

Help ‘baptized non-Christians’ return to life of faith, pope says

By Cindy Wooden

Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY – Catholics need to reach out to “baptized non-Christians,” those who have forgotten or walked away from their faith, Pope Francis said.

The pope met March 6 with about 7,000 members of the Neocatechumenal Way, which guides members in an itinerary of exploring the meaning of their baptism and learning to live according to its promises. The pope blessed 31 Neocatechumenal teams – 31 priests along with 200 couples and their 600 children – who are about to begin service as missionaries around the world.

Pope Francis asked the team members, formed originally “to evangelize non-Christians, those who have never heard anyone speak of Jesus Christ,” to fulfill that task but also reach out to the many “baptized non-Christians who have forgotten their faith because of secularization, worldliness and many other factors. Reawaken their faith!”

Even before speaking to anyone about faith, he said, “it is with your witness of life that you demonstrate the heart of Christ’s revelation: that God loves us to the point of handing himself over to death for us and that he was raised again by the Father to give us the grace of giving our lives for others.”

Pope Francis said people today need to hear the Christian message. “How much solitude, how much suffering, how much distance from God exists in the many peripheries of Europe and America, and in many cities of Asia!”

“Humanity greatly needs to hear that God loves us and that love is possible,” he said.

The pope told members of the Neocatechumenal Way that he continues to insist that the church cannot be satisfied with a pastoral plan inspired mainly by “simple preservation” or trying not to lose any more members, but must be “decisively missionary.”

“How many times, within the church, do we keep Jesus inside and don’t let him go out. How many times!” he said. “This is the most important thing to do if we do not want the waters to stagnate within the church.”

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