

STATUTE OF THE NEOCATECHUMENAL WAY

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STATUTE OF THE NEOCATECHUMENAL WAY

Title I

Nature and implementation of the Neocatechumenal Way

Art. 1

[Nature of the Neocatechumenal Way]

§ 1. The nature of the Neocatechumenal Way is defined by His Holiness John Paul II when he writes: “*I recognize the Neocatechumenal Way as an itinerary of Catholic formation, valid for our society and for our times.*”¹

§ 2. The Neocatechumenal Way is at the service of the bishop as one of the forms of diocesan implementation of Christian initiation and of ongoing education in faith.

§ 3. The Neocatechumenal Way, endowed with public juridical personality,² is composed of an ensemble of spiritual goods:³

1st. the “Neocatechumenate,”⁴ or a post-baptismal catechumenate,⁵ in accordance with the form described in Title II;

¹ JOHN PAUL II, Letter, *Ogniquialvolta*, August 30, 1990, AAS 82 (1990) 1515.

² See PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE LAITY, *Decree*, October 28, 2004 (Prot. N. 1761/04 AIC-110).

³ See c. 115 § 3 *CIC*: autonomous foundation of spiritual goods.

⁴ See *Il Neocatecumenato. Un’esperienza di evangelizzazione e catechesi in atto in questa generazione. Sintesi delle sue linee di fondo*, by the Neocatechumenal Center of Rome, Rome 1976 (*pro manuscripto*).

⁵ “An itinerary of a catechumenal type, which follows all those phases which the catechumens in the early Church followed before receiving the sacrament of Baptism... (See Postbaptismal Catechumenate, in *Notitiae* 95–96, [1974], 229)” (JOHN PAUL II, Letter, *Ogniquialvolta*, August 30, 1990: AAS 82 [1990] 1514).

It is inspired by various documents of the Holy See, including:

- chapter 4 of the RCIA [Part II: 4 of the 1988 US edition] which suggests an adapted use of the catechesis and certain rites proper to the catechumenate for the conversion and maturation of faith even among baptized adults;

-PAUL VI, *Apostolic Exhortation, Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 44: “By now it is clear that contemporary conditions make it ever more urgent that catechetical instruction is given in the form of a catechumenate”;

-JOHN PAUL II, *Apostolic Exhortation, Catechesi Tradendæ*, 44: “Our pastoral and missionary concern ... is for those who, even if born in a Christian country, even in a sociologically Christian context, have never been educated in their faith and, as adults, are true catechumens”;

-JOHN PAUL II, *Apostolic Exhortation, Christifideles Laici*, 61: “A help [in the formation of Christians] may be given ... through a post-baptismal Catechesis of a catechumenal kind, by means of re-proposing some elements of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, aimed at leading to the acceptance and living of the immense and extraordinary riches and responsibilities of one’s Baptism”;

-*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1231: “By its very nature infant Baptism requires a *post-baptismal catechumenate*. There is a need not only for instruction after baptism, but also for the necessary flowering of baptismal grace in personal growth”;

-CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *General Directory for Catechesis*, 59: “‘The model for all Catechesis is the baptismal catechumenate when, by specific formation, an adult converted to belief is brought to explicit profession of baptismal faith during the Paschal Vigil.’ This catechumenal formation should inspire the other forms of Catechesis in both their objectives and in their dynamism”; *ibid.*, 91: “Post-baptismal Catechesis, without slavishly imitating the structure of the baptismal catechumenate, and recognizing that those being catechized are already baptized, will do well, however, to draw inspiration from ‘this preparatory school for the Christian life,’ and to allow itself to be enriched by those principal elements which characterize the catechumenate.”

- 2nd. the ongoing education in faith, in accordance with the form described in Title III;
- 3rd. the catechumenate, in accordance with the form described in Title IV;
- 4th. the service of catechesis, as described in Title V, conducted in accordance with the forms and by the persons indicated therein.

Art. 2

[Implementation of the Neocatechumenal Way]

In conformity with the desire of Pope John Paul II: *“It is therefore my wish that the brothers in the episcopate – together with their presbyters – value and help this work for the new evangelization, so that it may be implemented according to the lines proposed by the initiators, in the spirit of service to the local ordinary and in communion with him and in the context of the unity of the local Church and the universal Church”*,⁶ **the Neocatechumenal Way is implemented in the dioceses:**

1st. under the jurisdiction, direction of the diocesan bishop⁷ and with the assistance, guidance⁸ of the International Responsible Team of the Way, or the delegated responsible team, as indicated in art. 3, §7;

2nd. **according “to the lines proposed by its initiators,” contained in the present Statute and in the Orientations for the Teams of Catechists.**

Art. 3

[Competence of the International Responsible Team of the Way]

It pertains to the International Responsible Team of the Way, as indicated in Title VI:

- 1st. to make available to the diocesan bishops the spiritual goods described in art. 1 § 3;
- 2nd. to guide the implementation of the Neocatechumenal Way and to guarantee its authenticity;
- 3rd. to carry out its proper tasks as indicated in the present *Statute*;
- 4th. to proceed with those consultations which it considers appropriate;
- 5th. to maintain regular relations with the diocesan bishops;
- 6th. to maintain regular relations with the Pontifical Council for the Laity, the dicastery to which the Holy Father has entrusted the responsibility of accompanying the Neocatechumenal Way,⁹ as well as with the other dicasteries of the Holy See within the scope of their respective competence, keeping the Pontifical Council of the Laity informed;
- 7th. to nominate, in accordance with the provisions of art. 31 § 2, national responsible teams – as well as, where necessary, regional and diocesan teams – delegating to them, in their respective areas, the tasks referred to in the preceding points 2^o, 3^o, 4^o and 5^o. These teams carry out their tasks until the International Responsible Team sees fit to replace or modify them.

⁶ JOHN PAUL II, *Letter, Ogniqualevolta*, August 30, 1990, AAS 82 (1990) 1515.

⁷ CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *General Directory for Catechesis*, 223: see c. 775 §1 CIC; c. 617 CCEO.

⁸ The words “direction” and “guidance” indicate two distinct functions: the term “direction” is to be understood as the jurisdiction proper to ordained ministers; the term “guidance” is to be understood as the technical knowledge of the Way according to the lines proposed by its initiators.

⁹ See JOHN PAUL II, *Letter to Cardinal James Francis Stafford*, President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, April 5, 2001, in *L'Osservatore Romano*, April 17–18, 2001, p. 4.

Art. 4

[Temporal goods]

§ 1. The Neocatechumenal Way, being an itinerary of Catholic formation that is implemented in the dioceses through services freely given, has no material goods of its own.

§ 2. When in a diocese it is considered useful to financially support initiatives and activities for the evangelization realized through the Neocatechumenal Way, the diocesan bishop, at the request of the International Responsible Team of the Way, will consider the suitability of erecting an autonomous diocesan foundation, with juridical personality, regulated by its own statutes, which will also be recognized by the civil authorities. This may also be supported by oblatory donations made by participants in the Neocatechumenal Way, as well as by foundations and other individuals.

§ 3. In the communities, collections are made to answer different needs. It is the task of the responsible team of the community and of the responsible teams of the Way at every level, to ensure that such collections are administered with a great sense of responsibility and respect for the law.

Title II

The Neocatechumenate

Chapter I

Fundamental elements of the Neocatechumenate

Art. 5

[Recipients]

§ 1. The Neocatechumenate is an instrument at the service of the bishops for the rediscovery of Christian initiation by baptized adults. Among these adults, the following may be identified:¹⁰

- 1st. those who have drifted away from the Church;
- 2nd. those who have not been sufficiently evangelized and catechized;
- 3rd. those who desire to deepen and mature their faith;
- 4th. those who come from Christian denominations not in full communion with the Catholic Church.

