



Daring and ever-enduring patience

LETTER TO OUR
BRETHREN
OCTOBER 2016

Too often you have heard me quoting the phrase in the first point of our Constitutions in which we say that the Piarist religious family “*recognizes itself as the work of God and the result of the daring and ever-enduring patience of Saint Joseph Calasanz*”¹. I think much of this claim, and I often speak of it to express what I believe that we must do and live as Piarists.

To the light of this phrase with which all we identify ourselves in a spontaneous way, we can build a simple reflection on the today and the tomorrow of the Pious Schools. My essential belief is that the process which we live and which we are called to live, if we want to truly renew our Order from radically Evangelical keys, must be thought and carried on in a *complex, intelligent, bold and persevering* way, without falling in simplifications or options which are not carriers of life, mission or future. I will try to develop gradually my reflection, trying to make me understood.

1-Starting point: “time is more important than space”.

I guess you all have recognized the author of this statement, one of the strongest convictions of Pope Francis. This is one of his contributions that most makes me think: “Giving priority to space means madly attempting to keep everything together in the present, trying to possess all the spaces of power and of self-assertion; it is to crystallize processes and presume to hold them back. Giving priority to time means *being concerned about initiating processes rather than possessing spaces*. Time

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1.- Constitutions of the Pious Schools, n 1.

governs spaces, illumines them and makes them links in a constantly expanding chain, with no possibility of return. What we need, then, is *to give priority to actions which generate new processes* in society and engage other persons and groups who can develop them to the point where they bear fruit in significant historical events. *Without anxiety, but with clear convictions and tenacity* “. (EG 223)

I think that it is very necessary to stop for a while in front of this affirmation and to treat of removing from it the juice that it has inside, in order to enrich the process that we live and to give it sense and horizon. I offer two -complementary- views from which we can progress in the reflection: first, entering in a certain *self-criticism*; second, suggesting a *bet by processes of life*.

2- To be lucid in our options, because not all is valid or leads to where we want to go.

To encourage an open reading of this reflection, I want to make it thinking about the whole of Consecrated Life, not in our Order as a whole or in any of its areas or demarcations. But all of you can feel free to apply this thinking to your own experience or to the whole of the Pious Schools.

a - **the “short-term” vision that sometimes we have on the priorities of Consecrated Life.** Reading many plannings and listening to many heads of our institutions, I have the feeling that Religious Life focuses primarily on maintenance strategies, and we all know that this dynamic usually only serves to delay the final result. We need to replace the maintenance strategies for choices of formation and of life to allow religious, or at least to the healthier and more valid part of them, to make questions on the sense of their vocation, entering in a serious discernment and launching concrete life decisions.

b - **The bet for a well recognizable visibility, since a significance based on a lifestyle that questions the world.** It is obvious that we are in front of an option that has always characterized the efforts of Consecrated Life. We also talk about it and look for it with honesty. But I have many doubts in relation to the ways that we propose, and - in addition - we must be aware that this option has a serious risk of which we are not easily aware: to feel better and called to give lessons to others.

Attention to this priority and its deceptions! One of the great dangers of Consecrated Life is not to understand well the challenge of the significance, because it can lead us, firstly, not to see all the good that is in the world, the lights that are turning on slowly in a difficult, and sometimes poor in hope, world; and in second place, it can make us forget that religious life does not live of bright certainties nor of spotless coherence, but also is walking laboriously in the middle of the desert, full of temptations, doubts and falls. Always I was impressed by the title of a book by Enzo Bianchi on Religious Life in the Church, in the middle of men. It was entitled: *“We are not better”*.

I think that our commitment has to be for the simplicity of life, authenticity, devoted work, sincere prayer, growing fraternity, enthusiasm for the service,

commitment to young people, real love for the poor, etc. And from there it will come, if it comes, the significance, referentiality and positive visibility (because the opposite exists also, and not infrequently). And this with ever-enduring

patience, day after day.

3- Betting on life processes, tenaciously keeping them along the time.

