

Passion for the Mission

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DIBUJO

Meanwhile, Joseph says nothing. He just prays. He has seen many things throughout the years and he knows that his trust in God will not fail.

DIBUJO

This sounds to me like piety.

Yes, they are the "Pious Schools" with the understanding that "Pious" means that they are at the service of the Good News, and that education is free.

I. PRESENTATION

1. A Proposal for the Beginning

Dear reader, perhaps personally known, dear brother in Jesus and Calasanz, I would like to start by making a proposal: visit these pages with me as a new opportunity to delve into the invitation received to keep the Piarist charism and to live our lives as a great mission.

"Passion for the Mission" is the title of this book. That's the call you and I, all of us, have received, as well as Calasanz. The Christian education of children and young people in the Pious Schools has been, is and will be our great mission, our passion and the legacy that we have received from Calasanz and that we must leave to those who will follow after us.

It is a mission, or better a "co-mission", that is entrusted to us by God himself, by Jesus (Mt 28, 19-20: *"Go and make disciples and teach them to observe all that I have commanded you; behold I am with you until the end of the world"*), by Calasanz, by all the people that now make up the Pious Schools and, above all, by the silent cry of so many children and young people seeking teachers who will teach them all that is needed to live as God wants.

It is a passion because we know that this mission surpasses us and we are not the protagonists, but envoys, cooperators and companions. We are passionate about it because it wins our heart and we discover that it becomes the reason for our existence. This changes our life because in it we discover the very presence of Jesus. It becomes a passion because we know that it carries disappointment, fatigue and suffering. It is the passion by which we give our life with the security that, like Jesus in his own life and passion, it is what gives life to others and what finally plunges us into the definitive Life.

It is possible that you are in a youthful time of your life where dreams and innovations encourage you each day; perhaps you are at that stage of maturity where routine makes it possible to move forward without the initial momentum; maybe you are at a vital time where forces fail and wisdom leads you to seek and assess what is really important. Perhaps you are in a difficult moment where nothing is clear.

Whatever your situation, religious or laity, at work or at a necessarily more leisurely time, these pages are an opportunity to share together, you and I, a series of thoughts aloud.

Hopefully we can share this reading accompanied by the one whom we follow, by Jesus, our Lord and Teacher, as well as our Holy Father, Joseph of the Mother of God, and so many other people who have been doing, are doing and will make an exciting adventure of their life in the Pious Schools.

I have always been surprised by that permanent openness to novelty in Calasanz to always follow faithfully and with passion the mission received, never stopping at any point in his life:

- at a very young age he left home to continue his studies in different places;
- ordained a priest at the age of 26;
- nine years of tireless service to several and exerting with much force the ecclesiastical reform at such an important moment in history;
- went to Rome at age 35 living and lived that personal process that changed his life;
- at age 40 started at Santa Dorotea what would become the first popular and free school in Europe;
- searched for stability and growth for this mission until he turned 60 when he obtained the first of all a Congregation, and upon turning 65 obtained the Religious Order;
- continued to tirelessly extend the schools until at the age of 89, when the Order was suppressed, and he was driven to another much more purified fidelity;
- died at the age of 91, in that passion (now in its sense of suffering) of seeing his work destroyed and still trusting in the One who entrusted him the mission to which he consecrated his entire life.

Passion for the Mission in all ages and in all times and situations. Here is the challenge of keeping alive the first love that allows us to say with Calasanz: *"I found the ultimate way to serve God by doing good to the little ones: I will not leave it for anything in the world"*.

I am convinced that you and I have also made the discovery of the treasure of our life in the wide and rich field of the Pious Schools.

Anyway, it is always good to hear the words to the Church of Ephesus: *"I know your works, your effort and your integrity. You have stamina, you had suffered for me and you have not yielded to fatigue, but I have something against you, that you've left the first love"* (Rev 2,3).

And, if it is our case, we need to allow ourselves to again be seduced by the Lord that again Jesus will *bring us into the desert and speak to the heart* (Ho 2, 16-25). Comes to my mind a beautiful song by Ricardo, a brother of our Fraternity of Emmaus, in the disc *"It is the time"* and entitled *"From silence"*:

FROM SILENCE

I have not composed a song in a long time, music in my life is already silent, I despair not to find inspiration and I find it hard to sing what I once composed for You, thinking of You, my guide. I almost don't dare to ask myself for the fear to discover what I want, but finally I have decided to put an end to this prolonged closure.

Lead me to the desert, as you did in the years when everything started, and remove my guts, make it quick, and give freshness to what I wanted then. Show me again that you are in the fragile and small phase of life, and whisper to me the music and lyrics that translate the sense of what I feel and with them I will sing to the world the greatness of your passionate and always new love.

We are going to restart the history, we will, while flushing, again tell each other that love has not been extinguished in silence, that we are made one for each other; but, my Love, You be the one to start, since I cannot find in this silent and battered heart the corner where those verses capable of expressing what I still feel for you, my God, live.

Lead me to the desert...

2. Logic of the Chapters

This book follows the content of Chapter I of our Constitutions, dedicating a sub-paragraph to each of its paragraphs, adding the presentation at the beginning and another as a closing to the end. Each one of these blocks has several small chapters.

Jaime, a religious brother of my community, says that books with many words and without any pause or illustrations choke him. That we do not need much "chatting" to go to the point and say what is important.

That is why they are short chapters for quick and easy reading. "What is brief is twice as good (*and short*)".

At the end of each chapter there is always a frame with a prayer, a parable, a reflection that helps us to pause to internalize, and I hope to also share with the Lord who is always by our side. The important thing is to raise and revive the passion for the mission that we need so much.

There is variety in the style of the chapters to facilitate focusing on the reading. There are more informative chapters of the realities of the Piarist mission. Other chapters are of a more spiritual nature, summoning from the experience. Others suggest future intuitions. All are trying to spread the passion for our mission.

There are also repetitions, sometimes because it is good to remember and others to give full meaning to each chapter, trying to make its approach different and rewarding in their complementarity. Each point can be read almost independently from the others, although they follow a logical path. In this way, the book can serve for personal reading, and can also be used to delve into a subject or share a reflection in community.

For the Piarist and those who Feel Piarist

It is aimed, primarily, at Piarist religious. From my own experience as Piarist religious and priest, I would like to share these thoughts, my own experience, as a contribution to permanent formation and the fidelity to the vocation received. I live with deep joy my vocation and I would like to continue sharing now in these pages, my conviction that being a Piarist priest and religious fully fills the heart.

This it can also be an interesting book for the brothers and sisters of Piarist Fraternities, as well as to those who feel Piarist and think that the Piarist mission is winning their heart. It has been many years since I have been sharing my faith and following of Jesus in the Piarist Fraternity and with groups of young people, teachers, and families. Above all, in that community of mixed life of religious and lay people, something which I have had the good fortune to be a part of for a long time. I have to thank all of them for what I have received and I recognize that we have helped each other to live our vocation more intensely.

It is increasingly more important that religious and lay Piarist also share reflections which are directed more to one or the other. It is much more what unites us than what differentiates us, and precisely knowing more about the other's vocation, we grow in ours and this will enrich the Pious Schools and their mission.

We have already been sharing the mission for a long time. Now we have to also go and share the heart and the brain. We should be taking steps to reflect together, to discover ways that will help all of us in the experience of our vocation, to love each other even more.

Mission as a Task

Mission as a task whereby the main point is that the one who sends and those who walk carry out the same assignment.

We understand the mission in a broad sense, looking not only at the task, but also to the One who sends us and those who accompany us on the road. By understanding the mission, we discover that it is for all and forever. It does not refer to the years of active professional life, or to the specific service in any Piarist work. It is much more. It is the Lord who comes to you and says: "*I need you.*" At each time it may be different: to teach in the school, to attend to a young man or a family, to encourage a community brother, to pray for all, to create a good atmosphere... to build the Pious Schools, which have this exciting mission and need you.

"Look, friend, when you offer your thinking to the world, be careful that it above all be: brief, brief...

The path is long and short, very short, because of time; we cannot stop at each inn.

Tell us in a few words and without straying from the main thought, the more you can say in a brief, brief manner."¹

¹ Miguel de Unamuno. "Denso, denso" in Obras Completas, t- 6. Madrid. Escélicer. 1966, pp. 169-170.

DIBUJO

It so happens that the poor's luck has taken his heart.

...And this is my idea, Father Brandini: to gather here, in the sacristy of your Parish of Santa Dorotea, all the children that wish to come...

II. WORK OF GOD AND OF CALASANZ

*"The Piarist religious family,
with humility and gratitude,
recognizes itself as the work of God
and the result of the daring and ever-enduring patience of Saint Joseph Calasanz.
For he, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit,
dedicated himself totally to the Christian education of children,
especially the poor, in learning and piety".
(Constitutions 1)*

3. We Gratefully and Responsibly Accept this Gift

Our Piarist Constitutions begin speaking, as it could not be otherwise, about the Calasanzian mission that is the beginning and the reason for being of the Pious Schools: this consecration in body and soul to the Christian education of children, especially the poor, in spirit of intelligence and piety.

Sometimes we get lost and we think that it is more important to achieve my own personal fulfillment, my own health, to feel at ease, the community... but we should frequently remind ourselves that the only important thing is to "*seek the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all else we will be given in addition*" (Mt 6, 33). If we focus on Jesus and the mission that he entrusts us, we will get, without having sought it, personal fulfillment, the satisfaction of a full life, the community centered on whom it should be... everything else!

For us, Piarist, searching the Justice of the Kingdom means to listen that "*children ask for bread, and there is no one to give it to them*" (Lam 4, 4), the sentence at the beginning of our Constitutions.

That call to answer, that sending that vocation gives us that journey of so many Piarist around the world, the great gift that has come to us from God and from Calasanz, and is the great responsibility that we assumed one day for each of the days in our life.

Poisoned Gift

Andreu, a Catalan Piarist religious called it a "poisoned gift".

A gift because God himself has noticed you and me, has looked fondly into our eyes, has called us by name and has challenged us: *"If you want... do you dare?"*. A gift because in this challenge we have discovered the meaning of our life. A gift because we have never been alone in this mission: Jesus and the Piarist community have always been present. A gift because we have witnessed the miracles God is doing in the Pious Schools, despite our many limitations. Gift for a task like this fully fills our hearts.

Poisoned because this wonder entails a great responsibility, a strong task, some disappointments, and many continued efforts. Poisoned, because this gift is seen differently in the different moments of life and often involves a weight. Poisoned because it brings many temptations of believing that we are something, of seeking compensation, of engaging with despair in some difficult situations. Poisoned because no message is carried with impunity, but it is necessary to give the testimony that accompanies it.

It is a wonderful gift, simultaneously Good News and Cross, which leads us to respond to the single / dual command to love God with all of our heart and thy neighbor as yourself, as if these were the two sides of the same coin.

The gift received is impressive: a Piarist family that, over 400 years, has faithfully maintained the charism of Calasanz. It is worth to stop for a moment to remember, to bring back to the heart the memories of so many Piarist who continue, that we continue, making possible the dream of God in Calasanz. Today we need to thank you, Lord, for those Piarist who have accompanied us, for those who are our brothers in community, for those who have made possible the Pious Schools that we have inherited and which we will leave to those who will follow. Behind those faces there is much generosity, much action of yours, Jesus. All of them are, we are, a sign that you keep remembering all of mankind, and especially those children who need it most. Thank you, Lord, for the gift of the Piarist family to which Calasanz, you and I belong.

In that Piarist family we cannot forget the lives of so many children and young people, today adults many of them or even deceased, that have been the center of the Pious Schools. We can name many of them, including a story, our dedication, our efforts, sometimes great or small successes and perhaps some disappointments. Behind them are you, Jesus: *"who welcomes a boy like this for my sake, welcomes me"* (Mt 17, 5). It is great to know that you are so present in our schools and works through so many children and young people!

Praying to God...

The Pious Schools are a free gift of God. We have done nothing to deserve them, but we do have the task of taking care of them, maintaining them, have them respond to the needs of the places and times where we have to be.

*"The Pious Schools are the work of God and the result of the daring and ever-enduring patience of Saint Joseph Calasanz"*². Lovely expression for what we very well know: *"when man works, man sweats"*, *"Walk softly and carry a big stick,"* *"to work as if everything*

² Constitutions of the Pious Schools, 1, cited in the *Salutatio* of Fr. General published in Ephemerides of December 2010.

depended on us, to pray as if everything depended upon God". Calasanz perfectly joined the full confidence in God with great audacity and tenacious patience worthy of a good Spaniard from Aragón and a great believer.

Today it is up to us, to you and me, to gratefully accept this gift with dare and patience, with spirit of intelligence and piety, so that it may give abundant fruit responding to the talents that we have received.

They say that one day there was a man on a road with a cart full of food and suddenly the truck broke, without any possibility of reaching his destination. The carter stayed staring at his cart standing in the way and suddenly he had the luck of meeting St. Bernard who happened to be strolling by. Then, the carter begged the saint to ask God to repair his car so that he could continue on his way. St Bernard said: "I pray to God for you, my, friend but meanwhile, grab a mallet and begin to repair the broken truck wheel."

4. It is You to Whom I am Calling

"There are many people who complain about the rock in the middle of the road, but it is only one who stoops to remove it."

Human Psychology is Surprising.

When we really want something, our heart and guts lead us to forget about the others and to place ourselves in the first place. All of us have in mind the image of a child, stuck to the glass of the showcase in a toy store, saying "mine, mine, mine." Or the teenager grasping all the food without thinking of anyone else, or the "don Juan" ruining any woman who crosses his path, or an adult achieving his ambitions, without caring who falls around him. The logic of desire is within the most profound part of us and bears an impressive strength. It is something that we must also know from within.

However, the strength of the responsibility is quite different. When we find something that needs to be changed, we want it but not with the same intensity. When we see an injustice, something rebels inside us, but here we do not place ourselves in the first place as we look to around us to see if someone takes action. Here we are looking for other doers, others who should act... and try to stay behind the barrier. We even dare to judge others, find them guilty, to denounce other people... but that does not lead us to action with the immediacy of the desire outlined above.

Man becomes more human when he has a better control of the strong impulse of desire to assume responsibility towards mankind.

Do You Not Feel That?

We could list examples of people where we can see the different momentums of strength that desire and responsibility can play. Even the desire of good things over the responsibility of the environment's calling, the same God who calls through the environment.

We could talk about prophets who cry out to God asking for help... until they realize that it is God who is calling them to get involved and be the divine answer to that human prayer.

We will now only cite the example of Calasanz. He wished to occupy an important role in the Church to be more useful in his priestly and renewing action following the Council which had marked the major guidelines of reform. That desire led him to leave his land, his family, his inheritance. It brought him to a far-away country, to Rome. It was the strength of desire, a good desire, as most of the desires are.

But the world and God are asking him for another answer. The poor-street children, without a future, ask for a response. Calasanz realizes that... and looks to another side searching for someone who can answer this urgent call. He will devote time and effort talking with different groups, associations, religious, congregations... to make others respond to the cry of the children and God.

He will need to spend time until he realizes that there is no one else to do it. That it is he the one being called. That there is no way to look at others, with the expectation of what others will do, complaining, reporting on situations of injustice, protesting... The call is for him.

When he sees this (and it will take his time and efforts), he can say with full satisfaction: *"I found in Rome the definitive way to serve God by doing good to these little ones. And I will not leave it for anything in the world."* He is just joining responsibility with desire. He fell in love with the proposition that God made him.

This does not have anything to do with you? Are you still looking around for culprits of what you don't like? Don't you realize that Jesus is asking for a reply from you?

A Challenge

Dare to analyze your deepest desires. You should not fear looking at your desires of happiness, security, feeling loved by others (by the kids to whom you dedicate your life, by your brothers in community, by the so generous collaborators that help you), being free, learning, and enjoying life. The vast majority of the desires are good, as long as they do not become idols.

Enjoy letting your mind and heart wander with so many wishes... and see how they mark your life, how they guide it, sometimes even above your will and your freedom. Isn't it?

Now, setting aside those wishes for a moment, think about the calls of the world, of the poor, of God. List those calls that awaken your compassion, mercy, piety, sometimes rage and impotence. They are calls that God makes to you about responsibility for the reply.

What is driving your life: desire or responsibility? What type of evolution is being produced in your life about control of desires and the assumption of responsibility?

Even more difficult: where is happiness: in the satisfaction of desire or in carrying out my role in the world?

We already know we should never oppose face-forward what we believe is so dearly to us, as the wishes and wills, what I want and what is good, mine and ours, the child and the adult that is in every person.

Perhaps both elements are compatible and the only question is how to focus life, from what point of view, with what criteria. It is possible that we can then say with Jesus: *"I praise you, Father, because you have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed*

them to the simple ones" (Lk 10, 21). Perhaps then we can say with Calasanz that we have found our definite vocation that we won't let go for anything in the world. Perhaps then the promise of the Gospel will be fulfilled: *"I assure you that: no one who has left house, brothers, sisters, mother, father, children or finance for me and for the Gospel, shall not receive a hundredfold: now to the present, houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and finances, with persecutions; and in the coming age, eternal life"*. (Mk 10, 29-30)

And if God Calls You to...

What are you missing mostly in the world, in your environment, in the people who surround you? What is it that you would like to have left in the world when the time comes for you to leave it? What is what our Church most needs today? What is what God may be asking you now?

Maybe it is not necessary to think about distant countries, in extreme situations. Perhaps the call is to be more helpful in your community, to always create a good atmosphere in your environment, to bring joy and hope, to say a word of encouragement to the one who feels tired and is at your side...

Don't search within your wishes, but what the closer, those next to you, are asking of you. Don't look to the sides. God is telling you today, even by means of these lines: "Yes, it is you, whom I am calling. Don't you realize that I need you? Can't you see that it is precisely because I love you that I am asking for this answer? Can't you see that the happiness of your whole life depends on the answer you give me? Yes, it is you that I am calling".

While climbing the mountain, Jesus was calling those who He wanted to and they met with Him. You were among them. You said yes and joined him down that path. You're still someone loved and called by Jesus and you keep joining Him.

He appointed you, along with others, in community, to be his partner, to accompany him in his mission, his surrender, to be with him, to share his bread, to be a member of his group, to assume then his legacy.

He chose you, along with others, in community, to send you to preach. Yes, so you deliver His Good News, to prepare the way for Jesus to meet so many children and young people, to remember always that you are an envoy and not the Lord.

He gave you power to expel demons, to expel despair and sadness, to overcome ignorance and poverty, to show the way toward the Kingdom of God.

So he made of you a member of his group and perhaps he also changed your name, your identity, your criteria and your securities, to make you a new person.

Yes, it is you whom the Lord is now calling³.

³ Free paraphrase of Mk 3, 13-19.

5. Whatever will Happen, May it Happen with You, Lord⁴

This short prayer has helped me a lot in life and I believe that it can also be helpful to you.

Jesus chose us to be his companions, to be with Him throughout his life, in good times and in bad. He needed that first group as a support, as a continuation of his work, as sign of the Kingdom which was already being made present, as a privileged space for the presence of the Father and the Spirit, as a multiplier strategy of the necessary efficiency of the saving action of Jesus...

Yes, Jesus needed that initial group and needs our community which is also today the group of Jesus. That is why he chose those first disciples and for the same reason has chosen you and me.

Today we also choose you, Jesus, as a companion at all times, in the lights and in the shadows, in our dreams and in our fears, in successes and failures: whatever will happen, may it happen with you, Lord.

I know, Jesus that your company is not going to get rid of tough times, of failures, of disappointments, of crisis, of darkness. But going through those trances with you makes them more bearable.

The same applies at times of success, joy, happiness, may they also happen with you, Lord. May I not get distracted and forgetful in these circumstances: Always with you, Lord.

Lord, You are the Best Thing that has Happened to Me

I look at my short story, analyze the lived stages, and I have to tell you with joy that You, Jesus, you are the best thing that has happened to me in life. I have received great gifts and am grateful from the bottom of my heart: life, family, so many friends, opportunities that few people have been able to enjoy in the history of mankind, many happy moments, and a great satisfaction for what I've been doing in my journey... However, I have to tell you one and thousand times: You, Jesus, you are the best thing that has happened to me.

You have always been at my side, at times You have carried me in your arms, there are times when you've pushed me and you have remained silently waiting when I didn't want to leave place for You. You have spoken to my heart when I've opened the door... You are the best thing that has ever happened to me.

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord". (Ro 8, 35-39)

Having discovered your love that someone as great as You looks at me and calls me and chooses me and needs me... is the best thing that has ever happened to me and the best thing

⁴ The idea is taken from an article by Mikel Hernansanz, with that same title, published in Frontera-Hegian del ITVR from Vitoria ("Current situation and challenges of religious life" Felicísimo Martínez).

that can happen to anyone. I want it to remain so forever: whatever will happen, may it happen with you.

I want to be with You, that You be with me, not to satisfy my heart, or to seek the success in my efforts for the mission on behalf of others, or to mitigate the limitations of the affection that I receive in the community. I want you to be there, of course, but also

- When I see my own image, may I discover you there as my rock and my horizon
- When I'm really looking for my self-realization, remind me about the needs of others and my responsibility towards them,
- When I try to be coherent and I find that I am a sinner, remind me of the unconditional love of our Heavenly Father,
- When I need prestige and recognition, may I feel above all loved by you,
- Even when I lack of health, may I feel your hand on my hand,
- At all times and circumstances, may it happen with you, Lord.

"You are worth much more than all the gold, You are the air that I breathe, my reason, the first thing, the best thing that has happened: my Lord", thus sings the Ixcis Group.

Whatever will Happen, May it Happen to us With You, Lord

I know, now, that this prayer should also be made in plural: whatever will happen, may it happen to us with You, Lord.

I invite you to pray it in your small community: whatever will happen, may it happen to us with You, Lord. Each and every one of us is very different. I know that You make us brothers, but sometimes we seem incompatible. At all times You be the Centre, make your presence be felt, help us to make noticeable that You are in the community: at every time of prayer, in fraternal coexistence and in the wounds that we cause each other; in the concern for my brothers and mutual neglect; in our mission and in our sloth; in discernment and confrontations... whatever will happen, may it happen to us with You, Lord. That our community and everything that goes in it, may it happen to us with You.

The same thing in my Province, the Order and the Church: sometimes we look at the future with certain pessimism. We face moments of joy and celebration, difficult circumstances, important decisions, with honors and silence... Also hence, may it happen to us with You.

We have to say that prayer many times, also with all of mankind, and above all, with those most in need and in plural. That progress and crises, solidarity and injustices, violence and work for peace, whatever will happen, may it happen to us with You, Lord.

We must also say this prayer with Calasanz. He discovered the best of his life in a church called Santa Dorotea: it is no coincidence that etymologically it means "gift of God". We already know that coincidences are small miracles where God wants to remain anonymous. There, at Santa Dorotea, Calasanz found the treasure for which he sold everything he had: it was the best thing that had happened to him.

Calasanz, Like Saint Therese of Avila, knows that the prayer *"is being with whom we know that loves us"*, that *"whoever has God, is missing nothing"*: therein lies that unconditional trust which leads Calasanz to humility in moments of success and to hope in moments of apparent failure.

We, who identify ourselves with the disciples at Emmaus, feel that our heart burns even though we do not see Jesus walking at our side. He always walks with us, listening, explaining the Scripture, breaking bread for us, sharing his time and his life.

Whatever will happen to ME, may it happen with You, Lord.

Whatever will happen, may it happen to US with You, Lord.

I ONLY ASK YOU TO BE WITH ME

I do not ask you, Lord, to let the night go by, I only ask that You be with me.

I do not ask you to regain the joy of a grateful heart, I only ask that You be with me.

I do not ask you to jerk from my heart that sadness that chills me, I only ask you to be with me.

I do not ask you to free the feeling of failure that makes me think that it was not worth it, I only ask you to be with me.

I do not ask you, Lord, any benefits or security, I only ask you to be with me until the dawn of a new day.

6. In Love with the Mission

There are times when we have a heavy workload. There are times when in school we carry a heavy burden. Tiredness, multiple tasks, and concerns can become overwhelming; as well as minor daily educational failures become burdens, and the self-esteem that becomes weak when we do not see immediate positive results...

Perhaps that is the reason why we have to re-take every day the deep motivation that moves us, the passion that touched our heart one day and continues to do so today. Perhaps that is the reason why we have to assume the passion involved in every mission as the great fortune of knowing that we help with the most precious task that exists in the world.

The best part of a nation is its children. Children are the most important asset of a family. Children are the future of mankind. That is the task entrusted to us: to care for, educate, and prepare our precious children for the future.

I invite you now to join Calasanz in the passionate defense of the Piarist Mission beautifully described in the Memorial to Cardinal Miguel Angel Tonti (1621), as the Reporter of the Pontifical Commission in charge of studying the approval of Constitutions and the suitability or not of granting the Pious Schools the category of Religious Order with solemn vows.

The schools were in danger if Calasanz had not received this recognition. There were many existing Congregations and the Church preferred not to create new ones, but to orient towards those already in existence. Calasanz knows that education is a new mission, no one is going to take it as the core of his mission. The future of many poor children was at stake. The defense of Calasanz is precious: only someone touched by God can speak so well.

The historians of the Order have always qualified this document as a *“masterpiece”*, an *“original Canticle to the educational task”*, *“doctoral Thesis”* of Calasanz. The enthusiasm is evident. We have an exceptional writing showing a man of great determination and

extraordinary personality, completely identified with his vocation as an educator. The allegation not only disarmed Cardinal Tonti; it made him an enthusiast of the work of the Pious Schools and a personal friend of Calasanz.

A Passionate Defense of our Piarist Mission

Imagine that you are now accompanying Calasanz when he was going to present defense of our mission. Listen from his own words, that of a person in love with his mission at the age of 64, after a long time of dedication in body and soul to the children at the school. Let your heart vibrate and your lips repeat these words of Calasanz right now:

1. There is no doubt that amongst the greatest acts of the Supreme Pontiffs as Vicars of Christ on earth, is the approval of new Religious Orders.

2. It is something that, if it comes from God, it will result in the greatest honor of the Church, help and edification of men. His Divine Majesty bestows on men the ability to live like angels on earth in the midst of the world and dead to the world, changing from free men to slaves, from wise men to ignorant, and from being earthly to spiritual and celestial.

3. The Fourth Lateran Council prohibited the foundation of new Orders to avoid confusion and multiplicity of the same. Anyone in search of personal conversion could choose any of the already existing Orders.

4. They have given them sufficient reasons to declare tacitly that the Council was to prohibit only those that were superfluous and redundant, but not to forbid others, especially those for a particular, necessary and special goal in the Church of God.

5. The Pious Schools are to be found amongst these. Their goal is the most necessary and basic one, providing good education to the youth depends on the possibility of having a good or bad future life.

6. Therefore, there is no doubt that it be favored and endowed with that name -bearing in mind- cannot be denied to a Congregation which has already truly performed and observed the actions of a Religious Order. A title which has not been denied to so many others which exercise a ministry not as useful and necessary as ours, and perhaps are not applauded and so desired by all. They are not solicited as this one which, after only a few years, is asked for and requested by so many.

The ministry of education is really the most worthy, the most noble, the most meritorious, the most beneficial, the most useful, the most necessary, the most natural, the most reasonable, the most worthy of thanks, the most pleasing, and the most glorious.

7. It is the most worthy because it deals with the salvation of body and soul.

8. It is the most noble because it is an angelic and divine ministry exercised by guardian angels with which teachers become co-operators.

9. It is the most meritorious because it performs throughout the entire Church the most effective remedy for the protection and eradication of evil, for youth of all classes through piety and letters.

10. *It is the most beneficial because it helps everybody in everything, without exception. Providing them with all that is necessary, teaching all children and including the accompaniment of them to their homes.*

11. *It is the most useful because of the changes seen in the life of children who are unrecognizable from what they were before they entered the school.*

12. *It is the most necessary because of the corruption of morals and lure of vices which dominate those who have been badly educated. It is necessary also for the needs of the Church for which the boys attending Continuous Prayer intercede as they take turns in the oratory.*

13. *It is the most natural because everybody instinctively wants the best education for their children.*

14. *It is the most reasonable, for princes and cities. This may be clearly seen by the contrary effects of those who lack education and who by their injurious actions disturb peace and bother people.*

15. *It is the most worthy of thanks not only as it is demonstrated by citizens in general who universally applaud and request it for their respective countries, it is also gratefully viewed by God, more than the conversion of one sinner, because in the school not only they repent from their sins, but many are preserved in their innocence.*

16. *It is the most pleasing for those called to work in this vineyard where the harvest is so abundant.*

17. *It is most glorious for the religious and for those who practice and promote it with their authority and favors; for the Supreme Pontiff to establish and approve it as a Religious Order, and finally for God because this ministry saves and sanctifies so many souls.*

18. *The numerous existing Orders ought not to be an obstacle, nor must the prohibition of the Council mentioned above because variety is a marvelous ornament of the Church. Furthermore, the abundance of Orders should not be regulated by mere numbers. As long as they are useful, necessary, not those that do not have a specific ministry but are just general and common, like others.*

19. *This should be enough to offer a similar interpretation of the said canon, which far from being contrary to the present request, rather advocates its concession. Because by blaming excessively the abundance of superfluous Orders, it tacitly exalts those which are useful and particular.*

20. *This danger of confusion is still less an obstacle. If by confusion with other Orders is meant the habit, ours is different. So, this danger is very remote. A great number of many other Orders like Capuchins, Franciscans, Dominicans and Augustinians in particular, praise our Institute, and send candidates to us and also ask for foundations.*

21. *As far as Bishops are concerned, much less of an objection, because they go out of their way to introduce our schools in their dioceses. This is worthy of mature consideration.*

22. As for mendicancy, it is not injurious to the other Orders because, if they are mendicants, it gives them an occasion to trust more in the Divine Providence. If they are secular, the issue is irrelevant, since they do not live on alms.

23. If anyone insists that education is sufficient as provided for by seminaries, the Jesuit Fathers and the secular teachers, this does nothing more than confirm the general opinion about the need for education.

Indeed, even if secular teachers had the necessary charity, did not shun fatigues, and once the need ceased to exist did not do what the Gospel says, a hired man flees because he has no concern for the sheep, and that is because a hired person learns more about vice than virtue. And even if seminaries in the diocese, according to the Council, were not only to form good shepherds but also obedient sheep, they could only educate a small number. And supposing the Jesuits had permission, in conformity to their ministry, to work in small towns and among poor people – who are the most abundant in the world – are admitted in many states and republics and when they do not accept them denying themselves a greater good. Being this a true fact, there is another principal argument: the world is large; “the harvest is great; the laborers are few”.

24. After showing the usefulness and need of this work, it logically follows the need to establish it as a Religious Order to prevent it from disappearing in the future.

It also follows that the Institute needs to expand and propagate itself according to the needs, desires, and petitions of so many. These cannot be done without many laborers. Those cannot easily be secured if they lack great generosity and a call to an Order already approved where they will enjoy a secure life and be ordained to the priesthood, where they will find difficulties coming from a life full of mortifications coming from the obligation of being with poor boys, tiring because of the constant efforts brought about by a constant, demanding profession which is detestable by the flesh that considers contemptible the education of the children of the poor.

25. Finally, our Holy Mother the Church has been used to grant solemn vows to so many other ministries; why not to this one which is a compendium of all the others? In case of necessity, it helps people in all other Institutes to assist them and beyond this, by means of a good education, it habitually trains and prepares souls to be able to receive the fruits of all other ministries.

For if in the morning we foretell the weather for the rest of the day and from good beginnings a good end, and the rest of life’s journey depends on the education received in tender childhood – the good odor is never lost as in the case of a vessel that once contained good liquor – who cannot see that so much greater advantage and facility will be experienced by other Religious Institutes in the exercise of their ministries the greater has been the preparation of some individuals by good education?

26. If our Holy Church has conceded the elevation to the rank of an Order to so many Institutes of general and common ministries, why not to one with a particular and specific ministry? If the Church has granted it to so many Institutes with a particular ministry, perhaps not so necessary or at least not so solicited, why not to this one so necessary and so much requested? If that

favor has been granted to those that help to care for the sick and rescue captives, why not to those who cure, preserve and redeem souls? If it has been granted to those who exercise a general or particular ministry in active life only or to those who lead a contemplative life, why is the favor to be denied to those who with one and the other ministry live a mixed life which is more perfect? If this favor has been granted to those who help people to die well, is it not more reasonable to grant it to those who help others from their tender years to lead a good life on which depends not only a good death, but also the peace and tranquility of peoples, good government of cities and princess, the propagation of the faith, the conversion of heretics and finally, the reform, of all Christianity?

Renew our Love

Doesn't this passionate defense of Calasanz impress you? Is it not also what you discover in your inner self, despite moments of fatigue and difficulty?

"Nothing have you given to Christ, if you have not given all your heart", said Calasanz⁵.

Today, Lord, I renew my love for You and the mission to which You call me. I thank you for the confidence that you deposit in me and in the Pious Schools. And I ask of you the strength to respond to You and to so many children and young people.

If the note said: "One note does not make a melody...", there would be no symphonies.

If a word said: "One word cannot do a page...", there would be no books.

If a stone said: "One stone cannot lift a wall...", there would be no houses.

If a drop of water said: "One drop cannot form a river...", there would be no oceans.

If a grain of wheat said: "A grain cannot fill a field...", there would be no harvest.

If the man said: "One gesture of love cannot help mankind..."

There would be no justice, peace, dignity, nor happiness on man's land.

Just like the symphony needs every note, the house needs every stone,

the ocean needs every drop, the harvest needs each grain of wheat,

mankind needs you, wherever you are⁶.

7. In the First Row

Humans are the most destitute beings at birth... and during all childhood! A long time when compared with any other animal. That weakness is precisely what allows us to develop qualities and possibilities unthinkable in other beings.

We are born depending on others. It is wonderful to discover that we owe our life and everything that we are to others. We are simple and wonderful creatures, bred and cared for by others. This reality wakes in us an attitude of gratitude and gives us a clearer indication of the heavenly Father who is always by our side.

In adolescence, our own development leads us to find the autonomy from our parents, to be ourselves in the interdependence with friends.

⁵ Miró and Miguel Ángel Asiain. *Vivir hoy el carisma de Calasanz*. ICCE. 2000. Page 129.

⁶ Gabriel Leal.

Upon reaching the adult stage, other people start to rely on us. We are no longer the center as in the phase of childhood, or peers as in the youth phase: we are now responsible and we should take care of others.

Finally, in old age, we return again to depending on others. And these constraints, always tough, remind us that we have always been creatures in God's hands... and in the hands of those who surround us!

At all stages of life, we want to be cared for, that people focus on us, to be met, recognized. We never stop being children in need of others, thank God.

At all ages, we want to be autonomous, walk on our own, make our decisions, and be ourselves. We never stop wanting to be free, thank God.

So far, everything is normal.

The Call to Take a Step Forward

The most decisive personal challenge is to discover that each one is distinct from the others, that each person is unique, and that you are the only one that can carry out your mission. If you don't do what God and the world expects from you, that task will be pending for all eternity. Here is the great challenge of your mission and your life.

If Calasanz had not taken a decision, not only the Pious Schools would be lacking, but thousands of children would have had a much worse life and perhaps the universal right to education would be still pending in the world.

Whenever there is a need in the world, whenever a cry goes up to the sky asking for a response, God will make the same question: "*Who shall I send?*"

Since our young age we are accustomed to having another person who responds to our needs. They are our parents, our teachers, elders... always the others!

Excuses are easy to find: others know more, do better, and have more experience... Sometimes we use a false humility not to respond: I am not capable, I am not worthy... Sometimes we compare and we grab an alibi to our measure: I've done enough, it is now someone else's turn...

However, God's question is always fluttering around us: "*Who shall I send?*"

Who shall I send to help that companion in your community that needs a timely word? Who shall I send to that young man to encourage him? Who shall I send to that child that has so little future? Who will I send to that disoriented family? Who shall I send to make happier my environment? Who shall I send to witness my immense mercy?

I Care About Everything, Count on Me

It is a constant in the Bible to make excuses when one is called: I am tongue-tied (Moses), I am a child (Jeremiah), I am not worth anything, I am old, I am ill, and there are others better than me...

We forget that "*You did not choose me, but I chose you*" forget (Jn 15, 16)

Although it seems difficult, sometimes impossible (look at Mary in the Annunciation), there is no other reasonable attitude than taking a step forward:

- *"Abraham was 75 years old when he left his land"* (Gn 12, 4)
- *"Speak, Lord, your servant listens",* says Samuel (1 Sa 3, 10).
- *"Behold the handmaid of the Lord, let it be to me according to your Word"* (Lk 1, 38)
- *"If it is possible, remove this cup from me, but may your will be done, not mine"* (Lk 22, 42)

I insist. We cannot look to the sides, look for another that will give the answer that God is now asking of you. The "count on me" attitude is key.

The disciples of Milani said that a key to growing was the discovery of being sovereigns of all, being convinced that *"I care"*, that everything that happens to my side, that everything asking for a response is challenging me and I can only say *"that I also care"*, I am also the sovereign in that.

"The voice of God is the voice of the Spirit, going and coming, touching the heart and passing, nor knowing where it is when it is blowing. It matters much to always be alert in case he arrives suddenly and walks away without result", said Calasanz⁷.

We should, therefore, be attentive and available, to move to the first row without looking back, nor even to the sides: here I am, Lord, to do your will. I know that I am not worthy of You, but with You I'm going wherever you want, I offer you my hands for whatever you want... Count on me!

SELECTION OF APOSTLES

Imagine that to form the group of his first disciples, to set up the Church, Jesus had consulted an agency specializing in the selection of personnel. This might have been the final report:

"Dear Sir:

Thank you for having sent us the curriculum vitae of the twelve persons you chose to give them positions of responsibility in your new organization. All have already been subjected to an impressive series of tests, the results have been handled by computer and we have performed with each one of them a personalized interview with our consultant on skills for Ministry.

Our team has come to the conclusion that most of your candidates lack experience, has little training and few skills for the type of business that you intend to start. They have no team spirit. We advise you to continue looking for other candidates with more experience in management and better skills.

Simon Peter is emotionally unstable, subject to sudden changes of mood. Andrew has no qualities to assume responsibilities. Two brothers, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, place their personal interests before their service to the business. Thomas has a tendency to argue about anything, it would only chill the enthusiasm of the whole team. Matthew's name is in the black list of the Committee of the Great Jerusalem for honesty in business. James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus no doubt tend to radicalism.

⁷ EP 131.

However, one of the candidates has great potential. He is capable and creative, he has the ability to deal with people, a developed sense of business and does not lack relations with the upscale members of society. We advise you to take Judas Iscariot as your manager and your right hand. He is motivated, ambitious and not afraid of responsibilities."⁸

8. A Task that is Also Yours and Mine

We began recalling with gratitude that the Pious Schools are the work of God and of the lucky daring and unique patience of Saint Joseph Calasanz.

We finish this section with a humble and grateful attitude, feeling happy that the Pious Schools are also your and my work, of this dedication we are offering to so many children and young people, of that response that tries to be faithful to the call received.

Today, we feel, we are, not only the followers and collaborators of Calasanz and of the same God, but we feel and are their face wherever we are. Our communities, our works, our brothers and companions and many collaborators, including You and me, we have in our hands this wonder of the Pious Schools, we are the Pious Schools.

That is our mission that we accept with pleasure and responsibility, knowing that "*we carry this treasure in earthen vessels, to make it see that such an extraordinary strength is of God and does not come from us*" (2 Co 4, 7).

SEND US CRAZY PEOPLE

Oh God! Send us crazy people, those who are totally committed, to the point of forgetting about them, those who love with something more than with words, who truly offer their life up to the end.

Give us crazy people, mad, passionate, men able to take the leap towards insecurity, to the surprising uncertainty of poverty; give us crazy people, that accept to dilute within the masses, unpretentious of even having a footstool built in their name, that do not use their superior authority to their advantage.

Give us crazy people, present crazy people, lovers of a simple lifestyle, efficient liberators of the proletariat, peace lovers, with a pure conscience, determined to never betray, able to accept any task, to go wherever, free and obedient, spontaneous and tenacious, sweet and strong⁹.

Gives us crazy people, Lord, make us crazy as well. Help us spread this healthy madness to others, to other young people, so that this work of yours and of Calasanz will last and continue approaching your Kingdom to this world that so badly needs it.

⁸ Pierre Trevet. "Parábolas de un cura rural". Monte Carmelo. 2007. Pages 162-163.

⁹ L.J. Lebre. "Gritos y plegarias", p. 310.

DIBUJO

I have been in Rome for five years and am planning on going back to Spain. I have seen so much need amongst the poor children that I think something should be done for their education.

II. NOVELTY IN THE HISTORY

“Saint Joseph Calasanz, an inspired interpreter of the signs of his time, founded a clerical institute, which the Church acknowledged to be of pontifical right, received into its bosom, and approved as the Order of Poor Clerics Regular of The Mother of God of the Pious Schools. Thus, he created a new school, intimately connected with the founding charism, the first model of integral, popular and Christian education through which he wanted to free children and youth from the bondage of sin and ignorance.”
(Constitutions 2)

9. The Great News: A School for All

There have always been teachers and disciples; parents educating their children, teachers of trades with apprentices, the formation of nobles and clergy... There has always been a school of some sort.

However, Calasanz introduces a great novelty to start the first popular and free public school in Europe. Education is not for the few, for the privileged few who are so lucky, but for all.

It will take 350 years before the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims the universality of the right to education for all. And still we have to report that millions of children still do not have access to school.

Calasanz, Creator of a New School

Josep Domènech i Mitra called Calasanz "an educational giant": *“It was four centuries ago that the great Spanish educator, Joseph Calasanz, founded the Pious schools, the first step on the long and difficult path towards the globalization of, free education. His philosophy and his life’s work were highly innovative and left their mark on this and many other aspects of education. He was compared to Comenius in the 17th century, and a number of parallels can be drawn between the two educators. Comenius was the educator of Protestant Europe and Calasanz the educator of Catholic Europe. Both were born in the sixteenth century, Calasanz in 1557 and Comenius in 1592. Both promoted universal education and the use of national languages in schools. Both were responsible for significant innovations in teaching methods and educational structure. However, history has always recognized the merits of Comenius. It has not been equally generous with Calasanz. This historical injustice has three basic causes. First, over-idealization by Calasanz’ biographers and followers appear to have produced a backlash. Secondly, too much emphasis has been placed on Calasanz’ religious life, overshadowing his strictly educational achievements. Thirdly, the fact that Calasanz left very few documents and did not provide a systematic account of his educational theory. This has made it difficult to*

appreciate and understand the significance of his contribution The key to Calasanz' thinking can be found in his letters—more than 10,000 of them— and in his texts on the founding, organization and operation of his schools and his congregation”¹⁰.

Aren't you excited by reading this paragraph? Calasanz was a visionary, a great discoverer. He knew how to interpret the signs of the times and hear what God was asking him: a new school to serve thousands of children and make a better world. Calasanz discovered, got underway, a dynamism of liberation from ignorance and sin for children and young people. Practically nothing!

We will not stop now in his pedagogical innovations, because they are well known: a popular school and free for all, without discrimination, strict application of Christian principles with respect and welcome to followers of other religions, school graduation by levels, the excellent organization of large schools with their respective regulations and very useful records, concerns about physical education and hygiene, the formation of educators, the accompaniment of children from school to their homes, the systematization and escalation of the contents, timely discipline, the preventive method, the international expansion of the schools...

Today's Novelty of the Pious Schools

Today we also have the challenge of interpreting our time and updating the Pious Schools to be faithful to the sending of the Lord, so that our works will respond to the children and young people of our time, so they will make a better world for all mankind.

When more than 57 million children still do not have access to primary schools, according to UNESCO in 2011, or the number of illiterates is approaching the 900 million people, the Piarist mission continues to be fully necessary and urgent.

Primary schooling continues to be a novelty in the XXI century, in many countries of the world, and especially in Africa for millions of children. Even more so, high school remains a novelty for children to achieve a real functional literacy level. There are a lot of Piarist missions waiting for us. As in times of Calasanz, we can say that our Piarist presence has a high demand and that we must continue to respond to the call of so many children that are awaiting us.

In countries where education for all has been achieved, it is still very new to have a school founded based on the intuitions of Calasanz:

- A school which is a center, which is reference for students and also for the families as well as the environment in which it is located. A school that brings together, that gathers, where those who attend, get to enjoy it. A school that aims to be a full time center, not limited to the academic schedule and the school calendar, but a school that is always open, with safe playgrounds town square-style. A school that offers activities at all times, at the end of the school day, during the weekends and holiday periods. A school that invites those who have completed their formative stage in it. A school that is the center as well as the referral center. For all of these reasons, there is only one way: placing the child or the young person in the center, and above all other plans and projects. This can be done in many ways. Perhaps the core issue is that

¹⁰From <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/publications/ThinkersPdf/calasanz.pdf>

each one feels loved and fully respected. A young man asked his teacher: "*Do you want to help me or do you love me?*"

- A school that is educational, as well as instructive, one that will help to develop the person as a whole: the intellectual, the emotional, the relational, social, religious, physical dimensions... all! A school that contains many schools inside: academic, sporting, cultural, social, pastoral services and complementary activities. A comprehensive school that seeks the harmonious development of each student with a personal and close accompaniment.
- An evangelizing school, in addition to training in the religious culture. Because it offers religious formation, meaningful experiences that can enable the encounter with the Lord, channels of service and solidarity, personal progress in the following of Jesus, growth and life reference groups. A school that during the academic schedule and outside it, creates an environment where it is possible the invitation to follow Jesus because there is a clear, explicit and respectful offer. A school that has a Piarist Christian Community that becomes the soul of the school and the offer of ecclesial insertion and arrival point of pastoral proposals.
- A transformative school collaborating in the construction of a better world for all. An inclusive school, allowing space for everyone, without discrimination, where we try to find the best place for each person. A school embedded in reality and critical of itself, committed to be close to the most needy. A school that transmits values and, above all, virtues. One that invites to solidarity actions, to commitment to life, to militancy for a better world. A school that becomes a center of transformation because it prepares people to do this and it becomes a platform for social transformation.
- A school that convokes all those who form part of it: students, families, teachers, educators, staff that makes it possible, the closest and collaborators, those who have already completed the school stage, people in the environment. A school that knows how to be "school", a group that brings together and takes everyone into account. A school that seeks to be an evangelizing, transformative and educational reference in the place where it is located. A school that is structured so each person and each group can make its specific contribution always striving for the achievement of the Piarist mission.

A school like that is a novelty and is also needed in societies that think they have already solved the education issues of their children and youth. Don't you think so?

Before the end of this chapter, we can ask the always nagging question: is our Piarist center a novelty? Does it provide everything specific to our society? My work and yours portray a Calasancian novelty, or are they rather a routine, repetitious, and considered professionalism, but nothing else...? Do you think that in a school like that someone could feel excluded, that there could be someone who might not contribute anything, regardless of his age or state of health?

If we offer the same as other centers, if we are not needed because there are enough schools for our students, then we need to ask ourselves whether we are superfluous, and we have to move on and search for other places or find another way of doing things.

And the same could be said about your and my work: if we don't bring something new and specific as good Piarist educators, as priests, as religious, as companions, then we need to relocate to be faithful to the always original and very necessary mission of Calasanz.

We have to be creative and innovative, always keeping alert to the needs of the time and each person, by updating our training and our works, not settling for what we have achieved, together finding the role and contribution of each, because we know that we have the great fortune and great responsibility to collaborate with God himself, in the future of many children and young people, as well as the advent of the Kingdom of God into our world.

PLANS

If your plans are for one year, sow wheat;
If they are for ten, plant a tree;
If they are for a hundred years, instruct the people.
Sowing wheat, you will reap once;
planting a tree, you will reap tenfold;
instructing the people, you will reap a hundred times¹¹.

10. Our Mission at School... and in Other Platforms

The great platform of our Piarist mission is the school. It is an insistence of Calasanz and Piarist tradition throughout these centuries, as you can see by the large number of schools and educational centers where the Piarist are present.

According to the General Secretariat of the Ministry in 2011, we have 189 schools¹², serving with the dedication of five hundred Piarist religious and more than ten thousand lay persons, and 125,000 students. To that number it is necessary to add all people who, somehow, make up the school reality: families, teachers and other educators, partners, close people, etc.

Today the school remains, without doubt, an excellent instance in many countries for children to be able to have access to a quality type of education, and it is also a privileged space for evangelization.

Next to the work in schools, Piarist history has led us to a reality where there are many other platforms where the Piarist mission is also carried out:

- 121 parishes¹³ serving 570,000 people, mostly in America (358,000), Africa and Asia (140,000), Italy and Central Europe (78,000) and Spain (14,000).
- 106 temples of public worship¹⁴, usually in our own schools.
- 230 programs of non-formal education: homes and boarding schools, socio-educational centers, hostels and retreat houses, schools for educators, young people and adult literacy programs, support for school, children's dining, volunteering, awareness-raising, social programs...

¹¹ Kuant-Sen.

¹² Piarist schools: 60 in Spain, 33 in Italy and Central Europe, 36 in Africa and Asia, 60 in America.

¹³ Piarist parishes: 28 in Italy and Central Europe, 40 in Spain, 37 in the Americas, 16 in Africa and Asia.

¹⁴ Public worship temples: 24 in Spain, 22 in Italy and Central Europe, 18 in Africa and Asia, 42 in America.

- 27 extracurricular pastoral centers, usually very close to Piarist works, although with their own autonomy.
- ... and many more initiatives that are not easily classified.

The difficulty posed by the implementation underway and the sustainability of formal educational centers in countries where there is no State aid for this purpose, has led to boost other platforms of Piarist mission, also effectively achieving the Calasanctian purposes.

Parishes, and perhaps even more the temples of worship of the Piarist Schools, have provided and continue to provide a valuable service to the Church and to the places where they are located. They always have the challenge of clearly maintaining their Piarist identity with the necessary diocesan coordination, working harmoniously with other Piarist works in the same place and demarcation, prioritizing the Piarist mission. When there is a Piarist project of school and parish together, the possibilities for action and the results are multiplied.

Together with Schools and parishes (and centers of worship), many works, centers, projects and programs that today are called "non-formal education" have been emerging. These works are gaining their charter of nature in the Pious Schools because they allow access to children and young people from popular strata, because they complement strongly the action of our schools and they respond perfectly to the Piarist goals.

The versatility of these works to adapt constantly to the needs of the recipients and the possibilities of available resources, the least difficulty to get financing, the flexibility with which they open the doors to volunteering, are some of their interesting features.

Especially for the initial moments of Piarist presences is being, and even more in the future, may be a line of Piarist mission of great value.

The challenge of these works of non-formal education, as well as the normal ones with other Piarist works (coordination in the locality and demarcation, keeping the Piarist identity, etc.) is achieving their sustainability in the time and to continue with the necessary flexibility.

The Mission is More than Concrete Works

The Piarist Mission in the world is certainly exciting, as well as its vitality to open the way over time, depending on the different situations.

It is essential that we do not forget what is really important, that we do not transform our means into goals, that we discover ourselves more as envoys than as owners, that we consider our works as a means to serve God and others, especially those that are in need, following Calasanz' footsteps.

This is something that each of us has to remember a thousand times, you and I, each of our works, each Piarist Province, the Pious Schools and all of us considered as servants and having been sent Lord, may we never forget that You are the center and the one who sends us.

THE SHELTER CLUB

It was a dangerous coast, battered by the waves and large hurricanes. It had witnessed countless shipwrecks. The captains of the ships sought not to pass close by it because of the dangers. However, every year, several boats were sinking in the rocks and reefs around those places.

Those who lived there, mercifully built a small ranch, with a team of lifeguards. Year after year, they collected funds to support it. The life-saving team became experts and the number of victims was decreasing.

The small shelter grew in fame and received some legacies. The funds were increasing and a Treasurer and a Committee were appointed to manage the funds.

Eventually, they began to feel ashamed of the poor conditions of the place and they decided to improve it, to be able to better serve the poor shipwrecked. At that time, they began to pay salaries to the lifeguards (previously volunteers) to better serve the castaways. A new building was built to make the shelter more presentable and be in better conditions to receive the poor shipwrecked.

Fame was growing. Many people asked to be members of the team even as honorary members, contributing funds. They made a flag, a slogan and a regulation: thus, the institution became known as "The Shelter Club".

The fame of "The Shelter Club " grew even more. A restaurant was built to serve the members; tennis courts and ballrooms were made, etc.

One day, during a luncheon-meeting of the members, a shipwreck occurred. The team went out to save the victims. When they arrived, they were wet, dirty. The castaways included whites, blacks, and yellows - people of all kinds - because the ship that had sunk was a boat carrying poor people seeking work elsewhere. When they saw the victims, the Shelter Club management held an Emergency Meeting and decided to provide the garage to accommodate the recently shipwrecked people, for a short period, since the place would soon be used to greet the guests at the night club parties.

That night, in an Extraordinary Session, it was decided that if some members wanted to provide assistance to that type of workers entering the shelter, it would be better to build a small ranch beyond the coast, to save nocturnal shipwrecks.¹⁵

11. Calasanz' Intuition Defined on a Mission

Among the many novelties of Calasanz, beyond didactic and organizational contributions of great value, is that of marking the purpose of the mission, launching a strategy to achieve the goal and pointing out three key points:

We could paraphrase Calasanz, imagining in his lips: *"Piety and letters for the reformation of the Christian society, for the happiness of the student and to give glory to God."*

Calasanz sees the unfairness of the society in which he lives: street children, futureless, without education, without the possibility of personal development. There is the germ of bad

¹⁵ José DAVID. "Juegos y trabajo social".

habits, of the bondage of ignorance, of a society that has to be changed. The way to change this situation is by Christian education, Piety and Letters, or Spirit and Letters¹⁶.

The Goals of Piarist Education

First Calasanz indicates the goals of education. What seems so simple, is imperative to be able to educate: determining what do we want with our action.

Frequently in our day to day work we forget these purposes and we are blind-sided by others: the students must learn much, they must pass the official exams or must succeed in their subsequent studies, they must behave well, not disturb, bring good memories of the school, and families must feel satisfied...

Calasanz indicates three purposes:

1. Educate to transform society and make possible a world as God intends.

DIBUJO: (de arriba abajo)

PIARIST MISSION

Social transformation, happiness of the student, give glory to God

Pastoral, Poor

Evangelization – Education

Children and youth / three praecipue...

*"The reform of the Christian society lies in the diligent practice of this mission"*¹⁷.

What Calasanz searches is the reform of people and, with them, of society. It is about avoiding bad habits and setting in place the Piety and Letters.

In an era of Church reform with the Council of Trent, this type of education also means a major renovation to the Church.

This is the horizon of our Piarist education which must always be present: the transformation of our society.

2. Enable the happiness of the student throughout his life.

*"If children, from their earliest years are instructed diligently in piety and letters, it must undoubtedly be expected that their whole life will be a happy one"*¹⁸.

A second objective is to facilitate the life of the students, prepare them for a fuller and happier life full of more possibilities.

The educational process represents efforts, hard times, but the educational purpose is the happiness of the student in the course of his life, including the present time. We must make a

¹⁶ Giráldez Miguel, *¿Piedad y letras? ¿Espíritu y letras?*, Ephemerides Calasancianae, nº 2, February 2012, pp. 162-164.

¹⁷ Preamble of Calasanz' Constitutions, 2.

¹⁸ Preamble of Calasanz' Constitutions, 2.

school where they are comfortable, happy, valuing what they do and accompanying them in the trances of major problems. The school must also be their home.

3. Give glory to God and be useful to our neighbor.

"For the glory of Almighty God and usefulness of the neighbor" is the end of the Constitutions of Calasanz.

*"The reason for us to work well and with commitment should be to please God"*¹⁹.

All of our Piarist life and mission, our school and works, have to be for God's glory and usefulness of thy neighbor. Not only because collaborating in building the Kingdom in this world, or not just because God's glory is the happiness of his children, but also because throughout our life and mission we have to be signs of the immense love of our heavenly Father.

The Way: Christian Education, Piety and Letters

There are many paths to reach a better world, happier people and a greater glory of God: the political changes, economic and legal reforms, scientific and technological discoveries, moral and philosophical reflections and ethical and religious exhortations...

Calasanz proposes education as the way to achieve all of this. An education with two major pillars: religious formation and human formation. Today we would say Christian education.

*"I want to remind everyone that you must carefully take care of the schools, which is our main mission; not only in terms of the letters, but also in terms of the holy fear of God"*²⁰.

It is good to remember that the school is a means to achieve the core objective. Quite often the risk of converting the means into goals surfaces and we undermine our mission.

Three Priorities

Calasanz not only indicates the purpose of the Piarist mission and marks the path of education, but also points out some priorities, a few *"praecipue"* that better define our action:

1. Mainly the poor.

*"We never will look down on poor children because our Institution was founded for them"*²¹.

*"What is done for one of the poor children is actually done for Christ. The same is not said about the rich."*²²

Calasanz opens his schools to all, also for the rich and, of course, for the poor. But his preference and alertness is to cater to the needy in a constant manner.

Clearly Calasanz speaks of the economically poor. So the traps that we can set extending the concept of poor to accommodate ourselves, are not valid. The priority is for those who have less opportunities and this has to stand out, above all, depending on the level of resources available. The Piarist mission also sets as a priority education for children and young people with any type of poverty: intellectual, social, cultural, religious... Piarist education is for everyone... and mainly for the poor.

