



# Integral sustainability

Letter to our  
brethren

APRIL 2023

This is how the 48th General Chapter of the Order described the fifth “key to life” of the Sexennium: “to advance significantly in the objective of achieving the integral sustainability of the Pious Schools”. This is a very good formulation, as realistic as it is challenging. It is realistic because it proposes to move forward. And it is challenging because it calls for doing so in a meaningful way. These are two words that very clearly outline the task at hand: to take steps and make decisions that really matter in order to achieve the goal we are proposing: the integral, holistic sustainability of the Pious Schools.

I think it is very important that the text of this 5th Key of Life<sup>1</sup>, approved by the General Chapter, be known to all people who belong to the Pious Schools. I think it is particularly important to understand the concept of “*integral sustainability*”. I say this because when we talk about sustainability, we usually think that we are essentially referring to the material resources necessary for the normal development of our mission. This point - the economic one - is undoubtedly fundamental. But it is not the only one. When our General Chapter proposes a comprehensive vision of the challenge of sustainability, it thinks of three broad areas: *Leadership* (people and teams), *Charism* (identity) and *Economic Resources*.

I would like to share with you all some simple reflections on each of these three broad areas that define our sustainability.

**CALASANCTIAN LEADERSHIP.** We can approach this challenge from very different angles, all of which complement each other. I would like to highlight three aspects of leadership that we need and that seem particularly important to me today.

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1.- GENERAL CONGREGATION. Chapter Document of the 48th General Chapter. Ediciones Calasancias. CUADERNOS Collection, pp. 49-54.

First of all, I think we need to **look to Calasanz** to understand the style of leadership we need, always widening our gaze. Let us think not only of the provincials, but of all people who assume or are asked to assume a leadership role (superiors, directors, ministers, delegates, etc.). It is enlightening to remember what Calasanz said about Provincials to bring us closer to the concept of leadership proposed by the Founder: *“May they imitate the love, tenderness and goodness of our Lord Jesus Christ, not exalting themselves above their brethren, but becoming models for the flock, leading them to perfection more by their example than by words.”*<sup>2</sup>

“Leadership” and “assume” are two words that must always go together. He who is given the responsibility of leadership must assume it as a calling, give the best of himself and personally live what he asks of his own. Otherwise, he will not only not be credible, but also not effective. And credibility and effectiveness are fundamental. Both. Only this leadership can fulfil its most important task: To create leadership.

Secondly, I believe that we need **leadership that generates co-responsibility**. The religious community or the educational community is made up of adults who are able to understand and take on the tasks necessary for the smooth functioning of the group and the mission. When the community or team or secretariat adopts an idearium, a plan, some goals, some tasks, some projects... it is accepted by everyone in the group. When the project is shared, everyone feels that it belongs to them. Shared responsibility and availability are attitudes that go hand in hand, like co-responsibility and sending. Taking into account the personal situation of each individual, their skills, their preparation, their vocation ... It is the community that proposes and sends its members for various tasks, and it does so through the people who bear the responsibility.

The third aspect I would like to highlight in relation to leadership has to do with what we can call **“forward-looking discernment”**. We need

to be clear about the key areas that guarantee our mission and our future. This discernment is fundamental. If we have reasonably clear priorities, we can make progress in these areas. But even this will not be enough if we are not able to make a “forward-looking discernment”, if we do not go deeper into the direction in which our reality and that of the society we serve is moving so that we can prepare ourselves to make appropriate responses. Discern what is essential and understand the context in which we need to develop it.

## **CHARISMATIC IDENTITY OF THE MISSION**

The discourse on the charismatic identity of our life and mission is becoming richer and more stimulating. We have worked through it and have an enormous wealth of reflections. I would like to make just three simple observations that I consider fundamental today in the context of the challenge of integral sustainability.

First, we should **never stop building our identity**. This is an eternal task. People renew themselves, contexts change, challenges surprise us. We need an “open and connected antenna” to understand what needs to be highlighted in each moment to strengthen our identity. One of the aspects we need to take care of today is undoubtedly the “missionary” dimension of our identity. In a recent *salutatio* I spoke about this issue. Our identity is essentially clear. But we find that it is also missionary and therefore open. The challenge is to combine well both dynamics: the clarity and consistency of the identity and its capacity to be open and inviting to dialogue.

There are **spaces and choices that are particularly important** for promoting a sustainable identity. I refer in particular to the following: the religious community embedded in mission with a vocation to share and invite; the Piarist Christian community accepting the challenge to be the soul of mission; Piarist ministries accepted for what they are: Expressions of the core aspects of our identity; the common mission teams, the formation processes, the relationship with the Fraternity and above all the capacity to call young people to embrace the Piarist life and mission as a vocation. All these aspects, summarised by our

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2.- Saint Joseph CALASANZ. Constitutions of the Pauline Congregation n. 283

General Chapter in the core “Construction of the Pious Schools”, are increasingly necessary and challenging.

Thirdly, I would like to point to our ability to **recognise new challenges and to provide appropriate responses**. The charismatic richness of a group has not only to do with history or with the keys contributed by the founder, for the charisms of religious institutes are constituted in an incarnational way and offer clues in their incarnation as to how they are to be understood. We need to know how to live our charism with as much fidelity as we need to respond to contemporary circumstances. A charism remains fruitful when it is able to give new responses to new situations. The charism is by definition inculturated. And now it has voluntarily become intercultural. An exciting challenge.

### **MATERIAL RESOURCES.**

This is the third dimension of the challenge of integral sustainability. Acquiring the necessary material resources to ensure the sustainability of our lives and mission as much as possible. To move forward in this complex challenge and difficult moment, we need to know how to conjugate three verbs: generate, manage and share. None precedes the other. All three are there at the same time, all three complement each other.

**Generate.** The Order needs to generate resources. I think we need to move beyond the traditional scheme of “internal and external” because it is not enough. It is better to move to a more comprehensive scheme that ultimately consists of four broad areas of action: seeking funds from different perspectives, managing and guaranteeing grants, generating income from mission, and promoting investments that guarantee future opportunities. We need to move forward in all these dynamics through our foundations and through new options and structures of the Order as approved by our General Chapter.<sup>3</sup>

**Manage.** Good administration creates resources;

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3.- GENERAL CONGREGATION. Chapter Document of the 48th General Chapter. Ediciones Calasancias. CUADERNOS Collection. Key to Life 5, Action Lines 5 and 6, page 54.

careless administration wastes them. This principle is as clear as it is fundamental. No doubt this is why our General Chapter decided that the first of the lines of action should be to carry out a serious economic and financial review in each of the demarcations.<sup>4</sup>

**Share.** The Order will progress if we understand that sharing our goods is the key to the construction of the Pious Schools. Our system of contributions is based on this criterion, which requires the cooperation of all. The contribution must be co-responsible and positive, and the General Congregation must contribute to this through the implementation of a “master plan” that helps everyone to understand the dynamics and objectives of our economic sharing. We are involved in this task.

To **CONCLUDE** this fraternal letter, I would like to say that the nine aspects I have presented are to be understood in an interdependent way. We can consider the nine and many others to advance the three core dimensions of our integral sustainability: *Leadership, Charism Development and the Resources we need*. This is the secret of being “integral”, approaching all dimensions from a holistic, never partial perspective. Let us move forward on this path. This is the proposal that the Chapter makes to us.

Receive a fraternal embrace.

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

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4.- GENERAL CONGREGATION. Chapter Document of the 48th General Chapter. Calasancias Editions. CUADERNOS Collection. Life Key 5, Action Line 1, page 54.