

Response to the NCW FAQ prepared by



Introduction

The FAQ recently circulated regarding the Neocatechumenal Way (NCW) in the Diocese of Las Cruces presents many positive aspects of the movement. While these points deserve consideration, the document omits significant concerns raised by clergy, former members, and faithful Catholics, both locally and worldwide.

This response seeks to provide a more balanced perspective.

1. "The Neocatechumenal Way has been approved by the Church."

True, but incomplete.

The Neocatechumenal Way has approved statutes and catechetical materials. However, approval does not mean that every practice, implementation, or local application is beyond criticism.

Throughout its history, the Holy See has issued directives and corrections regarding liturgical practices and the relationship of the NCW to parish life. Approval is not a declaration of perfection. Many approved movements within the Church have faced legitimate concerns requiring correction and oversight.

2. "Every Pope has been highly supportive of the NCW."

Partially true, but important context is omitted.

The FAQ highlights papal praise but does not mention the cautions and warnings given by the Popes.

Most recently, Pope Leo XIV praised the missionary fruits of the NCW but also reminded its members. There is a reason Popes have felt the need to keep reminding them specifically about this:

- "Your mission is particular, but not exclusive."
- "Live your spirituality without ever separating yourselves from the rest of the ecclesial body."
- "Charisms must always be placed at the service of the kingdom of God and the one Church of Christ."
- "The proclamation of the Gospel... must always be free from constraint, rigidity, and moralism."
- These warnings address concerns frequently raised by former members, clergy, and laity regarding exclusivity, separation from parish life, and excessive dependence on internal structures.

3. "The NCW is just like ACTS or Cursillo."

This comparison is misleading.

ACTS and Cursillo are retreat-based renewal movements.

The Neocatechumenal Way is a long-term formation itinerary involving:

- Exclusive communities
- A hierarchical catechist structure
- Distinct liturgical celebrations
- Multi-stage scrutinies
- International governance
- Its structure and operation are substantially different from ACTS, Cursillo, or most parish-based ministries.

4. Liturgical Questions and the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM)

The FAQ presents NCW liturgical practices as simply approved adaptations. However, it does not address the long history of Vatican interventions concerning NCW liturgical practices.

Over the years, the Holy See has repeatedly requested that the NCW bring certain practices into conformity with the Roman Rite. Pope Benedict XVI specifically instructed the NCW to follow the approved liturgical books and the Church's norms.

While the NCW has received certain permissions, concerns remain regarding whether all communities consistently follow the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM) and the liturgical norms of the Roman Rite.

The question is not whether the NCW is Catholic. The question is whether liturgical unity and obedience to the Church's norms are fully observed, and whether these norms are observed in the sacrifice of the Mass, given that the sacrificial aspect is often understated.

5. Comparing the NCW to Religious Orders

The FAQ compares the NCW with groups such as the Franciscans, Dominicans, Jesuits, and Benedictines.

This comparison is problematic.

Religious orders are canonical institutes with centuries-old governance, formation, vows, accountability structures, and spiritual traditions.

The Neocatechumenal Way is not a religious order. It is an approved ecclesial itinerary of Christian formation.

The concern raised by many Catholics is not whether the NCW has a charism, but whether that charism is being presented as equivalent to, or as a replacement for, the broader life of the Church.

6. Catechesis Advertised to Minors

The FAQ describes the NCW as an adult faith formation program.

However, promotional materials in the Diocese of Las Cruces have advertised catechesis for individuals as young as 13.

Many parents have expressed concern that minors may be introduced into a setting originally designed for adults, where personal testimonies and discussions may involve sensitive life experiences that are not always appropriate for younger participants.

This raises legitimate questions regarding age appropriateness, parental awareness, and safeguarding standards.

7. Is Participation Truly Voluntary?

The FAQ states:

"NCW is a voluntary activity, and every Catholic is free to choose whether or not to participate."

In principle, this is true.