¹⁹ EP 405.

²⁰ Letter 1068, 02/24/1629.

²¹ Letter 1319.

²² Letter 3041.

*"It would be a good thing for us to know how to lower ourselves to the capacity of children, because the Church has entrusted us their instruction"*²³.

2. Mainly children and young people.

Piarist mission can reach recipients of all ages, as well as adults, families, the closest people and collaborators.

But the priority for Calasanz and the Piarist are children and young people, starting from infancy. The work of planting, of equipping in the early years is very important for proper personal development. It is a key time to prevent deficiencies that could mark them for life.

Now, we must not forget that a Piarist priority is also the youth, and perhaps our reality here is more deficient. We, Piarist, have devoted a lot to kids, adolescents, and little to adults, and even less to young adults. Youth age is the time to crystallize options, to structure life: the Piarist mission includes the accompaniment and training at this time. In our time, in addition, the juvenile stage is extended and occupies more and more years in life.

3. Mainly pastoral action and catechesis.

*"Since our ultimate goal is education in faith, following the example of our Holy Founder and our tradition, we consider catechesis to be the fundamental means of our apostolate"*²⁴.

Educating in the faith today is to make possible the first announcement, to make known the message, facilitating the encounter with the Lord, proposing a way of life according to the Gospel, inviting the group and the ecclesial community. These tasks are a priority in the Piarist Mission in schools and in all the works.

Our Piarist Mission Today

Today we, Piarist, often say that our mission is to "*evangelize by educating*". Certainly that is the core, but we should enrich this claim including the goals and perhaps also the priorities. Thus we highlight more our specificity with respect to other religious entities.

Then we should say "*evangelize educating (with priority to the poor, children and youth, to pastoral action) to make a better world, happier people and to give glory to God.*"

Perhaps here and now it is a good opportunity to reaffirm to You, Lord, my answer to this mission. To tell you to keep counting on me. Help me to be faithful to you, help your Pious Schools in this great mission.

TEACHER OF TRUTH

A mediocre teacher, says.

A good teacher, explains.

A great teacher inspires.

An excellent teacher, makes.

Teacher! You work for eternity:

No one can tell where and when your influence ends.

²³ Letter 2577, 08/20/1636.

²⁴ Constitutions 96.

12. The Piarist Identity of Our Ministry²⁵

The General Congregation has recently published a simple and compact document, entitled "The Calasancian Identity of Our Ministry"²⁶.

In a few pages it collects ten characteristic elements of our Ministry, defines them with a list of indicators, proposes six transverse lines that have to always be present and, finally, suggests some possible practical applications.

Have you seen or read this publication? It is a valuable instrument to be able to make an in-depth analysis of each one of our works and also a mirror where we can see ourselves to check the degree of reality in our identification with the Piarist style.

I invite you to read it now as if it were a test, to discover what I can and I must do to move forward.

The Ten Characteristic Elements

These are the ten characteristic elements of identity of our Piarist Ministry:

1. The centrality of children and young people. Their human and Christian fulfillments, as well as their happiness, are the core of the Piarist mission.
2. The option for the poor. We opt for a popular education, we educate from the perspective of the poor, facilitating access to formal education to those who have a hard-time, and we respond to the challenge of the new poverties.
3. The educational and pastoral quality. We offer a comprehensive education that prepares for life and includes goals, objectives, methodology, resources and evaluation.
4. The proclamation of the Gospel. We explicitly announce the Gospel in our works, we seek to live in accordance with it and catechesis, solidarity actions, continuous prayer, spiritual life, sacramental life, vocation discernment and ecclesial inclusion are promoted.
5. The reform of society. We want children and young people to discover that they live in society and to engage in the construction of a more just and fraternal world in the light of the Gospel.
6. The shared mission. We make it possible the co-responsibility of the laity with which we share charism and mission, and form Christian communities of reference in our works.
7. The integration of the family. We seek the involvement of the family in the Piarist work.
8. The accompaniment. We attend to each student to make him feel loved and respected, and we offer all means for their integral development.
9. The training of educators. We cultivate the identity of the Piarist educator so that he can be a reference in his work of educating and evangelizing, and open to innovation and continuous improvement.

²⁵ Interesting the Salutatio of Fr. General published in Ephemerides, June 2010.

²⁶ General Congregation. "The Calasancian identity". ICCE, 2012.

10. The sense of belonging to the Church. Our works, a part of the Church, encourage Piarist Christian communities and participate in the Mission of the local and universal Church according to our own Ministry.

Cross-cutting Actions in the Piarist Ministry

These features of our Ministry are carried out following six transversal lines:

1. Reality analysis of the situation. To detect the needs, interests, resources and possibilities in each and every situation.
2. Reflection and internal evaluation. To upgrade decisions favoring the increasing quality of our Ministry.
3. Organization. Arrange and coordinate the human and material resources.
4. Implementation. Implementation of the various actions.
5. Communication and awareness-raising. To awaken consciences and let our mission be known.
6. Work in network. To work together, share resources and multiply the possibilities.

We should not stay give these lists a quick reading. We must understand that behind these lines the backbone of our mission is described. We are placing at stake what we represent in our works and school projects. That is where you and I are placing us at stake, as well as the Pious Schools, possibly affecting our own identity.

It is possible that there you find a proposal for personal advancement, a suggestion to enrich the action of the Piarist presence in what you are, a renewal of the dedication and love that you put into your dedication to children and young people.

If so, we can proclaim once more together, along with all the people who make up the Pious Schools, the following Piarist Mission Statement. It is also good to slowly reflect on each of the claims that are being made: they may change our way of thinking and our life. So it be. And also, why not, we can pray with this text: we pray to You, Lord, for every person that makes possible the mission at this time, who has done in the past, and will do in the future; we place before you, Lord, each of the children, every young person, so many people who are in your heart and in ours.

MISSION OF THE XLIV GENERAL CHAPTER, 1997

We, Piarist, religious and lay people, "cooperators of the truth", as Saint Joseph Calasanz did 400 years ago, we are now sent by Christ and the Church to

Evangelize educating, from early childhood, children and youth, especially poor, through the integration of faith and culture - "piety and letters"-, in those environments and places where charism guides us, to serve the Church and transform society, according to the Gospel values of justice, solidarity and peace.

We have received for this purpose a charism that comes from God, a Calasanzian reading of the Gospel, our own history, spirituality and pedagogy, people in communion, schools and specific institutions, allowing us to make present Jesus Teacher and the motherhood of the Church towards the little ones.

DIBUJO:

I have found the ultimate way to serve God, in Rome, by doing good to the little ones. I will not give it up for anything in the world.

IV. A NEW WAY OF LIVING

"To give stability within the Church to his inspiration and mission, Joseph Calasanz, moved from above, proposed to his companions the practice of the evangelical counsels, namely, chastity, poverty and obedience, to which he added a fourth vow to take special care of the education of children. He also wanted this educational work to be accomplished mainly by teaching priests through the ministry of the Word and Sacraments. Our Venerable Patriarch gave us this clear vision of the nature and goals of his Institute in the Preamble of his Constitutions"
(Constitutions 3)

13. The Mission Set Up the Piarist Charism

The Piarist mission is much more than a task, a dedication.

DIBUJO:

Spirituality

Pious Schools, Demarcation, Community – Jesus the Teacher

Institution – Mission – Life

Religious, Priest, Educator, Laity

All missions involves discovering that you have been sent by someone more important than yourself, supposes to adapt our life to the content of the message, and if we want it to be lasting, it also requires also an institution that gives it continuity.

This configures the charism: Piarist mission, spirituality and life.

Calasanz needed quite a lot time to become aware of this and to put it into action. He began with an action with the first school at Santa Dorotea. Little by little he found that to make it last, it was necessary to wrap that mission with support that would make it viable and sustainable over time: a particular spirituality appeared, a vocation that crystallized with the goodwill of people who gave temporary help to a stable and permanent lifestyle, an organization that Calasanz wanted with the maximum guarantees of a religious Order.

Features of the Piarist Charism

A Piarist mission with specific priorities, strategies and goals, requires educators to also be specific, from a specific organization and community.

It is difficult to be a Christian educator without spirituality in our life. Calasanz proposes a way to read the Gospel following the style of Jesus next to the little ones. He proposes a way to find God in our lives in the educational and evangelizing action. He proposes a spirituality that takes as reference Jesus, the Teacher: "*Learn from Him, as the Teacher*"²⁷. "*Christ, who was our Teacher*"²⁸.

This mission and corresponding spirituality also constitute a way of living, from the vocation received. Calasanz will be modifying it during the following years based on the three fundamental characteristics of religious, priest and educator. He will always accept as Piarist vocations some lay collaborators. Our Piarist history and the history of the universal Church will also discover how the charism is being shared increasingly in a more visible and realistic way by religious and laity.

The mission, spirituality and Piarist life require an institution to last over time. The community gives life, the Piarist works, the religious Order, the different demarcations will provide an answer to the required entity, so that Calasanz' dream remains a reality for centuries to come.

These elements (spirituality, life and institution) are not only necessary and unavoidable for the mission, but they also adorn it with this flavor, a characteristic of the Piarist charism.

Essential Contribution of Charism to the Mission

Whomever does not pay attention carefully, can think that one educational center is equal to another. He may think that what matters is the work that is developed, the objectives that are achieved. There are those who choose a centre nearby, thinking that they are all similar.

Some perceive that the objectives are not always the same that some schools are looking for certain goals and others are following different horizons. One Christian center is not the same as another that is not Christian. Not all of them promote the same values or understand them in the same way. Educational projects, the philosophies of the centers, the signs of identity can be very different.

Those who are closer, discover still more differences, since each school has its own personality. The centers are very different because of their educators, their organization, their history, their style. Some schools are technical, eclectic, aseptic, and cold. Others have a recognizable and own front. Others have charisma.

We have to ask everyone in our lives and in each Piarist work, whether we are just workers, we try to be good professionals, we aspire to be educators and teachers, we feel sent, we live the shared mission, we are partakers of the Piarist charism, and do we see ourselves working hand-in-hand with the Teacher? One response is not equal to another.

Lord, make our school to have charisma, that it be your face, your action in the world with each of the children, with each young person, with each approaching person. That it be not our work, but yours, Lord. Make us faithful laborers in your vineyard.

²⁷ Letter 3339

²⁸ Letter 1662

BUILDING A CATHEDRAL

A passerby stopped at a quarry in which three colleagues were working.

He asked the first one: "What do you do, friend?" He replied without raising his head: "I earn my bread."

He asked the second one: "What do you do, friend?" And the worker, caressing the purpose of his task, explained: "As you can see, I am carving a beautiful stone."

He asked the third one: "What do you do, friend?" And the man, raising his joyous eyes towards him, exclaimed: "We are building a cathedral."

And the fact is that the three were carrying out the same task.

14. The Mission Implies Spirituality

All tasks, especially if they are intense and durable, need a strong motivation, so they do not decline as time goes by.

If instead of a task, we speak of mission, a proper spirituality is already indispensable: it is the same God who has thought of you to be the carrier of his message. Are you not happy and overwhelmed?

Mission means being sent. Someone sends you to fulfill a request. You are the messenger, not the message, or the important one: you're an envoy. Who forgets this, loses the mission and possibly also loses the reason for life: what is the point of a messenger who forgets the message or changes it for another one?

Being a messenger is a joy when we assume it correctly: we are transmitters of what we have received. We need just to be faithful in that communication. Who sends the message knows what he says. We need only to be well aware of what the Lord is telling us and to reproduce it in the best possible way. What peace and responsibility!

The Piarist mission starts from the first sending to Calasanz by God. That mission has been confirmed by the Church and comes to each of us, to you and me, as the command that the Lord makes us to carry this good news and its liberating message through Piarist education to many children and young people that He places in our path.

It is worth stopping for a moment to think about the features of the spirituality of all messengers, of all missionaries²⁹:

1. Proclaiming from the received. "*Go home, to your people, and tell them what the Lord has made with you*" (Mk 5.19). Obviously it is not meant to transmit only our own subjectivity, because our message is communitarian, Piarist. But it is only credible by the one that communicates what he has seen, felt and lived. The key is not to talk with the lips, but with the heart and the hands.
2. Proclaiming from the mission. "*What we have seen with our eyes, what we watched and touched our hands, is what we announce*" (1 Jn 1.1). We announce from the

²⁹ From the book of Gabino Urbarri, "El mensajero. Perfiles del evangelizador". Comillas. 2009.

urgency to meet so many people who need this message and, above all, from the authority of the One who sends us.

3. Proclaiming from the union with God. "*We do not announce ourselves, but Jesus Christ*" (2 Co 4, 5). Imitating Ezekiel (Ez 2-3), before proclaiming the message we have to gulp the words Yahweh wants to put on our lips.
4. Proclaiming from the trust. "*I am with you all the days until the end of the world*" (Mt 28, 20). We are not asked to succeed, but to be faithful to the order received. We trust the strength of the message itself and the One who has prepared it. It is possible that we are doomed to failure as Jesus himself, but always it is God who has the last word and knows what to do.
5. Proclaiming with love for the people. "*His heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd*" (Mk 6,34). It is part of the message to communicate fondly the immense mercy of the Lord, at all times and despite negative response.
6. Proclaiming with humility and clarity. "*I have neither silver nor gold, but what I have I give you*" (Ac 3, 6).
7. Proclaiming building the Church. From the conviction that you can only follow Jesus in community, in the Church, despite its many flaws and poverty (thank God, because I, with my miseries have a place in it!)
8. Proclaiming with credibility. Jesus not only commissioned his disciples to preach; "*He also gave them power to drive out demons*" (Mk 3, 14-15). The Apostolic Church made signs (Ac 2.43; 5.12). The sign *par excellence* that we can relate to is the commitment to justice.

Am I a good messenger, a good herald, a good ambassador of the Lord? It is a question that you and I must ask many times. And, above all, it must be our prayer and our effort.

Because the Piarist spirituality is not only a personal matter, it is advisable to take into account the traits that define it³⁰:

- primacy of God felt and lived with strength
- central place of Jesus as the way towards the Father and Teacher
- docility to the guide of the Spirit
- Mary's intercession
- ecclesial sense
- enhancement of the liturgy and sacraments
- sense of transcendence coupled with an appreciation for each person's effort
- human and social sensitivity
- love for the poor
- sense of gratuity
- relief of the pedagogical virtues (love, patience, gentleness, humility)
- noble pride for knowing we are cooperators of the truth
- generous and persistent surrender to our vocation and mission

³⁰ Spirituality and pedagogy of Saint Joseph Calasanz. ICCE. 2000 page 50.

We can also hear Calasanz in some of his letters:

- *"Christ that was our Teacher"*³¹. *"Learn from Him, as Teacher"*³².
- *"You should become like children if you want to enter the true spiritual path"*³³.

There are some very characteristic Piarist traits, but perhaps the most important is humility. It is not a word of our time, because it is confused with modesty, undervaluing or inferiority. But the secret of humility consists in living the consciousness of having received everything, without a spirit of appropriation and the conviction of being instruments. Then you can live with peace the humiliations, as beautiful occasions to grow in humility. Then we can live with humor. How important it is to not take seriously thyself and accept with humor our own self, our work, our successes and our failures!

- *"Who comes to behave like a two-year old boy that without proper guidance falls many times, will always be wary of him, and will always invoke God's help. This means that penance, so little understood and much less practiced: If you do not behave like children, you will not enter the Kingdom of heaven. Learn this practice and try to reach this great simplicity"*³⁴.
- *"Pleasing God requires that by imitating Him, we humble ourselves and endure tribulations and adversities that happen to us, in satisfaction for our sins. You can do nothing more pleasing to God that, when afflicted and troubled, than humbling yourself and recognizing that all affliction and tribulation are sent by God, to learn from Him, as a Teacher, holy humility"*³⁵.

Keep accompanying us, shape us into whatever you want, as the potter makes with clay. "Yahweh, you are our Father; we are the clay and you the potter: we are all the work of your hands" (Is 64, 7). Thank you for shaping us, taking us into your hands and doing what we are.

"But who indeed are you, a human being, to talk back to God? Will what is made say to its maker, 'Why have you created me so? Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for a noble purpose and another for an ignoble one?'" (Ro 9, 20-21)

Forgive me, Lord, when I complain, when I compare myself with others, when I forget that You are my Creator, who have built me with your hands, when I forget that it is You who has shaped my siblings. Do with me according to your will.

"I want to be, my beloved Lord, like clay in the hands of the potter. Take my life, make it again, I want to be a new pot."

This is the way we want to feel before You, Lord, like children.

³¹ Letter 1662.

³² Letter 3339.

³³ Letter 1472.

³⁴ Letter 912.

³⁵ Letter 3339.

GRANT ME TO BE A CHILD

Lord, grant me the gift of being like a child to learn how to look at others with transparency.

The passing of the years has loaded my life of suspicions, fears, cowardice, sadness that weigh on me like a bale on my back.

Give me the gift of going back to the beginning, of trusting others, having hope, knowing how to cleanly share what I have received from You. Make me a child again, to receive the promise of happiness from You.

Remove all mistrust, anxiety, selfishness, and sin from me, which prevents me from reaching You. If I do not reach You, Lord, come to me.

Look on your poor servant and help him to stand up again, like a father helps his son. Grant me the gift, Lord of the first life of a child³⁶.

15. The Mission Entails a Lifestyle

Receiving a mission involves receiving a call, a vocation. It is the Lord who has noticed you, and because he so wants it, he chooses you to be his messenger.

Other motivations for your vocation are useless: he has chosen you because he loves you. Not because you're smarter, more valuable or more generous... *"Jesus summoned those whom he wanted and they came to him"* (Mk 3,13). *"It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you"* (Jn 15, 16).

Yes, you have had the courage to answer. You've said yes to that proposal which is changing your life.

You could have responded like the rich young man, or as Jonas splitting away from where God was sending him. But you said yes, you are still saying yes... with many failures, sometimes with fears, sometimes with infidelities...

Here, you have here another chance to renew your vocation, ratifying the lifestyle that the Lord offers you, moving forward step by step in the following of Jesus through the Piarist vocation to which you have been called.

The Piarist mission entails a lifestyle characterized by a dedication to Piarist education, assuming a rich ministry in community and in the Pious Schools, along with other people.

Consecrated to Piarist Education

The style of Piarist education, the careful attention to every child and young person, the extensive dedication involved, the sense of being sent, entails that the Piarist should devote his whole life to this mission.

Religious life, with its three usual vows plus the specific of dedication to the Christian education of children and youth, is the way in which this lifestyle has crystallized over the centuries.

³⁶ Javier Fernández Chento.

Devoting the life to God implies the attempt to focus the full existence in the One who has called us (sharing life), the One who has fully gained our hearts (chastity), and the One who we consider our only Lord (obedience) and in the One who we know that will give us everything we need (poverty).

Consecrating ourselves to God in Piarist education is to bet our whole life to serve Him in this task of accompanying and educating so many children and young people, especially poor, where we find Him to be present.

Dedicating our life to God is discovering us educators next to the only Teacher. It is discovering ourselves as religious trying to radically live some fundamental features of Jesus: the poverty of someone who knows to be liberated and in the hands of the Providence; chastity as a sign and commitment to the fullness of the Kingdom; obedience without conditions to the will of God; life in community as a strategy and advance of the Kingdom...

Consecrating our life to God is walking today with Calasanz in his paths and discovering the Lord in every boy, in every girl, in every young person, in every poor person.

The Triple Piarist Ministry

Piarist mission entails a Ministry that transforms life. Usually we reflect it in two, although intimately intertwined: the Ministry of Christian education and the Ministry of care to the poor children.

In the process of formation of the Piarist religious, there are two ministries that are granted at the same time. They are deeply related, although they are certainly different.

A third Ministry is still added to the vast majority of the Piarist: the ordained pastoral, the priesthood. It is the ecclesial and Piarist assignment of being pastor of the community, after having been ordained as a server (Deacon), in communion with the whole Church, by the Presidency of the celebration, the preaching and teaching of the Word.

Combining with success, gratitude and responsibility of the triple identity of the educator, religious, and priest, is the great challenge we, the Piarist have, and it configures our life. The difficulty involved is precisely what makes greater and more valuable the entrusted work.

The New and Ever Present Piarist Laity

Calasanz was attentive to people who wanted to participate in his work with proper spirit. So he used the collaboration of some lay people to carry out the mission that the Church had entrusted him, and he wanted that, if any of them wanted to become fully integrated with the work of the Pious Schools, *"our brothers should embrace him as one of ours"*.

Throughout history the participation of the laity has been a constant in the spirit and mission of Calasanz.

Also the laity involved in different ways in the Pious Schools sees their lives affected by this Piarist charism.

Some people understand it as just a service that is received at a point in their lives; others value it positively; others are identified with the style and are moved to collaborate actively; others are engaged in their work and profession to the Piarist educational task, at times for many years; others are volunteers or benefactors of the Pious Schools; others are incorporating their work as a shared mission; others live their faith and ecclesial insertion into

the Piarist Christian community; others share the charism; others focus their life in the Pious Schools, and even have a charismatic and legal link to grow in their lay and Piarist vocation.

There are different possibilities and situations that happen when the Piarist mission and charism touch people's heart.

SERVICE AND JOY³⁷

I was sleeping and dreaming that life was joy.
I woke up and saw that life was service.
I served and saw that service was joy.

16. The Mission Needs the Community

DIBUJO

COMMUNITY – BIBLE - REALITY

The word *community* is applied in many ways that do not coincide in their meaning: "international community", "neighborhood community", "European Community", "autonomous community", "educative community"...

Here we refer to the Christian community, in the style of the first community of Jesus: a small, recognizable group, summoned by Jesus to a mission.

To follow Jesus, we need three elements, such as the three legs of a stool or a table: the Word (to be disciples and followers rather than militants), Christian reading of reality (to be incarnated without falling into spiritualisms) and the Community (which will make us discover us as sons and brothers).

Piarist mission also needs the permanent reference to the Word (Calasanz also becomes Word for us), the reference to reality in which we find ourselves, as well as the community.

The Piarist Mission is not Possible Without Community.

To educate a person requires the coordinated work of many other people. The educational process is too long, too complicated, too important, to be the sole responsibility of a single person.

Neither is it enough to have only a working team in the Piarist mission. Of course that is necessary, but not sufficient: it takes more than that.

Imagine a building with a large sign at its entrance: "Hospital". Obviously we will think that this is it and there the sick will be adequately attended to. If inside there are no medical and health officers, this enclosure is not a hospital, even if it is written so in its facade. If every doctor and nurse works on their own, without any coordination, it will not be a hospital that can be called as such. If each health officer has forgotten what he had learned and just his title remains, if he does not practice medicine with the corresponding ethics, if patients are not seen except in the more physical aspects, it will be a bad hospital or maybe it will not even be that.

³⁷ R. Tagore

Unfortunately something similar may happen in some schools that today place outside a Christian title, but inside there are no such Christians, or they do not function as they should because they do not identify themselves as such, nor form a community, nor remind or live their faith, nor attend all the elements involved in being a Christian educational center.

A Christian school (and every Christian and Piarist work) needs a Christian community which supports it in its operation and, above all, in its identity. This was also one of the great insights and contributions of Calasanz, who now holds a particular significance in the context of secularization.

For a long time it has been the religious community, inserted in the same building of the school, who was a sign and guarantee of the identity of the center. For many years there have been numerous Piarist religious working in the schools as teachers, identified by their habit, making their personal and community lives a constitutive trait of the school.

In many places, the situation today is different. The presence of the Piarist religious has been numerically reduced in schools and, often, they have no full-time dedication as educators. Sometimes there is not a religious community at the center; however, the Piarist Christian community of reference is still essential.

In some countries, Christian schools are the main presence of the Church, because of the extent they have, because of the job they perform, because of the social value they maintain, because of the absence or reduction of other ecclesial platforms. It is necessary to make them present in the Christian community there, main sacrament of the presence of Jesus alive and convoking in them.

Home and Workshop³⁸

The Piarist mission, and the Christian mission, needs a community to carry it out, to support it, being the subject and arrival point of it, which verifies the truth of its action in its reality.

Our Piarist community has to be, as every Christian community, home and workshop. Home where we feel at home, where we feel safe, comfortable, and a family. Workshop where we are designing and building the model which can serve all mankind to approach the proposal of Jesus.

Our communities have to be such because we want to imitate Jesus, that the first thing He did in his mission was to convene the first community and will continue to always call to join that group.

The Resurrected is always present in the community or he will invite to quickly make Him present in the community. Who is not in the community, as it happened to Thomas (Jn 20, 24-29), will have difficulties to meet the Lord and to believe the brothers that thus affirm to Him.

The Spirit falls in Pentecost to those who are in the community and He will be the one who will guide them jointly.

Jesus always calls personally, seeks the personal encounter, and challenges everyone... to follow him in the community, to follow the same path with the brothers.

³⁸ Beautiful expression to define the community and suggestive book of José Antonio García. *"Hogar y taller: seguimiento de Jesús y comunidad religiosa"*. Sal Terrae. 1991.

Today, small communities are especially important to bring back significance to our Church with their proximity, with their testimony, with their commitment and with their style of personal and community life.

The community is, must be, an oasis in the middle of the unbelieving desert of our society, a space of plausibility against environmental and cultural erosion of our faith in many places.

The community is required for its efficiency and, above all, for its ability to verify that the Good News fully fills the life.

The sign of recognition is the community: *"I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all of you will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another"*. (Jn 13, 34-35)

The Community is Gift and Task

The community, the spirituality and the mission and life, is gift and task. It is a wonderful gift and a responsibility.

The community is the family that God gives us, it is the group of brothers with whom we can always count, is the living reminder of the Father who calls us. But the family can also be hell when trust has broken, when there are fears, when communication is missing...

It is not easy to build the community, to build that Piarist home on a daily basis. It is like a plant that we should help grow with hard work and with God's grace given by the sun and rain. We have to work with:

- the roots, the Eucharist and prayer, supports underpinning us
- the trunk, the brotherhood built every day, sharing what we feel and we do
- branches, training which links the trunk with fruits
- the fruits, the works for which we are known
- flowers, the celebration and feast that rejoices the community and the environment

This is the community that the Piarist mission needs: a group put together by Jesus, securely, to pray together, love one another, reflect together, help others and celebrate all of this. And when everything else is seen from a relative point based on this reality.

And this is the gift and the task that you and I, we, have assumed in our community. We are going to take care of it, to pray for it, to continue calling for more members, to constantly show appreciation to our brothers.

A COMMUNITY THAT CONVINCES AND FILLS UP³⁹

A community says a lot when it belongs to Jesus. When it speaks of Jesus and not of their meetings. When it announces Jesus and does not announce itself. When it praises Jesus and not its own merits. When it gathers around Jesus and not around its problems. When it grows for Jesus and not for itself. When it relies on Jesus and not in its own strength. When it lives from Jesus and not from itself... A community says a lot when it belongs to Jesus.

³⁹ Patxi Loidi. "Gritos y plegarias".

A community says little when it speaks of itself, when it communicates its own merits, when it announces its meetings, when it bears witness to its commitment, when it glories all of its values, when it grows for its own profit, when it lives for itself, and when it relies on its forces... A community says little when it speaks of itself.

A community is not wobbling because of its failures, but because of lack of faith. It does not weaken because of sins, but because of the absence of Jesus. It is not broken because of its tensions, but because of the neglect of Jesus. It is not small because of lack of values, but because Jesus in it is small. It does not drown by lack of fresh air, but by suffocation of Jesus. A community is only lost when it has lost Jesus.

A community is strong when Jesus within it is strong. A community is strong when Jesus inside it has weight. A community marches together when Jesus is in the middle. A community extends when it is extended to Jesus. A community lives when Jesus lives. A community convinces and moves forward when it is the community of Jesus.

17. The Mission Becomes Institution to be Able to Last

Human beings try to catch the insights that make us happy in order to make them remain along the time. Institutions are complexes of human relationships, actions, guidelines, conventions, trying that a considered successful and fruitful experience lasts in time and is extended forever.

"When men are happy, they create institutions" (Chesterton)

Calasanz saw clearly that the work of the Pious Schools had to be consolidated so that it would depend not just on the goodwill of some people: he needed to create an institution that would give it continuity in time.

The treasure found was too valuable. The happiness achieved was so intense that it could not be kept only for himself. It was unthinkable that the service provided to children and young people could disappear for lack of foresight. The effort and dedication of those early Piarist could not remain without a future. The Church and society were receiving a valuable service from those nascent Pious Schools. Many families needed the support of that educational proposal. The future of the world greatly depended on the mission that was being developed. It was God himself who had led them to that place. All this needed a structure, a foundation, an organization, an institution, that would provide consistency and future.

Calasanz, after years of attempts, looked for the entity which at the time seemed more solid and enduring: a religious Order, with solemn vows, approved in the most formal way...

His great suffering was when he saw that this institution was falling apart and it seemed like the Schools would have no future. It is impressive how well Calasanz knew how to combine hard effort and tenacious while searching for the institution that would guarantee the future, with the unconditional trust in the Lord, Job style.

In the same way that the Gospel and the Spirit need a community that lend its visibility, they need of a Church institution that makes them tangible (with its limitations and sins) amidst society. Similarly, the Piarist mission, its spirituality, the vocation that involves, the need for an institution that accompanies them. Thanks be to God!

Charism Before the Institution?

It is odd that today's institutions receive negative press comments, that they are disqualified because of their failures (they have them, no doubt) so easily. It is noteworthy that they are frequently seen as enemies of the person, of freedom, of progress, of a better world. It is strange and unfortunate.

Perhaps more in young people than in adults, there is a current crisis of belonging to any type of institution. People try to mark a distance to all of them in order to preserve their own individuality, critical ability, freedom. Possibly that hides a lack of involvement and commitment, as well as an increase in individualism which is imposed as a dominant culture.

What makes us precisely more human are the start-up, development and continuity of institutions. They are the ones that make society, progress, human development, the sustainability of knowledge and progress more possible, the overcoming of our own personal limitations, an organized response to the great challenges of mankind.

What would society be without the family, education, health, law, politics, the Church...? And yet, the culture of suspicion and criticism attack precisely the institutions that support the great achievements of mankind.

Saying this does not mean that we ignore the injustices, errors, sins, which are present in institutions... and in everyone! Of course all the institutions can improve, precisely because their permanence makes it possible and makes it interesting because changes can last in time.

It would be convenient to now have a call to join charism and institution, so that both elements enrich each other, they will discover that they can't live separately. Today we must make a call to the belonging of the institutions. Respect for and the value of each person are not in contradiction with his necessary and decisive desire of belonging to the institution, but in it is his guarantee for the future.

We have to put an end to the attitude of individualistic people creating their work apart from the others: their creation will rarely last more than what they will last. Enough of the "every small teacher has his small book" mentality, of all those freelancers, who are neglectful of the more general guidelines, who ignore shared decisions, who are more dedicated to criticism rather than collaboration.

We need people assuming the Piarist project, willing to contribute what they can to the common good, people who suggest changes, who detect failures and communicate them with team spirit.

Thus the Piarist charism has been taking shape in the Piarist community, in the Order of the Pious Schools, in the demarcations, in each of the works with their legal basis... They are works and institutions that will be improving with time, contrasting with the intuition of Calasanz and the reality in which they are.

Above all, they have to make efforts to ensure with creative fidelity the future of this discovered charism that is necessary to keep to the praise of God and the neighbor utility.

CALCULATING THE FUTURE

Which of you wishing to construct a tower does not first sit down and calculates the cost to see if there is enough for its completion? Otherwise, after laying the foundation and finding himself unable to finish the work, the onlookers would laugh at him and say, 'This one began to build but did not have the resources to finish'. (Lk 14, 28-30)

18. Piarist Charism Shared in Different Ways

As we have already mentioned, throughout the Piarist history there has been a constant participation by the laity in the spirit and mission of Calasanz.

Some Milestones on This Path of Awareness

For simplicity, we start after the Second Vatican Council, with the Special General Chapter (1967-69), approving a "Decree about the relationship of our Order with the laity": it is the first time that a General Chapter deals with the subject of laity. It proclaims the wish to maintain *Evangelical and ecclesial spirit-filled relationships with the laity and asks to consider them as brothers and cooperators*. The Chapter requests that they be matched in the school campus to the Piarist religious.

The General Chapter of 1979 bets on the Christian Educative Communities, and insists on the presence of active and responsible lay people in them.

Four years later, in 1983, Fr. Angel Ruiz, Superior General of the Order, writes a letter that represents a decisive step: *"Piarist charism does not belong to the Piarist. It is not a property of the Order. It belongs to the people of God. And in this there will be, and there are people, of both sexes and of all ages, as well as the Piarist, who have the charism or vocation to evangelize youth. If this were the case, those people would participate in the Calasanzian charism"*. So were born the Calasanzian Ecclesial Communities (CEC) as a fundamental element of the profound renewal of the Order. The union of all the lay people committed to such a project, was called at that moment "Secular Piarist Fraternity".

With the way open to integration, the Council of Major Superiors, in Czestochowa 1987, asked to proceed without going back along this road and favor it by working on the changing of mentality of the religious, so that all of them could accept it without fuss. The General Congregation designed the figure of the "Fraternity of the Pious Schools".

The road was open and also the resolute to go ahead with it. The General Chapter of 1991 asked to *"proceed gradually in the integration of the laity, mentalizing before for the changes that must be done in our reality... Act in such a way that the prevention and fear be replaced with the active desire to create 'Piarist laity' aside and in close collaboration with the Piarist religious"*.

The chapter of 1997 established the institutional project of the laity indicating four major modes of belonging to the charism: cooperation with the Piarist action and its institutions and works, participation in the shared mission, charismatic integration in the Pious Schools and charismatic and legal integration in the Pious Schools. He concluded proclaiming *"the deep and spiritual conviction that God continues calling religious and lay people to the following of Jesus, following in the footsteps of Calasanz, each according to the state of life to which he has*

been called... It is an irreversible institutional option, which requires from all a renewed ecclesial vision, a constant discernment and great respect for the diversity within the unity of the Order".

The Current Period of Times

A bet so determined for the laity as it has been done by the Pious Schools is bold and pioneering. And it cannot fail to bear excellent and abundant fruit in the Piarist life and mission. For now, we will just make a list of some of them:

- Training and accompaniment of teachers, families, cooperators.
- The strong commitment and dedication of many laymen in specific responsibilities of the Piarist mission.
- Some shared mission teams.
- Implementation of Piarist Fraternities, assuming charismatic integration, approximately in one-third of the existing demarcations, with more than 500 brothers and sisters living this Piarist vocation.
- The beginning of the General Fraternity with its corresponding Council to encourage the existing Fraternities and collaborate in the emergence of new ones.
- Fifteen lay Piarist, in the form of legal, and charismatic integration, some since 2002 and already with their final option.
- Institutions that are configured from the charismatic and legal integration. There is already one in the Order, Itaka-Piarist, composed of different Piarist demarcations and Fraternities.
- Mixed religious and lay communities
- Sending of laymen to other Piarist presences in the country or even to other continents
- Piarist ministries conferred to Piarist laity

This rich travel allows for a hopeful horizon of ways to participate in the Pious Schools, all of them valuable and complementary:

DIBUJO:

Beneficiaries – Cooperators – Teams of shared mission – Fraternity – Lay Piarist - Religious

- Beneficiaries. The most numerous group, formed by boys and girls, adolescents, young people, many of them poor and needy, to whom the Piarist mission is addressed. Also families and people who work, professional or volunteers, in our works. Their participation is essential, because they are its *raison d'être* and its purpose.
- Cooperators. The people that work in our works. The Pious Schools are unthinkable without their contribution. This mode requires a process of *rapprochement*, as it is not automatic for being simply within the Piarist environment.
- Teams of shared Mission. Formed by those who live their collaboration as a fundamental element of their Christian vocation. This mode requires the decision of the person concerned and of Piarist managers, a process of mutual understanding, the assumption of the Piarist mission as part of their vocation and the sending by the Pious Schools.

- Charismatic integration: the Piarist Fraternity. People who want to participate in a personal and communitarian way in the Piarist spirituality, mission and life. It requires a catechumenal process, the decision of the person and also the acceptance of the Fraternity through its leaders.
- Legal and charismatic integration: the Piarist Laity. Some members of the Fraternity want to have a greater integration in the Pious Schools with a temporary or permanent legal link that is specified in the agreement or statute.
- And, of course, the Order of the Pious Schools with the religious that form it.

Currently, the reference documents to place ourselves in this reality are as follows⁴⁰:

- "The Laity in the Pious Schools" (General Chapter, 1997): institutional project.
- "The Piarist Charism" (General Chapter, 1997)
- "Clarification of the Identity of the Piarist Religious and Laity" (General Congregation, 1999)
- "Constitutions" and "Common Rules" (General Chapter, 2003)
- "Directory of the Laity" (General Chapter 2009, still on an experimental basis)
- "The Fraternity of the Pious Schools" (General Congregation, 2011)
- We should also indicate the "Guidelines for a Plan of Formation of the Piarist Laity" (General Congregation, 2004), various materials and experiences existing in the Order⁴¹ and "Piarist Ministry" (1999).

A NEW CHAPTER IN THE HISTORY

" Today, often as a result of new situations, many Institutes have come to the conclusion that *their charism can be shared with the laity*. The laity is therefore invited to share more intensely in the spirituality and mission of these Institutes. We may say that, in the light of certain historical experiences such as those of the Secular or Third Orders, a new chapter, rich in hope, has begun in the history of relations between consecrated persons and the laity" (Vita Consecrata, n. 54, 1996)

19. A New Way of Living?

We began this chapter titled "A New Way of Living" recalling how Calasanz invites you, me, us, to live in a new way, characterized by the service to children and youth, especially poor, with a proper spirituality, with a lifestyle according to the vocation received by each one, sharing all in small communities and in the Pious Schools, making a shared way the religious and laity knowing that together we embody today Calasanz in our world and that we must continue inviting and inviting more people to participate in this great Piarist project.

Now that we conclude it so we can ask ourselves to what extent your life, mine, ours is really a new way of living, up to what extent are we responding to the invitation of the Lord and the dream of Calasanz.

⁴⁰ These documents and a clarification of the terms are collected in "The Fraternity of the Pious Schools", 2011 General Congregation.

⁴¹ Cf. "The Fraternity of the Pious Schools", General Congregation 2011.

Gabriel García Márquez wrote that *"life is not what is lived, but what is remembered, and the way it is remembered to be told"*. This has to be our life: full at the moment of living it, also remembered with God's eyes noticing in it his presence, and told with the enthusiasm and confidence of those who know that everything is in God's hands... Fortunately!

With full confidence and without any kind of guilt, you and I, we must ask the Lord to help us to live according to the vocation received: *"I urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace... Grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift"* (Eph 4, 1-7).

We already know, Lord, that alone we can do nothing. For this reason we count on your help and on the support of the Piarist brothers.

MEET THE PASTOR

At the end of a dinner in an English castle, a famous theatre actor entertained the guests reciting texts by Shakespeare. After finishing the scheduled performance, he proposed they ask him for some repeat.

A shy priest asked the actor if he knew the Psalm 23.

The actor replied: "Yes, I know it, but I am willing to recite it only on one condition: that after me, you will recite it".

The priest felt uncomfortable, but agreed.

The actor made a beautiful interpretation, with perfect diction: "The Lord is my shepherd, I need nothing...". At the end, the guests applauded strongly.

Then it was the priest's turn, and he stood up and recited the words of the Psalm. This time, when he finished, there was no applause, only a deep silence and the onset of tears in some faces.

The actor remained silent for a moment, then stood up and said: "Ladies and gentlemen, I hope that you have realized what has happened tonight: I knew the Psalm, but this man knows the Shepherd."

DIBUJO

I have found in Rome the ultimate way to serve God, doing good to the little ones. I will not leave it for anything in the world.

If this book had music, here is where we should raise the volume and listen to a fully singing choir. We are at the culminating point of Joseph Calasanz' life. From now on the path has been drawn. All the children in the world and all those who will be born in the centuries to come have started to heartedly applaud. You can also applaud, don't be ashamed. I'm sure you have applauded for less important things in your life!

V. CALLED TO HOLINESS

*" The Church of God and all religious institutes,
guided by the Holy Spirit, pursue as their ultimate goal the perfection of charity
through their specific apostolate.*

*Likewise, this is what our Congregation is determined to accomplish
through our specific apostolate, that was approved
by the Holy Father and Vicar of Christ, Paul V, of happy memory ".
(Constitutions 4)*

20. The Indispensable Ones

Today (and always) some people are indispensable. Among them are the priests, religious and the Piarist. At least, this is my conviction.

They often say that nobody is indispensable, that what is important are the joint projects, the whole of mankind, the common good. We hear that people pass away and nobody is indispensable.

Certainly it is a claim that places us in humility that invites us not to believe to be the center, to make relative our positions. But could it be true?

On other occasions it could be; however, it is a good excuse to avoid responsibilities, to justify our mediocrity.

Would the world have been like it is without Jesus of Nazareth, or is indispensable? Would it be the same if Moses, Buda, Confucius, Aristotle, Muhammad, Gandhi, Galileo, Newton, Thomas Aquinas, Gutenberg, Fleming, Einstein... and so many others had not lived? Would nothing have been lost if the great inventors, the good thinkers, advanced humanists, had not existed?

Bertolt Brecht said a phrase that we have heard and repeated too often: *"There are men who fight one day and are good. There are others who fight a year and are better. There are others who struggle for many years and are very good. But there are those who struggle the whole life, those are the indispensable ones"*.

Our mankind cannot do without certain people in today's world. It needs politicians who know how to organize our society in a fair manner. It needs economists who propose solutions to

the current crisis. It needs thinkers who can lead the culture and values. It needs researchers who make progress to all humanity. It needs good professionals who carry forward their tasks perhaps not so bright, but well needed to make everything work. It needs fathers and mothers, it needs educators who know how to accompany those who come behind. Many people, many lives are indispensable.

It is also true that many of these purportedly indispensable people can be so gray and mediocre to not contribute almost anything, that they spoil what could be the great contribution of their life.

It is also true that, going to the negative end, many people contribute little and only in their limited environment or, even, they are negative in their life and affect those around them.

Obviously not all people have the same opportunities to choose, to develop ourselves. Certainly we cannot expect the same from those who stem from different conditions. We cannot judge the value of people, because all have the maximum possible rating: to be sons and daughters loved by God himself.

And yet, today, with Bertolt Brecht, we say that we need good, even better, very good people... and, above all, we need indispensable people.

Among these indispensable people today (and always) are the priests, religious and the Piarist.

We need priests who can abridge between God and the people, being "pontifices" precisely so they can build those bridges. Not because they are better, I wish they were, but because they are betting their life trying to be a sign of the presence of Jesus in the community, at the shared Table, in forgiveness, in the service, in the preached Word. The service of the presidency, the unit, the communion, putting together different sensitivities and charismas are indispensable. The service of the celebration of the Eucharist, of forgiveness, of baptism, is not dispensable... Who teaches the Word with the knowledge of someone who is prepared and the authority received with his ministry, is it not dispensable?

We need religious who try to assume in themselves the fundamental choices of Jesus: the heart and affection placed in God, obedience to the will of the Father until the end, poverty as a means to better serve the brothers. We need religious, not because they are supermen nor even better than others (I wish they were), but because they are a permanent reminder that it is possible to live God-centered. Are the communities that become permanent signs that God is able to fully fill the heart and life of the people not indispensable? Those who devote their entire life to Jesus who has called them by name, are not indispensable?

We need Piarist who place their life at stake to help children and young people, especially the poor. Who carry forward the mission of Calasanz to make a better world through Christian education. Those who believe in the power of Christian education to make children and young people happy, to build a better world for all and to make the Church more faithful to the Gospel. Are they not indispensable?

After that indispensable Joseph Calasanz, we continue to need people who fully assume the traits of the Piarist educator, religious and priest. This is the core that unites us to so many other people who collaborate with us and share the Piarist mission and charism today.

Today we need leaders in our Church and in the Pious Schools, not because they are smarter and better (I wish they were), but because we need people who take on the ministry of

communion, who create community, who proclaim the Word, who gather and call future generations, who share forever their life in community as a sign of the Kingdom, who surrender their entire being to the mission, who give up everything because they have fallen in love with Jesus and his project, who are available to the needs of others, who faithfully keep their yes to God and to others throughout their existence...

We also need testimonies of life at times of disease, in old age, in the reduction, in physical limitations. We need people who show us with their lives the fidelity in the last stages of their life. They are a sign of faith and hope in the midst of our world which tries to forget these crucial moments that touch everyone.

Some might think that this "indispensable" trait requires very special characteristics that it applies only to "*super persons*."

This more or less conscious thought can lead to think that it does not concern me, I am not among those indispensable ones, and it refers exclusively to people from other periods of history or other places.

Therefore we have to repeat ourselves that the indispensable ones are not the most intelligent, the most powerful, even the fittest. We have to repeat to ourselves that the indispensable ones are those who discover that God has prepared for them a special place and respond with generosity and perseverance.

Indispensable is Jesus, who, when they arrested John the Baptist and that voice is muted, discovers that it is God who asks him to follow that path until the end.

Indispensable is Calasanz, who, when he sees that no one is going to respond to those children that are in need in Rome, he stops looking at what others will do and assumes this mission relentlessly.

Indispensable are you when you bless, when you never curse anyone, when you are able to capture and reflect the positive aspects of others, when you translate the negative aspects in people and situations into a commitment to change it, in fraternal correction, in committed prayer.

You can be indispensable when you look at reality and see that Jesus calls you and invites you to be his presence, his hands, his word and his gift for always and without constraints.

We can be fully assured of something: Jesus is still calling not only to be good or very good, but to be holy and indispensable.

Jesus calls all, each person, you too. To what is he calling you at this time of your life, in your current situation? Do you dare to ask Jesus?

INSTRUMENTS OF YOUR PEACE⁴²

Jesus companion and friend, make us instruments of your peace,
where there is hatred, let us put love; where there is offense, let us put forgiveness,
where there is error, let us put hope; where there is despair, let us put hope,
where there is darkness, let us put your light; where there is sadness, let us put joy,

⁴² Saint Francis of Assisi.

where there is selfishness, let us put generosity.
That we will seek not so much to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love, to be helped as to help.
Because by giving we receive, by forgetting we find,
By forgiving we are forgiven, by dying we resurrect to eternal life.

21. Saints Today?

Being a Piarist today, and always, means to carry out a mission in this our wonderful and sinful institution of the Pious Schools (and the Church) from a spirituality and a life as consistent as possible with this important role and responsibility.

What is the horizon? "*Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect*" (Mt 5, 48). That's the goal: what the Church calls the universal vocation to holiness. Not in vain were the first followers of Jesus called the saints, the saved ones.

Today there is much talk about creating a citizen and Human Rights ethics, about educating on values. That is all very well. But we must be aware that the values do not always lead to performances. Just see the example of the great social valuation of missionaries... that very few are willing to imitate!

It is fine to teach values, more so if they are those of the Gospel, but it is even better if we propose to advance in virtue, because it is better to practice than to simply assess. "*Not everyone who calls to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven*". (Mt 7,21).

It is good to strive to practice the virtues, to advance in Christian and supportive behaviors, but we must remind ourselves that our faith is not just a moral (although it is implied). The proposal is to discover ourselves as Saints and to behave as such.

Facing the Attempt to be Normal, Propose to be and be Extraordinary⁴³

Today normality is a value in our society. People seek to be normal, like everyone, not standing out, not to fall behind or be up front, but going with the flow. Before this dominant of culture today we must propose to be extraordinary, to be holy.

Adorno denounced that "*normality is the disease of our century*". Camus said that "*the biggest problem posed to the contemporary spirits is conformism*". Behind normality, the standard set of values is to behave like the spirit of a herd.

To consecrate normality as an ethical category or ideal conduct is contrary to morals that seek excellence. The ethical task is precisely the challenge of the hero, understanding life as an adventure for personal and social growth.

After the good purpose of stressing the absolute dignity of each person just for being such, hides the equalization of all with the topic that we are all equal, nobody is better than anyone, there is no reason to imitate anyone... With this, the admiring peculiar capacity of moral origin

⁴³ Aurelio Arteta reflections are very suggestive in his book " *Tantos tontos tópicos*". Ed. Planeta. Ariel 2012 collection. This section is taken almost verbatim from the book.

gets lost, and if it persists, it will remain in the dark and without daring to come to light. The ideal of mediocrity has triumphed and the ideal of the hero or the holy has been defeated.

Today, as always, the hero or simply the one who stands out of the row will face the scorn of the majority, the resentment of the normal people who will make him pay for that gesture that denounces them. So, that is how they line up, on one hand, the growing solitude of the brave ones, and on the other, the correlative and also growing society of cowards.

We insist: against the culture of trying to be normal, we have to promote and be extraordinary, we have to be holy.

Discover Ourselves as Saints

Although today, it is not in many places a term very close and dear; however, it is essential that we incorporate its content into our lives: we are saved, Jesus has saved us, you and me. This discovery changes our lives!

Charles de Foucauld expresses it in a beautiful manner: *"As soon as I believed that there was a God, I realized that I could do nothing more than living for Him. My religious vocation is born at the very moment of my faith. God is so great! There is so much difference between what is God and what He is not!"*

We are saints, not by our merits, but because the heavenly Father makes us his children and introduces us to his family, in his holiness. Is it not exciting, to discover this? It is not only that he makes you *"in his image and likeness"*, but it tells you in Jesus *"you are my beloved son"* (Mk 1, 7).

The call that God makes to us is to live not only passionate, but excited. Yes, *"enthusiasm"* has its root from 'being in Theus': is to have God within oneself, being in Him. This is the proposal of Jesus: to discover that we have God within that he is in our hearts, that he is writing there his final law based on love that we are also in the heart of God.

Saint Paul also says it with a beautiful expression: *"Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?"* (1 Co 3, 16). *"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?"* (1 Co 6, 19) *"What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God"* (2 Co 6, 16)

The response to a big gift can only be based on gratitude. Thank you, Lord, for remembering me, for loving me so much, for making me your son.

The answer cannot be other than recite with the heart *"Lord, our God, how wonderful is your name in all the Earth. When I look at the sky, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have created, what is man that you are mindful of him; the human being, to give him power? You made him less than the angels, you crowned him with glory and dignity, you gave him the control over the works of your hands, you submitted everything under his feet"* (Ps 8).

And together with the overflowing gratitude comes also a response: when you made me a son, Lord, you make me a brother. When you want me in your family, Lord, I am also a part of a family of brothers. To thank you, Lord, is not only to do with the lips, but also from the heart... and with the hands!

Living so is living saved, as saints. It is also what Calasanz proposes for our life and mission: *"We can do nothing more pleasing to God than cooperate with Him in the salvation of souls"*⁴⁴. The first step is to discover that God is grace, that salvation comes free, without having deserved it. The challenge is to accept it and to live the consequences.

Try to be Holier Every Day

"We are ambassadors of Christ." (2 Co 6, 3-10) So our service is never stained, do not give reason for a scandal; on the contrary, we constantly show evidence that we are servers of God by means of everything that we put up with, such as: battles, misery, anguish, injuries, beatings, imprisonment, riots, fatigue, sleepless nights, days without a meal; and we go forward clean, knowledgeable, with patience and kindness, with gifts from the Holy Spirit, sincere love, spreading the Word and power of God. Our right and left hands are open with the weapons of integrity, by means of honesty and shame, and by good and negative reputation. We are the impostors that speak the truth, the unknown that are widely known, the dying that are definitely alive, the convicts without being given a fair opportunity, the sorrowful and always rejoicing, the poor that actually enrich many, and the needy that have it all."
(2 Co 6, 3-10)

This is the proposal to holiness: being ambassadors of Christ, his representatives, his hands and his lips, his presence in the midst of our world. *"All of us, gazing with unveiled face on the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as from the Lord who is the Spirit"* (2 Co 3, 18)

This is the proposal to Piarist holiness: announcing God's mercy to children and young people, freeing them from so many slaveries not only with our words and actions: also with our personal and community life.

I wish that those who see us have to exclaim: *"Look how they love each other!"* (Tertullian, *Apologetic* 39. *"In this they will recognize that you are my disciples, that you love one another"* (Jn 13: 34) and *"And every day the Lord added to their community, those who were being saved"*. (Ac 2, 46).

It is not the same to preaching as it is to practice. Those who preach use a torch to light the way; those who practice are the torch.

The task is to try to every day be more faithful to that love and reflection of the Holy One.

ALLOWING THE LIGHT TO GO THROUGH

They had also been through war. The houses, the Church, the whole town showed the savage blow of the fratricidal fury.

One morning, accompanying his mother, the child entered the sacred precinct. That was a pure desolation: burned altars, mutilated images, chipped sanctum, blackish walls and piles of rubble everywhere.

Something, however, had survived: a stained-glass window. A stained glass window which, wounded by the Sun, opened the magical fan of thousands of colors.

⁴⁴ Letter 3127

The child asked: "Mammy, and that guy up there dressed in colors, who is He?"

-A saint.-replied the mother.

Years passed. At a gathering of friends, someone asked this question: "What is a saint?"

The child of yesteryear, a man already mature, stirring in the bunker of his memories, defined: "A saint is the man that is very high and that allows the light to pass through."

Beautiful definition. "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in Heaven". Today's man believes the witnesses more than the teachers, unless witnesses are teachers. Still better, look for teachers who are witnesses... And allow the light to go through⁴⁵.

22. Holiness or, At Least, Fidelity

The goal for a Christian is Holiness, no doubt.

But in today's world, we often seek other targets. Sometimes we content ourselves with a response to more physiological needs: eating well, drinking, resting... There is no doubt that we need these; however, is it the goal that moves us most?

Sometimes what moves us in the day to day is security, the affection of others, friendship. Who can think that this is not important? But is it essential? Are we going to stay there?

Frequently we put the greatest interest in receiving recognition from others, in the success of our tasks, in the deserved respect to our self. It is clear that all of this is important, but is it our biggest motivation? Are the successes of others also important, our brothers, all the Piarist or just mine?

Sometimes we seek self-fulfillment, feeling good about ourselves and what we are doing in life. What joy when we achieve this! But is it the most important thing?

The proposal of Jesus is another: "*Seek the reign of God and his righteousness, and all else will be given to you in addition*" (Mt 6,34)

In the background the question is to let Jesus go on being our Lord, more and more the Centre and guide of our lives.

In so doing, day by day, fighting with our limitations and inconsistencies, is our way of following Jesus, discovering ourselves saved and saints. The name of this path being intensely followed over time is fidelity.

Fidelity as Disposition

Fidelity has a lot to do with faith, because fidelity is trusting: only who trusts fully can remain faithful in all circumstances. It is also intimately related to love: only love is "*patient, friendly... not easily anger, nor keeps track of the evil. It endures all, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres. Love will never end*" (1 Co 13, 4-7). Fidelity is based on confidence: "*I know*

⁴⁵ López Arróniz, Prudencio. "Más allá...". Ed. Perpetuo Socorro. 1987.

whom I have trusted" (2 Tim 1, 12). And it is demanding permanent and visible expression of the final commitment.

"Fidelity is the love that is resistant to wear and tear of time", said Rovira Bellosó. That is why one of his names is "per-se-verance", because "by itself shows that it is true", which verifies the choice made. Fidelity is permanence, perseverance and sustained struggle, endure... all this "veri - fies" (makes truth) of what is said.

There are different levels in each person: what he feels, what he believes, what he says, what he does. Not always are all in line or have equal force in all persons (in some people emotional bears more importance than ideological, etc.). What really determines all is what you will be doing over time: *"if one does not act as he thinks, he will end up thinking how he acts"*. Fidelity reveals much about the attitude, behavior maintained, even at times when it is not clear or felt. In the end that is what remains.

Fidelity reminds us very much the attitude of Calasanz' attitude throughout his life, especially in times of crisis. The mood with which he assumes the destruction of his work, the confidence that he transmits, hoping against all hope... speaks much about the fidelity of Calasanz and his holiness.

Fidelity, now-a-days is not a rising value, change (even life choices and commitments), the relativism of everything, seems more valuable. Fidelity seems incompatible with freedom, adversary of progress, impossible to maintain, even enemy of personal self-realization. And, however, fidelity is absolutely essential for the construction and the life of the person, the family, for any group of people and for society⁴⁶.

Now-a-days fidelity seems particularly difficult to the Church, so attacked by the media and discredited by our society. At times, adherence to the Church becomes difficult because of the indifference of many before God, the mediocrity of the Christian communities, the attitudes of some pastors...

Sometimes the fidelity ceases to be it because it gets sick and then it becomes:

- Proud fidelity of someone who does not want to disappoint himself although he has already stopped loving.
- Fanatical fidelity that seeks more the cause than the people who are behind it.
- Fearful fidelity based on the fear to change and to recognize that deep down one has stopped being faithful.
- Interested fidelity held by the benefits of remaining unchanged.
- Mediocre and mechanical fidelity that remains just by habit..
- False fidelity of double life pretending in front of another hidden life.