§ 2. Clerics and religious who desire to revive the gift of Baptism through the Neocatechumenate, and in this way also to serve it better, undertake it respecting their vocation and their own charisms, and in fulfillment of the tasks assigned them by their diocesan bishop or, in the case of religious, by their superior.¹¹ For religious, the superior's consent is also required.

Art. 6

[The Neocatechumenate is implemented in the parish]

§ 1. The Neocatechumenate, being an itinerary of rediscovery of Christian initiation, is usually implemented in the parish, "the usual place in which one is born and grows in the

¹⁰ CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *General Directory for Catechesis*, 172.

¹¹ See JOHN PAUL II, *Apostolic Exhortation, Vita Consecrata*, 56.

faith”,¹² the privileged location in which the Church, mother and teacher, brings the children of God to birth in the baptismal font and “gestates” them to new life.¹³

§ 2. Since the pastoral work of Christian initiation is vital for the parish,¹⁴ the implementation of the Neocatechumenal Way must be coordinated with the proper function that the pastor/priest* has in each parish community (see c. 519 *CIC*),¹⁵ providing, also with the collaboration of other presbyters, the pastoral care of those who are going through the Neocatechumenal Way.¹⁶

§ 3. The Neocatechumenal Way will seek to foster in its recipients a mature sense of belonging to the parish and to promote relations of profound communion and collaboration with all the faithful and with the other elements of the parish community.

Art.7

[The Neocatechumenate implemented in the small community]

§ 1. Within the parish, the Neocatechumenate is lived in a small community – called neocatechumenal community – since the complete or common form for the Christian initiation of adults is communitarian.¹⁷

§ 2. The model of the neocatechumenal community is the *Holy Family of Nazareth*, the historical place where the Word of God, made man, becomes adult, growing “in wisdom, age and grace”, submitted to Joseph and Mary.¹⁸ In the community the neocatechumens become adult in faith, growing in humility, simplicity and praise, submitted to the Church.

Art. 8

[Initial catecheses, neocatechumenal itinerary, “tripod” and team of catechists]

§ 1. The Neocatechumenate consists of the initial catecheses (Ch. II) and of the neocatechumenal itinerary, inspired by the three phases of Christian initiation: pre-catechumenate, catechumenate and election, divided into steps, marked by passages sealed by some celebrations (Ch. IV).¹⁹

¹² See CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *General Directory for Catechesis*, 257.

¹³ See *ibid*, 79 and 257; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 169 and 507.

¹⁴ See CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *General Directory for Catechesis*, 91; also see 64: “Initiatory catechesis is thus the necessary link between missionary activity, which calls to faith, and pastoral activity, which continually nourishes the Christian community. This is not, therefore, an optional activity, but basic and fundamental... Without it, missionary activity lacks continuity and is sterile, while pastoral activity lacks roots and becomes superficial and confused: any misfortune could cause the collapse of the entire building.”

* i.e. the priest responsible for the parish (*parochus*), referred to as pastor in the US and as parish priest in the UK and other countries.

¹⁵ See SACRED CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP, RCIA, 45 [corresponds to 13 of the 1988 US edition]; CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *General Directory for Catechesis*, 225.

¹⁶ See c. 519 *CIC*: “The pastor (*parochus*) is the proper shepherd (*pastor*) of the parish entrusted to him, exercising pastoral care in the community entrusted to him under the authority of the diocesan bishop in whose ministry of Christ he has been called to share: in accord with the norm of law he carries out for his community the duties of teaching, sanctifying and governing, with the cooperation of other presbyters or deacons and the assistance of lay members of the Christian faithful.” See c. 281 *CCEO*.

¹⁷ See RCIA, 3 [corresponds to 3 of the 1988 US edition]; CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *General Directory for Catechesis*, 258, note 25: “It is important to see that Pope John Paul II in *Christifideles laici* 61 establishes the usefulness of small ecclesial groups within the parishes, and not as a parallel movement which absorbs the best members of parishes: ‘Within the parishes ... small ecclesial communities, where present, can be a notable help in the formation of Christians by providing a more extensive and incisive consciousness and experience of ecclesial communion and mission.’”

¹⁸ See Lk 2:21.

¹⁹ The definitive aim of the Neocatechumenate is to put people step by step, little by little, “not only in touch, but also in communion and intimacy, with Jesus Christ” (CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *General Directory for Catechesis*, 80; see RCIA, 6 [corresponds to 6 of the 1988 US edition]), “the pioneer and perfecter of faith” (Heb 12:2).

§ 2. The initial catecheses and the neocatechumenal itinerary are based on the three fundamental elements (“tripod”) of Christian life, underlined by the Second Vatican Council: Word of God, Liturgy and Community (Ch. III).

§ 3. At the center of the whole neocatechumenal itinerary there is a synthesis between kerygmatic preaching, change in moral life and liturgy.²⁰

§ 4. The Neocatechumenate is realized, in communion with the pastor/parish priest and under his pastoral responsibility, by a team of catechists (Title V),²¹ in accordance with what is established in art. 2.

§ 5. This team, with the initial catecheses, starts a process of gestation in faith in which the communities are formed, and it comes back periodically, usually once a year, to lead the different passages of the neocatechumenal itinerary and to give the necessary indications for the implementation of the various phases and steps.

Chapter II

Initial Catecheses

Art. 9

[Kerygma and celebrations]

The Neocatechumenate starts in the parish, at the invitation of the pastor/parish priest, with kerygmatic catecheses,²² called initial catecheses, contained in the *Orientations for the Teams of Catechists*. They are given over a period of two months, in fifteen evening meetings and they are concluded with a three-day convivence. In order to experience the Tripod – Word, Liturgy, Community – on which Christian life is based, the initial catecheses are articulated in three parts:

1st. The announcement of the kerygma which calls to conversion: the Good News of the death and resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ;²³ “...indeed it pleased God to save those who believe through the folly of the kerygma” (1 Cor 1:21). This “word of salvation”²⁴ calls to conversion and to faith,²⁵ and invites participants to recognize themselves as sinners, to welcome the forgiveness and gratuitous love of God, and to start walking towards their personal transformation into Christ, through the power of the Spirit. Conversion is sealed by the celebration of Penance according to the rite of reconciliation of several penitents, with individual confession and absolution. This sacrament, celebrated periodically, will sustain the way of conversion of the individual and of the community.

2nd. The kerygma prepared by God through the history of salvation (Abraham, Exodus, etc.): the hermeneutical keys, needed to listen to and understand the Sacred Scriptures, are

²⁰ See JOHN PAUL II, *Discourse to 350 itinerant catechists of the Neocatechumenal Way*, in *L'Osservatore Romano*, January 18, 1994 “It is to your credit to have rediscovered a ‘kerygmatic’ preaching, which calls to faith also the ‘far away’, realizing a post-baptismal itinerary according to the indications of the *Ordo Initiationis Christianae Adultorum* reiterated by the Catechism of the Catholic Church (see n. 1231). At the center of this journey of faith is a fruitful synthesis between preaching, change of moral life and liturgy.”

²¹ See CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *General Directory for Catechesis*, 156, 230–232; JOHN PAUL II, *Apostolic Exhortation, Catechesi Tradendae*, 55; *Encyclical, Redemptoris Missio*, 71; c. 211 CIC; c. 14 CCEO.

²² See CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *General Directory for Catechesis*, 62.

²³ See Rom 16:25; Acts 5:42; 8:35; 11:20; CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *General Directory for Catechesis*, 102.

