



Gathered in a community of faith...

LETTER TO OUR
BRETHREN
JUNE 2019

Thus begins the third chapter of our Constitutions, dedicated to Piarist community life. And so begins the second “key of life” of our 48th General Chapter, which proposes “to *revitalize our community life and to take special care of the central aspects emphasized by our Constitutions*”. I would like to dedicate next few ‘salutatio’ to share with all of you some aspects of our General Chapter that I consider particularly significant, in this way contributing to the process of *welcoming the Chapter* in which we are all involved. I will try to do it from a very concrete point of view: what are the points of attention that our Chapter proposes to us in each of the areas of our life and mission. Let us begin with community.

I will try to organize my reflection from three complementary points of view: some transversal processes proposed by the Chapter, some concrete options for renewal and, among them, some that may be particularly new and demanding. Let’s move on.

I-The transversal dynamics are very valuable. They can illuminate all areas of our life and offer suggestions for renewal in all of them. I have chosen four, which the General Chapter underlines in a special way around Community Life, but which, by their own transversal nature, affect and energize each and every one of the Keys of Life of the Pious Schools. There are certainly a few more, but we will leave them for another time.

First, I would like to turn to the theme of **processes, itineraries and learning paths**, which our Chapter calls “learning to learn”. I think this is a very significant wake-up call for us educators. We know that the development of people, the configuration of options, transformations and changes do not happen overnight. Time is needed, but “active” time, time that is cared for and full of meaning, a time that

becomes a process, an itinerary and a dynamic of learning.

Our General Chapter invites us to “*choose to learn to live in community*”, through formative processes and itineraries that help us to do so. It also invites us to “*unlearn*”, because there may be dynamics among us that do not help and that are consolidated. It is good that we can identify and redefine them.

Secondly, I would like to refer to the **Constitutions**. Our “fundamental text” is quoted in each and every one of our Keys of Life, and that is something very significant for us. When we speak of Community Life, what the Chapter says is “*to renew our community life and to take special care of the central aspects underlined by our Constitutions*”. Possibly we are facing a permanent task, which we must know how to carry out in a new way. What do the Constitutions ask of us, today in a special way, before the challenge of the renewal of our community life?

Just by way of example, I would like to take note of number 28, which says that “*we wholeheartedly accept others as they are, and actively help them to mature in their abilities and to grow in love*”. It is interesting to read this proposal today, from the point of view of our *intercultural, intergenerational and even inter-vocational* communities¹. There is much work ahead of us.

I would like to point out a third consideration, related to two learning experiences that were especially highlighted during the Chapter: **accompaniment and community discernment**. Our Chapter challenges us in two particularly significant areas, in which I believe we have much to learn and reflect on. One is the capacity of our communities to accompany the life and vocation process of religious, and the desire and openness of religious to be truly accompanied. Both are a challenge, because both require transparency, a desire to share, dedication of time and community dynamics that make this possible. I believe that more than one personal problem would have

been solved well - and in time - if this chapter proposal were lived in a more real and frequent way among us.

Community discernment is, without a doubt, one of the most fundamental elements that we have to face. I will try to dedicate some fraternal letter to this topic. For now, it is enough to highlight the challenge, as the Chapter did, and to do it in the terms in which we have to do it: *we have to learn*.

In this Easter season we read the Acts of the Apostles. In those first moments of the Church, community discernment in the light of the Spirit, in order to seek God’s will, was what helped them to seek new answers to new situations and to overcome old ties that did not make sense in the light of the source experience of the Lord’s Passover. We also find ourselves in a new situation, and we need processes of discernment to find the best options. Our General Chapter insistently proposes this to us.

The fourth transversal key that I would like to highlight has a very concrete name: the **Eucharist**. A General Chapter that insistently proposes that there is only one center (Christ the Lord) and that clearly reminds us that the privileged space for living and sharing this center is the Eucharist, could not fail to inspire us with ways to live it with increasing authenticity. It is enough for me to recall this chapter affirmation: “*The celebration of the Eucharist is for us an itinerary of life, incorporating into our lifestyle what we ritually celebrate: acceptance, forgiveness, listening to the Word, offering of our gifts, life given, thanksgiving and sending on mission*”² “.

