

ST. JOSEPH CALASANZ

THE FRIEND OF CHILDREN AND
YOUNG PEOPLE



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SAN JOSE DE CALASANZ, de Fernando Negro Marco, Sch.P.
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1. THE SAINT FRIEND OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

This is the story of an extraordinary friend of children and Young people all around the world. Though he was born more than 400 years ago, he lives in the hearts of those who discover and follow him in the most beautiful service a friend can render to another friend: to help him/her become the best person he/she could be.

I am referring to Joseph Calasanz. Well, in reality it is about Saint Joseph Calasanz, for he is a saint that, from heaven, continues working so that no boy or girl in the world may live without the bread of education and of the Gospel

I will tell you his story, so that you too may know him and get in touch with him through prayer, and following his teaching.

Joseph Calasanz was born in 1557, in the village of Peralta de la Sal, province of Huesca, of the Aragonian region, in the North East of Spain. He was the last born in a family of eight siblings; three of them were boys. Though the last, he became the tallest, for in his youth he was nearly two meters tall.

His parents were Pedro Calasanz and Maria Gaston. Mr. Pedro was the Mayor of the village of Peralta de la Sal, and his wife Maria looked after the family with motherly care. The specific job of Mr. Pedro was blacksmith. He used to



Peralta de la Sal

forge the horseshoes for the mules and donkeys of the village, as well as other instruments such as the ploughs, axes, knives and swords.

The most valuable thing in the family of Mr. Pedro and Mrs. Maria was the treasure of their Christian life, which they lived with great devotion and practical dedication. They prayed daily, attended the Eucharist together, memorized the essential prayers as well as the catechism, and lived according to the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. CHILDHOOD OF JOSEPH CALASANZ

Our friend Joseph Calasanz not only learned by heart the good things, but he stored them within, and practiced them. As a little boy, he learned to pray the rosary with its 50 Hail Maries and the 5 Our Fathers. Standing up on a chair he used to gather his friends to pray with them so that they might also learn to practice what he learned at home.

He also memorized the stories of a famous Spanish monk and poet, Gonzalo de Berceo, under the title of MIRACLES OF OUR LADY. Again, Joseph used to climb the chair at the school and, urged by the teacher, narrated to his companions the Miracles of our Lady the Virgin Mary, Mother of God and ours.

But the most beautiful adventure of his childhood was the fighting Joseph maintained with the greatest enemy of humanity, the Devil. Yes, yes, just as I tell you! Mr. Pedro and Mrs. Maria had taught their children that the Devil is the great master of falsehood, the angel of darkness; so Joseph had a brilliant idea: “then I will fight against it, I will kill it and thus God and His loving plan will prevail.”

One day he went to his father’s iron foundry, took the sharpest knife, and came out running toward the outskirts of the village, to an orchard of olive trees, for he thought the Devil was hiding somewhere among the shadows created by the leaves and the branches of the trees in that area of the village.

While running toward the orchard, with the knife girded in his waist and covered by his shirt, Joseph invited his friends to join him. A few of them courageously followed him. Others were skeptical, but they also came to see what the turn out of this adventure would be like. Arriving in the orchard, Joseph fixed his

attention in a shadow, on top of a tree, and he thought it was the Devil, for he is the angel of darkness.

Joseph climbed to the top and threatened him, while invoking the name of Jesus and of the Virgin Mary.



Monument to the Olive Tree

Unfortunately, our hero Joseph Calasanz, who held the knife in his right hand, wanted to take hold of a branch with his left, but the branch was

totally dried, and fell to the ground. He was pained and felt that he had been defeated in this battle, though the real war against evil and the great enemy of God and of humanity, was still going on. Looking upward to the shadow, he challenged it: “you will not defeat me, we will meet face to face later on.”

3. A WELL EDUCATED BOY

Yes, Joseph Calasanz received a very good education not only as Christian, but also in general knowledge such as reading, writing and arithmetic. If a person is instructed in these subjects from childhood, he/she has assured happiness for life. While Joseph parents taught him the path of Christian life at home, the teacher taught him to open his mind to knowledge, observation and curiosity, in the school of Peralta de la Sal, that counted with a population of about 350 people at that time.



Joseph wanted to learn a bit of everything. He was aware that it is not only the spirit to be fed, but the mind and the heart too. Thus he learned to read, to write and to count with ease, for the door of his availability for good things was widely open.

A few years later, the parents of Joseph wished that Joseph continue learning new things, and they sent him to a village called Estadilla, about 20 kms away from Peralta de la Sal. His grandmother, Margarita, lived there. Joseph lived in her home while schooling at the school the Trinitarian Fathers had in that village at the service of people of that surrounding area. Joseph, like Jesus in Nazareth, was growing in wisdom before God and before others. He had something special that attracted many. That's why he got the nickname of "the little saint".

4. IN THE UNIVERSITY OF LERIDA

As an adolescent, in common agreement with his parents, Joseph decided to continue studying, and went to the University of Lerida, not very far away from his village. The university atmosphere was not really the best at that moment, but Joseph remained faithful to what he had learned from his parents as a little child.

Everybody noticed his sense of responsibility in the studies, his way of clothing and, above all, his loving way of treating others. He never fought with anybody; on the contrary, he was an angel of peace. A certain companion called Mateo Garcia, called Joseph “mi Holy Spirit”, for he was troublemaker, and Joseph Calasanz always advised him and saved him from greater dangers. Years later Mateo will remember Joseph Calasanz with deep sympathy.

Calasanz was always faithful to the desire to be the decent person his parents taught him to be, the best according to God’s plan for him. Thus he was a very balanced and calmed person; he was affable and human, while detached from the influence of bad companions.

5. GOD STARTED MAKING HIM FEEL SOMETHING SPECIAL

Yes, God is always seeking to communicate with us, whispering in our hearts, to let us know how much He loves us and what is the unique and personal plan He has for us here on earth.

Everything started with this inner question that Joseph addressed to God: “Lord, tell me what must I be and do for you”. Gradually, a deep conviction from God dawned on him: “I want you to be a priest”. This conviction was growing like branches of a tree in the spring season.

Once he had finished the Humanistic studies in the city of Lerida University, situated toward the Northeast of Peralta, Joseph went with the permission of his parents, for further studies in the University of Valencia. Valencia is a beautiful city near the Mediterranean Sea, beautified by the color and the orange blossom exhaled from the orange trees.

He was 21 years old and he was studying Philosophy there, when a very beautiful girl came about, who invited him to son against purity. Joseph entrusted his life to our Lady of the Helpless, patroness of Valencia and, facing this danger against his priestly vocation, he found inner strength to fight once more against the Devil. Now he adopted a new strategy: to change place. He went to the University if Alcala de Henares, near Madrid, run by the Jesuits. He began Theology there.

