

# Canonical Approval for Jesus Youth; FAQs

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## **What is the relevance of being approved as 'International'?**

Let me quote the legal section of Pontifical Council for the Laity (PCL): "This simply means that the movement/association is acknowledged as being effectively international and as being useful for the whole Church across the world. It also means that the Holy See becomes directly competent for the matters concerning Jesus Youth that are covered by Canon 305." This means we are receiving a mandate to actively contribute to the **universal mission of the Church**. "The movements and new communities are like an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the church and in contemporary society... Dear friends, I ask you to collaborate even more, very much more, in the Pope's universal apostolic ministry, opening doors to Christ." (*Pope Benedict XVI, Second World Congress of Movements, June 2006*)

## **Why are we approved as an 'Association', not as a movement? Are we still a movement?**

We will continue as a movement itself - 'Association' is the Canonical term (legal term) which is used officially in the Church - which includes movements and communities. After the second Vatican Council, the Holy Spirit gave birth to many movements and communities in the Church. The first gathering of movements was initiated by St. Pope John Paul II - He used three terms - '**ecclesial movements, associations and new communities**' - when he invited everyone to Rome on 30 May 1998. On that occasion, John Paul II opened up a new horizon to these ecclesial groups for the third millennium: "Today a new stage is unfolding before you: that of ecclesial maturity... The Church expects from you the 'mature' fruits of communion and commitment". The second World Congress was in June 2006 - the largest gathering soon after Pope Benedict XVI became Pope. Pope Francis addressed the third World Congress which was held in November 2015. We had the blessing of participating in the last two Congresses. In all these congresses, the Popes used these three terms together 'Ecclesial Movements, New Communities and Associations'. So Jesus Youth **will continue to be an Ecclesial Movement**.

## **What is an Ecclesial Movement?**

In a letter to the World Congress of Ecclesial Movements in May, 1998, St. Pope John Paul II defined a movement as "a concrete ecclesial entity, in which primarily **lay people** participate, with an itinerary of faith and Christian testimony that founds its own pedagogical method on a charism..." This definition highlights three traits of the new movements: They are primarily lay (without neglecting the presence of clergy), their work is to **evangelize**, and they will have a specific charism. In essence they are vibrant Christian communities with predominantly lay membership who are aware

that they are on a journey of faith; they take part in the mission of the Church based on a precise charism given to them by the Holy Spirit. This charism always contributes to the richness of the Church, since every charism is a gift freely granted by the Holy Spirit for the good of the Church. We are the **123rd** movement to get Canonical approval from the Holy See - the **first** one from India and the **second** one from Asia - Couples for Christ being the first.

## Why 'Private' Association?

There are two categories Ecclesial movements - Public Associations and Private Associations.

**Public Associations:** "Associations of the faithful which are erected by competent ecclesiastical authority are called public associations (Canon 301.3)." Only the Holy See, a conference of bishops or a diocesan bishop has the authority to erect a public association of the faithful (Canon 312). Normally, a Bishops Conference or a Bishop forms a Public Association to serve a particular purpose/mission. They grant them a mission by which it formally acts in the name of the Church (Canon 313).

**Private Associations:** Most of the movements/communities/Associations born after the second Vatican Council are approved as Private Associations. "By means of a private agreement made among themselves (in our movement, we call it 'life style'- the understanding among ourselves of our life in a particular way), the Christian faithful are free to establish associations to pursue the purposes to foster a more perfect life, to exercise the works of the apostolate such as initiatives of evangelization, works of piety or charity" (cf. Canon 299). Since Jesus Youth is not formed by a Bishop or a Bishops' Conference, and we serve the Church through the charism of 'Faith formation and Mission, we are a 'Private Association'.

