



Calasanctian Route

Letter to our
brethren

NOV 2022

Last July there was a new edition of what is gradually being called “**Calasanctian Route**”, the annual meeting of all the young Piarists who, in that year, make their solemn profession as religious. The meeting of this year 2022 was quite different, because about eighty young people from all the demarcations have participated in it, in two different batches. After two years without being able to carry it forward because of the pandemic, this year 2022 we have recovered this formidable Calasanctian experience that so enriches the Piarists who participate in it and those who accompany it.

I have decided to dedicate one of the monthly letters that I address to all the Pious Schools to share with all of you some reflections that I was doing throughout this intense month of July. I do so because I believe that it is valuable to highlight some of the experiences that are lived in this “Calasanctian route”, and that reach a formidable value in the context of this process after a General Chapter that proposed to us all to live centered on Christ and to take care in depth of the vocational gift received.

I begin by recalling the **basic structure of the meeting**, so that those who do not know it can better understand the key points that I want to share with all of you. The young people gather in Madrid and begin by visiting the sanctuary of Saint Faustino Míguez, in Getafe. We begin, then, by highlighting the call to holiness that we have all received as Piarist religious. From there to Peralta de la Sal, to live five days of spiritual experience entering deeply into the core of

the Piarist vocation. From Peralta, a four-day trip through the places where our founder lived and exercised his priestly ministry. And from there, to Rome, to follow in the footsteps of Calasanz and work on some especially significant issues of the life of the Order today. We closed the first batch with the first priestly ordination held in Rome of a Vietnamese Piarist, presided over by Cardinal Lazzaro You Heung-sik, and the second with ten solemn professions and nine diaconal ordinations, the first presided over by this servant, and the diaconate by our brother and bishop Msgr. Carlos Curiel. We ended the two rounds with a pilgrimage to Frascati, to offer our vocation to the Queen of the Pious Schools.

But one thing is the geographical itinerary and another much more important is the spiritual itinerary that we live in the Calasanctian Route. I highlight some of the experiences that I consider most illustrative for the moment we live in the Order.

Internalizing and sharing. Reflecting on our own religious vocation and sharing our reflections with Piarists from different places and cultures is a formidable richness. The Calasanctian Route helps us to understand the importance of being able to enter deep into ourselves and of being able to share that vocational background with our brothers. There is no doubt that we all need moments like these, in which we can live these two precious dimensions of our vocation. Sharing in groups, two by two, or all together, in an organized or spontaneous way (which there was all) greatly enriched the young people. Proof of this is that, after the Route, they continue to share. And they want to be able to continue to do so in an organized way. We must reflect on this.

Calasanz challenges us. The Route has offered all participants not only a greater and better knowledge of Calasanz but, above all, the opportunity to confront with his figure, to link with his processes, to pray intensely before his tomb, to be moved by his memories and, in a special way, to renew and strengthen the call that they feel very deeply in the depths of their soul: *to be a new Calasanz*. This is the happy expression with which we try to express the most genuine of the vocation of each of the young Piarists that God grants us as an

undeserved gift. And what we experience on the Calasanctian Route, as I experience it in each visit and in each encounter with young people, is that, indeed, this is their deepest desire, that they live it with as much humility as authenticity: *to be a new Calasanz*.

To go on pilgrimage. The Calasanctian Route has a pilgrimage component. And every pilgrimage has, among others, three characteristics: to be in the specific places where something that is significant for us happened; to travel a spiritual itinerary illuminated by the experience to which we are making a pilgrimage and, finally, to become aware of what I have lived and what has happened inside me throughout the pilgrimage. Without these three components, we are not on a pilgrimage; at most, what we do is an interesting visit that enriches us or a good exchange of ideas on more or less valuable topics. I think that these three keys have been well lived by our young people along the Calasanctian Route, and all of them are now in the task of naming the third one. We offered them an accurate key to this task: to ask Calasanz' question to Glicerio, which is included in the new painting that we have placed in San Pantaleo in honor of the first young man who knocked on the doors of the Pious Schools to be a Piarist. The question is as simple as it is profound: *what dwells in your heart?*

The value of ordinary mediations. It is true that the Calasanctian Route is something extraordinary. But it is configured from many ordinary, frequent and normal mediations in our life. The prayer of Lauds and Vespers of each day; the careful and participated celebration of the Eucharist; the community meeting in which we share life, ideas and concerns; the service to the brothers that facilitates coexistence; the welcome of the communities that receive us; the free time – scarce - but shared and enjoyed; the dialogue with the superior or those responsible for the community; personal prayer, certainly in privileged places and spaces; listening to talks or reflections of interest; spiritual retreat; reflections on the life of the Order; Calasanctian formation, etc. All this is part of

our life; all this, when lived with joy and shared in fraternity, makes our life truly extraordinary.

The accompaniment of young adult religious.