It was at this time that he received the sad news of the assassination of his elder brother, Pedro, in a battle. Few days later, another bad news: her dear mother, Mrs. Maria Gaston, had passed away too. Joseph, devastated by this news, was devastated; but he was resistant to go back home, for he feared that his father might oppose his priestly vocation for, since his

elder brother had died, it was his turn to be the heir and head of the family.

6. GRAVELY ILL

Finally, riding a mule, Joseph returned home, in Peralta de la Sal. He related the story of his vocation to his father, and his inner desire to become a priest, something his father rejected now.

It was in this context that Joseph fell seriously ill, with very high fever. His father was really sad and did not know what to do to make his son well again. At a certain moment, when Mr. Pedro visited Joseph, he conveyed his father this message: "Father, if you want me to be well, please, allow me to be a priest." Finally, his father gave Green light to this divine desire, and his son Joseph recovered his health immediately.

Once more, Joseph went back to the University of Lerida, where he finished his Theological studies, a university carrier the seminarians undergo before their priestly ordination. Before his ordination, Joseph received various ministries or "services" in the Church: subdiaconate and diaconate. He was finally ordained a priest in Sanahuja, on December 1583. Joseph was 25 years old.

7. A FINE PRIEST

Joseph Calasanz is now a good priest, intelligent and very clear about his mission as servant of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the Church. That's why several Bishops wanted him closet o them under their immediate orders.

One of them was Msgr. Pascual de la Figuera, who invited Calsaz to be his personal secretary in an important meeting, convoked by the King of Spain, Philip II, in Monzon, about 30 kms distance from Peralta de la Sal. It was the year 1585.

The same bishop picked Calasanz to be his assistant in a solemn visit he had to do in a Benedictine Monastery called Montserrat, a stone throw from Barcelona. There was a problem there among the monks, in such a way, that bishop Pascual de la Figuera appeared poisoned dead after some days. Joseph Calasanz decided to run away from the danger.

As he did in Valencia, surrendering his life to Our Lady of the Helpless, now he flies to Our Lady's patronage, the Brown Lady of Montserrat. From there we reached Peralta de la Sal, where he spent a few months, until his dad passed away. Then he geared his way toward La Seo de Urgel. There he once more put his priestly ministry at work under a new bishop, called Andres Capilla.

He was his secretary, master of ceremonies in the cathedral of Urgel a, above all, he was a good priest at the people's service. After some time, the bishop sent him to an important city called Tremp, of the province of Lerida. He was not only the parish priest of this city, but of various villages nearby.

In a certain occasion, a farmer was going back home with his mule pulling the chariot; the rain had left the path swampy, filled with mud. The chariot and the mule got stocked in the middle of a pool. The farmer got nervous and started shouting and blaspheming, while being cruel with the poor animal. Father Calasanz was passing, came close to the scene, folded up the soutane, placed himself under the belly of the mule, pulled the animal up, and he finally forced both the mule and the chariot to come out. The farmer was filled with shame at seeing the example of that priest who, by the way, exhorted him neither to blaspheme nor offend God.

In another occasion, Father Joseph was taking a walk in the outskirts of Tresp, when he saw a group of idle priests exercising themselves in the sport of throwing of an iron bar. When he saw them, our Fr. Joseph came close and asked them to be allowed to see how far could he throw it. He held the bar and, with a fine athletic gesture, he threw the bar farther than anybody else. He invited them to use properly their time, being faithful to prayer and to the generous service of people.

8. JOURNEY TO ROME



One day, after much meditation and consultation with his bishop, probably due to reasons of ecclesiastical service, but also moved by reasons of personal prestige, Joseph decided to go to Rome. Before, he passed through Barcelona, where he obtained the title of Doctor in Theology and Canon Law.

In 1592, exactly 100 years after the arrival of Christopher Columbus in America, our prestigious Doctor Joseph Calasanz left Barcelona, leading to Rome. His assumption was to return pretty soon to Spain with the honorable title of canon, or maybe –who knows- of bishop. But, you will see, God had reserved a treasure for him that he will gradually discover within.

Once in Rome, he found shelter in a palace of a famous cardinal called Marco Antonio Colonna, where he remained for close to 10 consecutive years. He befriended his family and became the instructor of the cardinal nephews. Help by this cardinal, the great Doctor Calasanz thought that he would immediately obtain

the canonry; but –as I have already told you, things will start complicating, and God will start showing him a better way.

The fact is that the ambitious desire of Joseph was a delicate plate for other competitors who, through unclear ways, were acquiring more privileges than him. Days, weeks, months, and even years were passing amidst fighting and hostilities, and the process was becoming long and boring.

Meanwhile, instead of doing nothing, Father Joseph started taking more seriously his spiritual life through prayer, the sacraments, and the spiritual direction. In the mean time, he became member to several Christian associations dedicated to works of mercy among the pilgrims, taking care of the sick, visiting the prisoners, looking after the poor, teaching the children, etc. He was a very active member of them all indeed.

No matter how much effort he put so that influent persons might help him to obtain the title as a canon, he became frustrated. But God was becoming a more evident reality of his presence, and he started feeling a great regret for having mistaken the priorities in the direction of his life as a priest. God was showing him that the real matter dwells not in honors, but in service, in being close to the suffering, in order to help them come out of their material and spiritual miseries.

Calasanz was really disillusioned, for the machinery was not working according to his initial plans. A few years before, when he was still in the cloud of his dreams, he sent a beautiful golden chalice to the parish in Peralta de la Sal, with the following inscription carved at its bottom: “Pro ferro, aurum” (in place of iron, I send now gold). It was a sign of his human ambition, through which he wanted to impress people; but, from now on,

things begin to take a new direction, towards the service to the poor.

9. A NEW DIRECTION IN THE LIFE OF FATHER JOSEPH

Among the associations in which our candidate to saint worked, the Confraternity of the Christian Doctrine (CDC) was the champion. Its mission consisted in visiting different parishes in Rome, in order to teach the Christian Doctrine to the children, to prepare them to receive the sacraments, and to teach them how to live their life according to their Christian faith, as Jesus in the Gospel teaches us.

One day, visited a parish of a poor neighborhood in Rome, called Trastevere (in Italian it means “the other side of the River Tiber”). He went there with a few laypersons. The fact is that he was touched by something that the parish priest was doing in the sacristy of that parish, by the way called “Saint Dorothy”: besides the Christian doctrine, he was teaching a few bunch of children – almost free of charge- how to read, to write, and to count. It was there where God touched the deepest realm of Joseph’s heart. It was there that he received a very special inspiration: “it would be wonderful that a similar association to the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, devoted itself to teach not only catechism, but also human instruction to poor children.”

Let’s take into account that thousands of children wandered in the city of Rome, doing nothing good, behaving in improper ways. One day, while walking through one of the streets, Joseph saw a group of children, with ragged clothes, playing cards, blaspheming and fight among themselves. He heard a voice within his heart, coming from God: “Do something for these children, be their father and teach them how to live as my Son Jesus has taught you.”

