

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE NEOCATECHUMENAL WAY IN THE DIOCESE OF LAS CRUCES

1.Q: What is the Neocatechumenal Way?

A: It is a program of adult formation intended to help baptized Catholics grow in their faith.

- Begun in 1964 in the Slums of Madrid, Spain by Francisco "Kiko" Argüello and Carmen Hernández.
- Focuses on Teaching Baptized Adult Catholics who may be: o Non-Practicing o Separated from the Church o Desiring to Grow in Faith
- The Name Literally Means a "New Way of Teaching"
- The closest analogies we have in our diocese are the ACTS Retreat and Cursillo Movements.

2.Q: Has the Neocatechumenal Way been approved by the Roman Catholic Church?

A: Yes, the Neocatechumenal Way is defined and guided by a set of statutes which have been reviewed and approved by the highest levels of the Roman Catholic Church.

- June 29, 2002: Decree of the Pontifical Council for the Laity: Approval of the Statutes of Neocatechumenal Way "Ad Experimentum"
- May 11, 2008: Decree of the Pontifical Council for the Laity: Definitive Approval of the Statutes of the Neocatechumenal Way
- December 26, 2010: Decree of the Pontifical Council for the Laity: Authorizing publication of the Neocatechumenal Way Catechetical Directory. • January 8, 2012: The Pontifical Council for the Laity, after consultation with the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, has given its approval to the ceremonies contained in the Neocatechumenal Way Catechetical Directory.

3.Q: What do these approvals tell individual Catholics about the Neocatechumenal Way?

A: In granting these approvals the Church is stating that the Neocatechumenal Way is in full accord with Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition and Roman Catholic Theology.

- NCW is a voluntary activity, and every Catholic is free to choose whether or not to participate;
- However, we cannot say that it is not fully Catholic without rejecting the Magisterium of the Catholic Church.

4.Q: What have the popes said about the Neocatechumenal Way?

A: Since its development, every pope has been highly supportive of the NCW:

- Pope St. Paul VI o "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 'post baptismal catechumenate,' which can renew in today's Christian communities those effects of maturity and deepening which in the early Church were achieved by the catechumenate before Baptism."
- Pope St. John Paul II o "I recognize the Neocatechumenal Way as an effective means of Catholic formation for society and for the present times."
- Pope Benedict XVI o "The Neocatechumenal Way is a providential instrument for the New Evangelization." • Pope Francis o "I confirm your call, I support your mission and I bless your charism."
- Pope Leo XIV o "The Church accompanies you, supports you, and is grateful for what you do."

5.Q: Is the Neocatechumenal Way used in other dioceses in the United States?

Yes, of the 196 dioceses in the United States about 100 have Neocatechumenal Way programs including: Archdiocese of Washington Archdiocese of Newark Archdiocese of Denver Archdiocese of Boston Archdiocese of Miami Archdiocese of Philadelphia Diocese of Brooklyn Diocese of Bridgeport Diocese of Dallas Archdiocese of Los Angeles Archdiocese of Chicago

Archdiocese of Galveston–Houston Diocese of Tucson Diocese of Phoenix Diocese of El Paso
Archdiocese of Atlanta Archdiocese of San Antonio Archdiocese of Santa Fe

6.Q: How is the Neocatechumenal Way organized?

A: The Neocatechumenal Way is not a group or an organization like a religious order. Instead, it is organized into a series of teams who coordinate its activities and work to ensure it is administered properly.

The teams are:

- International Team o Headquartered in Rome o Provides catechetical guidance. o Coordinates with the Vatican on matters of catechesis and liturgy o Coordinates international activities. o Maintains unity of practice throughout the world.
- Regional and National Teams o Organize catechist visits. o Coordinate formation activities. o Assist bishops who request the NCW. o Arrange missionary initiatives.
- Catechist Teams o Conduct catechesis. o Accompany communities. o Report to higher-level teams. o Maintain consistency in the NCW practice. o Collaborate with the priests at the parish level

7.Q: What does the Neocatechumenal Way method look like?

A: It begins with a period of Initial Catechesis which involves about 15 evening meetings over 8-10 weeks. These meetings involve talks by catechists and personal testimony covering topics such as:

- The Message of Salvation
- The Word of God
- Liturgy & Sacraments
- Living as a Christian After the Initial Catechesis, people then attend a weekend retreat. Finally, if they choose, they can attend a weekly NCW mass, bible study and attend other occasional retreats.

8.Q: I have heard that the Neocatechumenal Way mass is different than the regular mass, is this correct and is it normal for a group to have a different mass?

A: The Roman Catholic Church occasionally gives permission for a group to adapt the mass to specific circumstances. Some groups have their own liturgical rites such as: • Dominican Rite • Carmelite Rite • Norbertine Rite • Carthusian Rite • Eastern Catholic Churches • Ordinariates for Former Anglicans Other groups have approved customs that affect the celebration of Mass without creating a separate rite: • Benedictines • Franciscans • Jesuits • Cistercians

- Neocatechumenal Way The Neocatechumenal Way does not have its own rite or Mass. It celebrates the Roman Rite just as with every parish in the diocese but has received specific permissions approved by the Holy See regarding certain aspects of its celebrations, which are intended to further its catechetical aims. These permissions include:
 - Celebrating the Saturday evening Eucharist in small communities.
 - Introduction by a layperson before the celebration and short introductions before each reading. • Brief “echoes” where laypeople are invited to share their reaction to the Gospel reading after its proclamation and before the homily.
 - The sign of peace before the consecration. • Communion is received under both species with unleavened bread and wine, standing and remaining in place before being consumed together.

9.Q: Will the NCW mass replace the normal parish mass?

