



CONVEGNO INTERNAZIONALE DELLE
OPERE DI CARITÀ EDUCATIVE E ASSISTENZIALI
ITALIA 2026

The new styles, forms and frontiers of Charity welfare

sharing, participating, building up



INTRODUCTION

Background to the project

In 2022, the XV General Chapter, pushed us to be bold witnesses of the prophecy of charity, new in style, form and borders. The chapter document in action line 8 dedicated to «The poor lifestyle for the apostolate among the poor», urged us to move more and more from works of charity to work charity, placing emphasis on a poor lifestyle among the poor. Only in this way will our mission have sufficient credibility to face new realities in the image of Christ (XV CG n. 53).

In 2024, the renewal of the provincial councils, vice-provincial councils and new delegation councils strengthened our commitment to shared reflection and concrete planning to relaunch the Orionine social assistance char.

Let us resume the path of reflection

In this spirit, the General Secretary of the Charity has developed a path of reflection that wants to revive the evangelizing power of charity in our communities.

This path involves raising awareness of our communities orionine - religious and lay - to undertake a paradigm shift of charity orionine socio assistance. In other words, we invite you to work to give continuity to the missionary conversion of our ecclesial charismatic family:

- a. Conversion within the actions;
- b. Conversion within relationships and authority;
- c. Conversion of structures and mentality;
- d. Conversion of the formative paths: towards a new paradigm of religious life and of lay life orionine (spirituality - communion - apostolate of charity).

Presentation of the training course

Today we present, therefore, the main stages of this itinerary, which includes three meetings to live together until December 2025. These meetings will be an opportunity to **listen**, **discern** and **propose** new ways to witness the prophecy of charity.

Structure of meetings

Each meeting is divided into the following moments:

1. Thematic introduction: a short introduction to the activity.
2. The journey made...: the point of the situation.
3. The prophetic indications: texts or experiences of Don Orione that open new horizons.
4. the dialogue and contributions: guide questions to stimulate communication and sharing of good practices to pass from the works to a new work of Orionina charity.
5. Estimated duration: two modules of 45 minutes each.



Sharing and synthesis phase

At the end of the entire journey and **before 15 December 2025**, each Orionine community will send its conclusions to their respective secretariats or provincial and delegation teams. The material collected will then be sent to the General Operating Secretariat of the Charity Assistant Member to the email address: cioc2026@gmail.com.

Towards the CIOC 2026 International Conference

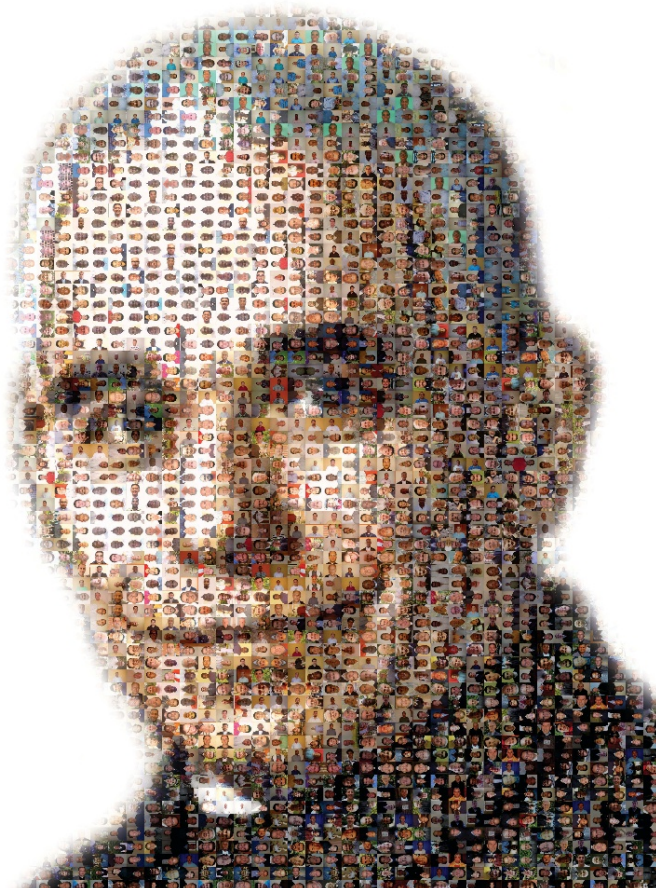
The contributions collected will form the basis for the drafting of the Instrumentum Laboris of the Conference International of Charitable Works (CIOC) 2026, which will be held from 19 to 23 October in Montebello della Battaglia, Italy.

