



FRATERNITÀ DI COMUNIONE E LIBERAZIONE

associazione di diritto pontificio civilmente riconosciuta

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Milan, March 24, 2022

To the members of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation

Dear friends,

The Central Diaconia of the Fraternity, in its meeting on March 19, 2022, discussed the contents of the letter that Cardinal Farrell sent to me on February 22. The Executive Committee of the Fraternity, having considered the letter at the first meeting after it was received, decided to bring it to the March meeting of the Diaconia.

The Cardinal's letter further clarifies the scope of the changes introduced by the Church. In the process of us formulating specific questions and the Dicastery responding each time with precise answers, we have been helped to fully understand the full picture, including the juridical aspects, and therefore to understand what is being asked of us.

It is very important to me that all of you know what has taken place. I would like to go back and outline with the utmost transparency the events that have taken place since the publication of the General Decree regarding International Associations of the Faithful and the resignation of Fr. Carrón. In past communications, I have, in fact, said some things that turned out to be partly inaccurate because I myself, along with all the members of the Diaconia, had interpreted our mandates to be only for a short term. Please forgive me for having to return to considerations of a "juridical" nature, but I would first like to pass on to you some interpretative notes, indicated to me by our expert canonists, regarding the three communications we received from Cardinal Farrell after Carrón's resignation.

I would further like to share my considerations about the meaning of this step of maturity the Church is asking of all of us as an awareness of the charism that has been given to us and to which we have been called back frequently in recent months.

Here, then, is the text of the **Interpretative Notes**:

The General Decree regarding International Associations of the Faithful, which came into force on September 11, 2021, establishes, in the section of interest here, a limit to consecutive terms and a restriction on the length of terms of office for the central governing body of such associations. A term may not exceed a duration of five years; moreover, one may not remain in the same office for more than 10 consecutive years (Articles 1 and 2 § 1).

The Decree presents some rules which are somewhat retroactive; in fact, it is specified that this limitation on consecutive terms and the duration of each term also applies to those currently in office. Therefore, those who, at the time the Decree came into force, had held positions in the Association for more than ten years must be replaced within 24 months; that is, by September 11,



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2023. This is why Carrón could not have continued his mandate beyond September 11, 2023, and new elections would have had to be held. The same applies to those who will complete 10 years in their offices after September 11, 2021, who will, instead, have to be replaced within 24 months of the natural end of their term.

On November 15, 2021, Fr Julian Carrón freely relinquished the office of President of the Fraternity. This resignation was accepted by Cardinal Farrell, as is clear from his letter to Davide Prospero dated November 25, 2021. According to the interpretation that the Dicastery has given in applying Article 19 of our Statutes, Prospero has been appointed President of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation and has been granted the “full powers” associated with this office until new elections are held in accordance with the new statutes, revised according to the General Decree. This is the interpretation Cardinal Farrell gave of the expression “ad interim” used in the November 25th letter.

*In that same letter of November 25, 2021, Cardinal Farrell affirms that the Central Diaconia of the Fraternity does not have, according to its current composition, the necessary representativeness to elect a new President and states that **the new statutes, because they need to be rethought and reworked, could not be approved in less than 12 months**; that is, before November 25, 2022. Again in this case, **it does not say that the new President will only remain in office until the new statutes are approved.***

In a second letter from Cardinal Farrell, addressed to Prospero on December 21, 2021, three points are reiterated:

1) The current Statutes are fully in effect, with the exception of those provisions that collide with the content of the General Decree, namely, the limitation on consecutive terms and the reduction of the maximum term of office to five years. Until the approval of the new statutes, therefore, any offices for members of the Diaconia and for Regional Leaders will be conferred by co-optation or by election in accordance with the statutes currently in force.

2) No leadership position within the Fraternity of CL has been overturned as a result of Fr. Julián Carrón’s resigning from office.

3) The members of the Diaconia who have been in office for more than 10 years, and who reach the end of their current term before the new statutes come into force must be replaced in accordance with the current statutes regarding co-opting or election. Their terms cannot be extended.

This was followed by a third letter from Cardinal Farrell dated February 22, 2022, in response to a request for clarification from the Diaconia on how the end of a term of office should be considered in the future. The Prefect articulates a principle that is in itself clear and consistent with the General Decree and previous letters addressed to Prospero. Until the new statutes are approved—not before November 25, 2022—the current ones are fully in effect, both with regard to the conferring of offices and to the duration of terms of office that do not exceed the limits imposed by the Decree. Therefore, for example, the members of the Diaconia who were elected or co-opted this year on January 15 and on March 19 have a three-year term of office, regardless of the approval of the new statutes—although it will likely be necessary to establish some transitional norms to regulate a few specific cases.



