

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO MEMBERS OF THE NEOCATECHUMENAL WAY**

**Paul VI Audience Hall
Friday, 6 March 2015**

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Good morning to you all! And thank you, thank you so much for coming to this meeting.

The Pope's task, the task of Peter, is to confirm his brothers in the faith. Thus, you too wanted by this gesture to ask that the Successor of Peter confirm your call, support your mission, bless your charism. And today I confirm your call, I support your mission and I bless your charism. Do I do it because he [pointing to Kiko] paid me? No! I do it because I want to. You will go forth in the name of Christ throughout the world to bring his Gospel: Christ goes before you, Christ accompanies you, Christ brings to fulfillment that salvation of which you are bearers!

Together with you I would like to greet the Cardinals and Bishops who accompany you today and who, in their dioceses, support your mission. In particular I greet the founders of the Neocatechumenal Way, Kiko Argüello and Carmen Hernández, as well as Fr Mario Pezzi: I also express my appreciation to them and my encouragement for how much good they are doing for the Church through the Way. I always say that the Neocatechumenal Way does great good for the Church.

As Kiko said, our meeting today is a missionary send-off, in obedience to what Christ asked of us and what we have heard in the Gospel. And I am particularly glad that this mission of yours is carried out thanks to Christian families who, gathered into one community, have the mission of showing signs of faith that draw men and women to the beauty of the Gospel, according to the words of Christ: "Love one another as I have loved you; by this love they will know that you are my disciples" (cf. Jn 13:34), and "that you may all be one and the world will believe" (cf. Jn 17:21). These communities, called by the Bishops, are formed by a priest and four or five families, some even with older children, and they constitute a "missio ad gentes", with a mandate to evangelize non-Christians. Non-Christians who have never heard of Jesus Christ, and so many non-Christians who have forgotten who Jesus Christ was, who Jesus Christ is: non-Christians who were baptized, but secularization, worldiness and many other causes have made them forget the faith. Wake up that faith!

Therefore, even before words, it is by your life's witness that you manifest the heart of Christ's revelation: that God so loved man that He consigned Himself to death for him and was resurrected by the Father in order to give us the grace to give our life to others. The world today is in dire need of this great message. How much loneliness, how much suffering, how much distance from God in so many peripheries of Europe and America and in so many Asian cities! How much need man has today, in every latitude, to feel that God loves him and that love is

possible! These Christian communities, thanks to you missionary families, have the essential task of making this message visible. And what is the message? “Christ is risen, Christ lives! Christ is living among us!”.

You have received the strength to leave everything and depart for a distant land thanks to a way of Christian initiation, lived out in these little communities, where you have rediscovered the immense riches of your Baptism. This is the Neocatechumenal Way, a true gift of Providence to the Church of our times, as my Predecessors have already confirmed; especially John Paul II when he said to you “I recognize the Neocatechumenal Way as an effective means of Catholic formation for society and for the present time” (Epist. Ogni qualvolta, 30 August 1990: aas82 [1990], 1515). The Way stands on those three dimensions of the Church, which are the Word, the Liturgy and the Community. Thus, obedient and constant listening to the Word of God; Eucharistic celebration in small communities after First Sunday Vespers, the celebration of lauds at home on Sunday with all the children and the sharing of their faith with other brothers and sisters are the source of the many gifts that the Lord has bestowed upon you, as well as the many vocations to the priesthood and to consecrated life. Seeing all of this is a consolation, because it confirms that the Spirit of God is living and working in his Church, even today, and that He responds to the needs of modern man.

On various occasions I have stressed the need for the Church to move from a pastoral ministry of mere conservation to a decidedly missionary pastoral ministry (cf. Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 15). So often, in the Church, we have Jesus inside but we don't let him go forth.... So often! This is the most important thing to do if we don't want the waters to stagnate in the Church. For years the Way has carried out this *missio ad gentes* among non-Christians for an *implantatio Ecclesiae*, a new presence of the Church, there where the Church does not exist or is no longer capable of reaching people. “What joy you give us with your presence and with your work!” — Bl. Pope Paul VI said to you in his first audience with you (8 May 1974; *Insegnamenti di Paolo VI*, XII [1974], 407). I too make these words my own and I encourage you to go forth, entrusting you to the Holy Virgin Mary who inspired the Neocatechumenal Way. She intercedes for you before her divine Son. Dearest friends, may the Lord be with you. Go, with my Blessing!