



Being a new Calasanz

Letter to our
brethren
JUNE 2023

In its “Roadmap” for the Sexennium, the General Congregation has chosen four “**Keys of Inspiration**” to help explain and understand the central message of the 48th General Chapter of the Pious Schools. We want these four keys, which express the General Congregation’s own reading of the Chapter and the Sexennium for which it is responsible, to inspire - as the name suggests - every single activity and project we undertake.

These are the four keys: “*Synodality*”, “*Going Forth*”, “*Identity and Authenticity*” and “*Integral Sustainability*”. I have already dedicated some *Salutatio*s to some of them, and I would like to refer here to the third of the keys: **Authenticity and identity**. When I talk to our young religious about what this means, especially in the context of solemn vows, I refer to these two words with this expression: “**To be a new Calasanz**”.

I am writing this letter on the evening of Easter Sunday. It is normally a quiet and serene day in the community of San Pantaleo. We celebrate the Eucharist, participate in the Pope’s Urbi et Orbi blessing and then renew our vows before the festive meal, as is our tradition¹. The afternoon is very quiet and I have used it to write this fraternal letter that will reach our communities as soon as the Easter season ends after Pentecost. But it is written in the Paschal context, and this has helped me to understand -

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1.- Constitutions of the Pious Schools 24

and to try to share - where the secret of the journey of Piarist authenticity and identity lies.

I am firmly convinced that Calasanz reveals this secret to us and proposes it as an exciting **spiritual task**: *“The faithful religious who wishes to receive the ripest fruits from our Institute must remain united to Christ the Lord and strive to live only for Him and to please Him alone”*.² Calasanz clearly expresses the same conviction as our General Chapter, which proposes that we *“walk with Christ at the centre of our vocation.”*³ This is the secret of Piarist authenticity and identity: *to be a new Calasanz from a growing identification with Christ Jesus, the Lord.*

I would like to begin with the Gospel text that we read in all the Eucharists in which we celebrate Calasanz: *“Whoever receives a child in my name receives me”*.⁴ This is undoubtedly the centre of the life of Calasanz: to identify with Christ by giving oneself to those with whom Christ himself identifies.

With whom does the Lord identify himself? The answer to this question is very revealing. I would like to highlight three Gospel texts in which Jesus clearly expresses with whom he identifies. One of them is the one I just mentioned: with the child. There is a second impressive text, Matthew 25:40, which Calasanz himself quotes explicitly in the Proem of the Constitutions⁵. In this text Jesus identifies himself with the poor (*I was hungry, I was thirsty, I was naked, I was in prison, etc.*). And the third text is Matthew 10:40, which belongs to the apostolic discourse and clearly says: *“He who receives you receives me.”* It is very beautiful to see these three identifications of Jesus: **with the authentic witness, with the poor and with the child.**

I have always believed that Calasanz (and later

2.- Saint Joseph CALASANZ. Constitutions of the Pauline Congregation 33-34.

3.- GENERAL CONGREGATION OF PIOUS SCHOOLS. 48th General Chapter. Chapter Document. Core 1. Calasancias Editions. Collection NOTEBOOKS, p. 13. Madrid, 2022.

4.- Mt 18, 5

5.- Saint Joseph CALASANZ. Constitutions of the Pauline Congregation 4.

Paula Montal or Faustino Míguez or Celestina Donati) clearly discovered these identifications, embodied them, transformed them into a life project and gave them to the Church and society in the form of Pious Schools, in what we, with humble pride, call Piarist life and mission. Our vocation.

So I think the challenge we face, *authenticity and identity*, has a very succinct name: Calasanz. Each of us is taking on the exciting challenge of **being a new Calasanz**. To every young person who professes I always say: with your smallness, with your need to grow, with all that you are, this is the horizon of your life: to be a new Calasanz.

In the light of these Gospel texts, I would like to suggest **three certain paths** that you can take in relation to authenticity and identity.

DAY BY DAY. This is the first way. The central experience of Calasanz, namely identification with Jesus and with those with whom He identifies, is not achieved in a short time. It is a vital process. It is a lifelong challenge. In fact, Calasanz was slow to discover the children. It took him a while to become aware, spiritually aware, of the affirmation of Jesus that he eventually included in his Constitutions: the poor. Some speak of a process of conversion, and perhaps this is a valid word to express Calasanz's experience.

I would like to invite you to consider the process that Calasanz lived as an honest, sincere journey of progressive discovery of Jesus Christ, walked by someone who never believed that his life was finished and who had already done everything he was supposed to do in his desire to follow Jesus. That is the secret of Calasanz. He was a man who was open to the Spirit speaking through reality and he was a man who was faithful to his calling and ministry. Part of the concept of faithfulness is the openness to transform that faithfulness into the creation of something new. So the first suggestion is: go from day to day. Every time we participate in solemn profession, we must tell our young people that solemn profession is not a goal, but a sincere commitment to always walk

towards it.

