



# *A Chapter that welcomes and receives*

LETTER TO OUR  
BRETHREN  
MAR 2022

**A**fter a General Chapter, it is usually convenient to write a letter exhorting the brothers to receive and welcome the documents, proposals and options of the Chapter. I will do so in a next opportunity, no doubt. But on this occasion, I think it is better to write a letter about what we capitulars have received, as Piarists, throughout the three weeks of work we lived in Mexico.

You may be surprised by what I say, but I think all the capitulars will agree on this statement: we have received, in Mexico, many testimonies of Piarist life and mission. They are worth remembering, highlighting and sharing. They are testimonies that have inspired the future of the Chapter. The background against which we discern illuminates the chapter process, without a doubt. I share them with all of you, with a grateful heart and from the conviction that I will not be able to quote them all, because there have been so many.

## **ENCOUNTERING WITH THE HOMES.**

The Calasanz Homes are one of the most significant Piarist works in Mexico. Chinchachoma's inspiration is very present in this extraordinary incarnation of the charism of Calasanz, which is increasingly expanded in the whole of the Pious Schools. The capitulars wanted to make a gift to the Homes of Mexico: the delivery of a little money that could help in some needs of the Homes, such as, for example, an aid for the purchase of the van or other things that they need.

The gift was given in the context of a Eucharist celebrated in Puebla. But the Home Houses gave the capitulars something much more valuable: the testimony of a life transformed by the integral and Piarist education received in the Home. This testimony has many names of its own, but I want to express it with one: Salvador, a 15-year-old who shared with all of us his life process. It was extraordinary. A reconstructed life, in which this young man was able to

reconnect with his dreams, aspirations, desires to grow. A transformed life, not without effort: struggle, work, trust, accompaniment, transparency, sincere search for one's own self. And a fruitful encounter with Jesus, the Lord.

It was a profoundly Piarist testimony. The image of Salvador, moved, embracing Fr. Cristian and his educator, is indelible. He wasn't the only one crying, he wasn't the only one who felt like giving a hug. The capitulars receive, from the Homes, a new confirmation of Calasanz' intuition: if a young man meets an educator who helps him grow, from a project like the Piarist, that young man will grow and become a man of good, capable of a life seeking fulfillment. Thank you, Salvador!

**LIVES TRANSFORMED BY CALASANZ.** Especially significant, Salvador's testimony was not the only one we received. There were many more. In the visits to the various Piarist presences of Mexico we were able to listen to educators, students, alumni, young religious, responsible for our works, Piarist priests. And, listening to them, it was not difficult to find the common denominator of all experiences: the transformative encounter with Calasanz.

Throughout these years, I have had the formidable opportunity to listen to many of these testimonies, which reflect with sincere authenticity the value of the treasure we carry in our poor hands: the charism of Calasanz, a gift of the Holy Spirit capable of giving new life, new horizons and new options.

But what we have lived in Mexico reminds us that the lives transformed by Jesus and Calasanz always ask for something more from us. The process cannot be stopped, nor does it ever come to an end. It is a permanent process, which always asks for new answers from those who believe in it, because novelty is embodied in each person, and each one wants to continue building to grow the talent received, without burying it<sup>1</sup>. The best testimony was given to us by a young man from the Morelos Institute, whose way of thanking the

Piarists for the gift received was to demand more and better answers from us. I transcribe his final words, because I asked them personally: *"I would love for the Piarists to be able to reach the students much more to share the Piarist charism, and that this contributes to each one being able to heal their wounds and fight their battles, as I did. I ask you to be close, to plan new strategies, to innovate, to take advantage of the technological resources that we now have at hand to make the Calasanctian spirit modern, to be inclusive, to be constant and resilient in each of your projects, to live intensely, to love your students. Once again, I ask you: be close, innovate and love."* No young person speaks without challenging us. I remember the name of this young man: Luis. Thank you, Luis!

**A WELCOME THAT INCREASES COMMUNION.** Throughout the Chapter, we visited the presences of Puebla, Apizaco and Chiautempan-Ocotlán. I will not detail what we did, but what we received: a fraternal, organized, participatory welcome; a joyful presence of the community, of the Fraternity, of the educators, of the students; authentic testimonies of Piarist life; an overflowing joy for the presence of the capitulars in each of the schools. All this provoked significant reactions from the capitulars, each according to his perspective: the Piarist of a new presence, who said *"now I understand what the real Calasanctian identity means"*; the young Piarist who expressed *"the things that young people have said are new, for example, the request to innovate"*; the Piarist who wanted to take advantage of every minute to talk with the boys; the formator who said *"how much it helps a young man to share his process and feel that they understand him"*, etc. Dear brothers and sisters of Mexico, nothing you did was left without echo in the soul of the capitulars, including the carpet of flowers of Morelos.