10. FOUNDER OF AN INVENTION CALLED 'SCHOOL FOR ALL'

Calasanz had practically forgotten now the primary ambition of obtaining a canonry, for God was guiding him through a different direction. He now understands that God asks him to do something for poor children, becoming their unconditional friend.

In 1597, Joseph Calasanz made history, when in a simple and humble way, started “the First Popular Christian School in the world”. It is something equal to “the First Public Christian School”. Everything began in the sacristy of the church at Saint Dorothy. The education imparted by Joseph and his collaborators was totally free. They wanted the poorest children to attend it free of any charge. The number of children increased rapidly and the sacristy was unable to lodge them; this is why they decided to transfer the school to a more spacious place in the center of the city of Rome.

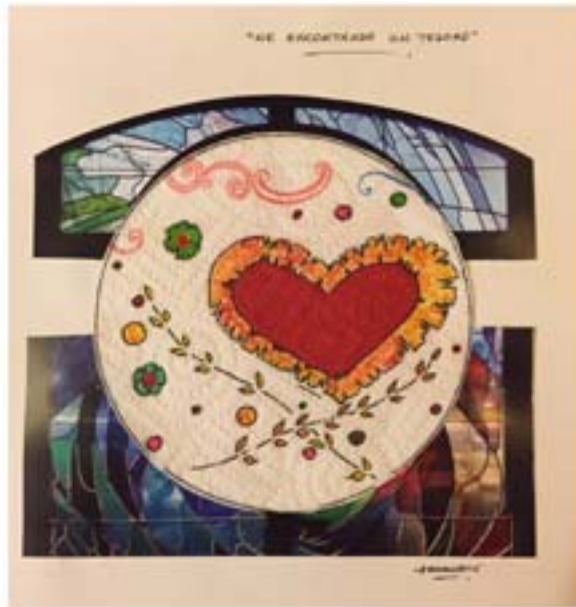
Meanwhile, Calasanz was deepening his spiritual life. In 1599 made a pilgrimage to Assisi, the birthplace of Saint Francis of Assisi, founder of the Franciscan religious family. This saint appear twice to Joseph Calasanz, suggesting him, through a vision of three young girls, to embrace religious life, with the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.

Calasanz was following the inner indications of God in his heart. Besides the service of the school, he was open to help at any time, especially when circumstances were adverse. For example, when the river Tiber was over flooded, there he was saving lives.

In 1601, King Philip III sent a messenger to share the good news that he had granted Joseph a canonry in Seville, one of the most important and beautiful cities in Spain. But he declined the offer, and said NO, with this words: “I have found the definitive to serve

God doing good to these little ones, and I will never leave it for anything in the world.”

Calasanz had burned the boats of his first dreams and ambitions and he will never think again to go back to his native land. He remained in Rome giving education to poor children, for the rest of his life.



11. FAILED ATTEMPTS

Calasanz was realizing the good effects of educating poor children, for it strengthened their will towards goodness and truth. That's why he made the attempt that the Confraternity of the Christian Doctrine might take charge of the recently created schools; but the board of directors answered simply with a NO.

Later on, Joseph tried with the Jesuits, who had started schools for higher education, but they too gave him a categorical NO. Then he called to the door of the Dominican Father. They also said NO, for they were devoted to the university level.

Little by little, Joseph became aware that God wanted him, no other, for this specific mission, that became a wonderful invention, a generous gift for the poor: the popular Christian School. To this invention he put the name THE PIOUS SCHOOLS, which is the same as to say "School for the poor", for in that historical context 'pious was equal to 'poor'. Children received education in 'piety and letters'. We are in the year 1601, and the number of students is now 700.

12. THE PIOUS SCHOOLS

The invention of the Pious Schools is the fruit of the Holy Spirit through the enduring patience of Joseph Calasanz, who always said YES to his inner invitations. He immediately had the contributions of generous collaborators, priests and laypersons alike, who were connected with the dream of educating and evangelizing the poorest children. Some of them gave up rather soon, for they were unable to endure the fatigue of being with the children in the classrooms.

Calasanz renown and his work were increasingly growing, together with the number of students in the school. Everything seemed to go “full steam ahead”.

One day, climbed in a ladder to install a bell in the courtyard of the schools, Calasanz slid away and fell to the ground, breaking his leg and the hip. He was obliged to be in bed for bout six consecutive months. It was in this context that a man of advanced age suddenly came to Calasanz asking to remain with him as teacher. He was wise and an excellent Latin teacher. His name, Gaspar Dragonetti. Joseph Calasanz accepted the offer, and Dragonetti lived with him for the rest of his life. He was 115 years old when he died.

Gaspar was a good man, but he lacked patience and was quite irritable. One day he became very upset and nervous because of the many debts in the schools, due the extreme poverty they experienced. He suddenly called the students and sent them home, without any major explanation. When Calasanz heard of this arbitrary decision, went to meet Gaspar Dragonetti and admonished him with great compassion, for not understanding that divine providence would always supply the deficiencies they were passing through. That very day Calasanz put a box at the

entrance of the school with this label: “Alms for the Pious Schools”. When they opened the box in the evening, they saw that there was a check with a great amount of money.

Another companion and collaborator of Calasanz was the young Glicerio Landriani, who belonged to a very rich and influential family and had recently suffered a process of inner conversion in order to be poor and to serve the poor, in the schools of Joseph Calasanz. It was a pity that he died early, when he had started showing his tremendous qualities as teacher and catechist. Glicerio, whose process of beatification was initiated by Calasanz, invented the method of accompanying children back home, after the school, so that the night might be well secured.



13. THE SCHOOL WAS GROWING AND DOING GOOD

In 1614, the followers of Calasanz, with the approval of Pope Paul V, joined the company of another religious group called 'Clerics of the Mother of God', founded by St. John Leonardi. The number of students continued growing; now they were 1200.

But the attempt to join the Pious Schools with the Religious of the Mother of God, did not work well. Thus pope Paul V decided to separate them again. This happened in 1617. The Pope wanted that Joseph Calasanz begin a new religious congregation that will be called "Congregation of the Pious Schools".

It was by then (1616) that Calasanz, future Superior General of the new religious congregation, founded the first school outside Rome, in Frascati. He sent there five religious, among them the venerable Gaspar Dragonetti and the generous and saintly Glicerio Landriani.

Joseph Calasanz place the new congregation under the patronage of our Lady. The complete name of the new religious family in the church was "Pauline Congregation of the Mother of God of the Pious Schools". Pope Paul V loved the religious congregation so much that that the name of the congregation was 'Pauline'. On March 25, 1617, the first Piarist religious took the habit, consisted in a wide black habit with a sash falling in the left side.