The evangelical fidelity is real in many Christians and in many Piarist. They are not flawless, they have their faults and weaknesses. But they are people who want to start each day. They want to learn and be updated. They want to renew. They pray intensely, looking for days of

⁴⁶ There are some beautiful pages dedicated to the praise of fidelity in the book: Juan Maria Uriarte. "Servir como pastores". Sal Terrae. 2011 pages 81-108. He also writes about faithfulness in other publications, always of great interest: Juan Maria Uriarte. *"Una espiritualidad sacerdotal para nuestro tiempo"*. Sal Terrae. 2010". Juan M^a Uriarte. *Carta cuaresmal: fidelidad de Dios y fidelidad humana*. Zamora, 1996.

recollection. They share with others, they have a friendly disposition. They have not lost their "apostolic youth". Their fidelity shows, among others, these four characters:

- Humble and modest fidelity from someone who knows his weaknesses without remaining in it. His life is typically generous and faithful, and the eventual infidelity is felt painfully and struggled with. They feel identified in Paul's words: *"I prefer to gladly boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell with me. For when I am weak, then I am strong"*. (2 Co 12, 9-10).
- Progressive fidelity in a prayer that is gaining in quality, sensitivity with the poor, in love with a Church increasingly better known, even in their fears and mediocrity. This can be felt and reflected in the words of Paul: *"Do not feel discouraged, instead, although our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day"*. (2 Co 4,16). *"All of us are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as from the Lord who is the Spirit"* (2 Co 3, 18).
- Concrete and realistic fidelity, built on the small daily fidelities with leisurely prayer, the awakened surveillance of our affection, the careful preparation of our pastoral interventions, the force of trust in people.
- Grateful fidelity because it is not question of temperaments or the fruit of our will, but the work of grace and mercy of God. We will repeat with Ignatius of Loyola: "Do not let me become separated from You". The faithful Virgin, Mary, accompanies us in this prayer.

Jesus Christ is the faithful "yes" of God to us. Jesus Christ is the faithful "yes" that we give to God. Because "what is impossible to man is possible to God" (Lk 18.27).

Fidelity Remains in the Prayer and in the Community

Fidelity can be maintained only in the regular and careful relationship with Jesus. Saint Therese of Avila said⁴⁷ *"Mental prayer, I think, is talking about friendship, dealing many times while speaking alone with whom we know loves us."*

Fidelity is held in the succession of moments, some more intense and others more morbid, which are marking our direction in life. When one looks back, one soon remembers moments of strong encounters with the Lord and also arid and remote stages, but hopefully what he will discover is that it is a path for growth in faithfulness, in confidence, in love, in allowing Jesus to be our Lord.

Let us try to remember, to go through the heart (which is what "re-cordare", means in Latin), reflections and experiences on prayer. It can be a time to discuss them with the Lord, to tell him once more that we need Him.

- *"How ideas change when I pray them!"*⁴⁸.
- What is important in prayer is not to feel much or to feel good, not even having it make sense... but let it slowly transform us.
- God gives us every day 1,440 minutes. Can we not dedicate to Him (return) a few minutes in daily prayer?
- *"Is not a friend of God who is not his friend in prayer"*⁴⁹.

⁴⁷ Life, 8,2.

⁴⁸ Georges Bernanos.

- Tell me if you pray and I will tell you if you believe; tell me how you pray and I will tell you how you think (lex orandi, lex credendi).
- *"Whoever does not know how to do mental prayer is like a body without a soul: gradually starts to give bad smell: to do prayer is to ventilate the soul."*⁵⁰
- *"Who loves the earth becomes earth, who loves gold becomes gold and who loves God becomes a spirit with him"*⁵¹.
- Prayer is not an obligation, it is a necessity. Not to pray is not a sin, it is a disgrace.

In addition to prayer (and of course the Eucharist and the sacraments), the community of brothers is the great support for fidelity when they communicate their personal faith, when we pray with them, when together we try to discern what God keeps asking us, when we correct and help each other with love, when they offer me possibilities of improvement...

The community is one of the greatest gifts that God gives us: it is the family, the brothers, who remind us who is the Father.

Community is also the gift that we can make, you and me to others, when we live as brothers.

THANK YOU AND YES

When Dag Hammarskjöld, the Swede, was General Secretary of the United Nations from 1953 until his plane crashed on 18 September 1961, when flying to handle the independence of Katanga. He received posthumously the Nobel Peace Prize.

Among the charred remains, his wallet was found with his hand-written card: "Thank you for the past, YES to the future."

This handwritten prayer expresses the permanent position of believers before God. We appreciate the vast litany of the goods and misfortunes that we carry on our back as our personal Old Testament; we happily accept future events, our New Testament. Thank you and be it done.

23. Fidelity at all Ages

If fidelity is *"love maintained in time"*, it will have to be lifelong perseverance, at the different ages in which we are living.

Juan Maria Uriarte, Bishop emeritus and alumnus of our school, has a very interesting book that dedicates a chapter to analyzing the situation of priests' challenges in four vital moments. We are going to summarize it here, although a summary does not excuse the direct reading of this book⁵².

Although it is addressed to young priests and guidelines are pointed out with that intention, it also applies to all the stages of life with the timely translation. The psychological and sociological keys are the same and the challenge of fidelity applies to everyone.

⁴⁹ Calasanz. *Sententiae spirituales sexaginta...* Perugia 1620, 93.

⁵⁰ Calasanz, Letter 664.

⁵¹ Calasanz, Letter 4527.

⁵² Juan M^a Uriarte. "Servir como pastores". Sal Terrae. 2011. Pages 11-51.

Young Priests (25-40 years): Spiritually Assume the New Identity

It's an age where decisions that mark our life are being taken: one takes his solemn vows as a religious, is ordained as a priest, and takes on a job and dedication of certain responsibility.

It's a time of excitement and intensity, all are new challenges, new roles and responsibilities that must be assumed. There are difficulties and fears before so many novelties. We seek personal fulfillment, to stabilize our life, the generous service. The time has come after so many years of preparation.

The vocational elements that are already embodied, must be assumed personally: you could be by *sacrament* a priest, but perhaps this reality still has not become the identity with all the consequences.

We are in a society that values youth and sometimes it is hard to change the habits of the young adults or values of our own generation which are not very consistent with this new mission and situation: it is easier to be young than to be priest or religious. Sometimes there is a fracture between the "common sense" of the generation to which one belongs and the proposal of the Church so socially under valued.

The spiritual task is to identify with the new identity, to become what I am: a religious Priest, an educator. There was already a first identification in saying yes to my vocation, in pronouncing the temporary vows and renewing them, in taking steps in the formative stage. It is now a decisive moment to crystallize the identity. We cannot disassociate life and ministry. We must balance the interior and exterior (prayer and work), control our possible narcissism, and learn the celibate language of love and personal relationships.

Personal prayer and the contrast with a companion or with the community are essential at this stage and always.

In the Middle of Life (40-60 years): the Second Conversion

After some good years there will appear the sense of inner emptiness, lack of enthusiasm, existential unwillingness, spiritual aridity, apostolic anemia. The past produce disappointment, the present contains dissatisfaction and the future generates skepticism.

The cause may be the precariousness of pastoral achievements, the disappointments that we accumulate in life without highlighting any in particular, little progress in spiritual experience, spiritual aridity, and fatigue due to the excessive burden. Perhaps also disease, some failures, and any event that humbles us...

In the background is the acute experience of human limitation, which awakens us from the childhood dream of omnipotence, and shows us specific limitations which could cause a crisis of hope, a crisis of meaning, a spiritual crisis.

Sometimes we look for outputs of more intense activity, we strengthen volunteerism, we look for the cause of our failure in the environment, and we seek as solution a change of place or work, sometimes even secularization...

The task now is the conversion: accepting God as God, accept being saved by his grace, seeking the real encounter with Him. For this purpose we confide in Him our past (accepting his mercy), our present (discovering his presence that helps us keep our mission giving less importance to our actions and our person) and our future (learning to trust). We must

patiently wait because the crisis is usually long (could last for about ten years). We must accept God, strengthen the option for Him by turning it into passion: "*Your mandates are the joy of my heart. Your law gives me life. Your will is my delight*" (Ps 118)

Senescence (60-75 years): Turning the Experience into Wisdom

It's time to grow and assume finitude simultaneously. The feeling is progressive dispossession. Physical forces are weakened, the psychic abilities diminish, and the loved ones are going away slowly.

We are marginalized from relevant positions. There is pastoral wearing because it is harder each time and we don't always see who will continue our work. There is also a new form of solitude that emerges: we need a company that shows appreciation and affection when before the mission seemed to be enough.

The temptation is to try to retain the beliefs that we had, holding on to the position that we have earned. This situation can lead to rigidity to change schedules, to understand new approaches. Skepticism and apostolic mechanisms that lead to the routine and, frequently, to sadness, bitterness and resentment, may appear.

The experience has to lead us to the wisdom that knows how to heal wounds, to soften calluses, to gain in serenity that accepts finitude, to be sensitive to the fundamental and to the sense of things. It is good to be calm at work, not so much in quantity as in the attitude to assume it without drama and with peace. Wisdom must lead to leniency with others, to the tenderness purified of possession.

The Evangelical attitude is detaching from the feeling of possession, with responsibility and generosity, passing the baton and feeling part of that historical chain that unites us with Jesus himself. Wisdom joins the experiences of uselessness with serenity and peace, recalling that one is a servant and not a subject of rights in front of God, feeling stripped but not plundered.

Senile Age (75 years and over): Growing While Decreasing.

The social image of this stage is the decline and collapse. This affects the person when one reaches this age.

The crisis is of identity, believing that one already is good for nothing. The sense of grief becomes constant with the own strength that is diminishing, with close people who are now disappearing, with personal responsibility and the social role that increasingly decreases...

The crisis is that of autonomy, of relying on others, sometimes with the risk of falling into infantilism or need for compensation, in the old geezer who wants to do it all by himself when he can no longer do it.

The crisis is that of belonging: marginalization can be lived as a social death in the institution itself because one does not find a role, with the consequent risk of boredom, of inner emptiness, sadness, loneliness.

The spiritual task is confidence, knowing how to lose your our own life to win it in God. It is an opportunity to reconcile with the past (overcoming possible culpabilities), assuming the present (assuming the expiration with the awareness of being a creature) and opening to the future with the hope of eternal life.

It's time to assume, with due community discernment, auxiliary and marginal tasks, not shining, but necessary tasks. It is time for a special dedication to prayer and "*lectio divina*".

Following Jesus at All Ages

The story of the disciples of Emmaus (Lk 24, 13-35), among other many readings, can be a magnificent account of the following of Jesus in its different stages:

- The first stage of these disciples that simply is sensed in the story is the initial enthusiasm that has made them followers of Jesus. Something has remained, the fact that they are on their way, and they are two (the minimum community).
- The widest part of the narrative may indicate a second stage, marked by disappointment at the apparent failure of Jesus; however, they permit to be accompanied, they listen what the Scriptures say through that traveler who has joined them along the way, they discover signs in the testimony of others (it is true that some women said that Jesus is alive and that the grave is empty)...
- With the arrival at Emmaus also comes dusk that could very well represent the stages of maturity. At this time it is especially important to ask the Lord: "Stay with us!" And sit at the table of the Eucharist and rediscover how our heart is burning inside us with the Scripture. Then we can hopefully find, as those disciples, strength to follow the path back to Jerusalem.

Let's take a moment to see in what stage of the path we are, to once again become more aware of the Lord who accompanies us and invites us with his presence and teaching to remain faithful in the path, who listens to us in our disappointments and fears, who shares with us the bread of the Eucharist...

We should keep in mind at all times the experience of Paul, to discover in disease and personal limitation, the power of Christ. This is true for all ages: "*So that I might not become too elated, a thorn in the flesh was given to me... Three times I begged the Lord about this, that it might leave me, but he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weaknesses. I prefer to gladly boast about my weaknesses, in order that the power of Christ may dwell with me. Therefore, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and constraints, for the sake of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong.*" (2 Co 12, 7-10)

LEAD ME, ALWAYS AHEAD⁵³

Through the darkness surrounding me, You always lead me ahead.
Night is dark and I am far from home: You lead me always ahead.
Guide my steps: I can no longer see what is said to be seen below:
one step at a time is enough for me.
I have not always been so, nor have I always prayed for You to drive me.
I wanted to choose and see my path, but now You lead me always ahead.
I longed for days of glory, and despite fears, pride directed my will:
Oh!, do not think about those years left behind.
Your power has blessed me so abundantly, that it could still lead me
ever further through plains and wetlands,

⁵³ Cardinal Newman. "Cries and prayers", p. 306.

over the steep rock and the roar of the stream until the night has passed
and those faces of angels smiling to me in the morning
that I had loved time ago and for a while I had lost.
You lead me always ahead.

24. The Call to be a Piarist Religious

Each and every one of us must try to be faithful to the vocation to which we have been called, to give adequate response to the plan which the Lord has intended for our happiness and for the construction of his Kingdom.

Most of the Piarist have received a triple vocation to be educators, religious and priests. These three elements, deeply overlapped, constitute our particular way of following Jesus⁵⁴.

Now we will address other aspects that involve our consecrated life as Piarist religious.⁵⁵

We Must be Fully Identified with Jesus Christ, as all Christians

Sometimes the question arises about the peculiarity of religious life with respect to other vocations. It is not a trivial matter, as it has many practical consequences both in the personal life of the religious as well as in the vocational proposals that we can perform.

What is the peculiarity of the consecrated life? Try to identify as much as possible with Jesus Christ and try to imitate Him in their major life choices... as all Christians!

We often want to delimit much of the different vocations that we forget that all of them respond to the only Christian vocation, that they are all complementary and intertwined, that the Spirit is sufficiently free to act with his criteria and not ours.

To define the genuine aspects of the vocation to the consecrated life, we must start with seeing what is common to all Christians. The vast majority of religious life, today and always, is the lay person.

In the beginning, religious life was a lay movement closely linked to martyrdom. This, in the early Church, was considered the top of the Christian life: "martyrdom is the authentic imitation of Christ". *"No one has greater love than the one who gives his life for his friends."* (Jn 15, 13)

When the persecution and martyrdom cease, their place will be taken by monasticism and religious life, where "it is possible to imitate more closely" Jesus Christ.

Martyrdom was not obviously for a singular group of Christians: all were called to confess Jesus Christ with their own blood if the occasion so demanded it. Martyrdom was common by definition and the same can be said of the imitation of Jesus.

Vatican II is located in this line when it starts from the common vocation of God's people before moving on to the specific charisms; being religious is, fundamentally, being Christian.

Today, term "imitation" is not commonly accepted; the term "following" is preferred. However, "following" means "imitating"?

⁵⁴ Salutatio of Fr. General published in Ephemerides, March 2012.

⁵⁵ Very interesting is the book of Gabino Uríbarri. *Reavivar el don de Dios*. Sal Terrae. 1997.

"So be imitators of God, as beloved children", (Eph 5,1). Imitation is not a material repeating of life, gestures, acts and words. It is to look alike, to follow his model, inspired by his example, to be like him, as he tells us after the washing of the feet: *"I have set an example that you also should do as I have done with you"* (Jn 13, 15).

"Have the same feelings of Jesus Christ" (Ph 5, 1). Paul exhorts us to appropriate this way of thinking (1 Co 2,16), this spirit, this feeling. Imitation means, therefore, identification with Christ. Christ is an identification model, the reference point, the horizon that we should follow...

"My children, who are re-born when acquiring the figure of the Messiah" (Ga 4.19). Imitation is now the conformation with Christ.

"For those that chose beforehand, he also predestined to reproduce the image of his Son" (Ro 8.29). The Christian life is to fulfill the plan of God the Father: to reproduce the image of the Son.

Identification with Christ, conformation with Christ and reproduction of Christ: imitation points to all of this. The best overview is offered to us by Paul himself: *"I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live, I no longer live, but Christ lives in me"*(Ga 2, 19-20).

Any Christian, regardless of his condition of lay or ordained minister, sacred or lay, celibate or married, is called to the imitation: identification, creation and reproduction of Christ. The call to holiness is common to all, and everyone can perform it excellently in his own vocation.

We Discovered it as a Step Forward that We Express with the Religious Vows

The vast majority of us, religious, have experienced the vocation to religious life as a gift, as a plus in the process of following Jesus. We do not feel superior or better than other Christians, but Yes to the object of a particular selection that we don't know how to clearly define it.

We perform the expression of this new step by imitating with special force three specific aspects of Jesus, that we consider to be central in Christian life: freely chosen poverty (2 Co 8, 9), celibacy for the Kingdom of Heaven (Mt 19, 12) and the abnegation of our own will in obedience to God (Jn 4, 34).

In this way, we religious embody a particular form of *"memory of Jesus"*⁵⁶ in the Christian community, and for this reason we are a sign for the whole Church⁵⁷. We update, remember, and make concrete, three existential and totalizing features of the life of Jesus in the Christian community

- We are celibate for the Kingdom of heaven as Jesus was, because like Him we feel that the relationship with God fills us in such a way, and the consecration to the service of the Kingdom that God wants absorbs us in such a way, that everything else remains in the background.
- We make ourselves to be poor, voluntarily, as Jesus was. Not only as a liberation to cater exclusively to the business of the Lord, but because we have felt in such a way that the only wealth for which it is worth to sell it all, is for God and his Kingdom (Mt 13, 44-46), that we can only reflect it physically, institutionalizing it.

⁵⁶ Vita Consecrata 22.

⁵⁷ Lumen Gentium 44; Perfectae Caritatis 1.

- We are obedient as was Christ, who lived obediently until death on the cross (Ph 2, 8). All the spiritual tradition is well aware of the ease with which we deceive ourselves. That is why the vow of obedience has been objectified, by which, in line with the sacramental structure of grace, obeying the religious superior we obey Christ.

The promise of Jesus is precious: "*And everyone who has given up houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands for the sake of the kingdom of God will receive a hundred times more, and will inherit eternal life*". (Mt 19.29).

These spiritual attitudes - chastity (1 Co 7.29), detachment of wealth (Mt 6, 19-21) and the abnegation of itself to follow Jesus and fulfill the will of God (Lk 14, 26-27) - are characteristics of the Christian life in general, but in the religious they take more consistency and form a precious and particular charism in the Church when these vows are assumed together and institutionally.

A Vocation with Clear Signs of Identity⁵⁸

Passion for Christ and passion for mankind take in us, religious, and their own characteristics:

- We have felt attracted to Jesus in a total and radical way: he has called us to leave it all and follow him without conditions, without belongings or possessions, where he wants to take us.
- In our life and deeper identity there is a 'yes' of disciples of the first hour, naive lovers of Jesus and his cause. A vocation that we decided to accept without measuring the limit of possible losses, nor calculating future earnings.
- Jesus Christ and his cause, the Kingdom, have become the first love, whose history depends on the life situation, work, intensity of passion, emotions and affections of each. But our heart is focused and always returns to the intimacy of the encounter with Jesus, to the loving fidelity promised by Peter, the silent presence of John on the cross.
- Love that leads to freedom and total availability for walking along the roads announcing the Kingdom, freeing from evil and performing miracles that verify and make credible the Good News.
- From God and the cause of Jesus, nothing human is alien. Our sense of urgency about the Kingdom is passion for mankind from the special taking care of the poor to the cause of Justice as a lifestyle that we only achieved by being completely for God.
- "Our vocation is based on the '*I will not leave it for anything in the world...*', on the '*I will follow you where wherever you go...*' and perceiving that Jesus and his message call us, and deserve a totalizing response: to give the whole life, with all its implications and facets.
- I direct my whole life, with all its facets, and dedicate myself to this response. As time and concern, as labor and vital commitment, but also as an expression of all my affection, availability and belonging. With everything implied at the time of the commitment, and with all that will suppose in other vital moments to deepen the quest and encounter with Jesus"⁵⁹.

⁵⁸ Taken in good part of the document of the Province of Emmaus "The role of the Piarist religious". 2008.

⁵⁹ Material of the 2008-09 Fraternity training: "*The vocation to be Piarist religious*".

A life devoted, as a sign and prophecy, trying not only that Christ be the center of our life, but that we "*strive to reproduce in them, as far as possible, that form of life which He, as the Son of God, accepted in entering this world*"⁶⁰.

- "*In our form of community life, we more fully love our brothers through chastity, we share everything with them through poverty, and, more closely united through obedience, we surely fulfill God's will. We encourage each other to live faithfully and in a spirit of conversion of heart the demands of our Baptism and of our religious consecration*"⁶¹
- Our passion for Christ and for mankind leads us to devote ourselves in a way of common life, wanting to be a sign that the Kingdom can be lived and anticipated.
- We share life and mission, faith and hope, projects and dreams.

As priests, the Piarist religious are called to be an image of Jesus himself and his offering:

- Therefore, we live the Word of God and express it with words and gestures, like Jesus.
- We read the Word with Calasanz, from the reality of the child and the young, especially the poor.
- The Eucharist, center of our own life and the life of the community, is a privileged space to bring Jesus to the children.
- As shepherds we especially promote the Piarist Christian community, encouraging the various Christian vocations, the process of Christian initiation, the various services and ministries.
- And, above all, we live our consecration and daily dedication to children and young people in all areas of mission in which we are

We embody and convey the charism of Calasanz: "*We shall be known by all as true disciples of Christ, if, wishing to know nothing but Christ crucified, we keep His new commandment. We draw the love, with which we love one another as He loved us, from Him who gave up His life for His friends, and dedicate our lives to the evangelization of children and the poor, and, while death is at work in us, life grows in all.*"⁶²

"*We show our consecration and love for all through our apostolate. With an open mind and heart, we are united with everyone, so that our life, hidden in Christ, may shine in the world as a sign to them of the presence of the Kingdom that we await.*"⁶³

That is why:

- We are guarantors of a spirituality that is linked to education, evangelization and work for a better world for children and young people. We read the Gospel from there, and share our faith in the small community, the Fraternity, the Eucharist of the Piarist Christian community, etc.
- In the community of life, and in the Fraternity, we are witnesses of community life, and we show love, understanding, shared project, unity in diversity.
- We give our life for the Piarist mission where needed by availability and dedication.

⁶⁰ *Vita Consecrata*, 16.

⁶¹ *Constitutions*, 26.

⁶² *Constitutions*, 18.

⁶³ *Constitutions*, 21.

A Terrible Critique and Call

Once religious life was defined in a terribly critical manner with this sentence: "*They enter without knowing each other, they live without loving each other and they die without crying for each other*". Unfortunately, and despite the bitterness and malice that it might have, we should recognize that it places the finger in the sore and may have its point of truth. Those who have made a courageous choice in life have to always be vigilant to keep it with fidelity and generosity.

It is a call that you, Lord, make us to refresh our option for You and the religious community with renewed spirits. Help us to be an image of your love, to discover you by the brothers that You give us, to keep alive the sign that You propose to us "*In this shall all men know that you are my disciples, that you love one another*" (Jn 13, 34).

SEND YOUR SPIRIT

Send your Spirit on the young and the old, on man and woman, on the high and the low, on the East and the West.

Pour your fire in the heart of man, in the mouth of man, in the eyes of the man, in the hands of man.

Send your Spirit on those who believe, on those that have doubts, on those who love, upon those who are alone.

Pour your fire in the words of men, in the silence of the men, in the speeches of men, in the songs of men.

Send your breath on those who build the future, on those who maintain the values, on those who protect life, on those who create beauty.

Send your Spirit on the houses of men, over the cities of men, over the world of men, upon all men of good will.

Here and now, pour your Spirit on us, and that He may be with us forever.

25. The Call to be a Piarist Laity

Calasanz created a clerical Order, a religious congregation to give greater stability to schools and "*to tend to the perfection of charity as all religious institutions*".

However, from the beginning there were some diocesan priests and some lay people who collaborated with the Pious Schools and Calasanz wanted that, if any of them wanted to become fully integrated into the works of the Pious Schools, "*our brothers will embrace him as one of them*".

Reflection, decisions and the life of the Pious Schools have led us to a rich reality of participation of the laity in the Piarist life, mission and charism in different modalities⁶⁴.

There is no doubt of the importance of all those people, children and young people who are the *raison d'être* of the Pious Schools. When approaching a Piarist work, they are receiving a call, a gift from God in the form of education, proposals for life, of the approach to a large and interesting group that tries to follow Jesus and update Calasanz. It is a call that invites them to be happy, to develop the whole personality, to work for a better world, and to discover the only One that can fill a life.

Thousands of collaborators, some of them living their dedication in terms of shared mission, are finding in their profession, their dedication, or in their cooperation, an element that enriches their life and fills it with sense. It is no longer a call to be receptors, but to be active in the consolidation of the Pious Schools.

There are also many people who find in the Pious Schools a place and a way to be inserted in the universal Church. In their celebrations, in their groups, in their work, they discover that Piarist Christian Community is where they can focus their faith that animates their entire life.

And even more...

The Fraternity of the Pious Schools

A few hundred laypeople have been approaching the Piarist reality through different paths and have discovered that the charism of Calasanz is also a personal call for them. The Piarist mission, spirituality, life, the institution of the Pious Schools are also the core of their own Christian vocation to follow Jesus, perhaps together with other elements (family, profession...).

They are people who feel vocationally called by God and by the Pious Schools to integrate into the Piarist charism. The Piarist Fraternity is the entity that gives shape and accommodates this vocation.

Since the first document in 1988 there is a long history, and many steps have been taken: the first Fraternities in 1991, a strong development especially after 2003, meetings and shared training plans, the new document from the General Congregation of 2011⁶⁵, the commissioning of the General Fraternity with its corresponding Council...

Belonging to the Fraternity means having been called to embody the charism of Calasanz today, along with the Piarist religious.

This is a great vocation for many lay people who attempt to concretize their following of Jesus and find in the Fraternity their vocation, becoming part of a space in Church, a mission for their life, spirituality with a rich history, a group of brothers and an institution that enables it. A great opportunity!

This common vocation is defined by a series of options: further deepening their vocation, getting to know more about Jesus and Calasanz, praying, taking part in the Eucharist,

⁶⁴ In a previous chapter, "Piarist charism shared in different ways", we have collected an overview of the current situation.

⁶⁵ General Congregation. "The Fraternity of the Pious Schools". ICCE 2012. In addition to the document of the Fraternity, it collects interesting clarification of terms and the current reference documents relating to the laity in the Pious Schools.

collaborating with the Pious Schools, actively participating in the small community and Fraternity, encouraging the Piarist Christian community, feeling part of the Pious Schools.

These traits that define us as brothers and sisters of the Fraternity include some that have greater significance because they mean key elements of life. They are, therefore, sign of a genuine community:

- Sharing the goods with those in need, targeting at least to the tithe of income as a sign of our commitment to the universal destination of goods, and as an opportunity to return to God part of what He gives us.
- Sharing the valuable gift of our time in the form of volunteer work and availability to boost the Piarist mission or the needs of the community where we are required.
- Sharing the decisions of our own lives, communicating our projects of life, gathering support, guidance, the advice of the brothers.
- Sharing our own living our own life experiences of faith in the shared prayer, the Eucharist, at times suitable to do so.

A Catechumenal process of formation and discernment, as well as the corresponding welcoming, has been a previous need. This opens a horizon for religious and lay people to walk together, reinforcing the Piarist action and trying each and everyone to be faithful in our life.

The Fraternity Opens a new Piarist Horizon

The Fraternity is not only a reality that makes possible a new Piarist and ecclesial vocation, but it becomes a new Piarist institutional subject, which, together with the Order, is responsible for keeping alive the charism received by God through Calasanz.

It is worth mentioning, even if it is only in the form of brief notes, some roads that open as the Piarist Fraternity is taking shape:

- The same Fraternity, a shared space where religious and laity belonging to it assume jointly the most valuable thing they have: the Piarist mission. And they do not just stay there (which is already more than enough), but that can be of mutual enrichment of two vocations so different and yet so complementary of each other, they share spirituality, they open new elements of shared life, which allow for dreams of new steps for the Pious Schools of tomorrow.
- Lay Piarist, people that from their membership in the Fraternity, step forward to also legally integrate the Order, some of them sharing from their marriage and family, substantive aspects of their own life: availability, decisions, goods, and a greater participation in the life of the Order.
- Some mixed communities formed by religious and lay people, from the Province and the Fraternity, where they share roof and life looking for a greater rapprochement between religious and laity, as well as a richer community and mission.
- Sending of laymen, families in some cases, to another Piarist presence or even to another country to reinforce the Piarist mission.
- The Piarist Ministry entrusted to laymen: the lay pastoral ministry, Christian education, social transformation⁶⁶.

⁶⁶ General Congregation. "Participating in the Pious Schools". 2014.

- Itaka - Piarist, as a reality shared between Demarcations and Piarist Fraternities, to boost the Piarist mission.

These roads are windows of hope to the future of the Pious Schools as well as vocational possibilities for some brothers and sisters of the Fraternity.

Don't you find this chapter exciting about the Piarist history that we are now writing? Can't you take a glimpse at the action of the Spirit in these new and bold steps that we are giving, religious and lay people? It's time to ask the Lord to be our guide that we don't miss his light and strength, which helps us all to be an image of his presence in our schools and Piarist works.

I invite the Piarist religious to welcome the Fraternities as a gift that enriches and strengthens the Pious Schools, and all those who are part of the Piarist Fraternities or feel called to them to live according to the charismatic gift received, all united, contributing to the strengthening and renewal of the Pious Schools, for the good of the children and youth, the poor and all persons to whom God sends, through the Church, *by the daring and ever-enduring patience of Saint Joseph Calasanz*.

We ask the blessing of God for all those that dream of Pious schools being faithful and renewed, under the protection of Mary, Queen of the Pious Schools, and Saint Joseph Calasanz.

Rome, January 15, 2011. Pedro Aguado. Father General.

26. The Blessed

We began this section recalling that you are, that we are all called to holiness, to be a part of the family of the Only Holy because he has made you already his beloved son and you need just to admit it and live as such. There rests the necessary faithfulness to the great treasure that we have received: relying on the Father, recognizing Jesus, living as brothers, led by the Spirit.

Another way to call this Holiness that God wants to introduce can be a Heavenly Bliss: the Father wants us joyful, happy, full, and blessed.

God is the Blessed one as Paul tells us: "*The blessed and only ruler will make manifest at the proper time, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in an unapproachable light, and whom no human being has seen or can see*" (1 Tim 6, 15-16).

A God so great who has noticed you and me for inviting us to participate in his happiness. We are going to enjoy a moment of this reality: God is calling us to be happy and shows us the way: to trust him and to live as brothers.

Numerous Beatitudes in the Bible

Immediately comes to our mind the Beatitudes of Matthew and Luke, but in the Bible they appear very often and constitute a literary genre.

They are made with an initial statement pointing out to people that are "worthy of happiness", normally with a second part stating the reason for that happiness or the consequences of that attitude or quality.

In the Psalms it is often repeated "*blessed who fears the Lord and listen to his mandates*" (Ps 112, 1-3; Ps 119, 1 - 2) mentioning the type of rewards of the time (riches, power, children).

The wise man does not limit his horizon to the remuneration in this world, but his reward is God in person: "*Blessed are those who place hope in Him*" (Isaiah 30, 8), "*who trust in God*" (Ps 84, 13), "*who has his support and hope in the God of Jacob*" (Ps 146, 5).

To discover that only God gives happiness, sometimes a disappointment is required: "*Cursed is the man who trusts in human beings, who seeks his strength in flesh, whose heart turns away from the LORD. Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose hope is the LORD*" (Je 17, 5.7).

Even in suffering there can be happiness: "*Happy is the man whom God corrects*" (Job 5, 17).

Justice will also appear ahead of the immediate joy of prosperity: "*Blessed is she who, childless and undefiled, knew not transgression of the marriage bed; she shall bear fruit at the visitation of souls*". (Wi 3, 13) when it seemed unthinkable. "*Call no man happy before his death, for by how he ends, a man is known*". (Si 11, 28).

The Great Beatitudes

We are going to read these Beatitudes of Mt 3, 3-12 personally addressed to you. Try to imagine Jesus saying to you:

- Blessed when you choose to be poor, when you share with others, when you only value goods as means, when you call anything never your own, but you put it at the service of others, when you live with austerity and simplicity, when you are close to the poor and their need hurts you: you have God for King.
- Blessed when you suffer, when you endure bad moments, when the cross that seemed far is placed on your back, when you see yourself without resource and weak, when you need to ask for help: you will receive comfort.
- Blessed when you're peaceful, when you try to control your temper, when you forget offences and always forgive, when you try to resolve conflicts with dialogue and benevolence, when you never turn to physical or verbal violence: you are going to inherit the Earth.
- Blessed when you are hungry and thirsty for justice, when you are hurt by the injustices that others suffer more than by your own, when you work for a world with more solidarity, when you give up your rights so that they will reach others: this is where you'll be satisfied.
- Blessed If you are merciful, if you are attentive to the needs of others, if their problems hurt you, if compassion is your attitude, if you always forgive: you'll also receive mercy.
- Blessed if you're clean of heart, if you refuse to see bad intentions, if you try to look with the eyes of God, if you can see his hands in everything that happens, if you take time to discuss with the Lord what you find, if you look in depth: you'll see God.

- Blessed if you work for peace, if you denounce injustice and violence, if you announce peace as the only way to solve the problems, If you see a brother in the victim and also in the executioner, and even in the viewer, if you make your contribution to peace: God is going to call you his son.
- Blessed if you are persecuted for your fidelity, because with humility and love you always speak the truth, because you do not shut up to the injustices suffered by others, because you refuse to collaborate on what is wrong: you have God for King.
- Blessed when they insult you, persecute you and slander you in any way for my sake. Remain cheerful and happy, because God will give you a great reward; thus the prophets before your time were persecuted.

They are a real pleasure that rejoice our heart and make us discover how good God is for all of us.

Reading in the first person the curses of Lk 6, 24-26 produces fear in us. But we cannot avoid reading them, and thus with fear and trembling let us read them also addressed to you and me:

- Woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.
- Woe to you who are filled now, for you will be hungry.
- Woe to you who laugh now, for you will grieve and weep.
- Woe to you when all speak well of you! Their ancestors treated the false prophets in this way.

It happens to us as when we read the chapter 23 of Matthew about the bad priests and Pharisees, that we feel the disappointment and anger of the Lord upon those to whom he had entrusted so much and who had so much responsibility.

We can only place ourselves in your presence, Lord, and ask you to help us, to change us, to shape us again and again with your own hands.

Other Beatitudes from the Gospels

There are other precious Beatitudes which should also be read one after another and as addressed to us personally. There is the way for our own happiness and of others, there is the response to this call to holiness, to actually participate in the family of the Lord.

- Blessed is the one who takes no offense at me! (Mt 11, 6; Lk 7, 23)
- Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. For I say to you, many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it. (Mt 13, 16-17; Lk 10, 23-24)
- Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father (Mt, 16, 17)
- My spirit rejoices in God my Savior because he has eyes in the humility of his slave. So from now on all generations will call me blessed (Lk 1, 47-48)
- While he was speaking, a woman from the crowd called out and said to him, "Blessed is the womb that carried you and the breasts at which you nursed. He replied, "Rather, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it". (Lk 11, 27-28)

- Blessed are those servants whom the master finds vigilant on his arrival. Amen, I say to you, he will gird himself, have them recline at table, and proceed to wait on them. (Lk 12, 37)
- When you celebrate a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind; blessed indeed will you be because of their inability to repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous. (Lk 14, 13-14)
- Amen, amen, I say to you, no slave is greater than neither his master nor any messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you understand this, blessed are you if you do it. (Jn 13, 16-17)
- Jesus said to Thomas: "because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed" (Jn 20, 29)

The Beatitudes of the Book of Revelation

We cannot ignore the magnificent seven Beatitudes of the Book of Revelation. With their keys of elaboration they show us poetically the dream of happiness that God desires for each of us, their children:

- Blessed is the one who reads aloud and blessed are those who listen to this prophetic message and heed what is written in it, for the appointed time is near (Re 1,3).
- Blessed are the dead who from now on die as Christians (faithful throughout their life): "Yes," said the Spirit, "let them find rest from their labors, for their works accompany them" (Re 14, 13).
- Blessed is the one who watches and keeps his clothes ready, so that he may not go naked and people see him exposed (Re 16, 15).
- Blessed are the guests at the wedding feast of the Lamb (Re 19, 9).
- Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over these (Re 20, 6).
- Blessed is the one who keeps the prophetic message of this book (Re 22, 7).
- Blessed are they who wash their robes (who give up their life in martyrdom) so as to have the right to the tree of life and enter the city through its gates (Re 22, 14).

It is easy to enter in the contemplation by reading, praying, and enjoying the Beatitudes. Not only because of the peaceful and joyous admiration that they cause, but also because we move to acting not from the moral obligation but from the discovery that there is the will of God and happiness.

"Happiness is only for those who focus their interest in something other than their own happiness: the improvement of mankind or the happiness of others"⁶⁷. And yet in a deeply way if in it we discover the blissful presence of God.

Those who participate in the Pious Schools are fortunate to have the example and model of a few saints. Not only Saint Joseph Calasanz or Saint Pompilio or the Blessed Martyrs, but also many Piarist brothers whom we have had the chance to know and now from heavens still form part of the Piarist family of all time. They also accompany us in our mission and in our life.

⁶⁷ John Stuart Mill in the book of Francesc Torralba, "Inteligencia espiritual", Plataforma editorial, 2010.

You can quickly see where is the hand of God, as Paul tells us: "*The fruit of the Spirit is love* (he says fruit and not fruits, then love is the important thing), *joy , peace, patience* (magnanimity), *kindness, goodness, faithfulness, modesty* (gentleness) *and self-control*"(Ga 5, 22).

Here we have a whole program of life and happiness.

THE DEVIL'S BEATITUDES⁶⁸

If the devil were to write his own Beatitudes, perhaps they would be something like this:

1. Blessed are those who are too tired, busy or distracted to help others: they save me the effort to move them from the blessings of God.
2. Blessed are those who do not act until they are repeatedly asked for help and they always hope to be given thanks: it is easy to prevent them from working for God.
3. Blessed are those who criticize and do not readily attend the community meetings: they are my missionaries.
4. Blessed are those who always speak ill of others, those who complain without stopping: I love to listen to them.
5. Blessed are those who create bad atmospheres, the gossipers: they cause discord and divisions and that pleases me.
6. Blessed is everyone who waits for a special invitation to do their job and to participate positively in their community: he is part of the problem rather than the solution.
7. Blessed are those who do not share their goods and their time with the Church or with the neediest: they are my sons.
8. Blessed are those who claim to love God, but hate their brother: they will be with me forever.

DIBUJO

This is Fr. Joseph. He is getting famous.

He is a Saint.

Does he perform miracles?

Do you think that what he does with those kids is a small miracle?

VI. TRANSFORMING SOCIETY.

*"The Ecumenical Councils, the Fathers of the Church,
as well as the most learned philosophers unanimously affirm
that the reform of Christian society lies in the diligent exercise of our mission.*

⁶⁸ Taken freely from www.obrerofiel.com with this same title.

*If children, from their earliest years, are instructed diligently in piety and letters,
it can undoubtedly be expected that their whole life will be a happy one”.*

(Constitutions 5)

27. The Objective of the Piarist Mission

The goal of the Pious Schools, from Calasanz, is the reform of Christian society. That Rome, and that world, that allowed poor children to roam through the streets without education and future, is a cry of God that cannot let anyone be indifferent.

Our Land Cries Out for a Radical Transformation

If that Rome touched Calasanz, the injustices of our current world continue to also stir us. The bloody injustices that exist, the human dramas that we know, the possibilities of information that allow us to bring us closer to any corner of the world, the training that enables targeting the causes that provoke them are many of the calls to an inescapable and militant commitment to radically transform our Earth.

The figures of shame are impressive: one out of every five people live below the threshold of extreme poverty (less than one dollar per day) and more than two out of every five, in strong poverty (less than two dollars a day).

<p>DIBUJO</p> <p>Distribution of the Global Income</p> <p>World population according to their income</p> <p>Distribution of income</p> <p>Wealth</p> <p>Each horizontal band represents a fifth of the world population</p> <p>Poverty</p>	<p>It is worth trying to live one day on one or two dollars. A hot shower, a trip, the cost of your home, not to mention food or clothing or attending an emergency, we can see that very soon exceed that amount of money. This the way that 20% to nearly 50% of mankind lives today.</p> <p>The distribution of wealth is an incredible injustice⁶⁹.</p> <p>The distribution of global wealth has, paradoxically, the shape of a glass of champagne: 60% of the world's population receives just 5.6% of the money, forming a long, thin stem, while the richest 20% keeps the 82.7% taking the shape of a chalice.</p> <p>In this chart we can see the distribution of world income by country, also checking the differences existing in each of them, being more or less rich.</p>
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<p>DIBUJO</p> <p>Figure 3. Distribution of world income by deciles and countries.</p> <p>Income per capita by country and by income group (in dollars PPA 2005)</p> <p>rich classes – poor classes – poor countries – rich countries</p>
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We very well know the data, but it is never superfluous to allow them to hurt our conscience:

- 54 countries are poorer now than they were in 1990.
- Women receive wages between 30 and 60% less than men.
- 860 million adults are illiterate.
- 114 million school-age children do not attend school.
- 1.3 billion people have no access to drinking water.
- 2.6 billion people do not have access to decent sanitation.
- Close to 11 million children less than 5 years of age die annually.
- 500,000 women die each year during pregnancy or childbirth.
- 31 million people are VIH/SIDA positive.
- 983 million people suffer from malnutrition (907 in impoverished countries).
- Life expectancy has decreased in 34 countries since 1990.
- 30 armed conflicts persist in the world (23 in Asia and Africa).

⁶⁹ Most of the data was extracted from the report: World Institute for Development Economics of the United Nations University. The world distribution of household wealth. December 2006.

Meanwhile

- 1 % of the richest people in the world have 40% of global wealth.
- 2% of the richest people in the world have more than 50% of the world's wealth.
- 10% of the richest people in the world own 85% of global wealth.
- The three richest people in the world have assets with a value greater than the sum of the GDP of the 48 poorest countries.
- 225 of the richest people in the world possess a fortune that is equal to the annual income of 47% of the world's population, i.e., more than 2.5 billion people.
- 16% of the world's population lives on the borderline of poverty.
- The world spending on military armament is round 1,500 billions of dollars.
- The sale of weapons increased in 2010 by 150%.

The crisis that is now affecting Europe and the United States and also makes it visible in the richest places where a new way of living in the world is required.

Today the global crisis is multifaceted because it affects food, ecology, finance, politics, international conflicts, values... Perhaps the biggest crisis is that of solidarity.

Gandhi had already denounced some decades ago the seven deadly sins:

- politics without principles,
- commerce without morality,
- wealth without work,
- education without character,
- science without mankind,
- pleasure without conscience and
- religion without sacrifice.

The Educational Strategy of Calasanz Remains Very Current

This world must be changed. Christian education, Calasanz style, is the best means for this purpose: cater to people who have no access to school, educating conscious and committed people, offering the Gospel of Jesus as the way to a society of brethren where everyone fits, creating Christian communities where it is already anticipated what we want for all of mankind.

We know that there are other ways to collaborate in a more just and human global society: an economy that places the common good as a goal, a policy that rules with justice and peace, a law that defends the human rights of all, a technique at the service of the progress of all, a science for the good of all mankind...

We seek to awaken all vocations because we trust that God is going to raise from them the necessary dynamics so the Kingdom that we have been promised does arrive.

We want to help with concrete proposals to young people, offering channels of another life-style and a militant commitment, creating spaces where people already live as God wants.

A GOAL FOR LIFE⁷⁰

Looking for a purpose for your life?

In the world we lack three million doctors: be doctors among the poor.

More than 1 billion human beings cannot read or write: be teachers for them.

Two out of every three men do not eat enough: be sowers and cultivate the uncultured lands to give crops that satisfy them.

Your brethren need you: simply are noble workers in any discipline, because all work is noble when it is pending of a star. Refuse to put your life on a dead track. Refuse the adventure that has more pride than service.

Denounce, but help. Protest, but to build. That your rebellion be moved by love. Every one of you is a small part, a spark of that love. Spread the epidemic of good, and spread it all over the world.

Strong are those who believe and want to build: build the happiness of others and tomorrow it will show your face.

Looking for a purpose for your life?

The world is being dehumanized: be men.

28. Gideon' Strategy

When it has been asked of us a task as immense as to transform the whole world, we should think of the Gideon Strategy.

It is convenient to slowly read Chapters 6-8 of the Book of Judges where they tell us their story. Here we will try to apply it to our current life.

The Cry of the Oppressed People

The Israelites did what the Lord said and the Lord gave to Midian for seven years (Jg 6, 1). Does not something similar happen today? That paradise that God had arranged for mankind, where is it?, what have we done of it?

Midian was a tyrannical regime. To escape, they had to avail themselves of the caves in the mountains (Jg 6, 2). Is it not so the tyranny that most of mankind suffers and has to take refuge in slums under inhumane living conditions?

Then the Israelites cried out to the Lord (Jg 6, 7). How many times is it necessary to suffer misfortune for us remember the Lord! When everything is going well we believe we are masters and lords... until the harsh reality reminds us of our littleness. Today, mankind is also crying out to the Lord for Him to free it from the tyranny.

The Lord Answers Involving Some People

God sends a prophet to tell them: "*I already freed you from slavery, I have accompanied you... but you have not obeyed*" (Jg 6, 8-10). The Lord explains again the obvious with great patience: do what I say.

⁷⁰ Raoul Follereau

The greeting to Gideon, which now He is making to you, is precious: "*The Lord is with you, brave*" (Jg 6, 12). Note that the phrase is a marvel: God is with you. You are a brave man.

Gideon, who does not understand, replies complaining: "*God has forsaken us. Where are the wonders that our parents told us? Why has this come to us?*" (Jg 6, 13). It is the complaint that comes out so easily. We believe we have so many rights that what usually comes up is the complaint, rather than the feeling of gratitude for all the gifts received.

God does not react to this complaint: "*Go, and with your own power save Israel. I send you*". (Jg 6, 14). Today the Lord also says to you: you are sent to save Israel with your own strength.

Gideon cannot believe what he hears: "*How can I free Israel? Precisely my family is the smallest one of Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father's house*" (Jg 6, 15). Fear, not believing what seems impossible, comparing with others and seeing him small, are some of the doubts that assail us and become excuses. Isn't it?

The Lord ignores it and says: "*I will be with you and you'll get it*" (Jg 6, 16). How many times must the Lord tell us that we don't have to rely on our own strength, but in His?

But the doubt persists in Gideon's mind and he begins to ask for evidence. And the patient God gives it to him: the fire consumes the offering. He has not realized it, but the greatest evidence is the word that God gives him in these dialogues that they sustain.

The Mission Begins

The call received, the confidence that Gideon acquires, the first action of tearing down the altar of Baal, lead him to be someone else: "*So on that day Gideon was nicknamed Jerubbaal, because of the words, 'Let Baal take action against him, since he destroyed his altar'*" (Jg 6, 32). God frequently changes the name of those people whom He calls, because they are not what they were and have become new people, with another identity. Do you feel like that as well?

"*The spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon*" (Jg 6, 34). The mission that will begin is no longer of Gideon, but of the Spirit that has filled him. Do you discover that the Spirit wants to fill you, handle your tasks, your life?

Despite having that Spirit, Gideon is still doubting and again asks for evidences (wet or dry sheepskin in contrast to the morning dew). How are we! And that weakness, that distrust, the need for security that reminds us that, alone, we can do nothing, that we need the presence and support that only comes from the Lord. With such strength, yes, we can indeed move forward.

Towards Gideon's Strategy

Gideon makes his plan by calling on many people for the army that shall fight against Midian. And God corrects him: "*You have too many soldiers with you for me to deliver Midian into their power, lest Israel vaunt itself against me and say, 'My own power brought me the victory'*" (Jg 7, 2). Success does not come from the number, nor the army, nor the plans that we make... but from God alone. How hard it is for us to believe this! How many calculations we do before embarking on a project! With what bitterness do we look at the people in our church, in our Congregation! Do we believe in our strength or in the Lord?

The selection proposed by God is easy: who is afraid, must go. More than half (Jg 7, 3-4) left. Who does not kneel to drink, will be chosen. Maybe this means those who do not lower themselves to do what certainly is necessary? Possibly what is important is that there are only 300 of those 22,000 initials. This is what the Lord wants: not many, but great confidence.

God keeps guiding Gideon asking him to act as a spy, listening to what the enemies say, to pay attention to their fears and dreams. With this he already has the elements to implement the strategy that will follow: to divide his army into three groups, having each person take a trumpet, a pitcher and a torch. The simultaneous action of so much noise, light, cries, creates much confusion for the enemy that is defeated.

A good strategy, designed after being with the Lord, with quite enough loud noise and light, with a few appropriate words can produce much fruit.

An End with a Warning

"With this the country was at peace for 40 years" (Jg 8, 28). It seems that everything ends well, but there is a fact that should not be skipped. With the loot from his victory, Gideon made an ephod, a priestly attire with their jewelry and ornaments (perhaps a kind of table to make consultations to Yahweh), to which *"all Israel paid idolatrous homage to it and this temptation caused the ruin of Gideon and his family" (Jg 8, 27).*

A mission carried out with success, also has also its permanent temptation. That is a warning for everyone and also for you and for me.

We have in Gideon an example to encourage us to take on a task that seems impossible.

WHAT IS GOD ASKING OF ME?⁷¹

The old monastery had survived the various vicissitudes and tests of its already long history. The foundation dated back to the times when the region was uninhabited, being a rugged terrain of difficult access. The core of the current population was born in the shadow of the monastery and was linked to it. There was a mutual dependence and complementation. At all times there were young people from the village who embraced the monastic life. The monks, in turn, dedicated generous efforts to cultivate the spirit of the people.

In these tasks excelled an elderly monk whose long life consecrated to God and to the service to others was subject to common admiration. Removed from the direct activity because of his advanced age, still he was sought for his gift of counsel.

In front of the revered monk came a young man, attracted by the fame of his science and virtue. When he stood before him, he told him: "I hope you can tell me, shortly and without complicated words, what is what God asks from each person; I need to know what God wants from me".

The monk responded: "It is very simple. Jesus came to show us, with his life, and to tell us what God wants from us: simply he wants it all".

⁷¹ Vidal Ayala. "La voz del bosque". PS.

29 See Miracles, Do Miracles, Be a Miracle

Transforming the world is impossible, unless some miracle occurs, that the same God comes to change it, or he send someone able to do miracles.

Exactly for that reason is why the Lord has chosen us: *"He called the disciples, he gave them power over unclean spirits, to expel them and to heal all kinds of diseases"* (Mt 10, 1). *"If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move"* (Mt 17, 20).

God calls us to do the impossible, to perform miracles. Or is that not what Calasanz did?

The First Step: See Miracles

God is very active in our world. His hands never stop working. His presence can be easily seen if one searches in the right place: he does not usually walk in palaces but in the outskirts of the city; he doesn't walk much among the powerful but amongst people in need; it is not easy to find him when we are self-sufficient, but is always at hand when we truly need him.

The first task is to discover his miracles, his action in our world. Is it hard for you to see his miracles? Some say that God likes to play hide-and-seek, but certainly he has left many traces of his presence. Just stop for a moment, make silence to be able to listen, open your eyes to what surrounds us... You not cannot avoid contemplating his work!

The greatest gift was to give you life. In your parents the Lord placed all of his love. How many dreams, how many efforts, how much love your parents placed on you! God placed even more! Briefly review your life: do you not discover the hand of the Lord accompanying you?

Don't you wonder at the miracle of creation? A whole world for you and your siblings! A paradise to grow in it, to master it, to be happy! To look at a mountain, the sea, fire, stars, compels us to exclaim: *"Lord, our God, how wonderful is your name on this Earth. When I look at the sky, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have created, what is man so that you are mindful of him; the human being, to give him power?"* (Ps 8).

When you are positively surprised by the good people, when something unexpectedly satisfies your happiness, when you feel a deep joy for having done something good, when you contemplate beauty in so many people and things... are you not seeing God's hands?

When you pray and know that God is listening to you, when you sense the presence of the risen Lord by your side, when you discover in you unthinkable strength, when you know that God is calling you by your name... are you not seeing the best miracles?

It is true that to see miracles we need to take off our glasses of pessimism, of utilitarianism, of selfishness, of self-sufficiency... We need to just place a little bit of confidence and much of silence and intensity.

"Then he began to curse the towns where most of his mighty deeds had been done, since they had not repented: 'Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty deeds done in your midst had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would long ago have repented in sackcloth and ashes'". (Mt 11, 20-21). *"And he did not work many mighty deeds there because of their lack of faith"* (Mt 13, 58).

The first step is to discover the miracles around us. Everything is possible for God: "*What is impossible for men, is possible for God*" (Lk 18, 27). And we know well that God wants the best for us, he wants his Kingdom to come.

The Task: To Perform Miracles

Jesus also sends us today, two by two, to a community, to the places where he thinks we should go to prepare the ground for Him. Our task, with no saddlebag nor sandals, is to cure the sick and announce that the Kingdom of God has arrived. Today, when we return to Jesus, we can tell him: "*Lord, in your name even the demons submitted to us*". Then comes the announcement of Jesus: "*Nevertheless, do not rejoice that the spirits are subject to you, but rather that your names are written in heaven*" (Lk 10, 1-20).

We have this feeling in our Piarist career with young people who have come out ahead of unthinkable fashion, with situations without solutions that have been resolved satisfactorily, with magnificent results from actions that did not seem capable of causing them...

For making miracles we need just to trust and act. It is a matter of approaching the suffering person, to the one who does not see, to the one that is in need, to the person who is asking you for help. It is just about touching him, hugging him, loving him. Simply having compassion, praying and getting down to work. It is just a matter of opening our eyes to see the neighbor, to be interested in him, to discover him as a brother. To perform miracles we just need to use words that heal, gestures that transform, love that can do all.

Assuming the task of making miracles is acting as the Samaritan (Lk 10, 30-37) and changing the logic of thought: not thinking what will happen to me if I act, but rather thinking what will happen to him if I do nothing. To do miracles, it is enough to remove ourselves from the center and to place God there and the brethren, especially those most in need. Then the miracle occurs by itself!

Calasanz manages to perform miracles when he realizes that he has to give up his plans, his projects, his purposes... to put at the centre of his life those children and young people to whom no one else will respond. Then the miracles will be stringing. With many difficulties and problems, but miracles will happen, God's action through Calasanz.

That is the task: perform miracles. Trusting that they are possible.

The Challenge: To Be a Miracle

And there is still the great challenge: to become a miracle, a sign of the presence of God in our world. Not only individually, but above all of as a community.

The persistence of the Church over these centuries, despite its mediocrity, is a miracle: it has never ceased to present the Gospel and celebrate the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. I can join in this miracle, blessing (well-saying) of the Church, identifying me with it, helping it to be renewed to be most faithful on a daily basis.

The Pious Schools are a miracle, so many projects and dreams moving forward "by miracle". I can redouble my efforts to continue this miraculous work.

It is a miracle that brave young men are willing to break with their environment to give up their whole life for others in priesthood, religious life. I can be someone to promote this

miracle in my environment with personal and daring proposals, with words of encouragement, committed prayer, with a close testimony of life.

It is a miracle that many people give up "their rights" to share their goods with others, so that others may have the necessary to succeed. I can be also one of them.

It is a miracle that so many generous people give much of their time in favor of the neediest children. I can be one of them not taking into account my time, my efforts. I can offer myself to satisfy the needs of others, albeit at the cost of losing time and opportunities for me.

It is a miracle that today there are prophets that speak of God, who will dare to face others for the behind, speaking for the needy. The great challenge is to join them with my words, my gestures and, above all, with my attitudes and life.

When these miracles occur, it is the same God who makes that they bear fruit.

Our challenge, the challenge posed to us by St. Paul: *"All of us, gazing with unveiled face on the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as from the Lord who is the Spirit"* (2 Co 3, 18).

Calasanz, the Pious Schools, are the great miracle with their presence and their life. The great challenge is that every day they may better reflect the mercy and great love of God for all of mankind.

Would you like to see even more miracles, to perform miracles, to be a miracle?

MIRACLE⁷²

-Why pray? God has not granted me what I have asked of Him. I have sought God, I have searched for him honestly, with my entire ardor... but God did not attend the meeting.

-Excuse me... what God are you talking about? It is so easy to look for a God to the extent of our dreams and desires! In your country is it considered a miracle when God does your will? Amongst us it is considered a miracle when someone does the will of God.

30. The Greatest Revolution is the Christian Community

A great miracle, an excellent way to go transforming the Earth, perhaps the greatest possible revolution, is to strive to already live the Good News in the Christian community. We anticipate the characteristic love and fraternity of the Kingdom and we set in motion the greatest transformation engine.

This model of community is very well described in the two summaries of the acts of the Apostles:

- *"They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and*

⁷² Prudencio López Arróniz. "Más allá..." PS Ed.

divide them among all according to each one's need. Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes. They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart, praising God and enjoying favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved" (Ac 2, 42-47).

- *" The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common. With great power the apostles bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great favor was accorded them all. There was no needy person among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them, bring the proceeds of the sale, and put them at the feet of the apostles, and they were distributed to each according to need" (Ac 4, 32-35).*

There the path is very clear:

- Living all together: one heart and one soul
- Praising God with joy and with all my heart
- Consistency in the community of life, in prayers and listening to the teachings of the Apostles
- Breaking the bread in the houses
- Having it all in common: no one call his their own goods and selling their possessions for partitioning according to the need of each
- Attending the temple together
- Giving a powerful testimony of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

The consequence of such a life is obvious: there are no needed people, the miracles and signs performed are impressive, all this makes it possible that the community is estimated and well seen... and the Lord is adding more people to it.

