



## *Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit* **First intuitions after the 48th General Chapter**

**LETTER TO OUR  
BRETHREN**  
**APRIL 2022**

**O**ver the next few months, we will receive, little by little, various information and materials from the General Chapter of the Order, recently held in Mexico. I would like to dedicate this fraternal letter to share with all of you some first impressions, perhaps as a “messy enumeration” of ideas, options and decisions. Let’s go there.

***The essential gift of the Spirit is Jesus Christ.*** The Chapter was convened from a very demanding and inspiring motto: “*Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit*”. Our assembly presented us the challenge with clarity and prophetism: we are called to walk from a single center, Christ Jesus, the Lord. We are invited to follow Him day by day, and to configure our life from Him, as a permanent process of Piarist vocational identity. We are deeply grateful for this, and we wish to bring to the whole of the Pious Schools a renewed call to be witnesses of the Lord, hoping to be credible, be-

cause what we announce we live it with simple and growing authenticity.

***Renewing our Calasanctian bets.*** Our General Chapter strongly underlined the importance of moving forward from consolidated Keys of Life, but which demand new answers and offer new nuances. Among them: to continue *building the Pious Schools*, which are an instrument of the Kingdom; to take care of the faithful experience of the vocation received, in order to become the Piarists that children and young people need; to *nourish our sending in mission*, to incarnate a ministry that is increasingly necessary, so that our way of serving children and young people grows in identity and in capacity for new answers; a *Vocation Ministry* based on prayer, on witness, and on the increasingly active commitment to propose, accompany and welcome; an *Initial Formation* understood in an integral way, capable of accompanying all the dimensions of our vocation; a *Community Life* under-

stood as a follow-up to the Lord and a humble witness to his centrality; an understanding of our life as a process of growing fidelity, this being the key to our *Ongoing Formation*: the process; a dynamic of *Participation* based on the shared construction of a Piarist Christian Community in which the various vocations converge, etc.

***Walking along renewed paths.*** New Keys of Life appeared, bearers of bets and challenges, which become calls that demand new steps from us. We welcome the call to *synodality* as a path of listening, accompaniment, discernment, and co-responsibility; we perceive our growing *interculturality* as a challenge of communion from diversity and inculturation from the Gospel; we assume the challenge of the *integral sustainability* of the Pious Schools, begging from the Spirit for the same patience and daring from which Calasanz founded them.

***We feel strongly sent to the Mission.*** We understand well the vision of Calasanz, who from an integral understanding of Piarist life insisted that the exercise of one's own ministry is a path of fullness. We have received the challenging call to walk with young people to build together paths of evangelization for the children, young people and families who live among us. We assume that the impulse of the Calasanzian identity of all our mission platforms must always be a task to be promoted, and always in a shared way with all the people who are co-responsible for the Piarist mission. And we have reaffirmed the call to mission among the poor, from the Pious Schools Going Forth and missionaries.

***A new "photograph" of the Pious Schools: the Spirit encourages us to look at our reality in a renewed way.*** The "photo" was different: capitular religious, the Council of Fraternity and the Young People with whom we walk and with whom we deeply share the Mission. It is good to understand that this is so because the Spirit has summoned us. And we welcome the novelty of this experience as a gift that we must take care of and enhance. We want the Order and the Fraternity to walk together in all the dynamics from which we build the dream of Calasanz. We want the Youth to be present in the real life of the Pious

Schools, and to help us not to believe that we have already given all the answers they need. We want people who vocationally share the Piarist Mission to be a real part of the new photo. And we want this to be our way of living and working in all our presences.

***Some decisions and changes that are incorporated into our domestic legislation.*** These include: the challenge of child protection and the fight against sexual abuse, of conscience and power; the dignity of women; the struggle against clericalism; the integral accompaniment of young priests; the keys to a renewed Initial Formation; the development of the Piarist Presence model; the promotion of the Participation Directory; the value of shared communities between religious and laity; Piarist ministries; the systematic development of Vocation Ministry; the greater agility and plurality in the configuration of the provincial congregations; the importance of Communication, etc. Each of these changes requires an adequate presentation, without a doubt; the time will come.

***The Spirit has also left us with concerns that we must try to answer.*** We want to be concerned about the *option for the poor*, which was what impelled Calasanz to engender the Order; we want the challenge of an *authentic Piarist experience*, woven of prayer, work and community, to be always present in our efforts; we want our struggle against *clericalism and worldliness* to be real and committed; we want the Pious Schools to be full of *care for the least and for the vulnerable*, and always on the side of those who suffer; we want the *calls we receive from our Church* to resonate as invitations to conversion and commitment; we want, in short, to live the vocation received as an offering to the God of the calls.

***Walking with young people:*** The Chapter invites us to share dreams; to build together; to accompany in truth; to live our faith in deep openness and communion; to promote with them new missions; to make a synodal journey; to let Calasanz transform them and transform us, etc. The Chapter invites us to it because it lived it and experienced it. We wish to welcome the three cries spoken at 48CG by the group of young people,

who affirmed these three convictions inspired by Calasanz and lived experience: to be more missionary; to live the realities of young people by promoting their utopia and their projects, discerning their needs in generous accompaniment; to think again how we live at the bottom of any pastoral approach: Jesus Christ. Let us live, truly, from Christ.