This is one of the aspects that was most strongly underlined in our 48th General Chapter. The chapters detect, with fine discernment, needs to which the Order must respond. The accompaniment of the Piarist religious in their first years of adult life is one of them. And the Calasanctian Route has helped us understand some important aspects of this challenge. The first, that accompaniment is desired and loved by young Piarists; they seek it and live it with joy and sincerity, but they need the context in which they live to provoke it and make it explicit. The second is that community dynamics are a good context of accompaniment. When a community decides to ask questions and share the answers, accompaniment emerges with its natural wealth. The third is that accompaniment needs people who believe in it, who give time to listen and welcome, and who provoke and propose it. And the fourth, that accompaniment is a “culture”, a way of living as Piarists, and when we experience it, the vocation grows in authenticity.

The hidden work of those who make our lives possible.

I echo in this letter the feeling of gratitude of young people towards all the people who have made the Calasanctian Route possible, and who make it possible every year. I dare to mention some of these people: those who strive to ensure that everyone has their entry visa into Europe; those in charge of logistics in each place we visit, some very complex such as the tour of Catalan lands; the reception of the communities of Gaztambide, Peralta de la Sal, Monte Mario, San Pantaleo and Frascati; the workers who are in charge of the food or the cleaning; the companions of each group; the Piarists who have offered their reflections and talks, etc. The young people have had words of gratitude for everyone, aware as they are that our life is possible because there are many people who facilitate it with their professional and well done work. It is also Calasanctian Route to thank those who help us.

The gift of professing or being ordained in Rome.

The General Congregation offers every year the possibility that those who wish to do so

may profess or be ordained in San Pantaleo, in the house of Calasanz. It is clear that a profession or an ordination are valuable experiences to live in your own province, in your school, in your parish of Baptism or wherever you are destined as a Piarist. But it is also true that doing it in San Pantaleo is a beautiful and impressive experience. All options have their wealth. This year, as has been said, we celebrated in Rome a priestly ordination, ten solemn professions and nine diaconal ordinations. For everyone, and not only for those who professed or were ordained, they have been meaningful experiences.

The opportunity to live the “keys to life” of the Order.

The Calasanctian Route offers participants the opportunity to experience the richness and complexity of some of the Keys to Life from which our 48th General Chapter wanted to guide our path. In a special way some of them: *synodality*, woven of fraternal search and shared reflections; *interculturality*, lived in so many complementary dimensions such as languages, traditions, lifestyles, etc.; the mentality of *Order*, especially careful with the sharing of the reality of each Province and with the listening of what we live at a general level; the *centrality of Christ*, expressed each day in many ways and especially in the Eucharist; the rediscovery of *Piarist spirituality*; the care of *community life*; the dynamic “*Pious Schools Going Forth*”, etc. All of them emerge as a gift and as a task. Every occasion is good to make us aware of the importance of the keys from which we are invited to live.

The richness of the proposals made by young people and the depth of their questions.

Throughout the days of the Calasanctian Route, proposals and ideas appeared, as well as worries and pains. All this is part of our life. It’s good to share some of them. I do it with brevity, looking only that we can grow in the beautiful experience of sharing what worries us. I quote only four of them:

Why don’t we organize a Calasanctian Route for the superiors of the communities and demarcations?

There were smiles when this idea was proposed, but it has a very important background. Along the Calasanctian Route many ideas and proposals for

renewal appear, but then “*we return to reality, and many times the things we talk about here cannot be raised in the community.*” It’s a challenging concern.

Would it be possible to meet again in a while to share what we are living from everything we have experienced in the Calasanctian Route? It is a concern that clearly reflects something important: we need spaces of shared life, and we cannot configure life from disconnected experiences that end in themselves, but from processes that cause transformation.

We need to rediscover Calasanz. The Calasanctian Route offers young people a formidable opportunity to fall in love with Calasanz again. The holy founder emerges as a novelty, as a call, as a provocation, as a model and guide.

The challenge of becoming an adult in the Order. One of the most beautiful expressions of adulthood is the ability to freely express what we think and what worries us about our Piarist life. Throughout the various meetings, the young Piarists have experienced the importance of sharing what worries and hurts you and what strengthens and makes you happy. We become adults in the Order also through this dynamism.

The construction of the Pious Schools. I end this fraternal letter by sharing one of the experiences we live in each of the batches of the Calasanctian Route. We spent three full days working on the “Pi-

ous Schools Going Forth”. One of the meetings consisted of a highly synodal reflection on a very specific question. The question was this: *think that you are Fr. Provincial and you have to explain to your brothers, in the Chapter, what you consider to be the fundamental thing that the Province needs to move forward.* The sharing, in which each and every one of the young people participated (each one had four minutes to share his ideas) was an extraordinary synodal experience and helped everyone to understand what we mean by the name we have given to one of the chapter nuclei: the construction of the Pious Schools.

I leave it here, not without sharing with all of you my thanksgiving to God for the vocation of each of the young Piarists that He, as Father, has given us for the good of children and young people.

Receive a fraternal hug.

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