

Lecture from the General Council

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THREE LOOKS OF FRATERNITY WALKING

Let us start with an image: the Fraternity is a daughter of the Order, which has different ages and sensitivities depending on the place and moment when it is born, that carries the same genes as the Mother and that Calasanz, and who is called to be a person – an adult entity that also lives, embodies and co-responsibility of the Piarist charism today, to keep alive the Piarist spirituality, mission and life.

This fact can be looked at from different perspectives and so we will do it now: from the point of view of the Order, of the Fraternity itself and from the mission to which God calls us.

Fraternity is born when we realize, religious and lay people, in an institutional way, that we have the same charism, that we share the same spirit that Calasanz initiates, that we are a family with different vocations, with diverse and complementary realities. Fraternity arises when the Order discovers that it has given birth to a new Piarist reality, when the Fraternity sees in the Order the Mother who has given her a life of her own and full.

A mother or father begins to be a mother or father when she has a child. Parents make the child and the son transforms the woman into a mother. It is a simultaneous process of novelty and life. This image can help us to live fully the moment we meet and to become aware that the Order is changing as a mother and the Fraternity as a daughter.

1. A look from the Order

The Order has never been or is sterile today: it has always had children... religious who follow in the footsteps of Calasanz, works that are transforming life of people and places... and of course, thousands of collaborators, benefactors and participants of the Piarist works.

This generating new life always takes time and a process. From the beginning of the first school in Santa Dorotea (1597) to the birth of the Congregation (1617) or the Order (1621) it took years, events, various attempts and "the fortunate daring and the persevering patience of St. Joseph Calasanz".

The Calasanzian family (1792) has also been a form of fruitfulness of the Spirit in Calasanz. And life and collaboration in this Calasanz family reminds us of the ability to generate Calasanzian life in all times and in well-valid and novel ways, after many years.

It is also being a very fruitful fruit that is transforming our Order the beginning in America (Guanabacoa in Cuba in 1857), in Asia (Japan, 1950) and in Africa (Senegal, 1963). These options and these new Pious Schools give more life to the Order and its mission in the world, at the same time that they transform it, allowing us to remain very alive after more than 400, thanks to the Spirit that continues to encourage us.

We are now in a new moment of motherhood of the Order. From Calasanz, the laity have always participated, even in what we now call "joint communities" from the beginning. The Pious Schools have been and are unthinkable without the collaboration of thousands of educators, catechists, volunteers, benefactors, participants of a very different type.

Since the Second Vatican Council, since the Special General Chapter (1969), there have been many initiatives to give more entity and prominence to the laity. It should be noted, in recent decades, the importance of the first document on fraternity (1988), the framework document of the laity, which presents the modality of charismatic integration and fraternity (General Chapter 1997), the new document of "The Fraternity of the Pious Schools" and the official launch of the General Fraternity (2011) and the "Directory of Participation" (General Chapter 2015), where recognition has been given to these new sons and daughters of the Pious Schools in the Fraternity.



This new daughter of the Order, the Fraternity, is already born. In some places it already has more than 25 years, in others it is about to be born and in others Demarcations is still a little close perspective. Nevertheless, despite the different situations, he is already born and continues to grow. The point now is to see how we will accompany her to become an adult, autonomous, well identified and formed in the Piarist charisma... unless we want it to leave held as one more group and no chance of growing, or unless we want it to leave it.

The diversity of the Fraternity is great:

- Somewhere it did not finish being born, in immense gestation processes...
- In other situations it was born on the initiative of some religious without the acceptance of the entire religious family and has already died.
- Sometimes it is born early, too weak in its training and options to have a healthy life. Sometimes it is born without having prepared a room to live, an education plan, a dream... And it is in critical condition, where it can be reborn or die.
- In most cases, thanks to God and the work of the Demarcations and many people, it was born as an open project, accompanied and assumed co-responsibility by religious and lay people.

It is good for us to remember that "to educate a child you need the whole tribe" and so it is also for the Fraternity.

The Order and each Province must be very aware that having a daughter like the Fraternity is creating new life, a daughter of the whole Demarcation and the Order (and it not only is the initiative of some religious), who will complicate ours, who will question us... and that it's going to give us more happiness and future. It is to open a wonderful path and nothing easy: it is a poisoned gift, which commits us all. It will start out as a little girl to devote many hours to, then a teenage girl looking for her place, then a young woman with a lot of life, an adult who will carry our same genes from another identity. The Fraternity must be a dear, listened to, formed daughter who becomes an adult... because it is called to be another reality linked and different from the Order that has given its life.

