

ITALY

Communion and Liberation's internal conflict brought to attention of Archbishop of Milan

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The internal conflict within Communion and Liberation (CL) has escalated, involving even the Archbishop of Milan, and has evolved into an open war declared by the faction loyal to Fr Julian Carron, who succeeded Fr Luigi Giussani as leader of the movement, against

the current leadership endorsed by the Holy See.

The sensational news is Fr Pierluigi Banna's appeal to the Milan Curia. Fr Banna (*photo above*) is considered the designated heir of Fr Carron. Objective of his appeal: to denounce the 'abuse of conscience and power' he's suffered from the movement's current leader, Davide Prospero, and the repeated defamation of which he is allegedly the victim not only perpetrated by Prospero, but also by other CL leaders — including Fr Stefano Alberto, Fr Andrea D'Auria and Fr Francesco Ferrari — as well as by the bishop emeritus of Reggio Emilia, Monsignor Massimo Camisasca. Bishop Camisasca is the founder of the San Carlo Borromeo priestly fraternity, to which many CL priestly vocations belong (including the three aforementioned priests). These are very serious accusations, which the five accused have vehemently rejected.

The matter dates back to the early months of 2025, but has remained hidden until now. The *Daily Compass* has obtained documents relating to this sensational development, which is reminiscent of the 1988 affair when the association 'La Rosa Bianca' denounced the weekly CL weekly magazine *Il Sabato* to the ecclesiastical court of Milan accusing Giuseppe Lazzati of Protestant deviation.

In this case, there has been no formal canonical denunciation, only a warning and a threat to take the matter to the ecclesiastical court, which was agreed with the Milanese Curia. Curiously, the Curia now denies any involvement when questioned by *Daily Compass*.

Let's start from the beginning: the CL movement has experienced deep tensions for years, which came to a head on 21 September 2021 when Pope Francis commissioned *Memores Domini*, an association of consecrated laity, 'to safeguard its charisma and preserve the unity of its members'. Father Carron's leadership was called into question: while the Holy See considers his theological vision regarding the transmission of the charisma to be 'gravely contrary to the teachings of the Church', some CL members have always contested his authority, regarding it as a kind of 'religious choice' contrary to Father Giussani's teachings. Indeed, the disappearance of CL as an active presence in society is clear for all to see.

Father Carron's subsequent resignation as president of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation in November 2021 should have paved the way for his protégé, Father Pierluigi Banna. Originally from Catania, he holds teaching positions at the Episcopal Seminary of Venegono and the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Milan. However, the project fell through when the Dicastery of the Laity demanded a

revision of the statutes and appointed the vice-president of the Fraternity, university lecturer Davide Prospero, as their interlocutor. This effectively locked the position until 2026, when the elections to decide the Fraternity's new president were scheduled to take place.

The Carronian wing, therefore, was preparing for revenge, and last January, at a meeting of priests, Don Banna himself came forward, proposing himself as an alternative point of reference to the current leadership. However, given the ongoing manoeuvres, the Vatican extended Prospero's appointment until 2031.

This prompted an all-out offensive by Don Banna and the Carronian wing, as six years of campaigning is unthinkable. The involvement of the archbishop and the Curia is just one aspect of this offensive. It began with a short letter dated 1 March 2025, addressed to the five individuals mentioned above and written by Banna, in which he complained about the 'bad reputation spread on my account with abuse of conscience and power' by Prospero, as well as the insults and discrimination suffered from the other four, and the lack of 'ecclesiality' of Monsignor Camisasca. On this occasion, however, he only asked for 'a loyal and cordial confrontation' with the five individuals, who replied to Don Banna individually in conciliatory tones, firmly rejecting the accusations and seeking to clarify any misunderstandings.

However, Don Banna took his letter and the replies he had received to Archbishop Delpini to complain and ask for protection. Delpini referred him to the Chancellor of the Curia, Fr Marco Cazzaniga, who he tasked with 'accompanying me in dialogue and clarification with you'. Don Banna himself wrote this in a new, lengthy letter dated 16 April, in which he repeated the accusations, also citing articles 220 and 1390 of the Canon Code, which punish those who 'damage the good reputation of others' with penalties that can go as far as the deprivation of all ecclesiastical appointments. A more than obvious threat.

Finally, Fr Banna requested a meeting to clarify the situation in the presence of Fr Cazzaniga. This meeting took place on 16 June at which the 5 sent diocesan representatives of the Fraternity of CL. To our knowledge, however, the meeting did not change the situation. When questioned by the *Daily Compass*, the Archbishop's Chancellor, Father Cazzaniga wished to make it clear that the diocese has no intention of becoming involved in the internal disputes of movements, and that it has simply made itself available for 'a clarifying meeting' concerning 'personal matters'.

We also asked Father Banna to explain his point of view and the purpose of such

an action, but he declined, stating that it was a matter of a 'strictly personal and confidential nature'. This is a rather curious statement, given that he was the one who brought the private correspondence with CL leaders to the Curia, as he admitted.

The diocese of Milan's absolutely neutral role was also emphasised by the head of the Curia's press office, Dr Stefano Femminis, who reiterated that 'this is a personal and private matter which in no way concerns relations between the diocese and CL. The Curia has made itself available, in the person of the Chancellor, to facilitate a dialogue that can clarify some personal misunderstandings. This is for the simple reason that diocesan priests are also involved in the affair'.

In this way, it seems that the Curia wants to distance itself from Father Banna's accusations and its collaboration in drafting the 16 April letter. However, Femminis had previously stated that he was also replying on behalf of Father Banna, with whom he had consulted. It is a strange way of not entering into relations between the diocese and CL.

Conversely, when we contacted Davide Proserpi he reaffirmed the absolute groundlessness nature of the accusations against him, as well as his consistently demonstrated availability to engage in dialogue with Father Banna and his followers.

However, this is not the only basis on which the Carronian offensive has moved. In the summer, there was an attempt to take control of the board of directors of the Colombano and Bonifacio Foundation, that administrates the funds of the Memores Domini. The strategic significance of this move is obvious: in the event of a split, control of the funds would be decisive.

Additionally, a challenge to the Fraternity's new statutes, which were rewritten based on the Dicastery for the Laity's recommendations, has begun in the form of a letter for which signatures are being collected across Italy. Among the promoters of this initiative is Giuseppe Capaccioni, the former head of the Fraternity of CL in Umbria, who stood unsuccessfully on a list supporting the Left's candidate in the recent regional elections.

In short, there are many signs that the rift within CL is now irreparable, and that there is also an attempt to discredit the current leadership before the ecclesiastical authorities. So, according to several CL members, the leaders of the movement should perhaps take note of this at this point, rather than continuing to pursue an impossible unity that distorts the truth.