²⁴ Acts 13:26.

²⁵ See CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *General Directory for Catechesis*, 53–55.

provided: to see in Jesus Christ the fulfillment of the Scriptures and to place the facts of one's personal history under the light of the Word.²⁶ This initiation into the Scriptures is sealed with a celebration of the Word in which participants receive the Bible from the hands of the bishop, guarantor of its authentic interpretation, as a sign that Mother Church, from now on along the Way, will nourish them weekly at this table, the living source of catechesis.²⁷

3rd. The kerygma in the sacraments and in the *koinonia*: the catecheses culminate in the convivence with the celebration of the Eucharist. This celebration, prepared by appropriate catecheses, helps to rediscover the paschal splendor emphasized by the Second Vatican Council and to experience communion among the brothers and sisters. Indeed, "it is not possible to form a Christian community unless it has as its root and as its hinge the celebration of the most holy Eucharist. From this therefore all education to form community spirit must begin."²⁸ The celebration of the Eucharist will accompany the community throughout the whole itinerary.

Art. 10

[Birth of the neocatechumenal community]

§ 1. On the last day of the convivence, the Sermon on the Mount, image of the new man, is proclaimed, and the neocatechumenal itinerary is presented as a way of rebirth and rediscovery of baptism.

§ 2. Through the preaching and the celebrations done in the initial catecheses, the Holy Spirit invites men and women of different ages, mentalities, cultures and social conditions, to begin together an itinerary of conversion, based on the progressive rediscovery of the "immense and extraordinary riches and responsibilities of one's own received baptism",²⁹ so as to operate in them a gradual growth and maturation of faith and Christian life.³⁰ At the end of the convivence, the neocatechumenal community is formed with those who welcome the call to undertake this post-baptismal catechumenate.

§ 3. The neocatechumenal community is entrusted to the pastoral care of the pastor/parish priest and of the presbyter appointed by him (cf. art. 27). In addition, the community, by means of a vote, chooses a lay responsible and some co-responsibles,³¹ who are confirmed by the pastor/parish priest and the team of catechists. These collaborate with the presbyter to ensure that the community will go through the itinerary of the Neocatechumenal Way in accordance with what is established in the *Statute* and in the *Orientations for the Teams of Catechists*, and to take care of the organizational aspects.³²

§ 4. The team of catechists, having finished the initial catecheses, explains to the presbyter, who presides over the community, and to the team of responsables how to do the preparation of the celebration of the Word and the Eucharist (see art. 11 § 3 and art. 13 § 4) and how to proceed

²⁶ See Psalm 119:105.

²⁷ See JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Catechesi Tradendae*, 27; see CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *General Directory for Catechesis*, 94.

²⁸ VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 6.

²⁹ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Christifideles Laici*, 61; see RCIA, 295 [corresponds to 400 of the 1988 US edition].

³⁰ See RCIA, 296 [corresponds to 401 of the 1988 US edition].

³¹ At the beginning of each step of the neocatechumenal itinerary of the Way, according to the *Guidelines for the Teams of Catechists*, the responsible and the co-responsibles are confirmed by the *team of catechists*, in agreement with the pastor and the presbyter of the community.

³² See PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 73.

with the monthly convivences, indicating the formative biblical themes for the celebration of the Word.

Chapter III

Word, Liturgy and Community

Section 1

Word of God

Art. 11

[Weekly celebration of the Word]

§ 1. Every neocatechumenal community has a weekly celebration of the Word of God,³³ usually with four readings,³⁴ according to the themes indicated by the *Orientations for the Teams of Catechists* for each step.

§ 2. In the celebration of the Word of God, before the homily, the presbyter invites whoever wishes among those present to express briefly how the Word which has been proclaimed has spoken to his life. In the homily, which holds a privileged place in the instruction of the Neocatechumenate,³⁵ the presbyter extends the proclamation of the Word,³⁶ interpreting it according to the Magisterium³⁷ and actualizing it in the “today” of the journey of faith of the neocatechumens.

§ 3. Each celebration of the Word is prepared with care, in turn, by a group of the community, with the help, whenever possible, of the presbyter. The group chooses the readings and the songs,³⁸ prepares the monitions and arranges the room and the liturgical signs for the celebration, caring with zeal for its dignity and beauty.³⁹

§ 4. In order to enter more deeply into the Scriptures “with the mind and the heart of the Church”,⁴⁰ the neocatechumens make use, above all, of the writings of the Fathers, of the documents of the Magisterium, specially the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and of works of spiritual writers.⁴¹

³³ See *Cæremoniale Episcoporum*, 221–226.

³⁴ In general the first reading is taken from the *Torah* or from the historical books of the Old Testament; the second from the prophets or wisdom literature; the third from the apostolic writings, and the fourth from the Gospels.

³⁵ See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 132.

³⁶ See *ibid*, 1154.

³⁷ See PONTIFICAL BIBLICAL COMMISSION, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, III, B, 3: “In so far as they are collaborators of the bishops, the first duty of *priests* is to proclaim the Word (see *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 4). They are gifted with a special charism for the interpretation of Scripture, when, transmitting not their own ideas but the Word of God, they apply the eternal truth of the gospel to the concrete circumstances of life.” (*ibid*)

³⁸ In the Neocatechumenal Way a book of songs is used, taken from the Word of God and from the Christian and Jewish liturgical tradition, which progressively emphasize the contents of the various steps and passages.

³⁹ See *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani*, 288.

⁴⁰ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Catechesi Tradendæ*, 27; see CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *General Directory for Catechesis*, 127.

⁴¹ See CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *General Directory for Catechesis*, 128, 96.

Section 2

Liturgy

Art. 12

[Paschal Vigil]

§ 1. Axis and source of Christian life is the paschal mystery, lived and celebrated in a pre-eminent way in the Sacred Triduum,⁴² whose brilliance fills the whole liturgical year with light.⁴³ For this reason, it constitutes the fulcrum of the Neocatechumenate, since this is a rediscovery of Christian initiation.

§ 2. “The Paschal Vigil, focal point of the Christian liturgy, and its baptismal spirituality inspire all Catechesis.”⁴⁴ It is for this reason that during the itinerary, the neocatechumens are initiated gradually⁴⁵ into an ever more perfect participation in all that the holy night signifies, celebrates and realizes.

§ 3. In this way, the Neocatechumenate will stimulate the parish to have a richer celebration of the Paschal Vigil.⁴⁶

Art. 13

[Eucharist]

§ 1. The Eucharist is essential to the Neocatechumenate, since this is a post-baptismal catechumenate lived in small communities.⁴⁷ In fact, the Eucharist completes Christian initiation.⁴⁸

§ 2. The neocatechumens celebrate the Sunday Eucharist in the small community after the first Vespers of Sunday. This celebration takes place according to the dispositions of the diocesan bishop. The celebrations of the Eucharist of the neocatechumenal communities on Saturday evening are part of the Sunday liturgical pastoral work of the parish and are open also to other faithful.

§ 3. For the celebration of the Eucharist in the small communities the approved liturgical books of the Roman Rite are followed, with the exception of the explicit concessions from the

⁴² See *Roman Missal, Announcement of the Day of Easter on the Solemnity of the Epiphany*: “The center of the whole liturgical year is the Triduum of the Lord’s crucifixion, burial and resurrection.”

⁴³ See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1168.

⁴⁴ CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *General Directory for Catechesis*, 91; see *ibid.*: “The baptismal catechumenate is wholly penetrated by *Christ’s paschal mystery*. Therefore ‘all of initiation has to clearly reveal its paschal character’ (RCIA, 8 [corresponds to 8 of the 1988 US edition]);” see *ibid.*, 59.