However, concerns have been reported in various locations where individuals claim they were encouraged or directed toward NCW catechesis without a full explanation of its nature.

Some parishioners have reported being encouraged to attend catechesis in connection with confession, sacramental preparation, or parish involvement without being informed that the meetings were specifically associated with the Neocatechumenal Way.

Others have reported that traditional devotional practices and existing ministries received less emphasis while significant parish attention and promotion were directed toward NCW activities.

Whether widespread or isolated, such concerns deserve honest examination.

8. Are NCW Communities Secretive?

The concern is not simply whether meetings are open.

- Historically, criticism has focused on:
- Limited access to catechetical materials
- Internal catechetical practices
- Scrutinies involving personal disclosures
- Strong influence exercised by catechists
- Limited transparency regarding formation materials
- Former members worldwide have consistently raised these concerns.

A balanced discussion should address them directly.

9. "No Controversies Have Been Reported."

This statement is inaccurate.

The FAQ suggests that controversies involving the NCW have not occurred in American dioceses.

However, controversies have been documented in:

- Guam
- Newark
- Brooklyn
- Denver
- Boston

Numerous dioceses throughout the United States and abroad

These controversies have involved:

- Seminary formation
- Parish division
- Governance
- Liturgical questions
- Catechetical practices
- Transparency

The existence of controversy does not prove wrongdoing, but it is inaccurate to suggest controversy has been absent.

10. "Problems in Guam and Peru Were Only Political."

Incomplete.

The FAQ dismisses these situations as merely political.

Guam

Concerns included:

Seminary governance

Property control

Transparency

Influence of NCW leadership

Relations between diocesan structures and NCW institutions

Peru

Reported concerns included:

Efforts to reshape parish traditions

Conflicts involving clergy who resisted NCW expansion

Questions regarding seminary governance

Concerns regarding transparency and administration

Whether one agrees with these criticisms or not, these situations cannot fairly be reduced to politics alone.

Seminary Questions

11. Why Two Seminaries?

The FAQ presents this as a practical response to the priest shortage.

However, many faithful are asking a different question:

Why establish a Redemptoris Mater Seminary linked to the NCW when numerous established seminaries already exist throughout the Church?

The concern is not simply numbers.

The concern is whether:

- One movement is receiving preferential treatment.
- Future diocesan leadership will be disproportionately formed within one spirituality.
- The Diocese is gradually being reshaped around the NCW.

These concerns are not addressed in the FAQ.

12. Seminary Formation in Las Cruces

No one disputes that the Diocese faces a serious vocational challenge.

However, many faithful question why such significant emphasis has been placed on recruiting and expanding the Redemptoris Mater Seminary rather than on continuing to form diocesan seminarians in long-established seminaries that serve the universal Church.

The concern is not opposition to vocations.

The concern is whether future priests will be formed primarily by the spirituality of one movement rather than by the broader traditions of diocesan priestly formation.

Many Catholics believe the Diocese needs not merely more priests, but priests formed to serve the entire Church and reflect the richness of Catholic tradition.

13. Budget and Resources

The FAQ acknowledges that Redemptoris Mater currently has substantially more seminarians than St. Joseph Seminary.

This reality raises legitimate questions about diocesan priorities and resource allocation.

The issue is not whether seminarians should be supported.

The issue is whether diocesan resources are becoming disproportionately concentrated in a seminary associated with one particular movement.

14. Will the NCW Reshape the Diocese?

The FAQ states that NCW Masses will not replace parish Masses.

At present, this is true.

However, many faithful are concerned about the long-term effects of priestly formation.

If a substantial percentage of future priests in the Diocese of Las Cruces are formed at Redemptoris Mater Seminary and shaped primarily by the spirituality of the Neocatechumenal Way, it is reasonable to ask whether the character of the Diocese could gradually shift toward that of one movement's spirituality.

This concern deserves discussion rather than dismissal.

