

**HOMILY OF HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL CHRISTOPHE PIERRE**  
**APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES**  
**MASS ON THE 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE NEOCATECHUMENAL WAY**  
**BROOKLYN, NY**  
**JULY 7, 2024**

Dear young men and women, brothers and sisters in the Lord,

On this significant anniversary of the Neocatechumenal Way in the United States, I greet you on behalf of Pope Francis and reaffirm his support and appreciation for the work the Way does in service of evangelization. Pope Francis said in 2018 at Tor Vergata, celebrating 50 years of the Way in Italy: *“Your charism is a great gift of God for the Church of our time. Let us thank the Lord for these 50 years.”*

The youth gathered here spent a week in pilgrimage throughout the United States, proclaiming the Gospel in many cities through their presence and witness. This witness is essential today, and the Pope relies on you to make visible the Church he dreams of—a Church that reaches out and searches for the lost sheep.

In response to secularization, the Holy Spirit, through the Second Vatican Council, has rediscovered the Word of God, the Paschal Mystery, the Church as the people of God and community, and has reintroduced the catechumenate: these are fundamental means to announce the Good News in this time of “epochal change.” It is necessary to remember how essential the teachings of the Second Vatican Council are today more than ever. It consoles and encourages me to see that today the Neocatechumenal Way endeavors to bring this great renewal to the people.

Pope Francis often speaks of opening the doors to people living in all situations of moral poverty, to those who have wandered far from God, and accompanying them back. It is necessary that the Church opens a way back. Is there a way back from addiction, from violence, from despair? God can open a way where it seems impossible. He opened a way through the Red Sea; He opened a way through the desert. He opened a way for you and your family to return to Him. He is rebuilding marriages; He broke the bonds of many slaveries.

The prodigal son wandered away from the house of the Father in search of happiness in the world. He ended up feeding on the food of pigs. Then he remembered the house of

the Father and the dignity he had there. There is a thirst for God that secularization cannot eradicate. The father had been waiting for him while he squandered his fortune in debauchery. This is the mission of the Church: to open the door for sinners to come back.

You are witnesses of the power of this grace: many of you have come back to the Church from situations of sin or despair; many of you were lost in the world following your projects. Many of you told me: where would I be if I had not found a way back to the house of the Father? We can say as the Jews say in every Passover celebration: “If the Holy One had not taken our fathers out of Egypt, then we, our children, and our children’s children would still be slaves.”

You are rediscovering the Church as a Mother who can regenerate the worst sinner. Jesus went to look for Peter after he betrayed Him three times, and he became the first pope; Jesus called Paul, the most ferocious persecutor of Christians, and he became the greatest apostle; and a murderer hanging from a cross was the first saint in Paradise. The womb of the Church is baptism, and through a post-baptismal catechumenate you are gradually rediscovering the immense grace of baptism. You are witnesses of this, and this assembly is living testament that it works. Because of this, we have reason to give thanks to God for the visit of Kiko and Carmen fifty years ago.

The Lord told Saint Paul: *“My grace is enough for you, for my power is fulfilled in your weakness.”* With Saint Paul we can say: *“I will happily boast therefore in my weaknesses so that the power of Christ may inhabit in me...”* Paul continues: I wish *“that you may understand what is the hope to which he has called you, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, of the love of Christ.”*

The good news is not about following or not following laws and rules, but it is about grace; and grace is to be touched by divine life, which gives us the power to do things impossible to human nature: for this, the manifestation of it is to love our enemies and to forgive them. I heard that many of you experienced in your poverty this power of grace: to forgive a father who abandoned you, or an unfaithful spouse.

Seeing this assembly with so many youth, one may think of what the people of Nazareth said seeing Jesus: where does this come from? And the Gospel writes, in fact, that they were scandalized seeing His miracles, and they thought that this could not come from

God, because Jesus was the son of the carpenter from Nazareth. Faced with your own weakness, perhaps these same questions echo in your experiences. How can I be a husband? Or a parent? Or a priest? Or a nun? Can I be chaste? Can I be holy? Can I be faithful?

**DO NOT BE AFRAID OF YOUR WEAKNESS** because there the grace of God appears. In the Eucharist, the victory of Christ over death is going to be made present and to touch our life. Christ is risen, and He is calling you to participate in His mission: you are a precious instrument in the eyes of the Lord, He knew you before you were formed in the womb, He loves and has a fantastic plan for you.

The Lord looked on the humility of His handmaid when He chose Mary. Our failures prepare us for the mission so that we will not judge others' sins: only he who has experienced the power of grace can show sinners the way back to God. In your communities, the Church is helping you to have an experience of mercy that is constantly regenerating you, giving you the capacity to announce it to sinners. I encourage you not to leave your community, especially in times of crisis: there you can find the Holy Spirit to lead you in moments of darkness. The Lord is calling all of us to go to meet people living in all sorts of situations: in these places, you can bring a message of hope because you yourselves were once there, and the Lord has come to look for you.

Dear brothers and sisters, the Lord has founded His Church on the witness of poor people, mindful of the promise that He will be with us every day until the end of the world. This promise stands true today. Let us ask the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who inspired the Neocatechumenal Way, so that we may answer as she did: **BE IT DONE UNTO ME ACCORDING TO YOUR WORD.**