



The Holy See

LETTER OF JOHN PAUL II

OGNI QUALVOLTA

*To my Venerable Brother,
Bishop Paul Joseph Cordes,
Responsible "ad personam" for the Apostolate
of the Neocatechumenal Communities
Vice-President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity"*

Every time the Holy Spirit awakens in in the Church impulses of greater fidelity to the Gospel, there spring up new charisms to express these realities and new institutions to put them into practice. This happened after the Council of Trent and after the Second Vatican Council.

Among the movements brought forth by the Spirit in our day are the Neocatechumenal Communities, founded by Mr K. Argüello and Miss C. Hernandez in Madrid, Spain. My Predecessor Paul VI acknowledged as a fruit of the Council their effectiveness for the renewal of Christian life: "What great joy and what great hope your presence and activity give us!... Living and promoting this reawakening is what you call a form of 'follow-up to Baptism', which will renew in today's Christian communities those effects of maturity and deepening which in the early Church were achieved by the period of preparation for Baptism" (*Paul VI to the Neocatechumenal Communities, General Audience, 8 May 1974, in Notitiae 96-96, 1974 230*). As Bishop of Rome, in the Roman parishes, I have had many meetings with the Neocatechumenal Communities and with their Pastors, and, during my apostolic journeys to many nations, I too have been able to note the abundant fruits of personal conversion and missionary zeal.

These communities make the sign of the missionary Church visible in the parishes and "work to open a path for evangelization for those who have all but abandoned Christian life, offering them a catechumenal itinerary that passes through all the stages which catechumens in the early Church went through before receiving the sacrament of Baptism; it reconciles them to the Church and to

Christ" (cf. Postbaptismal Catechumenate in *Notitiae* 96-96, 1974, 229). They are proclamation of the Gospel, witnessing in small communities, and the celebration of the Eucharist in groups (cf. Congregation for Divine Worship and for the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Notification on group celebrations of the "Neocatechumenal Way"* 19 December 1988; *ORE*, 9 January 1989, p. 12) which permit the members to place themselves at the service of the renewal of the Church.

Various brothers in the Episcopate have recognized the fruits of this Way. I want to limit myself to recalling Archbishop Casimiro Morcillo of Madrid at the time, in whose diocese and under whose governance the Neocatechumenal Communities, which he welcomed with such great love, came into being in 1964.

Appreciating 20 years of life of the communities, spread over 5 continents -

- taking into account the new vitality that invigorates parishes, the missionary zeal and the fruits of conversion that come from the commitment of the itinerant catechists and, recently, from the evangelization work of families in the de-Christianized areas of Europe and of the whole world;

- considering the vocations to the religious life and to the priesthood that the Way generated and the creation of diocesan seminaries for training priests for the new evangelization, such as the *Redemptoris Mater* Seminary in Rome;

- having seen the documentation you have presented:

accepting the request addressed to me, I recognize the Neocatechumenal Way as an effective means of Catholic formation for society and for the present time.

And so I hope that, with their brothers in the priesthood, my Brothers in the Episcopate will appreciate and assist this work for the new evangelization - along with their priests - so that it may develop along the guidelines proposed by the initiators, in a spirit of service to the local ordinary and of communion with him, and within the unity of the particular Church with the universal Church.

As a pledge of this hope, I impart to you and to all those who belong to the Neocatechumenal Way my Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 30 August 1990, the 12th year of my Pontificate

JOHN PAUL II

(In the AAS 82 [1990-II], 1513-1515, the following note was placed at the bottom of page 1513).

The Holy Father's intention in recognizing the Neocatechumenal Way as an effective process of Catholic formation, is not to give binding instructions to the local Ordinaries but only to encourage them to give careful consideration to the Neocatechumenal Communities. However, he leaves it to the judgement of the Ordinaries to act according to the pastoral needs of their own dioceses).