**A NEW PHOTOGRAPH OF THE PIOUS SCHOOLS.** We have seen many photographs of the chapter house. The official photos of the Chapter circulate on the networks. If we look closely, we will see that it is a "new" photo. The capitulars are not alone. The Council of the General Fraternity is present, and a good group of young people, religious and laity, members of the pastoral and educational processes of the

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1.- Mt 25:14-30

Pious Schools, is present. All of them cast their votes to prioritize the Action Lines of the Keys to Life. All of them signed the minutes of the Chapter. Their presence and participation was truly meaningful and valuable. We are entering a new way of understanding and realizing our chapter processes and our dynamics of shared reflection. The canonical spheres reserved for religious are clear, but the increasingly rich spaces of shared discernment with the people who build the Pious Schools day by day are also becoming clear. It will be necessary to advance in the reflection of how to articulate and organize in a more real and representative way this immense flow of Piarist life.

**A PRESENT AND PURPOSEFUL FRATERNITY.** I emphasize the presence of the Council of the General Fraternity. It was very positive and pluralistic. But there are quite a few things left that we will have to think about. Among them, I quote the following: the participation of the Fraternity in the processes of preparation of the Chapter, in all those areas that concern them and on which it is good that suggestions and proposals arrive, the articulated presence of representatives of the various Piarist Fraternities; a greater dedication of time to reflection on the construction of the new Piarist subject, a theme that perhaps we should raise recurrently in the General Chapters, which are a very good opportunity to take the pulse of the path we are traveling; a deeper reflection on Piarist vocational plurality and on Piarist ministries, etc. And without forgetting so many people who, without belonging to the Fraternity, build Pious Schools in so many places in our world.

**YOUNG PEOPLE, PRESENCE AND CHALLENGE.** The General Congregation summoned a group of young people to the Chapter, in coherence with what was experienced throughout the process of the Piarist Synod of Youth and considering that it was a good opportunity to give a renewed impetus to the Calasanz Movement. The presence of the young people did not disappoint; on the contrary, it helped the Chapter to delve deeply into the theme of the Order's relationship with young people, a relationship of increasing co-responsibility. The Chapter had access to the proposals of the young people, elaborated along the synodal path. Perhaps the challenge we have

to consider now is to follow up on this whole process, so that what has been a good experience is transformed into a new way of proceeding. The challenge is exciting.

**THE FORMANDEE OF MEXICO.** Throughout the Chapter there were two moments of coexistence with all the young people who live their initial formation process in Mexico (pre-novices, novices and juniors). There are many things we could highlight from these encounters, but I'm sticking with two. First of all, it was nice to see the capitulars looking for the meeting with the young people (on the walk, at lunch, on the bus, at any time). There was a desire to meet them, to listen to them, to encourage them, perhaps to receive from them the strength and the new vigor of their vocation. But I want to underline the great good that these meetings did in young people. I had the opportunity to meet with the juniors and hear their testimony of joy at the vocational impulse they had received. Once again, we could all see the value of shared life and fraternal encounter.

**A CONTEXT THAT INSPIRES DISCERNMENT.** No Chapter meets "in the abstract." We meet in specific places, with their own history and their particular dynamism. And these "keys of context" not only inspire the work in the chapter house, but also help in the subsequent process of welcoming the Chapter. This 48th General Chapter will go down in history as the "Mexico Chapter", although it will also be known as the chapter held in times of pandemic. Despite the health difficulties and complications of travel, the Chapter could be held with the participation of all the capitulars. We must be very grateful that this has been possible, and renew our conviction that external difficulties, which should not be ignored, cannot impede the permanent process of building the Pious Schools.

**THANKS.** There are many people to thank for the success of the Chapter. But I want six specific names to be publicly recorded: Adriana, Alan, Saúl, Paco, Emmanuel and José Luis. They were part of the Logistics Commission organizing the Chapter. Their work, their dedication and their discretion were, quite simply, extraordinary. The Chapter gave them a trip to Rome, more than de-

served, in which they can grow even more in their love for Calasanz. Thank you!

**UNDER YOUR PROTECTION.** Shortly before the end of the Chapter, we were all able to make a pilgrimage to the Basilica of Guadalupe, to offer Our Lady the chapter works and to put under her protection the walk of the Pious Schools. To Our Lady of Guadalupe, who is venerated with deep love for the Mexican people and for so many peoples of America, we entrust the fruits of our General Chapter.

Receive a fraternal embrace.

*Fr. Pedro Aguado Sch. P.  
Father General*