Delving Into These Key Elements of the Community

They are seven elements that offer us summaries of the first life of a community. Nothing to be wasted. We should read them again in the first person as clues to our own community:

1. To live united, with one heart and one soul. Communion, feeling a family, loving each other, together making things and projects, pushing in the same direction... is the first step. Despite so many disunity we may find around us, so much speaking ill from each other, so much suspicion and individualism, in the community we are committed to unity, through the Communion over any other criteria.
2. To praise God with joy and with all our hearts. To live in constant reference to God, with joy in life, in the belief that everything is in the hands of God and that is the reason to live happy, to give thanks. Despite the many situations where the spark in life is missing, where the joys come only from sport events or small personal successes, where people speak of anything but of God, in our community we try to have God be the center of our joy.
3. To be consistent in the community of life, in prayer and formation. We find in the community our reference of life, the space where we regain energy, the place where we receive directions for our actions, we share with the brothers, with communal prayer, the constant training.

4. To focus on the Eucharist, as the table of all tables, as the center that brings together the community and brings us all around Jesus, His Word, his love and his invitation to give our life. It is our food and our community axis.
5. To normally share the goods, with joy, knowing that they are to meet the needs of all and not the whims of one. Share so that goods comply with their real purpose to serve all people. And along with the goods, to share what we are, our joys and our sorrows, our concerns and assurances.
6. To attend the temple in group. To make us present as a community in our Church, in the midst of society. Because we do not want to move away from anyone, because we want to continue being present with all, do it in a group.
7. To give significant testimony of the resurrection of Jesus, with our words and, above all, with our lives. To show that who gives us strength and joy is Jesus, who continues by our side.

All of these are prodigies and signs, miracles in our world that show the hand and the action of God. Because words and gestures that cure illnesses, actions that bring peace and justice to the world, actions responding to the close people that we are encountering, are still needed.

Here goes the way of the transformation of the world.

Calasanz also discovers it soon: the community is not only the group that ensures the functioning and future of the schools, but it is also the main sign of the action of God in our world.

These Communities Exist Next to Us

It is frequently said that these summaries of the life of the first phase in communities are an exaggeration, that the community is idealized to present it as a model. I don't know, but I do know that there are communities that live that same kind of life, with failures, and we have them next to us and perhaps we participate actively in them.

Very curious is this anecdote⁷³: "A fellow began to speak out in an assembly of popular communities that he was living in an alternative community formed by a group of professionals with the same interests who had opted to move to a simple home in a working-class district. They wanted to experience the same living conditions of the working classes to learn from them; to borrow their eyes to see society from the other side. For those who were listening, it was an exemplary Christian option of a commendable radicalism. In addition, they had decided to fully bring their salaries to a common box, where everyone would take what he needed for his expenses, that they would be periodically subjected to community review. To the surprise of listeners, the common box system was running for several years without causing any conflict, despite the notable differences of income between all of them.

That sounded them to a feat of the Acts of the Apostles... On the other hand, and facing the environmental exaltation of sex as a supreme value and the progressive eroticization of interpersonal relationships, all of them had opted to be celibate. Those who listened to them already had eyes like dishes and did not leave their astonishment: they had never heard a Christian testimony of such caliber. But, when my colleague added that they were a group of

⁷³ Gabino Uríbarri. "Reavivar el don de Dios". Sal Terrae. 1997. We took from this book not only the anecdote but also some points that we develop in this topic.

Jesuits, all the admiration came down: 'that's another thing: you should have started saying that...!' But, were they not Christians who had taken a radical life choice?"

Cultural labels ("that's a thing of priests, nuns and friars") disqualify the experiences and the signs. Sometimes even they affect us as believers. But, despite this, these communities continue to be life-changing experiences for those who form them and for the environments in which they are.

Frequently we don't give importance, it seems to us to be normal, the heroic dimension of sharing life, goods, time. To live today in community, committed to create a better world, living a serious lifestyle, is an act of heroism, a breathtaking adventure, is a miracle!

We have to remember it and give thanks for that. We need to express it with humility and enthusiasm because it is certainly a very current and very present prodigy. Living in community with audacity is a feat that will find echo in young people and generous people.

And Even More...

These communities are not only a given in religious life (what a great gift for the Church and society!). They are also in communities of various kinds, amongst which we must highlight our Piarist Fraternities and Piarist religious communities.

In these communities, very real and present in many places, we find not only those indicated elements of every Christian community, but they also introduce some aspects of great interest. These are three.

The first and most important is the mission, this clear project that binds together the community trying to achieve it, avoiding that everyone goes by his side with his individual plans. In our Piarist communities this mission cannot be missing as a *raison d'être* for the community, for sending as an assignment to all and each of the members that form it.

The second is the connection between community and mission. The community is for the mission and the mission wants the community. They are two intertwined aspects: the community is the subject and goal of the mission, the one that carries it out and who is offered as the horizon. The community displays the offer that we do in our missionary work.

The third is the constant endeavor to always build Piarist and ecclesial community. To this end, it is essential:

- The priority of the vocational promotion to Christian life and, especially, to those vocations that most multiply community life: priesthood and religious life.
- Caring for the "conversational apparatus" in the community. It would be a disaster if in our communities we only speak soccer, policy, our health, the past... Common issues in our communities have to present God and to others with enthusiasm, hope and encouragement.
- Attention to our elderly says a lot in our society about the Fraternity and also places us in contact with the vocation lived by others and the history of our own community⁷⁴.
- The way to deal with the conflicts that always appear, as they arose already in the first communities. The difference is in the form and spirit in which they are addressed:

⁷⁴ Salutatio of Fr. General published in Ephemerides, November 2010.

searching for the will of God, humility, atmosphere of charity and prayer, forgiveness and reconciliation, efforts to heal the wounds... and always with love.

- The ability to celebrate events, enjoy the good events, is another aspect that produces much brotherhood.

The Christian community is stirring the values of our society and introduces us to another area where the values of the Kingdom can already be advanced.

Is this how you live in your community? It is our great opportunity⁷⁵.

THE COMMUNITY⁷⁶

A community is a group of people who pray together, but also talk together; they share a laugh and exchange favors; they joke together and together are serious; they are sometimes in disagreement, but without animosity, as we are sometimes with ourselves, using this rare disagreement to always strengthen the common agreement.

They learn something from one another or they teach each other. They miss, painfully, the absent ones. They welcome with joy to those who arrive. They make manifestations of this or any other type, sparks from the heart of those who love each other, expressed in the face, in the language, in the eyes, in thousand gestures of tenderness.

And they cook food at home, where souls join together and where several, ultimately, are just one.

31. Slowly but Surely

To start this necessary task of transforming the world, we already know that we have the strong support of God, with the possibility of miracles and the community.

But it is also good to do so with this dual and complementary attitude that the title indicates: slowly but surely. That is with the peace that provides the knowledge that everything takes longer than expected, and that does not depend completely on us, and at the same time with the tenacity of those who know that they must not relent at any time in the effort.

It's about wisely combining this beautiful quote, attributed occasionally to Saint Augustine of Hippo, that we should many times make it ours: "Pray as if everything depended upon God and work as if everything depended on you."

We work with peace and confidence knowing that everything depends on God, as well as with the responsibility of knowing that everything is in our hands, although we know that it is not always easy to combine these two poles on a daily basis.

⁷⁵ Salutatio of Fr. General published in Ephemerides, February 2012.

⁷⁶ St. Augustin, *Confessions*.

Aware that Everything Depends on God: Slowly

It is funny and, of course, there is much reason in the phrase that states: "*If you want to make God smile, tell him your plans for the future*". With that good-natured smile of the Father who loves us, he will look on us and He will tell us: "Leave your future in my hands that will be better for you and for all mankind".

It is good, from time to time, to relativize what we are and to look with perspective. Imagine that the entire history of the universe could be compressed into one single year⁷⁷. Each month would be approximately more than a million years.

- January 1st: at 0 hours happened the creation, or the Big Bang, without "nothing important" happening before
- May 1st : our Galaxy, the Milky Way, is born
- September 9: the solar system begins to form
- September 14: the Earth is formed
- September 25: life on Earth originates
- December 1st : the Earth begins to have oxygen, basis of organic life
- December 30: the first hominids appear
- December 31: we need to specify the hours:
 - 22.30: the first humans appear
 - 23.00: they start using tools
 - 23.59: rock paintings
 - 40 seconds ago, agriculture was invented
 - 9 seconds ago the alphabet was invented
 - 4 seconds ago Jesus Christ was born

Maybe should we look with perspective to better situate ourselves? Would it not be good that we discover that we are small in front of such a huge task?

In such a long history our contribution is simple, humble... but we are excited to know that we are cooperating with all those people who have been building a better world with their also small contributions.

With the psalmist we have to say: "*If the Lord does not build the house, in vain the masons work; if the Lord does not save the city, the sentinels watch in vain*" (Ps 126). And we have to ask the Lord to bless our action, to build with our hands, to be the one who marks the future.

Assuming that Everything Depends on Us: Surely

Together with that peace of mind of knowing that everything is in the hands of the Providence, arises the belief that everything is in our hands, that we must not lose a second in the task.

God wants to act in us. He is "*the strength of my strength*", says Pedro Casaldàliga, leaning on the Psalms. He calls us to be his hands intervening in the world. He acts from inside us.

There is the task: transforming the world slowly but surely, with the conviction of the popular saying "Pray to God but keep your powders dry". Luis González-Carvajal very graphically puts it: "*When God works, man sweats*"

⁷⁷ Carl Sagan (1934-1996) was the first person to name this idea in his book the Dragons of Eden.

Bonhoeffer expressed this hard dialectic thus: "*Before God and with God, we live without God!*". In the presence of God and with him on our side, we assume the responsibility to make our land a world of brothers. "*God's Providence is man*," said Thomas Aquinas.

"Lord, give me value to change what can be changed, gives me serenity to accept what cannot be changed, and give me understanding to distinguish one thing from another".

We, who are fortunate to be part of a very ancient institution, the Pious Schools, find that each of us contributes a grain of sand, and that together we will perform the great miracle that helps us to approach the Kingdom.

There is the treasure and the key to happiness in our own lives and in the lives of so many children and young people awaiting our action, slowly but surely. Others say the same thing with "*short step and long view*", one step each time, but without losing the perspective.

SLEEP WITH CONFIDENCE.

Cardinal Fellini was Archbishop of Paris. One day he went to see Pope John XXIII and confided in him his concerns: "I have the responsibility of ten million Parisians. Many of them are going away from the Church and that does not let me sleep."

John XXIII replied: "We also (at that time the Popes used the majestic plural), when we were chosen Pope, thinking that we had to care about the whole Church and even all mankind, could hardly sleep. But one night the Guardian Angel appeared to us and told us: "Angelo (your name), who do you think you are?"⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Pierre Trevet. "Parábolas de un cura rural". Monte Carmelo. 2007. Página 172-173.

DIBUJO

Father, what are we going to do now?

I don't know, but...

Rest assured that the institution will remain standing.

VII. HE IS CALLING US AS LABORERS

"Although we must humbly expect from Almighty God, who has called us to work in this most fruitful harvest, the necessary means to make us able cooperators of the Truth, nevertheless, taking into account His gentle guidance with which He governs the world, and following the example of the Saints, we have judged it necessary to lay the foundation of our Institute by these Constitutions".
(Constitutions 6)

32. We are Cooperators of the Truth

Calasanz wanted the Piarist to be *"worthy cooperators of the truth"*.

The truth is a word that is often used as a weapon against others. The truth often is reduced to simple belief, an opinion. In our multicultural society, where different ways of thinking coexist, truth seems to be secondary and relative against the peaceful coexistence, respect and perhaps the indifference. How can we become cooperators of the truth today? What is truth?

This question is precisely what Pilate dared to ask to Jesus at the judgment: *"What is truth?"* (Jn 18, 37-38). Few moments later he washed his hands, he wanted to ignore the issue and sent Jesus to be killed.

The Truth, the Vital Element of Society

The recent encyclical *"Caritas in Veritate"*, 2009, reminds us that the human development of individuals and people has to be done by charity and truth. Charity, justice, peace, also needs the truth to be able to deploy.

Certainly, when selfishness, injustice and violence stand out, that is done by deleting the truth. This exposes situations of privilege, of domain, of slavery...

The media, the systems of creation of public opinion, are powerful instruments that can serve the common good and the progress of mankind or, on the contrary, to the powerful that control them.

We live in an era with immense possibilities of information. Never in the history of mankind have there been so many sources to obtain access to the knowledge of the situation: the media, travel, inter-culturally, the possibility of meetings, Internet... And perhaps, it is the epoch of history with greatest control over the information of mass, that has become a big business, and not always with ethical criteria.

We must not forget that information is not the truth. Without training, without conscience, without criteria, information is a forest where it is easy to get lost.

And even more so when there are so many interested parties who want to hide the truth for their own benefit, to focus attention on specific issues leaving others aside, touching the emotional fiber and not always the educational one. Beware, we also have fears and interests that make it difficult for us to see the truth that concerns us.

Educators, along with many others (politicians, journalists, intellectuals, priests), have to be seekers of truth in our daily work and we must be authentic cooperators of the truth.

What is Truth?

Again the words of Pilate surface: What is truth?

"Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you by the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you quenched my thirst, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me."

Then the righteous will answer Him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and fed you, or thirsty and quenched your thirst? When did we see you as a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visited you?'

And the king will reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these smaller brothers of mine, you did for me'" (Mt 25, 34-40).

This is the criteria of truth, where we agree all the consciences, all religions, all people of good will: the truth is in the common good, in the defense of the weak, in the care of the poor and suffering. There is truth.

It is true that truth can sometimes be hard, painful; however, without it, everything we build is too weak.

It comes to my head the situation of people who discover that they were adopted by the executioners of their real parents in some dictatorships. We also think in the one who wins by cheating, who deceives her husband or his wife, who lies to his companions in the company, who tries to convince himself repeating that certain behaviors are not so bad...

It is necessary to name things by their name, tell the truth to one another, with love, firmly, with the degree in which it is possible to assume it... Truth is not something of second nature, but fundamental to allow us to grow as persons, to build on solid foundations, to build a society that is worthwhile: *"Truth will set you free"* (Jn 8, 31-32)

The answer, as always, is in Jesus: *"I am the way, the truth and the life"* (Jn 14, 6). What is it to be cooperators of the truth? This is the answer.

One of the Biggest Lies

Before risking to getting used to the current situation and believing that it is normal, we should remember that our world is based on a social lie. It is worthy to calmly read this precious and very current parable by José Ignacio González Faus.

NATHAN BEFORE THE CRIMINAL KING. PARABLE OF CAPITALISM (2 Sa 11-12, 13)⁷⁹

When the King enjoyed the fortune of a poor soldier and decided to also send him to death and to keep for himself what belonged to the soldier, the Lord sent Nathan the Prophet unto King David to reprimand him.

Nathan went to the King and told him: "There were two men in a town, one rich and the other poor. The rich had many herds of sheep and oxen, the poor only had an ewe lamb that he had bought. He was raising it and it grew with him and their children, eating their bread, drinking from their glass and sleeping in his lap: it was like a daughter. A visitor came to the house of the rich and this, not wanting to lose an ox or a sheep to invite his guest, took the ewe lamb of the poor and prepared it for his friend" (2 Sa 12, 1-4).

Nathan thought that the King, upon hearing this story, would get angry and exclaim: "I swear by God that the one who has done that is guilty of death! He will pay four times what he has stolen". At that time, Nathan would say: "That man is you" (2 Sa 12, 5-7). And he was sure that, when hearing it, the King would realize his sin and repent. Nathan had a lot of long experience: he knew that the parable had worked and hoped that it would work again.

But behold, the King replied Nathan: "Of course, my dear prophet. The rich could not spend his flock, since he needed it to invest. Still you don't know the importance of the capital accumulation? A sheep of the rich could produce much wealth, giving birth to four or five lambs. While the ewe of the poor was destined to die, since the poor did not have means, or lambs, or stallions to make it multiply. You must understand that if the rich had killed one of his sheep to entertain his guest, he would have impoverished the country ceasing to create wealth".

Nathan left crestfallen, realizing that he did not know economics and, therefore, perhaps it would be better to abandon his mission of Prophet. He retired to the mountain and was about to sit there forever when he recalled that he has to be accountable for his mission to the Lord God.

So he returned to the city and called to the King: "Hear me, Majesty. It is about the story that we talked about the other day, do you remember? Can you at least grant us that the rich will invest in creating wealth based on the sheep that he saved when treating his guest?"

The King replied: "I cannot assure you that, Nathan. To force him to do so would be violating his freedom and my Kingdom is a Kingdom of freedoms. The rich will have to see what is right for him, how the job market is and what are the risks that he is taking. And then he will decide whatever he considers to be the best. Perhaps he is already tired of so much effort creating wealth that nobody thinks of thanking him."

Nathan picked up the allusion and paled. But thinking of Yahweh God, to whom he had to give an account of his embassy, he still dared to ask: "But at least, if he so does, would he give the poor a newborn sheep to compensate for the one that he took? Cannot we say that this sheep belongs to the poor and that the rich should return it to him, because it was produced with the sacrifice of something of his property?"

⁷⁹ José Ignacio González Faus. "Migajas cristianas". PPC. 2000. Pages 50-52.

"Again you don't understand anything, my beloved Prophet. If he did that, do you not understand that it would be another great investment opportunity lost? How would God bless the people that he chose if it would close the possibilities of creating wealth?"

That's how Nathan left the prophecy and decided to become a postmodern...

33. We are Laborers of the Lord

What great luck that God has called us to work in his harvest! How fortunate that He has called us at all hours, from dawn, in the morning, at noon, in the afternoon... to work in his vineyard! What a gift that He sends us ahead! We are laborers of the Lord!

We offer our hands to God, our lives, in the secure sense that He will be leading us at all times. That is why our existence becomes a simple, humble, grateful, contribution to the plan of God: *When you have done all that I had commanded, you can say: "We are useless servants; we have done just what we had to do" (Lk 17, 10)*

Discover Jesus as My Lord, Our Lord

We sometimes seem "second hand", "hearsay" Christians. We repeat what others say, copy the actions of people who are our reference, we follow customs that are more or less thought on that day.

What a difference when we meet face to face with Jesus! As they said to the Samaritan woman, we can also say: *"We no longer believe because of your word; for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the savior of the world" (Jn 4, 42).*

How different it is when you have a life-changing experience! There are moments, events and meetings in our personal lives that completely transform our lives. They are experiences that we can place perfectly in time and space, that mark us. Something like those disciples with Jesus: *"Come and you will see". So they went and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day. It was about four in the afternoon (Jn 1, 39).*

I invite you to have a grateful memory of those moments of encounter with the Lord. Perhaps at Easter, exercises, an approach to the poorest, a chat with a significant person, and a hard time in life... Have you not had the experience, like Thomas, of doubting, and later on, after meeting Him face to face, you had to get to his feet, saying: my Lord and my God?

Jesus is not, cannot be, another value in our life. He cannot be another reference, another criteria... and nothing else! Jesus is the Lord! Jesus is my Lord!

Some theologians tend to distinguish between *"believing in Christ"*, *"believing Christ"* and *"believing with Christ"*. It is not wrong to distinguish, because it is one thing to believe that God exists, that he is good, that Jesus is an important reference, that he was a great man, that his message is interesting and valuable. Another very different thing is believing in Christ, trusting Him, establishing that personal relationship gives me confidence in Him, listening to his proposals and answer... And, finally, it is yet another attitude believing with Christ, looking at things with his eyes, analyzing people and the world from his heart, trying to get into his skin.

These three attitudes respond to faith, but they are not the same: the challenge is to discover Jesus as my Lord, as the owner of my life, as the reason for life itself, as the friend you trust, as

the backbone of all my existence, like the horizon of all performances, as the God with whom to live.

Discovering Jesus as Lord does not make me less, does not make me slave. Conversely, when I see myself as the server of so great a Lord, I see that my life is useful, that his lordship makes me free, this makes it possible for me to be happier and more fulfilled.

The Consequences of Having Jesus as Lord⁸⁰

If Jesus is my Lord, my whole life has meaning in Him. *"None of us lives for oneself, and no one dies for oneself. For if we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord; so then, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord."* (Ro 14, 7-8)

If Jesus is my Lord, we have been created again, we have been born again, we are invited to *"put away the old self of your former way of life, corrupted through deceitful desires, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new self, created in God's way in righteousness and holiness of truth"* (Eph 4, 22-24).

If Jesus is my Lord, my goals are not my criteria, my desires, my plans... He will mark my goal and I should make all decisions with Him in prayer. If Jesus is my Lord, I have no other lords that dominate me: neither a good appearance, nor that they would love me, my own self-esteem, or the need for success... He is my only Lord and this makes me free.

If Jesus is my Lord, I cannot be Lord of anything or anyone else, I cannot dominate, hoard, I cannot manipulate anyone at my whim, or make anyone my instrument, I can't use the things in absolute form or enslave myself to them. To make Jesus my Lord, I have to free myself from so many false masters that enslave me.

If Jesus is my Lord, I listen carefully to his words: *"Do you realize what I have done for you? You call me 'teacher' and 'master,' and rightly so, for indeed I am. If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do. Amen, amen, I say to you, no slave is greater than his master nor any messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you understand this, blessed are you if you do."* (Jn 13, 12-17)

If Jesus is my Lord, I also have to serve like Him. Like Him I must be willing to give life, to serve until the end, giving my life for others.

If Jesus is my Lord, I have to many times be simple and naïve and not stop being a brother. I have to learn to lose, to resign, and to place the others before me.

If Jesus is my Lord, I must help this lordship advance in intensity and extension, in areas of my life and strength in each of them, knowing that progression is never linear, and that there will be failures and ups and downs. If Jesus is my Lord, I cannot install myself ever, because I always have to be attentive to his requirements.

If Jesus is my Lord, the goal is to be able to say with Paul: *"I do not live, but it is Christ who lives in me"* (Ga, 2, 20).

⁸⁰ Quite a few statements that follow are freely taken from a retreat with Juan Maria Uriarte and some writings of Patxi Loidi.

I AM YOURS⁸¹

I am Yours and born of You, What do You want of me?

Majestic Sovereign, unending wisdom, kindness pleasing to my soul; God sublime, one Being Good, behold this one so vile. Singing of her love to you: What do You want of me?

Yours, You made me; yours, you saved me; yours, you called me; yours, you awaited me; yours, I did not stray. What do you want of me?

Good Lord, what do you want of me? What is this wretch to do? What work is this, what do you want, this sinful slave, to do? Look at me, Sweet Love, sweet Love, look at me, what do you want of me?

In Your hand I place my heart, body, life and soul, deep feelings and affections mine, Spouse – Redeemer sweet, myself offered now to you, what do you want of me?

Give me death, give me life, health or sickness, honor or shame, war or swelling peace, weakness or full strength, yes, to these I say, what do you want of me?

Give me wealth or want, happiness or gloominess, heaven or hell, sweet life, sun unveiled, to you I give all. What do you want of me?

Give me, if You will, prayer; or let me know dryness, and abundance of devotion, or if not, then barrenness. In you alone, Sovereign Majesty, I find my peace, what do You want of me?

Give me then wisdom, or for love, ignorance, years of abundance, or hunger and famine. Darkness or sunlight, move me here or there: What do You want of me?

If You want me to rest, I desire it for love; if to labor, I will die working: Sweet Love says where, how and when. What do You want of me?

Calvary or Tabor give me, desert or fruitful land; as Job in suffering or John at Your breast; barren or fruited vine, whatever be Your will: what do You want of me?

Be I Joseph Chained or as Egypt's governor, David pained or exalted high, Jonas drowned, or Jonas freed: what do You want of me?

Silent or speaking, fruit bearing or barren, my wounds shown by the Law, rejoicing in the tender Gospel; sorrowing or exulting, You alone live in me: what do you want of me?

Yours I am, for You I was born: yours I am, for You I was born: what do You want of me?

34. Temptations and Demons in the Mission⁸²

There is a beautiful booklet of Segundo Galilea that speaks of the various temptations that we could have in the mission and in prayer, the two large dimensions of the commandment of love for God and neighbor. He recalls how Jesus spent his temptations in the wilderness and says that also you and I, we have on our side the "demons" that frequently tempt us and always on the side where we are more fragile. Even if reading the book is highly desirable, these lines can serve as a stimulus so that we are well aware of our mission.

⁸¹ Saint Teresa of Avila.

⁸² Taken the outline of one of the two parts of the book of Segundo Galilea. "Tentación y discernimiento". Madrid, Narcea, 1991.

We should not be surprised at the mention of demons, devils that haunt us around. As well as the "*symbol*" attempts to unite two meanings to gain communication skills, the Devil ("*dya-bolo*") aims to separate, divide, confuse, and make mistakes. The temptation has much to do with the action of the demons that confuse us, divide us. That is why it is very healthy to be aware of some of the demons that are on the loose, on our side, and some of the temptations with which they want us to fall.

We are laborers, sent by the Lord. We are not the owners of the harvest, or the masters who can have all our will. We are servers of Jesus and not of ourselves, or of demons who want to fool us.

1. Messianism

A temptation in our work can be to consider ourselves the center: "I am the pilot and the Lord is the co-pilot". Yes, it is true that I keep in mind the Lord, but in the background, as a companion, not as the only center. I want to be the actor, announcing Jesus, but it is I who decides, who plans, and who does everything. I do not need to ask him in prayer, to pray for each student. At the bottom I incorporate God into our mission rather than joining in the mission of Jesus. Possibly I don't trust that the only Messiah is Jesus and that I am a servant, an envoy, a missionary.

2. Activism (and even worse, passivity)

The demon of utilitarianism, of efficiency based on the efforts and techniques, the faith in myself rather than in God, tempts me with focusing my life in action rather than in being. I place all the soul in the means and, at times, I forget about God, that He is the only one that makes faith sprouting, the only one who can show himself and transform people. I am overloaded with working, I fill the day with many activities, at a frantic pace, and I neglect prayer, study, and formation. It's wearing me out, without the necessary rest and renewal and peace that comes from knowing that everything is in the hands of the Lord.

Passivity is obviously a worse temptation, doing little or nothing, forgetting that the Lord has called me to be his hands and his presence.

3. Lack of trust in God

Closely related to the previous temptations is to place trust in God in the background, place my own safety in certain means, in my experience, in myself, in my qualities, my institution. As I gain confidence in myself, I leave God only "in case of emergency".

At other times that confidence can be missing when everything is twisted, when things don't go as you want, when life is reduced. Thousand times a day we have to remind ourselves, searching through the heart, the confidence in the heavenly Father who takes care of the birds, the flowers... and of you, of me and of us!

4. Preaching problems and not certainties

Sometimes I am tempted by the difficulties of living the Gospel with consistency by problems in the transmission of faith, by the sins of myself and our Church. And, more or less consciously, I announce problems rather than a message of hope. Sometimes pessimism is stronger than me, I hesitate in my convictions, and I doubt the certainties that have always

moved me. This means that I am more of a prophet of woes than of a best world, more pessimistic than confident in God.

5. Reducing hope

Christian hope is based on the promises of Jesus: in his resurrection and ours, in eternal life, in the certainty of the Father's love to all, in the coming of his Kingdom. But sometimes I feel the Devil by my side so that I will transmit only a message of human hopes, of a better social future, of progress, of certain improvements in solidarity. All that is fine, if I don't reduce hope, if I am not satisfied with anything less than the Lord of life and of every one of us.

6. Losing the sense of people

There are times that I feel like a pastoral executive, absorbed by the organizational, administrative, planning, supervisory tasks. There are so many things to do... that I lose the sense of people, the center of all that work. There are times I do not have time to "lose it" with people, for closeness, listening to, conveying that love of God is what transforms everything.

7. Discriminating people

The Piarist task absorbs me, fills my day, and requires each and every one of the moments. To be able to reach so many needs I surround myself with some people and I forget others. I do not mean, obviously, needed employees but people for whom I struggle. I spend more time, I place more interest in people who have more qualities, which are more interesting, more entertaining, that respond better, that are more available. I leave in second place the less gifted, to the more gray, to the less rewarding. Again, I forget that I am a messenger of a God Father that loves us each one as unique, as the best. I have to remind myself that should also be my attitude.

8. Waiting for a rewarding career

Insofar as I bring forward the mission, I receive, more or less frequently, some perks in the form of comments, praise, gifts, friendship, and I'm getting used to it all as a right, as something merited by my efforts. Expectations are growing on me and I'm expecting from the mission a rewarding task that translates into power, compensation, accolades, praise. I have forgotten the gratuity, which I am just the envoy that I am the useless servant who did just what he had to do.

9. Losing the joy of mission

As time goes by, I'm making a routine, a daily duty, from the educational work and evangelizing work. Little by little that will be increasingly harder. Instead of being this mission the main source of joy (what wonder that the Lord has entrusted me with this assignment!) I lose the joy, I forget who sent me and what to do.

10. Installation

As the years go by, I'm losing adaptability of renewal, of change. To compensate for this sclerosis, this missionary arthritis, I install myself in a place, a rhythm, a way that I don't want to leave. I respond more or less to the mission, always asking to be let alone. It is gradually taking shape in my discouragement, I'm losing confidence in God to improve. I'm accommodated and I forget that every morning the Lord asks me to get back on the road.

There are other temptations. Many more. Some are prominent in the Gospel: using religion to draw attention or to seek loopholes, using God to manipulate others, putting God only in the outward appearance (Mt 23). Sometimes I feel them inside in the form of infidelity of all kinds of comfort, narcissism, pride, etc. I am aware of the abundant weak points of my life.

Do you not feel the same? But it is also true that, if I open my eyes and I stop, I find a multitude of angels that convey a message of encouragement, guiding me to return to the proper path, to remain faithful to the mission received. There are many temptations, but also much mediation to respond to the Lord. It is a matter of feeding the latter more.

THE TWO WOLVES

An old chief of a tribe was having a chat with his grandchildren about life.

He said to them: "A great fight is happening inside me!... it is between two wolves!" One of the wolves is evil, fear, anger, envy, pain, resentment, greed, arrogance, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, pride, ego, competition, superiority. The other is goodness, joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, gentleness, generosity, benevolence, friendship, empathy, truth, compassion and faith. This same fight is going on within you and within all beings of the Earth.

They thought for a minute and one of the children asked his grandfather: "And which one of the wolves you think will win?"

The old chief replied, simply: "the one you will feed."

35. My Vocation and Yours

I propose that now you refresh your vocation and mine, giving a quick review to any of the most important milestones that have led us, you and me, to say to the Lord, indeed, count on us.

Don't you have the feeling that God has loved you from the beginning and already had scheduled a wonderful plan for you? *"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I consecrated you as a prophet to the nations I appointed you"* (Je 1, 5).

Have you not discovered in your own story a lot of seeds and care, the Lord has been providing through your family, your teachers, as many people that have been marking you in life? It was the necessary dedication to your vocation: *"It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear that fruit."* (Jn 15, 16)

Did you not feel many times lucky, privileged, for so many opportunities that have been occurring in your life? Do you not feel debtor for being so lucky? Have you not ever wanted, somehow, returned so many gifts? *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, as he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him. In love he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ"* (Eph 1, 3-5).

Do you not immediately place names to your vocation for the people who proposed you, encouraged you and accompanied you on your personal process? We have to be grateful that God has sent us these messengers to help discover our vocation. Thank you for them, Lord.

Do you not put a date and a place to those moments that have marked your life? On these occasions the Lord came out to meet you, and there are experiences that serve as strong foundation for your life, of handle when the winds are strong and the rains hit us.

Do you not discover coincidences that served you as a warning of God's desire? They say that a coincidence is a little miracle where God wants to remain anonymous. Are there not small miracles in your vocation story?

Do you not discover the supports that the Lord is still sending you every day to keep you faithful to your vocation? Many events, your community, people who support you, some successes that you're having, and the satisfaction that arises inside you... sometimes are small thrusts of the Lord in your life. We have to thank them.

Do you not see yourself, from time to time, full of doubt, discouragement, and confusion? Only after the storm can you appreciate the tranquility, only after the night can one grasp a beautiful sunrise. Our life will be getting stronger only with difficulties. Why don't we also thank the Lord for these moments of trial?

Does it not happen to you that when you look back you see the path and you become surprised because you didn't think that you had advanced so much? When one is climbing a hill he sees the hardness of the rise, the slope; but when he looks back, he sees an ever-expanding landscape, he contemplates what he has already achieved and recovers encouragement to continue towards the summit. Look back to give thanks and to get strength to continue forward.

Does it not happen to you that when you think of your vocation you remember names of people whom you have served, humble and perhaps quietly, perhaps in a palpable and evident way? Do you not fondly remember many faces? God wanted to use you to help them. Lucky you!

Have you not sensed many times in your life God's hand that has made in you or by your means, unsuspected actions? That in situations without apparent output, He has been able to move you ahead?

Have you not asked the Lord to be your potter, to model you according to his desire, to make of you the piece He wants? Have you not told him that you feel like mud, that you are small and need his action? Have you not whispered or shouted that you trust in his hand to make of you whatever he wants?

Now it is time to tell you, Lord, thank you and Amen. Thank you for all received and Amen to what you propose for tomorrow.

Today is a good occasion to tell you, Lord, that when I look back I see your action in my history, I admit that you knew what you were doing. Thank you for this. When I look at the present moment, I am poor and needy of you. Thank you for this. When I am looking to the future I do it with trust: I trust You, for whatever will happen. Thank you for this.

With Charles de Foucauld today, once again, I say: *"Father, I abandon myself into your hands; do with me what you will. Whatever you may do, I thank you: I am ready for all, I accept all. Let only your will be done in me, and in all your creatures. I wish no more than this, O Lord. Into your hands I commend my soul; I offer it to you with all the love of my heart, for I love you,*

Lord, and so need to give myself, to surrender myself into your hands, without reserve, and with boundless confidence, for you are my Father".

GOD ANSWERED MY PRAYER⁸³

I had asked God strength to succeed, He made me weak so that I can humbly learn to obey.

I had asked health to do big things, He has given me the disease so that I can make better things.

I had asked richness to be happy, He gave me the poverty to be able to be wise.

I had asked for power to be appreciated by men, He gave me weakness to be able to feel the need of God.

I requested things to enjoy in life, I received the life to enjoy all things.

I have nothing of what I had asked, but I have received everything that I had expected.

Almost despite myself, my unformulated prayers have been answered.

DIBUJO

Poverty is another of the strong requests from Joseph. He is definitely on the side of the weakest and defenseless ones; that is why he has asked us, teachers, to be "poor amongst the poor".

VIII. AT THE SERVICE OF THE POOREST

*"And since we profess to be truly the Poor of the Mother of God,
we shall never look down on poor children,
but, with great patience and love, we shall try to enrich them with every virtue,
especially encouraged by the words of the Lord:
'What you did to one of the youngest of my little ones, this you did to me'".
(Constitutions 7)*

36. Our Option Today for the Poor

The insistence of Calasanz on behalf of poor children is constant:

- *"We will never look down on poor children because our Institute was founded for them."*⁸⁴
- *"Since we profess to truly be the Poor of the Mother of God, we shall never look down on poor children, but, with great patience and love, we shall try to enrich them with*

⁸³ María Luisa Brey.

⁸⁴ Letter 1319.

*every virtue, especially encouraged by the words of the Lord: "What you did to one of the smallest of my little ones, this you did to me."*⁸⁵

- *"And what is done for one of the poor children is made for Christ. It is not said thus much of the rich."*⁸⁶
- *"All of you remain there with hard-working spirit to serve the Lord and his members, who are the poor."*⁸⁷
- *"So, we currently support with patience sometimes fatigue, and even the scarcity of things necessary to properly perform the work and straighten it for the glory of the Lord and the good of the poor, as I hope you are all doing."*⁸⁸

Today, in our world, the education of the poor children is also a priority. Amongst the eight Millennium goals, approved by 189 Member States of the United Nations in the year 2000 to be achieved by 2015, the achievement of universal primary education, after the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger is cited in second place.

However, and despite some progress, the world is not on track to achieve neither the goals set for 2015 nor the objective of achieving primary education for all⁸⁹:

- Hunger is slowing progress. In the developing countries, one of every three children - 195 million - suffers from malnutrition; consequently have irreversible damage to their cognitive development and their educational prospects for a long term basis.
- The rate of decrease of children that are out of school is too slow. In 2008 there were 67 million children without attending school in the world. If current trends continue, by 2015 the number of unschooled children could be higher than the current statistics.
- 17% of the adult population of the world - 796 million people- lack basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic. Two-thirds of these people are women.
- The quality of the education is placed at a very low level in many countries. Millions of children leave primary school with very poor skills.
- The global financial crisis is undermining the efforts to fund education plans. Donors have not fulfilled promises to increase aid made in 2005. Current aid trends are disturbing.
- In the decade prior to 2008, 35 countries, 30 of them are lower-middle or low income countries, have been victims of armed conflicts. The average duration of the conflict is twelve years. In these poor countries, affected by conflict, there are 28 million children of age to attend primary school, which represents 42% of the world's children are deprived of schooling.
- There are more than 43 million displaced persons in the world, primarily due to armed conflicts. In 2008, barely 69% of the children in refugee camps went to primary school.

It is very clear that we, Piarist, continue to receive an important call from the reality that surrounds us: we need to redouble our efforts so that all the children of the world will have schooling and future.

⁸⁵ Constitutions of Calasanz, 4; Constitutions, 7.

⁸⁶ Letter 3041.

⁸⁷ Letter 4454.

⁸⁸ Letter 871.

⁸⁹ Monitoring report of the Unesco on Education for all 2011.

Our direct presence among the poor, the expansion of our schools and works in places where they are most needed, awareness of people who are on our side, starting with ourselves, the real and lasting solidarity of all of us who form the Piarist world, the careful attention to the most needy in our environment, are some urgencies that should move our heart.

The effectiveness of our educational action should bring us to be aware of some contradictions in which we could fall. A school that works well for years transforms the environment, and it can happen that in a few decades it changes the profile of its students. What had begun in the outskirts, in a popular area, dedicated to simple people as time goes by, is gaining prestige and can transform into something else. Something like this has happened in a few Piarist schools.

All my life has revolved around a Piarist school. This center began in 1893, being the second male religious school in the city, built in the outskirts of the city, in response to a population that grew quickly by industrialization. It is currently in the middle of the city, serving a middle and high class population, due to its location and the prestige of its good education. Where is the option for the poor today?

The answer that we have given has been especially insisting in pastoral work, in the work of social awareness, in the attention to special educational needs, in the reception of immigrants, in the care that no student leave the school or cannot access it or any of its activities because of economic issues, turning the school into a center of volunteerism and solidarity from which to undertake new Piarist works (foster homes, center of literacy for immigrants...).

Our option for the poor should always be kept. It will be a criterion to start new works and presences. We have to analyze in each case how to attend our favorite, those who need it most. That will become a change in their lifestyle. Our option for the poor is a feature of Piarist identity and not something added.

Do we see the consequences?

DECLARATION OF HUMAN *FACTS*, with deep pain⁹⁰.

Fact 1. Not all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, as they are not endowed with reason and conscience to behave fraternally with each other.

Fact 3. Everyone who can defend himself has the right to life, liberty and safety for his person. Children, third world and viable fetuses that cannot defend themselves do not have those rights.

Fact 4. No one who is financially solvent is subjected to slavery or servitude. Children, the unemployed, and women without other means are not included in this consideration.

Fact 5. Torture and cruelty or degrading treatment is, at times, very useful for the defense of certain rights.

Fact 7. Not all are equal before the law. But still a lot less when it comes to international law.

Fact 17. All solvent persons are entitled to property. The insolvent, by definition, lack that right because they could only get it by stealing.

⁹⁰ Each paragraph numbers refer to the Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. Taken from José Ignacio González Faus. "Migajas cristianas". PPC. 2000. Pages 127-129.

Fact 22. Only 20% of mankind has the right to social security and the satisfaction of economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for their dignity and the free development of their personality.

Fact 24. Two thirds of mankind is not entitled to rest, or to enjoy leisure time, or to a reasonable limitation of the duration of their work, or a vacation regularly paid. If they are children, they have much less.

Fact 25. Only a minority of mankind has an adequate standard of living that ensures health, welfare, housing and medical assistance to him and his family. More than 100 million children lack care and basic attentions.

Fact 26. Children working due to the poverty of their parents will not have education or elementary instruction. Education aims at the preparation of robots capable of handling the time machines, without referencing human rights or freedom, or encouraging understanding among peoples.

Fact 28. Rights and freedoms set forth in the Declaration of 1948 may not be effective for any social or international order when that does not seem adequate to the major financial powers that sustain the world.

Fact 30. Anyone who opposes these facts cannot have human rights since his very existence is a threat to the most "human" of all rights: the right to the excessive wealth of a few countries and people.

37. Some Proposals to Better Serve the Poor

In this issue of the option for the poor and our style of poverty we Piarist (perhaps all Christians) have, fortunately, a pretty bad conscience.

It is not that we are especially incorrect in our lifestyle, in our spending, our houses; but the environments in which we move the institutions that drive our mission claiming an important economic management, the families from where we come, strongly affects us and we know it.

We have to repeat a thousand times what we know in deep self: "*Who is not content with little is not content with anything*" (Epicurus). The challenge is not to increase the assets, but to reduce the greed.

Calasanz insistence in the poverty of his religious, extreme poverty, was a workhorse that brought him many difficulties and some clashes with his own brothers, to the extent that it was necessary to lower the requirements. This we also know.

Life in community, sharing all assets, the large religious work, a few centuries of history, leads us to have resources to live without economic strain. What is a marvel (sounds like the multiplication of the loaves and the fishes) can also pull us away from the situation of those who lack the most basic. We also know that.

We do a lot for the small ones, for children, for students especially the needy ones, for solidarity with the poor... There is no doubt. The Pious Schools, with their thousand failures

and limitations, are being faithful to the dream of Calasanz. And, yet, something inside us tells us that we must move forward in servicing those that are behind.

Without wishing to delve into our guilty conscience, that surely you also feel like me, it would be good to try to realize some of the proposals that would make us to be more faithful to the wish of Calasanz: "*Encourage him to let go of all the things of the world, as empty and false, and to imitate Christ, which is the hidden treasure found by few*" (letter 1466).

It would be sufficient if with these lines we can, you and I, take another step in servicing the poor, in a poorer lifestyle and more helpful.

With that intention I offer you the following proposals, without a special order, like a brainstorming, just in case they can inspire something in you:

- Giving preference with our human and economic resources to those works that serve more to the poor, trying that it be so in all that comes under my responsibility.
- Supporting ethical banking and the solidarity funds. Being vigilant with respect to financial institutions with which we work, in which we deposit our savings or, even, the investments that we have.
- Being aware at all times of the Piarist preference for those most in need, knowing that this Calasanz option, of all times, will often seem like a surprise.
- Unmasking when possible attitudes that make possible injustice: privacy and individualism, the feeling of impotence, the distance of the media through which arrives to us the information is received and the speed at which we forget it, the physical distance to the poor, selfishness, fear and laziness.
- Detaching myself from the things I may have: my objects, my space, my... Learn from this parable: the philosopher Diogenes was dining lentils when the philosopher Aristippus, who lived comfortably by flattering the King as he passed said to him: «If you learned to be submissive to the King, you would not be eating that crap of lentils». To which Diogenes replied: "If you had learned to eat lentils, you would not be flattering the King."⁹¹
- Dedicating time, a few years, a lifetime, to the poorest as an opportunity to approach the clearest sacrament of the presence of God: the poor.
- Insisting on my educational action and my life in social sensitivity, in solidarity with those who need it most, in the analysis of the causes and attitudes that lead to poverty and injustice.
- Including in my option for the poor and those who suffer need in my immediate surroundings, although it is not a great poverty: it will be the way for me to train to take major steps.
- Being demanding with myself in austerity, reducing the necessary compensations that we seek, sharing what we have: "the earth produces enough to meet the needs of all mankind, but is absolutely insufficient to satisfy the whims of a few."
- Frequently pray for the gift of poverty and of sharing. Little by little learn to be a beggar (Spanish: "por-dios-ero", who lives discovering that everything is by God, by his

⁹¹ Anthony de Mello. "The Song of the Bird". Page 114.

grace). *"May I not, Lord, lack of giving something that is yours and keeping it in my hands."*⁹²

- Feeling responsible for everything, not by conviction but by stewardship in the style of the following parable: "Diogenes was planted on a street corner laughing like crazy." Why do you laugh? ", asked a bystander." "Of foolish things, that is human behavior," he said. "Do you see that stone in the middle of the street? "From this morning when I arrived ten people have stumbled over it and have cursed it, but none of them has taken the trouble to remove it so that others do not stumble over it."⁹³
- Collaborating with social initiatives that seek poverty eradication and a better world.
- Having a good social formation that allows me to learn more about the causes of poverty and injustice, in order to propose breakthroughs for a better world.
- Being an expert in the social doctrine of the Church, in its reflections, on its way to analyze and propose actions.

Surely you will think of more of these. Here is perhaps what is important, that is to go a step forward each day, advancing in our ability to discover the Lord by sowing for the small and needy that we serve.

IF CHRIST CALLED TOMORROW AT YOUR DOOR⁹⁴

If Christ called tomorrow at your door, would you recognize him?

It will be, as then, a poor man, certainly a single man. He will be, without doubt, a worker, perhaps, an unemployed, or, even, if the strike is a righteous one, a striker. Or perhaps he will be offering policies of insurance or vacuum cleaners... He will go up and down stairs and more stairs, he will stop endless floor after floor, with a wonderful smile on his sad face... But your door is so grim...

In addition, nobody sees the smile of people that he does not want to receive. "I am not interested", you say before listening to him. Either the maid will repeat like a song: "Milady already takes care of her poor", and she will slam the door before the face of the Poor, who is the Savior.

He will perhaps be a refugee, one of the 15 million refugees with U.N. passport; one of those who do not interest anyone and go wandering through the desert of the world; one of those who must die, "because, ultimately, it is not known from where persons of such ilk are coming..."

Or perhaps also, in America, a black, a sad black, tired of begging for a hollow in the hotels of New York, like then in Bethlehem, the Virgin Our Lady...

If Christ tomorrow called at your door, would you recognize him?

⁹² Ignacio Iglesias, Jesuit.

⁹³ Raúl Berzosa, *"Parábolas para una nueva evangelización"*, p. 109.

⁹⁴ Raoul Follereau. *"Si Cristo mañana..."*, p. 11.

38. An Experience: Zaccheus Option

A few years ago in one of the Fraternities of the Order a very interesting experience was launched to increase our desires to share more with the poor and move forward in a more simple and supportive lifestyle.

The situation of economic crisis in the nearby environment, the awareness that the austere style of life is always a pending matter, led to a reflection that resulted in what we have called the "*Zacchaeus Option*".

In this reflection we discovered that there are three main themes in which it is decided much of our life-style: how we use our time, how we make decisions, and what we do with our money.

It is clear that a good indicator to see the values of a person is to analyze how he distributes his time. When we try to gather data about how many hours we spend during a week (it is more difficult but it would be more accurate to do it throughout the year), the first usual surprise is what the numbers show us: that we lost time, we waste much time... a reality that contrasts with the usual claim that we always say: that we need time to do things. The next surprise is usually that it is a very low the percentage of the time dedicated to others (apart from one's own family) and God. The value we give to the different fields, in the same proportion as to the time spent is also quite evident. There are many conclusions, therefore it is highly recommended to apply this exercise to both personal and community life.

Another good challenge is to share decisions. We obviously refer to decisions of a certain standard. Some of them are conditioned by the obedience in religious life. But there is always a wide margin and we should realize how we accept them, what space do we leave for God, for the community, for others. It is true that one's consciousness is always the last criterion, but sharing the process of discernment is essential to the lifestyle.

A third key element is to share the money. The religious renounces to his own property, which passes completely to the community. In the Fraternity it is marked as basic criteria to share our goods, and it is often indicated by the tithe. With it we share 10% of all income with the most needy, usually in Piarist projects through the Itaka - Piarist Foundation, and other goods already shared in the community or the Fraternity through various initiatives.

Now we address another step referencing the money.

Zacchaeus Option: the Experience of this Publican⁹⁵

We call the Zaccheus Option the commitment to get closer to the chief of tax collectors of Palestine who had become rich at the expense of the poverty of many and was transformed after his encounter with Jesus, deciding to return much of his wealth to the poor. Zacchaeus found salvation with this. This may be an experience today for you, for me, and for us.

The experience of Zacchaeus brings together the basic elements that we want to propose for this option: the joy of being followers of Jesus that makes us choose a lifestyle; renunciation of cementing ourselves in possessing and accumulating, and the impulse to share with the poor as an experience of salvation. Thus, generally, we think that, as religious or as Fraternity

⁹⁵ Further information in <http://opcionzaqueo.site90.com/>

members or as Christians that we are, we are already living it. But we can certainly move forward spiritually and in concrete actions.

For this reason, we set the following elements as common traits for those who follow this path. These are examples of steps we can take:

- Living this commitment is a vocational key element as the current response to the option for the poor, solidarity communion with the neediest, the Beatitudes and the call to build the Kingdom.
- Maintaining a *Lazarus perspective* on life (rating and judging the world, political measures, personal situation, from the perspective of the poor, like Lazarus).
- Establishing guidelines for responsible consumption and austerity, shared and reviewed with in the small community with others who have made the Zacchaeus option, both at a personal and at a family level.
- Deciding once a year to get rid of something that we don't need, sharing something that until now we have not been able to, modifying any specific attitude on goods...
- Sharing more than the tithe with the poor through Itaka-Piarist.
- Making an annual budget of income and expenses, comparing it in the Fraternity and in the event of a surplus, donating a quantity in terms of solidarity.
- Giving the tithe from the refund of our personal income tax (tax on the income of natural persons).
- Be members of any ethical bank.
- Mark the boxes intended for the social works (Church and others, in the countries where that is possible) in the statement of income.
- Meeting once a year with people who also make this commitment, to track it and to follow-up and develop the indicated aspects of the plan.
- Contributing to the growth of all members of the Fraternity in these aspects of Christian life.

This experience has not only been interesting for people that have taken it, but it has also served to encourage other members of the Fraternity to carry out any of the elements listed in the above list. And it can, in addition to being a sign, indicate interesting actions of solidarity and sharing.

Once again, a little stronger option of some encourages everyone else to continue taking steps.

More Possible Options

With the same intuition of the Zacchaeus Option, we can take advantage of the faith of other Biblical characters (or from the history of the Church or our own environment) to identify insights that can help us in the growth of our faith.

There is a beautiful book by Dolores Aleixandre and Juan José Bartolomé referencing the attitudes of the following characters:⁹⁶

- Abraham, the man of the "here I am"
- Moses, who takes on his people
- David, a God-like heart

⁹⁶ Dolores Aleixandre and Juan José Bartolomé. "*La fe de los grandes creyentes*". CCS. 8ª ed. 2011.

- Amos, to whom injustice hurts
- Ruth, the woman who knew how to be faithful
- Jonas, flees from God and ends surrendering
- Jeremiah, a controversial Prophet
- Judith and Esther, who trusted in God
- Mary, the best disciple
- John, who knows he is loved
- The sinful woman and Mary, two transformed women
- Peter, who allows Jesus to educate him
- Bartimaeus, who begins to see
- Zacchaeus, who loses to win
- The Samaritan, who comes near
- The poor widow, that gives everything
- The family, supporting Paul
- Ananias, a catechist for Paul
- Barnabas, Apostle and protector of Paul
- Peter, Apostle and antagonist
- Silas and Luke, two companions in mission
- The Woman in Paul's mission
- Titus, disciple, confidant and son
- Timothy, son and heir of Paul

And more characters that we could incorporate:

- The Magi, to be guided by a star
- Bethany: the home that welcomed Jesus
- John the Baptist, who denounces and announces
- The Samaritan woman, drinking from the water that quenches
- Nicodemus, who learns how to be born again
- Thomas, invited to see and touch the suffering

And what about thinking of any other option, Zacchaeus type, which we can incorporate as our own and help us in the approach towards the poor and our choice to be at their service?

CALL ME ZACCHAEUS⁹⁷

Call me Zacchaeus, and remind me that I am living in the glorious Jericho of the lucky ones.

Call me Zacchaeus and speak to me of Jesus, but don't let me know Him only from hearsay, pinch me out of curiosity so I can see him closer.

Call me Zacchaeus so that I can realize that I am rich, with more goods than I need and more needs than the adequate ones to be happily free.

Call me Zacchaeus to force me to look around, very close, in the streets of my neighborhood or in the news, on the other side of the world.

⁹⁷ This text, by Elena Pérez, is used at the moment of making or renewing the Zacchaeus option.

Call me Zacchaeus and make me see that I have more than what is right, and that it is right to return what we have taken from others.

Call me Zacchaeus and make me feel co-responsible for the injustice of so much inequality, and look for my small contribution to turning the tables.

Call me Zacchaeus and bring me up into a Sycamore tree because I am low in stature, and although my heart is burning by desire to move on, my eyes fail to see anything among the crowd.

Call me Zacchaeus and bring me up beyond my fears and restraints, because I know that only by this I'll have the enormous luck of receiving Jesus in my house.

I ask you, therefore to call me Zacchaeus with all letters, with everything that it entails. And receive me Zacchaeus despite my doubts, turbulences and inconsistencies, with loving and demanding look, like Jesus.

Let my choice become yours, so that our house will be a party in which Jesus rejoices to see how his saving proposal spreads and overflows.

Give me that opportunity.

DIBUJO

During the time that the school is open, there is always a group of children that will take turns in the Chapel, praying to the Lord that everything goes well. We call it the "Continuous Prayer."

IX. URGENCY OF EVANGELIZATION

"Therefore, it will be the commitment of the Order to teach children the fundamental methods of correctly reading, writing, mathematics, the Latin language, and above all, piety and Christian Doctrine. All this must be accomplished with as much expertise as possible."
(Constitutions 8)

39. How Can They Believe if They Are Not Evangelized?

Calasanz places emphasis as one of the priorities in Christian education: piety, catechesis and Christian doctrine: today we should probably translate it as evangelization and pastoral action.

Like other Calasanz' institutions, this pastoral priority is just as valid in our time and in our world, and possibly in all times and places.

"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. But how can they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone to preach? And how can people preach unless they are sent? As written in the Scriptures, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring (the) good news!'" (Ro 10, 13-15).

The Presence of God in Our World

It has never been easier to discover God in the world and in life: God, has left us so many traces of his existence, it seems like having fun playing hide and seek. We find mysteries in life, we touch frequently the transcendence, we discover in us the thirst for God, we see people and events a presence which surpasses us... however, it is not easy to place before them the face of God.

Victor Hugo said that *"God is the obvious invisible. The mysteries that hold our world only have one output: God"*. While that evidence about "something else has to be", makes us debate whether to grant reason as the sole criteria, the palpable, the useful, what is good for one's self in every moment. God is present and is also absent at the same time.

To this constant difficulty of meeting with God, joins a more or less orchestrated campaign to discredit faith and, especially, the Catholic Church. I think that we should not be naive in this respect: it's true that we, as Christians, have many failures and we give way to many criticisms, but possibly there is also an attempt to silence one of the strongest voices in favor of the dignity of all persons, and the need for a more just world for all. A small sample can be any campaign that shows this image.

The public opinion, so easy to manipulate as we all know, can magnify situations and establish certain behaviors that are creating patterns of behavior as "normal."

Interestingly this quote about religion in France: *"When those who refused Christianity started shouting and those who still believed in it kept silent, happened what we have seen so many times, not only in matters of religion, but in all other issues. The idea of being unique to remain faithful to it frightened the men who preserved the old faith, and fearing more solitude than error, they joined the crowd, without even thinking like them. So what was the feeling of a part of the nation, it seemed to be the opinion of all, opinion that since then seemed irresistible, even for those who gave this false appearance."*⁹⁸ This is from the mid-19th century and it seems like if it was today!

We must highlight *"fearing more solitude than error, they joined the crowd, without even thinking like them"*... and ended up thinking like them. Again the terrible saying is true: If you do not act as you think, you will end up thinking how you act.

Something like that is happening in some of our environments and, especially, amongst the youth: in order not to be seen as strange, they are leaving religious practice and with it, faith and behaviors that all persons, and still more young people, felt inside in favor of compassion, solidarity...

In the rich Western world, faith carries special demands of sharing, controlling, putting others ahead of self... and this is shocking with advertisements that promise instant happiness, the individual enjoyment without conscience, the depersonalized fun in the middle of the mass... Christian faith can mean *"much to lose"*.

In addition, we need to add the culture of suspicion to where we live, where we are always looking for double intentions, where it is hard relying on others. This attitude, which has been very useful for the advancement of science (it is strange that today the same science is suffering its crisis precisely because of its previous confidence in many *"aprioris"* and because it is being absorbed by many interests), can have very negative effects when it moves to coexistence.

This dominant, social humus in some societies, is eroding us, believers, slowly, almost without realizing it. Our convictions can go losing firmness, our allegiances can be giving up commitments can be less...

And in this situation we Christians see with concern what it seems that the chain of transmission of the faith is breaking. Many parents wonder uneasily if they'll manage to get their children to follow in the faith that is so central in their lives. Many institutions and religious congregations wonder about their continuity in the absence of necessary vocations.

God is Still Very Present

This outlook that seems so real has a lot of appearance.

