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To the Neocatechumenal Way: show the tender gaze of the Father and regard the situations you encounter as a gift

Vatican City, 18 March 2016 – Unity, glory, world: these were the three words that Pope Francis indicated as the mandate of their mission to the seven thousand members of the Neocatechumenal Way whom he received in audience this morning in the Paul VI Hall. Among them there were the 250 "families in mission", from all five continents, to be sent to evangelise in the fifty new "missio ad gentes", who will depart shortly to strengthen the ecclesiastical communities in countries and zones where they do not exist or are in difficulty.

After thanking them for welcoming the call to evangelise and blessing the Lord for the gift of the Way and the gift of each one of its members, Francis spoke about unity. "Jesus prays to the Father that His people may all be 'brought to complete unity'... Is is His final request before the Passion, and the most heartfelt: that there may be communion in the Church. ... The enemy of God and of man, the devil, can do nothing against the Gospel, against the humble strength of prayer and the Sacraments, but can do great harm to the Church, attacking our humanity. He provokes presumption, judgement of others, narrow-mindedness and divisions. He himself is the 'divider', and often begins by making us believe that we are good, perhaps better than others; in this way the terrain is ready for sowing discord. It is the temptation of all communities and may be insinuated even in the most beautiful of the Church's charisms".

The Neocatechumenals have received "a great charism for the baptismal renewal of life" and every charism is a grace from God for intensifying communion. "But the charism may deteriorate when it is closed away, or when it is boastful and seeks to distinguish itself from others", warned the Pope. Therefore, it is necessary to protect it by "following the high way of humble and obedient unity", through the "search for unity with all and obedience to the Church", in this way remaining "docile children of the hierarchical Holy Mother Church".

"The Church is our mother", emphasised Francis. "From her we are reborn, from her we are nourished with the Bread of life, from her we receive words of life, we are forgiven and led home. This is the fruitfulness of the Church, who is Mother: not an organisation seeking employees, or a group that goes ahead following the logic of its ideas, but a Mother who transmits the life received from Jesus". He explained, "After Baptism we no longer live as isolated individuals, but have instead become men and women of communion, called to be workers of communion in the world, as Jesus not only founded the Church for us, but founded us as Church. The Church is not an instrument for us: we are the Church".

The second word that the Pope suggested to the Neocatechumenals was "glory", recalling that before His Passion, Jesus announced that He would be "glorified" on the cross, and that from there His glory would appear. "But it is a new glory: worldly glory manifests when one is important, admired, when one has goods and success. Instead, the glory of God is revealed on the cross: it is love, which shines out from there. It is a paradoxical glory: without clamour, without gains and without plaudits. But only this glory makes the Gospel fruitful. In this way the Mother Church too is fruitful, when she imitates the merciful love of God, Who proposes and never imposes. It is humble and acts like rain on the ground, like the air that we breathe, like a little seed that bears fruit in silence. He who announces this love cannot but do so with the same style of love".

Finally, "world": God loved the world so much that He sent Jesus there. "He who loves cannot stay far away, but instead comes towards" the beloved, said the Holy Father. "You will go forth to many cities, to many countries. God is not attracted by worldliness; on the contrary, He detests it, but He loves the world He created, and He loves His children in the world as they are, wherever they live, including those who are 'far away'. Life will not be easy for you in distant countries, in other cultures. ... But it is your mission. And you will do it out of love, for the love of the Mother Church, in the unity of this fruitful mother. You will do it to make the Church a mother, and fruitful. Show the tender gaze of the Father and consider the situations you encounter as a gift; familiarise yourself with cultures, languages and local customs, respecting them and recognising the seeds of grace that the Lord has already sown. Without giving in to the temptation to transplant acquired models, sow the first announcement: 'what is most beautiful, most grand, most appealing and at the same time most necessary'. It is the good news that must always return, as otherwise faith risks becoming a cold, lifeless doctrine. Evangelising as families, then, living unity and simplicity, is already an announcement of life, a beautiful witness, and for this I thank you".

"I thank you myself and also on behalf of all the Church for this gesture of going forth, going towards the unknown, and also suffering. Because there will be suffering, but there will also be the joy of the glory of God, the glory that is on the Cross. ... I remain here, but my heart goes with you", Francis concluded.