What the FAQ Does Not Address

The most significant omission is that the FAQ does not address concerns currently being voiced throughout the Diocese of Las Cruces, including:

- The establishment of the Redemptoris Mater Seminary.
- The growing influence of the Neocatechumenal Way within diocesan leadership.
- Concerns expressed by priests and the lay faithful.
- Pope Leo XIV's recent warnings about exclusivity, separation, and the importance of remaining integrated into ordinary parish life.
- Canonical actions taken against concerned lay faithful.

- Efforts by the Diocese to have websites and online platforms operated by concerned Catholics removed, including the removal of comments on the Diocese of Las Cruces social media platforms, where parishioners express concerns and confusion.
- Questions regarding transparency, consultation, and diocesan governance.
- Independent Oversight and Accountability

The FAQ also fails to address an important question regarding accountability within the Neocatechumenal Way:

What independent mechanism exists outside of the Neocatechumenal Way's own chain of authority to review complaints, investigate concerns, or provide oversight when problems arise?

The FAQ describes the NCW's structure as overseen by international, national, regional, and local catechist teams. However, it does not explain what safeguards exist when concerns involve:

- Actions of catechists
- Community leadership
- Catechetical practices
- Scrutinies and personal disclosures
- Financial matters
- Conflicts between members and NCW leadership
- If concerns are raised, are they reviewed by individuals independent of the Neocatechumenal Way, or are they handled primarily within the movement's own internal structure?

This question is particularly important because the NCW places significant authority in catechist teams, who, though not ordained clergy, exercise considerable influence over communities and formation.

The issue is not whether the NCW produces good fruit. The issue is whether adequate transparency, accountability, and independent oversight are in place to address concerns as they arise and to protect both participants and the integrity of the Church.

These questions are central to the current discussion and deserve clear answers. A truly balanced presentation would address them directly rather than ignore them.

Conclusion

The FAQ presents the Neocatechumenal Way almost exclusively in terms of its strengths, missionary fruits, and official approvals. Those facts are real and deserve acknowledgment. However, a truly balanced presentation would also recognize the cautions issued by successive Popes, the controversies that have arisen in multiple dioceses worldwide, the experiences of former members, legitimate concerns regarding parish unity, and ongoing questions surrounding seminary formation and diocesan governance.

Many faithful Catholics in the Diocese of Las Cruces are deeply concerned by what appears to be an increasing effort to discourage discussion regarding the implementation of the Neocatechumenal Way and its growing influence within the Diocese. Lay Catholics who have publicly expressed concerns have been served with canonical penal precepts, while priests and parishioners who have questioned diocesan decisions have reported restrictions, marginalization, or removal from positions of ministry.

At the same time, efforts have been made to limit platforms through which concerned Catholics communicate. The Diocese has contacted third-party providers regarding websites

and social media platforms associated with those raising concerns, including platforms connected to the Basilica of San Albino and the Voice of the Catholic Faithful.

These actions have led many faithful to question whether legitimate concerns are being addressed through open dialogue and transparency, or whether efforts are instead aimed at controlling the narrative surrounding the Neocatechumenal Way and its role in the Diocese of Las Cruces.

The faithful have both the right and, at times, the duty under Canon 212 to respectfully make known their concerns regarding matters affecting the good of the Church. Catholics can fully accept that the Neocatechumenal Way is an approved movement within the Church while still asking whether its implementation in a particular diocese is prudent, balanced, transparent, and beneficial for the unity of the local Church.

The current tensions within the Diocese of Las Cruces will not be resolved through silence, penalties, or the suppression of discussion. They will be resolved through transparency, respectful dialogue, genuine discernment, and a shared commitment to preserving the unity, traditions, and mission of the Catholic Church. These questions deserve thoughtful answers and open conversation for the good of the Diocese of Las Cruces and the wider Church.

Our desire is not division, but fidelity; not conflict, but communion; not silence, but truth spoken in charity for the good of the Church.



"Rather, living the truth in love, we should grow in every way into Him who is the head, Christ." — Ephesians 4:15