⁴⁵ Even today, many neocatechumens come from the world and experiences outside of the Church and they need a gradual introduction to the Sacraments: a sacramental pedagogy that John Paul II has defined as a “sacramental laboratory,” in which the baptized, but not initiated (see KAROL WOJTYLA, “So that Christ may use us: Catechumenate of the Twentieth Century,” *Znak*, Krakow, 34 [1952]: 402–413), may gradually discover the splendor of the paschal mystery.

⁴⁶ See CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP, *Circular Letter, Paschalis Sollemnitatis*, 39–42, 77–96.

⁴⁷ JOHN PAUL II, Letter, *Ogniqualevolta*, August 30, 1990: AAS 82 (1990) 1515: “It is the announcement of the Gospel, the testimony in small communities and the celebration of the Eucharist in groups (see “Notification on celebrations in groups of the Neocatechumenal Way,” *L’Osservatore Romano*, December 24, 1988) which empower the members to place themselves at the service of the Church’s renewal”; IDEM., *Discourse to 350 itinerant catechists of the Neocatechumenal Way*, in *L’Osservatore Romano*, January 18, 1994: “All of this is actuated in small communities in which ‘reflection on the Word of God and participation in the Eucharist ... form living cells in the Church, renew the vitality of the Parish through mature Christians capable of witnessing to the truth with a faith which is radically lived’ (*Message to the Bishops of Europe gathered in Vienna, April 12, 1993*).”

⁴⁸ See RCIA, 36 [corresponds to 217 of the 1988 US edition] and RCIA, 368 [corresponds to 243 of the 1988 US edition].

Holy See.⁴⁹ Regarding the distribution of Holy Communion under the two species, the neocatechumens receive it standing, remaining at their place.

§ 4. The celebration of the Eucharist in the small community is prepared under the guidance of the presbyter, by a group of the neocatechumenal community, in turn, which prepares brief monitions to the readings, chooses the songs, provides the bread, the wine, the flowers, and takes care of the decorum and dignity of the liturgical signs.

Art. 14

[Penance, prayer, the liturgical year, practices of piety]

§ 1. “The sacrament of Penance contributes in a pre-eminent way to sustain Christian life.”⁵⁰ In their itinerary of conversion, the neocatechumens celebrate it periodically according to the rite of reconciliation for several penitents with individual confession and absolution. Moreover, they are educated to frequent recourse to the sacrament of Penance according to the rite of reconciliation for a single penitent.

§ 2. The neocatechumens are gradually initiated into liturgical and private prayer.⁵¹ Parents are instructed on how to transmit the faith to their children⁵² in a domestic celebration during Sunday Lauds.⁵³ The children are prepared for First Communion and for Confirmation in the parish and after their thirteenth year are invited to begin the Neocatechumenal Way.

§ 3. The Church progressively initiates the neocatechumens into the catechetical and spiritual riches of the liturgical year, in which she “celebrates the whole mystery of Christ”.⁵⁴ To this end, the catechists give a preparatory announcement before Advent, Lent and Easter.

§ 4. The neocatechumens are also instructed gradually in Eucharistic devotion outside Mass, in nocturnal adoration, in the recitation of the Holy Rosary and in other practices of piety of Catholic tradition.

Section 3

Community

Art. 15

[Communitarian aspect and convivence]

§ 1. Education in community life is one of the fundamental tasks of Christian initiation.⁵⁵ The Neocatechumenate nurtures people in community life in a gradual and constant way by inserting them in a small community, open to the life of the parish community and of the whole Church.

⁴⁹ See Benedict XVI, *Speech to the Neocatechumenal Communities on January 12, 2006*, in *Notitiae* 41 (2005), 554–556; CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP, *Letter of December 1, 2005* in *Notitiae* 41 (2005), 563–565; “Notification of the Congregation for Divine Worship on celebrations in groups of the Neocatechumenal Way,” *L’Osservatore Romano*, December 24, 1988: “The Congregation consents that among the adaptations foreseen by the instruction “*Actio Pastoralis*”, nn. 6-11, the groups of the above-mentioned “Way” may receive communion under two species, always with unleavened bread, and transfer “*ad experimentum*” the Rite of Peace to after the Prayer of the Faithful.”

⁵⁰ SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, *Christus Dominus*, 30, see cc. 718–736 CCEO.

⁵¹ See art. 20, 1st and 3rd.

⁵² See CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *General Directory for Catechesis*, 226–227, 255; c. 774 §2 CIC, c. 618 CCEO.

⁵³ See *Institutio Generalis de Liturgia Horarum*, 27.

⁵⁴ *Normae Universales de Anno Liturgico et de Calendario*, 17; see c. 619 CCEO.

§ 2. A special moment of this education is the monthly day of convivence of every neocatechumenal community. In the convivence, after the celebration of Lauds, people share their experience of what God's grace is accomplishing in their life and any difficulties which may have occurred are expressed, respecting the freedom of a person's conscience. This fosters knowledge and reciprocal enlightenment and mutual encouragement in seeing God's action in each person's history.

§ 3. The community helps the neocatechumens to discover their need for conversion and maturation in faith: differences, defects and weaknesses show clearly the incapacity to love the other as he is, destroy false ideals of community and provide the experience that communion (*koinonia*) is the work of the Holy Spirit.⁵⁶

Art. 16

[The experience of koinonia and the fruits of the community]

§ 1. As the neocatechumens grow in faith, signs of *koinonia* begin to appear: not judging, not resisting evil, forgiveness and love for the enemy.⁵⁷ *Koinonia* is also made visible in helping the needy, caring for the sick, the suffering and the old, and in providing, as far as possible, for those who are in mission, according to what is indicated in the *Orientations for the Teams of Catechists*. The neocatechumens are gradually formed in an ever more profound spirit of communion and reciprocal help.

§ 2. The Neocatechumenate thus progressively forms in the parish an ensemble of communities which make visible the signs of love in the dimension of the cross⁵⁸ and of perfect unity,⁵⁹ and in this way they call to faith the far away and prepare non-Christians to receive the announcement of the Gospel.

§ 3. The Neocatechumenal Way is thus offered as an apt instrument to help the parish fulfill more and more the ecclesial mission to be salt, light and leaven of the world,⁶⁰ and to shine before men as the visible Body of the risen Jesus Christ,⁶¹ universal sacrament of salvation.⁶²

Art. 17

[Initiation to the mission]

§ 1. "Catechesis prepares the Christian to live in community and to participate actively in the life and mission of the Church."⁶³ The neocatechumens are initiated to "be present as Christians

⁵⁵ See CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *General Directory for Catechesis*, 86.

⁵⁶ See *ibid.* 253: "The Christian community is the historical realization of the gift of 'communion' (*koinonia*), which is a fruit of the Holy Spirit."

⁵⁷ See Lk 6:27–37; Mt 5:38–48.

⁵⁸ See Jn 13:34–35: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you that you also love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples."

⁵⁹ See Jn 17:21: "Even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me."

⁶⁰ See Mt 5:13–16; 13:33.

⁶¹ See SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, *Lumen Gentium*, 7–8.

⁶² See SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, *Lumen Gentium*, 48; SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, *Gaudium et Spes*, 45.

⁶³ CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *General Directory for Catechesis*, 86.

in society”⁶⁴ and “to lend their co-operation to the different ecclesial services, according to their proper vocation.”⁶⁵

§ 2. The neocatechumens collaborate “actively in the evangelization and building up of the Church”⁶⁶ above all by being what they are:⁶⁷ their decision to live the Christian vocation in an authentic way becomes an effective witness for others, as well as a stimulus to the rediscovery of Christian values which might otherwise remain almost hidden.