Around us remain millions of Christians living their faith, celebrating the presence of Jesus in their lives, sharing in communities, working for a better world.

In everyone's inner mind, the personal call of God continues working, in great dreams and in permanent awareness. This is something that can easily be checked when breaking the

⁹⁸ Alexis Tocqueville. *"El Antiguo Régimen y la Revolución"*. Madrid. Alianza. 2004. p. 189. This author lived between 1805 and 1859.

superficiality of many human relationships and defenses that prevent us from showing what we have inside.

God continues to be present at events that touch the deepest fibers of life and which, somehow, are calling for a greater depth than the mere conventions of a birth, a wedding, an illness, a death, or a challenge in life.

God's presence is palpable to those who stop to see the miracles of their environment, the wonders of nature, the signs of altruistic love, the generosity of many people, the solidarity of Christian communities and the Church.

Faith is still very present in the testimony of concrete people, in places where the presence of God is evident. There are times in which the world becomes transparent and allows you to see the hand of God, as in this beautiful testimony: *"The missionary examined an old lady: 'Where is God?' The good woman responds: 'I don't know, father'. 'How is it that you do not know? Do you not remember? 'I don't know, father, but I'm sure that He knows where I am'".*

Perhaps *"the greatest proof of God's omnipotence is not that He can create billions of years of light or immense spaces; the sign of his omnipotence is that He can create a tiny being that is able to say to Him no, to oppose Him, being free"*⁹⁹.

Convey and Spread the Faith¹⁰⁰

Our Church is calling for a new evangelization, a new effort to revitalize the experience of faith, giving new vigor to the religious communities, reviving the members that are still burning although not always being noticed.

From the Apostolic Exhortation "Evangelii nuntiandi" of Paul VI, 1975, until the Synod for the New Evangelization for the transmission of the Christian faith in 2012, there have been many calls, reflections, actions that have been carried out.

There exist in some environments the feeling that the chain of transmission of the faith has broken, that young people will not receive the Good News neither from the family (indifferent and bewildered regarding education in the faith), nor from the parish (with reduced capacity for call) nor the school (not always addressing this dimension or giving it adequate importance).

It is necessary to offer a faith that is not just knowledge, even though it is that. A faith that is searching, finding or, still better, meeting; trusting and even risking; sharing, engaging, worshiping, loving and serving. Transmitting the faith is then offering a close testimony of a believing life, provoking questions, narrating own personal experience, letting know the true face of God, respecting freedom, presenting it as a way to salvation, helping dialogue, proposing the faith of the Church, joining in the search.

This stewardship of the entire Christian community is essential: the faith of the couple that is involved in the education in the faith of the children, even when they are growing up; the presence of faith in different environments with the witness of personal and communal life that gives reason for hope; missionary actions, welcoming and accompanying; evangelizing

⁹⁹ Kierkegaard.

¹⁰⁰ Pastoral letter of the Bishops of Pamplona and Tudela, Bilbao, San Sebastian and Vitoria. "Spread the faith today". 2001.

culture; Christian initiation and catechesis; teaching in the school; Youth Ministry; the renovated celebrations.

For this we need adults, aware of their evangelizing mission, Christians committed to training and dedication, in teams and powerful communities, with a spirituality close to life and mission.

Evangelizers are Needed

Our world needs today, and always, messengers of the Good News, heralds who make the Lord be present, educators who promote the personal encounter with the Only One who can fill the whole life: we need evangelizers.

We need evangelizers transmitting their own experience: "*What we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have seen and our hands have touched... that we announce it.*" (Jn 1, 1-3)

We need evangelizers showing God not in the hurricane, or in the earthquake, or in fire, but in the gentle breeze and the whisper of every day.¹⁰¹

We need evangelizers that make God present in culture, in society, in life, giving depth to the events without reducing them to the purely rational and conventional aspect.

We need evangelizers loving Jesus, militant evangelists in the Church, committed to the poor, witnesses of the experience that fills their life.

We need evangelizers sharing with young people their simple life, their effort to live a more consistent life, their prayer, volunteering...

We need evangelizers organizing a pastoral of processes that prepare children and young people to find the vocation to which God calls them and where they will find their happiness.

We need evangelizers that suit their pastoral work to the situation of children and young people today, to respond to the call of Saint Paul: "*Do not conform yourselves to this age*" (Ro 12, 2), "*you know the time; it is the hour now for you to wake from sleep.*" (Ro 13, 11)

We need people who feel the evangelization in their veins and their heart: "*If I preach the gospel, this is no reason for me to boast, for an obligation has been imposed on me, and woe to me if I do not preach it!*" (1 Co 9.16).

We need Piarist carrying forward the Piarist mission: "*Since our ultimate goal is education in faith, following the example of our Holy Founder and our tradition, we consider catechesis, which illuminates faith to be the fundamental means of our apostolate*"¹⁰².

¹⁰¹ Reference to Elijah in Horeb: 1 Kg 19, 8-12.

¹⁰² Constitutions 96.

EVANGELIZING¹⁰³

The Lord has sent us to evangelize people. But have you thought about the meaning of evangelizing? It is to say: "You too are loved by God in the Lord Jesus". And not just to say it, but really thinking about it. Not just thinking about it, but behaving with that person in such a way that he feels and discovers that there is something saved, something larger and more noble than what he thought, and thus he wakes up to a new awareness about himself.

This is what announcing the good news means. And you can only do so by offering your love to him. A real, selfless love, without temporizing, made of confidence and deep appreciation.

The world of men is a huge battleground for wealth and power. There is too much suffering and atrocities that hide the face of God from them.

When going to meet them, we must not appear to their eyes as a new kind of competitors. We need to be, in the midst of them, the pacified Almighty witnesses, men without greed and contempt, able to really be their friends.

What they expect is our friendship, a friendship that makes them feel that God loves them and saves them in Jesus Christ.

40. Pastoral as a Vocational Key Element

The fundamental objective of the pastoral and evangelizing action is not transmitting knowledge, inviting to a few celebrations, facilitating some sacraments, encouraging to have a strong experience, offering channels of solidarity commitment, proposing a lifestyle consistent with the proposals for Jesus, summoning to a community of our Church...

All of this is very important, but it is not the main objective: the center is to foster the personal encounter with the Lord. Everything else will come afterwards or will be the way to facilitate that encounter.

The pastoral goal is to announce humbly and with passion: "*We have found the Messiah.*" (Jn 1, 41) "*Come and you will see.*" Then let Jesus act.

They say that early Christians spoke of two roads to meet face to face with the Lord: the way of lighting, the falling off the horse with Paul (Ac 9, 1-9) and the Catechumenal path: dare to live like us. Both have the same goal to meet with Jesus who transforms the lives from its roots and guides us to follow Him.

When someone encounters Jesus, he needs Ananias to recover the sight and to be filled with the Holy Spirit (Ac 9, 17). This founding experience will need to be illuminated with the Word, with belonging to the community, with the training accompaniment... But the key is always the personal encounter with Jesus.

The encounter with Jesus transforms people: the Apostles who are asked to let go of all and follow him; the Samaritan woman who becomes an effective presenter of Jesus in her town;

¹⁰³ Eloi Leclerc. "Sabiduría de un pobre". Marova. 1992.

the blind to whom He returns the vision; the sick that He heals; the adulterous woman whom He forgives... you and me when he has called us by name as only He can do.

Whenever there is an encounter with Jesus there is a call, an invitation: get up and go, introduce yourself to the priests, go and sin no more, follow me... To everyone, Jesus invites them, it marks the path of his vocation.

We can obviously before the call of Jesus respond as the rich young man, and make us and Jesus sad. Or we can discover the key to happiness and full life in that vocation: "Vocation is Jesus who passes, looks at you and you look at Him, and you cannot do anything but follow him."

The Vocational Culture

In this perspective all pastoral work is based on a vocational key element, it needs a vocational culture where to develop. At all times the reference will be inviting, proposing, suggesting, facilitating experiences that bring me closer to Jesus.

It is necessary to seek the will of God, discern his desire at all times, pray a thousand times for Him to be our guide, introduce ourselves before Jesus with the attitude of Samuel: "Speak, Lord, your servant listens". What do you want from me?

To promote this vocational culture, it will be necessary to frequently inform about the various calls that God has been doing, the testimonies of people who could serve as orientation, the great vocations in the Church.

To make possible this vocational culture we should make vocational proposals, with courage and honesty. We should place a particular emphasis on those vocations that are multipliers of others in those that are more necessary in every moment¹⁰⁴.

We must insistently pray for vocations: "*The harvest is plentiful and the laborers are few. Pray to the master of the harvest to send laborers into his harvest*" (Lk 10, 2).

Proposing the Priestly and Religious Vocation¹⁰⁵

We are living a vocational winter to religious life and priesthood. This situation, which has been coupled with the emergence of some lay vocations, cannot make us forget that we still need religious and priests.

It is not uncommon to find reticence to vocation promotion with arguments of the type "*it is not too good to make this type of proposal very early*" (as if there was not a long posterior process of formation and discernment), "*children and young people are laymen in the making*" (instead of Christians with all the vocational possibilities), "*it can be a moment of grace to pass responsibilities to the laity*" (forgetting that always priests and the prophetic religious life will be needed).

Vital and personal reticence can also arise: fear to cause surprise that will push them away from us, fear to appear as proselytizing, little enthusiasm and conviction in our vocation, fear to not be prepared to accompany.

¹⁰⁴ Salutatio of Fr. General posted in Ephemerides in August 2011 and January 2012 at the start of the Piarist Vocational Year.

¹⁰⁵ Juan Mº Uriarte. "Servir como pastores". Sal Terrae. 2011. Pages 141-160. It is a very lucid chapter on pastoral work for vocations to the priestly and religious life.

Thus the religious and priestly vocation is a proposal that is not forcefully and frequently presented (when every young man should think about it, at least once in his life), late (for fear of making it too soon, we can arrive too late), insecure and little provoking: *“The time has come to speak courageously about priestly life as a priceless gift and a splendid and privileged form of Christian living. Educators, and priests in particular, should not be afraid to explicitly and forcefully set forth the priestly vocation as a real possibility for those young people who demonstrate the necessary gifts and talents. There should be no fear that one is thereby conditioning them or limiting their freedom; quite the contrary, a clear invitation, made at the right time, can be decisive in eliciting from young people a free and genuine response”*¹⁰⁶.

The pastoral work for vocations into the priestly and religious life is a priority today, because they grant the Church the "basic services": celebration, the proclamation of the Word, the communion in the name of the Lord, the emergence of the other charisms and vocations.

Starting up a pastoral work of vocation promotion requires regarding it as a priority, accompanying it with the quality of the testimony of life and joy, the proximity to young people, the mood of hope. It also requires sensitizing the community, parents and educators, creating the environment where the vocational proposal is possible. It requires initiating young people to prayer, spiritual accompaniment, the strong consciousness of belonging to the group, the radical nature of the proposal.

We already know that the difficulties are many and out of the reach of pastoral agents: the difficulty of deep religious experience, little support and understanding of chastity, the difficulty of the definitive commitments and more in a Church increasingly less prestigious, the fewest children per family and their less religious roots, the low value given to the institution and to whom take responsibility in it, the search for new ways...

Against these real obstacles, we can present a personal testimony, some communities and works that convey to the heart of our youth:

- personal, intense, and joyfully relationship with Jesus
- ability to indicate and initiate ways of encounter with the Lord
- supportive living with the pains of the world
- simple and fraternal life style
- proximity to children, young people... to the world
- availability and serviceability
- spirit of joy and good mood
- depth of life from humility
- community life open to all

We need a vocational culture as the background of all our pastoral action, with the presence of various vocations, with brave and honest proposals, with educational processes that will help.

Therein, we must also work with the prayer, with the testimony of life, with the brotherhood carried out in the community, with the proximity to people, supporting those most engaged in pastoral work for vocations... should I consider any change, any step? We put ourselves in prayer before the Lord and ask him to help us to be his word, his call, his invitation in the midst

¹⁰⁶ Apostolic Exhortation of John Paul II “Pastores dabo vobis”, 39.

of the place in where we are. You, Lord, accompany us in this task that today is difficult for us, be our guide and our support.

WE NEED PRIESTS.

During a pastoral visit a Bishop came to a village where there had not been a pastor for several years. The people received him with all the honors and, at the end of the reception meal, the Mayor stood up to make a brief speech and addressed the Bishop saying: "Bishop, on behalf of all the people, I ask you to send us a priest. A village without a pastor loses its soul, we need the man of God..."

When he finished, the Bishop stood up in his turn and said: "Mayor, I am completely determined to send you a priest, but on one condition..." The Mayor interrupted him to exclaim: "We accept right now your condition, Bishop!" "Well, continued the Bishop, then send me seminarians and I'll send you priests".

There is a simple test: ask the parents if they would like to see one of their children become a priest or religious. The same thing happens with highways as frequently happens with priests, they are fine when they go through the neighbor's house.¹⁰⁷

41. School as an Evangelization Key Element

Three large socializing agents in the faith: family, parish and school.

The family is undoubtedly the most influential, although it is losing its evangelizing weight in a considerable manner, especially in the European world, due to the dominant climate of social and religious indifference.

The parish, always a fundamental reference, is also having its difficulties in the most laicized societies because of the descent in the sacramental practice and because of the decline in people who come to it on a regular basis, for the catechetical, charitable services, etc.

In some countries, Christian schools are the ecclesial presence of greatest influence. Both because of the number of people that go to them, as because of the time dedicated to students and their families, and because the positive image they portray.

The responsibility of a Christian center in some places is very large, because it offers maybe the only face of the Church to some of the people who come to it. If we are satisfied with having a good school and we neglect the evangelizing dimension, we are missing an excellent opportunity to present the Gospel, as Piarist, and we betray the Calasanz proposal: Piety and Letters.

On certain occasions a debate on what should be a Christian school has opened. It is discussed whether or not a clear Christian identity Center is inclusive of all persons, whether to include training in the form of explicit catechesis and religious culture, whether it can offer or not certain values very linked to the Gospel, whether it has to offer a rather generic presentation of transcendence...

On other occasions there has been no such reflection, but simply the Christian identity has been losing weight in favor of other educational features that might be more attractive to

¹⁰⁷ Pierre Trevet. "Parábolas de un cura rural". Monte Carmelo. 2007. Paga 164.

families and potential students of the centre. In some cases the Direction of the school has been delegating its duties in good education professionals that have focused more on other aspects.

In many Christian schools it seems to already be enough with having religion courses, with some people responsible for the pastoral, with a range of human values. The pastoral team is often weak and is not projecting strength, it is there just to maintain what it has been doing for a long time.

There is one aspect that always catches my attention. In an era in which we measure all, we quantify it, we include it in quality and continuous improvement processes... the processes of religious training and ecclesial socialization are virtually not analyzed. There are very few statistical studies or results. We just have some very general data and certainly not promoted by those who should have greater interest: we, the responsible officials of Christian Schools, of parishes, of the Church. Some tend to say that you cannot make these matters an objective, but my impression is that we are afraid of the results and that they may be known by others.

A school does not have evangelization as a key element, just because its name so indicates it, or the documents so define it.

Features of a School as a Key Element of Evangelization

Without trying to gather all the elements that make up a school as a key element of evangelization, we should cite at least some fundamental ones.

A school has the key elements of evangelization when it has a Christian community. That community is the subject of Christian education, the testimony and the offer of ecclesial inclusion. It can be of different types, but if this community fails or if it becomes very diffuse, evangelizing education will also fail or will be very diffuse. The sign of a Piarist Christian Community at our centre is essential to be able to send Christian educators, to show how we can really live the faith, to have a specific place with a face where we can invite...

A school has the key elements of evangelization when it has clear priorities and the direction and management of the school. This stems from this evangelizing spirit more than from any other element.

A school has the key elements of evangelization when it imparts quality Christian religious training. It may be within the framework of a religious culture or in an explicit catechetical offer, taking advantage of the school program or outside of it, in one way or another, but this Christian formation must be present and must be very well prepared. Evangelizing today means making known the contents of our faith, approaching the Bible as God's Word, the history and doctrine of the Church as the great contribution of the Christians.

A school has the key elements of evangelization when it also offers significant experiences in approaching Jesus. Now-a-days it is fashionable to have language immersion to be able to learn a second or third language. In religious matters we also need immersion, moments and occasions where we can live the religious event with all intensity: it may be a religious celebration, a juvenile Easter, a labor camp, an outing or a spiritual retreat...

A school has the key elements of evangelization when it takes special care for the development of interiority, initiation to prayer, sharing in the Eucharist and the appropriate liturgical celebrations.

A school has the key elements of evangelization when it enhances human values common to all people of good will (peace, international solidarity, social justice, human rights for all, ecology, the equality of all persons...), knowing how to present the proposal of Jesus. To remain only within those important human values is to reduce the contribution that we make as followers of Jesus.

A school has the key elements of evangelization when it tries to adapt its organization, its operation, its way of relating, to the proposals of the Gospel: the preference for the weakest, always love, the ability of forgiveness, the maximum dignity and worth of every person at all times...

A school has the key elements of evangelization when it introduces the vocational approach in its education, when it tries to develop all the dimensions of each person, when it invites others to consider the future with perspective and generosity, when it offers varied testimonies of life, when it invites to place your life in God's hands.

A school has the key elements of evangelization when it offers processes in faith education, group itineraries that allow a progressive and proper growth of the different dimensions of faith, a point of arrival of these processes in the Christian community.

A school has the key elements of evangelization when it invites all members (students, families, faculty, staff, partners...) to become a part of its most important core: the Christian community that maintains the fundamental identity. When they finish, it also leaves its doors open for other types of collaboration, always with this clear identity.

A school has the key elements of evangelization when it promotes joint action of families with school at all levels, and especially, in religious education.

A school has the key elements of evangelization when as such it is actively involved in its local Church, in the universal Church, in the way that is most appropriate for each case. Only from the actual belonging to the Church, can it be a truly evangelizing school?

A school has the key elements of evangelization when it continues presenting its Christian offer without disrespect to the different situations of persons and imposing nothing. Calasanz, many years ago, showed us how to perfectly merge a Christian school its students and pupils from other religions.

CATHOLIC SCHOOL IN THE HEART OF THE CHURCH ¹⁰⁸

From the Catholic identity are born the peculiar features of the Catholic school are born, that is "structured" as ecclesial subject, place of authentic and specific pastoral action. It shares the evangelizing mission of the Church... In this sense, "Catholic schools are at the same time places of evangelization, integral education, integration of cultures, and learning of a vital dialogue between young people from different religions and from different social environments".

¹⁰⁸ Congregation for Catholic Education. "The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium". Rome, 1997.

... By virtue of their identity, a Catholic school is a place of ecclesial experience... if it is located within an organic pastoral of the Christian community... In a very particular way a Catholic School allows for young people to meet in an environment favorable to Christian formation...

It seems appropriate to remind everyone that the presence of the consecrated in the educational community is essential because they "are able to carry out a particularly effective educational action", and are examples of how 'giving thyself' without reservations and free to the service of others, for the sake of the spirit of religious consecration. The contemporary presence of religious women and men, and also of priests and laymen, offers students "a living image of the Church and makes easier to understand the knowledge of its wealth."

42. The Calasanz Movement Proposal

Giving a quick review to the Piarist action in the world, we have to note with satisfaction the immense educational work that is carried out. Just look at the amount of educational centers, social works, where education is provided to tens of thousands of children and young people.

When within this action, we stop to see the pastoral efforts that we carry out, we discover that the work with children is great: religious training, initiation to the sacraments, continuous prayer, liturgical celebrations, children's groups... Our pastoral action with children is very important and applies to a wide range of work.

When children reach the adolescent stage, Piarist ministry is reducing, but it is still strong: there are many teenagers who are still in our schools, who participate in our groups, in preparation for the confirmation... Quite a few less than the children, but we can still speak of a considerable number.

If we jump to the world of adults, we can see that the Piarist pastoral action also has been gaining presence. It is lesser than with children and adolescents, but our action in parishes, in the centers of worship of our schools, schools for parents... is still very important.

The most deficient point in our pastoral action is, without a doubt, in the youth ministry. Here the Piarist pastoral presence is very small. There are multiple reasons: they have already finished the school stage and leave our schools; some even leave the town where they were to go away to study; there is no sacramental offer for them; these are more complicated ages for the pastoral work...

The truth is that here we have a substantial deficit¹⁰⁹. Sometimes we deceive ourselves by calling young people those who are mere teenagers, telling them that they have already finished their stage in our schools...

After so much work of planting, hours dedicated to the childhood, when the options should now be consolidated for the youth, our Piarist pastoral action is very low. We waste a lot of work by not giving it continuity. And let us remember that the youth is also a Piarist priority: children and young people.

The General Congregation, seeing this need, at the end of May 2012 launches this new Calasanz Movement with a coordinating team who will foster it.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Salutatio of Fr. General posted in July 2011 in Ephemerides.

What is the Calasanz Movement?

<p>The Calasanz Movement is the communion of groups of different Demarcations throughout the Piarist world, that come together in a same educational and evangelizing proposal inspired by the spirit and style of Calasanz.</p> <p>This Movement wants to reinforce the existing realities, placing them in connection for mutual enrichment, to win in Piarist identity and to offer pastoral horizon to those in need at this time.</p>	<p>Dibujo – from page 97 in the source document in Spanish.</p>
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The Calasanz Movement involves a continuous itinerary based on different experiences and for all ages that aims to enable a personal process, lived in group, of discovery and maturation of the personal vocation as well as a clear ecclesial insertion.

This process expressly includes the Piarist offer to integrate in the Pious Schools, especially in the religious life and the Piarist Fraternity.

Key Elements of the Itinerary

The evangelizing action is not made through isolated actions, but following a process where the vocational life project shared in community is taking shape.

The charism of Saint Joseph Calasanz and the Piarist orients the pillars of the educational process for the entire Movement.

The fundamental elements, always interrelated and with the perspective of the following of Jesus in the style of Calasanz, are:

- The personal encounter with the Lord in prayer, the sacraments, the Word, the believing and Christian reading of reality, close solidarity with the poor, community, ecclesial and Piarist history and personal commitment.
- A lifestyle based on the key elements of the Gospel, in the following of Jesus, always looking for the vocation to which God calls us and adapting our lives to his proposal is an attitude of permanent conversion.
- Human, Christian and Piarist training that allows people to be able to give reason for hope and embody the Piarist and Christian values while we are growing as persons.
- Service to others and commitment to the construction of the Kingdom of God, especially with those most in need, from the intuitions of Calasanz.
- Sharing the following of Jesus and all aspects of life with the brothers and sisters in small groups and communities in clear communion with the Pious Schools, and with the whole Church.

There are some established stages in this process, so that it can be carried out at any age, from childhood through adult ages, with special emphasis on youth. The itineraries always conclude in vocational discernment with its conclusion to arrive at a clear ecclesial insertion.

¹¹⁰ Ephemerides of June 2012, pages 671-672.

We propose different possibilities of meetings throughout the different stages of the process and according to different situations.

The Calasanz Movement style will be emerging over time, but it is worth noting some necessary methodological principles:

- Process always in small groups
- Schedule weekly meetings
- Celebrate intense activities on a regular basis: recollections, camps, retreats...
- Practice active pedagogy with the members as protagonists
- Prepare a schedule to share experiences, discoveries: prayer, social, relational...
- Prepare a wholesome program adapted to the educational age
- Practice personal accompaniment
- Practice accompaniment by the whole ecclesial community
- Provide support from the elders in the process for younger ones
- Prepare events around the centrality of Jesus and the Word
- Participation in the celebration of the Eucharist
- Prepare a symbolic framework, especially for the younger ages
- Prepare signs that identify the stages
- Prepare a life project that includes reviews and contrast
- Provide attention to the social reality, solidarity
- Show commitment at every stage, services...
- Show how to volunteer and have a missionary sense
- Share relationship with school, work and Piarist community
- Share participation in the local Church and in the life of the Demarcation and the Order

This Calasanz Movement needs educators, always in team and with adequate training to carry out this initiative. Some necessary features in these educators are:

- Personal participation in most of the advanced stages of the process
- Have adequate training including constant updates
- Have a clear Piarist identification with the style of the Calasanz Movement
- Carry out a consistent Christian life
- Always work as a team of educators

Special care will be placed in the preparation of these educators, complementing the personal, spiritual and Piarist formation which they have received in their reference groups on a constant basis, with the corresponding initial and permanent training.

The Calasanz Movement has a coordinating Team to put it into action and organize the first steps. As soon as possible, it is convenient to have a responsible person for each participating Demarcation that will assume the direction of the start-up of the Calasanz Movement in his Demarcation and will maintain a seamless relationship with the coordinating Team.

MANIFEST OF THE CALASANZ MOVEMENT

We Piarist, religious and lay people, gathered by the Father in the name of Jesus, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and faithful to the inspiration of Joseph Calasanz, we feel we have been sent by Christ and by the Church to evangelize while educating. So we declare that:

1. Jesus is the center of our Movement. His message of love, his lifestyle and his generous dedication are for us the reference in our educational and pastoral action.
2. The Virgin Mary, by her simplicity and humility, is a model of reception and surrender to the will of God. She teaches us to live as children of God and disciples of Jesus.
3. God has delivered to Calasanz a valuable charism that illuminates our reading of the Gospel. From the history, spirituality, pedagogy and style characteristic of the Pious Schools, we carry out our mission to evangelize while educating.
4. The young people are the immediate and first apostles of the same young people. Their initiatives offer valuable dynamics for the Piarist mission.
5. Education, the full human and Christian realization, as well as the happiness of children and young people, are the core of our mission.
6. In faithfulness to Jesus and Calasanz, we offer ourselves to the cause of justice and peace with a preference for the poor and younger members of society.
7. The reform of the society lies in a good education. We are inspired by the thinking and educational practice proposed by Saint Joseph Calasanz.
8. The Piarist charism is a gift of God for the Church and society. The Fraternity of the Pious Schools is a complete proposal for religious and laity to share the charism and present it wherever we are.
9. The urgency of announcing the Gospel to children, young people and adults leads us to create pastoral itineraries lived within a group that enables a personal process of discovery and maturation of our vocation as well as a clear ecclesial insertion.
10. Passionate about our Piarist lives, our ministry is always vocation oriented. We offer our vocation as a proposal of ecclesial insertion, either as Piarist religious or as members of the Piarist Fraternity.

43 Following Jesus in this Church¹¹¹

We stem from a conviction: we can follow Jesus only in community, in the Church and the Church that we have is the one that exists today with its lights and shadows. It must be said clearly in a world where individualism reigns: we must follow Jesus in this Church.

We affirm also with strong certainty that in the Church the positive aspects are dominating, that we see in it the hand of the Lord, that the generosity of many people today and of all time is bearing fruit. That, without hiding the many errors committed in 2000 years of history and millions of Christians in all those centuries and today, there are many more positive things than negative. That even if some people want to focus on negative aspects, we can be proud of the path and of the reality of our Church.

However, we do not always have that impression, we have different membership profiles in the Church:

- There are people who feel part of the Church and usually act in a renewed and militant way with a permanent training, in some group or community and serving in some concrete place.
- Others have a "faithful and silent" bonding, quietly participating on Sunday celebrations, Church guidelines, without any prominence and with high fidelity.
- There are also other people who live their links to the Church on a "critically and tense" manner, trying to be demanding with their personal life and/or in some sort of association, while they find it difficult to deal with their experience with the Church.
- Sore and nostalgic accession occurs in people who have felt injured at some point by any action, or simply who have moved away from the Church and look at it very sporadically with pain while also with nostalgia.
- Other groups have a faded or even non-existent adhesion. Without too many reasons or, at least, without too much clarity on them: simply they feel distant or completely outside.

Certainly the situation varies a lot according to the countries, culture and corresponding religious tradition, but globalization is extending with regards to this real link with the Church.

Today the Church, like all institutions, is being strongly challenged in many places. This also has its positive aspects by requiring those who want to grow in their faith to have a more lucid and active relationship, as well as a clear sense of belonging, since these criticisms imply a more or less consciously desire for a Church to be more faithful to its Lord. This can be a time of purification and of ecclesial renewal.

But it also it has its areas of concern: the fragmentation of Catholic membership that hurts the ecclesial communion, certain group discouragement, the social and ecclesial criticism that is bearing important weight in the general culture, as well as in the experience of Christians themselves...

¹¹¹ With this same title appeared a Pastoral Letter of the Bishops of Pamplona and Tudela, Bilbao, San Sebastian and Vitoria. "Following Jesus in this church". 1989.

Today, it is necessary to renew our faith in the Church, in this Church. Believe in it as a mystery, as a space of communion and means of salvation, as the primary subject of faith. Believing it and accepting it as necessary and relative, because we know that the Church is holy (the main sacrament of Christ today) and at the same time sinner (with many personal and institutional weaknesses and sins). Believing it is discovering it as a reality, always needed of renewal, of improvement in fidelity to Jesus and committing ourselves to do our part in this sense.

We must remind ourselves without disappointment, and even be thankful, that the Church is sinful, because this way you and I have a place in it. Or is there anyone who wishes that a Church be of pure people, where we would not fit, nor those who have failures and recognize themselves as sinners? The flaws and weaknesses of the Church show that it is human. While we strive to make it better, we discover that it is God who makes it holy. It is not that we rejoice that is sinful (as you and I, and we), but only so we can discover God's mercy and the call to make it more faithful to the Gospel.

We Must Renew our Communities¹¹².

We have to purify the Church, its signs, the face that it presents to society. We should cultivate the elements of ecclesial membership:

- Learn more about our Church because we love what we so closely know.
- Love it, recognizing in it the efforts that are made, people who are opening ways, institutions that are a great sign for anyone who wants to see,
- Engage with it in celebration, in behavior, in commitment, in the testimony. Because the superficial, inconsistent, criticism of the one who watches "*the speck in the eye of his brothers and do not repair in the beam of his own*" (Mt 7, 3) is useless.

We are in a cultural and social context with great values and advances and discoveries, which at the same time brings secularization (God disappears in every day's social life), crisis of beliefs (major world views are losing importance), moral standards (subjectivism appears as the maximum criteria), of religious practice (they are not interesting, they have no utility), which also affect us believers and to the same ecclesial institution. We live immersed in society and the times in which we live.

In this environment and time, the Christians and the Church have our weaknesses and infidelities: the neglect of the experience of God, the blurring of the nuclear contents of faith, individualism... The culture in which we live is eroding us with rush, lack of time, the way of life and customs that are becoming dominant. We need to be vigilant and make a strong commitment to not be guided, to take the reins of our faith, to continue to always grow in it.

This social situation is a painful test for the Church, seeing people moving away and losing ability to communicate the Good News. It is a colossal challenge to which is necessary to respond with great communion of efforts, and from many areas, while we are still confident in the Spirit which acts in the world and guides the Church. By this we feel called to conversion, to spirituality of confidence and not of optimism; of responsibility and not of guilt; of hope and

¹¹² Another beautiful pastoral letter of the Bishops of Pamplona and Tudela, Bilbao, San Sebastian and Vitoria. "Renew our Christian communities". 2005.

not of nostalgia; of patience and not of hurry; of appreciation for the small things and not of ambition for great things; of tuning and not of distance; of healing and not of accusation.

The key items of a real renewal of our communities and the Church will be:

- A faith anointed by the experience, which will be necessary to start and always restart in you, in me, in us and in those children and young people who are with us: with careful and sustained prayer, with meaningful experiences, with celebrations filled with life, with a Christian reading of reality and of our own life.
- A faith worked by the following, not only as a few ideas that are on the inside, but as a following of Jesus in the family, work, social life, solidarity.
- A faith lived in community, in the image and likeness of the New Testament. Now-a-days it is not enough to have diffuse links; we need deep spaces to share faith and life, where we feel like brothers, where we discover children, where we send each other to build the Kingdom of God.
- A faith urged to evangelization, to spread what is bursting within our heart, to invite those we love to live what fills our life, to announce to everyone the wonderful proposal of Jesus to make a big family where all mankind fit and live "*as God intended*".

These keys to renewal have to take us to:

- A renewed, more spiritual, evangelizing, communitarian, responsible, personalized style of pastoral, where the evangelizers are also taken care of. We will have to maintain the catechesis, regular training programs, personal and community accompaniment that we have been doing... While we are looking for and putting up new actions and, above all, a new spirit of the whole Christian community.
- Renewing the great pastoral tasks in service to God's Word, the celebration and the charitable and social action. These large dimensions of the Church are primarily the responsibility of priests. In many places, we, priests, are grandparents, not parents, by age and mentality. We need a renewal that will come, in good part by young people, through their participation, through their contribution.
- Remodeling some pastoral structures. The ecclesial organization has to be enriched with a better functioning of the parishes, with a more coordinated work in the area, with a more realistic participation with other ecclesial realities of the place (religious and communities of different type, schools, etc.). It would be a serious error for individuals and entities that today have a great responsibility of evangelizing, to enter into competition: what is needed today is the sum of efforts in this great challenge of trying to transmit faith.

What Can We Do?

Now that we are ending this chapter we can ask ourselves what we can do.

Just a conviction: for many people we are the only face of the Church or, at least, one of the kindest. We often hear criticisms and we are to the Church and the priests... and they add: "*but we do not mean you. You are different and, of course, better*".

It is true that criticisms are usually made by hearsay, of pure repetition of what certain dominant environment proclaims. It is true that, if we ask if they have had some bad

experience with priests or with the Church, the usual response is that they have a good impression of priests and religious they know, but they are speaking in a "general" manner.

In any case, you and me, we are the face of the Church. We should always manifest as such, as a part of the Church. We should never speak badly of it, but try to focus on the positive and in the possibilities of advancement. With our community, and personal conduct as Piarist, we should show to those who wish to know better that the whole Church tries to, above all, be true to his Lord.

THE CHURCH POINTS TO GOD¹¹³

"When the wise man's finger points to the Moon, only the morons look at the finger", says an ancient Chinese proverb.

The Church is also like a finger. What matters is that it points well, as the indicators of the roads. It doesn't matter if they are of stone, brass, wood, or silver, what we want is for them to properly indicate the path. Of course that it is also requested of the Church, made up of human beings, to also point in the same direction. We belong to the group of idiots when we only look at the finger, criticizing the Church and not following the indication if it is good.

44. Offer of Ecclesial Insertion

Pastoral and evangelizing action attempts to procure the personal encounter with the Lord, the discovery of our own vocation and the ecclesial insertion.

This last aspect, the ecclesial insertion, is the most verifiable because it includes a reference and verifiable membership. For this reason, it becomes an especially important indicator of our pastoral work.

Where do we live our faith? With whom do we share it? How do we express it? Do we feel part of the Church? A religious feeling, an exclusively individual faith, a "non-practitioner" Christianity is not enough.

What are the possibilities of ecclesial insertion today? What can we offer from the Pious Schools?

The Great Offers of Insertion

It is clear that in an educational process that tries to discover the vocation of each one, it will be necessary to present all of the possibilities of the Church:

- The three great vocations: priests, religious and laity.
- The diversity of existing charisms
- The key elements that constitute the lay vocation: family, profession and socio-political commitment...
- Existing Ecclesial Movements, notably the Catholic Action
- Various communities and associations

¹¹³ José M^a Rueda. Convivencias cristianas para jóvenes

With all honesty, we have to present all of the possibilities and help everybody discern what his own vocation is.

As Piarist, there are three offerings that we can do with a special strength. They are not the only ones, but those that are in our hands:

1. The Piarist religious life.

We offer it because we know it firsthand. Because we know of its validity and its importance. We are convinced that in it, many young people can find the full realization of their lives and provide a great service. We trust that God is calling young people to carry out this exciting and necessary mission.

We offer our Piarist religious and priestly vocation with humbleness and courage, with the simplicity of who knows that the one who is calling, the only calling, is God; also with the courage to know that with our proposals we try to collaborate in that call that God wants to do.

We present our vocation as a possibility and opportunity, at various times of the educational process, in different ways, within the framework of different experiences.

We follow a process which we know is slow, that of sowing, waiting, proposal, accompaniment, and discernment... where we are not actors but teachers, companions.

We make closer our religious vocation with our personal spoken and lived testimony, the closeness and openness of our communities, with our daily work, with our dedication to the poorest.

2. The Piarist Fraternity

We are aware that many people are not called to the priestly or religious life, that their call is the following of Jesus from the lay vocation.

There we have a proven Piarist proposal, a necessary proposal for the Piarist mission, a proposal that can serve many of those who have grown up next to us, who have participated in our spirituality, life and mission.

Therefore, we offer the Piarist Fraternity as a space of Piarist ecclesial insertion, to live faithfully in a small community at the heart of the Pious Schools.

We present this vocational and ecclesial inclusion as a possibility of commitment to incarnate and keep alive the charism of Calasanz, his support to children and young people, his strategy of Christian education to make a better world, his history continued by many people throughout these centuries.

3. The Piarist Christian community.

Along with those two possibilities, we also invite you to live the faith and to follow Jesus in a continuous manner by means of the Piarist Christian community.

It's a space wider than the Order or the Fraternity, where there is also a place for other vocations, where all forms of participation in the Pious Schools have their place.

We invite to this community, a space that has as center the weekly Eucharist that has the support of the Piarist presence and work, as well as the environment.

They are three very concrete, realistic offers, hopefully present in every place where we Piarist are present. These final offers guide our pastoral action and mark the direction of the various processes that are carried out.

For this reason they must be clearly palpable. This is the way, how we, Piarist, want to contribute what we have to the Church of Jesus.

LETTER TO DIOGNETUS

“Christians are indistinguishable from other men neither by nationality, language or customs. They do not inhabit separate cities of their own, or speak a strange dialect, or follow some outlandish way of life (...) With regard to dress, food and manner of life in general, they follow the customs of whatever city they happen to be living in, whether it is Greek or foreign. And yet there is something extraordinary about their lives. They live in their own countries as though they were only passing through. They play their full role as citizens, but labor under all the disabilities of aliens. Any country can be their homeland, but for them their homeland, wherever it may be, is a foreign country. Like others, they marry and have children, but they do not expose the newborns. They share their meals, but not their wives. They live in the flesh, but they are not governed by the desires of the flesh. Obedient to the laws, yet they live on a level that transcends the law. Christians love all men, but all men persecute them. They are condemned because they are not understood, they are put to death, but raised to life again. They live in poverty, but enrich many; they are totally destitute, but possess an abundance of everything. They suffer dishonor, but that is their glory. They are defamed, but vindicated. A blessing is their answer to abuse, deference their response to insult. For the good they do they receive the punishment of malefactors, but even then they, rejoice, as though receiving the gift of life”.

DIBUJO

Joseph wanted the boys that were graduating from the Pious Schools to have a guaranteed future and a good job. He wanted still more: he wanted that all children, even the poorest, to have the possibility of access to a higher education, until now this was a privilege for only the rich.

X. GOOD EDUCATORS

"Since the matter that we are addressing, is so important, it requires people that are well endowed, with the greatest of patience and love, and other virtues. It will be necessary to very carefully consider those who will be admitted into formation at this Institute to share in our apostolate and who will be rejected or excluded from it."
(Constitutions, 9)

45. The Model of Jesus, the Teacher

Calasanz frequently stresses the importance of teachers being well chosen and trained because the educational task is very important and delicate.

On many occasions Calasanz presents Jesus as a model. There is no doubt that Jesus is the Teacher for all Christians and, no doubt, which has had the most disciples and continues to have in the history of mankind.

Let us get closer to Jesus as a Teacher, as my Teacher, who teaches me to be a teacher.

It must not be strange to look at Jesus from this perspective: Jesus created a teachers' training school, formed a group of teachers to go world-wide passing on His teachings. There were about three years of training, with the corresponding practices, their moments of examination and sending them forward to a task that is so significant.

At the time of preparation, Jesus gave to his disciples, the future teachers, the fundamental keys of how they should fulfill their task, what purposes should they search for, how to teach, how to consecrate their lives to their disciples, how to give and gain life.

Those first disciples do not seem to have been the smartest ones, nor people with the best qualities, but what is clear is that the Teacher knew how to get the best out of each one of them, and they ended up being the best teachers: those who give their life for others.

We're going to get closer by means of the Gospel of Matthew. He is the one that mostly presents Jesus as a teacher.

The other Gospels insist on other facets of Jesus. Mark presents, above all, Jesus as Messiah: it may be interesting reading to see how he is responding to the Messianic expectations and, ultimately, the expectations of any person. Luke insists more on the closeness to the poor that Jesus had, and how he heals the sick: it is the Gospel for those who are closest in contact with the world of the poor, and hopefully also close to the Piarist, from this point of view. John

focuses on Jesus as Son of God and is aimed at those people who are more reflective, more poets, and more philosophers. But there is no doubt that the Gospel of teachers, educators, is that of Matthew: there Jesus is basically presented as the Teacher.

We, who want to be good teachers, there we have a superb reference. Hence we see how Jesus thought, what was important for him as a teacher, how he taught, how he related to his students... We are fortunate that in addition, the Gospel is not only a manual, but it is the living Word that we can pray, which puts us in touch with the same Lord and Teacher. Can we ask for more?

I invite you to take the role of a disciple. It is not only about knowing, but also enjoying. It is not about knowing the elements of a good educator, as if they were the ingredients of a good meal, but about tasting that good food, that teaching what the Teacher can transmit to you through these poor lines.

I invite you to do so with deep gratitude: we share, if you are an educator, one of the most important aspects of Jesus, our Lord and our Teacher.

I invite you to quietly pray and read this Gospel of Matthew, that it is a fully advanced and intense course on how to be a teacher in today's environment.

The Scheme of the Gospel of Matthew

1. This Gospel begins with a prologue of the infancy of Jesus (chapters 1 and 2). It is possibly an added text to the rest of the Gospel. It means there was something important, that it was necessary to incorporate it, even at a later date. Then there is a brief explanation of who are the teachers of the Teacher, where Jesus takes his references from, who were his role models (chapters 3 and 4).
2. The following chapters refer to the educational purposes of Jesus, they are his ideology, his curriculum design, his program. It is clearly presented from the beginning, as it should be done at all levels of education. (Chapter 5 to 7).
3. The strongest block of the Gospel refers to his educational and evangelizing action (chapters 8 to 20) where he develops his teachings, his actions, his way of living and behaving. In this large section, it is worth mentioning three outstanding moments:
 - a parenthesis, a retreat, a course for educators (Mt 9, 35-11, 1)
 - a training methodology with the parables (chapter 13)
 - a quick test to see how the training is going (Mt 16, 13-20)
4. The Gospel concludes with the outcome of a good teacher who gives his life and this is how he remains alive forever (chapters 21-28). In this section, also broad, three key moments should be highlighted:
 - the denunciation of the bad teachers (Chapter 23)
 - the questions about the final exam of the Master and of any person (Chapter 25)
 - the mission with the corresponding delivery (Mt 28, 18-20)

We will be watching it carefully. We stand with the parable of the educator:

PARABLE OF THE SOWER

"A sower went out to sow and as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and birds came and ate it. Some fell on rocky ground, where it had little soil. It sprang up at once because the soil was not deep, and when the sun rose it was scorched, and it withered for lack of roots. Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew and choked it. But some seed fell on rich soil, and produced fruit, a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold. Whoever has ears ought to hear" (Mt 13, 3-9)

No need to explain what it means: we must be generous to spread the seed, we must be patient without wanting to separate the wheat before time, from the weeds. (Mt 13, 24-30), We must trust, because although part of the seed will be lost, the harvest will be plentiful.

46. The Preparation of the Teacher

The Gospel begins with a text seemingly not much didactic: the genealogy of Jesus (Mt 1, 1-17). It's a long list of names of the ancestors of Jesus. Some might think that it is bad pedagogical tactics, but intelligent students soon discover that it is a challenge and it isn't bad starting with a challenge like this: What does it mean?

There are many teachings locked up in there: the plan of salvation is long and reaches the culmination with Jesus; God is preparing the arrival of the Messiah with patience; in the ancestors of Jesus there are people of all types... but the challenge to the intelligence and curiosity is at the end with its corresponding key: from Abraham to David fourteen generations; from David to Babylon, other fourteen; and from there to the Messiah, fourteen. As a clever reader, you may have realized that there are six periods of seven generations each: the seventh is lacking, the one that goes from the Messiah Jesus to you. It is a book designed for you and me.

Once we have resolved this first enigma, we can now continue with all senses being alert in order not to lose detail.

We have the narration of how was Jesus' childhood, how He was conceived, how was his birth and some special significant events. Since we are already in an attitude of trying to interpret the key elements (we want to be good disciples!), we can highlight the traits of these first two chapters:

- We discover the miraculous birth of Jesus: what birth is not also miraculous? Jesus owes his life to the Holy Spirit. Should we not also owe our life to God? But it is good to remember it.
- The parents of Jesus are magnificent: Mary who is relying on the Spirit and lets him get her into a mess; Joseph who is a good man, who trusts Mary and his own dreams.
- We see two opposite attitudes before the birth of the Teacher: the Magi who have no problem to make a long journey following a star to worship Jesus, and Herod, envious, fearful and killer. They first achieved their objective, and Herod only caused suffering and pain.

- Jesus' childhood experience as an immigrant in Egypt, emulating the people of Israel that were also exiled in that country. The history of Jesus and Israel marks the first years of the future Teacher.

Following is a presentation of the teacher of the Teacher: John the Baptist (Chapter 3). Jesus learns from John, his preaching, his signs, his way of living and relating with those who came to the Jordan River.

There are several lessons from John, but perhaps the most important thing is that John knows that he is neither the center nor the important one: *"The one who is coming after me is mightier than me. I am not worthy to wear his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire"* (Mt 3, 11). John will be a teacher who knows how to read the face of his disciple, Jesus: *"I need to be baptized by you, and yet you are coming to me?"* (Mt 3, 14). This attitude of service, simplicity, being attentive to the student, will mark the Teacher when his time comes.

Jesus has to do his personal learning, he will need to internalize what he has learnt from God and his teachers (parents, John the Baptist, all who sowed in him) and look for his vocation. To do this, he withdraws to the desert and has to go through his temptations. Jesus thinks of his future and he discovers that not only of bread lives man that we should not tempt God asking for extraordinary proofs, that we should not be sold or sell our life for anything (Mt 4, 1-11). In that fight he was forging his vocation, the discovery of what God wanted for him. The crucial point will be learning about the arrest of John and taking responsibility in order to give continuity to this prophetic work (Mt 4, 12).

Jesus is already about to start his mission: he begins to preach the nearness of the Kingdom of God. And he discovers that he needs his group, his community. It will be one of his main supports together with God and it will be the group of his disciples, the students, future teachers, who will continue and multiply his work: *"Come with me and I will make you fishers of men"*.

The "first year" of future teachers is ready. They can now start their mission fully.

It is time to "enroll" in this group of Jesus. We also want to learn from the Teacher to be good teachers, to be as the Teacher.

FAREWELL OF JESUS¹¹⁴

Dear mother:

When you wake up, I will already be gone. I wanted to spare you the farewell. You have already suffered enough, and you have still to suffer, Mary.

Now it is night, when I write to you. The cat looks at me as saying "can one not ever sleep in this house?".

I want to tell you why I am leaving, why I abandon you, why I cannot stay at the workshop making frames for doors and repairing chairs the rest of my life.

¹¹⁴ José Luis Cortés. Un Señor como Dios manda.

For thirty years I have observed people in our village and I tried to understand what they lived for, what the purpose of getting up every morning was and what hope did they have when they went to sleep every night.

John, the one who sells drinks, and with him half of Nazareth, dream of becoming rich and they really believe that the more things they will have, the happier they will be. The Mayor and others place the meaning of their lives in getting more power, in being obeyed by more people, in being able to control the future of other men. The Rabbi and his sanctimonious have already surrendered everything, meaning to strive to grow and apologized saying that this is God's will.

The result is that most of the days are grey, too heavy the solitudes to be supported by normal shoulders, usual the bitterness at home, the joyous time is short and not very cheerful.

Sometimes, mother, when the postman arrived and sounded the trumpet in the town square, when people used to go running around, I noticed in those faces waiting eagerly, deliriously, good news, from no matter who and from never mind where. They would have given half of their lives for someone to open to them, from the outside, a gap in the shell! I felt as wanting to place myself in the middle and shout: "The good news has already arrived! the Kingdom of God is within you! The best letters will arrive to you from within! Why do you repeat that you are lame if it turns out that God has given you the legs of a gazelle?"

I feel the fullness of life, Mary. I discover myself in a fire that takes me and makes me tell the simple people and beautiful news that no newspaper can ever say. I would like to burn the world with this flame; that in every corner there was life, but life in abundance.

I know that I am a carpenter without high school and that I have just reached the age to open my lips in public. I wouldn't mind to wait for a while, to think about it a little more, to be more mature, to "do my theological synthesis"... But this afternoon I heard that they have arrested John while baptizing at the river.

Who will encourage now the spark of hope that still smokes in the heart of the poor? Who will cry out what God wants in the middle of so many people screaming that they do not want God? Who will heal the simple and the weary that have a right to live because they are loved from the beginning of the universe?

There is too much unhappiness, Mother and I cannot be content by just making hammocks for a few... There are too many blind, too many poor, too many people for whom the world is the blasphemy of God. People cannot believe in God in a world where men die and are not happy... unless you are on the side of those who give their life for all of that not to continue; to make the world as God intended it.

If I have to tell you the truth, I have no idea about what I am going to do. I know where to start. I don't know where we will end. For now I'm going to Capernaum, on the shore of the lake, where there are more people and what will happen will have more resonance.

It is dawning.

I will write to you. I will come to see you from time to time. The neighbors, the cat, the stars of heaven and God our Lord will accompany you, in this massive wave of fraternal coexistence with nature which men are not able to discover.

When we make that small group of people who live as we are made to do so, then you can come with us, full of grace, full of flowers, full of rhythm, blessed among all girls in Israel, you who gave me, as your fruit, your Jesus.

47. The Teachings of the Teacher

The first thing that Jesus will do with that group of students to become teachers, seeing the crowds and their many needs, is climb the mountain with them and present them with His program.

Jesus is clear from the beginning: If you follow me, this is what I am going to teach. It is a magnificent project that will make you happy, that will fill your life. Do you want it?

Is the Teacher already proposing that we be that clear in our schools, in our Piarist works, in all of our works? We offer a path of fullness and happiness: it is our proposal. Not just a spoken offer, but a style of life... preached and lived!

Jesus' Program

The Sermon on the Mount contains this educational program of the Teacher (Mt 5-7). I invite you to go up to that mountain, with the other disciples, listening to the Teacher with all of his expressions, his gestures, with his words, with his conviction.

1. Do you want to be happy? I offer you to be blessed, fortunate and fully happy.

If you want to be happy, then be poor, materially poor and poor in spirit. Be gentle, be peaceful. Cry with the afflicted, suffer with them, and join them in compassion. Have hunger and thirst of righteousness. Be merciful, always forgive, always excuse, and always love. Be clean at heart, do not look for bad intentions, and look in depth at the reality and the hearts of people. Work for peace, for reconciliation, for a world of brothers. If you want to be happy, rejoice even when they insult and persecute you, for so they persecuted the prophets.

If you act so, yours is the Kingdom of Heaven, you will own the entire earth, you will be comforted, you will be satisfied, you will reach mercy, you'll see God, you will be called son of God, yours will be the Kingdom of heaven and your reward will be great.

I offer you happiness. This is the first item on the agenda of Jesus. Does it not excite you?

2. To achieve that happiness, follow these steps:

- 2.1. You have to learn to be salt and light. You have to learn to provide flavor, give flavor to what surrounds you. You have to learn to be the light to enlighten all: that others may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.
- 2.2. You must search not the letter of the law, but the will of God. Who fulfills the will of God and teaches it to others will be great in the Kingdom.
- 2.3. Love everyone, beyond the offenses, vengeance, enemies. If you love only those who love you, what merit do you have?
- 2.4. Don't look for the recognition of others, as the Pharisees did.
- 2.5. Pray secretly, without many words, with the Lord's Prayer, with insistence.

- 2.6. Do not accumulate treasures on earth, but in heaven: where your treasure is, there is your heart.
- 2.7. Trust God: your heavenly Father knows what you need. Do not live distressed.
- 2.8. Don't judge others, do not compare yourself to them, do not envy...
- 2.9. Treat others as you would like to be treated: this is the Law and the prophecies.
- 2.10. Know people by their fruits, not by appearances, nor by their words, nor by their prayers: good deeds are the fruits.
3. If you want happiness, if you are looking for it on these trails that are the only ones that lead to it, you are building your house and your life on rock: it is more difficult and costly to do so on the sand, but it is the only way that happiness will not collapse when the winds and rains will arrive.

This is the program of Jesus. So simple and so wonderful. Do we really want it? Do we go forward to work and build our lives, our community, our Pious Schools?

Is this also our educational program for our disciples? Do we also clearly present to them the way to happiness? Do we show them the paths that lead to it?

BEATITUDES OF A CHRISTIAN EDUCATOR¹¹⁵

1. Blessed is the teacher who models the human clay with enthusiasm, not to be like his own image and likeness, but to enable to freely agree to be like the image and likeness of God.
2. Blessed the educator who does not live like a prisoner of his own history or experience; therefore, does not close the door to anyone, but opens them to all.
3. Blessed is the educator who after having guided his listeners on a path and sees that those who he educated go down another path, he still gives them love and hope.
4. Blessed is the educator who does not hold anyone close to him and does not make of friendship or authority a wired wall, but who happily blesses them when they go forward to new horizons.
5. Blessed is the educator who lives his efforts as works for the Kingdom, when his attitudes are the same that encouraged Jesus in the supreme adventure of his death and resurrection.
6. Blessed is the educator who says the word at the proper time and at times remains silent; who does not impose his word and does not hide it by cowardice or by fear of spoiling his image in front of others.
7. Blessed is the educator who reads the signs of the times with as much passion as he reads the times of those signs: the action, the word, the death and resurrection of Jesus.
8. Blessed is the educator who leaves behind him the enlightened memory of a peaceful, fair, poor, and clean heart of Jesus.
9. Blessed is the educator who does not succumb to discouragement after the mute silence of years, the betrayal of friendship or the collapse of cherished worlds.
10. Blessed is the educator who can say with joy that at the beginning, mid-way and at the end of his days: Lord, we have carried out the entrusted work, we your useless servants.

¹¹⁵ We present as a summary these magnificent Beatitudes of Olegario González de Cardedal.

11. Blessed is the educator that, from his trust in God, has the courage to place at risk in the conquest of all values.
12. Blessed is the educator who makes it possible to receive the Good News: "God has become supportive of those who live and die". He has a name: Jesus of Nazareth.
13. Blessed is the educator who knows how to give 'reason for his hope'.
14. Blessed is the educator who every day joyfully cultivates his vocation, in faithful integration in the community and in solidarity with those who struggle for new a heaven and a new earth.

48. The Educational and Evangelizing Action of the Teacher

We have a good summary of the action of Jesus even before the Sermon on the Mount:

"He went around all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease and illness among the people. His fame spread to all of Syria, and they brought to him all who were sick with various diseases and racked with pain, those who were possessed, lunatics, and paralytics, and he cured them" (Mt 4n 23-24. Also in Mt 9, 35)

The action of Jesus consisted in going through villages, announcing the Good News and curing diseases and ailments. Something very similar will be the work of the first community in Mk:

"in order to live together with Him and to send them to preach with power to drive out demons" (Mk 3, 14-15).

We could summarize the task of every teacher by announcing the Good News (presented in the previous section), making miracles, signs, cures that confirm it. This is the work that we have to learn and carry out as educators.

Jesus the Teacher performed miracles and teaches us and sends us to also perform them.

A Review of the Miracles of the Teacher in Matthew

- He heals a leper (Mt 8, 1-4). Jesus extends his hand, touches him and he is cured. Are there lepers around us who ask us for help, needing to be touched, to be approached... and with that they would be cured? Physical leprosy is terrible, social marginalization resulting from it perhaps is worse: the miracle is to reach out and touch.
- He heals the servant of a centurion (Mt 8, 5-13). A stranger approaches him, a chief of the invading Romans, asking him to heal his servant. Jesus, instead of despising him, sets him as an example: *"A faith like that I have not found it in any Israelite"*. An attitude like that, thus achieves the miracle of healing even at a distance.
- He heals Peter's mother-in-law and exorcises a possessed (Mt 8, 14-17). Again what Jesus did was taking her by the hand. The personal contact, the healthy closeness.
- He calms down a storm (Mt 8, 23-27). Jesus sleeps quietly, while the disciples are frightened by the waves: with his word he calms down the disciples... and then the storm.
- He cures some possessed people (Mt 8, 28-33). Jesus approaches, when no one else dares. Don't we also have students who seem to have evil inside and nobody dares to approach them? What about if we try?

