DAY OF DISCERNMENT ON THE
KEYS
TO THE RENEWAL
OF THE PIOUS SCHOOLS
(Material prepared by the Group “Ángel Ruiz”)

Structure

1. Prayer

2. Reading of the document “Connecting to the sources, sharing life”

3. Questions and tasks to facilitate sharing in community

   - There is also the possibility of consulting the Facebook page (“Conectarse a las fuentes, compartir la vida”), where interviews appear and you can publish similar ones, following the description there.

4. Intercessions

   It may be appropriate to place in the center of the meeting a copy of the Constitutions of the Order, renewed according to the directives of the Second Vatican Council since we commemorate that day their approval.
1. Prayer

Lord Jesus,
in your light we see light,
with you we experience life,
in your words we find meaning to our life.

We have come to be with you in this community of yours,
listening to the words you once uttered,
and with the wish of leading the life you lived.
Today we especially ask you
to help us find lucidity
so that we can understand your words
in the here and now of the life of this community of the Pious Schools.

When you gave rules to those who were yours
you taught them not to be afraid of being left behind,
of dying, and of letting your Father down.
You knew what was in us,
you knew our hearts,
you knew our weaknesses,
you knew that at times even our hearts deceive us.
Come to be more intimate to us than we are to ourselves.
Touch our hearts:
give us living and feeling hearts,
make us capable of accepting the Father’s forgiveness
so that we can forgive truly.
Touch our ears:
give us understanding and sympathy,
make us perceptive to the possibilities that the Father opens before us
so that we can work meaningfully.
Touch our eyes:
give us light and insight,
make us see your Father in you and in your brothers and sisters
so that we can love selflessly.

Following Saint Joseph Calasanz, we hope to be your co-operators
by learning to find and to ever rediscover the truth
and so to help others, especially your little ones, to find it again and again in
their lives.
We know that, for this, we need to be renewed, we need your newness.
We know that you can and want to renew us.
We know that you will renew us.
Make us open and receptive to your promptings of renewal.

Amen.
2. Connecting to the sources, sharing life

IDEAS YOU’LL FIND IN THE TEXT:

- Ecosystem of the Pious Schools
- Sources of life
- Connecting to the sources
- Keys to renewal
- Shared discernment
- ‘Pentecost of the Piarists’
- Shining eyes
- Rainmakers
- Great potential of Mission and Charism
- Diversity and richness of Piarist life
- Teachers-disciples educational relationship
- All learners and teachers
- Narrative identity
- “Evangelizing pedagogy”
- Causing amazement
- Pious Schools going forth

0. PREAMBLE

The Pious Schools constitute a vibrant ecosystem. This life flows through you, through me, through us. It is among us, in each one of those who are part of the works, communities and presences. In a special way, and naturally overflowing, in the thousands of children and young people for whom we live, including those who are missing, those who, as at the times of Calasanz, call us from all corners of the world to go beyond, to go forth, to venture out to meet them.

In this reflection, as well as in the comprehensive proposal that we do to celebrate this day, we want to invite basically to two things: (1) to connect to the sources that give us life; and (2) to share one’s life. We believe that both elements are in deep relationship with the keys to renewal we are seeking for the Pious Schools, and also the best contribution we can offer to children and young people of the world, to everyone, to the Church and society.

We are not offering a systematic description of the keys of renewal, nor exhausting the content of the two suggestions that we do. For the first, we have the Keys of Life of the Order, the quadrennial plans, programmatic documents, documents on participation... Regarding the latter, it must be said that the possibilities are endless; every person, community, team, work, should seek these sources of life according to their situation and reality. Moreover, it is in the process of discernment about the sources and the sharing of life where we largely find the keys to personal, community and institutional re-

The Pious Schools are full of life. Therefore we invite all to connect to the sources that give us life and to share one’s life.
newal. For this reason also, and from the perspective of the two suggestions made above, we propose a discernment-making, renewal-exercising, discovery-going forth. The content of this reflection must be taken as mere notes that can inspire or not, but the real challenge and invitation is, ultimately, to connecting-sharing.

Perhaps the condition of ultimate possibility of our authentic renewal is experimenting with force the “Pentecost of the Piarists” to which Pope Francis invites us. It would be an audacity on our part to claim to define what exactly it is and much more to try to plan it. What we can do is to intuit what the Pope wanted to tell us meditating on the meaning of the Christian Pentecost and its effects. Maybe placing ourselves in a going forth attitude to frequent with openness of spirit the current reality of the Pious Schools, even having the courage to frequent its future with hope. We are confident that the rest of the reflection may also help us to better understand what is happening in the current Piarist ecosystem and, above all, to connect us to its sources and to share life. It will be so how, full of Spirit, the keys to renewal of the Pious Schools will come out to meet us.

