

Petition to Bishop Peter Baldacchino

Diocese of Las Cruces

Subject: *Firm Opposition to the Influence and Practices of The Neocatechumenal Way in Our Diocese.*

Petition Summary

We, the faithful of the Diocese of Las Cruces, respectfully and unequivocally request that no priests formed in the Neocatechumenal Way be assigned to our parishes, that no further promotion of this movement be allowed within our community, and that there be no additional development or promotion of The Redemptoris Mater Seminary. The introduction of the Redemptoris Mater Seminary—without proper communication to priests and parishes—has caused confusion, division, and tension within our communities. These outcomes suggest neglect, inadequate oversight, and a lack of proper care and leadership from a spiritual father. While we recognize the presence of the Redemptoris Mater Seminary, we strongly urge that it be removed and that priestly formation in our diocese remain free from the influence and pressure of the Neocatechumenal Way. We insist that NCW practices be discontinued in our Diocese.

We are deeply concerned that the theological, liturgical, and pastoral practices associated with the Neocatechumenal Way are not compatible with the spiritual life, liturgical tradition, or pastoral needs of our local communities.

We urge a more substantial commitment to fostering vocations within our local communities, supporting the priests who already serve faithfully here, and grounding priestly formation in the Church's timeless teachings, sacred liturgy, and full communion with the broader Catholic tradition.

Full Petition

Dear Bishop Baldacchino,

We, the undersigned faithful of the Diocese of Las Cruces, address you with profound respect, deep concern, and love for the Church. We are writing to express our clear and unwavering opposition to any plan that would introduce priests formed by the Neocatechumenal Way into our parishes or continue the operation of the Neocatechumenal-affiliated seminary recently established in our diocese. While we recognize that the seminary has already opened, we firmly believe it must be discontinued. We respectfully but urgently ask you, Bishop, to take immediate and decisive action to bring an end to its development and presence, as its continued operation poses a serious threat to the unity, liturgical integrity, and pastoral identity of our local Church.

Our Concerns:

1. Rejection of Liturgical Innovation

The liturgical practices of the Neocatechumenal Way are well-documented to depart from the norms established by the Roman Missal and the Congregation for Divine Worship. We strongly oppose the introduction of any liturgical deviations into our parishes—especially practices that alter the celebration of the Eucharist in ways that obscure its sacrificial nature, undermine the unity of the faithful, or diminish

the reverence owed to the Blessed Sacrament. We ask that all liturgies in our diocese conform strictly to the Roman Rite as approved by the Church.

A few critical issues illustrate this incompatibility:

- **Lack of Transparency and Liturgical Deviation:** The Neocatechumenal Way often functions with minimal openness to the broader Church community. Its liturgies are frequently held in private settings, with practices such as inviting personal reflections after the homily. These departures from the norms of the Roman Rite risk doctrinal confusion and undermine the unity of worship.
- **Irreverent Eucharistic Practices:** The distribution of the Eucharist—often while seated or passed hand-to-hand—diminishes the reverence due to the Real Presence. This practice risks the profanation of the Blessed Sacrament and is deeply distressing to those devoted to the Eucharist's sanctity.
- **Liturgical Aesthetics and Music:** The Catholic Church is heir to a sacred tradition of music and art that lifts the soul and reflects the beauty of divine worship. We are alarmed by the replacement of traditional Catholic imagery with the distinctive artwork of Kiko Argüello, the movement's founder, and by the introduction of non-traditional music and liturgical dance. These innovations distract from the solemnity and sacredness that should mark the celebration of Holy Mass and risk alienating the faithful who seek reverent, spiritually nourishing worship.

These are just a few examples of how the practices of the Neocatechumenal Way diverge from the richness, reverence, and continuity of our Catholic liturgical tradition. Rather than promoting the influence of an external movement, we call for renewed investment in our local Church: strengthening parish life, supporting our priests, and fostering vocations through formation rooted in the Church's universal teachings, reverent liturgy, and rich tradition.

2. Firm Rejection of Neo-Catechumenal Clergy in Our Parishes

We state this plainly: **we do not want Neo-Catechumenal priests ministering in our diocese.** Their formation, liturgical customs, and pastoral methods differ significantly from those of our diocesan tradition, and their presence would likely cause division, confusion, and spiritual disunity among the faithful. This is not a rejection of individuals, but of an approach to Church life that we believe is not appropriate for our parishes or culture. Our people need shepherds who are steeped in our shared liturgical and theological heritage, not emissaries of a separate ecclesial movement.