This journey represents an extraordinary opportunity to deepen the Orionine charism in the light of current challenges, guided by the intuitions of our holy Founder and our tradition.

Let's live it with enthusiasm and sharing spirit!

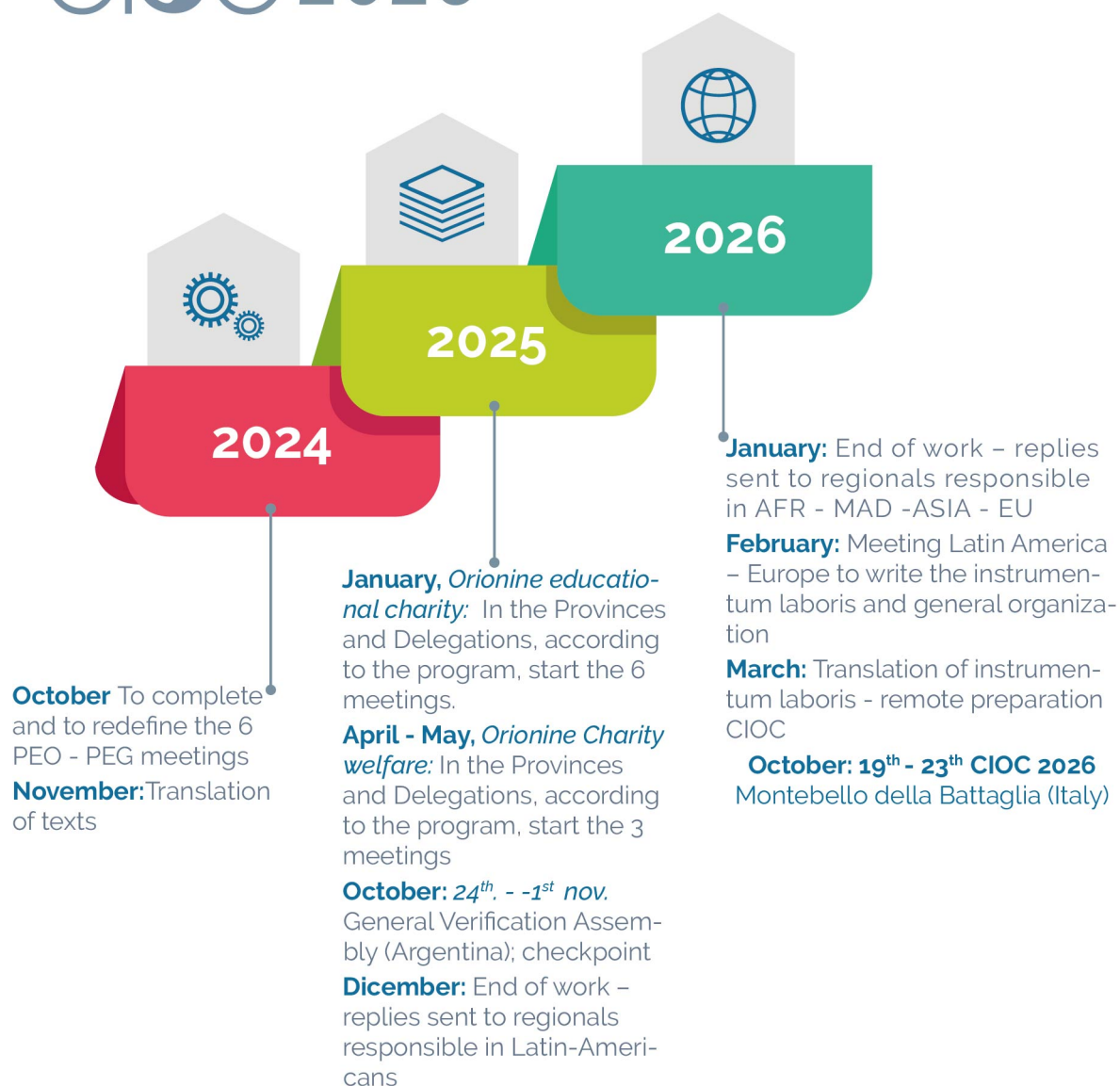
Don Fernando Fornerod

General Operating Secretariat of the Orionine Charitable social works



Timetable of the route

CIOC 2026



FIRST MEETING

The style of apostolic charity



Introduction

In this meeting we propose to understand the apostolate of charity not only as a set of works, but as the apostolic and spiritual style specific to the Little Work of Divine Providence.

Next, we want to create the conditions and take the decisions necessary to adopt a new paradigm: **go from simply performing charity works to a way of acting that fully embodies charity.**

The path taken

Today, within our lay religious family, we observe a certain weakening of the charismatic identity. As a result, we encounter difficulties in carrying out some activities according to the traditional paradigms of our mission. In fact, there are fears and resistance to leaving our communities and established works to face the new poverty and emergencies of our time with a poor style that is consistent with our charism.

How to overcome this situation?

Let us recall that Don Orione used the expression «the Apostolate of charity» in order to communicate to the disciples a true vocation and an original mission of the Congregation.

On numerous occasions our Founder, in fact, he explained that the apparent universality of the works of charity to be carried out in the Little Work only responded to the fact that they wanted to express the ecclesial communion of all men around the Lord Jesus and his Vicar the Holy Father.

This identity was manifested by the papal and popular apostolic style; the strong sense of fraternal life shared with the poor; from a deep spirituality of charity that spanning the visible frontiers of the Church embraced the whole world. In other words, the original charismatic identity of the Little Work involves loving the Pope by serving the poorest to establish omnia in Christ.

