



Vacani, vacani

LETTER TO OUR
BRETHREN
JUNE 2018

Last April I had the joy of being able to visit our brothers in the Minheuene community in Mozambique, Diocese of Pemba. It was my first visit to this Piarist presence founded by our Order in November 2016. A missionary presence, requested by the diocesan bishop, assumed by our Order from a deep sense of mission, and as one of the most beloved fruits of the Calasanctian Jubilee Year. A beautiful, committed and challenging gift to Calasanz in the 400th anniversary of the constitution of the Pious Schools and the 250^o anniversary of the canonization of our Holy Founder.

I would like to share with you all our reality in Mozambique because it is as unknown as it is exciting. So I deliberately choose a descriptive style, so that we can understand the project well and begin to love it.

We are in Mozambique called by the diocesan bishop of Pemba, a very extensive diocese with many needs. A diocese in which we are “building the Church,” because the pastoral needs and missionary presence are extraordinary. We are answering a call from the Church. This starting point for us is of paramount importance and marks our decisions and our plans. We are happy to try to respond.

The General Congregation welcomed the call and called for the collaboration of the African provinces, which responded positively. The first religious sent to Pemba belong to West Africa, but both provinces are committed to the sustainability and growth of our mission.

The mission entrusted is a large parish, with 30 communities, in the areas of Minheuene, Meza and Mariri, about two hours' drive from Pemba, the capital of the province of Cabo Delgado, north of Mozambique, border with Tanzania. The parish has a kindergarten annex, and there are possibilities in the near future of working in the primary and secondary schools located in the parish territory. It is a clearly missionary and Church-building work.

Our brothers are fully dedicated to the mission, working with dedication and enthusiasm. After being sharing with them their life, dreams, challenges and difficulties, I can say that I am proud of them. Seeing how they work, knowing the reality of the people they serve, I think of the beginnings of so many Piarists presences among the poorest, which began with small steps and, little by little ("Vacani Vacani" in the Macua language) are consolidating and developing. But the beginning, with scarce means and enormous challenges, requires a great trust in God and of missionaries full of daring patience and fortunate boldness, as Calasanz in his first steps.

Throughout the visit, in which I was accompanied by Fr. Pierre Diatta, we carried out many activities: a wide and quiet encounter with the diocesan bishop, who welcomed us in his house the first night; a visit to some of the parish communities; an Eucharistic Celebration with the faithful of our parish of "Saint Louis Grignon of Monfort"; a meeting with the various civil and parochial leaders; frequent meetings with the Piarists, to study in depth the reality and the future approaches; a Calasanz Family encounter with the three Cavanis religious who carry on another mission about three hours away from ours; personal dialogues with our brothers; a visit of the Escolinha (kindergarten) annexed to the parish; a visit to primary and secondary schools located in the parochial territory and which are currently managed by the public administration; moments of prayer; informal dialogue spaces, etc. An intense and well-tapped visit.

Thanks to the welcome and openness of our brothers, I was able to get a pretty clear idea of the reality and the prospects for the future. I share

them with you.

The first thing I want to say is that it is worthwhile to be in Mozambique and to carry on the dream of Calasanz among the children and young people of the country, deeply in need of Piarist education.

Secondly, I would like to underline the two great dynamisms from which I think our mission in Mozambique: ***to collaborate with the Church in what it needs, and to build our stable presence in the country, with its development and consolidation project.*** The two objectives are fundamental to us, and we can combine them very well.

The first of these criteria can now be realized like that: We fully assume the mission entrusted and its possible future development. We are talking about the parish, the Escolinha (kindergarten), the possibilities of a primary and secondary school, if the bishop gets their return to the diocese, etc. We also believe that we must work to expand this mission, with some Escolinha, a possible socio-educational center, etc. For us, collaborating with the needs of the diocese is an essential key to our mission. That was the reason for our arrival, and we want to keep it strong and clear.