Let me try to explain this in detail:

1. A movement is a concrete ecclesial reality. Therefore its reason for existing is in the communion of the Church. If it loses this ecclesiality, it will die.
2. The ecclesial movements are composed mainly of lay people, even though other faithful can also be members. This aspect will be reflected in the spirituality: it will be usually a secular one.
3. Every movement constitutes a way of life as well as a Christian witness in the Church and in society.
4. In every movement we can find a charism that is given to them by the Holy Spirit. They serve the Church using their Charism. "On 30 May 1998 I spoke in St Peter's Square of "a new Pentecost", referring to the growth of charisms and movements which has occurred in the Church since the Second Vatican Council, with this expression I wished to acknowledge the development of the movements and new communities as a source of hope for the Church's missionary action" (St. John Paul II - The seminar on Ecclesial movements and new communities, June 1999)
5. The charism of each movement should be open to the discernment of the Church. "No charism dispenses a person from reference and submission to

the Pastor of the Church" (*Christifideles Laici*, n. 24). And no private association of the Christian faithful is recognized in the Church unless competent authority reviews its statutes (Canon.299). This is why the PCL told us that the Canonical Approval is not an 'Option' but a 'Mandate'.

6. I am quoting Stanislaw Cardinal Rylko, President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity: "Maintaining the proper relationship to Church authorities, the laity have the right to found and control such associations and to join those already existing." (Vatican II, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no.19.) This right and the resultant freedom to form and join associations do not depend on the benevolence of the Pastors, but are rooted in the nature of the human person and stem from the ontological reality of the sacrament of baptism which creates a fundamental equality between all the members of the people of God as "new creatures" (cf 2 Cor 5:17), grafted onto Christ and animated by the Holy Spirit... And this freedom must be exercised under the paternal oversight of the Pastors, who have the responsibility of discerning charisms and recognising or erecting the associations of the faithful". With this "official recognition and explicit approval" of the Holy See, **any baptised Catholic can join Jesus Youth** movement.

### **Will Jesus Youth become a Public Association after the approval?**

No. We are approved as a Private Association by the Holy See and will continue as a Private Association. Canon 299.2 and Canon 322 explicitly mention that the approval of statutes by competent authority does not change its private nature. This clearly demonstrates the intent of the law to protect the autonomy of private associations and allow the Christian faithful to freely guide and direct them according to the prescripts of the statutes (cf. Canon 321), under the vigilance of ecclesiastical authority (cf. Canon 323)

### **In our approval, there is no mention about 'lay faithful' - Will we cease to be a lay movement?**

No. We will continue as a **lay movement with a focus on youth**. But our statutes gives us the option to have clergy, seminarians and religious in the movement. Canon 307.3 says "Members of religious institutes can join associations according to the norm of their proper law with the consent of their superior." "Members who become diocesan seminarians and candidates to religious life can continue in the association. Those members who have joined seminaries or religious formation houses will be provided support to live the spirituality and continue to be members of the association, with the knowledge and permission of their respective Superior or Ordinary." Clergy and Religious can become either Regular or Associate Members after completing the required formation of the association with the permission of their Superior or Ordinary (Bishop)". (Jesus Youth statutes 19, 20.1). ***Isn't this beautiful?***

## What does it mean to have 'Juridical personality'?

Juridical personality, in secular law is probably expressed by the term 'legal person': Any physical person (you, me, my father, mother, wife etc.) exists in law and has rights in law. In the same way, an entity (a company, an association, a university) exists in law and is represented by its president: I am quoting the legal section of PCL "For example, Mr. Thomas as an individual can possess property, can go to court to protect his rights as an individual, or can buy a car as an individual. In the same way, a company/association/movement with 'legal personality'/' with juridical personality' can also possess property and Mr. Thomas as a company director or president of an association goes to court or buys a car in the name of the company and to protect its property"

In a nutshell, the juridical personality gives us an identity as a **legal entity in the Church** which will be represented in the Church through the office of the International Coordinator.

## Will this approval bring any changes in the spirituality, charism and life in the movement?

No. The long period of process involved in this approval was mainly for understanding and bringing clarity to the spirituality and charism in which the Spirit formed this movement in the Church. The Holy See is recognising and affirming our call, mission and charism as a missionary movement. There will be some changes in the way we function - mainly when it comes to the selection and functioning of the leadership teams - which is drawn from the rich and wide experience of the Church. However, there won't be any change in the spirituality and charism of the movement.

## Does this approval mean that we have the right to work in any parish/diocese/country?

Yes and No. As a movement approved by the Holy See, we can be **present in the whole Church**. But only with the **knowledge and consent** of the local priest/Bishop, we can get involved in the mission of the parish/diocese as a movement.

## If we have to use this approval along with the name of the movement for web/print matters, how will we articulate it?

*'Jesus Youth - An International Catholic Lay Movement approved by the Holy See'*