*Put simply: the approval of the new future Statutes of the Fraternity of CL does not result in the overturning of current offices, **including that of the President.***

*The case of the current President of the Fraternity is expressly clarified: **he remains in office until November 25, 2026**, in application of the Decree which stipulated, with immediate effect, a reduction of the term of office, meaning it can last **up to five years** and not six, as previously stipulated in our current Statutes.*

The Interpretative Notes that I have copied for you above in italics add one last consideration:

There is also an aspect that goes beyond the law itself and should be kept in mind. The Dicastery's determinations show its intent to give the governing body of the Association the stability necessary for CL to undertake and to complete the required rethinking of its juridical and participatory structure. Carrying through the application of the new statutes, once they come into force, will also, in fact, require a sufficient amount of time.

This, then, was the text of the Interpretative Notes. Where did the initial misunderstanding regarding the expiration of the terms of those currently in office within the Diaconia originate? As becomes clear in reading the Notes, what jurists call “the combined provisions” of the General Decree and the implementing letters of the Dicastery offer a multifaceted interpretation and application. This complexity misled us. Initially, we did foresee the application of the Decree's restrictions to the specific case of Julián Carrón, who had been in office since 2005. As I have already said, if Fr. Julián had not resigned, he still would have had to leave office within 24 months of the Decree going into effect, and in this respect our interpretation was correct. With Carrón's resignation, the situation changed, and we now must follow the necessary consequences.

I feel compelled, at this point, to offer an important consideration concerning **the substance** and meaning of what is happening, which illuminates the interpretation of the law.

We cannot understand the circumstance that the Movement is going through if we do not look at it in the light of the intervention that Pope Francis wanted to make in order to address some issues related to the reality of ecclesial movements, therefore, including ours.

I would like for all of us to be aware of this fact: the change in the leadership of our movement was determined by the Pope's intervention, in the form of the General Decree that applies to all movements and International Associations of Pontifical Right. A change in the leadership of our movement had to occur in any case, because as we know Carrón had already exceeded the maximum duration of ten years. Carrón, then, decided to resign before the approval of the new Statutes. At that point, Cardinal Farrell confirmed that, according to Article 19 of the Fraternity's Statutes, in the event of the resignation of the President, the Vice-President takes his place. He then asked me to take on this responsibility, asking me if I would be willing to take a new step of ecclesial maturity, including in correcting some limitations and errors from which we are not exempt. Therefore, it is not only a matter of adapting our statutes to the new norms, but also of learning to look in a new way at ourselves and at how Fr. Giussani's charism can continue to bear fruit for us and for the Church. I was aware of this, I gave my availability, and I spoke to you of this from the beginning in my previous communications.



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Undoubtedly, the Pope could have chosen other modalities. For example, he could have directly appointed a delegate, as he did for the *Memoires Domini*. Instead, he chose the path of giving responsibility to me—to someone who participated in the leadership of the Movement from the inside, closely collaborating with Julián—and, together with me, to the entire Movement through their indication of the people who will make up its governing bodies. This is a clear sign of the Pope's desire to confirm all the good in the experience of the Movement, in its life and its charism, while at the same time indicating some aspects, mainly regarding governance and the transmission of the charism, that we are being asked to correct.

The fact that I have been given the task of leading the Movement is not, therefore, simply a juridical automatic response, but rather a response to this underlining of the need for a more mature and communion-based leadership of the movement. I was the first to have to give my availability to the Pope, through the Dicastery. And this means—this is the point I want to get across—that we can only understand the transition we are living through by delving into the meaning of the word **obedience**, which is asked of everyone.

As far as I am concerned, in accepting this proposal, I am aware that my position will be uncomfortable and the task tiring, but I accepted because I felt it was right, for me first of all, to obey the Church and the Pope. In fact, I think the only possibility for the good and growth of the Movement lies in this obedience.

With that same serenity, I would like you to know that my desire is **to obey as a free man**, one aware of the richness of what has been given to us in the encounter with Fr. Giussani and through his charism. I know that by accepting this task I have also taken on, on all of your behalf, the responsibility of telling the Church who we are, what the Movement perceives itself to be because of the history it has and because of the experience we have lived in these 70 years. This, so that the authority of the Church can come to know us more and more, and lead us in the execution of what the Decree asks of everyone in a way that respects **and enhances** the specific face that we perceive we have. Obeying as free men and women means trusting that this dialogue with Church authorities is a sure way (**the only sure way**) to deepen our ecclesial self-awareness; that is, to come to a new, deeper and truer discovery and understanding of ourselves as a movement in the Church, without losing anything of what we have lived together to date. For this, we are grateful not only to Fr. Giussani who generated this history, but also to Fr. Julián Carrón and to all those who have contributed in great or small ways to help that history reach us here today.

Consequently, I confirm my full availability, offering all of myself for as long as I am asked to serve our companionship in this capacity, and I renew my invitation to each of you to work together by putting ourselves right away at the service of this great history.

In communion,

Davide Prospero