



Our way

EpCal 1236

LETTER TO OUR
BRETHREN
DECEMBER 2016

write this Letter to the Brothers at the beginning of the Calasanctian Jubilee Year. Only a few days separate the period of the Jubilee of Mercy and the one that now we as Piarists begin, a year of grace that we are going to live and that the Church proposes us as an opportunity for renewal of our life and mission. This “Jubilee continuity” can help us to make us aware that there is a deep relationship between the two Jubilees: the one that we have lived together with the whole Church during these past months, and the one that we will live in the Church, this year 2017. I’d like to explain it by citing one of Calasanz’ letters which we know better and which has helped us most throughout these four centuries of history, a letter written to Fr. Joseph Freyxo in October 1629. In our particular catalogue of letters we numbered it as the letter “1236”:

“The briefest and easiest street or way to be exalted to self knowledge and from it to the attributes of mercy, prudence and infinite patience and goodness of God is lowering oneself to give light to the children, and in particular to those who are as abandoned by all, because since this is a low and vile trade to the eyes of all, few want to get down to it, and often God gives a hundredfold, especially if doing it well, we suffer persecution or trials in which, if taken with patience from the hand of God, there is hundredfold of spirit”.

I share with you my thinking, and I invite you to make it your own in this Calasanctian Jubilee Year from the question that seems to me central: **what do we celebrate and, therefore, what are we invited to live?**

I think that what we celebrate this year, essentially, is the consolidation of our Piarist identity. Since Calasanz began with schools in 1597 until Pope Paul V signed the brief “*Ad ea per quae*” twenty years passed. 20 intense years during which the project inspired by God in Calasanz was brewing and consolidating. There are many things that were happening, and very diverse vicissitudes. We all know them. But finally, in the year 1617, the Church consolidated the project of Calasanz. This is what we celebrate in this year of grace.

How are we invited to live it? I think that the road is marked for us by the other anniversary that gathers and convokes us: Calasanz’ canonization. And the message is clear: only living the human and spiritual dynamics that made Calasanz a Saint we can renew our vocation and live it with the authenticity that we need to ensure that Calasanz’ project continues alive and giving life.

This is the invitation that I want to make to everyone at the beginning of this year, dear brothers: let us try to live today what Calasanz lived, what made him a Saint, giving the best of ourselves to build the Pious Schools as the founder wanted them.

What made Calasanz a Saint? This question would give matter for a book, but I think that it also can be explained shortly, especially if the protagonist himself explains it. We can approach the response from many points of view, but I have chosen the one provided by the letter 1236 that Calasanz writes to a Piarist of Naples. I chose it because I believe it summarizes in a wonderful way what Calasanz wanted to live, what he lived and what he wants us to live.

In the first place, Calasanz wants us to live ***a deep experience of God***, which will help us to experience in our heart how God loves us: with mercy, prudence, and infinite patience and kindness. Calasanz wants this experience for each Piarist, because only that can make of us witnesses of that love among the children and youth to whom we are dedicated. Piarist life style is not simply the result of the nature of each (which always helps or hinders, of course), but the depth from which we live our being children of God, which produces fruits of love and goodness, because we feel that we receive love and goodness. Only in that way we can pass on the love of God. And just for this reason.

Secondly, ***Calasanz proposes us lowering***. Lowering ourselves in order to bring light to children, especially the most underprivileged. In a world like ours, where the temptation of “climbing” is rampant, Calasanz proposes us “lowering”. It is a spiritual dynamism, be sure of that. Not to search any own purpose, no recognition, no promotion. Searching only “to be at the height of children”. Calasanz is aware that “very few want it”, because the human tendency is the opposite. It is very clear that “in the eyes of the world” his project is “low and vile”.

The spiritual dynamic that Calasanz proposes is kenotic. It is therefore profoundly Christian. Any responsibility that we are entrusted with, any recognition we receive, any feedback that others may have of us, any charge that we assume, everything is useless, unless we experience it from this spiritual

dynamism. This is one of the more profound Calasanctian truths.

One of the fruits of the Calasanctian Jubilee Year that I expect the most is that we grow in our understanding of this proposal of Calasanz: *lowering to illuminate*. There is no other way. We are talking about one of the keys in which most we have to help each other, because the temptation to “climbing” is still present in our lives. Never forget that.

Calasanz speaks to us, thirdly, of the difficulties, which he calls “tribulations and persecutions”. We all know what this means, because we all have the experience that things are not always easy and not always go well. But the proposal of Calasanz is deeper, and I express it clearly: ***the Piarist gives his life for children and youth, for the assignment received***. He is giving it every day, and every day he wears, from the verb to wear, for the cause to which he decided to consecrate himself. And in this daily giving himself, in this “positive wearing”, lived from God, shared with the brothers and experienced with deep joy, is the “hundredfold” of which the Gospel speaks and that Calasanz recalls.

In this letter from our founder, I find the answer to the question: what do we celebrate and how are we invited to live it? I insist, there are other points of view from which we can respond. But I wanted to ask you this: *we are invited to live authentically from God, available to children and young people, without seeking anything for ourselves and giving everyday our life, generously, knowing that we will find there our fullness*.

These are the features of identity I want to point out at the beginning of this Jubilee Year. These are the roads that I want to propose for this Jubilee Year. I propose them because they are those who Calasanz proposed, and because I see clearly that we need them. Everything else will come in addition. Therefore, brothers, I believe that the same dynamic of the Jubilee of Mercy helps us to understand our own Jubilee, and orients it. For that we are grateful.

During this Jubilee Year that now we start we will celebrate, as proposals of life, the various keys that make up our vocation. We will celebrate the Ministry of Christian Education, we will propose the Ministry of Attention to the poor for social transformation, we will reflect on the gift of Holiness, and we will be living little by little, everything that defines us and makes us Piarists.

We will do it sharing it happily with so many people that have received also the don of the charism and assume it, with confidence, in their own lives and in the lives of their families and communities. In a special way, we will celebrate with our brothers and sisters of the Piarist Fraternities all that unites and convokes us, because a consolidated identity, if it is so, expands and is shared, always with the look on the mission.

And, above all, we will celebrate our vocation with the children and young people. There is no other way, because it is the Piarist way. Our Jubilee is not for ourselves, but for those for whom Calasanz founded the Pious Schools. We must celebrate the Jubilee Calasanz style.

I end with a little curiosity. In the year 1897, the Fr. General of the time, Fr. Mauro Ricci, on the occasion of the third centenary of the starting of the first school of Calasanz, invited the Order to celebrate “the beginning of the fourth century of the Pious Schools “. And with that proposal, he encouraged his brothers to look forward.

I endorse his invitation: let us celebrate, with deep joy and giving thanks to God, the beginning of the fifth century of our beloved Order of the Poor of the Mother of God of the Pious Schools. Happy Jubilee Year!

May all be is for the glory of God and utility of the neighbor.

Receive a fraternal embrace.

Fr. Pedro Aguado
Father General