

GENERATE

The orionine charism: a prophecy of gharity

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Dear CIOC participants,

Welcome!

Every era poses new questions to the Little Work: to our communities, to our mission. Poverty changes, cultures change, forms of participation change, and so do the circumstances in which we are called to live out our charism.

But perhaps, behind many of the questions we ask ourselves today, there is a deeper one:

Does the orionine charism still retain its capacity to generate?

This question does not mean that the charism has weakened. The charism is a gift of the Spirit. What can weaken is our ability to be surprised by it, to recognize it anew as a source of novelty, and to allow it to suggest new forms of presence, service, and evangelization.

The orionine charism always experiences a tension: **preserving its identity** while simultaneously **embodying itself in new historical circumstances**. When conservation prevails, fidelity risks becoming repetition. We defend our forms, structures, and ways of doing things because they are what we have received, forgetting that Don Orione did not simply hand down to us a collection of works.

Our Founder gave us **an evangelical outlook**, a heart shaped by the charity of Christ, and the apostolic freedom to recognize where the Gospel was still needed. Our works were the fruit of this outlook, **not its starting point**.

Does the orionine charism still retain its capacity to generate?

Our Conference is situated within this question.

The CIOC, as we all know, is not a point of arrival. It is a moment in a journey that we have already begun and must continue. For over three years, we have been working through the provincial secretariats, communities, works, and various entities of our charismatic family.

Now we meet here in Montebello della Battaglia to **recognize** what is emerging, to **learn** from one another, and to **embrace** together what will give continuity to our mission.

For this reason, I would like to present this report through five verbs:

Recognize. Meet. Learn. Weave. Generate.

These are not five separate themes. They are five movements of a single process: that of orionine charity.

Recognize

Before generating something new, we must learn to recognize what the Spirit is already doing. Therefore, the first action during these days will not be planning.

The first action is **listening**.

Listening to the world in which we live. Hearing the cry of the new poor. Welcoming the people we encounter in our works. Listening to the questions that emerge in our communities. Listening even to what we do not yet know how to name.

Don Orione possessed this ability. He did not begin by asking himself what work needed to be built. He looked at reality through the eyes of Christ's charity and allowed himself to be challenged by the needs of his time.

For this reason, fidelity to the charism cannot consist merely in preserving what we have received. It must become creative fidelity: the ability to preserve the source and, at the same time, find new ways for that source to reach new people and new situations.

We understand fidelity to Don Orione by following him with the same passion for Christ and for people.

Our Conference also arises from this listening.

We do not come simply to show what we do. We come to recognize what the Spirit is stirring through so many different experiences.

And this requires humility.

Because recognizing also means accepting that something can be born elsewhere, in another culture, in another community, or in another work, and that it can become a gift for everyone.

Meet

The second verb is to meet.

The CIOC brings together diverse entities: educational charity and social welfare, people from different countries and continents, different cultures, and different experiences. We would have liked to include parish charity in this experience as well. For various reasons, this was not possible; but we will make it a commitment for the future.

The activities of the Little Work are therefore not all the same. And they should not be. Our richness also lies in their diversity, their widespread presence, and our ability to respond to different cultural situations. But what makes us one family is not what we do in the same way.

It is the spirit with which we do it.

It is papal and popular charity, lived according to the charism of Don Orione. This is why we can remain together even though we do different things.

Even the Conference's more than five languages can become a sign. They are not simply an organizational necessity. They remind us that charity speaks every language because it is Christ who desires to enter into dialogue with each of us.

Indeed, languages vary, cultures change, and missionary approaches differ. But in our diversity, we can recognize the same source and the same passion for the Gospel.

Encountering one another, then, means moving beyond an “I know” mentality toward a “we can learn” mentality. And when this happens, diversity does not divide us. It enriches us.

Learn

The third verb is to learn.

The CIOC offers workshops, experiences, dynamics, and opportunities for skills development. But we do not simply want to impart content. We want to learn how to better fulfil what our charism demands of us today.

For this reason, the skills we will develop are not a technical addition to the mission. They are a **tool** through which the mission can become more informed, more shared, and more evangelically effective.

We need people capable of discernment, collaboration, working in intercultural contexts, taking on responsibility, building communion, and exercising truly synodal leadership.