There is only one way to be a Piarist: day by day. Live with authenticity in every moment, in every prayer, in every educational meeting, in every Calasanz Movement group, in every community meeting, in every Eucharist, in every young person you listen to and accompany, in every school class. Day after day, in daily fidelity. Calasanz invites us to a life of authenticity. Let us pray that ours may be close to his.

LIVING LIFE FROM THE CENTRE. In Calasanz's life there is only one centre. We are all called to live from one centre. And that centre is Christ. There is a text from the Book of Proverbs that we all remember when we think of Calasanz: ***“The fear of the Lord is the school of wisdom; before glory comes humility.”***⁶ Piarists often remember this phrase and many of the references that Sacred Scripture devotes to the fear of the Lord⁷, because for Calasanz it was very significant. As an example, I quote the advice the Provincial is to give to a young man preparing for the priesthood: *“Strive to make yourself fit for the priesthood by growing every day in the holy fear of God and by acquiring with special zeal the humility which will greatly elevate you in the presence of God.”*⁸

The consecrated life had, has and will always have a plus at its root: to give my *whole* life without reserving anything for myself; to love Christ and the mission *completely* without other wonderful, good and holy loves; to trust *completely* without trying to be the master of one's own life; to try to live freely for the mission without attachments other than one's vocation and its consequences. The authenticity of the Piarist consecrated life is the result of an honest experience of seeking God's will for one's life, without fear of finding in the depths of our soul that God is asking you for “everything”. This is the reason why we conse-

crate ourselves.

We **must always take care of this centre.** And it is a lifelong task. And it is a task that we have to work on in many areas. I do not want to leave the most important ones unmentioned, if only by listing them: Make an effort not to focus on other things that are not important but sometimes unconsciously trap us; dedicate yourself to personal prayer, that privileged space of honest encounter with God out of the truth of your soul; live prayer, community and mission with increasing balance; gain transparency for yourself, for your brothers and for God; love the Piarist mission deeply by giving the best of yourself to children and young people; love the Order generously by doing the spiritual work necessary to be always available for the Pious Schools... It will help us greatly to look to Calasanz and learn from him to live from the centre.

There is one particularly important way that Calasanz, as already mentioned, holds dear to his heart and lives by: humility. This is the way, brothers, the way of Calasanz, on which he has built his Pious Schools and formed our vocation. Calasanz proposes to humble oneself, or self-lowering. Stoop to give light to the children, especially the poorest. In a world like ours, where the temptation to go “up” is the order of the day, Calasanz suggests going “down”. This is a spiritual dynamic, do not doubt it. This is probably one of Calasanz's most profound teachings: to grow in our identity with Christ and in our identification with the Lord, the best way is humility. Therefore, it is an exciting spiritual task to see from the centre. Rejoice!

BUILDING THE PIOUS SCHOOLS. This is the third reference I would like to give you, and I would like to highlight it because it is directly related to what our General Chapter proposes, which defines the “building of the Pious Schools” as one of the central nuclei of our Piarist journey.

The Pious Schools, the Calasanzian Family, the Piarist Fraternity: they are essentially instruments in the service of the Kingdom of God. To build them up, to work for the Pious Schools and for a Calasanzian Family better able to generate

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6.- Proverbs 15:33

7.- Especially in the book of Ecclesiasticus

8.- Saint Joseph CALASANZ. Opera Omnia. Volume VII, page 263.

Life and dedicate itself to the Mission, is a formidable task. That is why we are here.

There are two key elements of the vocation that Calasanz lived with great vigour: dedication to the mission and the building of the Pious Schools. In my opinion, we have all learned the first well, but not so much the second. We work hard, we dedicate our whole life, our time, to the mission, but sometimes we forget that we also have to take care of the construction of the Pious Schools, of the consolidation of the project that Calasanz created. If Calasanz had dedicated his life only to teaching children, or to creating a school where the children of Rome could learn, we would not be here. Calasanz built a religious Order that is essentially an instrument of the Kingdom.

So I invite you once again to renew our commitment to the continued building of the Pious Schools, the Calasanctian Family, and the Fraternity, through all the dynamics that make this possible. And one of the most important is the love for the Pious Schools, which leads us to give the best of ourselves to make our Order, the Fraternity and the Calasanctian Family ever better and more consolidated instruments at the service of the Kingdom.

We have just finished the Chapter period and the General Congregation has already published its “Roadmap” for the sexennium. I invite you to read it and reflect on it, both personally and in community, and try to take from it the indications that can most help us to grow in our identification with Calasanz.

Receive a fraternal embrace.

Fr. Pedro Aguado Sch. P.
Father General