The second (the development of our Order in the country), needs some points of reference. At the moment, we see the following:

- a) Together with the key "collaborating with the diocese", we also seek, little by little, our own missions. That is why we are planning the opening of a primary school in our own land where we can also build our house. We will have to work hard to get the necessary resources, as well as to study in detail all the legal aspects that will allow to open a Piarist school in the country.
- b) We also consider the vocational work. We believe that our vocation can be very attractive in Mozambique, and that is why we will seek to develop a vocational project and to have sufficient capacity for reception and accom-

paniment.

- c) We think it would be very good if the mission in Mozambique had a “Mother Province” to accompany and sustain it. We do not think for this of any of the African provinces, which already have enough mandated missions. The General Congregation will study this topic in depth and see the best possibilities to carry it forward. The close accompaniment of a consolidated province will be of great help to the development of our mission, as our experience in other places tells us.
- d) The provinces of Central Africa and West Africa will remain committed to sending religious to Mozambique, although this Piarist presence does not belong to any of them. Brazil’s collaboration in the initial training of young people who can do their studies in Portuguese language is very valuable and is working very well. Brazil can collaborate in the formation of young Piarists. Some of these young people could stay in Brazil, others go to Mozambique or some return to their province. The “Brazilian connection” is very important for the future of our presence in Mozambique. In addition, we contemplate the possibility that some of our missionaries spend one or two months in Brazil, not only to improve the language, but also to enrich their pastoral experience by knowing our work in Brazil.

It is still very early to make very concrete plans, but I think we are in the first steps of a very interesting Piarist foundation. In time, we will surely enter other dioceses of the country and, with God’s favor, we will go, Vacani Vacani, building the Pious Schools.

I offer you some final reflections that I consider important to our Order:

Mozambique is a good example of a “***new way of founding***” a new Piarist presence. Two provinces of Africa are collaborating in it (sending religious and caring for their accompaniment), that of Brazil-Bolivia (helping in the formation of young Piarists in Portuguese language) and the General Congregation (assuming the leadership

and accompaniment of the Mission and the community, which is set up as a general house).

This “New way of founding” will be enriched, when possible, with the commitment of a “Mother Province” that will assume this mission, with the help of the Piarist Fraternity (which will be able to send some members of their communities to collaborate in the mission), with the network “ITAKA-Piarists”, with which we will study a collaborative project, with the Secretariat of Projects Management and Sustainability, that will collaborate in the development of the mission projects, and with the solidarity of some other demarcation that has already been interested in giving a hand on what they can.

I stress these reflections because I want to emphasize that various ways of carrying forward the “key of life” of the consolidation and expansion of the Pious schools will be coming. Along with the traditional model that is very consolidated between us (a province that makes a foundation in a new country), a different model, which involves various demarcations, each with what is able to contribute (people, experience, accompaniment, resources), the Piarist Fraternity itself and networks of shared mission, will develop. I am convinced that it will be a very rich and fruitful model.

The General Congregation is working on the project “Pious Schools Going Forth”, which has already been consulted with the Council of Major Superiors held in October 2017. I think that our presence in Mozambique is a good example of some of the dynamisms we wish to promote with this project.

I would like to finish this fraternal letter with a few words of gratitude. First of all, our brothers Jean de Dieu, Jean Bernard, Rudy and Robert, who are or have been carrying out the foundation. Thanks for your example of availability and your missionary courage! Thanks also to Mgr. Luis Fernando Lisboa, Bishop of Pemba, who called us to collaborate and provoked in us the desire to serve. Thanks to Christian and Evaristus, for collaborating from their provinces with this foundation. Thanks to Fr. Pierre Diatta, who with his close

and frequent accompaniment is bringing a lot of strength to this mission. And thanks to all those who, from this moment on, are already interested in giving a hand. You'll always be welcome.

The Pious schools are being blessed with our presence in Mozambique, because in it we are living with fullness that “preferably the poor”, which deeply marked the soul of Calasanz. Let us pray for our brothers in Pemba and for the future of our mission in Mozambique.

Receive a fraternal hug.

Fr. Pedro Aguado
Father General