§ 3. After a suitable period of time in the Way,⁶⁸ each neocatechumenal community chooses by vote some brothers and sisters to undertake the task of catechists. These are chosen from among those who give guarantees of a life of faith and of moral life, who participate in the Way and in the life of the Church and are able to bear witness, grateful for the goods received through the Neocatechumenal Way. These, if they accept this designation, having been previously approved by the pastor/parish priest and by the catechists who guide the community, constitute, together with the presbyter and with the responsible of the community, a team of catechists, to evangelize and guide new communities, either in their own or another parish, or in another diocese,⁶⁹ at the request of the respective pastors/parish priests or diocesan ordinaries. The catechists are formed in a suitable way (see art. 29).

§ 4. The neocatechumens collaborate in the missionary and pastoral work of the parish and of the diocese. Before the “*Redditio symboli*”,⁷⁰ taking into account the maturity of their faith, those who so wish can offer their help; after the *Redditio*, as a fruit of rediscovering the mission of the Christian, the neocatechumens take part in various ecclesial services, according to each one’s vocation.

Art. 18

[Initiation to and formation in the priestly vocation]

§ 1. The Neocatechumenal Way, like every true itinerary of catechesis, is also a “means to foster vocations to the priesthood, and of particular consecration to God in the different forms of religious and apostolic life and to enkindle in the heart of individuals their special missionary vocation.”⁷¹

§ 2. The Neocatechumenal Way is also an instrument that is offered at the service of the bishops for the Christian formation of candidates to the presbyterate.

§ 3. The diocesan missionary “Redemptoris Mater” Seminaries are erected by diocesan bishops, in agreement with the International Responsible Team of the Way and are governed by the current norms for the formation and incardination of diocesan clerics⁷² and in accordance

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*; see c. 210 CIC, c. 13 CCEO.

⁶⁶ RCIA, 19,4 [corresponds to 75,4 of the 1988 US edition].

⁶⁷ See PAUL VI, *General Audience*, May 8, 1974, in *Notitiae*, 95–96 (1974), 230: “This purpose, while it is for you an authentic way of living the Christian vocation, becomes an effective testimony for others – you perform an apostolate *just because you are what you are* – in a stimulus for the rediscovery and recovery of true, authentic, effective Christian values, which might otherwise remain almost hidden, dulled and quite watered down in everyday life.”

⁶⁸ Usually after the second scrutiny of passage to the post-baptismal catechumenate.

⁶⁹ CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *General Directory for Catechesis*, 268.

⁷⁰ See art. 20, 2nd.

⁷¹ CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *General Directory for Catechesis*, 86.

⁷² See cc. 232–272 CIC and cc. 331–366 CCEO.

with their own statutes, in fulfillment of the *Ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdotalis*.⁷³ In them the candidates for the priesthood find in participation in the Neocatechumenal Way, a specific and basic element of their formative itinerary and, at the same time, are prepared for a “genuine presbyteral choice of service to the entire people of God in the fraternal communion of the presbyterate.”⁷⁴

§ 4. It is the task of the diocesan bishop to appoint, upon presentation by the International Responsible Team of the Way, the rector and the other superiors and educators of the “Redemptoris Mater” diocesan missionary seminaries. The rector, in the name of the bishop and in close cooperation with him, oversees the studies of the seminarians and their formative itinerary and ascertains the suitability of candidates for the priesthood.

Chapter IV

The neocatechumenal itinerary: phases, steps and passages

Art. 19

[1st phase: rediscovery of the precatechumenate]

§ 1. The first phase of the Neocatechumenate is the *precatechumenate*, which is a time of *kenosis*⁷⁵ in order to learn to walk in *humility*.⁷⁶ It is divided into two steps:

1st. In the first step, which goes from the initial catecheses until the first scrutiny, and which lasts approximately two years, the neocatechumens learn the language of the Bible by celebrating each week the Word of God, with simple themes that run throughout the whole of Scripture, such as water, rock, lamb, etc. The *Word of God*, the *Eucharist* and the *community* gradually help the neocatechumens to be emptied of false concepts of themselves and of God and to descend into their reality of being sinners in need of conversion, rediscovering the gratuitousness of the love of Christ, who forgives them and loves them.

In the concluding celebration of the *first scrutiny*, after the inscription of the name, they ask the Church to help them mature in faith in order to do works of eternal life,⁷⁷ and then they receive the sign of the glorious cross of Christ, which illuminates the salvific role of the cross in the life of each person.

2nd. In the second step, of similar length, the neocatechumens celebrate the great stages of the history of salvation - Abraham, Exodus, Desert, Promised Land, etc. - and a time is given to them so that they may prove to themselves the sincerity of their intention to follow Jesus Christ⁷⁸ in the light of his Word: “You cannot serve both God and money” (Mt 6:24).

In the concluding celebration of the *second scrutiny*, they renew before the Church the renunciation of the devil and they manifest the will to serve God alone. Thereafter, they study and celebrate the main biblical figures - Adam, Eve, Cain, Abel, Noah, etc. - in the light of Christ.

⁷³ See CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* (March 19, 1985), nn. 20–101.

⁷⁴ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 68.

⁷⁵ See Phil 2:7.

⁷⁶ See Mic 6:8.

⁷⁷ See 1 Jn 3:14–15; Eph 2:10.

⁷⁸ See Lk 14:25–33.

§ 2. The scrutinies, inspired by the catechumenal itinerary of the RCIA, help the neocatechumens in their way of conversion, respecting the conscience and the internal forum, in accordance with canonical norms.⁷⁹

Art. 20

[2nd phase: rediscovery of the catechumenate]

The second phase of the Neocatechumenate is a time⁸⁰ of spiritual battle to acquire the interior *simplicity* of the new man who loves God as the only Lord, with all his heart, with all his mind, with all his strength, and his neighbor as himself.⁸¹ Sustained by the Word of God, by the Eucharist and by the community, the neocatechumens are trained in the fight against the temptations of the devil: the search for securities, the scandal of the Cross and the seduction of the idols of the world.⁸² The Church comes to the aid of the neocatechumens, giving them the necessary weapons in three steps:

1st. “The spiritual battle of the Christian’s new life is inseparable from the battle of prayer”,⁸³ which leads to intimacy with God. The neocatechumens rediscover the initiation into liturgical and personal prayer, as well as nocturnal prayer,⁸⁴ which culminates with the catechesis of the Gospels on prayer and the celebration of the *handing over* of the book of the *Liturgy of the Hours*. Henceforth, they begin each day with the prayer of Lauds and of the Office of Readings and they learn to have a time of silent prayer and of the prayer of the heart.

The neocatechumens, scrutinizing the Psalms in small groups, are initiated into the assiduous practice of the “*lectio divina*” or “*scrutatio scripturae*”,⁸⁵ “in which the Word of God is read and meditated upon to be transformed into prayer.”⁸⁶ Indeed, “ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.”⁸⁷

2nd. The Creed of the Church, “the compendium of Scripture and of faith”,⁸⁸ is handed over anew to the neocatechumens (rediscovery of the “*Traditio Symboli*”) and they are sent to preach it, two by two, to the homes in the parish. They study and celebrate the Apostles’ Creed article by article and then confess their faith (rediscovery of the “*Redditio Symboli*”), proclaiming the Creed in an appropriate celebration, during Lent.

3rd. The neocatechumens’ formation in liturgical and contemplative prayer and culminates with the catechesis on the Lord’s Prayer and in a celebration the Our Father, “synthesis of the whole Gospel”,⁸⁹ is handed over to them anew. Henceforth, on the weekdays of Advent and Lent, before going to work, they begin to have a communitarian celebration of Lauds and the Office of Readings in the parish, with a time of contemplative prayer.

