



DICASTERIUM
PRO LAICIS, FAMILIA ET VITA

JESUS YOUTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 2026

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Address of Fr. Giovanni Buontempo – Responsible for the Dicastery’s relations with Associations of the faithful and Ecclesial Movements

A warm greeting to the Bishops and Priests present, and to all members of Jesus Youth.

The charism that gave life to your association is forty years old (41, to be precise). Four decades is already a long time; it is the time of the charism’s maturity!

Today you will reflect precisely on returning to your roots, on the founding charism, on the six pillars, and on the spirituality of the Movement, just as they have been shaped from the very beginning.

We are in a special jubilee year of St. Francis, 800 years after his death. It is striking to note in the sources that even during his lifetime (not 400 years later!), Francis observed that the fervor of the early days had been lost:

“Seeing that the friars were abandoning their original purity and poverty, Blessed Francis felt immense sorrow in his heart and soul” (Speculum Perfectionis, Chapter 81, FF 1787).

Francis observed this departure from the spirit of the early days less than twenty years after the charism began! There had already been a decline after just 20 years—and you are now 40 years in!

In movements born of a charism, it is very common to hear a certain kind of nostalgic discourse. There are those who lived through the early days, and often, when they meet those who came later—the new generations—they say, “The spirit of the early days is gone!” For example, within your movement, referring to the six pillars of your spiritual experience, there might be someone who says: “We all had an intense life of prayer! We spent hours in adoration, and it seemed like the most natural thing in the world! Now, it’s already a lot if

anyone prays the Rosary.” We knew entire passages of Sacred Scripture by heart; now the Bible is read only during Mass. We truly lived in brotherhood; we were always together; it was a joy to see one another; our homes were always open to our brothers and sisters, and there were no set schedules—we spent time together during the day and even late into the evening! Now everyone keeps to themselves; we only meet at official events! We had an incredible zeal for evangelization; for us, it was natural to talk about Jesus to everyone: to our family members, relatives, school friends, coworkers—even on the street and on public transportation, on trains and buses—we talked about Jesus to everyone. Now you’re shy, fearful—you only talk about Jesus during the movement’s “official” missions, when there’s a banner, a loudspeaker, and a stage! We were truly poor people helping other poor people. We had nothing—no budget, no magazines, no facilities to hold meetings—but we were full of zeal and helped the poor in a thousand ways. Now there’s an organizational structure, financial resources, projects, media outlets, and international conferences, but there isn’t nearly as much zeal, and the poor are viewed from a distance and helped from afar, without ever mingling with them!

Comments like these are found in every charismatic movement. They are common to all.

But then, we might ask, are charisms merely a brief, intense flash, a flame, that quickly fades away? No, that’s not the case!

I want you to consider that there is always a special time: the time of beginnings. It is the initial phase in the history of the charism—the very first years, perhaps the first 5 to 10 years. It is the time when the founder or founders begin to conceive and live out the new charism, and to share it with the very first companions who follow them. These are years in which God grants special graces precisely so that the charism may emerge, develop, reveal its distinctive features, and then spread throughout the Church. Therefore, it must be a special time of flourishing, of momentum, of immense zeal and enthusiasm.

It is like when a satellite must be sent into orbit: it is launched into space by a rocket, which, for the first few minutes, provides a very powerful thrust to overcome the force of gravity and exit the Earth’s atmosphere. Once the thrust is provided, the rocket shuts down and detaches, allowing the satellite to enter orbit, begin circling the Earth, and start carrying out its work.

Something similar happens in our personal lives. Generally, especially for those who have experienced a conversion—and thus come from a state of estrangement from God—at the beginning of their spiritual journey they feel a powerful surge: a great desire for prayer, an attraction to the sacraments and to the things of God, a deep closeness and love for their brothers and sisters in the faith, a missionary zeal to share their faith with everyone, and so on. All these positive things are due to special graces that God grants at the beginning of conversion. And why does God give these special graces precisely at the beginning of conversion? To help a person leave the world behind, to turn away from the allure of sin, and to devote themselves with total generosity to the new life of faith. If these graces were

not present, a person would always look back; perhaps they would sense that the truth is found in Christ, but they would never decide to follow Him. But be careful! After a while, these graces come to an end, because God must lead the person to greater maturity, which is not based solely on the spiritual consolations experienced at the beginning.

That is why we look back with nostalgia on the early years of our conversion. It seems to us that we were holier, more devout, more humble, more committed to evangelization, and more in love with Christ (sometimes that is the case). But this doesn't mean that everything is wrong now. It doesn't mean that what we're experiencing in our spiritual life now is false, no longer authentic, or corrupted. It simply means that we've now reached a stage of maturity; we're now "in orbit," like a satellite, so we're doing the work we were meant to do, fulfilling the mission to which the Lord called us. The rocket that propelled us to leave the world and our old life is no longer there, because it is no longer needed. It is pointless to long for those first few minutes when the rocket was thrusting powerfully, and there was great speed, a loud roar, and a lot of smoke, etc. ...

What happens on an individual level also happens within movements. When the very first phase of charismatic enthusiasm comes to an end, this does not mean that the charism is over. It simply means that the charism is entering a phase of maturity and must begin to carry out the work for which the Lord raised it up in the Church.

St. Francis wanted everyone to live the radicalism of the early days, but after a few years, it seemed to him that his evangelical ideal was no longer shared by everyone. Can we say, therefore, that the Franciscan charism died with him? Certainly not! Do you know how many Franciscan saints there have been throughout history? Considering all the historical branches of the three main orders (the Friars Minor, the Conventuals, and the Capuchins, in addition to the Poor Clares and the Third Order), we can estimate a figure of approximately 7,000 figures of holiness, including saints, blessed, venerable, and servants of God in the process of canonization. Francis's charism has borne immense fruit over 800 years of history and continues to do so. His charism has not faded!

This brief reflection is meant to be an encouragement to all of you. You are 40 years into your journey; perhaps the "heroic" phase of the early years has come to an end. But the charism of Jesus Youth is not over; on the contrary, it is just beginning to fulfill its mission in the Church and throughout the world. The fact that the Holy See has granted pontifical recognition to your movement means that it has recognized in you the presence of a charism that is a gift for the whole Church, not just for your groups. And a charism recognized by the Church is a charism inspired by the Holy Spirit for the spiritual good of all the faithful, not just a few. Opus Dei was founded in Spain, but it is not a charism for Spaniards! It is for everyone. The Focolare Movement was founded in Italy, but it is not a charism for Italians! It is for everyone. In the same way, Jesus Youth was founded in India, but it is not a charism for Indians! It is for everyone. Therefore, do not be afraid to be missionaries, to bring the

beauty of your charism and the spiritual experience you have gained to every region of the world, transcending all boundaries of race, language, nationality, and culture.

Jesus Youth is celebrating its 40th anniversary, but we can say that it is still at the beginning of its journey. Many apostles and missionaries must yet arise from your movement to reach hundreds of thousands of people who are waiting to encounter Christ, to be saved by Him, and to find true life in Christ.

May God always bless you.