**The Spirit cannot be controlled.** We can try to name his inspirations, but others will appear. They will appear in these coming months and years, in the processes of reception of the Chapter, in the processes of synodal journey, in the chapter processes of the demarcations, in the fraternal meetings, even, hopefully, in the meetings of the General Congregation. A Chapter is not an isolated event, but a process of discernment and life.

I am aware that each of these options and decisions needs a broader and more accurate presentation to be well understood and welcomed within the Pious Schools. Some of them will be the subject of study in future *salutatio*s. For the moment, I wanted to offer you an initial presentation, very synthetic, that can contribute to start the **process of receiving the Chapter**, which must be long and active. In order to help in that process, I would like to express again three dynamisms that I believe help in the process of chapter reception:

**Receiving the Chapter from a central attitude**, from a conviction that clearly places us in the current moment of the Order. And that attitude is none other than trying to live and walk from the centrality of Jesus in our life, our mission and our choices. Only in this way can we welcome this Chapter as an invitation to “*build Pious Schools*”. This way of situating ourselves helps us to understand ourselves as people co-responsibly committed to the construction of a more alive, more missionary, more faithful Order capable of new responses. This commits us all. We invite young people not to repeat our models, but to build with us by contributing their sensitivity. We propose an initial formation that seeks a more significant consecrated life, not one without horizons. We work with and for the laity not

so that they may be only our collaborators, but so that they may build with us, co-responsibly, according to their own vocation. All this helps us to understand ourselves as humble workers of this most fertile harvest, which belongs to everyone. We work by vocation.

**Purifying our risks and taking advantage of our opportunities.** Upon receipt of the Chapter, we all have *risks and opportunities*. The former must be overcome, the latter taken advantage of. Among the first, I quote a few: the temptation of *indifference* (this does not go with me, it has nothing to do with my daily life and my needs), *vulgarization* (“more papers, as always”), *simplification* (of the chapters, what interests are the choices, the rest stays on the shelves), *manipulation* (bring the water to our mill, instead of thinking about what I should change), *provincialism* (let’s see what we have to do with this Chapter in our Province, instead of thinking about what we are called to, as a Province, from this Chapter), *ignorance* (not even taking the trouble to read, because I already know everything and I have other more important things to do). There are many examples that we can add, but it is not necessary to do so, because the essential thing is to be aware that we all have risks in the reception, because normally things are received according to the container, and that is not easy to avoid.

We also have opportunities. It is good that we know how to take advantage of them. As simple suggestions, I point out some: *enriching our consciousness of Order*, trying to understand what concerns and occupies us, *strengthening and updating our understanding of some central elements of our charism* on which we can read very interesting documents, *accepting a small movement of vital uninstillation* thinking about what I can collaborate so that the great common challenges that we have as a possible Pious Schools, organizing a good *formation plan* in the community, working on some of the chapter documents or having some community retreat focused on what the decisions of the chapter can mean for us.

**Also living this time in prayer dynamics.** Our communities prayed intensely before and during the General Chapter, asking the Lord that

our six-year assembly would be an “*opportunity of the Spirit.*” I think we should not stop doing it. We need to place the reception of the Chapter in the prayer life of our communities and works, as well as in our personal ones. Little by little, like the rain that soaks the earth -if it is constant-, our prayer will transform us according to God’s will. Therefore, I remind you of one of the petitions that are part of the prayer that was prepared for the Chapter.

***Come, Holy Spirit.*** *Help us to contemplate life and the world with the eyes of Jesus. Make our humble and faithful disciples of the Lord, like Mary, our Mother, and like Calasanz, our founder. Through your intercession, may the General Chapter of our Order be welcomed and received for the Glory of God and the Usefulness of our Neighbor. AMEN.*

I end this fraternal letter with a simple story lived in the Chapter, which I think illustrates very well what I want to say in this letter. During the Chapter we had the opportunity to listen to many testimonies of the chapter members themselves, who told us about the Order’s projects, the new presences, etc. One of them was Fr. Roberto Da-

lusung, from Asia Pacific. I know he will forgive me for quoting him explicitly. Roberto explained to us the Project of Piarist Vocation Ministry in Asia, especially in countries where we are not present. His presentation was a vocational witnessing, in which many of the values we talked about in the work sessions were mixed. Listening to him we could see what love for the Order and for Calasanz means, the strength of prayer, the audacity in the proposal, the serene trust in the God of the calls, the learning of the generosity of the young, the work for the construction of the Pious Schools, the tenacious patience of the one who knows that the owner of the processes is Another, and many more things that are at the bottom of the soul of every Piarist. Perhaps that is why the ovation with which his testimony was received never ended. Thank you, Roberto!

Receive a fraternal embrace

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Father General*