3. Preserving the Identity of Our Diocesan Presbyterate

Currently, our diocese has only 17 diocesan priests, with nine expected to retire within the next eight years. The plan to bring in **11 priests from the Neocatechumenal Way—none of whom are from Southern New Mexico—would, in effect, redefine our diocesan clergy overnight.** Such a drastic transformation, especially one rooted in a movement with controversial practices, is something we cannot accept. We believe it would gravely damage our diocesan unity, liturgical continuity, and parish life.

4. Formation in Traditional, Church-Approved Seminaries

We express our deep concern regarding the formation of the young men currently discerning a vocation to the diocesan priesthood. It is particularly troubling that their propaedeutic year is being conducted under the exclusive direction of a priest affiliated with the Neocatechumenal Way. This arrangement is not appropriate for diocesan seminarians and is, quite frankly, unacceptable. The early stages of priestly formation should be rooted in the heart of the diocesan Church, under the guidance of clergy who fully embody the pastoral, liturgical, and theological identity of the local presbyterate.

We strongly urge that any new diocesan seminarians be entrusted to long-established seminaries known for their fidelity to the Church, rigorous academic and spiritual formation, and reverent celebration of the sacraments. These institutions, grounded in the Magisterium and the Church's enduring traditions, have proven effective in preparing holy, faithful priests.

It is also worth noting that for the past six years, our diocese has not produced a single seminarian from within our community. This stands in stark contrast to the era of previous bishops, when one to two local vocations were fostered annually. We believe it is imperative to return to actively nurturing homegrown vocations, rooted in the spiritual, liturgical, and theological heritage that has sustained the Catholic priesthood for centuries.

5. Revitalizing Parish Life, Not Replacing It

Rather than continuing to develop a seminary affiliated with an outside movement, we call for renewed investment in what already exists: our parishes. Our diocese urgently needs robust catechesis—firmly rooted in the authentic teachings of the universal Catholic Church, not shaped by the proprietary methods or interpretations of the Neocatechumenal Way. We need vibrant youth and family ministry, outreach to the lapsed, and comprehensive support for our priests. The clergy who have faithfully served our communities deserve to be nurtured and strengthened, not displaced or overshadowed by externally formed missionaries whose theology and pastoral approach differ sharply from those our people know, trust, and find spiritually nourishing.

We Pray...

...that under your pastoral care, our diocese may remain faithful to the Church's authentic tradition, and that all initiatives serve the unity of the Body of Christ. We ask that you listen to the voice of your flock, who do not want the Neocatechumenal Way to reshape the identity of our parishes or clergy. At a time when the Church faces many challenges, let us choose the path of fidelity, clarity, and communion with the rich and universal traditions of our Catholic faith.

Entrusting our plea to the Holy Spirit, we remain,

Yours in Christ,

The Faithful of the Diocese of Las Cruces

Call to Action

Please sign this petition if you support the following:

- **A clear and uncompromising rejection of the introduction of Neocatechumenal Way priests into our diocese.** Their presence would bring liturgical confusion, theological divergence, and pastoral disunity. We do not want clergy from a movement that does not reflect the spiritual heritage of our Catholic community.
- **Preserving the traditional celebration of the Mass**, strictly according to the Roman Missal and Church norms, without unauthorized adaptations.
- **Encouraging and forming vocations** within our communities, with a focus on seminarians who understand our people, culture, and needs.
- **Sending our seminarians to long-established seminaries** that are faithful to Catholic doctrine and tradition.
- **Renewing parish life and outreach**, especially to those who have fallen away, through time-tested methods of evangelization and pastoral care, not experimental or ideologically-driven programs.
- **Supporting our current diocesan priests**, ensuring they receive the respect, formation, and care they need to continue their vocations with joy and fidelity.

By signing, you stand for unity, tradition, and a future rooted in the Church's proven path, not one shaped by unfamiliar and divisive movements.

Name and Last Name	Parish	Signature

Please print the petition and keep a copy for your records.
Send us ***only*** this page “**Call to Action**” filled out at the bottom, one petition per person, and mail it to:

P.O. Box 1440
Mesilla Park, NM 88047

Thanks for your support!