The number of schools started growing, as well as the number of novices and of Piarist religious. It was a heavenly blessing. All for the greatest glory of God and the benefit of the poorest in society, the intimate friends of Joseph Calasanz and his followers.

So that you may appreciate the quality of the education imparted in the Pious Schools, listen to this story: “A farmer was hanging upside down, entangled between the branches of a tall tree. He was in an imminent risk of dying; his son was praying for his father, and inviting the father to do the same. Finally, the farmer saved his life. Somebody asked the child where had he learned to act in that way. The lad answered without hesitation that he had learned it in the Pious Schools of Father Joseph.”

14. THE INVENTION OF THE SCHOOLS IS BECOMING STRONGER

In 1614, Calasanz was walking through a narrow street, when he got a vision that will mark the rest of his life as a religious. He saw a young girl clothed with rags; she was crying and showed a great desolation; she told Calasanz: “Father Joseph, I am lady poverty, and all fly away from me.” Father Joseph wanted to cover her with his mantle, when she disappeared.

Apparently, this event lacks relevance, but Calasanz, felt that God wanted him poor, and that he dedicated his entire life to the poor, with greater passion through the education and evangelization to children. This vision is perfectly connected with the previous one he had had in 1599, when he went on pilgrimage to Assisi. Can you remember?

To cut it short, I will tell you that Calasanz, once he saw clearly that God asked him to remain forever with the little one in the school, deemed it necessary to devote his energies to this task in a total and definitive way. Therefore he asked the Pope that the congregation be upgraded as a Religious Order, which is a more stable and permanent reality. But he was obliged to convince many who opposed his idea and his work. I will explain it later.

Our good Calasanz wrote the Constitutions in 1620. The book of the Constitutions is the document that guides and directs the life of the Piarist Order, regarding everything the Piarists do in their specific service of education and evangelization of children and young people. On August 8, 1622, Pope Gregory XV approved the Piarist Religious Order that is fully alive since its foundation until today, for it is the work of the Holy Spirit.

15. THE ENEMIES OF THE PIOUS SCHOOLS

I will share a confidential matter: God's projects are always filled with light, truth, transparency and generosity. This was the baggage of Calasanz heart. That's why he risked everything and gave everything up. When he arrived in Rome with the title of 'Doctor in Theology and Law', he was quite rich; but he gradually started to put everything at the service of God's cause in educating poor children. He had finally found the treasure within. And he sold everything he had in order to gain all.

If God's matters are filled with light and a brilliant passion of generous service, the Devil's business come filled with darkness, lack of truth, suspicions, condemnations, calumnies, hunger for power and vengeance, etc.

Precisely this is what happened to our Father Joseph Calasanz, for he suffered a great deal inside and outside the Order he founded.

The outside problems came based on negative criticisms made by powerful and rich persons, including cardinals, bishops, and courtesan priests who loved the "dolce vita". Why? Very simple!

They couldn't understand why the lower class of society, beginning with the little ones should be educated. If Calasanz dream continued growing –they thought- they will not have any more servants. They were afraid that through the education, the servants would become a danger, and the rich could not require their services at all.

Calasanz started having problems within the Order too, for there were some priests who could not bear teaching the poor, and preferred to be among the rich, doing things outside the school.

They considered that coming down to the level of the poor, endangered their priestly dignity. The situation created many problems of mutual relationships between Piarists who were priests, and others who weren't.

If the service education had never been easy, in Calasanz time the problematic was much more difficult. Some authors used the literal expression, "the latrines of society", to define what the school was like. They perceived this work as humiliating and lowdown. But the saints have always been like this, like Calasanz, persons who accepted risks for love of God and the poor. They made possible to filtrate the Good News even in the latrines if necessary.

Another initial suffering in the horizon was the level of poverty required by Calasanz for himself and his followers. The most important credential he required from children to be admitted in the schools was that they were really poor. This should be truly certified by the respective parish priest. As you see, God's perspectives are so different from the world's...

16. EDUCATION IN ACTION

I briefly tell you of the inner atmosphere that Calasanz imposed in his schools, so that their dear friends, the poor children, might learn to be the persons God dreamed them to be.

It was customary that teachers punished the stubborn children with corporal punishment. But in the school of Calasanz this was forbidden, unless it were totally necessary, and exceptionally, in extreme cases. Even then, they shouldn't use the whip, and they should apply over the clothes, never touching directly the flesh. Besides, the person inflicting the punishment should always be other than the direct teacher, so that he may not be guided by resentment against the students.

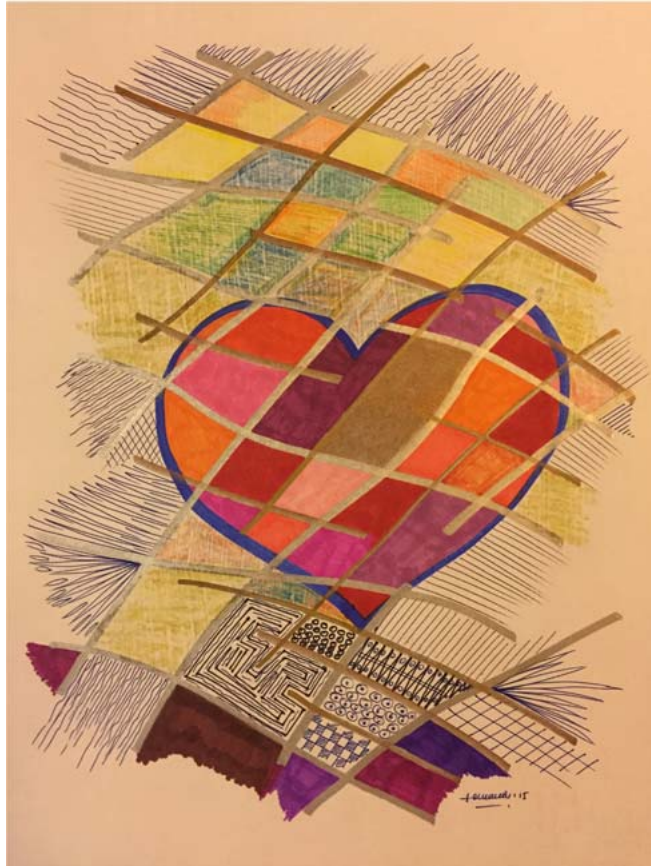
For Calasanz prevention was more important than curing. Thus he invented the so called preventive method of education, that essentially consists in teaching the truth about what is good and bad, motivating the student to embrace goodness and abhor evil. Since the will power is many times weak, Calasanz invited the students to pray and to practice the sacraments, especially the sacrament of confession.

Whenever someone had behaved badly, he recommended that, instead of harsh punishment, he were invited to have a good confession. Why did he act this way? He was convinced that the power of Gods grace is stringer that the punishment's. Punishment can externally 'tame' a person, but grace can 'transform' the heart at each stage of human development.