1. CONNECTING TO THE SOURCES OF LIFE

The central event has already happened, it is called Jesus Christ. Here is the Source! At the same time, the Piarist treasure has been among us for 400 years and, thanks to God, and to all the Piarists who during these centuries have been living it and transmitting it, we can continue enjoying in fullness the great gift of the charism.

Our main spring will always be the call to contemplate in the face of children, especially the poor ones, a particular way of following Jesus Christ. Practicing the “Look, look” that Calasanz received and welcomed in his own life and vocation will be key to permanent renewal. In it we find the original experience that changed him forever, the same experience that is our foundation and fundament. The look that Calasanz cultivated is intimately linked to the answer that he finally gave to what he saw. Since then he would apply the same logic of “Look, look” to the other circumstances that he would live. We can say that his sensitive and responsorial look created the Pious Schools.

That is why the vitality of the Pious Schools depends largely on our ability to recreate this experience at every moment and social environment. With great
clarity Pope Francis is telling us this when he unites inextricably together the binomial look–answer in his exhortation: “Above all, follow the traces that children and young people carry written in their eyes. Look at their faces and let them contaminate you by their brightness to be bearers of future and hope. May God grant you to be prophetically present in the corners where children suffer unjustly”. Synthetically said, if we try to “see” (being and doing) as Calasanz did, we will find life, and life in abundance. Closely related to this is also the self-lowering which we must necessarily apply to look at the children in their eyes, the call of Jesus to become a child that Calasanz put into practice at the end of his life.

Another aspect of this look is to realize with great joy that there are among us people so full of that experience who radiate unlimitedly the shining in their eyes. It will help us if we come closer to these people, in general all the elderly Piarists who have given their lives in the Pious Schools and whose lives are a precious testimony of fidelity in their vocation, when we lose the brilliance of our eyes. Just watching their faces, observing their daily work, allowing them to tell their stories, talking with them, and above all, listening while looking with attention.

It can also be helpful to live connected intensively to the Mission, taken in a broad, communal and global sense. Broad, because there are so many facets and riches contained in an educational charism as the one that God gave us in Calasanz. Throughout history, we have discovered quite a few of them following the traces of the “Educate–Proclaim–Transform”. Frequenting the current reality of the Pious Schools (in a virtual, physical, emotional, mental or communicative way) is a good source of energy, or of restorative medicine, as the case may be. The same is true of frequenting the future, perceiving the “enormous potential, many of which are yet to be discovered” that our charism contains, as Francis says.

The communal dimension of the Mission is also a source of life. Each of us promotes it, but in communion with others. My acting becomes mission when in it the brothers are present from the heart and thus I transmit it to my environment unintentionally, spontaneously. Community life is a key in this instance and

**We will renew us looking in the eyes of children, especially the poor ones, as well as meeting all the people who reflect their same brightness.**

**Jesus Christ is the source that flows through the treasure that has been with us for 400 years. Practicing the „Look, look” of Calasanz we can fully enjoy it.**
in it the mission has to be reflected and lived, even as far as how we accompany, treat, love each other and how we relate to each other.

The global vision of the Order and the Pious Schools (Africa, America, Asia, Europe) is, on the one hand, the fruit of all that has been said above, on the other hand, however, it can also be a source from which to nourish our hope and missionary vigour.

If we understand the Mission in this sense, then we can see that we all are necessary, whatever each one of us does – regardless of the place, the moment of one’s life, the responsibility... – is important and gives life to the Pious Schools. Moreover, each of us must feel called to be a source of life for others. We are all called to be “Rainmakers” with our life, work and witness. Creating the possibilities for life and multiplying life are part of the mission. To build the Pious Schools is a task of all. In this endeavour, we are brought to life.

When routines, hopeless realisms, disappointments and difficulties, unhealthy securities, vicious circles, circumstances and ups and downs of life take over us, it is convenient, for the sake of purifying us, to let go of what is accessory, to take a leap, to provoke disruptions, to create virtuous circles, ultimately, to look with special intensity for the sources that will give us new life. Building the Pious Schools is also being able to identify institutional rigidities that accumulate over the years and choke life, preventing it to grow and multiply. Discerning together the ossifications that take away our force and evangelical boldness can be another way to renew ourselves and to opt for the needed new wineskins.