- He heals a paralytic (Mt 9, 1-17). How many people are not self-sufficient, cannot or dare not to move? Jesus begins forgiving his sins: perhaps that is what was impeding his movements. Certainly what he gets is that he rises and starts walking. Is it not something important in education?
- Calling of Matthew (Mt 9, 9-13). This is a great miracle: achieving that a rich and certainly a thief, leave his money and follow Jesus. It is a challenge that we have to practice.
- He heals a woman with flows and resuscitates a girl (Mt 9, 18-24). A woman, impure by her illness, dares to touch Jesus hiding: he puts her as an example and heals her. He will do something similar with the girl, despite the laughter of the nearby: touching, closeness, trust... makes miracles.
- He heals two blind and a mute (Mt 9, 27-34). Jesus touched their eyes... and they were healed. Isn't our educative work opening the eyes to those who are very blind? Isn't it the role of every teacher to give the word to the dumb, who dares not or cannot speak? It is the miracle that we are asked to perform.
- He heals a man with an atrophied arm (Mt 12, 10-13). Without being paralyzed, the man could not move. Those who surround him oppose the cure for it being Saturday, but Jesus places the patient's needs above all: he is the first, more important than a Saturday... and that heals.
- He heals a person possessed by the devil, blind and mute (Mt 12, 22-24). More difficult still: Jesus does not consider anyone lost, and that originates the miracle. Do not take anyone for lost, this is a key attitude in education.
- The multiplication of the breads (Mt 14, 13-21). Jesus teaches us to share and that allows everyone to eat: the great miracle of sharing!
- He walks on the water (Mt 14, 22-33). It is a symbolic story full of educational content: daring to get out of the boat, crying when fear arises and sinking, receiving the hand of Jesus that prevents you from drowning, walking over the difficulties...
- Healing at Gennesaret (Mt 14, 34-36). They healed by touching Jesus. What power has the Teacher with his presence!
- He heals the daughter of the Canaanite woman (Mt 15, 21-28). Jesus puts to test that woman who is a foreigner and prays for her daughter. The trust that she shows to Jesus is what heals her daughter. Stunning scene of the Teacher for the Canaanite woman and, above all, for those who were present.
- Multiple healings (Mt 15, 29-31). The people were admired by these wonders. Showing signs that provoke admiration, that bring glory to God, are educational tasks.
- Again the multiplication of the loaves (Mt 15, 32-39). The story is repeated: is the teaching of the miracle of sharing so important that it must be insisted?
- Transfiguration of Jesus (Mt 17, 1-13). Jesus takes aside three of his disciples and before them he appears in a different way. It is not uncommon that when a teacher takes aside some students and speaks from the heart, the disciples see apparitions of angels and the same hand of God. What a beautiful work and what a miracle!
- He heals another epileptic (Mt 17, 14-20). The disciples have not been able to expel the devil and Jesus has to intervene. It's funny that the students - teachers of Jesus were already performing healings. It is meaningful that, when they can't perform them with their own strength, they have to call on Jesus... who always can! How about if we

are to apply that system when we are unable to make the necessary cures with our students?

- He heals two blind (Mt 20, 29-34). It is the last story of healings in Matthew. Perhaps that is the reason why it has a special meaning: they recover the vision and follow Jesus. Precisely the goal of education: to see clearly and to follow Jesus.

In the Gospel it shows the difficulty of miracles when faith is missing: "*Because of their disbelief, he did not perform there many miracles*" (Mt 13, 58)

Before I thought that miracles were an obstacle to faith that it was easier to believe in the teaching of Jesus than in miracles, so far from our reasoning. Now I think that without seeing miracles, it is not possible to see faith. Perhaps that is the reason why the Gospels insist so much on the miracles.

A teacher who does not obtain miracles, who does not cure, who cannot achieve healings with his closeness and his word... can he be a real a teacher ?

The Requirement to the Disciples

Besides the miraculous action to cure, heal, expel evil, Jesus Teacher keeps a close and at the same time demanding attitude, very demanding for those he loves.

- To the one who wants to follow him, He will tell him that he will not have a place where to rest his head, that he should not waste time in burying his father (Mt 8, 19-22).
- To the rich young man, who seems generous and conscientious, Jesus asks him all: "*sell your property, give it to the poor, and you will have a treasure in heaven; then follow me.*"(Mt 19, 16-22)
- In the parable of the laborers in the vineyard he will tell them that they should not expect any special reward for their greatest work (Mt 20, 1-16).
- When the mother of the Zebedees makes a request for her children, Jesus will answer with exigency and clearly: "*whoever wants to become great, must become your servant, and whoever wants to be first, must become your slave*" (Mt 20, 20-26).

Yes, Jesus is close by, loving, is attentive to the needs of others... and is extremely demanding with those he loves! There we have another fundamental characteristic of Jesus, the Teacher, and those who want to learn from him.

A Quick Course for his Students - Teachers

We find an educational jewel in the life of Jesus. There's a moment when he gathers his disciples aside and opens his heart to them: it is a special retreat for future educators, where the Teacher is shown with special intensity:

- "*At the sight of the crowds, his heart was moved with pity for them because they were troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd*" (Mt 9,36). This is the point of departure, looking at people and being moved by what they need.
- "*The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so the master of the harvest asks to send out laborers for his harvest*"(Mt 9, 37-38). Many arms, many people, many efforts are needed. Let us put ourselves in that attitude, moved and ready... at the same time in prayer.

- *"Calling the disciples, he gave them power over unclean spirits, to expel them and heal all sorts of diseases"* (Mt 10, 1). The disciples of the Teacher have authority and power. They have already the means, now they have to put them to work.
- *"Jesus sent them with these instructions..."* (Mt 10, 9). It is a sending, a mission, not a simple occupation that one wants to do. We act in the name of the Lord with clear instructions.
- *"Look that I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; be shrewd as serpents and simple as doves"* (Mt 10, 16). A warning and a recommendation: it will not be an easy task, there will be enemies, difficulties. Stay alert.
- *"For it will not be you who speaks but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you"* (Mt 10, 20). Let us allow God to speak through us, rather than our words and our plans.
- *"Do not be afraid"* (Mt 10, 26). The mission can be scaring, you could be afraid before the problems that lie ahead, but don't be afraid.
- *"Everyone who acknowledges me before others I will acknowledge before my heavenly Father"* (Mt 10, 32). Present you face with courage, without fear, despite persecutions, because the proposal of Jesus is more important than the seemingly more valuable things, more than the father, mother...
- *"Who clings to life will lose it, who loses it for me will keep it"* (Mt 10, 39). Giving his life to live: proposal of Jesus that He himself will soon assume.
- *"Whoever receives you receives me... and whoever gives only a cup of cold water to one of these little ones to drink because he is a disciple - amen, I say to you, he will surely not lose his reward"* (Mt 10, 40-42). Who collaborates with you, will receive his reward: invite others to collaborate.
- And he ends up a little later: *"Come to me all who are weary and overburdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble at heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. Because my yoke is easy and my burden light"* (Mt 11, 28-30).

There, we have an entire course with instructions on a Jesus-style education. There is work for making those tasks our own.

The Teacher's Methodology: the Parables

The parables of Jesus are pretty much condensed in Chapter 13, just the content is very enriching for teaching, and they are a model for teaching methodology.

We will not stop, because it is better to read them directly from the Gospel. We will just name them:

- Parable of the sower, with its detailed explanation (Mt 13, 1-23)
- Parable of the weeds (Mt 13, 24-30) with its subsequent explanation (Mt 13, 36-43)
- Parable of the mustard seed (Mt 13, 31-32)
- Parable of the leaven (Mt 13, 33)
- Parable of the hidden treasure (Mt 13, 44)
- Parable of the fine pearl (Mt 13, 45)
- Parable of the net (Mt 13, 47-50)
- Parable of the new and the old (Mt 13, 51-52)

And later on

- Parable of the lost sheep (Mt 18, 10-14)
- Parable on forgiveness (Mt 18, 23-35)
- The blessing of children is a represented parable (Mt 19, 13-15)
- Parable of the laborers in the vineyard (Mt 20, 1-16)
- Parable of the two sons (Mt 21, 28-32)
- The parable of the wicked grape-growers (Mt 21, 33-45)
- Parable of the wedding banquet (Mt 22, 1-14)
- Parable of the signs of the times (Mt 24, 32-35)
- Parable of surveillance (Mt 24, 45-50)
- Parable of the ten virgins (Mt 25, 1-13)
- Parable of the talents (Mt 25, 14-30)
- Parable of the judgment of the nations (Mt 25, 31-45)

A Fundamental Intermediate Exam

In this whole educational process of Jesus and the formation of his students - teachers, there is a turning point when he asks his disciples: "*Who do people say that I am?... And you, who do you say that I am?*" (Mt 16, 13-20).

It is a time of key evaluation then and now. What do the people say about Jesus? What do your students say about Jesus? What do you say? What do I say? In this response, we bet our life.

Peter gives the correct answer: "*You are the Christ, the son of the living God*". You, Jesus, you are my God, you are my Lord, you are the sense of my life, you are my reason for being, you, Jesus, you're everything.

Another Peter, Casaldàliga, says it in a very beautiful form: "*You are my Strength and my Failure. My Heritage and my Poverty. You, my Righteousness, Jesus. My War and my Peace. My free Freedom! My Death and Life, you, Word of my cries, Silence of my waiting, Witness of my dreams. Cross of my cross! Cause of my Bitterness, Forgiveness of my selfishness, Crime of my process, Judge of my poor crying, Reason for my hope, You! You are my Promised Land... Easter of my Easter. Our Glory forever Lord Jesus!*"

GIVE US BACK CHRIST¹¹⁶

More or less in times of Tiberius, nobody could tell us exactly where nor when, did a man of whom we know very few things open a gap in the hearts of men.

He was surely neither a philosopher nor a tribune, but he must have lived in such a way that his whole life is telling us that any of us can at any time go back to start again.

Dozens and perhaps hundreds of popular narrators have sung this good news. We know of three or four. The impact that they had received, they expressed it with images of simple people, the humiliated, the offended, the beaten, when they get to dream that everything has

¹¹⁶ Roger Garaudy. "Gritos y plegarias", p. 513.

been possible: the blind see, the lame walk, the hungry in the middle of the desert get fed with bread, the prostitute discovers that she is a real woman, the dead son goes back to life.

In order to shout the glad tidings, it was necessary that He, by His resurrection, would announce us that all barriers had been removed, including the ultimate barrier: death.

Some scholars may cast doubt on the facts of this existence, but this does not change anything about this certainty that transforms life.

A new light has just been turned on, it has been this spark, the initial flame that gave rise to the bonfire. This new light was first in favor of the poorest. If it had not been for this, from Nero to Diocletian, the system would not have treated them so harshly. In this man, love must have been incendiary, subversive; if not, they would have placed Him to die on the cross.

So far, all wisdom was based on fate, the need that the world had for reason. He, on the contrary, has convinced us of that madness, He, who was the opposite of Fate; He who was freedom, creation, life itself, He who has collapsed the fatalism in history. He complied with the promises of the heroes and martyrs of the great revelation of freedom. Chains and walls, mythic images of fate vanished in front of Him: the gods have died, man is born.

You, who have appropriated the great hope that Constantine stole us, give it back to us! His life and his death are ours, they belong to those for whom it makes sense, it belongs to all of us who have learned from Him that the man has been made creator.

49. The Outcome of the Teacher

The outcome of the Teacher's life is as expected: it has already been announced three times in the Gospel of Mt (Mt 16, 21-23; 17, 22-23; 20, 17-19).

There is a clear progress in the attitude of the disciples of the Teacher: the first time, Peter is severely reprimanded by Jesus for trying to persuade him; in the second announcement the disciples are sad and silent and in the third, they accompany him to Jerusalem towards the end. They have learned that when it will be their time, they also will assume the fate of his Teacher.

The final is as foreseen: a triumphal entry (at first it seems that everyone will accept this Good News), but resistance will appear by the side of the powerful, those who don't want anyone to change. Tensions are deepening, the traps against the Teacher appear and plot to kill Jesus is brewing, even by means of the treachery of one of his disciples.

At the last supper, Jesus says goodbye, he will give them the last lesson with the washing of feet that describes John. He leaves them the gift of the Eucharist (his presence anytime they gather in community and remember him), reminds them of the only commandment of love, tells them what is going to happen... and invites them to be in prayer.

Then comes the prayer in the garden where Jesus renews his acceptance of the will of the Father, followed by the arrest when Jesus continues with his attitude of teacher asking Peter to save his sword. Then comes the quick judgments, the abandonment of his closest disciples, and the preference of the people for Barabbas, the mockery of the soldiers and the crucifixion and death.

Jesus has given his last lesson: He gave the life for all mankind, for every one of his disciples, for you and me.

Although it seems like everything has been a failure, Jesus dies in the worst imaginable way, damned on the cross, abandoned by his closest friends. Jesus is buried... and everything is finished.

Is that the award for a good person, for a good teacher? Little by little, but quite soon, testimonies appear: the centurion and the troops who have guarded his crucifixion (Mt 27, 54) are puzzled; He appears to Mary Magdalene and to the other Mary (Mt 28, 1-8); , the tomb is empty (Mt 28: 11-15), he appears to the Eleven (Mt 28, 16-17).

Jesus has died to give life... and thus he lives forever. His word, his teaching is true: unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies...

Jesus is alive, he is still alive, and you and I are also witnesses of it, if we find him on the path of life. The final destination of the Teacher is Life!

He Denounces the Bad Teachers

Chapter 23 is very harsh: Jesus gets angry with bad teachers, with false teachers, with the lawyers and Pharisees who pretend to be wise.

Criticism is fierce. To read this chapter we need to have courage... and humility! We must recognize before the Teacher that, at times, these criticized attitudes are behaviors that define us too.

With fear and trembling we quickly gather Jesus' denunciations:

- Do all what they say; but do not imitate their conduct, because they say and do not do.
- They tie heavy burdens and place them on the back of the people, but they do not want to even move them with a simple finger.
- They make all their works be seen by men.
- They want the first place at banquets and in the synagogues.
- They want to be greeted in the streets and that people call them Rabbi.
- Woe unto you that close the Kingdom of Heaven to men: you certainly will not enter; and you will not allow to enter those that are entering. .
- Woe unto you, that goes by sea and land to make one proselyte, and when you make him, he becomes son of condemnation twice as you!
- Woe to you, blind guides, who strain out the gnat and swallow the camel!
- Woe to you, who pay tithes of mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the most important things of the law: judgment, mercy and faith.
- Woe unto you, who cleanse the outside of cup and dish, but inside they are full of plunder and self-indulgence.
- Woe unto you, who are like whitewashed tombs, that appear beautiful on the outside, but inside are full of dead men's bones and every kind of filth.
- Your House will be left deserted.

Three Final Questions, and Mission

The Gospel according to Matthew ends indicating the three questions of the "final examination", the fundamental questions of life, where we judge to be or not to be:

- Have we been vigilant? (Parable of the faithful and unfaithful servants and the ten virgins)
- Have we brought forth fruit from our own and foreign talents? (Parable of the talents)
- Have we attended those "brothers among the humblest"? (Parable of the last judgment)

There is at stake our also being teachers... and being good people and finding true happiness for us and for those who are around us.

And the end comes with the mission of these disciples that, after the resurrection and with the Spirit, they are already teachers as the Teacher (Mt 28, 18-10):

- Go and make disciples of all nations.
- Teach them to observe all that I have commanded you.
- Behold I am with you until the end of the world

Can you ask for more from this Gospel of Matthew as a living manual for us who want to learn from the Teacher to be teachers?

EDUCATION IS THE SAME¹¹⁷

Education is the same as placing an engine in a boat...
 one should measure, weigh, balance... and put it all in motion.
 But for that, one has to take in the soul
 a bit of a seaman... a little bit of a pirate... a bit of a poet...
 and a kilo and a half of concentrated patience.
 But it is comforting to dream while one works
 that this boat, this child will go very far on the waters.
 Dream that this ship will take our load of words
 toward distant ports, to distant islands.
 Dream that one day when sleeping in our own boat
 in new ships, our peaked flag will be flying.

50. And Many More Teachings

There are many more lessons in the Gospel of Matthew. To try to collect them in a comprehensive way would be to write a book. Yes, it will be good to pick up some more lessons: we are looking at Jesus, the Teacher, as our reference.

Jesus' Way of Relating

We could stop for a while and we see how Jesus relates with different people, how he sees them, calls them, makes proposals to them, approaches them, touches them...

Here are a few of Jesus' guidelines for the educational relationship:

- Healthy people do not need medical help
- To the woman with discharges, your faith has cured you

¹¹⁷ Gabriel Celaya

- Give advice: do not be afraid, there will be conflicts, which receive you, receive me...
- Present people as example: Baptist, Centurion...
- Give explanations: cure of the atrophied arm
- Educate with what happens: who is my mother...
- Feel compassion: multiplication of the breads
- Lend a hand to Peter who is sinking: what little faith
- Precious dialogue with the Canaanite woman
- Transfiguration: takes aside Peter, John and James
- Placing the child at the centre: the greatest... he blesses them
- Look at with love... he is saddened with the rich young man.

Some Educational Pearls

- They left the nets immediately and followed him (4,20)
- All the Sermon on the Mount (5-7)
- Calling of the twelve disciples, he gave them authority over the unclean spirits to expel them and heal all affliction and illness (10, 1)
- You received it free, give it free (10, 8)
- A disciple is no more than his teacher... it is enough for him to be as the Teacher (10, 24)
- You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to the simple people (11, 26)
- Learn from me, for I am simple and humble: you will find your respite, For my yoke is easy, and my burden light (11, 30)
- Your disciples are doing what is not allowed... If you understood, you would not condemn those who are not to blame (12,2-8)
- How much more valuable is a person than a sheep. So it is lawful to do good (12, 12)
- Jesus, knowing what they thought, said... (12, 25)
- A good person brings forth good out of a store of goodness: the one who is good brings good things for his kindness (12, 35)
- After saying goodbye to the people He climbed the mountain to go and pray alone. In the evening he remained there by himself (14, 23)
- If you do not become like these children, you will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven (18, 3)
- Whoever receives one child such as this in my name receives me (18, 5)
- See that you do not despise one of these little ones (18.10)
- It is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of these little ones be lost (18, 14)
- How often must I forgive him? Seventy times seven (18, 21-22)
- Let the children come to me (19, 14)
- The last shall be first and the first, last (20, 16)
- Whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave (20.28)
- "Teacher, which is the main commandment?" "You shall love the Lord... and your neighbor as yourself" (22, 36-40)

Some Precious Texts of the Other Gospels that in Each Case are a Lesson

- The dialogue after getting lost in the temple (Lk 2, 49-52)
- The conversation with the lawyer with the parable of the good Samaritan (Lk 10, 25-37)
- The conditions to be a disciple (Lk 14, 25-35)
- The incomparable parable of the prodigal son (Lk 15, 11-32)
- The worthless servants (Lk 17, 7-10)
- The lesson with the widow's obolus (Lk 21, 1-4)
- The accompaniment of the disciples of Emmaus (Lk 24, 13-35)
- Dialogue with Nicodemus (Jn 3, 1-21)
- The process with the Samaritan woman (Jn 4, 1-42)
- Teaching with the adulteress (Jn 8, 2-11)
- The story of the blind since birth (Jn 9, 1-41)
- The good Shepherd (Jn 10, 1-19)
- The washing of the feet (Jn 13, 1-17)
- The vine and the branches (Jn 15, 1-17)
- The prayer of Jesus in the last supper (Jn 17, 1-26)
- Dealing with the doubting of Thomas (Jn 20, 24-29)
- Dialogue with Peter and the assignment of his mission (Jn 21: 15-22)

There are many more lessons in the Gospels. We could say emulating the Gospel of John:

"There are also many other things that Jesus did, but if these were to be described individually, I do not think the books that would be written would fit in the world" (Jn 21, 25).

TWO REFERENCES OF CALASANZ TO JESUS AS TEACHER IN THE CROSS

None of the ancient philosophers knew true happiness and bliss, and, what is worse, few, not to say very few, know it among Christians, for having placed Christ that was our Teacher in the cross¹¹⁸.

The real book, that we must all study, is the passion of Christ; it gives wisdom according to the status of each one.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Letter 1662.

¹¹⁹ Letter 1563.

DIBUJO

Joseph was returning to Rome with the Constitutions already written.

"It will be, therefore, the mission of our Institute to educate young children in the fundamentals of reading, writing, arithmetic, Latin language, and especially piety and Christian Doctrine. All of this must be accomplished by the most efficient and simplest methods.

XI. TRAINING OF EDUCATORS

*"If careful screening of novices to be admitted
is not carried out with great discernment
and they are not diligently instructed, our Institute,
no matter how holy, will easily topple."
(Constitutions, 10)*

51. Training by Applying the Key Element of Identity

Calasanz was well aware that the future of the Pious Schools was based on the selection and training of people. Without this, no project can hold over time.

The Pious Schools need religious well selected and well trained. The need of religious cannot lead to admitting candidates without sufficient human and religious conditions. The formation of future religious has to be painstaking and carefully perform the proper preparation to be able to carry out their important ministry. This training continues throughout their life with a permanent formation, proven, in team and community, that will provide the fidelity to the vocation received.

We have to act similarly with the people who approach us willing to share the Piarist charism in Fraternities or teams of shared mission in our provinces and demarcations.

We now stop at the most numerous group of the Pious Schools: teachers, educators of different type, staff and cooperators that make possible our schools and our works.

The future is at stake in the selection and training of these so important people in the Pious Schools.

A Piarist Work Applying the Key Element of Identity

What identifies a Piarist school is not that it is just a center for education, but that it is Christian and Piarist. The specific contribution, the plus that it adds when compared to other schools, comes from its identity. If it was a work like others, the maximum that it could offer would be a work of fallback (which is very important when there are not enough schools). But, in these situations as in others, the Piarist mission has a clear identity that is precisely our best and specific contribution.

Should we remember our Piarist identity? A Piarist school (or other Piarist work, each with its own characteristics) should be a reference, educative, evangelizing, transforming, and full time center¹²⁰.

Carrying out this project requires many efforts that are only possible with the various contributions of many people, according to their possibilities, interests, and their own vocation. We live this diversity of situations as richness in complementarity and in achievement of the common good.

From this plurality, and to be able to develop this project, we need educators identified with it, who from their professional or voluntary work will bring the best of themselves and are willing to grow as persons and as educators.

Our Faculty and teams are plural groups, in whose diversity is also one of the key elements to our educational success. In any case, in our schools the following may never be missing:

- People who come from different backgrounds, tasks and services, teaching and non-teaching, make it possible to make our schools work and educate with their example and dedication.
- Educators, women and men, with accredited academic competence, who master their area of knowledge as well as didactic key elements for their teaching and assessment at various stages.
- Educators used to work as a team, ready to tackle the challenges of each day from different points of view.
- Educators, women and men, close to the students and their families, sensitive to the requirements of their formative processes, aware of the responsibility to help our children and young people in shaping their identity.
- Educators, women and men, willing to pursue their training, based on the reflection of their own practice, open to the possibility of innovation and professional improvement.
- Educators, women and men, identified with the Piarist style that places in the centre of their action the dignity and the interests of children and young people, especially those who need more care.

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¹²⁰ It is explained in more detail in the previous pages, specifically in "The great news: a school for all" (9) and "The Piarist identity of our Ministry" (12).

- Followers and supporters of Jesus of Nazareth in the world of education, convinced of the need to recreate the Church and transform society.
- Active members of the Piarist Christian Community that is a reference to the educational and evangelizing work of the school.

These features of the identity of a Piarist educator are, at the same time, a proposal addressed to all those involved in the educational work of our centers.

Training Proposals

Identity as a Piarist educator is a dynamic dimension that we can continue to cultivate along our whole professional life by using appropriate means:

- Self-evaluation
- Permanent formation in professional and personal aspects and, in a particularly important manner, training initiatives in "key elements of identity":
 - The proximity to the Piarist reality as basic breeding ground
 - Personal proposals for going forward
 - The climate of teamwork, with clear and shared projects
 - The process of training new teachers
 - The permanent formation of Faculty and teams
 - The formation as a Piarist educator
 - The itineraries towards the shared mission with further development of shared mission teams
 - Catechumenal processes towards the Fraternity
 - The continuous invitation to get involved in Piarist life, to the extent that everyone is discovering and looking forward to
 - Participation in the local Piarist Christian Community.

Taking care of our own Piarist identity, feeling that we are partakers of the Pious Schools, wanting to grow in awareness and Piarist involvement, developing the Piarist mission with love and dedication, are fundamental elements of this careful preparation that is necessary so that our work will endure.

LETTER OF A DISCIPLE¹²¹

I am young and I need you to tell me what no one else dares.

Sometimes, I wonder why you're so fearful and never offer any bold goal. It seems like the case is that you're living them, but you shut them and save them for you, for your exclusive use. You seem not to believe in what you really believe.

You, the adults, walk adulterated. Can't you see my wings? Show me the horizons. I can still move for what – even if I am not sure, but it seems like it does not seem to touch you. You once had my years, remember? Tell it to me with courage and beauty. You say that shutting is realistic. It is the other way around. You know that it is the opposite.

You just don't find out. The Gospel moves me. Tell me. Do not hide it from me. Please tell me about life. It is what I hope, and so far, you have not spoken about it. In the best of cases, only hints, allusions and cowardice is what you dare to tell me. You do not talk to me about important things unless they are important for you. When you talk to me, do it believing (as in fact you believe) in what you say. I need to see you, hear you, and feel that you are betting your life when you speak.

Be honest to me. I want to feel with the ears that you are betting your life, that you're scared when you speak, you tremble and vibrate. Fit yourself with well thought-out reasons, and tell me them to with fears, because you place yourself at risk if you communicate it to all. I have to see you respect me so that I can notice a responsible thought with soul. That your heart be sensed, be able to show emotion not less than intelligence.

Never speak to me as a professional, but as a man who has lived and lives it. Tell me things and not words. Tell me your word. What no one and no book can tell, but only you. Do not talk to me "in public".

Tell me your mistakes. Ask me and get me to ask what I avoid asking myself. Take me to dangerous terrains. Corner me and force me to rebel and discover my fear to be free.

Do not ever tell me stories. Tell me truths. Do your best, but state something. Something that hurts you. So it will hurt me and I will be awed of how beautiful and difficult it is to live.

I'm going to look at you. Look at me. You are going to tell me and you should pursue the language of my eyes. If you follow them, you'll see how to react. I am listening to you. Even, I am listening to you too much. Let's see how you do. I am in front of you as the good soil. You will see. Is it possible that you've forgotten so many things?

¹²¹ Enrique Iniesta, Piarist.

52. The Process of the Piarist Educator

The Piarist mission requires good educators. This represents a meticulous formation process. This process is complex and involves many dimensions of the person. Formation is the action of taking form, shape, getting into shape, in the form that the Piarist mission needs.

Taking that Piarist form and getting fit involves a series of intellectual and, above all, vital learning. It implies therefore an itinerary from time to time and various discoveries and experiences.

It Begins with the Discovery of an Invitation

The first step towards becoming a Piarist educator starts with an invitation. This can come in very different ways: having studied at a particular school, having participated at any Piarist work or project, meeting someone and identifying yourself with him having the taste for education, a direct invitation... or sheer luck that attracted you to work in this Piarist work.

We can be in a place without being aware of where we are. This can happen with some people that have spent years in a school and it has not left any trace. Or you can be participating without the Piarist essence touching any personal fiber. It can happen... and then we cannot talk about a process towards the Piarist educator.

The beginning is discovering an invitation: "*Come and you will see*". One is decided and begins to walk, and then many discoveries start to surface.

It Follows the Discipleship

We have just seen how the school of the Teacher was, the process of learning of those students that were to become teachers. This is the first stage in the learning process: a wonderful encounter with the Lord and with the Teacher.

We will not repeat that Jesus is a Teacher of life and he teaches it by betting on life, performing miracles, surprising with its attitude of closeness to those in need and trust in the Father. The disciples, besides seeing those miracles of Jesus, are invited to perform them and discover the happiness that acting in the name of the Lord causes.

We can read in the first-person mode about the practical teaching of Jesus when he sends them to perform miracles and preaching in Lk 10, 1-12.17-24.

Through the words, the miraculous performances of Jesus and, above all, his death and resurrection, the disciples discover who Jesus is: he is the Lord, the way, the truth and the life. He is the son of God and God himself.

The results of all of this are some attitudes that define the disciple: leaving everything and following Jesus (Lk 5,11), sitting at the feet of Jesus and listening to his Word (Mt 10, 38-42), believing in Jesus (Jn 2,11), deeply loving Jesus more than anything in the world (Lk 14, 26), renouncing everything that he has (Lk 14, 33), loading with his cross (Lk 14, 27), doing the will of Jesus (Jn 15, 14) praising God (Lk 19, 37), loving his brothers (Jn 13, 35), bearing fruit (Jn 15, 8).

Where:

- Leaving everything and following Jesus means to abandon what I know that takes me away from God, to follow the path that He shows me, and follow his example of life.

- Sitting at the feet of Jesus means to give myself enough time to, calmly, carefully, with a willing heart, hear his word, listen to his teachings.
- Believing in Jesus means to understand that everything He did and said are not merely historical events and beautiful words, but lessons for my life.
- Loving Jesus more than anything in the world means that Jesus has to be for me a living person, whom I love, not a “character from history” whom I simply admire. I have to love him until he is the center of my life.
- Giving up all what you have means, not to abandon what I have in life (home, family, work), but to give them the importance that they deserve, without clinging to them.
- Carrying the cross means accepting the limitations, defects, and all those things that are hard for me in life or that could make me go back, and despite all of this, I move forward with Jesus.
- Doing the will of Jesus means to change my life, applying in it all that I'm learning and knowing about Jesus and his message.
- Praising God means that I must be a person of prayer, that I must always find a moment to communicate with God and to praise him.
- Loving the brothers means that I cannot live my relationship with God leaving others aside.
- Bearing fruit means that I do not limit myself to learn to know and love Jesus. It is necessary that others realize that I know and love Jesus Christ. To do this, I must give fruits, put into action what I am learning along with Jesus.

Perhaps we can focus these attitudes of discipleship: spending time to listen to Him (in the Word, in the Eucharist, in prayer and in others), discover and perform miracles around us, and draw conclusions of the fact that Jesus is my, our, Lord.

We Feel Ourselves Called to be Witness, to be Apostles

Who is a good disciple of Jesus realizes that he has to be an apostle, i.e., a witness of Jesus. Who finds in the words of Jesus the way of life, who sees in his actions the hand of God, who feels him alive beside him at all times, it is impossible to keep Him to himself: he must proclaim Him to the world: *"We cannot shut what we know and we have heard"* (Ac 4, 1-21).

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The disciple discovers a good day that the Teacher is no longer there, but he has sent his Spirit, and it is time for him to begin to be a teacher.

It's about being a teacher not only of a trade, of some courses, but a teacher of experiences: it is about communicating what we have lived that fills our life. We are witnessing a unique event:

- *What we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we looked upon and touched with our hands concerns the Word of life, we now proclaim to you."* (1 Jn 1, 1)
- *"We did not cleverly follow devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty"* (2 , Pe 1, 16).
- *"Therefore, it is necessary that one of the men who accompanied us the whole time the Lord Jesus came and went amongst us, come with us as a witness to his resurrection"* (Ac 1, 21-22).

- *"You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Ac 1,8).*

A witness can only be one who has been a disciple, who has seen and touched, who has heard, who has been present and attentive. We should add more: an apostle is the person who has witnessed not only long ago, but also now. An apostle can only be a direct disciple of Jesus, because he remains next to him in prayer, in his Word, in the Eucharist, in his community, in the poor, in the Church...

Then we are indeed witnesses and also *"ambassadors for Christ"* (2 Co 5, 20) because we are today the voice of the Lord, his face, his hands, his presence in our world. And we give testimony of Jesus with our words and with our deeds.

We are Sent, We are Missionaries

Being a disciple, being an apostle, entails accepting a mission, discovering oneself as a missionary.

"Go and make disciples from all nations, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. Behold, I am with you always, until the end of time" (Mt 28, 18-20).

Missionary is the one who knows and loves Jesus Christ and helps others to also get to know and to love Him. It is not enough only to transmit information. This news is about someone whom I know and love deeply, and I am interested that others also know and love Him.

We say with Paul: *"Woe to me if I do not preach it!"* (1 Co 9, 16).

The Mission of every Christian is to evangelize. We, as Piarist, carry out this mission Calasanz style, by means of education, evangelization and social transformation together with all the people who make up the Pious Schools.

We can hear the words of Jesus reminding us that *"the harvest is plentiful and the laborers few: pray to the Lord of the harvest that he sends laborers into his harvest"* (Lk 10, 2).

Today we need laborers who assume the priestly service to encourage Christian communities. We need religious Piarist that keep alive the core of the Pious Schools. We need people available for multiple services, claiming the Piarist community and mission. We need many arms and many hearts.

We pray to the Lord to send us missionaries as well. We ask him to give us strength if He calls us to these tasks. We ask him for clarity and humility, if He makes us messengers to ask someone in our community for these services. We ask him to bless our efforts and work. We ask Him to make us available for whatever He wants.

We are More Than Just Disciples, Apostles, and Missionaries: We are Sons and Brothers!

It is not much of an effort to have discovered ourselves as disciples, apostles and missionaries. But there is more, much more: Jesus calls us friends: *"I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father"* (Jn 15, 15).

Friends of Jesus. Realize what this means: Jesus is your friend. We had been chosen to be with him, to accompany him, to preach and perform healings... but now it's still more: we are friends!

There is more, much more: God is our Father. We are children of God, I am the son of God, He has given us a place in his family, we are his own... is it possible to have a greater gift?

Indeed, God is my Father: I owe him my life. He loves me as only a mother, a father, can love. Not only has He created me, but He has raised me, has accompanied my growth and continues to do so. I can say "our Father".

And recognizing me as a son, I discover myself also as a brother. I feel the joy of belonging to the family of mankind, my brothers. I assume, with clumsiness and not always as I should, the responsibility to live in fraternity, to see in every person a brother, a son of God. I realize that I am also a brother of Jesus, we carry the same blood: the blood of God!

An Exciting Formative Process

The proposal is exciting: assuming the form of a call, disciple, apostle, missionary, friend, son, brother...

Everything is really very intertwined, these approaches to the same reality until reaching *"the fullness of the one who fills all things in every way"* (Eph 1, 23).

This progressive itinerary, always innovative and challenging, allows us to follow Jesus and try to keep us faithful to communicate him to others, because he fills our life.

I invite you to make a personal exercise. We have stopped at some names that can define us and that mark an itinerary for us (called, disciple, apostle, missionary, son). Each of these terms can help us to situate ourselves before Jesus and the heavenly Father. They are perhaps the most important expressions in our relationship with God, but we could add more. I remind you that you're a follower, a servant (who serves and who has a Lord and master), Christian (who puts Jesus in the center), priest (bridge, shepherd), religious (sign, image, poor, chaste, obedient, and fraternal), Samaritan man and Samaritan woman, sinner, prophet, lover, faithful...

Thank you, Lord, because certainly making the trip with you and towards you is exciting.

GOD PRAYS THE LORD'S PRAYER¹²²

My son that you are on Earth, anxious, lonely, tempted, I perfectly know your name and I pronounce it as sanctifying it, because I love you.

You are not alone, but inhabited by me and together we build this Kingdom that you're going to be the heir.

I like you to do my will because my will is that you will be happy, since a living man is the glory of God.

Always count on me and you'll have the bread for today, don't worry, I only ask you to know how to share it with your brothers.

¹²² José Luis Martín Descalzo.

Know that I forgive all of your offenses even before you commit them, so I ask that you do the same with those who trespass against you.

So you never fall into temptation, hold strong to my hand and I will deliver you from evil, my poor and beloved son.

53. Some Competencies of the Piarist Educator

It would be too broad, to try to collect all the competencies of a Piarist educator; that could be discouraging to present a hardly attainable ideal, and it could also be impractical because the competencies that are needed may be different in each work and place.

In any case, we should indicate some features that seem fundamental to all Piarist educators and that could indicate key elements for the adequate preparation and permanent formation.

We highlight four elements:

- Feeling an active part of the concrete Piarist project
- Having certain qualities of leadership
- Knowing himself and others
- Being ready to always learn.

Being Part of the Project in a Piarist work

Any company needs a team that drives it. When it's an ambitious company that carries out the education of many children and young people, over many years and with the collaboration of many people involved in all of this, it is essential to have the consciousness of participating in a project, of pushing together in the same direction.

A Piarist educator must know the concrete project of the work where he is participating, the operating system that is carrying it out, the Piarist framework in which it is inserted, the expectations that the Pious Schools have regarding its performance...

He needs an initial training that sets him; accompany him in the first steps, that integrates him into the corresponding teams, making him feel part of the global project.

If this should fail, we would have the risk of a fragmented work and a misplaced person who would hardly provide everything he could.

Those who feel participating and identified with a project that they value with all their heart, do not find it hard keeping motivated.

Knowing Oneself and Others

If knowing oneself is one of the major tasks of any person, it is still more so in an educator. Being aware of how one acts, his deep motivations, his qualities and defects, is an essential element for a teacher.

Knowing oneself facilitates the knowledge of others. Although it is not enough and it will also be a task of the educator to get to know his students, their specific situations, needs...

Being aware of the complexity of each person, starting with ourselves, helps us to situate ourselves better in personal relationships and, therefore, in the educational relationship. It also allows us to bring peace and capacity of relativizing many situations that could be

conflicting and could block ourselves, those we have around us and the same interpersonal relationship, so important in education.

This task is a key element for every educator.

Leadership Capacity

Every educator must have some capacity for leadership, regarding his students and also in teams and activities in which he may participate.

We can identify several types of leadership. Each Piarist collaborator will have to place himself and see how to continue progressing for a greater contribution to the common project:

- Educational leadership: to bring together a group of students creating a suitable environment for learning around the same objectives. It will mean closeness in the relationship, personal authority and clarity to make appropriate proposals, dedication of time and affection, programming of the collective and individualized work...
- Charismatic leadership: to combine around the Piarist project students and colleagues, families and those who are nearby. Because our own enthusiasm is contagious, because one has been formed and knows, because we have real links with the Piarist world, because we invite others...
- Organizational leadership: when a person must assume any specific responsibility in the work and puts into play dedication, preparation, politeness, ability to summon persons and efforts, awakening the best attribute of each component of the organization...
- Personal leadership: to provide those personal charisms that everyone can have in very different topics and that can enrich the common project.

These different possible leadership characteristics that we have to take care of and strengthen so that they are useful to the work and allow the personal development of each member of the same.

They say that every leader has to have three "h": humility, humanity and sense of humor. Not believing that you are above others, but feeling as a server, being able to understand others and love them, and learning to laugh at one's self, to be able to peacefully accept events, are three good indications.

Ready to Always Learn

An educator is aware that his formation does not ever end, that he must always be in an attitude of self-improvement. Improvement and progress in his personal and spiritual growth, in his professionalism as a teacher, in his attitudes as an educator, in his availability as a server...

As Christians we are always learning by following Jesus. As people, every day we are faced with novelties to which we should provide an appropriate response. As teachers we have the responsibility to help develop the most precious of mankind: children and young people.

We need to always be in training, always willing to listen to others, to collaborate in teams, to ask God for the necessary clarity to carry out this mission.

Calasanz also makes a very interesting contribution: "Educators have to be *equipped with patience, charity and other virtues*".

THE DIAMOND¹²³

The sanyasi had arrived at the outskirts of the village and camped under a tree to spend the night. Suddenly someone from the village came running up to him and said: "The stone! The stone! Give me the precious stone!".

"What stone?" asked the sanyasi. "The other night Lord Shiva appeared to me in a dream", said the villager, "and assured me that if I came at dusk to the outskirts of the village, I would find a sanyasi that would give me a precious stone that would make me rich forever". The sanyasi looked in his bag and found a stone. "Probably he referred to this," he said, and he gave the stone to the villager.

"I found it on a forest trail a few days ago. Of course you can keep it».

The man stared at the stone with astonishment. It was a diamond! Perhaps the biggest diamond in the world, because it was as big as a man's hand. He took the diamond and departed.

The villager spent that night turning around on the bed, completely unable to sleep. The next day, at dawn, he went to wake up the sanyasi and told him: "Give me the wealth that allows you to let go of this diamond so easily."

54. A Particular Exercise: the Enneagram

Quite often we feel desperate with our families, in our community, in our relation with our students, when we find ourselves in situations that puzzle us: the person who lies as the most natural thing, other who needs to draw attention at all times, another focuses on details in an exaggerated manner, the one who is always eager to create a discussion... If we are able to place ourselves in the other man's shoes, to know his way of being, to know ourselves and realize the behaviors that bother us most, coexistence, human relations and educational tasks would be much easier.

I invite you to do this exercise individually, or even better, if possible do it in community using a specific tool: the Enneagram.

The exercise is about finding your own type, the types of the people with whom you are more related to and understand some behaviors, while proposing some improvement. It is certainly a good resource (although of course there are many others).

Here we present just some notes, but it's easy to get more information from someone we know or through the Internet resource. There are simple tests to find your own classification.

A Short Presentation

The Enneagram is a powerful tool to apply it to ourselves. It supplies us with a guide to the discovery and acceptance of our major constraints and qualifies us for the respectful understanding of others. At the same time it guides us towards our larger potentialities that remain largely undeveloped.

¹²³ Anthony de Mello. "The song of the bird".

This system includes nine different personalities, defined by numbers in this chart and connected in each case with two other personalities: these will be the people with whom you relate to more and also two lines of personal development.

As in all the descriptions, these are clues that should not be taken as indisputable doctrine, but as a means that can help us improve. It is also necessary to take into account that it is not a judgment on people but an instrument to better understand ourselves and those who are around us.

Here are the nine types with a simple and incomplete description that necessarily has to be expanded with more details:

1. The Perfectionist

His dominant feature is the concern for what he considers to be his own responsibility. Never satisfied, he demands a lot of himself and others. He may tend to dominate others because he believes himself to be superior. Person of action by sense of duty, logical and pragmatic thought, common in churches and schools. He believes and needs to have the reason even though inside it is hard for him to make decisions because of his insecurity. He can drown in specific details. Responsible and very effective in its responsibilities.

2. The Helpful

His characteristic is the intense and sustained service to others. High-energy, enlarged self-image, confident, brilliant at what they do, generous (sometimes to feel more than others and earn their love), they need to feel needed, paternalistic, they capture the needs of others while they deny their own, flattering, proud, low tolerance to the routine and discipline, very active and helpful. Internally they can suffer by not knowing how to help more.

3. The Effective

His dominant trait is efficiency in his action. Vain, he needs admiration and recognition. He adapts to any environment and is socially nice. Untrue in the expression of feelings and tending to lie to beautify his reality. He needs to demonstrate at all times that he is worth. Select and refined, flees from vulgarity. He needs to be the best and this makes him to be practical, efficient, organized. Competitive and calculating, he does not want at his side someone who can shade him. He fears failure and tries to control everything. Very active, perhaps to not see his inner emptiness. He brings a lot to an organization.

4. The Artist

Sentiment is predominant, the sensitivity that can be translated into art. Envious: he is always comparing and seeing himself as a loser. Low self-esteem. They feel victims and are well only when everyone else is not well. They normally complain about all. They feel special, unique, and they can express it frequently in art. Great importance of feelings: there is an inner life. They capture the feelings of others and are obsequious and attentive. They can be melancholic or nostalgic. They merge with the couple being dependent and creating dependency. They suffer much. They can contribute much to capture the vital situations of others.

5. The Observer

His main characteristic is to remain in the background until they have a complete view of the situation. Greedy, especially of knowledge and also in the material matter and in their

expressions. Careful observers. They limit their needs to not depend on anyone. It is hard to relate on a social basis. To avoid vulnerability, they try to be cold and insensitive. Smart, witty, ironic, they tend to be expert at something to feel safe. They observe much before acting, and therefore tend to make interesting interventions.

6. The Loyal

They are noted for their loyalty to those persons or institutions that they provide support to. Insecure and full of fears of the outside world, of making mistakes, of making decisions. They blame themselves much and they can criticize others for a behavior similar to theirs. They see dangers everywhere, hidden intentions. They seek references that give them security, groups of confidence in which they come involved. They need clarity in their tasks, apply standards, and have everything organized: they are very responsible and hard workers. He is a very valuable member of any organization.

7. The Seller

Positive, friendly, fun, cheerful, enthusiastic, willing to adventure. Agile intelligence, is a quick learner. Tendency to disperse in multiple projects, traveler, always very busy and never satisfied. Behind his charm there is a manipulative mind to achieve his goals: he is a seller. Obliging, not aggressive, persuasive, oriented towards the future and limitless. He may end up as the "charmed charming" getting to believe his own delusions and narcissism. His way of being soothes and brings much to the teams where they are in.

8. The Fighter

His fundamental characteristic is nonconformity. Dominant, independent, defiant, self-confident. With charisma, natural leader. They need to intensely feel what they do. Their fear is to be hurt, to be rejected. They are impulsive, impatient, tendency to hedonism. They like challenge, risk, transgressing rules. They do not want to depend on anyone and feel at war with everybody. They say what they think without detours. They create an interesting dialectic that enriches a group.

9. The Peaceful

He is quiet, sociable, kind, tolerant, and conformist. He longs for peace and shuns any tension or conflict. He focuses on satisfying the needs of others. Lazy, he leaves the important things for the end. Indifferent, they adapt to everything with ease. They live life through others.

To Know Ourselves and to Know the Others

When one knows himself and those who are on his side, coexistence, dialogue, mutual understanding and the attainment of the common objectives is easier. In community life and in education that is very necessary.

This instrument of the Enneagram, besides knowing ourselves and knowing others, allows us to see steps of personal growth, understanding of relationships, being more tolerant and better.

The Enneagram also allows us to learn more about natural groups, environments, according to the leaders and the types of individuals that make them up. It is an interesting instrument.

WHAT A COINCIDENCE!¹²⁴

A young newcomer to a town asked an elder man who was accompanied by his grandson: "How are the people who live here?" The elder man answered with another question: "How are the people of the place where you come from?" The young man said: "they are very selfish, but above all envious and vengeful". Then, the elder man replied: "what a coincidence... it is the same as the people you'll find here!"

Soon afterwards came another young man who asked the same question as above. The elder man replied: "How are the people of the place where you come from?" The young man thought for a moment and replied: "you can rely on them. They are friendly, fair and show love towards others." To what the elder man said: "what a coincidence! It's the same people that you will find here."

The grandson, not understanding anything and quite surprised, asked his grandfather: "Why have you done that, grandfather? You have said to each one a different thing". Staring him in the eyes, he replied: "Decide what face you will wear inside and that will be what you will show. As you are, so you'll see others".

DIBUJO

Then, Joseph of the Mother of God, Joseph Calasanz, the blacksmith's son, gets angry and writes the famous "Memorial to Cardinal Tonti," claiming his works as his own child.

The positive or negative life-style at a mature age depends on good education from the start. You have to know that the ministry of education is:

- the most worthy
- the most noble
- the most meritorious
- the most beneficial
- the most useful
- the most necessary

¹²⁴ Francisco Cerro y otros. "Cientos de cuentos parábolas para todos". Ed. Monte Carmelo.

XII. ECCLESIAL MINISTRY

"The Pious Schools, under the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother and educator of Christ, tested through the centuries and always sensitive to the needs and hopes of mankind, feels sent by the Church in our time and intends to contribute toward the building of a more just and fraternal world".
(Constitutions 11)

55. Assignment with the Protection of Mary

The Ministry of the Pious Schools comes from the sending by the Church, also in our times, to try to build a more just and fraternal world.

We have already said that our way of doing it will be through Christian education, with special attention to the poor, children and young people, with the pastoral action.

Now, it is worth stopping with the support and protection of Mary, mother and educator of Christ. The devotion of Calasanz to the Virgin Mary and the importance that he gave to it before the religious and in Schools is well known: *"Try to instill in all the devotion to the Blessed Virgin, acquiring it before you"*¹²⁵. *"It will be a holy thing to introduce the devotion to the Blessed Virgin"*¹²⁶.

We're going to get close to Mary in ten sentences, trying to place ourselves inside of her, feeling what she might feel in each one of these situations, asking her to help us to make our attitudes like hers. When we do so, we grow in Piarist identity, and therefore also in the mission.

1. *"Behold the handmaid of the Lord, let it be according to your word"* (Lk 1, 26-38)

A plan of life has just been presented to Mary, one which breaks all human schemes. When it seemed that her life was already taking clear direction to be betrothed to Joseph, everything was altered with the announcement of a great joy and a great complication.

The reaction of Mary is that of trust, availability, docility, humility: whatever was needed. For Mary it is very clear who her Lord is, who she is, what the only possible answer is.

And then, without giving more importance to the fact, she goes her way to help her cousin Elizabeth, because her heart belongs to those who need her, her life is to serve.

Help us, Mary, to be slaves of the Lord. Help us also feel that the announcement of the angel: "Rejoice, favored one, the Lord is with you". Help us to trust, to be docile, simple, like you.

2. *"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord"* (Lk 1, 46-55)

Mary's heart overflows when she feels so much loved by God. She discovers the desire of the Lord to be faithful with mankind, disrupt the powerful and sympathize with the humble, to accomplish his promises.

¹²⁵ Letter 1928.

¹²⁶ Letter 3968.

Mary is praying, with a prayer of committed praise, of gratitude because God has noticed the humility of his handmaid, of commitment because she has to allow God to do mighty things through her.

We frequently pray your prayer, Mary, but help us to actually live it, to feel grateful and chosen, small and committed, like you.

3. "*Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart*" (Lk 2, 19)

Mary reread the story of each day from the heart and meditated it. She was discovering signs of what was happening around her, although it was hard for her to understand it.

Today we call that a believing and reading of reality. She did it quite simply, with the deep sense of being so close to Jesus.

We, also need, like Mary to learn to read the signs of the times, to see your son, Jesus, in our day to day, to understand what he wants to tell us, to rely on the Word. You, who knew well Jesus, teach us to know Him well also.

4. Blessed Mary (Lk 11, 27-28)

Happy and blessed are you, Mary. Before the crowd, a woman you said "*Blessed is the womb that carried you and the breasts from which you nursed*". And your son, Jesus said: "*Blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it*".

The two sentences were for you, Mary. You have to be happy because you are a mother and you hear and meet God's Word.

Teach us the way to happiness, be our mother, make resonate the Word of God in us as it did in you.

5. "*Do whatever he tells you*" (Jn 2, 5)

Not only are you a disciple and mother, but you also point the way for us: "*Do whatever he tells you*". You trust Jesus, you are sure that He will do what seems impossible, to change water into wine, He is the way.

And you, Mary, you indicate it to us. At Cana you pushed him to advance his time to respond to that need. With that gesture, he anticipated the wine of the new and definitive Covenant.

Repeat to us many times that phrase: "*Do whatever He tells you*". We often forget that in Jesus is the reference for all.

6. "*Next to the cross of Jesus was his mother*" (Jn 19, 25)

Until the end, Mary was there. From birth to death. Always at the feet of Jesus, serving Jesus, with an attitude of listening. In the midst of the suffering of the cross, Mary was there to support him, to suffer with him, to follow him until the last moment.

It is easier to follow Jesus when the Magi come to give gifts, or when Simon or Anna prophesies good words. But Mary is always there, in the good times and in the bad ones. Always quiet, always discreet, always attentive.

Mary, we want to be like you. Remember us when we leave Jesus' side, when we are ahead of him.

7. "Here is your mother" (Jn 19, 27)

In the sacrifice of the cross, Jesus sees Mary and wants to take care of her, he wants his preferred disciple to take care of her. He entrusts to John the care of Mary, he entrusts to Mary the care of John.

Who could be, as John, the preferred disciple of Jesus! Perhaps we are, you and me. Possibly when he looks at you and me, he also gives us the same assignment: here is your mother.

Yes, Mary, you are the mother of Jesus. Therefore, the mother of God and also our mother. Not easy to understand! Take care of me, Mary! I will also try to take care of you.

8. Mother of the Pious Schools

Yes, you are also Mother Mary of the Pious Schools. From Calasanz we the Piarist have always had you in a very special place. We not only ask your protection with full confidence, but we discover you on our side as mother, accompanying all and, especially, many children who are also your children. Take care of your schools.

9. Joseph of the Mother of God

It is surprising to see how Calasanz used to sign many letters and writings: Joseph of the Mother of God. He wanted this to be his name, his distinction, his support at all times.

Mary is also mother of Calasanz and of his schools.

10. "All of them, with some women, the mother of Jesus remained... unanimous in prayer" (Ac 1, 14)

Mary is also faithful to Jesus even after his death. She remains in the community, unanimous in prayer, in the following of the one now resurrected.

Mary is faithful up to the end, faithful in community and in prayer, faithful from the simplicity without any special prominence.

Mary, show us the way. You, who knew to follow it faithfully, be our example, our protector, and our mother.

"We fly to thy patronage, O holy Mother of God; despise not our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us always from all dangers, O glorious and blessed Virgin".

INSTRUMENT¹²⁷

On the desktop of a famous poet there was an inkwell that, at night, when the things took life, he considered himself very important.

He said, "It is incredible how many beautiful things come out of me. An entire page is filled with a single drop of my ink. And how many magnificent and moving things can be read in them!"

¹²⁷ Raúl Berzosa, "Parábolas para una nueva evangelización", p. 168.

But its boasting caused the resentment of the pen: "Do you not understand, you gross fool, that you are only the one who puts the raw material? I am the one who writes what is in me with your ink. The one who really writes is actually the pen!"

The poet, who had gone to a concert and was inspired by the music, came back. And he wrote on the sheet: "What fools would be the bow and the violin if they thought that they were the players!"

Fools are we, men, when we boast of what we do, forgetting that we are all simple instruments of God".

56. Our Ministry in the Church and the Piarist Ministries

Chapter VIII of our Piarist Constitutions¹²⁸ is dedicated to our Ministry in the Church.

Without going into all the elements that are described, we highlight three points:

1. The definition of our Ministry in the Church

*"Our Order, through the integral education of children and youth, especially the poor, as it is indicated in our specific fourth vow, participates in a particular way in the mission of evangelization, which belongs to the whole Church"*¹²⁹.

It is very clear: our specific ministry is participating in the mission of the Church through the integral education of children and youth, especially those most in need. Christian education, Piarist style, is our Ministry.

2. The various concretions of our Ministry¹³⁰

This ministry focuses on actions and works: in catechesis, in schools, in parishes and missions that have been entrusted to us and in any activity that promotes the education of the youth¹³¹.

The action field is as broad as the needs and possibilities according to each moment and situation. Many different works, projects and programs fit into this.

3. The participation of the laity in this ministry

*"The Piarist ministry is exercised today by religious and many lay people, related to the Order in different levels and modalities. They are active and valuable members of our apostolate and have responsibilities in our Institutions according to their availability, engagement, and human, spiritual, professional and pedagogical preparation"*¹³².

It is important to highlight this point: the Piarist ministry is not exclusive to the religious. It is something obvious, but it is not negative to explain it so clearly.

¹²⁸ Nn. 90-102.

¹²⁹ Constitutions, 90.

¹³⁰ Constitutions, 96-102.

¹³¹ Constitutions, 99.

¹³² Constitutions, 94.

The Three Great Piarist Ministries

Within the Piarist ministry that the Order receives as a specific mission, that the Church entrusted us to serve the world, three major ministries that we the Piarist assume personally must be highlighted: the Ministry of Christian education, the Ministry of care for the poor children and the ordained Ministry of pastoral care.

In the formation path of the Piarist religious the first two ministries of Christian education and attention to the poor child are often jointly conferred¹³³, as an important step in preparation for the Piarist ministry. The ordained Ministry of pastoral (diaconate and priesthood) are left for a later time.

These ministries, together with the religious consecration with the fourth vow, provide an overview of the ministerial responsibility of the Piarist religious and priest.

These ministries, each separately, are obviously not exclusive of the Piarist, but of the entire Church. Therefore, they may contain different shapes and shades in the different ecclesial spaces where they are carried out.

Still more: with their particular characteristics, they are ministries that can also be entrusted to lay people or shared with them in different ways. Calasanz had great care in trying to bring the laity to the Ministry: *"Our fathers must take great care of the students, and make them devotees, not only teaching them in the schools letters and Christian doctrine, but making them join the oratories, and in them the holy sacraments, so that, if lay people see this fervor in our religious, they will like our ministry much more."*¹³⁴

We are now in an interesting ecclesial moment where evangelizing is a central theme and where the ministerial direction can achieve a major push, also in our Pious Schools¹³⁵.

We should now give impetus to recognized ministries which, little by little, are making their way among the laity of the Pious Schools¹³⁶. It is an opportunity to renew and delve deeply on the ministry of religious¹³⁷.

Some basic criteria¹³⁸ that the Piarist ministries conferred to the laity must have:

- a. It is a fundamental service for the Pious Schools and their mission.
- b. It is difficult to achieve the accomplishment of this service through other types of commissions or assignments.
- c. It is required to have specific training.
- d. It be required that the commitment of the person be for a relatively long time.
- e. It is visible that their assignment be in the context of a communitarian celebration.

In the Order and also in the Fraternity, we intend to promote some Piarist lay ministries: in addition to the lay pastoral ministry, the ministry of Christian education and the ministry of care to the poor for social transformation¹³⁹.

¹³³ FEDE 89-90.

¹³⁴ Letter 4039.

¹³⁵ It is worth remembering the "Salutatio" of Fr. General over the Ministries in Ephemerides, June 2011.

¹³⁶ "Directory of the Laity" nn. 72-75. "Guidelines for a Plan of Formation of the Piarist Laity" pages 75-76. "The Fraternity of the Pious Schools", nn. 25-26.

¹³⁷ Much of the text is taken from the document submitted to the major Superiors in Peralta in October 2011: "Participating in the Pious Schools", which developed mainly shared mission teams, Piarist ministries that now we collect and the impulse to the pastoral processes at all ages.

¹³⁸ They are proposed by Yves Congar and today they are a reference when speaking of the ministries in the Church.