For Saint Joseph Calasanz and his followers, education was, and continues being, a matter of the heart. It is not only about storing knowledge in the brain to be wise, but also about transforming

the heart to be able to love as God loves, and about strengthening the will so that it may be docile to God's will.

Therefore true education embraces the totality of the person. This was the intuition of Calasanz, written in his motto PIETY AND LITTERACY. In his schools were admitted Catholics, but also Christians from other denominations, and Jews too. Today we find among our students, children who are Hindus, Jews, Muslims, etc.



17. DEVOTION TO MARY, THE MOTHER OF GO

Joseph Calasanz had prayed in front of many images over the year: Our Lady of the Mora in Peralta de la Sal, Our Lady of the Helpless in Valencia, Our Lady of Montserrat in Barcelona, Our Lady of Pillar in Zaragoza... But most important was that he had the love for the Mother of God within, always and everywhere, in his heart.

That's why, when Calasanz started changing his life direction, according to God's plan, he even changed his name. Since March 25, 1617, the new congregation will be called "Pauline Congregation of the Poor of the Mother of God of the Pious Schools". Since then Joseph will never sign 'Doctor Joseph Calasanz', but 'Joseph of the Mother of God'. A clear and powerful sign: his congregation and his person, under the loving protection of the Mother of Jesus Christ, God-with-s.

He composed the beautiful prayer entitled THE CROWN OF THE TWELVE STARS. In this prayer we exalt the Most Holy Trinity through Mary, Daughter of God the Father, Mother of God the Son, Spouse of the Holy Spirit, Living Temple and Tabernacle of the Holy Trinity.

He created the so called 'continual prayer', that consists in praying in the oratory of the schools, each half an hour, a group of about 12 students at a time, directed by a Piarist member. The prayer was based on the CROWN OF THE TWELVE STARS, and other intercessory prayers for the Church, the Order, the schools, the families, and other needs of society and of the world.

Our good friend and founder, Saint Joseph Calasanz, wanted that all meetings and gatherings finished with this beautiful prayer:

***“We fly to thy patronage, oh Holy Mother of God,
Despise not our petitions in all our necessities,
But from all kind of dangers always deliver us
Oh, ever blessed Virgin Mary”***

I invite you to learn it by heart and to recite it frequently each day of your life.

Calasanz gave order to build the sanctuary dedicated to the Mother of God in Frascati, where the Piarists had the first foundation outside Rome, in 1616. He brought personally the image of our Lady personally. It consists in an icon of Mary, crowned as Queen, holding tenderly her Son Jesus. Joseph urged his sons to pray constantly to Mary, for her patronage and protection is the stronghold of those loved by God.



Our Lady of the Pious Schools

18. THE MIRACLE OF THE EYE AND OTHER MIRACLES

In a certain occasion, at recreation time, two children were playing in the court of the school of St. Pantaleo, when things became serious and both started to fight. Accidentally one of them hurt seriously the eye of his companion that was practically out of its orbit. The boy started to cry loudly, and blood was flowing out. Here is arriving our saintly Father Joseph who knelt before the child, took the eye, put it back in its cavity as if nothing had happened, looked at him with sympathy, and blessed him with these words: “my child, all is well, be not afraid and go back to your classroom”. The child was completely healed.

This wasn't magic, but an merciful and loving action of God through the Saint. Remember, dear friend, the closer we are to God, the easier his Grace acts in us and through us. That's all.

In another occasion a Piarist Father called Melchior Alachi, who was somehow extravagant and adventurer, was very sick, to the point that doctors thought he was at the brink of death, due to very high fever. But Father Jose told them clearly that his sickness was not really serious and that he would be well soon. Doctors laughed at Father Joseph's reaction. The fact is that a few hours later, Father Alachi got well, walking on the streets, as if nothing had happened.

While visiting Naples in another occasion, Father Joseph healed doctor Aniello di Falco; besides, the nephew's doctor was converted, and eventually became a Piarist.

A lady had given birth to beautiful babe. While breastfeeding him in bed, the mother fell asleep and, accidentally asphyxiated the child for lack of oxygen. This lady flew anxiously to Father Joseph for help. He held the child in his arms and calmed down the lady

with words of hope and compassion; then he called a bunch of children and went together to the oratory to pray before an image of Our Lady the Virgin Mary. Immediately the child began to breath normally and came back to life. You can imagine the joy of the mother, who started praising God through the Blessed Mother of Jesus.

Another miracle took place in Naples, in 1626, when the civil authorities evacuated a building where 600 people of bad reputation –many involved in prostitution- had their nest. That building became a school of the Piarist Fathers, called the “Duchesca College”. Eight days after its inauguration, there were 400 students receiving Christian education. This is precisely the meaning of “educative charity”.

There was time of severe epidemic, called ‘the plague, that took away many human lives. People were filled with fears and sadness. The government declared the schools closed. In that context, our Holy Founder could not remain with arms folded. He came out to the streets and started helping as many as he could. He even healed a few Piarists who fell sick and mourned the death of others who were affected while taking care of those disturbed by the plague.

As a jovial anecdote I will let you know that our adventurer Father Alachi, who did not wish to be contagious not to contaminate others, visiting Venice, constructed a house on top of a tree, in order to breath fresh and healthy air.

19. THE OPEN MIND OF ST. JOSEPH CALASANZ

As people saw the good fruits of Joseph's work of education and evangelization, many asked him, who was the General Superior of the Order, to found schools in their cities and villages. He had so many requests, that it was impossible to honor them all. He was always attentive to those petitions and tried to send Piarists there, but he could not satisfy many of them.

He used to say that if he had 10,000 Piarists he would immediately post them where they were requested. But unfortunately he did not have those numbers. He founded communities and schools in Italy, and also abroad: in Check, Hungary, Poland, and other places in Central Europa. We can say that the Order of the Pious Schools was a missionary one from the very beginning of his foundation, always at the defense and the service of the expansion of the Gospel, through the education and the evangelization of poor children, from their tender age.

He has an open mind, for he wasn't embarrassed to befriend wise people, though the Inquisition persecuted some. Such was the case of Galileus Galilei, who had been called twice by this inquisitive organization, due to his heliocentric conception of the Universe that was against narrow-minded theological ideas of the time. Galileus sustained that the earth gravitated around the sun, not the contrary.



When Galileus became old and blind, Calasanz allowed that two Piarists were his personal secretaries. We are in 1639.

Another person Calasanz befriended, with whom he counted in the formation of Piarists seminarians, was the Dominican Father Tomasso Campanella, who had been imprisoned for several years by the Inquisition. Calasanz hosted him in Frascati where he imparted Philosophy to the Young professed Piarists.