2. Sharing life

The positive connotation of Life we propose allows us to say, taking as a starting point and paraphrasing the Augustinian mandate, “Be a Piarist and do whatever you want”, that there are no better ways of life than others, that all forms of life in the ecosystem of the Pious Schools are valuable and bearers of beauty, just because they are reflections of the Piarist diversity that we have at the moment.
That is why we offer in this second section new notes that will help establish the right conditions to make of the sharing of life between us a joyful and enriching experience, knowing that the challenge is again to discern together such conditions.

First, we must bring together the life that we already have, which makes us live, our personal stories, great Piarist moments, meaningful experiences... without trying to teach others how to live, without prejudging the other forms or establishing our own as a paradigm. The other side of the “Look, look-in-order-to-respond” is the “I see, I-see-in-order-to-tell”. Sharing in this way will become, in itself, a source and reference of life for everyone. Great help will come from looking at the other with a look of confidence, a look that welcomes and accompanies with love, that enhances the other’s capabilities, a look that conveys deep interest in the other’s life and an unconditional love to the one who is sharing their life story. Incidentally, it will help us to guard against ourselves and to get away from controlling, pushy, inquisitorial, suspicious, patriarchal or paternalistic looks.

It is in the community, in groups and in meetings among equals, both in the formal and informal moments, where we have to develop this attitude and way of doing. We must bear in mind that our charism and mission suggest raising towards their receivers a kind of relationship that we can call “educational”. The framework of that relationship, very in tune with the Christian following of Christ, is that of a person who acts as a “Master” and the other as a “Disciple”. What is sought for is not just a personal relationship. There is also an intention, since the master wants to connect the disciple with the ecosystem of the Pious Schools, with the charism that unites us. The challenge is that this relational asymmetry is meant to generate forms of sharing, interacting and, where appropriate, identification and engagement, enriching for both sides, spiritually and humanly. In a word, relationships that can generate more future life. We often find testimonies from people who tell us that when they came closer to, got involved in and, following their calling, opted for the Pious Schools, it had to do with the way in which they felt looked at, accepted, accompanied and loved, it had to do with the rewarding way of having shared life. We are talking about authentic Piarists masters who invite you to grow, create and believe, who transmit confidence, who appreciate and respect what others do, say, think or write, without limiting or imposing their own views or ways of doing. It is about modes and forms that open processes of identification, reference, and belonging and which are so much worth to the personal and group accompaniment.

Although in this type of relationship, there is one who acts as a master (monitor, catechist, companion, educator, trainer...) and the other as a disciple, the proposal of sharing that we
are talking about creates the situation where the disciple also becomes a master (students to the professor, the community to the priest, the group to the monitor, the junior to the formator...). It is opting for a way of understanding formation where learning and growth is mutual and where, at times, the master and the disciple exchange positions without confusing their roles.

This way of relating and sharing (a sort of self-formation) has many positive effects for the construction of the Pious Schools. The first is that it produces more life spontaneously, since this life is already there between the master and the disciple, and in a very good way. The second is that the “master” has an increased capacity and authority of accepting, validating, and properly promoting – whichever of these may be needed – the proposals of the “disciples”, their new ways of acting or focusing the issues. The best validation is the one based on trust, generosity and recognition to the contributions of the disciples. The trust that the master has is not simply in the intuitions of the disciple but in the inspirations the Spirit is manifesting through him. The master is called to go out of himself, of the past, of the forms that has been valid until now, toward the new possibilities that the Spirit is opening in the disciple to renew the common world of both. “Speak, Lord, your servant listens”: what the disciple will have heard, the master is looking for it with confidence. It is the “docibilitas” (the disposition to learn), the attitude of openness and hope that converts the experiences of the master into wisdom. In short, it is that event of learning that, eventually, transforms the teacher into Master.

The third is that interacting and sharing in a so widespread way multiplies the potential teachers (both religious and lay) and converts training into a permanent task, since in a way, we all are disciples in need of learning. We all need a learning that transcends the institutionalized relationships and is carried out also in informal situations, in our everyday life and interactions. All our relations become formative, where all participants feel actors and protagonists.

We propose therefore to foster this type of relationship and connections between people, to expand networks, to increase community communication, to tell more about each other, to give testimony of our own sources of life...
In a word, to promote everything that help us to share, express and celebrate among us as much as possible the life that we have and that we dream for the future. We are convinced that this will strengthen the communion among all the people who participate in the Pious Schools, as well as our Piarist identity since, to a large extent, identity is what we share and we tell each other.

