

Archbishop Chaput confirms pope to visit Philadelphia in September 2015

By Nancy Wiechec

Catholic News Service

UPDATED JULY 25, 2014 — FARGO, N.D. - Philadelphia Archbishop Charles J. Chaput said Pope Francis has accepted his invitation to attend the World Meeting of Families in the U.S. next year, even though the Philadelphia Archdiocese still has not received official confirmation from the Vatican.

Archbishop Chaput made the announcement July 24 before giving his homily during the opening Mass of the Tekakwitha Conference in Fargo.

"Pope Francis has told me that he is coming," said the archbishop as he invited his fellow Native Americans to the 2015 celebration being held in Philadelphia Sept. 22-27.

"The pope will be with us the Friday, Saturday and Sunday of that week," he said.

Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, Vatican spokesman, said July 25 Pope Francis has expressed "his willingness to participate in the World Meeting of Families" in Philadelphia, and has received invitations to visit other cities as well, which he is considering. Those invitations include New York, the United Nations and Washington.

"There has been no official confirmation by the Vatican or the Holy See of Pope Francis' attendance at the 2015 World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia," the archdiocese said in a statement. "We still expect that any official confirmation will come approximately six months prior to the event."

It said Archbishop Chaput "has frequently shared his confidence in Pope Francis' attendance at the World Meeting and his personal conversations with the Holy Father are the foundation for that confidence."

"We are further heartened and excited" by Father Lombardi's comments, it added. "While Archbishop Chaput's comments do not serve as official confirmation, they do serve to bolster our sincere hope that Philadelphia will welcome Pope Francis next September."

Some Mexican media have cited government officials saying a September trip to North America also could include stops in Mexico, but Father Lombardi said that at this moment "nothing operational has begun relative to a plan or program for a visit

to the United States or Mexico. Keep in mind, there is still more than a year to go before the meeting in Philadelphia.”

Contributing to this story was Cindy Wooden at the Vatican.

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