Calasanz sought to have an army of good educators, above all priests, to help children the persons they could be, according to God's plan for each of them. He gave up everything he had, all his life, for this mission. This is what he wrote in 1624: "Since the past year I had been suffering with an hernia in one side, and since a few days ago, in both sides. But it doesn't hinder me to serve and suffer for His love whatever it may come, particularly in the service we Piarists do for the transformation of children through their education."

20. THE INNER LANDSCAPE OF OUR FOUNDER

He was a humble and simple person, ready to abase himself and do whatever necessary for love of the little ones: he swept the classrooms, prepared the ink in the inkwells, had prepared the fountain pens, went to the streets begging for alms for the schools, washed the dishes took care of the order and discipline of the schools, and he liked to visit the students –above all little ones- in the classrooms. Besides he accompanied them back home after the school period. For Calasanz, a Piarist plays the role of the guardian angel we all have from the moment of our conception and birth.

He looked after the sick with particular affection and tried that they might not lack anything. For him, the most important thing was not about being a priest or a prominent figure, but to be a saint, that means to do things without being self-referential, for pure love of God and the poor.

That is the reason why he invited all, especially the superiors, to abase themselves to the level of children, to be like them, to visit their classrooms, as he used to do even in his old age. He lived and died as a poor. His cause was God's cause, whom he served through education and evangelization, in the context of a 'school for all', invented by himself.

He was concerned with social matters. That's why he wrote in the preamble of his Constitutions: "If children are diligently imbued for their tender age in piety and letters, they will without any doubt have a happy course for the rest of their life." The rich had well secured their financial and educational system. The poor, on the contrary, were marginalized in the peripheries of the big cities and of the institutions. The school for all was a revolutionary idea

that uplifted human history helped by the Gospel and human knowledge.

This was Saint Joseph Calasanz: without evading the sweetness of heart he remained persistent in his inner convictions in favor of the needy, for whom he became their voice, a sheer opportunity to improve themselves through the exceptional gift of the education for all, beginning by the least and the last, the poorest among the poor.

21. ONCE MORE, THE DEVIL

Do you remember the fight of Calasanz against the Devil, on top of the olive tree, in Peralta de la Sal when he was a little child? He lost that battle, but now he was gaining the war through his faithfulness to the light he received from the Holy Spirit.

The enemy, the Devil that is always like a roaring lion, searching for someone to devour, came again to meet Calasanz. I already spoke of the strategic plan of this unwanted actor: obscurity, lies, and appearance of fake sanctity. He dwells wherever there is ambition and evil doing. Let me explain it in practical ways.

This was a man born in Florence, who at age 40 knew the Piarist Fathers. His name was Mario Sozzi. The fact is that, though he did not like teaching, he was admitted to the Piarist novitiate and, eventually, he was ordained priest. He was then sent to Florence, where above all, he used to hear confessions.

There was a famous woman in Florence called Faustina, who had under her care, in her home, a group of young girls. Apparently they all had a very devoted and pious life, but the truth is that underneath they were covering up a real scandal, with a dissolute life, connected with prostitution.

One of these girls, on the occasion of visiting the church of the Piarist Fathers, went to confession and, there she found Fr. Mario in the confessional. The girl spoke in confession about the abusive behavior they were suffering in the home of Faustina, under the protection of a corrupt priest who hid himself covered with the mask of false holiness. Father Mario Sozzi requested that she speaks of the matter outside the confessional. The girl agreed, and Sozzi communicate the case to the Inquisition in

Florence, beginning a process that gradually became a huge spider web.

The incident awoke in Sozzi a great ambition that was fed by the “good reputation” he acquired before the Inquisition. He even accused the Piarists in Florence to the Inquisition in Rome, for things that were very mine and bizarre. The Piarists requested that he abandon Florence.

Nevertheless the assessor of the Inquisition asked Mario to return to Florence, though he knew he would not be welcome by the Piarists in that community. Sozzi accused the Piarists of heretics, for befriending Galileo Galilei, who lived in Florence.

The matter is that, amidst the diabolical maneuvers, the assessor asked that Fr. Sozzi were appointed provincial superior of the Toscana Region, to where Florence belonged. Now, yes, the Devil begins to act with absolute freedom. He used the unbalanced personality of Mario Sozzi and his tendency to a paranoiac persecution complex, creating thus the perception that he was the victim of the Piarist community attacks. He wrote letters to the assessor, who forced Father Joseph, General of the Piarist Order, to oblige everybody to obey this unstable Father Sozzi.

22. THINGS CONTINUE COMPLICATING

Well, well! Father Sozzi went from Florence to Rome once more. He found lodging in the General House in Saint Pantaleo, where Joseph Calasanz lived together with his assistants. For several weeks they were missing the letters from the Piarist community of Florence to the General in Rome. Thus everybody started to assume that Father Sozzi might have diverted the mail. This was the reason why the Cardinal protector of the Order gave the instruction to inspect Father Sozzi's room. Sozzi felt embarrassed and humiliated.

He went to report the incident to the assessor of the Inquisition, under the pretext that it had been Father General, with his assistants, who ordered the inspection. But it wasn't true. But, based on the "let Father general and his assistants be punished and imprisoned!" the verdict was given and they were taken from the Piarists house to the Inquisition cell, in the Vatican.

It was August 15, 1642. The assessor went to the General house of St. Pantaleo, called the Saint and his assistants, and stated: "I declare you prisoners of the Inquisition". They ignored what was going on. But they obeyed and, under the infernal sun of the Roman summer, the old saintly man, Calasanz, 84 years old, with his assistants, came out in the streets, hands tied, walking toward the Vatican like criminals. It was Friday, a very appropriate day to remember and imitate the Master, who had run the same fate many years before, in Jerusalem, on the way to Calvary.

From midday until 6:00 pm, they were in a room, with nobody to explain the reason why this was taking place. Our friend, the Saint of children, who had his conscience at peace, fell deeply asleep. At 6:00 pm, the assessor arrived after having enjoyed his good meal and siesta, and told the accused: "You will not leave until

you bring back the documents stolen to Father Mario Sozzi yesterday.”

It was then that they understood the matter of the accusation. They were innocent, for the order of inspecting the room had been given by Cardinal Cesarini. It was the Cardinal himself who gave order to bring Fr. General and the assistants back home, in his own chariot, with honors.

Do you know the reaction of Calasanz? Only a saint like him could have reacted this way: “I went meditating the sufferings of Jesus on the way to Calvary”. How proud should we be, for having this great a saint, the unconditional friend of children!

23. EVERMORE COMPLICATED

Mario Sozzi went back to Florence, but the governor of the region, the Duke Fernando II, sent him exiled in a period of 24 hours. Sozzi brought his complaint once more to the assessor, who pronounced this terrible threat: "I have a premonition that the exile of Fr. Sozzi will be the cause of the Order's ruin." I will not enter in details, but I will tell you that the Inquisition sent a decree providing notification that Joseph Calasanz wasn't the General Superior anymore, and his assistants ceased in their position. From now on, Father Mario Sozzi would govern the Order with the help of an Inspector.