This specific style of evangelizing mission characterized by a strong papal and popular imprint is then concretized through various institutions and works of charity, which



must necessarily always change according to the times and places. In short, for Don Orione, **the style is decisive, not the type** of work to be carried out. The style of Orionine charity is relational because it builds and renews the Church.

The prophetic indications

Let us make life Christian: let us make the soul of the orphans and young people entrusted to us Christian: *this is what God and the church ask from us.*

And we use all the holy industries, all the most honest and most appropriate arts to arrive at this.

Even those forms, those customs that may seem *too secular* to us, respect them, and adopt them, *taking place, without scruples, without small-mindedness: save the substance is necessary! This is the whole.*

The times are fast, and they have changed somewhat and we, in everything that does not touch the morality, the doctrine and the Christian life and of the Church - we must go and walk with the times and walk at the head of the times and peoples, and not to the tail, and not be dragged: In order to draw people and bring youth and people to the church and to Christ, one must walk at the head.

And then we will remove the abyss that is being made between God and the people.

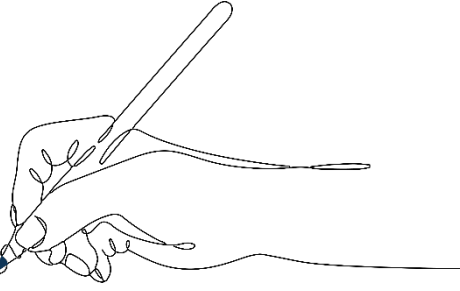
Don Orione

Questions to inspire concrete proposals

1. What is the difference between «charitable social work» and «loving act of charity» and what conditions must be created to fully embody the apostolic spiritual style of the Little Work?
2. In what way can the ecclesial synodality renew the spiritual and apostolic style of Orionine works (the apostolate of charity), favoring the transition from a hierarchical structure to a more egalitarian and synodal way of management (redarchia)?
3. What tools and attitudes are needed to live discernment in common, build consensus and resolve conflicts within the community of charity?



Conclusions



SECOND MEETING

The forms of apostolic charity

**Introduction**

We are all part of a charismatic family, because we have a father: Don Orione. His heritage calls us to live and renew our commitment in charity to be holy like our Founder.