A: Absolutely not. The NCW mass is only available in a few parishes in the diocese and where available, it is a supplement to the mass schedule and does not replace any of the regular parish masses.

10.Q: Are the NCW masses open to all Catholics?

A: Yes, when a NCW mass is offered in a parish it is advertised in the parish bulletins and open to all Catholics. They fulfil the Sunday mass obligation.

11.Q: Some people have said that problems have arisen with the Neocatechumenal Way in Guam and Peru is this correct?

A: It is true that controversies have arisen in Guam and Peru involving the NCW, however these controversies were political and did not involve the theological or doctrinal validity of the NCW.

12.Q: Have there been any controversies involving the NCW in the 75 American dioceses where it is practiced.

A: Although the NCW is present in dioceses as close to us as El Paso and Albuquerque, no controversies have reported. In fact diocesan newspapers have reported the opposite. In July of 2024, the pope's representative to the United States celebrated Mass with about 15 bishops and 20,000 people of the Neocatechumenal Way in New York. The celebration was for the 50th anniversary of the NCW in the USA.

13. Q: Some people have said that the NCW masses and communities are secretive and are not open, is this true?

A: Not at all. The NCW desires to embrace every Catholic who wishes to grow in their faith. It is no more closed or exclusive than any other Catholic organization such as the Knights of Columbus or the Ladies Council.

14.Q: Some people have said that the diocese sends money to the NCW, is this true?

A: No, the diocese does not send any money to the NCW

15.Q: So then what is the bottom line?

A: The NCW is just one ministry among many in the Diocese of Las Cruces intended to help Catholics encounter Jesus Christ. It will not change the mass, the customs or the culture of our diocese any more than the Knights of Columbus or the ACTS and Cursillo Movements. There is a great need for continued adult spiritual growth in the diocese and it is hoped that the NCW will help those who choose to participate.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE SEMINARIES IN THE DIOCESE OF LAS CRUCES

16. Q: Does the diocese have enough priests?

A: Ever since its erection in 1982, the Diocese of Las Cruces has faced a severe shortage of priests and this situation has grown steadily worse. At the present, the diocese has: • 50 Priests • 33 are Foreign Priests Mostly from India and Nigeria • 17 are Diocesan Priests Permanently Attached to the Diocese • 7 Diocesan Priests are Scheduled to Retire within 5 Years

17.Q: What has been done in the past to alleviate this problem?

A: The diocese has never been able to produce enough vocations to the priesthood to supply the priests it needs and has had to borrow priests from other dioceses. The diocese could not have functioned without these borrowed priests, and they continue to be incredibly important, but they are subject to recall to their home dioceses at any time and do not offer a sustainable solution to our problem.

18. Q: What has Bishop Baldacchino done to solve this problem?

A: Bishop Peter has taken substantial steps to increase the flow of seminarians and thus diocesan priests. He has established: • The St. Joseph Seminary in Las Cruces • The Redemptoris Mater Seminary in Las Cruces. • The Maria de Ágreda Theological Institute

19.Q: What is the logic of having our own seminary?

A: Historically, the diocese has sent its seminarians to places like Denver, Chicago, Miami and even Rome to study. While there they work in local parishes and provide a role model for young men considering a vocation to the priesthood. In addition, the cost of educating men at these institutions has grown rapidly. By establishing our own seminary and bringing our young men home, Bishop Peter believes that they will inspire more vocations in our diocese and lower our costs.

20.Q: Why do we need two seminaries and a theological institute?

A: Having two seminaries allows a diocese to significantly broaden their pool of seminary candidates. • St. Joseph Seminary o

A Traditional House of Formation o Attracts Local & Regional Candidates • Redemptoris Mater Seminary o A Neocatechumenal Way House of Formation o Attract Candidates from Communities Worldwide • Maria de Ágreda Theological Institute o The men from both seminaries study together, and; o Receive identical educations

21.Q: Is this arrangement unusual?

A: No, the idea of having two diocesan seminaries began with Pope St. John Paul II who established the first Redemptoris Mater Seminary in Rome in 1987. Since that time, about 120 Redemptoris Mater seminaries have been founded worldwide. Ten U.S. Dioceses have dual Traditional & Redemptoris Mater Seminaries. Archdiocese of Newark Archdiocese of Washington Archdiocese of Denver Archdiocese of Boston Diocese of Dallas Diocese of Bridgeport Archdiocese of Philadelphia Diocese of Brooklyn Archdiocese of Miami Diocese of Las Cruces

22. Q: Is it normal to have priests in a diocese who have attended seminaries with different spiritual formation methodologies?

A: Yes, having priests trained in different spiritual methodologies is a normal practice in the Roman Catholic Church. • The Diocese of Las Cruces has traditionally scattered its seminarians among five or more seminaries who each have a unique formation program. • Our current priests come from many different seminaries and religious orders that all have unique formation programs. • Although their spiritual development is varied, the education the priests have received is much more standardized.

23.Q: Some people have said that the Redemptoris Mater seminary receives more budget money than the St. Joseph seminary, is that true?

A: Yes, it is currently true for obvious reasons. St. Joseph has 3 seminarians and Redemptoris Mater has 17. It simply costs more to house and feed the 17 men at Redemptoris Mater than the 3 men at St. Joseph. Other than that, all the seminarians, regardless of their spiritual backgrounds, are precious in the eyes of the bishop and are treated equally.

24.Q: Are there any indicators that the bishop's approach will be successful?

A: While it will take time to see an increase flow of locally trained men into the priesthood, one hopeful indicator is that the number of seminarians in our seminaries has grown from 6 in 2020 to 20 today and is expected to increase