3. CONCLUSION

Francis tells us Piarists that “today more than ever we need an evangelizing pedagogy that is able to change the heart and reality in harmony with the Kingdom of God, making people protagonists and participants in the process”. Connecting to the sources of life and sharing among us the treasure that we live communally and personally can help develop this pedagogy.

Also “connecting and sharing” can help us to properly feed our evangelical, charismatic and missionary vigor, preventing us against spiritual anorexia, deformed relationships and against the loss of shining in our eyes and burning in our heart.

Let us be aware of the abundance of life that we have in our Piarist ecosystem and let us connect to its sources by placing at the centre the children most in need among us and the world’s poorest boys and girls. From here let us discern together the rest of keys that will allow multiply more and more life. For that, let us share our experiences, let us learn from each other, let us generate communion and personal connections. Our shared life stories, the testimonies that we will tell and the relationships that we will establish will cause around us surprise and astonishment, attractive bewilderment, healthy envy and wishes to join the group of the followers of Jesus in the style of Calasanz. It is hard to resist being a part of an ecosystem that is so full of life.

Finally, let us remember that, if we are able to recognize the Gift of the Spirit blowing strongly today among us, we’ll opt with courage and without any fear for the “Pious Schools going forth”. Going forth toward the existential, and geographical peripheries, going forth from...
our indoor enclosures, going forth towards a more ‘Catholic’ view of our Piarist reality and time horizons that will foster a good generational relay... In short, Pious Schools going forth that, with creative fidelity, will continue making real the dream of Calasanz in history for the greater glory of God and neighbor utility.

Let us bet, with creative fidelity, for the Pious Schools going forth.
3. Questions and tasks to facilitate the sharing

1. What reflection on your Piarist life and/or on the current situation of the Order/Pious Schools do you have after reading the document?

2. How did you feel, what did you think when you received the first obedience in your Piarist life, or in other words, when you had the first experience of “going forth”?

3. If you look at your Piarist life, where do you find experiences of life, joy, the presence and closeness of Jesus, of grace? What is the favourite history, moment... experience of your Piarist life?

4. What can I consider to be more connected with the current sources of Piarist life, to share more, to entangle me more, to improve as a disciple of Jesus and Calasanz, as a brother of community or teacher for others, to be a good rainmaker (generator, seeding of rain, of life, of future...)?

5. What would you say to Saint Joseph Calasanz if he came now to meet you and your community? What do you think he would tell you?

6. You can find on Facebook this page: https://www.facebook.com/Conectarse-a-las-fuentes-compartir-la-vida-272099213249449/ On this page – “Conectarse a las fuentes, compartir la vida” – you can leave comments or testimonials about Piarist life. Feel you a part of it, get connected. Celebrate and share your Piarist life. Share the richness of your Piarist life. #compartirlavida400años
4. Intercessions

Our Father in heaven. Jesus said to us: “Wherever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them”. We are gathered together here in Jesus’ name. We thank for his presence, because we seek your face. We beseech you, listen to our prayers and requests that we present today as we look for the signs of the Life you bestow us:

– Open our eyes, Lord, to your presence among us.

Father, you know how much we desire to be connected to the Life: make us aware of the treasure that we hold in jars of clay, so that we can recognize the Life you want to give us.

– Open our eyes, Lord, to your presence among us.

Give us openness to connect to each other, and courage to share our stories of life with each other: so that the Life you have been giving us may flourish in our community for the benefit of all those to whom you send us.

– Open our eyes, Lord, to your presence among us.

Give us trust, and teach us to embrace the others with attentive acceptance, with listening ears and with welcoming heart: always aware of your presence in the least ones.

– Open our eyes, Lord, to your presence among us.

Make us sensitive to the needs people have, especially to the needs of those who lack the means to draw attention to them: let us be the channel of your redemptive attention to them.

– Open our eyes, Lord, to your presence among us.

Let us continue our prayer with the word Jesus taught us:

Our Father, ...
Father, we experience, especially in these days of the Calasanz Jubilee Year, your blessings on us. We see life in our midst, in our communities, in our centres and works. We see that life is emerging in the wake of our words and actions. We would like to be grateful for this, and so we want to recognize this blessing of yours because we want to be channels of your Life and co-operators of your Truth. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.
ANNUS IUBILÆI SCHOLARUM PIARUM
400 ANNI 1617-2017

SCOLOPI CASA GENERALIZIA