



LETTER OF THE IV ADVISORY COUNCIL TO THE ITAKA-ESCOLAPIOS NETWORK
AND THE PIOUS SCHOOLS

Dear Piarist religious, dear people who are part of the Piarist Fraternity and those who participate in various ways in the Itaka-Escolapios Network and the Pious Schools.

We are writing to you in the final moments of the IV Advisory Council of the Itaka-Escolapios Network. This Council meets every three years to evaluate the progress of our network and to plan the steps we want to take. This year, moreover, the Advisory Council coincided with the 20th anniversary of the legal recognition of the Itaka-Escolapios Foundation, which has been an even greater reason to rejoice. The fact that this Council had to be held online meant a great loss, especially in terms of the quality of the personal meeting and the time available, but this was compensated in a certain sense by the greater number of participants it allowed.

The first thing we want to convey to you is the feeling of joy and communion that remains. At some point during these four days, more than 70 people from 22 countries and four continents came together. On 9 March, at the first international meeting of volunteers on the occasion of our 20th anniversary, more than 120 volunteers came together to share our experiences and dreams. It was an exciting occasion to visualise that our Network is today a reflection of the diversity and interculturality of the Pious Schools. Following our vocation to serve the strengthening and growth of the Piarist mission, Itaka-Escolapios is today present in many of the youngest presences of the Order, as we have been able to see in this IV Advisory Council and it is a reason for our joy.

The teams of Volunteering, Training, Communication, Awareness Raising and Management and Fundraising have conveyed to us the importance of promoting these areas in each Demarcation and in each place in order to be able to share more intensely the richness that we have as a Network.

In addition to reviewing the work and the rich experiences shared, and following the mandate that called us to “find new paths”, during these days we have been able to reflect and dream about where we want to go in the next six years.

Fr. General pointed us in the direction of assuming our role in the Order as a platform in the field of participation, without abandoning the image of being a tool exclusively linked to economic support, but going beyond it. In this sense, our new Strategic Plan includes as its first objective the strengthening of the shared Piarist subject, from our contribution in Piarist identity, in formation for leadership and mission, in global awareness, in interculturality, both in the Order and in the Fraternity.

Fr. Javier Aguirregabiria, on behalf of the Executive Committee, called on the whole Network to make the contribution of Itaka-Escolapios more visible in every place where it is present and



to promote the prominence of all. Without this, it is impossible to gather support, to call more people to the mission or to extend the reach of the Network. The next six years are going to be key in this endeavour to make the Itaka-Escolapios Network more present and more deeply known in the Order and the Fraternity.

We cannot forget, however, that all our reflection and organisation is directed towards a better performance of the mission to which we have been called by God and the Church. Educating, evangelising and transforming society, especially among the poorest children and young people, is the *raison d'être* of the Pious Schools and, therefore, of the Itaka-Escolapios Network. All our efforts would be worthless if we did not push History a little bit each time towards the World of sisters and brothers that God wants.

It is true that we live in difficult times, in which those who suffer the most see that when the threat is global and affects all people, they are still the last to be cared for, to be healed, to be vaccinated or simply to be considered in the plans for economic recovery.

Those of us who have gathered in this Advisory Council, and the whole Itaka-Escolapios Network, are committed to promote together the Piarist mission among those who need it most, at this time with even greater dedication, if possible. We are challenged to redouble our efforts to maintain and expand the scope of our educational centres, our homes, our cultural centres, our socio-educational projects and the Calasanz Movement, so that they can respond to an increasingly harsh reality.

It only remains for us to ask for the collaboration of those who share this dream so that we may join forces, knowing that we place ourselves in the hands of God, whom we ask, through the intercession of our Mother Mary, to give us the necessary wisdom and courage to continue to be faithful to the mandate of Love that Joseph Calasanz received and transmitted to us. May it be so.

IV Advisory Council of the Itaka-Escolapios Network

11th March 2021