⁷⁹ See c. 220 *CIC* and c. 23 *CCEO*

⁸⁰ See RCIA 20 [corresponds to 76 of the 1988 US edition]: “The duration of the catechumenate will depend on the grace of God and on various circumstances... Nothing, therefore, can be settled a priori.”

⁸¹ See Mk 12:30–31; Deut 6:4–5.

⁸² See Mt 4:1–11.

⁸³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2725; see CONGREGATION FOR THE EASTERN CHURCHES, *Instruction for the Application of the Liturgical Prescription from the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches* (January, 6 1996) 95–99.

⁸⁴ See *Institutio Generalis de Liturgia Horarum*, 10; 57–58; 72.

⁸⁵ See Jn 5:39.

⁸⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1177; see PONTIFICAL BIBLICAL COMMISSION, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, IV, C, 2.

⁸⁷ SAINT JEROME, *Comm. in Is.*, Prologue; see SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, *Dei Verbum*, 25; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 133.

⁸⁸ CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *General Directory for Catechesis*, 85.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*; see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2761.

The neocatechumens are initiated to become “little ones”⁹⁰ and to live in filial abandonment to the fatherhood of God, protected by the maternity of Mary and the Church, and in fidelity to the Successor of Peter and to the bishop. For this reason, before the handing over of the “Our Father”, the neocatechumens make a pilgrimage to a Marian Shrine to welcome the Virgin Mary as mother⁹¹ and they profess their faith at the tomb of Saint Peter and make an act of adherence to the Holy Father.

In this step, the neocatechumens study in a systematic way the individual petitions of the “Our Father” and themes regarding the Virgin Mary: Mother of the Church, New Eve, Ark of the Covenant, Image of the Christian, etc.

Art. 21

[3rd phase: rediscovery of the election]

§ 1. The third phase of the Neocatechumenate is the rediscovery of the election, “summit of the entire catechumenate”.⁹² It is a time of enlightenment, in which the neocatechumens learn to walk in *praise*, “flooded by the light of faith”,⁹³ that is to discern and fulfill God’s will in history by making of their own lives a *liturgy of holiness*. They study and celebrate the individual passages of the Sermon on the Mount.

§ 2. Having shown with their works that the new man described in the Sermon on the Mount is becoming a reality in them even in their weakness – the new man who, following the footsteps of Jesus Christ,⁹⁴ does not resist evil and loves his enemy⁹⁵ – the neocatechumens *solemnly renew their baptismal promises in the Paschal Vigil* presided over by the bishop. In this liturgy they wear white garments as a reminder of their baptism.

§ 3. Then, during the 50 days of Eastertide, they solemnly celebrate the Eucharist every day and make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land as a sign of their wedding with the Lord, visiting the places where Christ realized all that they have lived throughout the neocatechumenal itinerary.

§ 4. With the rediscovery of the election the Neocatechumenate is concluded.

Title III

Ongoing education in faith: a way of renewal in the parish

Art. 22

[Ongoing education in the small community]

§ 1. The neocatechumenal community, after having completed the itinerary of rediscovery of Christian initiation, enters into the process of ongoing education in the faith: continuing the weekly celebration of the Word and the Dominical Eucharist and in fraternal communion,

⁹⁰ See Mt 18:4.

⁹¹ See Jn 19:26–27.

⁹² RCIA, 23 [corresponds to 120 of the 1988 US edition].

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 24 [corresponds to 124 of the 1988 US edition].

⁹⁴ See 1Pt 2:21.

⁹⁵ See Mt 5:39–45.

actively involved in the pastoral work of the parish community, in order to give signs of love⁹⁶ and unity,⁹⁷ which call contemporary man to faith.

“Ongoing formation in the faith – as the *General Directory for Catechesis* affirms – is directed not only to Christians individually, to accompany them on their journey towards holiness, but also to the Christian community as such so that it may mature also in its interior life of love of God and of the brethren, as well as in its openness to the world as missionary community. The desire of Jesus and his prayer to the Father are an unceasing appeal: ‘May they all be one; even as You, Father, are in me, and I in You, that they may also be in us, so that the world may believe that You have sent me’ (Jn 17:21). Approaching this ideal, little by little, demands of the *community* a great fidelity to the action of the Holy Spirit, constant nourishment with the *Body and Blood of the Lord* and ongoing education in faith, in listening to the *Word*.”⁹⁸

§ 2. The Neocatechumenal Way is thus an instrument at the service of the bishops to implement the process of ongoing education in faith required by the Church: Christian Initiation, as the *General Directory for Catechesis* underlines, “is not the final point in the process of continuing conversion. The profession of baptismal faith is the foundation of a spiritual building which is destined to grow.”⁹⁹ “Adhering to Jesus Christ, in fact, sets in motion a process of ongoing conversion, which lasts for the whole of life.”¹⁰⁰

Art. 23

[A way of renewal in the parish]

§ 1. Thus the Neocatechumenal Way contributes to the parish renewal hoped for by the Magisterium of the Church: to foster “new methods and structures”, which avoid anonymity and massive numbers,¹⁰¹ and to consider “the parish as a community of communities,”¹⁰² which makes “the parish community decentralized and articulated.”¹⁰³

§ 2. The team of catechists who guided the community during the neocatechumenal itinerary, in a way analogous to that of the godparents for baptism,¹⁰⁴ remains available for the needs of the evangelization and ongoing formation.

⁹⁶ See Jn 13:34–35.

⁹⁷ See Jn 17:21.

⁹⁸ CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *General Directory for Catechesis*, 70 (emphasis added).

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*; see also 69–72.

¹⁰¹ See JOHN PAUL II, *Discourse to the Conference of Catholic Bishops of Ontario*, in *L'Osservatore Romano*, May 5, 1999: “The anonymity of the city cannot be allowed to enter our Eucharistic communities. New ways and structures must be found to build bridges between people, so that there really is that experience of mutual acceptance and closeness which Christian fellowship requires. It may be that this, and the catechesis which must accompany it, would be better done in smaller communities: as the Post-Synodal Exhortation puts it, ‘one way of renewing parishes, especially in larger cities, might be to consider the parish as a community of communities’ (*Ecclesia in America*, n. 41).”

JOHN PAUL II, *Alla Parrocchia di Santa Maria Goretti*, January 31, 1988, in *L'Osservatore Romano* February 1–2, 1988: “There is a way, I think, to rebuild the parish based on the neocatechumenal experience... this is very coherent with the very nature of the parish.”

JOHN PAUL II, *Message to the Bishops of Europe gathered in Vienna*, April 12, 1993: “[Such communities] form living cells of the Church, renew the vitality of the parish through mature Christians, capable of witnessing to the truth with a faith radically lived.”

¹⁰² JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in America*, 41: “One way of renewing parishes, which is especially urgent in the parishes of the large cities, may perhaps be found in considering the parish as a community of communities.”

¹⁰³ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Redemptoris Missio*, 51.

¹⁰⁴ See cc. 872, 892 *CIC*; cc. 684, 685 *CCEO*.

Title IV

Baptismal Catechumenate

Art. 24

[Catechumens]

§ 1. The Neocatechumenal Way is also an instrument at the service of the bishops for the Christian initiation of the non-baptized.