In my readings, reflections and times of meditation dedicated to trying to understand what God is requesting to us religious, I found finally a word that expresses very well one of the more clear convictions that I have on the role of the Pious Schools in the world and in the Church: *“hypomoné”*. It is normally translated as «perseverance», but its literal meaning is «staying under», that is, something like *«bearing the weight of the reality in which we live, but awaiting a change and a release done by God”*. It is about *remaining patiently under the load, as expression of love and of hope for this*.

a-In the first place, I share with you that I like to understand the challenge of the **“hypomoné”** (hope from perseverance)² from **two different perspectives**: the **for what of our Order** and the **how should we think our process**.

In relation to the first of the views, I think that it is very important to assume our consecration to the Mission of educating without ever doubting of its sense, or its efficiency or its indispensability: we want to change the world changing people; we want to help humanity to be better. Thus clear. And thus demanding. Therefore, brethren, we must keep going. Even though sometimes we are tired, or tempted by the deception of the immediate effectiveness. We continue every day, all days, because children and young people expect it from us.

And with regard to the second point of view, related to the process of revitalization of the life and mission of the Order, the challenge is clear: taking on the challenge, carrying the load, loving the Order, working thoroughly to renew it in everything that should be renewed to “grow in Gospel”, taking correct decisions and accompanying processes perseveringly, working as if all depended of us knowing that all depends on God³.

We have to keep on taking decisions. The constitution of the group “Angel Ruiz” -courage, brothers! - seeks precisely this: to help us to see the reality open to the calls of the Spirit, as it did our Holy Founder. But this task is not only for this group. We cannot “delegate lucidity” in a particular group, but

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2.- It is very revealing to see how the New Testament, and in particular St. Paul, frequently relates perseverance with patience: *unceasingly calling to mind your work of faith and labor of love and endurance in hope of our Lord Jesus Christ, before our God and Father”* (I Tes, 1, 3).

3.- St. Ignace of Loyola.

opt to find ways that encourage it, in every Province, in every community, in every person.

b - Among those processes that we must accompany with daring and ever-enduring

patience I quote some concrete ones, from which I hope fruits of life and mission. I only list them, without developing.

- » Betting for growing in our own Calasanctian identity, overcoming any temptation of self-referentiality, giving the best of ourselves for the good of the mission.
- » Advancing slowly towards the consolidation of an authentic Piarist vocational culture that will allow us to continue offering to the Church and to the society a Piarist, vital and committed, body.
- » Working with generosity and spirit of humility so that young religious become better Piarists. As it sounds. Doing everything in our hands to make them better and able to do things better. Boosting training, community life, and a dynamic of mission that will help to bring forward a new culture of Order that will help us not to repeat mistakes and to create new horizons.
- » Continue taking steps to make our communities, in the light of the Word that everything can and everything penetrates, configured as spaces of discernment, vocational growth, change and conversion.
- » Advancing in Order mentality, in consciousness of belonging, in availability, in desire to continue building the Pious Schools, with choices and decisions that go in that direction and affecting all areas of our Piarist reality.
- » Continue encouraging and inviting the participation of laymen and laywomen in the Pious Schools. It is an extraordinary dynamism, which we should know how to accompany, share and thank for.
- » Promoting two correlated and transforming dynamisms: the accompaniment and the vocational authenticity. Working in both directions will help us much on this way.
- » Continue giving steps, gradually, in our capacity of response to the missionary call that we keep on receiving in the Church. A clear and urgent call, that goes also to the Pious Schools.
- » Keeping as reference for our life and mission the “first and foremost the poor”, so that what we live and we do will keep in mind always this Calasanctian priority.

Here I leave this list of options, because adding more would be very long

and would not lead us to anything. I think they are enough examples to illustrate what I mean: Without anxiety, but with clear convictions and tenacity⁴. The three things: little by little, clearly - calling things with their name - and with ever-enduring patience.

I am convinced that from this dynamic, spontaneously, we will arrive at the most important and central: confident and constant, personal and community prayer to the One which is the only carrier of Life and that sends us to the Mission. Let us ask the Lord to give us his light to accompany the process of the Pious Schools according to his will.

Receive a fraternal embrace.

Pedro Aguado
Father General

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4.- Pope Francis, “Evangelii Gaudium” 223.