Responsible motherhood leads us to make the creation of the Fraternity a provincial decision to create new life, a new Piarist subject who, together with the Province, embodies and co-responsibilities of the Piarist charism. And to do this, we must have a good educational project, a good place prepared for it, an accompaniment process for which we have the experience of other fraternities and the Council of the General Fraternity. To the extent possible and at the time when each Province is prepared and has a group of lay people willing to walk the path, we will have to take the step of also launching the Fraternity there. It is not a matter of inventing everything, but of preparing and having the possible aids. The Council of the General Fraternity has recently drawn a book designed for the Provinces and Fraternities, for those who want to start it and for those who need to continue to take steps.¹

Starting a Fraternity is a matter of love, of being in love with the Spirit who wants to give new life, to be in communion with all the people who promote our mission and want to share more, is to be passionate about this gift of fraternity that the Lord gives us... We cannot forget that life always comes, through parents, from God himself.

We need to leave our comfort zone, open ourselves to this reality that has already been born, to enrich ourselves with the close complement of the lay vocation that helps us to live our religious and priestly vocation, to let the Spirit speak to us also for this daughter who is called to be sister of the Order, to be open, like Calasanz and Mary, to what the Lord will ask of us... And all this with the confidence and joy of knowing that it is a sign of the times and a gift from God that will facilitate our educational, evangelizing and transformative mission... and our lives.

Without a doubt, in the Order and in each Province we have an important task of becoming aware of this new motherhood and of raising and helping the Fraternity to grow.

¹ Javier Aguirregabiria. "Passion for Fraternity". Calasancias editions. We found it in https://edicionescalasancias.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Pasi%C3%B3n_por_la_Fraternidad_ebook.pdf and in https://edicionescalasancias.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Pasion_por_la_Fraternidad_ebook.epub

2. A look from the Fraternity

The eleven current fraternities have very different looks, depending on their age (some are close to their birth, others are more than 25 years old), depending on their previous journey and formation, their location in the Province and the ecclesial reality in which they are themselves, the profile of the majority of their members, the steps they have taken...

With these differences, it is normal that there is not a single look, as is the case with the different Demarcations of the Order. But there is a look of its own from the General Fraternity, as there is from the Order. And we're going to refer to her.

The Fraternity is called, as a daughter of the Order since its charismatic integration, to be a new Piarist subject, an adult reality that lives the Piarist charism from its specific vocation of laity (most) or consecrated life (religious who participate directly in the Fraternity). That is the horizon to which it is called: it is what we call "common vocation".

The starting point they are in is different. And, therefore, the way to go is also typical of each Fraternity.

In some cases, the Fraternity was born as a natural arrival of long-standing educational and pastoral processes, such as the Calasanz Movement today. In this situation is great the journey of encounter with Jesus, of Piarist identification, of formation of the fundamental elements of one's life and faith, of discovery and assumption of the vocation of each one...

Sometimes the Fraternity is born from shorter processes of training as educators, from shared mission teams, from Calasanzian spirituality groups, from prolonged collaboration in the Piarist mission... usually at more adult ages. There are many steps taken and we will have to complement with those that are necessary.

It sometimes emerges as an invitation to people close to the Piarist world who are somehow claiming to take it a step further. They can be more diverse groups in their composition and in need of a more complete process.

In any case, (surely, there are other initial experiences), it is the discovery of the vocation to follow Jesus with the Piarist style. It is to feel, in some way, the son of the Order, passionate about Piarist life, spirituality and mission. It is wanting to share in small associated communities the Piarist charism and the co-responsibility to keep alive, together with the Order, the spirit of Calasanz at the time and place in which we are ourselves. It is to gradually discover that we are a new Piarist subject, with the same DNA of the Order, called to be adults and to promote the Pious Schools where there is room for different forms of participation without anyone losing their specificity (such as Religious Order or as Fraternity).

This implies, like the process of each person, growing in training, identity, autonomy, responsibility, ability to collaborate... always maintaining the filial love of the Order that has transmitted to it the Piarist life and being very aware that he must also assume a fully adult life.

In the first steps, like every child, it has to let itself be guided. It must always maintain respect and affection for his mother. At the same time, it must progressively assume its own personality and decisions. And it should never forgotten that it is daughter and family of the Order... and the Spirit that has called each member vocationally as well.

Taking steps in adulthood means many attitudes and behaviors:

- Overcoming the adolescent attitude of those who believe to have rights and no obligations
- Gaining in economic autonomy and decisions as Fraternity
- To create one's own style of Piarist spirituality, as lay people in Fraternity.
- Growing in availability so that it can be requested by the Fraternity and the School mission
- Increasingly sharing time, money and life decisions in the Fraternity
- Contribute proposals and dedication for the Piarist mission and the Pious Schools
- Moving forward in fidelity over time
- Taking on the agreements and lines that the Fraternity is taking
- Better organize the Fraternity to respond to the Piarist charism entrusted
- ...