II-The General Chapter proposes some very concrete and demanding “**options for the renewal of our Community Life**”. I am going to highlight some of them, all of them taken from the General Lines of Action approved by the Chapter Assembly. I do not seek to elaborate on them; I only wish

1.- 48GC. “Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Configuring core “In the footsteps of Jesus”, n. 5.

2.- 48GC. “Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit”. Configuring core “In the footsteps of Jesus”, n.11.

to help us to approach them. I quote four of them³.

There are some options that are considered by the Chapter as “*especially urgent*”. They are the following: open and welcoming communities; communities that are “schools of prayer”; communities that bet on the construction of a new Piarist subject formed by religious and laity; communities that care for and accompany the vocation process of each Piarist, religious or lay. It is interesting that it is said of these four options that they are “urgent”. The four are expressed with a nuance of activity, of process, of change: *to be school, to welcome, to build, to accompany, to take care...* It is very suggestive to read these proposals in the context of each of our communities, as an institutional call – for that is what they are – to our conversion.

The acceptance in our communities of the ecclesial call to *synodality* is expressed above all in two moments especially emphasized by the Chapter: the Eucharist and the community meeting. This is very clear, Brothers.

The role of the *local superior* and his service of pastoral leadership clearly emerges. I think that in this sexennium we should advance in this topic, based on simple but effective proposals of formation, and on dynamics that make it possible.

It would be very helpful if we could make progress in the *dynamics of projects* (personal project, community project and project of presence). Let us be clear that, if we know how to work in this matter, and if we know how to combine well these three realities, we will obtain good fruits. But let us not lose sight of the fact that the Chapter proposes us to live on the basis of the three and to advance in the three. They are different, but complementary. Step by step.

III-There are some quite new proposals, which may even surprise us. It is good to welcome them in this perspective. Perhaps some of them can be

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3.- 48GC. “Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.” Key of Life on Community Life. Lines of Action.

one of those “surprises of the Spirit”. I will focus on four:

That the Piarist communities be responsible for the **Pastoral Care for Vocations**⁴. We have insisted these years that in each Province there should be a person responsible for the Pastoral Care for Vocations, and also that all religious should feel responsible for the Pastoral Care for Vocations. But perhaps this proposal has escaped us: that the communities be – and feel – responsible for the Pastoral Care for Vocations. I think that we are facing an interesting and very demanding challenge, and that it can help a lot in the dynamics of our communities. And in many areas: community prayer, evangelical witness, welcome, interest, inclusion of the theme in the community project, formation, support for the person in charge, etc.

That the communities be “**schools of community life**”. This is expressly said of the houses of formation⁵, but I believe that we should apply it to all communities, because otherwise we run the risk that what is learned in the houses of formation – if they really are schools of community life – will be forgotten over the years, for lack of practice, reinforcement or coherence.

The “**Piarist Christian community**”. It appears in almost all the “Keys of Life” approved by the General Chapter. There is no doubt that we are facing a reality that has not only come to stay (Rule 103), but to grow and renew our life and mission. Among other things, the Piarist Christian communities help to situate the religious community in the whole of the Piarist presence, which is one of the greatest needs we have.

“**Communities of communion**”. No doubt they already exist among us, but the Chapter has given them a name. In addition to what we live in the religious community of which we are a part, the Chapter recognizes that we religious need to be able to meet at other levels, “*with brothers with*

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4.- 48GC. “Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit”. 7th Key of Life: “Vocation Ministry”, 2nd thesis.

5.- 48GC. “Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. 8th Key of Life: “Initial Formation”, 5th Line of Action.

whom they can share their life and vocation in new and creative ways⁶.

I end with an invitation. Community is our way of life, the natural space in and out of which we live, grow, work and pray. It is perhaps one of the testimonies that the young people of today need and seek the most. And it is also one of our nostalgia, and we express it frequently in our chapters and assemblies. Perhaps the time has come to take steps, as humble as convinced, as simple as accurate, to move closer to the ideal we seek. And the path is undoubtedly through choices, commitments and risks. Let us live it with joy.

Receive a fraternal embrace.

*P. Pedro Aguado Sch.
Father General*

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6.- 48GC. "Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit". 2nd Key of Life: Community Life. Line of Action n.7