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Father Julián Carrón is pictured in New York City in this Jan. 15, 2017, file photo. (CNS photo/G

Father Julián Carrón is pictured in New York City in this Jan. 15, 2017, file photo. (CNS photo/Gregory A. Shemitz)



by Catholic News Service

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Complying with new Vatican rules placing term limits on the leadership of Catholic lay movements and associations, Spanish Father Julián Carrón, president of Communion and Liberation, has announced he is stepping down from the office he has held since 2005.

"I have decided to submit my resignation as president of the fraternity of Communion and Liberation in order to encourage that the change of leadership to which we are called by the Holy Father," Father Carrón said in a statement posted on the group's website Nov. 15.

In June, the Vatican Dicastery for Laity, the Family and Life issued new norms for Catholic associations and lay movements, saying term limits would help promote greater involvement in leadership and help protect members of the groups from possible abuse by leaders who are not answerable to the membership.

"Not infrequently, for those called to govern, the absence of limits in terms of office favors forms of appropriation of the charism, personalization, centralization and

expressions of self-referentiality, which can easily cause serious violations of personal dignity and freedom, and even real abuses," said the dicastery's explanatory note, which was published June 11 along with the new norms.

Under the new norms, those who hold offices in the central leadership of international Catholic lay movements and associations may serve a maximum of two five-year terms.

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In explaining his resignation, Father Carrón said the need to find and choose a new president would encourage each member of Communion and Liberation "to take personal responsibility for the charism" of the movement.

"It has been an honor for me to exercise this service for years, an honor that fills me with humility for my limitations and if I have failed any of you," he wrote. "I give thanks to God for the gift of companionship that I have been able to enjoy" and for the example of the members' "daily witness, from which I have constantly learned and from which I want to continue to learn."

"I wish you to live this circumstance as an occasion of growth of your ecclesial self-awareness (and) to be able to continue to witness the grace of the charism given by the Holy Spirit" to Msgr. Luigi Giussani, founder of the movement, Father Carrón wrote to members.

Msgr. Giussani's inspiration, he said, was to help young people use their faith and their reason to see Christ as "a real, persuasive and determining presence" in their lives and cultures.

It was Msgr. Giussani who invited Father Carrón to move to Milan to help guide the movement; the Spanish priest became president after Msgr. Giussani died in 2005.