When a Fraternity moves forward and becomes equipped with a Council that assumes more functions and a team of animators that watches carefully over each person, when it takes significant steps (Final choice, community mobility, sending, Piarist ministries, joint communities, lay Piarists, commissions and entrustments, participation in Itaka - Piarists...),



when it takes care of the call for new members of the various Piarist vocations, when it seeks personal and joint collaboration with the Order, when it grows in sensitivity with the Pious Schools around the world... then it's gaining in maturity.

Again, it is worth remembering this publication of "Passion for Fraternity", as a clue to that looking deeper and deeper from the Fraternity.

Each Fraternity has to take that step from childhood, adolescence, youth and adult life, hand in hand with the Province and, above all, from the General Fraternity itself. Here is an important and particular challenge for each Fraternity and for each of its members.

3. A look from the mission entrusted by Calasanz, the Church and the Spirit today

The two looks, from the Order and from the Fraternity, are interesting and complementary. But it is the important gaze that brings us closer to discerning what we are called to by the participants in our Piarist mission (children, adolescents, young people, people in need, presences where we enter), what Calasanz asks us today, what we are sent to in our Church... and above all, where the Spirit wants to lead us.

Today, and always, the Piarist mission is immense. Millions of out-of-school children, adolescents and young people in need of life proposals, people in need in all countries, calls from the Church and society to create new presences and works in need of life proposals, young people and adults wishing to receive the call to be Piarists.

It is clear that the "harvest is many and the workers are few". That all hands are necessary, all hearts, all vocations...

Order and Fraternity, as well as the other ways of participating in the Pious Schools, must work hand in hand to answer so many calls from the Piarist mission.

And for this it will be very important not to confuse mission with the different vocations, not to pretend to dilute both entities in one of them or in something fuzzy. The Order must remain itself, as a reality formed by the religious and with its own life. The Fraternity must become itself, as an entity with a life of its own. But however, knowing that both entities are sharing, from two very different and complementary vocations, the same charism and that we can share many elements of spirituality, life and mission, that we are the same charismatic family.

We are two different subjects, with the same genes, who share a lot from their own identity. We can help each other a lot. We can walk together. To prevent us from separating, it will be important to share the elements that we see suitable: shared spaces and moments, religious belonging to the Fraternity, lay people who are legally integrated into the Order such as lay Piarist, shared Piarist ministries, joint sendings, the Piarist Cristian Community, the joint communities... and much more. The model of presence in the different areas is a good framework to put all this also and here we have, without a doubt, one of the lines of the future that we have to go through.

A special section deserves the Network Itaka – Piarists. The Order has its own life and many works that are within its competence and responsibility. The people of the Fraternity will be able to collaborate, assume functions entrusted to them... but knowing that they are projects of the Order, where the laity can have the voice and participation that the Order confers on them in each case. And this is fine. And it can and must go on.

The Fraternity could also have works of its own, but, so far, its option has been not to do so, but to always act on projects shared with the Order. This is a very brave option that is worth highlighting and maintaining: it is a bet to renounce the same, to act together with the Order. And for this it is born Itaka – Piarists, as an international network where the Order and Fraternity share what they want at all times, always with a shared responsibility.

The Order has the possibility, through annual agreements, to add or stop sharing the projects and works that depend on it, while the Fraternity renounces to have its own space (ownerships and properties), because it is convinced that the reality of Itaka – Piarists will win the hearts of all and will prove that it is an inclusive path, respectful of both identities and able to offer growth to the Order and Fraternity, from this shared space and from the recognition of the autonomy of each entity.

An objective look at the history of the Itaka – Piarists Network allows us to see that much is achieved in growth of the Order and fraternity, as well as of the Piarist mission, which is always our common horizon. In the coming days, on the Fourth Advisory Council, we will be able to present a detailed balance of this.

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PLENAMENTE EN
LA **FRATERNIDAD**



> **II ASAMBLEA FRATERNIDAD GENERAL**

When we are talking about the gaze from a world that claims the action of the Piarists, we have to say that fraternity is a gift that opens up possibilities to have more people, to enrich ourselves more with that vocational complementarity for the mission, to have at the disposal more resources of all kinds (human, economic, knowledge) ... It's more than an opportunity: it's a sign of the times.

And above all, a wealth for the Pious Schools and for the Church, by offering a religious life with more possibilities thanks to the closeness of the Fraternity, an adult lay life committed to the offer to live in Fraternity very close to the Order, a model of Church more community and co-responsible, a way of living the faith expressed in different vocations and always in a missionary way.

It may seem bold, but I think we can say that today the Fraternity of the Pious Schools, walking together with the Order, the reality of Itaka – Piarists, the signs that are emerging from all this are a gift of the Spirit to live more intensely the Piarist charism, to grow in a Piarist mission and to respond to the signs of the times.

This Assembly must be, it is being, another step towards an increasingly adult and faithful General Fraternity to the Piarist charism that the Order has recognized it and which the Spirit has entrusted to it.

We ask for that strength of the Spirit, the protection of our Mother Mary and the audacity of Calasanz, to be faithful to this call.