I can assure you that the panorama seemed to end in disaster. Thank God the Inspector was a good, prudent and wise man, called Augustine Ubaldini, who immediately realized the diabolic trick against the holy Founder. Maybe this was the reason why he declined his responsibility a few weeks later. The assessor appointed a new Inspector in the person of the malign Silvestre Pietrasanta, a Jesuit.

Pietrasanta and Mario were a headache for Joseph Calasanz. Mario insulted him with words such as "senile man". One day, Calasanz brought a sum of money somebody gave him to support the cause of beatification of Glicerio Landriani, the young Piarist of whom I already told you, who died as a novice. Our saint, good and honest as he was, handed over the money to Father Mario, now the Superior, but asked him a few coins to buy some holy pictures. Mario took a bunch of them and was giving them to our holy friend, one by one, with sarcasm and ridicule. Having finished the amusement, Mario went laughing loudly to celebrate with his friends the contempt he had given to the saint.

24. THE SAD END OF THE EVIL DOERS

God writes right in crooked lines. This is what happened, for after some time, Mario fell gravely ill, something like leprosy that brought him pain and, finally, death. He died depressed and abated. Calasanz tried to visit him in several instances, but Mario refused to welcome him. That's why he sent one of his assistants, Father Peter Casani, who brought a blessing on behalf of Calasanz.

Immediately after Mario's death, they had already provided a successor, Father Stephen Cherubini, a Piarist whose past life was splashed with bad actions regarding his relationships with some students. He came out from a noble family related to the Inquisitorial power. All the Piarists were indignant at this abuse and mistreatment of the Order.

Remember, the Devil seeks to complicate things and his strategy is to invade the ecclesiastical structures by taking over the heart of people who appear externally holy, though internally are filled with ambition and priorities disconnected with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

25. THE APPARENT ANNIHILATION OF GOOD PEOPLE.

Pope Innocent X signed the document of the practical destruction of the Piarist Order on March 16, 1646. The assessor of the Inquisition went once more to the General House, called the community and read the document. The holy and venerable Father was really sad with this news, but he immediately and unconditionally accepted God's will with these words: "The Lord gave it to us, and the Lord has taken it back. Blessed be his holy name." It was the moment in which, like Abraham at Moount Moria, Joseph accepted the sacrifice of his only son.

He was 89 years old and he was gradually arriving to the final end of his pilgrimage on earth. Besides, Cherubini and Pietrasanta, the Inspector, accused him of the collapse of his Order. Almost impossible to believe, but true!

But, attention! God is going to write once more right in crooked lines. A few days later, Pietrasanta suddenly died in his room, while Pietrasanta got a sickness similar to leprosy, as it had happened before to Mario Sozzi. Calasanz to visit him and consoled him. In this case Cherubini repented and asked for forgiveness. Obviously, Calasanz forgot him full heartedly. It is January, 1648, and Joseph Calasanz was 91 years old.

Saint Joseph Calasanz, the great friend of children, never stopped loving them, for he loved God in them. Many Piarists were sad and distressed; a good number of them had left the congregation and joined other religious families or were admitted in the secular clergy. Others were temped to do the same. But Joseph exhorted them –in writing and by word- to not abandon, for everything happening around was the play of the Evil one, but God will always have the last word.

Calasanz never ceased to pray, hoping against any hope. He wrote to a Piarist who lived in the city of Nikolsburg, Check, in these terms: "Be not discouraged, for we hope in the Lord that everything will be well, if we remain united."

Calasanz always saw hope, obedience and active acceptance of God's plans. His favorite sentence was this: "let's allow God to act". He was convinced that, in the apparent absence of God, He was persistently present, and that, soon or late, He would eventually conquer the Evil One.

26. WHEN A FRIEND IS NO MORE, SOMETHING DIES WITHIN

In the middle of July 1648, Joseph came out from home for the last time; he went to the Church of the Savior to pray and to gain plenary indulgence. While returning home, lacking good sight, stumbled against a stone and hurt his toes, as he used open sandals.

On August 1 of the same year, our Saint presided his last Eucharist, in the oratory of Saint Pantaleo, close to his room, and went lie down. Next day, August 2, he woke up only to attend the Eucharist celebrated by Fr. Vincent Berro and, surrounded by children, received holy communion.

Calasanz suffered great pain in the liver, for his body was really wasted out loving so passionately children, and God in the children.



He would never wake up again. The end of the race was at hand. An end that would be the beginning of everything, as it happened with Jesus, who was raised from the dead and now lives forever. The strength of a saint does remain in the number of years he lives, but on the passionate love he has for God. While staying in bed, a lady called Victoria Gracci entered Calasanz room holding his little babe in her arms; the baby had his legs deformed, and asked Calasanz to pray for him. Father Joseph touched the little

feet, prayed and caressed the child. Immediately later, the babe was completely healed.

The students were praying for their friend, Father Joseph, who had suffered so much for love of them, and to whom he had left the perennial gift of a school for all. In the mean time he encouraged all to be united and offered his sufferings for the Pious Schools, in unity with his Mother, the Catholic Church. On August 12 he received Holy Communion. When the Blessed Sacrament arrived Joseph said: “ this is the tribunal of the truth”. Then he asked for forgiveness in case he had offended someone.

He used to say: “the doctors do not know my sickness. When the Lord wishes to take someone to heaven, He takes away the knowledge of the illness cause, and thus they cannot apply the opportune remedy. I have high fever and I am very thirsty. I give up water to drink as much as I can for pure love of God. Pray for me that I may be conformed with divine will.”

He was constantly thinking of the Piarist Family and the children. His life was being consumed like the flickering wick that is about to disappear. But he never lost conscience.

He had always felt in communion with the Catholic Church, and now that he was about to go to heaven, he decided to make a gesture of unity with his Mother Church. He sent Father Berro and Father Fedele to the Basilica of Saint Peter in the Vatican, to place their heads under the statue of Peter the Apostle on his behalf. He was thrilled with joy when they came back and informed him of their mission accomplished, and of the special blessing given by the Pope. He was about to die marked by a clear sign as a true son of the Church.

Our Lady came to visit him in several moments to give him consolation, assuring him that pretty soon he would fly to heaven, in union with all the Piarist who had gone ahead of him. He confided to Fr. Castelli the following message: “Yes, Our Lady has told me to be happy, that I should not have any doubt.”

Those who visited him asked for his blessing. During those painful days, Father Berro slept in the same room to take good care of the old saint. The saint was already prepared for the definitive encounter with the Beloved.