In this meeting we want to initiate new processes that give life to a **renewed Orionine apostolic** praxis, capable of expressing the prophecy of charity through new relations and services.

We wish to rediscover and strengthen our membership in a **living**, catholic, international and intercultural ecclesial network, which makes concrete our commitment in Orionine charity for today's world.



The path taken

We have grown in recent times in the shared management of works with the laity. We believe that continuing on this path will give us time, strength and boldness to meet the new existential peripheries; especially if one takes into account the considerable decrease in the number of religious in the various provinces.

The prophetic indications

Reform the forms, to witness the Gospel

As Pope Benedict stated in *Deus Caritas est*, love for *one's neighbour cannot do without organization: in fact, «The love of neighbour rooted in the love of God is first and foremost a task for each individual faithful, but it is also a task for the entire ecclesial community, and this at all its levels: from the local community to the particular Church up to the universal Church in its totality. The Church as a community must also practice love. The consequence of this is that love also needs organization as a prerequisite for an ordered community service.»* (DCE, 20)

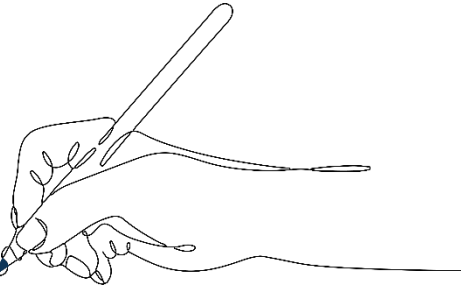
However, the organizational factor has a nature that induces the danger of self-referentiality, or the heterogeneity of ends: the concrete form in which love is structured tends to become rigid over time, losing its connection with the ultimate sense of its *raison d'être*, to be trapped in a specific historical configuration. Precisely for this reason, Pope Francis continually reminds us that the Church is not an NGO (Non-Governmental Organization): the form in which love for others is embodied cannot be understood as a neutral factor, therefore assimilable by any other organization, but as one of the key elements to represent to the world the originality of charitable action that springs from the nature of the Church. Therefore, it must be continually renewed in order to bear witness to the Gospel in a constantly changing context.

Questions to inspire concrete proposals

1. How does apostolic charity manifest outwardly through the structures and forms of apostolic activity, embodying the spirituality and mission of Don Orione?
2. What new processes and structures can foster a renewed Orionine praxis, and what is the role of the “non-structures action”, that is to say, the new relations and services in apostolic action?
3. How can the Orionine ecclesial network (catholic, international and intercultural) support and strengthen the reform of the Church in today's world?
4. How can we reconcile in our Christian life the personal attention to those who suffer (relationship of charity) with the commitment to transform the unjust structures of society (structure of charity)?



Conclusions



THIRD MEETING

Inhabit the borders with charity



Introduction

The last General Chapter showed us the imperative need to live the prophecy of charity, especially in the suburbs. It is good to keep in mind that the way to awaken a new identity of the orionine religious and lay people is to take up with renewed enthusiasm and courage the apostolic dynamisms indicated for our sixties: young people, poor people, missions.

Charity is certainly the area in which we must experience a real deinstitutionalization of everything that responds to lifeless models. Certainly, institutions are an extraordinary asset, in which we are inserted and of which we cannot do without if we want to think about some kind of change. But can we change structures without changing ourselves?

In recent years we have felt the need to be recognized and accredited as service providers, and we have not been able to resist the spiral of thought and the dominant practice of creating, in order to survive, a real entrepreneurial system of charity.



Today we are called to go beyond the logic of offering those services that all can offer and want to implement, to initiate initiatives that are signs that have the strength of meaning: small, humble but highly evangelical presences. In the existential situations of fragility of peoples: will we have the courage to move from service to care? Will we be able to inhabit the new existential frontiers of our time as prophets of Orionine charity?

The way to go

In the famous leaflet «Souls! Souls!» (probably from 1939), Don Orione has left written: «We must *be holy, but make us such saints* that our holiness does not belong only to the worship of the faithful, nor is it only in the Church, but transcends and throws into society so much splendor of light, so much life of love of God and men to be more than the saints of the Church the saints of the people and social health» (Scritti, 57,104c).