Pastoral Ministry.

To the ordained ministry of pastoral, the Church entrusts them with the authorized announcement of the Word, the presidency of the celebration, animation of charity and communion. It assumes the service of unity and the presidency in the name of Jesus Christ, ensuring the fidelity of the community and of each of its members to the vocation received and the given assignment.

The lay pastoral ministry is associated to the ordained ministry and, with it, it shares the pastoral care of the community and the responsibility for the call, animation, formation and government of same.

Ministry of Christian Education.

We are at the core of the Piarist ministerial mission, central to the Piarist religious, even as a fourth vow.

The Ministry of Christian education can also be an assignment made by the Pious Schools to lay people to boost some aspect of the Piarist educational mission or of the community, in constant communion with the other organs of their life and mission.

Some areas can be: family support, spiritual accompaniment of children and young people, care of coherence and complementarity between the educational school and extra-school action, the initiation to prayer and the care of the religious experience, some executive responsibilities, etc.

Ministry of Care of the Poor for Social Transformation.

Attention to poor children is a central feature of the vocation and ministry of the Piarist religious. And it can also be a ministry entrusted to certain lay people by the Pious Schools.

The ministry of attention to the poor for social change covers all services that the Pious Schools deem appropriate to boost the dimension of social transformation of the Piarist mission. The following areas may be included in this ministry: education for social transformation, the specific attention to children with learning difficulties, schooling support, education in values, awareness, fight against exclusion, homes for street children, volunteering, cooperation with the work in our structures at the service of sustaining our social works, animation of social networks, solidarity economy, international cooperation, support for immigrants, etc.

Some key elements to launch the Piarist ministries entrusted to lay people are:

- Choosing people involved in shared mission teams or Piarist Fraternities¹⁴⁰.
- Marking the stage of initial training following a suitable itinerary of training and preparation for the corresponding ministry, both for the person who is to assume the ministry¹⁴¹ and for the Piarist presence where he will develop it¹⁴².

¹³⁹ The ministry of special attention to poor children is grouped with the aim of our school to reform society and renewing the Church.

¹⁴⁰ It is advisable to entrust the lay pastoral ministry to Piarist laity and people of the Fraternity, while others can be also given to members of the shared mission teams.

¹⁴¹ For the lay ministry of pastoral we may think of a formation involving an official degree of theology as well as preparation for the Piarist pastoral of the demarcation. In the other ministries we should adapt the training plan to the specific field.

- Making the assignment by the corresponding Major Superior on behalf of the Demarcation, of the Fraternity, of the teams of shared mission and of the Piarist Christian community.
- A formal sign of mutual commitment¹⁴³, usually as part of a celebration of the Eucharist of the Piarist Christian Community .
- The ministry is entrusted by a broad and renewable period¹⁴⁴.
- The Piarist Ministry is always done as part of a team¹⁴⁵ that accompanies the person over time in their work, decisions, lifelong learning, etc.

The General Secretariat of charismatic integration and shared mission gives its support in putting up these teams and is available offering to interested parties its accompaniment, along with materials and existent experiences.

In each Demarcation and in the Order we will keep a record of people who have been entrusted with Piarist ministries.

Boosting Ministry and the Piarist Ministries

We have an important and exciting mission to carry forward with the Piarist ministries. We need all hands to do this. We need to give renewed impetus to our Piarist Ministry every day, in every work, in every place where we are present.

We need to give visibility, brotherhood letter card, also to those people who collaborate with us and want to do it with greater availability and involvement. We can and must follow steps so that they can participate in our Piarist ministry also, when appropriate in each case, with the assignment and assumption of a specific ministry.

We need that every one of us, who have received in our day any ministry to boost the Piarist Ministry, renew it with enthusiasm, with fidelity to the received assignment, in a team because it is a ministry of the community and non-personal.

In this we put at stake our own vocation and also the service that we can give to children and young people for whom we have been called.

TWO PASTORS: THE DENOUNCED BY EZEKIEL AND JESUS, THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Woe to the shepherds of Israel who have been pasturing themselves! Should not the shepherds, pasture sheep? You have fed off their milk, worn their wool, and slaughtered the fatlings, but the sheep you have not pastured. You did not strengthen the weak nor heal the sick nor cured the injured. You did not bring back the strayed nor seek the lost, but you lorded harshly and brutally over them.

So they were scattered for lack of a shepherd, and became food for all the wild beasts. My sheep were scattered and wandered over all the mountains and high hills; my sheep were scattered over the whole earth, with no one to look after them or to search for them.

¹⁴² It is necessary to start preparing the community and work that will receive the minister when he will complete his formative stage and begin to exercise the ministry.

¹⁴³ It might be the text of the "Memorial to Cardinal Tonti".

¹⁴⁴ "Directory of the Laity", 73. We can think of ten years for the lay pastoral ministry and seven years for others.

¹⁴⁵ This team should be also be made up of religious Piarists, who have already been entrusted, obviously with the Piarist ministries.

Therefore, shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: I swear I am going after these shepherds. I will claim my sheep from them and put a stop to their shepherding my sheep so that they may no longer pasture themselves. I will save my sheep that they may no longer be food for their mouths. For thus says the Lord GOD: I myself will look after and tend my sheep. (Ez 34, 1-11).

I am the good shepherd who gives his life for his sheep... I know them and they know me... I call the sheep by name, I walk in front of them... (Jn 10, 1-18)

57. To be a Priest

Calasanz "*wanted this educational work to be accomplished mainly by teaching priests through the ministry of the Word and Sacraments*"¹⁴⁶.

In a previous chapter we spoke of the religious vocation. Also of the vocation of the layman and the educator. Now it is time to speak of the priest.

We just said, speaking of the ministries, that the Church entrusts to the ordained Ministry of pastoral the authorized proclamation of the Word, the presidency of the celebration, animation of charity and communion. It assumes the service unity and the presidency in the name of Jesus Christ, ensuring the fidelity of the community and of each of its members to the vocation and assignment received.

The Priest is a Man of the Word.

I may not be the wisest, the greatest theologian, no expert on hermeneutics, but he must indeed be a man of the Word. Because he hears it, he reads it, he has it present in his life and in his heart. Because it is his reference and therein he finds his guide. Because he also discovers in it a word of encouragement to communicate to his people, and also words of hope, of discernment, of demand, mercy, peace...

He is a man who has the smell of the Gospel¹⁴⁷. Due to his proximity to the Word, he smells quickly what contains Gospel and knows how to detect it, to mirror it, to animate it.

He acts as Philip, attentive to the one who needs an explanation of the Word, like the Ethiopian who reads the Scripture and does not understand: "*How can I understand it if no one guides me. And he asked Philip to go up and sit with him*" (Ac 8, 31). He is the one who gives the necessary explanation and who seeks that there be other people prepared to do so.

The Priest is the Man of the Presidency of the Eucharist.

He may not be the best in the community, nor the most worthy; however, at that moment, in the Eucharist, he is occupying, representing Jesus himself. From his personal poverty and indignity, he feels transformed by the One who acts by his means. He feels happy about the possibility of carrying out this essential service to the community.

He brings the Eucharist in the heart and knows that it is the center of the community: the presence of Jesus who calls us, speaks to us, conveys his Word in the community, gives us food and strength, sends us to build his Kingdom...

¹⁴⁶ Constitutions, 3.

¹⁴⁷ Beautiful expression of Gabino Urbarri. "Reavivar el don de Dios". Sal Terrae. 1997.

With fear and trembling, he prepares every Eucharist with love, with prayer, with dedication. He knows that he will be the instrument of the great gift of Jesus, and this fills him with joy and responsibility.

He does not intend to be the owner of the Eucharist. That's why he attends to both the Church directions and the needs of the community with an attitude of humility and service that he provides for this important service.

The same applies with the other sacraments that make up the community, especially forgiveness, and baptism.

The Priest is the Man of the Animation of the Charity.

He probably won't be the most generous, or the most dedicated to the poor, or the best person, or the more committed; however, he has the assignment by Jesus and by the Church to be the shepherd of all, especially of the lost sheep, of the one who has more needs. He vibrates with the problems of others, seeks solutions, promotes solidarity, encourages charity to all, and is personally involved in all care.

His work is not to be a chief, or a leader. He's trying to act like the good Shepherd (Jn 10). Knowing his limitations, he delves into the attitude that San Pablo asks: *"We are ambassadors for Christ, as if God were appealing through us" (2 Co 5, 20). "We cause no one to stumble in anything, in order that no fault may be found with our ministry; on the contrary, in everything we commend ourselves as ministers of God, through much endurance, in afflictions, hardships, constraints, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, vigils, fasts; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, in a holy spirit, in unfeigned love, in truthful speech, in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness at the right and at the left; through glory and dishonor, insult and praise. We are treated as deceivers and yet are truthful; as unrecognized and yet acknowledged; as dying and behold we live; as chastised and yet not put to death; as sorrowful yet always rejoicing; as poor yet enriching many; as having nothing and yet possessing all things" (2 Co 6, 3-10).*

The Priest is the Man of the Animation of the Community.

In the community there will surely be other people with greater capacity for leadership, for kindness, for making the call. But he is the one who has been given the assignment of communion, promoting all vocations and all the charisms, highlighting in everyone the best for the good of the community. He has to be the creator of peace, coexistence, forgiveness, joining wills for the unique mission.

He has to ensure that the community moves forward without leaving anyone behind, with the pace appropriate for all. Because he knows that he alone cannot do it, he consults the people, neither is in communion with the Bishop and other priests, because he knows that the mission is not his nor is he who has invented it. He prays and prays much.

He is aware of the fact that he is not who should do it all, but he entrusts, delegates, encourages all those who collaborate for the growth of the community and its mission.

He feels the assignment made to Peter, as a personal call: "Feed my sheep" (Jn 21, 15-17).

Thanking for the Gift of Priesthood

This ministry is not a profession or a career to which one can aspire. It is a gift of God that has chosen us, not because of our merits, but by his own free will.

In front of such a gift and responsibility, we can only respond with availability, gratitude, humility, asking for help.

You, Lord, better than anyone else knows that I am not worthy of this ministry. You know why you have chosen me. I can only say thank you and help me.

A SEPARATE CASE: THE MAN WITH HIS HEART IN THE SKY AND HIS FEET ON THE GROUND¹⁴⁸.

RALLIES. To fill a rally, politicians make million advertising efforts. They offer their leaders, surround them with music, they flank them with pretty women... There, in giant screens, they promise them "down with prices and up with salaries, up with freedom, up with all".

STADIUMS. To fill a stadium they use a whole world of emotional, rivalry, speed, betting and fans that appear every night on television in all the houses.

MASSES. Every Sunday, from two thousand years ago, in the small towns and large cities, some clumsy men, even in bad mood, unknown gray men, mount a small ceremony always the same, say the same and known things, demanding. They have not paid advertising. They opened the door and waited.

Meetings bring together 5% of the population, stadiums 19% and masses 38%. Why? Who is that gray and anonymous man, muttering the same song with four candles, sometimes with only two, and who can beat so many famous?

THE LAST. In this village there was life. Young men who sang, children on the role of the plaza, women speaking by the window. Now there is only a neighboring ghost with a confused dog. The young men already left. Then, little by little, everyone left. They were already gone, the pharmacist, the physician, shortly after the shopkeeper. Without children who were being born, the teacher went away. The last to leave was the pastor. He occasionally comes to visit the castaways. When the bell went silent, the village died. What was this man doing, he was the soul of everything?

WHAT HE DOES. Accompanying the people at their best moments: a couple is born to love and there he is. He places flowers, plays music, celebrates a ceremony, he puts words that delve deep, digging in the meaning. A son will be born and he will tell them that everything is fine. He will say it like no one else, until all of them joyfully become aware. The newborn child will appear with all of its importance. Because he has been able to state it clearly.

Joining people in their worst moments. In bewilderment of an agony or a death, he goes and puts hope and opens the horizon. He ensures that Life goes on, everyone needs to hear it. He was there during the disease and when this loneliness or lack of love or betrayal that was so unexpected. At times of doubts he is giving strength. In the sorrow or the question of a girl to whom no one wanted or knew how to respond.

¹⁴⁸ Taken, with some changes to update and simplify it, from Enrique Iniesta, Piarist.

HIS FRIENDS. Nobody takes into consideration children, the old ones, the fools, the poor, the sick, because they are a burden or because they have no vote or because they are not beautiful or useful, or comfortable. They, those useless, are his friends, his faithful. And he is faithful to them.

HE IS. He has something of a physician, another bit of an educator, a pinch of mother or psychologist, illusionist, manager, attorney of already lost causes, and a little bit of a poet, ecologist, and marginal. He is a specialist in humanity, counseling-from-always-to-always and the most human.

IT IS FOR FREE. Is there still someone who does something for free? That man is the continuity of idealism and fantasy. He does what nobody else will do, even though everyone would like to be able to do it.

WHERE. He is around there tucked into stunning failures, always at the top, of course. He is there, on the other side of the world: by encouraging people of Granada, educating the Japanese on computer sciences or Lapps with their seals; among people from different nationalities and wearing different clothes. He can be there with you, to explain algebra to you or just smiling.

Others like him or He, himself, will walk through the United States saying no to the President or in Central America fighting for the Indians when people step on them or researching biochemistry, poems or history or economics or galaxies.

WHERE. He came from amongst you. He was not born from the marriage of a cloud with a cherub. He is from your own star and your very flesh, the guy. His parents were left without him, even before the others. When the boy went away he was quite sexy and promised much. His brothers went out after him, everyone with his wife to live another adventure. Now, his parents know that he is more theirs, the freest and the most faithful. The one who returns every summer or at every trouble or every time without failing the one who is always ready.

THE PRICE. Their children are not. They were a project. You, you and those others took their place. His children are the price that he paid.

THE SEX. So much he bought that he had to pay it all together. It was an investment to this risk. There is no possible rebate. For such a revolutionary life, such pro rata price. It is true that this issue is complicated during the young age.

FREE. That is why he is free. He is blatantly free. Completely free, ultimately free. The most happy, as no one else is free and for this reason, feared, fearsomely free. It is normal, neither current nor vulgar. Where he puts the eye, he puts the bullet. He is the creator of spaces, environments, chances of freedom for others.

INSIDE. Among such fairy tale, such appearance and marketing, in the midst of so many fixed tales, he has arranged his life in another manner. Living silence, solitude, the heart and the idea. It is unprecedented: in these times closing, thought, poverty and various other absurdities.

IN THE MIDDLE. He has a book, even if he has others. It is not a fascicle of serial scams: it is the Gospel. He understands it as much as he practices it. If one repeats the life of its protagonist, he suddenly says what no other manages to decipher. "Leave what you have, follow me and

you will find your treasure." For others, a few words, for him, the explanation of his own life. Jesus Christ.

Twelve, seventy, two hundred... That was the progression of those who saw him living by their side stayed with Him. Not all died on the cross at his side. Their names were Peter, John, and James. Their names accompany the name more loved and named among the names of men for more than two thousand years.

TO KNOW HIM. Don't walk beside him with the vulgar opinion in your eyes. Go live with him for a while. Watch him. Watch how he lives and how he does his accounts. Live with him his troubles, his loneliness and his mess.

You'll see how many are calling him on his phone that does not stop and a door that is always ringing too. Know him directly. So you can compare. You can see "what serves a man gaining the whole world if he loses his life". You will see that "sell everything you have to buy that field".

58. At the Service of a Better Church

When we present the mission of the Pious Schools, we say that it is to "*evangelize educating children from early childhood and young people, especially the poor, with the integration of faith and culture (Piety and Letters) to renew the Church and transform society according to the values of the Gospel, creating Fraternity*"¹⁴⁹.

The Piarist ministry has much to do with providing service to the Church, to make it better, more faithful to its Lord. The Pious Schools are at the service of a better Church.

Piarist Contributions to our Church

When there is a strong Church entity, there is a risk that from outside it can appear to be more interested in itself than in its assignment, and the Church that is sending it. Internally we can also forget that with the comings and goings of every day, we not only belong and represent the Church, but that the renewal of our Church is one of the elements of our Piarist mission.

Let's take a moment to become aware of what we are doing institutionally, as Pious Schools, and to encourage us to continue along this path.

The intention at this time is not to exhaust the contributions, but highlight some that may be most relevant to an ecclesial renewal. That is why we will not quote now the main contribution of the life given to God and to the Church that so many Piarists have given, nor the ministerial service as priests in many of them, or some more personal contributions of great importance in the history.

1. Christian Education and Ministerial Attitude of Educators

It is necessary to herein quote what is most characteristic of our Piarist Ministry: education of children and youth, particularly the poor. Education for all, was at a moment a real revolution that contrasted with the thought and action of that epoch. It also is a new and crucial contribution recognizing the work of the teacher as a vital and very worthy ministry. Today both of these aspects are still a key element for the ecclesial renewal: Christian education and

¹⁴⁹ Taken from the web site <http://www.escolapios.net/es-ES/Inicio.aspx>

the ministerial mood of educators. Here, we Piarists, have contributed much along our four centuries of history, with the word, and above all, with our work.

2. The Piarist Christian Community

We, Piarists, have for a while believed that our intuition is that all of our schools and works must have a Piarist Christian community. The educational community is not enough to safeguard Christian identity. Today only the religious community is not enough, sometimes it is not present in the school or work, because it does not make room to accommodate others who can contribute much. It is necessary to have a Christian community with a clear Piarist identity that it is subject to the mission, sign of the message that we propose and offer of ecclesial inclusion for young people, families, educators, employees and environment.

Getting the Piarist schools and works to also be living communities is an excellent contribution for the Church because they strengthen a new Christian core that renews the ecclesial subject. It provides a great service to the mission entrusted by the Church itself and because it is the quarry of Christian vocations of all kinds that a school of these characteristics can provide.

3. The Participation and Involvement of the Laity

The role of the laity has been pivotal in the history of the Church and is an urgent call since the Second Vatican Council insisted on the strengthening of the People of God.

The Pious Schools throughout their history have given, and is still giving the word and the possibility of creating links in different ways. Institutional betting for the laity took a big step in the General Chapter of 1997 and, since then, it has been a reference for other religious congregations and Church bodies.

The Piarist Christian community that we have just mentioned, the modalities of participation in the Pious Schools, training as Christian and Piarist educators, Piarist Fraternities, some perseverant community experiences, the ministries conferred also to lay people, sending and assignments for certain services, vocational diversity that fits in the Pious Schools (with religious life, lay Piarist, Fraternity, ministries), are some of the interesting Piarist contributions to the Church and to our world.

*"The evangelizing work of the laity is changing ecclesial life"*¹⁵⁰. Certainly the laity is changing the life of the Pious Schools; thereby, also makes their contribution to the improvement of our Church.

4. The Pastoral Action with Children and Young People

Piarist priority of pastoral action in our work today is also one of the great contributions to our Church.

Schools are privileged places for the evangelization because of their proximity to the children, youth and families. The continuity throughout the years of studies, and even later, as well as continuity of educational efforts that come together at a school in the strictly educational field, in the additional academic, in the family, and in the environment are due to the ease of finding reference models in the wide diversity that enables a school. The possibility of offering appropriate and different experiences to the different moments of life is because of the human resources and spaces that it can offer.

¹⁵⁰ John Paul II. "Redemptoris missio, on the permanent validity of the missionary mandate", no. 2. 1990.

A Piarist school that pastorally works with the key elements of process and vocation provides a service to the renovation of the Church. It is our contribution to the new evangelization.

5. The Presence and Action with the Poorest

The Piarist preference for children, for the needy, is another major contribution to the current renewal of our Church. Today and always they are necessary credible signs of God's merciful love for the last ones. We, Piarists make of them our brand and our hallmark. We need to continue growing in works and our presence amongst the poorest in the world.

There are obviously many more actions that we carry out to improve our Church, to renew it, to make it closer to children and young people. It is good to stand out and be aware of any of these issues.

What is my Contribution?

This chapter can not only serve for awareness purposes. It must also be a call of encouragement to expand, to improve what is in our hand.

The most important is, undoubtedly, a life true to the Lord, devoted to those who are near me and need me. Trying to be better every day, taking care of my vocation, approaching the Lord who will give me the necessary strength, requiring that I, do everything that I can do, these are fundamental tasks.

The important contribution is also acting in community, support the project along with the Church and the Pious Schools grow in communion and in availability, have the spirit to create a good brotherhood and environment, place the common good before my own good.

I place my life at stake to be able to offer what is in my hands, whether little or much. That is what You are asking me, Lord, nothing more or nothing less.

THE FOOT OF THE CHURCH¹⁵¹

Saint Paul compared the human body with the body of Christ: a great body full of perfections; a palace of the thousand wonders that we all admire. Few of us think, however, of the modest feet, humble, hidden, but so necessary: the feet of the tired tourist, looking at landscapes or visiting monuments; the feet of the pilgrim, meditating in his steps, praying along the way; those of the housewife, charged with the purchase; the fun-loving feet during party nights.

They never see anything, nor enjoy anything; however, they are loaded daily with the weight and the passing of time.

There are many people in the Body of Christ: they are the good Christians, silent and anonymous; they are simple people, with a hidden faith; they are the patients who suffer with the crucified Lord; the elders who live from their long hope and prayers; they are the nuns and monks, who have burned their lives as the lamp of the Tabernacle, to give light to the world from the shadows and silence.

¹⁵¹ Alberto Iniesta (Bishop emeritus of Madrid) in Vida Nueva n. 2028, February 1996.

Nobody sees them, but they are carrying the weight of the Church. When they reach Home, the House of the Father, these worn feet will receive a bath and a gentle caress of love and gratitude from the One who washed the feet of his poor disciples.

DIBUJO

A Saint... I think I am not a bad person, but I do not have much time to think it over...

I work by teaching, although we should say that we are offering something else, besides knowledge. We want to achieve the integral formation of young children.

XIII. AT THE SERVICE OF INTEGRAL EDUCATION

"Therefore, faithful to the founding charism and inspired by the love of Christ through religious profession carried out in the Piarist family, we spend our whole life at the service of our brothers, and, following the example of our Holy Founder, we care for the integral formation of children".
(Constitutions 12)

59. Integral Education Means, Above all, Full Time

We, Piarists, feel committed to the integral formation of children as stated in our Constitutions as well as the documents of our Schools.

What do we mean by integral education? It is certainly a very ambitious goal that, if it is indeed what guides us in our educational action, indicates a type of very demanding education... for educators and for the educational institution!

Integral Education Means Addressing all of the People's Dimensions

The first thing we think about integral education is the training of all and each of the dimensions of the person.

What are all of these dimensions? Perhaps we have a problem if we have to list them. In the end, our goal is to have the ideal person, following the model that we have mentally created.

The current Spanish legislation speaks about eight competencies:

- communication in the official language and foreign languages
- mathematics
- knowledge and interaction with the natural world
- information research and internet communication
- social and citizenship
- artistic and cultural
- learning to learn
- initiative and entrepreneurial spirit

Certainly this model of competencies is an interesting educational contribution, but are we talking about this with a comprehensive education?

In some Christian centers they add spiritual competence and they already feel compliant. With that, would it be sufficient?

It is true that other elements could be incorporated with these competencies, thus completing what could be the integral education. We should see how to fit the affective education, sociability, educational values, personality development, physical education, more intellectual faculties, Christian proposals, personal and vocational counseling... and a long etcetera.

This approach is not bad, and it can help us in our educational task, but perhaps the integral education is much more than that: we have to start from the situation where the child or the young person comes from, loving him with all our strength, trying to develop in him his potential, offering Christian proposals and all this in the midst of a society that we need for it to get closer to a world of brotherhood, in justice and in peace.

Integral Education

Integral education is reaching the child and the young person in all of their environments.

There is another way, complementary to the previous one, of planning an integral education. This is the one that manages to reach the child and young person in the different environments in which they move with a coherent educational proposal.

From this point of view, comprehensive education is the one jointly offered by the school, family, leisure and other spaces where the child or young person is within their environment. The task here is to get the different educational actors in a joint and complementary educational project. According to an African proverb, it wisely says: "*The whole tribe is needed to be able to educate a child.*"

Piarist education focuses on school and also tries to achieve a joint effort with families, and the same applies for sports coaches, catechists, monitors, those responsible for complementary activities...

Here we are facing an important and demanding challenge for the educational institution and each of the educators has to achieve this joint action.

The necessary leadership, the proposal for common objectives, the training plans that include elements shared by different educators, are some of the tasks required.

Integral Education

Integral education, above all, means full time.

We can still consider integral education from a third point of view, perhaps that brings together the previous ones: it's about offering a full time school, which excels the school spaces, the schooling age, and reaches students as well as families, teachers, educators and the environment in which the school is located.

It's about getting a center that attracts. A centre which offers solidarity, evangelizing and educational references. A centre geared to students and also to the families, the educators and the town or city in which it is located.

It becomes a real Christian school, a collective, with the goal of an integral Christian education, which entails a transforming goal for society itself. We are talking about a school that is a plurality of centers: the actual academic classes and school hours, having a close relationship with the pastoral offer that places it and extends a Christian education and leisure time. Together with other complements, like sports offerings that enrich the integrity of training and makes more reference to the school. At the same time, it involves religious, teachers, families, alumni, and the environment... all those who want to feel part of it and continue their own formation. All of this is related to concrete proposals of solidarity that reach classrooms and groups and the extra-school environment.

This also includes the Piarist integral education. The school is a full time center, where there always is life, always open for those who want to receive or share, who want to hang out, meet others, collaborate in specific projects, continue their education, celebrate their faith, lend their voluntary work...

An especially interesting tool to carry out this approach of integral education is education in leisure time for children, adolescents, young people and adults. If this comes to be implemented, it can trigger the rest that we have just mentioned.

Basically, the Scouting methodology offers an extraordinary tool when it is updated and is applied within the wider educational evangelization and integral education for all ages. It offers current and continued education, with natural groups, with an abundance of signs of the time and for personal growth, with games and the symbolic framework as the educational framework for children, with the promise and proposals for growth of adolescents and youth, with closeness to nature, the active education with the formator as the protagonist, living the faith that stems from life, with the group as an educative space to share and progress, etc.

Integral education: that is the challenge for Piarist education. Yours and mine, of all of those who form the Piarist presence. Let us finish listening to Calasanz: *"And since our Institute consists of the good education of children, this should push you above anything else so that it goes well, ensuring that all in one way or another serve the good of the children"* (Letter 3206)

TESTAMENT OF BADEN POWELL

Remember, it is the last time you will ever hear from me, so think it over.

I have had a most happy life and I want each one of you to have as happy a life too.

I believe that God put us in this jolly world to be happy and enjoy life. Happiness doesn't come from being rich, or merely from being successful in your career, nor by self-indulgence. One step towards happiness is to make yourself healthy and strong while you are a boy, so that you can be useful and you can enjoy life when you are a man.

Nature study will show you how God has made the world full of beautiful and wonderful things for you to enjoy. Be content with what you have and make the best of it. Look on the bright side of things instead of the gloomy one.

But the real way to achieve happiness is by giving happiness to other people. Try and leave this world a little bit better than when you found it and when your turn comes to die, you can die happy by feeling that at any rate you have not wasted your time but have done your best. "Be

Prepared" to live happy and to die happy- stick to your Scout Promise always when you have ceased to be a boy - and may God help you to do it.

60. The Educational Words

"*The words show who you want to be, while actions show who you are*". It is not bad stopping to think of the words that we usually use in education: it is minted wisdom and shows what we want to do. Then, we already know, because it is our lives and our actions that will show who and what we really are.

A List of Words to Think About

Following is a list of words to think about: they are very related to that comprehensive education that we want.

1. Teach (Latin: *insignire*). Is to place the signs, or markings on the path. It is to point to. We need to know where we want to go in order to have established guidelines. It is our task to place students to follow that path.
2. Learn (Latin: *apprehendere*). Is to grasp, capture the signs that help us, to accept them, to make them our own, to make them belong to us.
3. Educate (Latin: *educare* and *educere*). Is to guide, drive from outside and also bring out the best in the student. Perhaps both directions are the same: guide to get out all of the possibilities. "*Educating a child is not teaching him something that he didn't know, but making of him someone who did not exist*".
4. Educator. Who educates, who leads by promoting discovery of what is inside the student.
5. Professor. Who professes, who expresses his convictions. The connotation can lead us to join the teacher with knowledge, but etymologically it is more related to convictions, which mark the life and leads to actions.
6. Tutor. Who makes you be yourself. The one who accompanies, who makes you different from him so that you may be yourself, the one who will help you to develop your personality, your vocation...
7. Teacher (Latin: *magister*). Together with magisterial, the one who makes you be more. Who helps you to grow, to be more. Teaching is a ministry, a service, of someone who becomes less for you to be more, who gives his life to give you life.
8. Student (Latin: *alumnus*). Who is without light, which has to be lighted, fed?
9. Disciple. Who is in the process of learning from the teacher, who teaches.
10. Discipline. Related to disciple, having an attitude to learn. Does someone not like this word or does not know what it means?
11. Doctrine, indoctrinate. Doctrine is a coherent set of instructions used for teaching. In today's world it has negative connotation: is it maybe because we are not interested in coherence?
12. Child . In Latin, in-fants, who cannot speak. This word already marks the educational direction: teaching to talk, giving the word.
13. Adolescent. Who still lacks something, something that is still missing. He needs to continue achieving for himself.

14. Formation. Action of taking form, shape. Process for getting fit, includes articulation of many attitudes: form, information, conform, reform, transform... It is a long process and of course, not only reduced to the intellectual.
15. Instruction. Create an interior structure, arrange the person, develop how to reason, perceive, feel, live.
16. School. Place for listening. It must be because they say things that are worth listening.
17. Educational Center. Landmark, which convenes, which has a shaft in lathe to which there are more elements.
18. Christian school, college, collective. A group of people organized around a project, a program.
19. Class: Group with a specific assignment or objective.
20. Matter. It comes from *mater*, origin. It is convenient that at school people study many matters, this is at the bottom of various realities.
21. Subject (Spanish: *asignatura*). From *ad-signum*, it brings us closer to what makes sense, what means something. Do not stay in the external, but approach its depth.
22. Course curriculum. Tour or itinerary that will enable a person in training to learn the process and key elements.
23. Know (Latin: *sapere*). It has two properties, to have and to know wisdom and having flavor, to taste and certainly both aspects go together: "the one who can taste, knows" (Spanish: "el que sabe, sabe").
24. Intelligence. Understanding (Latin: *intelligere*) and also of "*intus* (among) *legere*": read between the lines, learn to read reality, capturing the important part of what we have before us.
25. Pro-blem. It is a definition (a fact) that launches us somewhere. Just as emblem is one slogan in another, a hieroglyph, one sign in another. Posing problems is a good system of education.
26. Lesson. Action of reading (Latin: *legere*). Attention: read the words and books, and learn reality.
27. Correct. Is to bind together (Latin: *corrigere*), compare what we do, agree amongst ourselves.
28. Examine. Is to look inside from the outside, creating minds from the outside to see if the inside is solid.
29. Explain. It comes from folding (Latin: *explanare*), sorting, in this case from the outside. Besides explaining, it should imply (from within), complicate, apply and allow be replicating, supplicating or appealing.
30. Raise (Spanish: *criar*). It has much to do with creating (in Spanish: *crear*) and perhaps also with believing (in Spanish: *creer*), with trust. This means to accompany growth.
31. And many more: approve and suspend, dialogue (from *logos*, word, wisdom)...

We do not pretend to complete the entire semantic field, but that will allow us to understand, through the use of some educational terms, the number of aspects that should be considered in a good education, in quality education.

We ended up with a phrase from our Constitutions: "*This educational mission has as its aim the integral perfection of man in such a way that our students may love and search for the truth, and, as authentic builders of the Kingdom of God, they may work in building a more humane world, and their way of life should be consistent with the faith they profess. Thus, by growing in greater*

freedom every day, they may complete the happy course of their lives and reach everlasting salvation"¹⁵².

I WANT TO GET OUT OF YOU THE BEST IN YOU¹⁵³

I want to turn on stars in your sky, I want to sow songs on your way;
put light in your nights, fire in your life, and dreams in your look; planting concerns...
Give you hunger and thirst for things above, climbing higher is always your destiny,
putting peace and joy, giving you a hand, and help you to walk, sowing concerns...
Forgive me, if sometimes, awkwardly, I do not seek in you the best that I see in you.
I am at your service, I just want to help and not to interfere.
I want with all my soul to GET OUT OF YOU... THE BEST IN YOU

HOW TO EDUCATE¹⁵⁴

Make disciples, not teachers; make persons, not slaves; make walkers, not people seated;
make servers, not bosses. Make brothers.

Make believers, not people who just believe in themselves; make seekers of truth, not
teachers of certainties; make creators, not plagiarists; make citizens, not foreigners. Make
brothers.

Make poets, not pragmatic; make people with dreams and memory, not titles, boxes and
maps; make risky people, not spectators. Make brothers.

Make planters, not collectors; make artists, not soldiers; make witnesses, not inquisitors; make
friends of roads, not enemies. Make brothers.

Make people for the encounter, with depths of tenderness, with promises and hopes, with
presence and patience, with mission and deliverables. Make brothers.

Make disciples of mine; give them what I have given you; unload their shoulders and feel
brothers.

61. My Great Discoveries in the Piarist Mission

Coming close to the end of this journey, I would like to share with you a series of discoveries relating to the mission that I have lived very closely in my years in the Piarist Ministry, all of them around the school of Bilbao.

I am aware that it is only one amongst many other stories that could be told on this matter; however, I prefer to do it as experience in the first person. So with fear and shivers, I dare to narrate.

In the reading of my own life, I consider these discoveries as milestones with which the Lord has been driving me to carry out his desire concerning the mission entrusted to me. I also

¹⁵² Constitutions 92.

¹⁵³ Inspired by Pedro Salinas' poem. "Perdóname por ir así buscándote..."

¹⁵⁴ Lic. Pepe Betanzos, University Cristóbal Colón of Veracruz.

believe that they have been communitarian discoveries, that we have been doing together while we attempted to reconcile fidelity with the heritage received as a result of the great work of many Piarist religious and laity along the centuries, with the creativity that each moment was demanding. The road has not been easy, but fruit of much reflection, quite a lot of prayer, different attempts and not always positive, plenty of time with comings and goings, sometimes tensions, hard work and, above all, many dear faces. I am convinced that they were not inventions of ours, that they have been discoveries of something that the Lord was placing in our path.

I think that it is good to gratefully acknowledge the luck I've had, that we have had. I believe that it is just and righteous to let others know, in case it could be worthy to other people under other circumstances. I start with a more personal narration and shortly thereafter I will try to summarize everything in five discoveries that I consider are the most important.

My Personal History of Discoveries

I was a student in a Piarist school ever since I was five years old. I was formed in it, they accompanied me and I have excellent memories of many educators and, above all, Piarist. It is hard for me to mention some of them because I know that I will forget others, but I will mention Lekun, Inocencio, Juanjo, Pedro, Miguel... and a long etcetera.

Ever since I was a kid, I was impressed, among many positive things, by the various fields of activities that were present at the school, each one with a religious in charge. It was the world of sports, the cinema of the weekends, the scouting group, the revision of life group, the club of mountaineers, the school magazine, the cine forum, the confraternity, each morning's Mass and the one on Saturday... It was a school with plenty of life, although each space was autonomous, even sometimes with a certain rivalry.

As a young Piarist, during my civil studies and theology, as I was learning to enter the school and pastoral life, as a monitor of groups, with some experiences in courses, etc. I felt that in this new situation of greater closeness and involvement, I saw again that it was a very active school, with many educational offerings and also a fragmented school with plots not too well related to each other.

In my pastoral apprenticeship I was fortunate to meet different styles, each one with a vast richness. The greatest discovery, in my opinion, came from the synthesis of the education in leisure time of scouting on the one hand, with the intention of catechesis and religious training on the other. The pastoral action multiplies when both elements are joined together from a project and teams that sustain it over time.

Once ordained as a priest and completed my studies, I was appointed Coordinator of the School of Ministry: an important responsibility in a centre with a tradition of good responsible persons for pastoral care, back in 1982. The pastoral in the school was good in terms of religious training, celebrations and prayers, retreats, accompaniment... The challenge of that time was to give continuity to the groups after the school ages. For this purpose it was necessary to simultaneously address several aspects: presenting an interesting offer for young already ex-alumni and adults; increasing the number of students in groups by improving the invitation; caring for the work of teams responsible for running and their training (including their membership in the groups that they promote); working with families to create the environment with their support and involvement, together with the extra-academic school

action; introducing more forcefully in the own school and in groups some actions of solidarity... The presence of a young Piarist formation House was a great help because of the help and the dedication from some of them, as well as their formators.

That grew rapidly and it was necessary to give an entity to this whole movement. In 1985 the Itaka Association was born to give identity to so many people that were part of groups of young people and adults: soon there were not only former students, because they also approached other people, sometimes convened by the members of the groups themselves. An association with a name different of the one of the school allowed initiating actions of solidarity and other (the Gesture for Peace, collaboration with residences of institutionalized children, school of educators, etc.). Also an association made possible the access to public subsidies that will allow a few years later to have the first hired people in pastoral and social action. A new Piarist reality was born.

This new reality in a school, forming part of it but at the same time being autonomous, means a dialectic which we had to adjust. It is also a moment of separation between the school and the community that resides in it. There were several communities in Bilbao, it was good to separate the duties of the Principal and the Rector. These were times of significant changes. Key issues were surfacing: whether the Piarist mission reaches the ex-alumni and families or must we focus only on school age; whether it is necessary to provide alumni and families something beyond a sentimental school link; whether we wanted to strongly introduce social issues.

In 1988 I was appointed Principal of the school. Direction thus joins the pastoral and, with it, a decisive step is given to combine the school education project with the extra-academic in a single Piarist mission project. It is about to make a full time educational, evangelizing and solidarity Center: the doors were open from early morning until late in the afternoon, including weekends and vacation times; with multiple educational, pastoral, leisure activities, sport, complementary; for everyone, students, former students, families, teachers and school staff, with nearby people.

With all of this, the Piarist mission was being consolidated, the communities of Itaka were born in 1991, as an already adult point of arrival of catechumenate group processes for a while, and with the unmistakable desire to walk together with the Piarist. This provides guidance to the pastoral that finds a horizon to move toward, and offers life groups to those responsible for the processes of previous stages. This will multiply the Piarist action: some members of these communities become teachers in the school (or being teachers come into the communities); new education, evangelization and social projects (which include the presence in the San Francisco area and work as NGO) are started.

In 1995, another step is taken. A member of communities was appointed Academic Director while I remained as Principal (still in a not too well defined separation of figures) and Provincial Assistant for the evangelizing mission. It is a time of great results: we start the process of discernment so that the communities of Itaka constitute the Piarist Fraternity (1996); a community of joint life of religious with lay people gets underway, which today is still going on; the first lay people are sent to Venezuela for three years, to share life and mission over there; the opening of the first homes takes place, etc.

Elsewhere in the Province similar experiences are emerging, richer in some respects, in Pamplona, Vitoria, in Tolosa, in Tafalla... and also in other demarcations. This step for greater coordination with the Province represents another qualitative leap in the mission. Implementation of the Secretariat of Schools, very inspired by the rich experience of Catalonia, will help also a more shared work amongst all.

In 2001, there is another decisive step with the Constitution of the Itaka – Piarist Foundation. The Province of Vasconia and the Itaka Fraternity create an entity of joint Piarist mission. In it converges the various entities that had built up around the Itaka Association (scouting group, the school of educators, the one that catered to children in residence, the presence in the neighborhood of San Francisco, etc.). In the Centre and as a priority project is the pastoral action with the educational and pastoral groups. This joint platform opens a path of great possibilities.

Very soon the Itaka - Piarist Foundation will accommodate Fraternities and pastoral realities of the different places of the Province, first from Vasconia, and from 2005 elsewhere: Andalusia, Aragon, Valencia, Venezuela, Brazil, Bolivia, Cameroon, India, Philippines...

At the same time the concept of "Piarist presence" takes shape which tries to combine the Piarist mission and persons and entities that drive it to obtain its optimization. In many places there is a religious community, perhaps some Fraternity, many lay people linked to Piarist, some school, perhaps a parish or worship Center, any work of non-formal education... To advance in all these areas in a coordinated manner would be very good for Piarist identity, for inviting new people to this Piarist life and mission, for the best achievement of fruits of our mission. This will require a person who coordinates with a team and a project of presence. The subject and soul of it all will be the "Piarist Christian Community", those people who usually gather around the Eucharist and who feel called to assume their own Piarist mission.

This leads to the creation of the Province of the Commission for Mission in 2005 to reflect on its future help the growth of the Piarist subject, coordinate and promote Piarist presences, as well as the two great pillars of the mission: schools with their secretariat and the Itaka - Piarist Foundation with its Executive Committee, now led by people from the Fraternity under the supervision of this Committee and the Provincial Congregation.

Fr. General appointed me as his General Delegate in 2009 for the charismatic integration and shared mission. It's about boosting these lines of the Order, especially with the setting up of the General Fraternity (2011) and the development of all of its potential, the Calasanz Movement (2012), the accompaniment towards the establishment of new Fraternities and the implementation of shared mission teams, and of course, to continue with the Itaka - Piarist Foundation, these were major challenges for the coming years.

Today, as I look back, I see the hand of God in the journey and so many people who have made it possible, and for this, I need to give thanks to God and to all.

Great Discoveries to Highlight

Based on this experience I highlight the following great discoveries which, as often happens with gifts from God, can also perhaps occur in other places. Following is a summary of this:

1. A good pastoral work is fundamental for a good Piarist school

When an evangelizing action is strongly present in a Piarist school, this school improves a lot. It improves in Piarist and Christian identity, in educational offerings, in vocational announcement, in having more partners, in ecclesial and social presence.

Good religious training, celebrations and maintained religious experiences, the pastoral atmosphere of the Centre, education in values according to the Gospel, a few days a year of retreat, the offer of extra-academic group processes as well as concrete runways of solidarity, are key initiatives for a Piarist school. All of this is carried out as a team, with a shared project and sustained over time.

2. It is not the same to have a school with pastoral care as a school with pastoral and evangelizing key elements.

Developing many and good pastoral actions is very important, but not sufficient. A Piarist school must be based on evangelizing and pastoral key element. This is its identity and its heart. They are not initiatives in a broad educational program: they are the *raison d'être* of the school. The school is organized around the evangelization: it is what gives tone to others, as well as fundamental elements.

So the direction of the school has to be pastoral. It can be done in different ways, but this is a key element.

3. A school with pastoral key elements needs to be a full time Center

A school with these characteristics must be full time and aimed at all ages and audiences. Precisely here is where we get the necessary synergy to reap results. The challenge is to be a reference center, a desired meeting place for students, families, staff, nearby people, collaborators... in the three important Piarist areas of evangelization, education, and social transformation.

4. The School can be the center, but needs another identity for the continuity of the processes

The school is the centre of reference, of meeting, but another identity is needed for people who are approaching: it may be the Piarist Christian Community, the religious Order, Fraternity, and the Association where they feel protagonists...

Other spaces are needed to accommodate the participation and involvement of all persons. It is also necessary that all go together in a shared Piarist project.

5. A Piarist school makes Piarist offers

Creativity helps us imagine the best that we can do. However, in a Piarist school we cannot lack Piarist offers for a vocation to Piarist religious life and Fraternity, to shared mission and collaboration, to the Piarist Christian community, to the Calasanz Movement, to activities that will be promoted by the Demarcation, the Order and the Church.

It is necessary to overcome individualisms of each one, of our school, of our own demarcation, to remind us again that we are messengers of a Single Lord.

While all of this is going on, we facilitate God's action, or at least, so I think and live.

6. The great union between community and mission.

The mission is to convene to the following of Jesus in Church, in community. The *raison d'être* of all community and the Church is mission. We cannot separate life and work, being and doing, commitment and faith... The more one is committed to mission, the more he discovers the need for training and prayer: surprisingly, it is not always the same in the other sense.

Where we work in solidarity and Christian education, we are calling to collaborate and be a part of the Pious Schools. When people are responding and we approach them, we are creating spaces and shared communities, we are discovering that the diversity of people, of vocations, charisms, personal styles, then each of us gets richer in his own vocation, and the mission that has called us improves a lot.

When sharing reflection, mission, prayer and community with many laymen, I have come out winning in my own vocation as a Christian, religious, priest and Piarist. I think that I have also won all the people, the community, the Pious Schools and its mission.

SEEING AND NOT SEEING

An Abbot of a monastery was very concerned: "There are many who enter the novitiate, but also many that, after some time, leave it. After a few years, there are very few who remain".

One day, while meditating, he saw a scene that lit him up completely: the fox hunt. The poor animal ran through a field. It was chased by a pack of dogs, and behind, on horseback, the hunters. The fox ran and ran, and dogs, after it, barked fast trying to get it.

The Abbot noted that, after a while, just a couple of dogs were continuing the race; the rest abandoned the chase and he saw them, here and there, resting or entertained while sniffing.

When the hunt was over, the Abbot asked one of the hunters: "how come those two dogs, followed the fox until the end, when most had left?"

The hunter smiled, and without thinking replied: "You see, father, at first all dogs run and bark, but most haven't even seen the fox, just running in the middle of the hubbub. It is those who indeed have seen the fox that continue until the end."

DIBUJO

Many institutions have been born from the charism of Calasanz: Piarist Sisters, Calasanctian Sisters of the Divine Shepherdess, Calasanctian Sisters of Florence, Sisters of the Christian Schools, Sisters of St. Joseph Calasanz, Calasanctian Missionaries of Jesus, Mary and Joseph...

Father Cavanis of Venice, the Pious Workers of Wien, the Ilmon David Fathers of Marseilles, the Fathers of the Sacred Heart of Verona...

Those who announced that the Good School of Joseph would not survive its Founder were not very accurate...

Thanks be to God!

XIV. BUILDING THE PIOUS SCHOOLS EVERY DAY

*"As persons who live in society, we accept the law as a means of expressing love.
We follow principles which safeguard the rights of the human person,
as well as the laws of the Church, and our Constitutions and Rules.
These Constitutions and Rules, the sign of our consecration,
will undoubtedly help us walk more securely along the path of our vocation,
which is for the glory of God and the benefit of our neighbor".*
(Constitutions 13)

62. The Key Elements for the Future

We now ask about the keys that can help us to walk safer in the path of vocation, for praise to God and the usefulness of thy neighbor.

Every day, with our personal, community and institutional endeavors, we have to build the Pious Schools to give continuity to our history and to help keep us faithful to the challenges of the moment and the future.

Some keys remain over time because they are fundamental. The General Chapter of 2009 collected and defined them as general lines of action by grouping them into six major sections, with some concretions in each of them:

- Revitalization¹⁵⁵, consolidation and growth of the Order
- Fraternal life in community
- Piarist Ministry
- Vocation Ministry
- Initial Formation¹⁵⁶
- Laity

¹⁵⁵ Salutatio of Fr. General published in Ephemerides, March 2011.

¹⁵⁶ Salutatio of Fr. General published in Ephemerides, January 2011.

The General Congregation, with the support of the General Secretariats and always in connection with the Superiors of the demarcations, elaborates its programs and is developing actions to promote these keys for the future.

Among the many developed initiatives and works, they are noteworthy as key elements for the future:

- Progressive awareness of the need to work together in the Order.
- The new organization with creation of new Provinces, grouping of others.
- The plan for growth in new countries.
- Greater accompaniment of religious in their first years of ministry.
- The accompaniment of religious in their different life cycles.
- The design of the elements and indicators of Calasanzian identity in our works.
- The beginning of the Calasanz Movement (pastoral process also with youth).
- The promotion of the works of non-formal education.
- The various initiatives to promote Vocation Ministry.
- Care of plans for the initial formation of the religious.
- Boost of the vocational welcoming houses and the formation communities.
- The promotion and coordination of the Piarist Fraternities.

This list does not exhaust the actions being carried out at this time to continue to build day by day the Pious Schools, nor tries to collect all the key elements for the future; however, it can indeed be useful to point out some aspects which all of us Piarist must support.

Anyway, I think that by now we must highlight some fundamental options for the future of the Pious Schools. We will comment on them later; now we just list them:

- Bless always
- Work with well-planned and shared projects
- Strengthen the Piarist subject, the new Piarist “we” that is now taking shape, and particularly the Fraternity that is opening new and hopeful horizons
- Take advantage of the intuition and the reality of the Itaka – Piarist Foundation
- Advance in our Piarist community of friends of Jesus
- Keep watching passionately the Piarist mission

TEMPTATIONS AGAINST THE CHARISM¹⁵⁷

- + Secularization of the charism, forgetting that through it the Spirit guides us.
- + Automatic imitation of the ways in which we have been living the charism, forgetting the creative fidelity and the reading of the signs of the times.
- + Personal or group fears, removing the necessary boldness and the ability to speak with courage.
- + Accommodation and the weakness of religious life.

¹⁵⁷ Josep Miró and Miguel Ángel Asiain. “Vivir hoy el carisma de Calasanz”. ICCE. 2000. Page 172.

- + The lack of historical memory and contact with the charismatic beginnings that moves us away from the Calasanctian options.
- + Practical oblivion that the charism deepens, and updates with the time.

63. Always Bless

To keep building the Pious Schools of the future, we must continue our efforts, each of us to be better people, better Christians and better Piarist.

The way to do this is by placing ourselves a thousand times in the hands of the Lord, asking for his light and his strength, making our way by every day growing in joy, in service, and in love.

There are virtues that are a balm for the peaceful coexistence, which are collected in the history of the Church as counterpoints to the deadly sins: humility, generosity; chastity, patience, temperance, fraternal charity, diligence and zeal in the service of God. We could add compassion, non-violence... and always love.

Today, possibly always, banishing the backbiting and cultivate the "well-saying" has special importance. Instead of envy, gossip, speak evil of others, highlighting the negative, we must promote the "well – saying" of everyone and of everything.

Banish Speaking Evil of Others: Gossip and Envy¹⁵⁸

A wise man was visited by someone who stood up to speak evil of another friend of the wise man, and this one told him: *"After all of this time, you visit me to commit three felonies before me: first, trying that I hate a person that I love; second, making me worry about with your advices and making me lose serenity; and third, accusing yourself of slandering and gossiping".*

If everyone had the same attitude of the wise man, there would not be gossipers. For a person to speak evil of another, it is necessary to have someone who will listen. The one who hears, agrees and gives fuel is just as guilty as the one who speaks. As told in a comic way by Titus Martius Plauto (251-184 BC): *"Those who spread gossip and those who listen, all of them should be hung: the propagators by their tongue, and the listeners by their ears".*

The biblical message is very insistent on this issue, no doubt because of the importance that it has:

- *"Who wants to love life and enjoy happy days, must restrain his tongue from speaking evil and her lips from uttering deception"* (Ps 34, 12-13). A text repeated by Peter (1 Pe 3,10).
- *"Be not a witness against your neighbor without just cause, thus committing deceiveness with your lips"* (Pr 24, 28).
- *"Brothers, do not speak badly about each other."* (Jc 4, 11)
- *"Who, Lord, can stay in your tent? Who can live on your holy hill? He who tells the truth honestly and does not slander with his tongue, who does not defame the neighbor"* (Ps 15, 1-3).
- One of the commandments of the Decalogue prohibits specifically the false testimony (Ex 20,16; Dt 5, 20).

¹⁵⁸ Taken freely from <http://alpasarlashoras.blogspot.com.es/2010/07/maledicencia-el-pecado-del-que-no-se.html>

- *"Don't give false reports, do not become an accomplice of the wicked to witness in favor of an injustice" (Ex 23, 1).*
- *"Let your 'Yes' mean 'Yes,' and your 'No' mean 'No.' Anything more is from the evil one" (Mt 5, 37).*
- One of the features that the Bible gives the church leaders is that they should not be of "two tongues" (1 Tim 3, 8), "without bending", says another version, "which never miss their word". That is, honesty, transparency, so that they don't have to go giving explanations of something they have said about other people.

Backstabbing is a *"a kind of homicide"*¹⁵⁹, because the word freely assassinates the reputation of a person being covered by complete impunity.

*"In the absence of a brother we should not talk speak evil of him and defame him, even if we tell the truth. This would be slander"*¹⁶⁰. It's time to start talking about this sin, to stop it, otherwise it will continue destroying lives and hindering relations between people.

Unfortunately talking about evil people, gossip, and envy are present around us, even in communities and Christian environments. Building a future means to banish these behaviors with an active attitude like the one showed in the following story:

"A young disciple of Socrates comes to his house and says:

-Listen, teacher. A friend of yours was talking with malevolence about you...

-Wait! -Socrates interrupts him-. Did you already filter through the three grills what you are going to tell me?

-Three grills?

-Yes. The first is truth. Are you sure that what you want to tell me is absolutely true?

-No. I heard it from some neighbors.

-At least you've filtered it through the second grill, which is goodness. What you want to tell me is it good for anyone?

-No, actually, not. On the contrary...

-Oh, wow! The last grill is needed. Is it necessary to let me know what worries you so much?

-To tell the truth, no.

- Then - said the wise man smiling - if it is not true, nor good, nor necessary, bury it in oblivion".

Behind the gossip, idleness and envy usually stand. So you should tackle them from their inception.

How well would we do by answering when someone comes to us with a gossip! Or when we have the temptation to speak evil of others! If we place ourselves in a not "wrong - saying" campaign, it would be very good for us. Let's not forget that it is just as guilty the one who acts with backstabbing, as anyone who listens. Tell me how you speak and I will tell you who you are.

¹⁵⁹ St. Francis of Sales (1567-1622).

¹⁶⁰ Antiochus from the Monastery of Saba.

It should be noted, as an example, the damage that can be done in education when a family speaks evil of a teacher (or vice versa), when the school environment is bathed in gossip, when superficial and damaging criticism comes to the ears of children and young people... Words like those can damage the work of many people over a long time.

Always Bless, "Well - Said"

We always speak well of others, without being flattering or sticky, making effort to detect and highlight the positive aspects of people and situations.

It is not about forgetting the negative aspects, nor removing importance to good criticism that always acts with love, commitment to help changing the situation, and at the appropriate time and space. Then the criticism is fraternal correction being done and is also "well - saying" because you say good things.

*"No one speaks in our presence in the same way as in our absence"*¹⁶¹. I hope that when we talk about others we know to do so positively. Otherwise it is a contradiction to the lifestyle that we pretend to live.

We need to learn to speak well of others, to eliminate gossip, to overcome the envy. We need to train ourselves to do so. This story can stand as an example:

"They say that a group of sisters used to meet regularly to prepare and give clothes to the needy. However, they had the habit of speaking evil of others. They always had some reason to criticize or tell some gossip of any member of the Church or someone they knew. On the contrary, there was an old woman who always gave some positive feedback about all of the persons that they referred to. This used to bother the other ladies very much, because their words changed the atmosphere and they were no longer felt comfortable to keep talking.

One day they agreed and said:

-We have to talk about someone who does not have anything good.

-The devil! - said one of them excited, and all laughed with complicity.

So the next time they waited for the elderly woman to arrive and they began to talk about Satan. Each gave her opinion and expressed her annoyance with the more negative characteristics they could think of him. All looked through the corner of their eye at the old woman who was weaving, waiting to see whether she was going to say something, when suddenly she raised her head and said:

"-Have you realized how persevering the devil is?"

It is always possible to speak well of people, when we want as long as we change our mental attitude.

Our religious communities or the Fraternity, our groups, our work teams, our attitude and environment would be very different if the slogan was "well - saying" always. We would treat differently and better our students, our brothers and sisters. They could be the gyms to train and develop the muscle of the "well-saying". We would be happier.

¹⁶¹ Blaise Pascal (1623-1662).

I intend to, I propose to you, I invite you to propose to ourselves altogether, to banish the backstabbing and promote speaking well of others. By doing so, we also have to think well of others, try to understand them, place ourselves in their shoes. Many times I think that the greatness of God precisely lies in this: being so big and so good He is able to think and always speak well of you, of me, of us, because He loves us, even if He perfectly knows our sins and weaknesses.

A STYLE OF LIFE

I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship. Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.

By the grace given to me I tell everyone amongst you not to think of thyself more highly than one ought to think, but to think moderately, each according to the level of faith that God has apportioned. For as in one body we have many parts, and all the parts do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually parts of one another.

Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us exercise them: if prophecy, in proportion to the faith; if ministry, in ministering; if one is a teacher, in teaching; if one exhorts, in exhortation; if one contributes, in generosity; if one is over others, with diligence; if one performs acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

Let love be sincere; hate what is evil, hold on to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; anticipate one another in showing honor. Do not grow slack in zeal, be fervent in spirit, and serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, and persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the holy ones, exercise hospitality.

Bless those who persecute (you), bless and do not curse them.

Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Have the same regard for one another; do not be haughty but associate with the lowly; do not be wise in your own estimation. Do not repay anyone evil for evil; be concerned for what is noble in the sight of all. If possible, on your part, live at peace with all. Beloved, do not look for revenge but leave room for the wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." Rather, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head." Do not be conquered by evil but conquer evil with good. (Ro 12, 1-21).

64. Living and Working with Projects¹⁶²

A key element for the future of any organization is to work with projects shared by all who comprise that entity.