27. “I DIE BECAUSE I DO NOT DIE”

Calasanz died on August 25, 1648, at age 91. His personal secretary, Fr. Berro left a moving account of Calasanz death that I transcribe here, about to finish this reflection: “It was 12:00 o’clock in the night. The two fathers who were keeping vigil on him thought that he started agonizing. They rang the community bell and everybody, Fathers and Brothers, came down. Knelt down, Fr. Castilla intoned the recommendation of the soul. Our Father, agonizing, paid attention with the eyes fixed on high. He looked like somebody healthy reciting his prayers. He remained this way until we heard the sound of the one o’clock after midnight. Immediately, lifting his hand in a gesture of blessing us, he entered in real agony. The Fathers continued reciting the litany of the saints. And he finally expired his last while pronouncing clearly the most blessed names of Jesus and Mary, thus he gave up his soul to the Creator. It was exactly 1:30 am, August 25, festivity of St. Bartholomew Apostle. While the Father was agonizing, all were crying with tenderness for their beloved progenitor. But after expiring all were filled with such a great joy that started to embrace one another. So deep was the joy that it seemed that inwardly and outwardly he was not dead, but risen. Their commotion was so great that all seemed to be drunk of divine love”

28. THE RESURRECTION

In the morning of August 25, 1648, they placed the saint in the Church of Saint Pantaleo, upon a simple catafalque. A Little boy called Tomasso, seeing the body entering in the church, began to shout, “the Saint, behold the Saint, behold the Saint!” The news reached the last corner of Rome like the ringing of a bell.



A woman with a paralyzed arm, got well as soon as she touched the body. Many people arrived like an avalanche, and Rome was like paralyzed. As soon as Pope Innocence X heard the news, he sent some members of the Swiss Guard to keep vigil before the dead body, trying to put order among the multitude that came to venerate him. Many wanted to have a relic from the Saint, and tried to cut a piece from his clothes.

In the morning of August 27, Calasanz was buried in the church of Saint Pantaleo, and many came to venerate him as a saint. On that day the sun did not cry of sadness, but clothed itself with a beautiful luminosity, because Joseph, who hade love children as nobody had done before, had entered heaven and, from there, he was blessing them now more than ever before.

Fruit of our dear friend, Saint Joseph Calasanz, were miracles like these ones:

- Salvador Morelli, half of his body paralyzed, began to walk normally when he kissed the feet of Joseph, when the body was exposed in the church of Saint Pantaleo.
- Sister Christina Cecherini, from Florence, paralyzed due to the damage of her backbone, was healed immediately in front of the relic of the Saint friend of children.
- A weaver from Florence, with a severe heart illness, was healed in the same manner. Other sick people got well through the invocation of the name of the Saint.

29. CALASANZ, ALIVE TODAY

No matter the persecutions and sufferings, we must proclaim that Saint Joseph Calasanz and his work are still alive, because Christ has overcome forever the power of the Evil One. I tell you the following, so that may never forget:

In 1656 Pope Alexander VII recognized again the Pious Schools as Religious Congregation of simple vows.

In 1669, his successor Pope Clement IX elevated again the Pious Schools to the Rank of Religious Order of solemn vows.

The same Innocence X, who has written the document of the destruction of the Order Pious Schools, authorized in 1650 to begin the ordinary process of beatification of our dear friend Joseph Calasanz.

On August 18, 1748, Pope Benedict XIV solemnly proclaimed him Blessed, in the Basilica of Saint Peter, in the Vatican.

In 1755 was erected a statue inside the Basilica of Saint



Peter, fabricated by the sculptor Innocence Spinazzi, in a niche in the transept of the Basilica.

On July 16, 1767, Clement XIII canonized Joseph Calasanz.

On August 13, 1948 –third centenary of his death- Pope Pius XII declared Saint Joseph Calasanz “Celestial Patron Saint of all the popular Christian schools in the world”.

His feast is celebrated every 25th of August, when entered heaven. But many Piarist centers in the world celebrate his feast also on November 27, following the liturgical calendar before Vatican II, and for being more pastorally convenient.

We, the Piarist Fathers, are a beautiful reality today, through which the Risen Lord is proclaimed alive, following the footsteps of our Holy Founder. To be a Piarist is a way to a joyful holiness, ministering generously to children and young people, especially the poorest. The Piarists do not seek honors and privileges; our life is simple, and we prepare ourselves to be good educators and evangelizers, according to the present circumstances of our time.

Today we are present in 35 different countries. We are about 1400 religious, distributed in 250 communities. Though our most natural ambience is the school, we also give importance to missions, to non-formal education, youth groups, parishes, small Christian communities, development programs, Calasanzian Fraternities, schools of Christian leadership, etc. All this in communion with the Church, for we feel we are her children.

We are an Order of priests, but we also have a feminine branch, founded by Saint Paula Montal (1799-1889) so extend our ministry also to the girls. The charism of the Piarist Fathers and of the Piarist Sisters is the same: to educate children and young people,

in piety and literacy, from their tender age, especially the poor, assisting the families.

There are other Piarists who have also been elevated to the altars: Saint Pompilio Maria Pirrotti (1710-1766), Blessed Peter Casani (1572-1647), companion of St. Joseph Calasanz, Blessed Faustino Miguez (1831-1925), founder of the Calasanzian Sisters the Daughters of the Divine Shepherdess, the Blessed Martyrs of the Pious Schools who gave up their lives for love of children and Young people, as Jesus did, Blessed Anthony Maria Schwartz (1852-1929) founder in Austria of the religious congregation of the 'Kalasantiner', and Blessed Celestina Donati (1848-1925), founder of the Calasanctiane Sisters in Italy.

Today in our schools and works boys and girls are educated together. The Pious Schools counts on many lay collaborators in the Calasanzian Fraternities, who share our mission, following the teachings of Saint Joseph Calasanz.

30. GOOD BYE

It has been my pleasure to share with you, telling the story of this soul friend of children. I would like to say good bye in gratitude for the time we have spent together. I wish that everything you might have learned, remain installed in your mind and in your heart.

Do not forget that it is worth to be a saint under the pattern of Saint Joseph Calasanz. Commit your endeavours to his protection and, if God calls you to follow the footsteps of this beautiful way of holiness, do not hesitate and say YES. You will never regret it.

In many parts of the world boys and girls sing daily this HYMN TO ST. JOSEPH CALASANZ:

O, Father who for children
Have cared all your life,
We want to sing your glories
Always thankful to God

**Hail Calasanz, you listen
To the voice of our hearts,
Listen to our prayers
And bless us all with love.**

You, Calasanz, for children
Have given all you had.
We thank you for your life today
In joyful praise to God.

You kindled flames of piety
In your students' souls
Help our modern youngsters
In faith and love to grow

You are of all Christian Schools
The Patron Saint and guide.
With Piety and knowledge
May they flourish and shine



***“keep, O Lord, my heart at peace,
always close to you.
You who calm the wild waves of the sea”
(José de Calasanz)***