§ 2. The participation – according to their proper status – in the initial catecheses and in the first phase of the neocatechumenal itinerary of those who must follow the catechumenate according to the norm of law¹⁰⁵ guarantees that all that is required by the RCIA will be adequately implemented. In particular:

1st. The Christian initiation of the catechumens takes place “in the midst of the community of the faithful. Together with the catechumens, the faithful reflect upon the value of the paschal mystery, renew their own conversion, and by their example lead the catechumens to obey the Holy Spirit more generously.”¹⁰⁶

2nd. “The people of God, represented by the local Church, should always understand and show that the initiation of adults is their concern and the business of all the baptized ... Each disciple of Christ ... must help the candidates and catechumens throughout the whole period of initiation, during the pre-catechumenate, the catechumenate, and the period of post-baptismal catechesis or mystagoga.”¹⁰⁷

3rd. “That time of evangelization, in which faith and initial conversion take their origin, should not be omitted...”, nor “the period of the pre-catechumenate” required “so that the true desire of following Christ and seeking Baptism may mature.”¹⁰⁸

4th. Before admission to the catechumenate, it is necessary that the candidates “have begun to have a sense of repentance, to invoke God and pray to Him, to have a first experience of community and of Christian spirituality.”¹⁰⁹

5th. “The catechumens, who have been welcomed by the Church with a mother’s love and with her care as already her children, are joined to her, belong to the family of Christ: indeed they receive from the Church the nourishment of the Word of God and are sustained with the help of the liturgy.”¹¹⁰ “Celebrations of the Word of God are arranged for their benefit, and at Mass they may also attend the Liturgy of the Word with the faithful, thus better preparing themselves for participation in the Eucharist in time to come.”¹¹¹

6th. “When they are present in the assembly of the faithful, they should be dismissed in a friendly manner before the Eucharistic celebration begins.”¹¹² In the Neocatechumenal Way this is done through a special blessing,¹¹³ after which they receive “a fitting catechesis” prepared on the basis of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which “leads the catechumens to a suitable

¹⁰⁵ See cc. 206, 788, 852 §1, 865 §1, 1183 §1 *CIC*; cc. 9, 30, 587, 588 *CCEO*.

¹⁰⁶ RCIA, 4 [corresponds to 4 of the 1988 US edition].

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 41 [corresponds to 9 of the 1988 US edition].

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 9–11 [corresponds to 36–38 of the 1988 US edition].

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 15 [corresponds to 42 of the 1988 US edition].

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 18 [corresponds to 47 of the 1988 US edition]; see c. 206 *CIC*; c. 9 *CCEO*.

¹¹¹ RCIA, 19,3 [corresponds to 75,3 of the 1988 US edition].

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ See *ibid.*, 119–124 [corresponds to 97 of the 1988 US edition], 116 of 1990 U.S. ICEL edition.

knowledge of dogma and precepts and also to an intimate understanding of the mystery of salvation.”¹¹⁴

7th. “The catechumens also learn to collaborate actively in evangelization and in the building up of the Church.”¹¹⁵

§ 3. To complete the preparation for baptism and celebrate this in the Paschal Night, everything prescribed by the RCIA is followed.

Art. 25

[Neophytes]

§ 1. Having completed the period of preparation, in agreement with the pastor/parish priest and with appropriate communication to the diocesan bishop,¹¹⁶ the catechumens receive the sacraments of Christian initiation¹¹⁷ (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist) and are thus fully incorporated into the Church.

§ 2. Those who wish will continue to participate in the life of the neocatechumenal community with which they have walked until then as catechumens, and they will proceed with the two other phases of the neocatechumenal itinerary: “the community and the neophytes continue on the Way meditating on the Gospel, sharing in the Eucharist and performing works of charity. In this way they understand the paschal mystery more fully and bring into it their lives more and more.”¹¹⁸ This provides a precious help for the neophytes to overcome the difficulties intrinsic to the first years of Christian life.

Title V

Form of service to the catechesis

Art. 26

[Diocesan bishop]

It pertains to the diocesan bishop, as responsible for initiation, formation and Christian life in the local Church:¹¹⁹

1st. to authorize the implementation of the Neocatechumenal Way in the diocese;

2nd. to watch over the implementation of the Neocatechumenal Way so that it may take place in conformity with what is established in art. 1 and 2, respecting the doctrine and the discipline of the Church;

3rd. to provide for a reasonable pastoral continuity in the parishes where the Neocatechumenal Way is present;

4th. to preside in person, or through a delegate, over the celebrations which mark the passages of the neocatechumenal itinerary.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, n. 19,1 [corresponds to 75,1 of the 1988 US edition].

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 19,4 [corresponds to 75,4 of the 1988 US edition].

¹¹⁶ See c. 863 *CIC*.

¹¹⁷ See c. 866 *CIC*; cc. 695, 697 *CCEO*.

¹¹⁸ RCIA, 37 [corresponds to 244 of the 1988 US edition].

¹¹⁹ See CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *General Directory for Catechesis*, 222–223; RCIA, *General Introduction*, 12; RCIA, 44 [corresponds to 12 of the 1988 US edition] and RCIA, 66 [corresponds to 34 of the 1988 US edition].

5th. to resolve, in dialogue with the Responsible Team of the Way, as per art. 3, questions which may arise with regard to the implementation and the development of the Way in his diocese;

6th. to ensure a productive collaboration between the Diocesan Neocatechumenal Center, as per art. 30, and the various offices of the diocesan Curia (in particular the liturgical and catechetical offices).

Art. 27

[Pastor/parish priest and presbyters]

§ 1. The pastor/parish priest and the presbyters carry out the pastoral care (see c. 519 *CIC*) of those who go through the Neocatechumenal Way – also in the light of what is indicated in art. 5 §2 and 6 §2 – and exercise “*in persona Christi capitis*” their priestly ministry by announcing the Word of God, administering the sacraments and, as far as possible, presiding over the celebrations of the first or of other neocatechumenal communities in the parish.

§ 2. In addition, the pastor/parish priest and the presbyters:

1st. in the name of the diocesan bishop watch over the implementation of the Way, so that it may take place in conformity with art.1 and 2, respecting the doctrine and the discipline of the Church;

2nd. help the teams of catechists, as per art. 8 §§ 4 and 5, to carry out their mission;

3rd. given that the pastoral work of Christian initiation is vital for evangelizing contemporary man, support the implementation of the Way as one of the pastoral instruments of the parish.

Art. 28

[Catechists]

§ 1. The teams of catechists are composed of some lay faithful, elected in conformity with art. 17 §3, and a presbyter.

§ 2. The teams of catechists, as described in the present *Statute*¹²⁰ and in the *Orientations for the Teams of Catechists*:

1st. upon the invitation of the pastor/parish priest, give the initial catecheses, which begin a process of gestation to faith through which the communities are formed;

2nd. return periodically, usually once a year, to conduct the various passages of the neocatechumenal itinerary and give the necessary indications for continuing the various phases and steps;

3rd. exercise an important role of discernment as to the readiness of individual catechumens and their respective communities with regard to the passage to the various stages of the itinerary of the Way;

4th. during the scrutinies of passage guided by them, they are to maintain the maximum respect for the moral aspects of the private life of the neocatechumens which belong to the internal forum of the person.

§ 3. In exercising their task, the lay catechists collaborate with the pastor/parish priest and with the presbyters of the respective communities and help them in the mission of governing, teaching and sanctifying which is proper to them as ordained ministers.

¹²⁰ See art. 17 §3 and art. 31.