In this aspect, we have much to improve in our Piarist reality. Great work capacity and strong dedication are very weakened if a shared project is missing. A project needs a leader that encourages it, a team that is responsible and a detailed plan that defines it, marks objectives, steps, timetable and indicators for evaluation. These three elements are fundamental: If there is no plan, people do not know where to go and things will be done according to the person responsible for it or the people involved; if there is no team, the plan will depend on just one person and it will last as long as that person is there; if there is no a leader, the project will run the risk that each member of the team understands things in his own way and derail the plan. Leader, team and project are required to carry out any business that we want to undertake.

A project cannot be missing an analysis of reality, some clear goals, an itinerary and a periodic evaluation.

- It is necessary to begin with the starting point where we are: to do this, we need to know where we are, what do we need, what are the elements that we have...
- We need to clearly know what the goal is, with well-defined objectives so that they actually identify the direction.
- We need to identify a path with its steps, stages, and the needed means.
- With some regularity, we will have to stop to see if we are headed in the right direction, if we are moving or not, if we need to correct something... Indicators are useful for this.

These projects, since we begin to develop them and until we reach their completion, must always be performed by a team. It may be that someone has it in his head at first, but they will be weakened and with less future plans, if they are not shared at all times: in its preparation, in the definition of goals, establishing schedules and the time for evaluations.

Management systems tend to talk about mission (who we are, the moment where we stand), vision (where we want to go, what we want to achieve within the expected years), what specific objectives have we set to bring us closer to that vision (with different levels of specificity to reach the actions) and with a constant evaluation that allows continuous improvement.

In our Piarist areas we need to work with four types of projects.

The Personal Project

We need to ask ourselves periodically (it could be every year, or more clearly set if there is any major change in the situation) where are we in our vocation, what we would like to achieve, how to go forward...

Follow the steps of personally analyzing ourselves, setting some goals, seeing improvement and control points to see if we move forward... and by doing it in writing is already a breakthrough.

¹⁶² With this same title, the General Congregation presented a document to the Superiors of the demarcations encouraging to live and work on projects. It is worth knowing this letter and put it into practice.

The characteristics of our vocation, responsibilities that we have received, the contrast with the Gospel and the Constitutions, the revision of life, the believing-reading of reality, permanent formation, living and spiritual care, references and community plans, are references that can be used for the analysis of situation and to identify the necessary progress.

In this project, like any project, a responsible person is needed. This person is you. It is true that you can and you must put it in God's hands so that it is not your project, but God's plan for you; however, it is up to you to make it this way: the Lord has already called you regularly and continues to do so.

A team is also needed. It is true that you can consider the project as your own business and nobody else; but at least it will be good to share it with the Lord. It will also be very convenient to do so, to the extent possible, with the community or with a companion or a trusted person.

The Community Project

It is also very convenient for every community to have a community project. It can and should be largely the same as the one of other communities in the Demarcation, or the Fraternity. It will always have some specific aspects and the fact of writing it, sharing it, starting it, and reviewing it is always a help to the life and mission of the community.

The community project is more than a planning of activities with their corresponding schedules and calendar. It is, again, the result of the steps of every project: analyze how are our community and the people who form it, and what we want to see. Is it achievable? How are we going to do it and how to check that the community is moving along.

People who form the community, take care of the elderly or young, the mission we have been entrusted, the joint plans of the Province or the Order, the fundamental aspects of all communities (prayer, celebrations, sharing, formation...), will be elements entering into the analysis and development of the community project.

The Project of the Piarist Work

Each school, each Piarist work, also needs a shared project so that it can provide results.

It would be a disaster if the Head of a school were not aware of what the Pastoral Coordinator was doing, and that both were disconnected from those responsible for other areas of the school. Unfortunately situations like that sometimes occur.

We need a project that defines the goals, organization, processes that are put in place. So it makes possible the adult participation of all partners, the contribution of each for a known common good, the contrast of all the steps that are taken, its enrichment with a projection designed together.

Quality management models that facilitate working with projects are being applied at an increasing rate in the schools. Somehow we should do it in all Piarist works.

The Project of the Piarist Presence

The need for a coordinated and joint work of all the Piarist reality at a place is increasingly taking on more strength. Most of the time there are several entities involved: the religious community, the Piarist Fraternity, the school, the center of worship or parish more or less linked to the school, some work of non-formal education...

Each of these entities may have its own life and they should have their own project shared by those who participate in them; however, it would be much more helpful and enriching if we got a project that combines all of the Piarist realities within a locality.

We could better serve certain aspects that could hardly be achieved on a separate basis: offering a more Piarist involvement with the laity, enhancing the Piarist Christian Community, taking advantage of human or materials resources to help each other, growing on Piarist identity, having a more coherent presence in the local Church and the town or city, aligning more with the objectives of the demarcation, increasing the efficiency of pastoral work for vocations...

Once again and as in any project, that requires the presence of a coordinator, a team and a project. Of course, following the steps to analyze the situation, set goals, steps and evaluation indicators.

The results from the presence of a project are noticed very soon in the results of the mission, in the further identification and involvement of people who collaborate...

Living and Working with Projects

The dynamics established by living and working with projects is setting up our way of being and helps us to be more faithful and more effective in our Piarist mission.

We must remind ourselves one and a thousand times that we are servers of a great project, the one of Jesus, of the Kingdom of God, that in it we are collaborators. Therefore, generously and without any pretensions, we collaborate with all those who push for the coming of the Kingdom so expected.

PARABLE OF THE GEESE

When the geese migrate, they fly forming a "V". It was found that when each bird flaps its wings, it produces a movement in the air that helps the bird that goes behind it. Flying in "V" the full flock increases at least 71% more power than if each bird flew alone.

Whenever a goose falls out of formation, it immediately feels the air resistance, it realizes the difficulty of doing it alone and quickly returns to its place to benefit from the power of the partner going ahead.

When the leader of the geese gets tired, it moves to one of the places behind it and another goose takes its place. The geese that fly behind croak to encourage those who go ahead to maintain the speed.

When a goose gets sick or wounded by shot and leaves the formation, other two geese leave the flock and come to its aid and protection. They accompany it until it is again able to fly or until it dies, and only then will the two companions return to their flock or join another group.

65. Boosting the Piarist Fraternities

The Piarist Fraternity is a commitment of the Order since 1988. Then, already in the presentation of the document concerning it, appeared several considerations from Fr. General, Josep M. Balcells, where he stated:

- "Lay people time" in the Pious Schools is a gift offered to our Order.
- We have the right to "re-adapt" the Pious Schools for our present and future that belongs to God. Calasanz said: *"give the habit only to people who are very apropos for founders"*¹⁶³.
- We wholeheartedly welcome and open our house, spirituality with charism to those who identify themselves with it, and feel a new and exciting Fraternity, which means opening to fresh newcomers. They are brethren given by the Spirit.
- Welcome to your home those who you feel in the Pious Schools, as if it was in your own home! Welcome to the Pious Schools those who wholeheartedly already feel Piarist!
- This "Fraternity of the Pious Schools" is born from the heart of Calasanz. Many are those who through the path traveled by Calasanz are trying to follow a similar path that will conduct them to the heart of Christ, Teacher and Shepherd.
- Thus, officially I constitute the «Fraternity of the Pious Schools», wishing at the same time a revival of the ecclesial ministry of Christian education among parents, teachers, alumni, students and friends in full communion with the Calasanctian charism.

The first Fraternities were born in 1991, more so after 2001, when more were arising and coming into relationships with each other, sharing elements of formation, accompanying each other and many of them becoming involved in this joint project that represents the Itaka - Piarist Foundation.

The General Congregation was officially constituted in 2011. The General Fraternity appointed a provisional Council to accompany the existing Fraternities, intervene in the process of creation of new ones and prepare the first general Assembly of the Fraternity.

It's been 20 years since the beginning of the first Fraternity until the official launching of the General Fraternity! During this time there has been an interesting reflection, full of life and experience. All this has contributed strongly to the revitalization of the Piarist charism and also of our own religious life, its role and its mission. The Fraternity has achieved little by little, the definition of its identity and is gaining its place in the Pious Schools. Today, it is together with the Order, the pillar of the new Piarist subject, of the Piarist "we" that is dawning.

One of the great challenges of the Piarist future is the consolidation of the Piarist Fraternity and its implementation underway in all the places where possible.

¹⁶³ Letter 4031.

Some Current Challenges of the Fraternity

Since the still recent Council of the General Fraternity, the existing Fraternities and Piarist demarcations, all have some important challenges to face in order to strengthen this young and hopeful Piarist reality.

A. FOR THE SURVIVAL AND STRENGTHENING OF THE FRATERNITIES

The first five challenges refer to key elements for the survival and strengthening of already existing Fraternities or which are being launched:

1. Clarity of identity, common vocation and operation of the Fraternity, the communities and their members.

Fraternities, especially in these still quite early moments, need to take care of placing emphasis on the quality of Christian and Piarist life of the persons who form them and the community as a whole.

Reference to the document of the General Fraternity that establishes a common framework that defines all of them must be clear. Some private performances launching groups with the name of the Fraternity mislead those people, because they are offered something that does not respond to this reality and are damage to the development of a decisive commitment today for the future of the Pious Schools.

The clarity of the elements that make up this vocation to the Fraternity, their integration into the Piarist charism, spirituality, life and mission, should be formal and actually present in the daily life of each Fraternity.

Also, within each Fraternity, and in each of the small communities that compose it, there has to be a clear understanding of its members, who is and who is not in the Fraternity. The features of the common vocation and the effort to be faithful to them must be very clear and defined. The Council of each of these Fraternities should ensure this.

2. A real place in the Demarcation where to share life, spirituality and mission.

The Fraternity needs a clear space, a few instances in which to share life, spirituality and mission with the Demarcation. This new Piarist subject, which is the Fraternity, responding to the charismatic integration mode, requires that its link to the charism be something tangible, to not be an ethereal trait which easily dissolves.

This means to develop some initiatives making present the Fraternity in the Piarist life and mission, for example, including it in the chart of the Pious Schools in each Demarcation, creating teams of presence where the Fraternity is a fundamental pillar, meetings of the Provincial Congregation with the Council of the Fraternity, the legal link that supposes the integration in the Itaka - Piarist Foundation, etc.

3. Appropriate involvement of the religious.

Another very important aspect for the growth and consolidation of the Fraternity is the adequate participation of the religious in it.

The religious must fully participate in the Piarist charism. They do not need the Fraternity or belonging to it to be in the heart of the charism, as it has been during the previous centuries.

However, by recognizing that the Fraternity also shares the charism, we religious meet a few new Piarist brothers along the way. It seems very convenient to walk with them, encourage them in their choice for the Fraternity, also engaging in it as a real demonstration of our commitment to a new Pious Schools.

At any time and place, somebody has understood the belonging of religious in the Fraternity as a serious difficulty assuming a dual membership with respect to the Order. Nothing farther from reality. All persons have many memberships: they are the elements that are giving identity to each one of us. The important thing is to get these memberships in a clear order.

A Piarist religious belongs to the Order, to his Province, to his small community, to his school or Piarist work. He belongs to his family. Perhaps he belongs to some pious entity, to an NGO, to a sports club, to any association. He belongs to a people, a country. He belongs to a Church.

The difficulty that could surface is if these memberships are not sorted or are contradictory in their approaches. It is certainly not the case of the Order and of the Fraternity of the Pious Schools which share the same charism in the Church at the service of the society in which they are.

How is the membership of the religious in the Fraternity? On the one hand they are members like everyone else: they are not monitors, directors, counselors... but just one brother. On the other hand, by their status as priests and their religious vocation, they are a major contribution to the whole Fraternity. The participation of religious in the Fraternity is like moving between these two poles.

The religious, and also many laymen, are involved in both communities, his community as religious and the Fraternity. Possibly also in other groups of young people, families... The priority of his own vocation is clear and is precisely because of it, that he is linked to the Fraternity.

Sometimes, the entire religious community participates, along with some laymen and laywomen, as a small community of the Fraternity. It is an interesting possibility that opens a space of the religious community (one day or several days and times) to the Fraternity.

We also have the already proven and persevering experience without interruption since 1995, of mixed communities where religious are living with some lay singles or families with children. Knowing how to safeguard spaces and moments needed for the development of each particular vocation, they are being a great richness for everyone and for the Piarist mission.

Another interesting experience is the participation in the Fraternity of a religious community focused on the initial formation of young Piarist. Participation not in the moments of the small community, but in moments of the whole Fraternity: the weekly Eucharist, retreats or joint exercises, meetings, formation plans... Without losing any of the formative religious community, it participates as one community more of the Fraternity. Something similar could be done, although it does not exist yet, with other religious communities.

In any case, religious who belong to the Fraternity should do so with clarity, without having a fuzzy or intermittent participation. It can help to do this, not so much the promise in the Fraternity since they already have their religious vows in the Order, but any sign by which they make patent their time of entry: it could be the renewal of their own religious profession in

the Fraternity or something similar. There are various concretions that were able to answer correctly at this point.

4. Flow of new incorporations

The Fraternity, as the Order, needs to keep a steady flow of new incorporations to its survival.

The vocational work in the broad sense, both for the religious life and the vocation to Fraternity, is an inescapable priority. Without new vocations, not only the future is endangered, but we are leaving without attention a key area of our mission, perhaps fundamental, that is to invite to participate in the construction of the Kingdom, each one from the vocation received.

The effort to achieve a vocational culture in the environment, the strengthening of educational and pastoral processes that can lead to adult vocations, the personal involvement of the members of the Fraternity in these processes, the pastoral orientation of all our Piarist works, are some of the actions that we must take care of.

The Council of the Fraternity, in connection with the Provincial Congregation and other organs of each demarcation, has to be aware so that we can achieve a steady flow of new incorporations.

5. Participation in the Local, Demarcation, General Fraternity

It is important to generate an identity of the members of the Fraternity that exceed their participation and belonging to the community, through belonging to local and Demarcation Fraternity and the General Fraternity.

The trait that defines the Fraternity is the integration into the Piarist charism, and this far exceeds the small limits of each particular reference. We are Catholics because we are universal, because we discover brothers in mankind, because we are part of the world, of the Church, of the Pious Schools, of the Fraternity...

Here much of our identity is at stake. The still-nascent Fraternities can make this sign of their general feeling of belonging to the Pious Schools with the corresponding consequences.

Possibly we Piarist religious have sinned of particularities of my field of responsibility, of my work, my community, my demarcation... The current option to live working from an Order mentality is an important decision at the moment¹⁶⁴. The Fraternity can also be an opportunity in this regard.

To achieve this, we will have to enable experiences and steps so that members of the Fraternity, go beyond their membership to the small community with mobility in their own Fraternity or even in other Piarist presences, the meetings of different type (among Fraternities, with religious and lay people, with other ecclesial entities), careful information and communication...

B. TO ADVANCE MORE ALONG WITH THE PROVINCE OR DEMARCATION

We can make some proposals to go beyond the survival and consolidation of the Fraternity. They are possibilities, always with the Province, that allow making important leaps in the life

¹⁶⁴ Salutatio of Fr. General posted in June 2011 Ephemerides.

and progress of the Pious Schools, both of the Demarcation and the Fraternity. We note five proposals:

6. Promotion of vocational diversity

We have previously indicated the importance and need of a vocational culture where to place our Piarist mission and also the specific vocation to the religious life and the Piarist Fraternity.

It is appropriate to extend it now with the proposal that the Fraternity, along with the Province, assume as a priority this vocational culture, taking care, of course, of the common vocation to each of these two realities and, in addition, the diversity of vocations, allowing to visualize the need of the different bodies in the "Body of the Church".

Everyone has to seek and pray to discover his own vocation to which God calls him in life. The possibility of viewing a few of them, concrete proposals from educators, the testimony of life, are essential actions for this purpose.

It is not about as exposing in market different vocations for each one to choose, but making palpable that they are different and all necessary and complementary when they contribute to the common good. Each person must seek, pray, discern, that particular call that God makes him for his life.

At the same time, Fraternity wins in vocational, charismatic and ministerial wealth, growing as well as a community.

Some vocational possibilities that cannot be missing, according to the modalities of participation in the Pious Schools: Piarist consecrated life, priestly ministry, Piarist laity (charismatic and legal integration), vocation to Fraternity, shared mission, the various forms of collaboration...

The diversity of community models in the Fraternity is also helpful, perhaps any small community, with a specific assignment, with any trait that defines it especially. It can be very interesting to have any "community engine" of the Piarist presence in every place, in the sense that it may provide further reference to young people, to the life and the mission of the place. The involvement of the Fraternity, always with the Province, is very important.

We can include in this vocational diversification certain personal or community assignments. For example, taking responsibility in the Piarist Mission, in a work or the Province. It can also be a sending elsewhere, even to another country, to encourage the presence and the Piarist mission. They are already actions that are vocationally involving persons and that represents a jump of quality in the reality of the Fraternity.

Easier, although very important by its content and because they reach more people, is the definitive Option for the Fraternity after a few years of traveling in it. Now it becomes a privileged moment for personal growth, also vocationally, and for the growth of the Fraternity that sees how a person is committed forever to the following of Jesus in the style of Calasanz.

7. Starting of Piarist ministries in a shared way between Province and Fraternity

Previously we dedicated a space to reference the importance of these Piarist Ministries. It is not a matter of coming back in the same reflection, but of realizing that we have a great chance of advancing for the Fraternity, for the Province, for Piarist mission and also a great contribution to our Church.

Piarist ministries have existed since the beginning of the Order. The religious have been assuming them along the centuries. So it has to continue.

Now a great vocational and ministerial opportunity opens for the Pious Schools. The laity may also be called to participate in these Piarist Ministries¹⁶⁵.

We are proposing three large Piarist ministries that we can entrust to lay people close to us and well identified with the Pious Schools, possibly in the Fraternity¹⁶⁶. Hence the necessary collaboration of the Province and the Fraternity in this aspect.

As we have already pointed out, we are referring to the lay pastoral Ministry, the Ministry of Christian Education and the Ministry of Care for the Poor to assist in the social transformation.

8. Beginning of the Piarist presence model

This was already presented in the previous section; therefore, we will not repeat what was said above. We should indeed insist now that we have an opportunity to make the Province, the Fraternity and the Piarist mission grow with the setting up of this model.

Talking about Piarist presence implies a commitment to unite everything that is Piarist in every place, always from the Provincial direction and the Order. It is to opt for a joint and coordinated work driven by a shared project, giving voice and space to all the agents involved in this broad reality of Piarist presence. It is to have the Piarist subject and the mission grow strongly.

If we launch the model of Piarist presence, we will begin by indicating who promotes it and it will immediately appear as the Province and now also the Fraternity. Of course, other modalities for participation in the Pious Schools (shared mission, collaborators, and recipients). We have already taken an important step.

When we implement this model of presence, we combine the Mission of the place, starting from its current situation, analyzing it, marking together objectives and ways, involving more people... and, thereby, advancing much in the mission.

At the time of starting the model of Piarist presence, we clarify the organization, functioning and tasks. We have a coordinator, a driving team of all teams that may be, a project that orients all and each one.

Implementing the model of Piarist presence is an opportunity that we must not pass long.

9. Starting of Calasanz Movement

When talking about the urgency of evangelization, we reflected on the proposal of the Order to start the Calasanz Movement.

It is an option in order to start-up processes of groups with children, young people and adults with clear proposal of an arrival point with a vocational Piarist key element to Piarist religious life and to Fraternity.

¹⁶⁵ It is worth reading the Salutatio of Fr. General posted in Ephemerides in April and May 2011.

¹⁶⁶ See the document "Participate in the Pious Schools" presented at the meeting of Major Superiors in October 2011 in Peralta.

It is time that the Province and the Fraternity mark together this task of promoting the Calasanz Movement in their environment and coordinating it with the rest of the Pious Schools.

This shared responsibility not only develops both the mission, but it also opens an interesting call that can result in new incorporations to the Order and to the Fraternity.

10. Considering the participation in Itaka - Piarist

There are quite a lot of Demarcations and Fraternities that make possible today the Itaka - Piarist Foundation as a shared space, such as platform of Piarist mission, as a reality of charismatic and legal integration between institutions.

We will make reference to this novelty in the following sections.

At this time, we simply highlight the opportunity to connect in network Provinces and Fraternities, to help in the Piarist mission, especially where it is most needed and to provide an institutional clear place to the Fraternity and its mission within the whole of the Pious Schools.

Neither Province nor Fraternity should fail to consider their possible participation in Itaka - Piarist. It would be, without a doubt, a huge step for them and also for this still-nascent reality that so good services is providing to the Order and the Piarist mission.

It is a Time of Grace to Promote Fraternities

The Order is living a historical moment of reorganization of its demarcations, fostering lines for the future, insisting on stronger efforts to get re-energized.

In this situation the Fraternities can be seen as a sign of the times, as a gift of God to the Pious Schools and their mission, as a gift for this call to revitalization.

Now it is also the moment of grace when the Fraternities can grow strongly because they are prioritized, because they are seen as a result of the action of the Spirit today, because people have them in mind in the process of restructuring and revitalization.

It is time for the Superiors, of each religious, for every member of the Fraternity, to be open to the Spirit, and pray to Him to help us in this effort to be more faithful to his will.

IN THE PRESENTATION OF THE DOCUMENT OF THE FRATERNITY OF 2011¹⁶⁷

... At the heart of the Pious Schools different Piarist Fraternities live today, who have been created with the approval and support of the respective Major Superiors and, above all, with the effort, enthusiasm, authenticity of life and Piarist commitment of those who are part of them. All have defined their identity in written documents, structure and mission. All of them are a special gift to the Pious Schools and the mission that we are called to promote in the bosom of the Church and at the service of society.

... I invite the Piarist religious to welcome the Fraternities as a gift that enriches and strengthens the Pious Schools, and all those who are part of the Piarist Fraternities or feel called to them to live according to the charismatic gift received, so that, all united, we may

¹⁶⁷ Summary of the presentation of the document "The fraternity of the Pious Schools". Ediciones Calasancias, 2011.

contribute to the strengthening and renewal of the Pious Schools, for the good of the children and youth, the poor and all persons to whom we are sent by God, through the Church, by the lucky daring and unique patience of Saint Joseph Calasanz.

We are asking the blessing of God for all of us who dream of Pious schools that are faithful and renewed, under the protection of Mary, Queen of the Pious Schools, and Saint Joseph Calasanz.

66. Strengthening the Piarist Subject

*"If right now I had ten thousand religious, I could distribute them in one month only to those places that have requested it, with great insistence."*¹⁶⁸

Certainly the Piarist mission needs many hands, and even having many, we still would always be lacking. *"The harvest is plentiful..."*

One of the key elements for the future for the Pious Schools is to strengthen the Piarist subject, having more Piarists and making them better; therefore, expanding the Piarist family.

*"The Piarist family, consisting of all of its members in all times and places, is manifested in a more concrete and visible way in the local community, formed by professed members assigned there. All local communities are part of larger communities, namely, the Province and the whole Order. The life of the Piarist family is shared, to some extent, by non-professed candidates and by lay people partaking in our spirituality and mission according to different modalities"*¹⁶⁹.

Be More and Better Religious

Strengthening the Piarist subject means, first, be more and better religious.

To be more religious we should continue giving priority to the pastoral care of vocations, making timely and daring proposals to young people, praying to the Lord of the harvest that He send out laborers into his harvest, taking care of vocations in their formation process...

To be better religious we will have to take care of the initial and also permanent formation, we have to get living communities that help people grow, it will be necessary to enhance those mediations that help us to improve (experiences, retreats, courses, new proposals, personal and community accompaniment, etc.), we will have to take care of our relationship with the Lord...

To be better religious it will be convenient to carry out our vocation with creative fidelity, adapting our life and dedication to the Pious Schools today¹⁷⁰:

- Living with strength and conveying with words, attitudes and behaviors, the emergence of a new renovated Piarist 'us' in which we believe and bet.
- From fidelity to our own religious vocation, trying to be a reference of life for others: continuing to transmit the richness of the following of Jesus¹⁷¹, being "Ministers of the hope of the future Kingdom and the fraternal union among men"¹⁷². In any personal

¹⁶⁸ Letter 2027.

¹⁶⁹ Constitutions 36.

¹⁷⁰ Taken in good part from the document of the Province of Emmaus "The role of the Piarist religious". 2008.

¹⁷¹ Constitutions Chapter II.

¹⁷² Constitutions 25.

circumstances give witness to human, Christian and Piarist life. "The good news must be proclaimed, first, through the testimony"¹⁷³.

- Pushing with strength the shared mission, enhancing learning paths that invite everybody to participate.
- Depending on the greater or lesser active life, being in neuralgic points of the pastoral and the mission, in general, as ordained Ministers is being in communion with the other Ministers of each place (ordained and lay).
- The "high tone of Christian life"¹⁷⁴ is particularly relevant in situations of weakness, disease, reduction of activity by age... It must be noted that elder religious continue adding value to the Pious Schools and the Piarist Christian community.
- In imitation of Jesus Christ, being a reference of service to others will be the best way that the "prominence" of the laity or religious activity may always be a key element of humble contribution to the common good. Often practice the "where am I most needed?".
- "Being experts in communion with those who promote the spirituality of communion"¹⁷⁵. Fostering unity, good atmosphere, the hope, the 'well - say' in our works and presences.
- Making the community a welcoming home, a reference of Piarist life.
- Calling to religious life and other vocations, to the Piarist mission, to participate in the Piarist Christian community...
- Feeling called to particularly enhance the "zipper elements" that strongly sew the Order and the Fraternity: the mutual support, religious involved in the Fraternity, Piarist lay bound legally to the Order, the mixed communities, ministries and services shared between both institutions, sending, shared mission, the Foundation Itaka - Piarist as a realization of the Mission shared between both institutions, the moments and actions of meeting...
- At any time, place and condition, being authentic Poor of the Mother of God of the Pious Schools for the greater glory of God and the utility of others.

Being More and Better Brothers in the Fraternity

Strengthening the Piarist subject means to make strong presence of the Piarist Fraternity, getting the brothers and sisters that the Piarists are forming to be more and better.

To have more members in the Fraternities, we should have more Piarist presences, make proposals and with them start paths towards the Fraternity, organize catechumenal processes accompanying them in the formation and discernment prior to the incorporation, promoting the pastoral processes that can offer the Fraternity as point of arrival, take care of the performance and the life of these communities...

To be better members of the Fraternity we will take care of the vocation of each and every one of the brothers, consolidate mediations that favor fidelity to the following of Jesus from the Piarist charism, demanding of ourselves and accompany each other, read with creative fidelity the Calasanctian charism and the needs of our world...

¹⁷³ Evangelii nuntiandi, 21.

¹⁷⁴ Novo millennio ineunte, 31.

¹⁷⁵ Vita Consecrata 46 and 51.

So, we need to consolidate the existing Fraternities, help others to be born, place all of them in communion, and build together the Pious Schools of today and tomorrow.

Boosting the Charismatic and Legal Integration: the Piarist Laity

We already have amongst us a precious Piarist vocation in its infancy: the one of those who, from the Fraternity, discovers their vocation in a greater integration in the Order to live as "*true lay Piarist in the full sense*"¹⁷⁶ living with intensity, also institutional their Piarist spirituality, life and mission from their lay vocation.

This vocation is born in June 2002, after a long process to define the model and carry out the appropriate itinerary of discernment, with seven people in what is now the province of Emmaus. After more than ten years of travel, these seven people have made a definitive promise and nine more are living this vocation in its still temporary stage. During this time we have kept on deepening in the sense of this Piarist vocation and the fruits obtained are important¹⁷⁷.

The challenge today is, as the Fraternities are growing in consistency, proposing the possibility of this vocation possibility so that it can serve some people, and of course, to strengthening of the Fraternity, of the corresponding Province, the Order and the Piarist mission.

The Piarist Christian Community, Piarist Ministries... and a Lot More

Once the Fraternity is up and running, a whole horizon of possibilities for the Piarist life and mission opens. Above all, a stunning strengthening of the new "us" Piarists.

First of all, many pastoral processes that could be carried out are clarified: they have continuity from the time of childhood when they are initiated up to adulthood, they have a concrete and visible vocational offer to become a member of the Order as a religious and in the Fraternity... and all the ecclesial possibilities that may be in that time and place. Those responsible for these educational processes have the possibility of having their reference group, living what they offer to their own kids.

The existence of a living Fraternity enables the vocation of the lay Piarist, of the person who, in addition to his charismatic integration into his own Fraternity, wants a greater connection with the Order. Without the Fraternity, this vocation and its actual inclusion in the Pious Schools are difficult.

When there is Fraternity, the Piarist Christian Community is more visible. It is true that it is not strictly necessary to have the Fraternity so that this community exists: it is enough to have the offering by the religious to have to live the faith around a Piarist work or presence. But the Fraternity here makes a very important contribution not only for the people involved and committed, but also because with the visibility of the Fraternity, it enriches the nucleus and the communitarian offer of this Piarist Christian Community so it can easily welcome anyone else.

¹⁷⁶ "*Laity in the Pious Schools*" n. 23.

¹⁷⁷ At the request of Fr. General, was made a careful reflection that was published in the Papyrus 190 of November 2011 and was sent to the demarcations. It is available in <http://escolapios21.blogspot.com.es/>

The existence of a Fraternity provides more support to the Piarist presence model because it reinforces the Piarist subject and constitutes one of the fundamental elements of this presence, along with the religious community, the school, and works that may be, and with all the people that can convene.

A Piarist Fraternity is an open door to the Piarist Ministries entrusted to laymen, as we already have a group of identified persons, embodying the Piarist charism. It is only necessary to well discern the candidates, take care of the preparation and entrust these ministries that will always be developed as a team. The Fraternity, along with the Province, is a guarantee that these ministries are responding faithfully to their assignment.

The life of the Fraternity expands the field of the call because it offers more hands, opens Piarist vocational possibilities also for laymen, provides a model of a more open Church, and renews the Pious Schools...

"It is always very important to stay alert so that it (the voice of God, who breathes where He wishes) may not come unforeseen and pass us by without bearing fruit in us" (Constitutions 44)

Creative fidelity to these voices of the Spirit has finished generating a new ecclesial paradigm which affects the very identity of the Church and, therefore, the way of understanding and updating all of the elements in it: gifts, vocations, structures, ministries, mission, community... It is the confirmation that *"the evangelizing action of the laity is changing ecclesial life"*¹⁷⁸.

ROLE OF THE PIARIST RELIGIOUS¹⁷⁹

We the Piarist religious are the "charismatic leaders for the development of the mission and other modalities of participation in the Pious Schools". To do this:

- + We live our personal and collective following of Jesus by Calasanz' style, with what this implies about prayer, communion, vows...
- + We are pastors of everyone in the community and the teams in which we participate, promoting all the Piarist elements: religious community, Fraternity, Piarist Christian Community, teams of shared mission, Piarist identity, pastoral and educational processes, social awareness, celebrations... We are a link between the school and after-school environments of the school, combining the action of the school, the Itaka – Piarist Foundation, the center of worship of the school... We boost the teams of Shared Mission. We are present wherever necessary trying to be soul of the Piarist presence.

67. The Piarist Community of Friends of Jesus

A key for the future, perhaps the most important, is living, being and appearing as the community of friends of Jesus.

So simple and so complicated: today we are the group of Jesus, who we placed in the center of our lives because we know him deeply and we love him. If we can be the community of the friends of Jesus, we have much future, we will have vocations, we will be very happy, we will

¹⁷⁸ *Redemptoris Mater*, 2.

¹⁷⁹ Taken freely from Juan José Iturri in "El papel del religioso escolapio". Provincia de Emaús, 2008. Page 14.

give evangelicals fruits...Our friend Jesus will take care of it: "*Now I don't call you servants, but friends*" (Jn 15, 15).

Jesus is Who Summons Us: We are His Group

We are the group of Jesus because we have been summoned by Him. He has called each of us by our name, because he loves us, because he wants us to be his companions and to each one, one by one, everyone. He looked at us, called us, he made us feel loved by our Father in heaven as we are, and for what we are

After that I can only tell you: I love you, Jesus, not because you are an advantage, but because you've won my heart, I've fallen in love with you.

Not only I love you, but I love only you, you are the first. I know that my heart is going to frequently go to other places, but I want you to be the center of all the other loves. I recognize you as the Lord of my life. No other person or reality is my Lord: only you, Jesus.

And I love only you unconditionally and forever. Although I know that I'm going to fail a thousand times, despite the moments of fatigue and doubt, today and always I tell you: I love only you and without conditions.

Take me in your group, I want to be yours, a member of your friends group. I know that you are calling me and I answer: here I am. I love you, only you, unconditionally and forever.

I find that this close relationship, Jesus, you have it not only with me but also with other people. I am discovering that these people are my brothers and sisters, your brothers. You are making a family of us, you are making us yours. We are invited to the group, Lord.

Our Friend Jesus is Very Present in Our Prayer¹⁸⁰

Because I know, because we know that you love us, that we are friends and brothers, we need to be with you, to place you in the center, to know you, to tell you a thousand times that we love you, that we want you to be with us forever, that we call it prayer, personal and community prayer. We are your group and we want to be with you.

Whatever will happen, may it happen to us with you, Lord. We are aware of how much praying together or personally can change the ideas or situations: everything changes color, takes on another perspective.

I want, we want to fall at your feet, Lord, and feel at ease, at home, in your group. I want to, and we want to tell you that you are our life, our reason for being, and our goal. I want to and we want to thank you that you have looked at us, you have called us, you wanted to make us yours. We are your group, Jesus.

Because we love you, because we try to listen to you in Word and in life, because we are happy with you in prayer, because we celebrate at your table by being yours, we thank you for the past, amen for the present and Yes for the future with the only condition that you remain by our side, that you take us by the hand.

Alone and in community we try to live what Calasanz asked us so insistently:

- "*The most impeccable care must be taken never to give up the practice of internally praying twice a day: one hour at dawn and half an hour in the evening before supper. We*

¹⁸⁰ Salutatio of Fr. General posted in Ephemerides, June 2012.

*must endeavor in profound silence and relaxation of body and spirit, kneeling down or in another convenient position and following the example of St. Paul, to contemplate Christ crucified and his virtues; and thus, to know, imitate and remember Him frequently during the day*¹⁸¹.

- *"I applaud very much your going on retreat for a little while, with one or two companions, making spiritual exercises in a place away from the conversation with men, to remain alone. So they are together Martha and Mary"*¹⁸².

We are Friends and Brothers within the Group of Jesus

The sign of your presence in the community, Jesus, is that we love each other. We know it, and even so, it is hard for us to live it. We need, Lord, that you give us strength, and that you remember it to us and that you make seeing you in the brothers.

We know that it is God who, as our Father, makes us brothers. We know that you, Jesus, you are our brother, the brother of all. It is sometimes easy to feel brotherhood in the companions of the community, sometimes it is hard: make of us your group, Jesus, the group of friends and brothers.

We'd like to now recall some of the criteria that we have in our head, and we want to pass it to the heart and life, in the day to day living, because we want to be your group, Jesus.

- Unity, freedom, and charity. A good criterion of the community, from the mouth of St. Augustine: *"Unity in essentials, freedom in the dubious, charity in everything"*. We want people to note that we are a community, that we are united, that we have the same heart and the same soul. That is why we are together and share many projects, full of life. We do this communion in freedom, letting each have his own autonomy. We will always do it with love, the mark of any community, any group that wants to be yours, Lord.
- Love always. We make this beautiful prayer to be ours: *"Lord, make me love every brother, today as if it were his last day, as if it were my last day. Amen"*. We try not to leave anything for tomorrow: today we have to work out the differences, today we have to reconcile with the brother, today and now is the time of the community.
- Aware of our fragility. We are aware that there are difficulties in our community, Lord. The daily friction, the routine, different characters, different ways of thinking and acting, some habits of the brothers, give birth to frustration in us, resentment, contempt, confrontation, sniping... and, however, above all that is reality, it makes us suffer, we sense that there is a way of doing more palpable things, that you are the one who brings us together, who makes us friends and brothers, and that makes us relativize, dialogue, overcoming us... We are not just a group of people well related, we are your group, Lord.
- Brothers. It is not a perfect community, but it is a community of brothers. As time goes by we become more aware that there is no perfect community, that no one or nothing will ever satisfy all of our expectations and desires... thank God! And at that time we began to be realistic, to stop working with unrealistic dreams to truly love the other, to discover that we are your group, Lord.

¹⁸¹ CC 44.

¹⁸² Letter 2475.

- We are modeled together. Little by little, we are discovering, especially when we look at ourselves in an external reflection, that we are the brothers of the community, that we are sharing expressions, gestures, attitudes... Almost imperceptibly, we leave that you, Lord, model us through the brothers.
- We correct. We want to have amongst us delicate and loving fraternal correction, and it is hard. Sometimes we prefer to shut up and leave that resentment take strength in us. Sometimes we explode and say terrible things; however, we need to tell each other things to be able to grow, to be more faithful. We try to provide that criteria, so basic and so complicated: is it fully true what I say? Is it good saying what I have to say? Is it necessary to say what I say? Is it the right time? We tell each other things in private and in community, hitting and missing, but trying to be for the good of the brother. How difficult, Lord! Luckily, we know your system to tell us things in our conscience, in others when we hear, on the needs of the environment when we have our eyes open. We want to also be part of your group, Lord.
- The magic words. We have the magic words that produce authentic miracles when they are said. They are four: thank you, forgive me, help me and I love you. Many walls are broken with only pronouncing them and that builds community. We want to use them more, Lord, even if it is hard for us.
- Every day. A thousand times in every day I renew my commitment to you, Lord, and to the community to which you have called me. I renew my commitment to these people who you have given me as brothers. I renew my choice by the Pious Schools, that group that wants to be yours, your group, Lord. And I want to renew this option not because it is the best community, or my best friends, but because you have given me these brothers and you have entrusted me this plot from your vineyard.
- Brothers and friends. The brothers are given to us by our parents; friends are chosen. Our community, Jesus, first is a community of brothers, in which we discover each other together because you wanted it. We learn to love each other, unconditionally, simply because we are a family and brothers. The task is to get to be friends, to choose us, to love each other also because we agree in many things and we journey together. We want to hear from you, Jesus, once more "*I do not call you servants, I call you friends*" (Jn 15, 15). We want to say to our brothers in community: you are also my friends.

The Greatest Sign: the Group of the Friends of Jesus

We may draw attention with our works, our way of life. We can cause admiration with our commitment. We can... do whatever it takes, but the greatest sign is the community of brothers, the community of friends, and the community of friends of Jesus.

Impressive is the miracle of the community of brothers: all share, no one is in need, they recognize the Father of all... The community of brothers and friends is still better: when there is contagious joy, happiness, good atmosphere, love... It is still a greater sign, perhaps the greatest, when the community of brothers and friends of Jesus is transparent, the life of each person and community is the living presence of Jesus.

For us, Piarists, the key element to the future is clear: living, being and showing that we are a community of friends of Jesus.

PRAYER FOR MY COMMUNITY

Father, today I ask you for my brothers in community.
You know them personally: you know their name and surname,
their virtues and faults, their joys and their sorrows,
their strength and their weakness, you know their history;
you accept them and love them as they are and you give them life with your Spirit.
Teach me to really love them,
not because their words or deeds, but by themselves.
I thank you for them, Father.
They are all a gift for me.
Give me the look and the heart
of Jesus to contemplate them and love them till the end
because I want to be for each of them
a living sacrament of the presence of Jesus.

68. Passion for the Mission

Speaking of keys for the future of the Pious Schools, we should not forget the one that gives this book its title: the passion for the mission.

If we love the Piarist mission, if we live it with passion, if we are able to remain faithful and creative at the same time, if we are able to provide hope for persons close to it... then we are talking about a great work and great future for the Pious Schools.

Passion for the Mission is Compassion

To be passionate about the mission starts from compassion, from feeling close to the small ones and those who suffer, from suffering with them. Our Piarist mission has much to do with compassion: one of its synonyms is piety, a word that resonates very much to us Piarist.

Compassion is now socially discredited. *"A symptom of the collective discredit of piety is the transformation operated in the meaning of a concept such as "miserable". Because from meaning something worth of compassion (as the memorable is what deserves to be remembered), miserable has passed to designate, above all, something or someone who must be hated, rejected, condemned without remission. In a few words, an insult."*¹⁸³

Today it seems more proper to talk socially about empathy, placing oneself in the place of the other, but we lose in the exchange. Empathy helps us understand (which is not a small thing) but compassion affects us, changes us, and mobilizes us in favor of the weak. It is not the same. Compassion is linked to passion, to wrath that is looking for active and effective justice for the other.

The Piarist mission stems from compassion when seeing children without schooling, young men with no proposals for life, a society that needs a radical change, so many needy in our environment and in the world, so many students without life while they survive, the same Jesus present in the latter...

¹⁸³ Aurelio Arteta. "Tantos tontos tópicos". Ed. Planeta. Colección Ariel. 2012.

When these situations hurt you in the soul, when the blood boils in you and the heart hurts, then you start to feel a passion for the mission. You no longer live it as a job, as a volunteer, as a dedication, as militancy... you live it like that and much more: as the purpose of your own life.

Only with passion and compassion can we make profound changes. Only then miracles are possible, perhaps small, but absolutely crucial: "*Many small people in small places will make small things that will transform the world*", said Eduardo Galeano. We say more: we small people do great things, not by our merits, but because it is the Lord who insists on it.

The first small breakthrough of compassion is happiness. We will not remind about the Beatitudes, which show us clearly in that apparent contradiction that becomes certain. We support it now in the finding of the need and importance of compassion: "*If you want the happiness of others, be compassionate. If you want your own happiness, be compassionate*"¹⁸⁴. Strangely, suffering with others, making ours the injustice of the other, in the solidarity of the change of that situation, there is happiness.

Passion for the Mission is to Place Ourselves at the Service of the Mission

When one is compassionate, when the need of other holds unto you, when you are in love with the mission, the perspective changes: we live for the mission, we are at its service not by obligation or voluntarism but because it takes us and draws us.

That sentence well known for many becomes reality: "*who does not live to serve, does not serve to live*".

There is no place for laziness, focusing on oneself, doing many things that do not mean the important things. The urgency of the mission calls us so hard, that we prefer it to any other reality.

Placing ourselves at the service of the mission has nothing to do with putting ourselves at the head of that mission: we are useless servants, we are partners. I am not the centre. We do not feel so responsible and protagonists as to forget that we are at the service, that we are not sovereign, but servers. That is why, as Calasanz, we feel preference for simple means, for the hard work knowing whenever it is a means for God to save: we are sowing and we confidently hope that the harvest will come by the action of the Lord.

Being at the service and not at the command of the mission, means following the style of Calasanz' patience. From humility, we must be patient with our healthy inconsistency, with the inability of the suffering of those who love, with the slow pace of progress and the frequent regressions, we must be able to expect without despair, knowing how to support our own errors...

Placing ourselves at the service of the mission is having more confidence than optimism; appreciating the small with the soul of a poor without missing the big; learning to act with diligence and at the same time calmly and without hyperactivity; seeking fidelity rather than success; feeling responsible without blaming us; being patient without haste, resistance before the unjust; decision for change, capacity of suffering; knowing how to surpass the rhythm over the difficulty: slowly but surely.

¹⁸⁴ Tenzin Gyatso, 14th Dalai Lama.

Placing ourselves at the service of the mission clearly knows from the heart and behavior that the important thing is the mission and the One who sent me to it, and seeking no other reward than the good of the other, trying to fulfill the will of God. Thus we will achieve,, without intending it, not to be beggars for the appreciation of others. The secret is to "*give everything keep nothing*"¹⁸⁵, the path through which people travel and then forget about it.

Passion for the Mission is to Be Ready to go All the Way

Passion for the mission means availability to go all the way, to fully assume the double meaning of the passion: what fills my heart and what causes suffering.

Jesus and his project, presented and lived by the Calasanz style, seduce us, we fall in love, and it excites us. Intimacy with Jesus, his kindness, his relationship as a friend, takes us along with ups and downs towards a closer trust. We know that we are on the road with Jesus, we see ourselves as apprentices of his criteria and values (love of the Father, waiting for the Kingdom, care of the community, poor, mercy, simplicity, fidelity), always in his following. We will gradually identify ourselves with the saving project of Jesus, we become incorporated into his project, clashing with each other and sometimes with the nearby. Little by little we also approach the cross, our own cross. At all of those moments, we want to live the passion for the mission and accept that the mission can lead us to the passion.

We are aware that there is no painless mission. The suffering is always present in our life and more so, if we strive to change the reality to make it a better world. We know that together with the action goes passion, with the mission we need to be ready to go all the way. There is also a time when we say: "Whatever will happen, may it happen to me with you, Lord. Whatever will happen, may it happen to us with you, Lord".

Especially in hard and difficult moments that always surface, we hear the words that were said to Peter are now said for you and for me: "*Peter, do you love me more than these?*" (Jn 21, 15). It is not possible to compare with others, to look to the side; we can just but give the answer: "*You know that I love you*".

We can only say like Jesus on the cross, first with compassion: "*Father, forgive them for they know not what they do*" (Lk 23,34). Then in the feelings of loneliness and pain: "*My God, why have you forsaken me?*" (Mt 27, 46). Finally in the confidence of one who has been faithful to the end: "*All is accomplished*" (Jn 19, 30) and "*Into your hands I commend my spirit*" (Lk 23, 46).

Accepting the Mission of Jesus, assuming the Piarist mission, is to be passionate for it and be willing to go all the way.

If Passion is Compassion, Mission is Commission

Passion corresponds to each person, but for it to be plentiful, it is necessary to have compassion, shared with others, it becomes life along with the other, above all, with those most in need.

The same can be said of the mission: it is personal, each of us receives it personally, it is an individual and unique experience, but that is not enough. The mission belongs to the

¹⁸⁵ One of the wise sentences of St. J.M. Vianney, Pastor of Ars.

community, it is a commission; more than missionaries we are commissioners, sent in commission, in group, in community.

This emphasis on the community, on the team, is not to achieve greater efficiency (which is obvious), but because it becomes a part of the same mission. The community is not only a team: it is the place which we focus on Jesus, on the Eucharist, on the Word proclaimed and heard and shared, on love. The communities, the Church are those who evangelize, by means of each one and the community itself. The mission is always, in some way, commission.

We are personally passionate and also in community. With the real community that we have, not with the ideal one that does not exist anywhere. We live with passion the Piarist mission when we give to the community what we are, when we support the weakest, when we bow to the common project, when we assume the global and not only the particular vision, when we communicate our interiority with simplicity, when we plan and jointly develop the mission, when we pray together, when we live...

Passion for the mission is to also to be in love with these Pious Schools that need to improve every day but are always exciting for me, and I'm willing to give for them my whole life and surely you too.

HE IS NOT HEAVY... HE IS MY BROTHER

The group was hiking when in the distance appeared an eight years old child carrying on his shoulders another smaller one, around three years old. His face was burning, toasted as the face of all peasants of the place. More expressive perhaps when he crossed over at our side, but unable to hide certain weariness, produced no doubt by the distance, the hard road and the weight of the child.

To encourage the poor child, I asked with a tone of affectionate closeness: "Friend, is he heavy?" And he, with an ineffable expression on his face and a shrug, which contained a great load of love, value and resignation, said with strength and decisiveness: "He is not heavy, he is my brother", and holding the little one more strongly, who smiled and greeted with his right hand, he took a short and slow run gracefully making his brother jump, who was still looking back at us and smiling.

DIBUJO

Father, do you really believe that the Pious Schools will re-emerge?

I don't believe, I know. Our Lady has told me.

He talks nonsense.

I am not sure, maybe not.

XV. FINAL OR CONTINUATION?

69. With You, All the Way to the End of the World

We come to the end, or perhaps we should say that we continue with our lives, with our mission, our community, hopefully more animated and reinforced. We end up with these brief thoughts that can help us to do this.

The Secret: Passion for the Mission

"I looked for God and I did not find him. I looked for myself and I did not find me. I looked for the neighbor and I found all three".

Trying to be happy on my own, with my plans, my ideas, my whims... is impossible. We have a heart too big so that we, ourselves, can satiate it.

Trying to find God in the air, in the clouds, even in my own heart, is to look where it is more difficult to find Him.

Serving the other, giving our life for the brother every day, placing the center in the poor and the needy, is the secret to finding everything: self, God and neighbor.

Listen in the First Person, Paul a Great Passionate for the Mission

We put it in first person, addressed to you. You can also put in plural and see it with your community, into the Pious Schools. It is an occasion to pray and assume the mission:

"You are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by all, shown to be a letter of Christ administered by us, written not in ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets that are hearts of flesh" (2 Co 3, 2-3).

"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to Timothy, my dear child: grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Jesus Christ our Lord. I remember you constantly in my prayers, night and day. I yearn to see you again, recalling your tears, so that I may be filled with joy, as I recall your sincere faith that first lived in your grandmother, Lois, and in your mother, Eunice, and that I am confident lives also in you. For this reason, I remind you to stir into flame the gift of God that you have through the imposition of my hands. For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-control. So do not be ashamed of your testimony to our Lord; but bear your share of hardship for the gospel with the strength that comes from God. He saved us and called us to a holy life, not according to our works but according to his own design, for which I was appointed preacher and apostle and teacher. I know him, in whom I have believed" (2 Tim 1, 1-14).

Certainly we know of whom we have relied upon and assume the mission to be a herald, apostle and teacher with joy and responsibility. All of this is not on our merits, but because you, Lord, have written your message in our hearts and we have to communicate it.

We Need All

Sometimes it happens to us, Lord, that we judge others with ease, that we disqualify them in their choices and actions... and even as persons. Sometimes we think they have no place in your project, Lord. We forget your words as when your disciples complained to you because one cast out demons without being of "ours": "*Who is not against us, is there for us*" (Mk 9, 40).

At times, Lord, it happens to us as in Corinth, and some of us are followers of Paul, or Apollo (1 Co 11-13), or of ourselves. We forget that only you are the Lord and only your project is important.

Sometimes we do not remember that we are one body, that you are the head, and each of us a member (1 Co 11, 12-31). That we need eyes, hands, feet, heart... all the organs! That the only condition is to work together for the sake of the body, not being a cancer in the body, feeling and making indeed a contribution to the whole.

Lord, there is a place for all of us with the sole condition of heading in the same direction, giving something to the Piarist project. There is a place for retirees and sick with our testimony of life, our prayers, and our support for others. Young people are important with their dreams, with their ideas, their thrust. There is room for those who bring a few things or others, for those who collaborate with what they can. We are all needed, Lord.

This is a strike of luck, because I do know that You also count on me, there will always be a place for me. Help me always to be positive, that my engine be the love and affection for others, seeking always to fulfill your desire.

The Mission is Each Person That You Place in Our Path

We are excited, Lord, knowing that You become present in our life, especially in each little one who needs our help, that we can serve you, that we can collaborate with you to build this world of brothers where it will be obvious that God is our Father.

Today we thank you for all the people you have placed in our path: those who have helped us to be who we are, those who collaborate on this mission that you have entrusted on us, together, those you place before us so that we give them our support.

*"At the end I want to arrive before the Father with empty hands and a heart full of names"*¹⁸⁶.

Thanks to all the names listed on the following pages and, above all, supporting the Piarist mission. It is always hard to begin naming a few, because you will always forget others (luckily there is One who does not forget anyone!). It is every one of you, you and many others, who every day perform the miracle of making Calasanz present, and who spread with your life the passion for the mission.

THANK YOU WITH ALL MY HEART

¹⁸⁶ Pedro Casaldàliga.

Without you, my life would have been different, the world would be worse, the Pious Schools would be missing something. For this reason, my heartfelt thanks. Thank you for what you have already contributed and thanks for what you are going to provide. Thank you.

First of all, thanks to you, Jesus, who shows us God the Father and who sends us your Spirit. Thank you.

Thank you for all those people who have passed into history, for our family and the Piarist who are in God's presence, for all the persons of good will, for all mankind.

Also and especially thanks to Abel, Adela, Adelio, Adriana, Agendia, Agustín, Aimar, Ainara, Ainhoa, Aitana, Aitor, Aintzane, Aitzol, Alazne, Alba, Albert, Alberto, Alejandro, Alessandra, Alex, Alexandre, Alexis, Alfonso, Alfredo, Altair, Álvaro, Amador, Amagoia, Amarildo, Amaya, Amparo, Ana, Ander, Andoni, Andrea, Andreas, Andrés, Andrew, Ane, Ángel, Ángeles, Antón, Antoine, Antonio, Antxon, Aparecida, Arantxa, Arellys, Arilson, Arnel, Arrate, Arturo, Asier, Augustine, Axun, Ballenynne, Baudilio, Beatriz, Begoña, Belén, Benito, Benjamín, Berna, Bernardeta, Bertrand, Beth, Bibiane, Bienve, Blanca, Borja, Camilo, Carla, Carles, Carlos, Carmelo, Carmen, Carmina, Carolina, Casilda, Caterina, Cecilia, Cecilio, Celia, César, Cesáreo, Charo, Chiquinquirá, Christian Cidinha, Cirilo, Cyrille, Clara, Claudia, Clement, Clemente, Conchi, Constanza, Corina, Crispín, Cristina, Cristóbal, Curro, Dámaso, Damián, Daniel, Dante, Darío, David, Demetrio, Diana, Diego, Dionisio, Domingo, Doris, Eba, Eddy, Eder, Edgar, Edixon, Eduard, Eduardo, Edurne, Edwin, Efren, Egidio, Eladio, Elaine, Elena, Elene, Elisa, Elizabeth, Eloy, Emelio, Emiliano, Emilio, Eneko, Enivaldo, Enrique, Ernesto, Emmanuel, Esperanza, Esteban, Esther, Estibaliz, Eugenio, Eulalio, Eunice, Eva, Evaristus, Fabiana, Fátima, Faustino, Federico, Felicien, Felicita, Felipe, Félix, Fermín, Fernando, Fidencio, Flaminio, Flavia, Flavio, Francesc, Francia, Francisco, Fred, Garazi, Gartxot, Gemma, Genoveva, George, Georges, Georgina, Gerald, Geraldine, Gerardo, Germán, Glaucilene, Gloria, Gonzalo, Gorka, Gotzone, Gregorio, Grover, Guerrero, Guillermo, Haroldo, Héctor, Helena, Heliodoro, Hugo, Humberto, Ibon, Ignacio, Igone, Igor, Iker, Imanol, Inés, Ingrid, Inma, Inohelia, Iñaki, Iñigo, Ion, Iratxe, Irene, Iris, Irune, Isabel, Isidora, Ismelda, Israel, Itxaso, Itziar, Iván, Ixone, Izaskun, Jacinto, Irati, Jacqueline, Jakobo, Jaime, Jan, Javier, Jazmín, Jarbas, Jean, Jennifer, Jesús, Joane, Joao, Joaquín, Joel, Jon, Jone, Jorge, José, Jaume, Joseba, Josefa, Joseila, Joseph, Josi, Josu, Józef, Juan, Juanjo, Juan Mari, Jude, Judith, Julen, Julián, Julio, Juncal, Justine, Justino, Kasimir, Kattalin, Kepa, Kike, Ladislao, Laida, Laura, Lara, Leire, Lenin, Leonard, Leonardo, Leticia, Libia, Lidia, Lino, Loles, Loli, Lorea, Lorenzo, Lourdes, Luis, Luisi, Luiz, Luz, Mabel, Magda, Mahylda, Maia, Maider, Maipi, Maite, Malen, Manel, Manolo, Manuel, Marcel, Marcelino, Marcelo, Marcia, Marcio, Mark, María, Maribel, Marina, Mario, Mark, Marek, Marga, Maritza, Mariví, Mariano, Marisete, Markel, Marta, Martín, Mateusz, Mattin, Matxalen, Mauricio, Max, Maximiliano, Máximo, May, Melvin, Mercedes, Mertxe, Miguel, Mikel, Miren, Miriam, Mirosław, Modesta, Modesto, Moisés, Mónica, Montse, Moses, Muskilda, Nacil, Nagore, Naia, Nany, Natalia, Nati, Natxo, Nazaret, Neida, Nekane, Nelyimar, Nerea, Nidia, Nieves, Noelia, Norberto, Norma, Ofeliz, Oier, Olegario, Olga, Orlando, Oscar, Oskia, Pablo, Paco, Paloma, Pantaleón, Pascual, Patricia, Patxi, Paula, Paz, Pedro, Pepe, Pierre, Pilar, Poliana, Primitivo, Puri, Rafael, Rakel, Ramón, Raquel, Raúl, Regina, Resu, Ricardo, Roberto, Rodolfo, Rogelio, Rogerio, Romeo, Roniyer, Rosa, Rosalinda, Rosalío, Rosario, Rubén, Salvador, Salvadora, Sandra, Santiago, Sara, Saturio, Sebastiao, Secundino, Sergio, Sidonio, Simón, Sonia, Stanislaw, Stephen, Silvia, Suely, Susana, Tailo, Teodora, Terence, Teresa, Thadeus, Thomas, Tomás, Tulio, Txemi, Ugo, Unai, Unax, Uxue, Valentín, Vicente, Víctor, Victorino, Virgile, Walberleno, Wilfred, Willians, Xabier, Yelitza, Yolanda, Yrene, Zacarías, Zaida, Zigor, Zoraida, Zsolt, Zuriñe¹⁸⁷

(Excuse me for not repeating or are compound nouns. Thanks to all).

For the great glory of God and the neighbor's usefulness.

¹⁸⁷ To simplify, I did not repeat names nor compound names. I apologize if you cannot find your name on the list; however, do not worry. Thanks for your contribution to the Pious Schools and their exciting missions.