

SAMUEL RODRIGUEZ: A Modern-Day Peter

Already recognized as one of the nation's most influential Hispanic leaders, Samuel Rodriguez's profile increased last year via a merger of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference and the Fraternity of Latino Evangelical Churches (NHCLC-CONEL).

As president and chief executive officer, Rodriguez provides oversight to an international organization of 500,000 churches with estimated membership of more than 125 million. NHCLC-CONEL supports such major directives as evangelism and strengthening families, and recently launched initiatives opposing sex trafficking and persecution of Christians.

Despite his busy travel schedule, most Sundays Rodriguez occupies the pulpit at New Season Christian Worship Center. The Sacramento, California, Assemblies of God church has more than 1,500 members.

A father of three who recently celebrated the arrival of his first grandchild, Rodriguez credits the Holy Spirit with fueling his ministry and helping him withstand the continuing political stalemate over immigration reform.

While the latter is a source of frustration, Rodriguez is grateful for the support among evangelicals that has developed in recent years. Instead of getting "shut down" like he did in the past, today most evangelical leaders and two-thirds of members support a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants.

He also expresses strong support for such "politically incorrect" policies as traditional marriage and pro-life causes, comparing society's societal hostility to the ridicule Peter faced on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14-15).

"We were not filled with the Holy Spirit to be complacent," Rodriguez declares. "Today's complacency is tomorrow's captivity. Pentecostals are loud. If we are to be light, it behooves us to stand up and raise our voice."—*Ken Walker*