Art. 29

[Formation of catechists]

In order for the catechists to acquire – as required by the *General Directory for Catechesis* – “the evangelical attitudes which Jesus taught his disciples when he sent them on mission...: to seek out the lost sheep, announce and heal at the same time, to be poor, without money or knapsack; to know how to accept rejection and persecution; to place one’s trust in the Father and in the support of the Holy Spirit; to expect no other reward than the joy of working for the Kingdom”,¹²¹ they are suitably prepared:

1st. the basis of their formation is participation in the Neocatechumenate, which guarantees their gradual maturation in faith and in witness,¹²² with a corresponding deepening of their biblical, patristic and theological formation, with particular reference to the documents of the Magisterium of the Church;

2nd. they prepare themselves to transmit the word as they in their turn have received¹²³ and lived it: they are trained by accompanying their own catechists several times for the initial catecheses and the various passages of the Neocatechumenate;

3rd. they complete their formation by participating in appropriate convivences and meetings of catechists, called by the International Responsible Team of the Way or by a team delegated by them, in which fundamental themes of the Church’s Magisterium are addressed;

4th. they participate in the meetings of the *Diocesan Neocatechumenal Center* - referred to in the following article - for the formation of catechists;

5th. finally, they prepare each catechesis and passage of the Neocatechumenate, together with the presbyter in so far as is possible, reading in an atmosphere of prayer the corresponding passages of Sacred Scripture, of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and of the *Orientations for the Teams of Catechists*, which revive in them the “word of salvation” (Acts 13:26) which they themselves received orally from their own catechists.

Art. 30

[Neocatechumenal center]

§ 1. Whenever the development of the Neocatechumenal Way in a diocese requires it, the team of catechists which opened the Way sets up and guides, in agreement with the bishop, a center called the *Diocesan Neocatechumenal Center*, which promotes the encounter between the bishop, or his delegate, the pastors/parish priests, and the presbyters, catechists and responsables of the communities.

§ 2. The scope of the center is to contribute to the formation of the catechists, to assign the new catecheses, to coordinate the various passages and to support the teams of catechists in the various difficulties of evangelization, and to present to the bishop or to his delegate the responsables of the new communities.

Art. 31

[Itinerant catechists]

§ 1. In the convivences of catechists, as per art 29, 3rd, to answer the requests of distant dioceses, a call is made to the participants to make themselves available to be sent as *itinerants* to any part of the world. Those who feel called by God indicate their availability.

¹²¹ See CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *General Directory for Catechesis*, 86; see Mt 10:5–42 and Lk 10:1–20.

¹²² CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *General Directory for Catechesis*, 246–247: “When the faith of the catechists is not yet mature, it is advisable that they participate in an itinerary of a catechumenal type.”

¹²³ See 1Cor 15:1–11; CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *General Directory for Catechesis*, 235–236.

§ 2. In appropriate convivences, the International Responsible Team of the Way establishes *teams of itinerant catechists*, usually composed of a presbyter, a married couple and a single man, or a presbyter, a single man and a single woman, to be sent to distant dioceses to begin and to guide the implementation of the Neocatechumenal Way.

§ 3. In these convivences, which begin with a day of conversion, the Responsible Team of the Way, or another one designated by it, verifies the availability and coordinates the activity of the itinerants, in a dynamic of “systole” and “diastole”, following the example of the Lord who sent his disciples in mission and then gathered them, in a secluded place, to listen to the mighty deeds that the Holy Spirit worked through them.¹²⁴

§ 4. The itinerant catechist remains united to his own parish and community, to which he returns regularly in order to take part in the journey of his own community. Moreover, the itinerant catechist accepts to live his personal mission in precariousness – according to the praxis of more than thirty years of the Neocatechumenal Way – remaining free to discontinue it at any moment, informing the bishop *ad quem* and the Responsible Team of the Way.

Art. 32

[Itinerant presbyters]

In the case of the secular clergy, or members of institutes of consecrated life or societies of apostolic life, these must have the express permission of their own diocesan bishop or competent religious superior, in due form. The ordinary, in contact with the bishop who welcomes them, establishes the time frame of their availability, is periodically informed of their activity and ensures that the material and spiritual conditions of their ministry, lived in the spirit of being itinerant, are according to the provisions of the law.

Art. 33

[Families in mission]

§ 1. The implementation of the Neocatechumenal Way may be helped by *families in mission* who, upon request by the bishops, establish themselves in de-Christianized areas or where an “*implantatio ecclesiae*” is required.

§ 2. These families are appointed by the Responsible Team of the Way, in special convivences, from among those who have made themselves freely available to go anywhere, after having considered, with trust in the Lord, both the need of the Church and the absence of impediments within their own family. They are usually sent by their own bishop in a special celebration.

§ 3. The family in mission remains united to its own parish and community, to which it returns periodically to take part in the journey of its own community. Moreover, the family accepts to live its mission in precariousness – helped, if possible, by the community of origin – remaining free to discontinue it at any moment.

¹²⁴ See Lk 10:1–24.

Title VI

The International Responsible Team of the Way

Art. 34

[Current International Responsible Team of the Way]

§ 1. The International Responsible Team of the Way is, for their natural life, composed of Mr. Kiko Argüello – who is its responsible – and Miss Carmen Hernández, initiators of the Neocatechumenal Way, and the presbyter Rev. Mario Pezzi of the diocesan clergy of Rome.

§ 2. After the death of one of the two initiators mentioned in the previous paragraph, the other one remains the responsible of the International Team and, after hearing the opinion of the presbyter, will proceed to complete the International Team. In case of death or resignation of the presbyter, the initiators will choose another presbyter and present him to the Pontifical Council for the Laity for confirmation.

§ 3. After the death of both initiators, the election of the International Responsible Team of the Way will be carried out according to the procedure established in the following article.

Art. 35

[Election of the International Responsible Team of the Way]

§ 1. The election of the International Responsible Team of the Way will be entrusted to an *Electoral College*, numbering between eighty and one hundred and twenty persons chosen by the same team. Those who belong to this College are appointed for life, except in those cases where the International Responsible Team of the Way may deem it necessary, for grave reasons, to make some substitutions. Every five years, the aforesaid team will provide for the substitution of any of those who – through death, retirement or for grave reasons – have ceased to be part of the College. The list of the members of the Electoral College is deposited with the Pontifical Council for the Laity.

§ 2. The election of the International Responsible Team of the Way will take place as follows:

1st. One month prior to the expiry of its mandate, the Electoral College is convoked in a *convivence* by the outgoing *International Responsible Team of the Way*, or, in case of its demise, by the first person on the aforementioned list.

2nd. The College, having reached a *quorum* of at least two thirds of the members, in the first meeting chooses three people to whom the task of scrutineers and other duties relating to the election is entrusted. The College elects the members of the International Team from among those present or from other catechists of the Way proposed by them, as per can. 119 of the Code of Canon Law.¹²⁵ The first to be elected is the responsible of the team, who must be a lay man – married or single – and then, by separate ballots, the other members of the team.

3rd. The composition of the team, when the voting is completed, must include: a presbyter, a married couple and a single man, or a presbyter, a single man and a single woman.

4th. The confirmation of the election of the team will be requested of the Pontifical Council for the Laity by the responsible, according to law.¹²⁶ If this confirmation is not forthcoming, the entire team will be re-elected.

¹²⁵ See c. 924 *CIC*.

¹²⁶ See c. 179 *CIC*.

§ 3. The International Responsible Team of the Way has a mandate of seven years, and may be re-elected several times. After each re-election, the responsible will request confirmation from the Pontifical Council for the Laity.

§ 4. If during his mandate the responsible dies, the team will be entirely re-elected, according to the procedure indicated in §§ 1 and 2; if one of the other members dies, a substitute will be elected, following the same procedure.

Final Disposition

Any possible modification of the present *Statute* will be submitted for approval to the Pontifical Council for the Laity by the International Responsible Team of the Way, after prior consultation with the Electoral College.