The «*saints of the people and of social health*»: this is how Don Orione wants us. He told us to leave the sacristy and Pope Francis reminded us that they knew us as «the priests *who run*». Today we can do more. The Holy Father proposes a triple conversion: pastoral and missionary (Evangelii gaudium); *for an integral ecology* (Laudato Si'); *towards a fraternity without borders* (Brothers all).

The field of the apostolate is ever more vast and every day «new poor» emerge: *refugees, young people* increasingly disoriented, and many others that we meet in our reality, but often do not know how to recognize. The Founder said: «*We must also age in the way of working for souls: if we really want to go to the people and have effectiveness we must age in many things, and we need a bath of well-understood modernity*» (Scritti, 52,221). At this point we ask ourselves: do we still feel within us the anxiety of Don Orione to run to the poor, to the last? Can we see the face of Christ in everyone? Do we worry about going in search of those who are far away or do we settle for those who come to us? If our works and parishes are permeated by this apostolic anxiety, they will give a strong witness of the charism and those who attend them will experience the sweetness of being in family.

The prophetic indications

Move the camp...

The Church is a field hospital, Pope Francis has said many times. Being a camp, it can and must migrate, shifting its «position» towards the changing frontier of poverty and vulnerability of peoples. On this Don Orione has asked and will always ask for freedom of development and spirit of initiative. Some characteristics of Don Orione's charity:

Type of guests: the «desamparados»

(...) It begins in Buenos Aires, in the Name of God and with the blessing of the Church, a most humble work of faith and charity, which has its purpose to give shelter, bread and comfort to «los desamparados», to the abandoned, who could not find help and shelter at other charitable institutions.





Type of guests: a plurality of conditions

Little Cottolengo will keep the door always open to any kind of moral or material misery. Then in many different families, he will receive as brothers the blind, the deaf and dumb, the incompetent, the ignorant; Cripples, epileptics, old people who are falling or unable to work, scrofulous children, chronically ill, boys and girls from a few years up; Children in the age of danger: all those who, for one reason or another, need assistance, help, but cannot be received in hospitals or hospitalizations, and are really abandoned. (ibi)

Reception mode: extreme flexibility and «saturation» in charity

The door of Little Cottolengo will not ask who enters if it has a name, but only if it has a pain. (...) There must never be an empty seat at the Little Cottolengo. (ibi)

Style of government: freedom in the development of works

But I need and thirst for freedom: freedom of internal government, and administration, and freedom to give development to the works, and be able to maintain them according to the spirit of foundation without restrictions and without reticence, without constraints. This freedom for me is life!

Don Orione



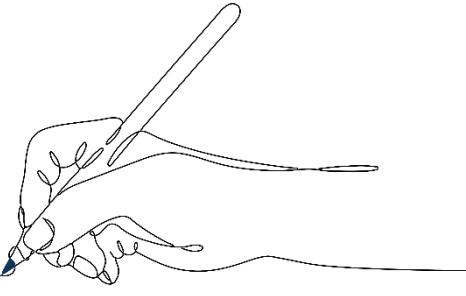
Those who are called to be part of the Family of Don Orione not only serve Christ in the poor: they themselves want to live as their Lord, sharing the fate of the «helpless and excluded», to experience the love of God in their hearts. So says our Founder: *My dear son, see that, coming with us, we are poor, and you too will have to live as a poor religious for the love of Jesus Christ who is our divine example and he was born poor: lived poor: died poor on a cross, also deprived of a little water. But Jesus, our sweet God and Father, is with us, and we make a happy life, because it is enough for us to have Jesus».*

Questions to inspire concrete proposals

1. What role does the Orione charismatic family have in keeping alive the link between the figure of Don Orione and the concrete forms of apostolic charity?
2. How can the balance between traditional structures and new forms of apostolic action make the Orionine mission more effective in the present context?
3. What challenges and opportunities arise in building an international and intercultural ecclesial network that values Orionine charity on a global scale?



Conclusions



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