



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS TO REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NEOCATECHUMENAL WAY

*Paul VI Audience Hall
Saturday, 1 February 2014*

Video

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I thank the Lord for the joy of your faith and for the ardour of your Christian witness, thanks be to God! I greet you all warmly, beginning with the International Team of Directors of the Neocatechumenal Way, together with the priests, seminarians and catechists. I extend an affection greeting to the children, present here in such great numbers. My thoughts go in a special way to the families, who will be travelling to different parts of the world to proclaim and bear witness to the Gospel. The Church is grateful to you for your generosity! I thank you for all you do in the Church and the world.

And in the name of the Church, our Mother — our Holy Mother Church, the hierarchy as St Ignatius of Loyola liked to say — in the name of the Church I would like to give you a few simple recommendations. The first is to take the greatest care to build and preserve *the communion within the particular Churches* where you will go to work. The Way has its own charism, its own dynamic, a gift that like all gifts of the Holy Spirit has a profoundly ecclesial dimension; this means listening to the life of the Churches where your leaders send you, appreciating their riches, suffering through their weaknesses if necessary, and walking together as a single flock under the guidance of the Pastors of the local Churches. Communion is essential: at times it can be better to give up living out in detail what your itinerary would call for, in order to guarantee unity among the brethren who form one ecclesial community, which you must always feel a part of.

Another point: Wherever you may go, it will be good for you to think that the Spirit of God always

goes before us. This is important: the Lord always goes before us! Think of Philip, when the Lord sends him by that road where he meets an administrator seated in his chariot (cf. Acts 8:27-28). The Spirit arrived before him: he was reading the prophet Isaiah and did not understand it, but his heart was fervent. Thus, when Philip approaches, he is ready to be catechized and baptized. The Spirit always arrives before us; God arrives there always before we do! Even in the furthest places, even in the most diverse cultures, God sows the seeds of his Word everywhere. Hence the need to pay special *attention to the cultural context* in which you families will go and work: it is often an environment very different than that from which you come. Many of you will take the trouble to learn the local language, at times difficult, and this effort is admirable. Much more important will be your commitment to “learning” the cultures you encounter, knowing how to recognize the need for the Gospel that is present everywhere, but also that action that the Holy Spirit has accomplished in the life and the history of every people.

And finally, I exhort you *to take loving care of one another*, especially the weakest among you. The Neocatechumenal Way, as way of discovering one’s own Baptism, is a necessary path, along which a brother or sister can find unforeseen challenges. In these cases, the exercise of patience and mercy by the community is a sign of maturity in the faith. The freedom of each one of you must not be forced, and it must be respected even if one chooses to seek, outside the Way, other forms of Christian life that may help him or her to grow in their answer to the Lord’s response.

Dear families, dear brothers and sisters, I encourage you to carry the Gospel of Jesus Christ everywhere, even to those most de-Christianized, especially in the margins of life. Evangelize with love, bring God’s love to all. Tell all those you meet on the streets of your mission that God loves man as he is, even with his limitations, with his mistakes, even with his sins. That is why he sent his Son, that he might take our sins onto himself. May you be messengers and witnesses of the infinite goodness and inexhaustible mercy of the Father.

I entrust you to our Mother, Mary, that she may always inspire and support your apostolate. In the school of this tender Mother, may you be zealous and joyful missionaries. Never lose the joy, go forward!