We need authentic apostles of charity.

This applies to both the educational and social welfare dimensions. The skills may differ, but the source is the same.

The CIOC is an opportunity to meet, connect, and learn.

And there is a crucial point. If what we learn remains a personal asset, its impact will be limited. If, however, what we learn is shared, connected, and returned to the community, then it becomes a heritage of the charismatic family.

This is where knowledge begins to become a network.

Weave

The fourth verb is, therefore, to weave.

Our charism does not simply push us to build a network, **but to weave relationships**.

A network can be very large and, at the same time, very fragile. We need a finely woven network, within which people, experiences, skills, initiatives, creativity, and resources can circulate.

The Gospel image of the net can help us here. We all remember the passage in John’s Gospel at the end of which Peter casts his nets at the request of the Risen Jesus.

The network is not an end in itself. **It is a tool for mission.** The network can thus also become a place where grace circulates through communion and a space in which we can recognize the Lord, even in the intimacy of our prayer.

Our international network also makes sense if it enables us to reach people more effectively, share what we have received, and find together answers to the new frontiers of charity.

An organizational issue also comes into play here. We need to develop organizational forms that

are not simply pyramidal, but can function as a **redarchy**: a network in which the service of authority continues to have its place, animating and fostering new relationships, skills, co-responsibility, and collaboration.

The leadership to which we are called, therefore, also involves the ability to facilitate, connect, listen, discern, and allow skills to circulate.

A network like this is not built through structures alone. It needs to embrace the family spirit, an essential characteristic of the Little Work.

Because without this spirit, the network can simply become an organization. With this spirit, it can become communion.

Generate

Thus, we arrive at the fifth verb: to generate.

Generating does not simply mean producing something new. It means allowing what we have received to bear fruit in the present. The ultimate source of this fruitfulness is the Holy Spirit.

The charism that Luigi Orione passed on to us is not our own. It is a gift we have received, and we are called to be ready to recognize it, embrace it, discern what it generates, and cooperate with its action.

Therefore, the question is not simply: “What must we do?” but rather: “What is the Spirit calling us to do today?”

The Apostolate of Charity, which Don Orione identified as the style of our apostolic life, does not coincide with a specific activity. **It is a way of living our relationship with Christ, our brotherhood, and our mission.** When the charism is experienced as a source, it can generate new forms. It can generate new presences, new collaborations, new languages, and new responses to the poverty we encounter.

And then we also understand the profound meaning of the CIOC.

The outcome of the Conference will not simply be what we hear or learn during these days. It will be seen, above all, in what happens afterward.

It will be seen in the **skills** we bring to our works. In the **relationships** we continue to cultivate. In the **collaborations** that will emerge. But above all, in the **decisions** we are able to make together, in the **priorities** we recognize, and in the commitments, we make to continue our journey.

An international network is not born simply from meeting. **It is born when a meeting becomes a relationship.** The relationship becomes collaboration. Collaboration becomes a decision. And the decision becomes a mission.

That is why the CIOC should not simply leave us with new ideas. It should help us become proactive in generating them.

A Charity Capable of Generating the Future

We can then return to the initial question:

What else can the orionine charism generate?

It can generate people capable of allowing themselves to be inhabited by the charity of Christ, communities capable of experiencing fraternity as a form of mission, and a charismatic family capable of living its unity in the diversity of cultures. It can generate a network in which what we have received can be shared and placed at the service of the new frontiers of charity.

But this fruitfulness will not depend on the CIOC as an event. The Conference will be fruitful if what we have experienced here continues to live on in our communities, in our works, and in the relationships, we have begun to build.

An international network becomes truly missionary when encounters generate relationships, relationships generate co-responsibility, and co-responsibility translates into concrete choices in service of the poorest.

The CIOC, then, can become a threshold: a moment in which the Little Work recognizes what the Spirit is doing, strengthens what already exists, and prepares to explore paths it has not yet explored; paths that must be opened...

The Conference will end. The journey will continue.

And our responsibility will be to guard the source, listen to what is being born, and give shape, together, to what the charity of Christ asks of us today.

The charism we have received from Saint Luigi Orione is not merely a story to preserve. It is a life to be given, so that a new story may be born.