



The Calasanzian Family

*Letter to our
brethren*
NOV 2024

In this year 2024, on the eve of the Jubilee of Hope, we are celebrating a very special anniversary that I do not want to let go unnoticed: the 75th anniversary of the official constitution of the Calasanzian Family. I dedicate this fraternal letter to remembering and reflecting on this event.

Let us begin with history. At the end of November 1949, at the end of the celebrations of the double centenary of Calasanz (300 years since the death of St. Joseph of Calasanz and 200 years since his beatification), the then Father General of the Order, V.R.F. Vincent Tomek of St. Anthony, invited all the Pious Schools to thank God for the gift of the declaration of the Holy Founder as “Heavenly Patron and Protector of all the popular Christian schools in the world” (August 13, 1948) and considered the occasion as a privileged moment to bring together all the Institutes that recognize themselves in the Calasanzian spirit.

The conclusion of the centenary celebrations and the celebration of the patronal feast of St. Joseph Calasanz on November 27, 1949 thus marked the birth of what we know today as the “Calasanzian Family”. From that day on, the various Institutes inspired by the spirituality and mission of St. Joseph Calasanz responded to the call of Father General Vincent Tomek. Each of them received the confirmation of “spiritual communion in the graces granted to the Order of the Pious Schools,” a form of attachment chosen for the formation of the charismatic family born of

the happy daring and tenacious patience of St. Joseph Calasanz.

From that memorable date, the meetings between the Superior Generals, the visits and pilgrimages of religious from these congregations to the Calasanzian places in Spain and Italy, the celebrations at the tomb of the Saint in Rome and the use by all the institutes of the common denomination: “Calasanzian Family” intensified.

Father Tomek’s appeal of November 27, 1949 is recognized as the “Constitutional Act of the Calasanzian Family,” which, like a small seed, set in motion a process of recognition of the charism and the common mission that, thanks to the invitation of the Second Vatican Council, gave the definitive impulse to “return to the sources” and recognize Saint Joseph Calasanz as the inspiring and fruitful root of the group of religious men and women and lay people who, in different ways and to different degrees, identify with the spirituality and mission of Calasanz.

Therefore, on November 27, 2024, the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Calasanzian Family will be celebrated, which is a community in the spirit and mission of St. Joseph Calasanz for the religious men and women of the various congregations that belong to it together with the Order of the Pious Schools: Daughters of Mary, Religious of the Pious Schools (Piarists Sisters); Institute of the Schools of Charity (Cavanis Fathers); Calasanzian Institute, Daughters of the Divine Shepherdess (Calasanzian Sisters); Society of the Holy Name of God (Suore Cavanis); Institute of Christian Schools in Voorselar; Society of Mary, Provolo Institute; Poor Daughters of St. Joseph Calasanz (Suore Calasanziane); Institute of Christian Workers of St. Joseph Calasanz (Kalasantiner Fathers); Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (Religious of Timon-David). We have the joy of being able to include the Fraternity of Pious Schools in this list of names.

I would like to reflect with all of you on the life and future of our Charismatic Family. These are not reflections that I would like just to

share with the other Congregations, but some keys that I think it would be good if we could spread among all the Institutes, perhaps from our reality as founders of the Family. I will try to be brief.

1. First of all, I believe that we need to “breathe life into the family”. It is good to have “family meetings” from time to time, “at the different levels of our organization: general, circumscriptional, demarcational and local. These are different meetings and they have different objectives. But it is good to come together to think, pray and celebrate together, always respecting the autonomy of each congregation, something that has always characterized our charismatic family. We have scheduled a general level meeting in Rome for the end of November 2024, which we hope will be fruitful and positive.
2. Our Order can and must make creative proposals on everything related to the Calasanzian identity to the congregations that wish to do so. We have some interesting experiences from the last few years, which are greatly appreciated by all participants.
3. I think it is important that in our Pious Schools we can deepen our knowledge of the specific charisms of the congregations of our family, especially through the lives of the founders and foundresses. For example, next year we have the opportunity to celebrate two beautiful anniversaries: the centenary of the deaths of St. Faustino Míguez and Blessed Celestina Donati, and the second centenary of the birth of Father Celestino Zini, co-founder of the Poor Daughters of St. Joseph Calasanz.
4. I think it is very important for us to always be open to collaborating with the Calasanzian Family in whatever is asked of us. We have an exciting mission together, and anything we can do to collaborate with the sister congregations will always be good for the project initiated by St. Joseph Calasanz. A “positive engagement” with the Calasanzian family will always be a good

thing.

5. Sometimes there are “family issues”, mostly at the local level. It is good to recognize them and learn from them so that we can do better. Sometimes they were problems depending on the way people live, but they were also caused by institutional decisions. It is important to take an objective look at our family’s journey and learn from history.
6. On a general level, we have occasionally tried to form a Calasanzian Family “Coordinating Commission” that could help prepare meetings and reflect on important issues for everyone. Probably the time has come to reconsider this step of “institutionalization”
7. The exchange of options, dynamics and bets that we make can also be very helpful in the life of the Calasanzian Family. Just as an example, I would like to remind you that we have included in the General Congregation’s roadmap for the six-year period the objective of reflecting on the challenge of moving towards a “Calasanzian Family on the Way Forward”.
8. Our Calasanzian Family lives in the Church and wants to grow in communion with her. This is the reason why Pope Francis will receive the participants of the “family Meeting” that we will celebrate in Rome at the end of November. It is very important to listen to the Pope as a family and in a family context. There will be an opportunity to share with everyone what the Pope is telling us on this important day.
9. There is no doubt that the challenge of vocations ministry is of great importance for everyone. We have had interesting experiences of working together in this area and I think it is good that we explore how we can move forward. The challenge of the growth of congregations can also be a valuable topic for collaboration. In some newly formed countries, we have helped each other and that has been very important for everyone.

10. We are taking care of the celebrations of the “Day of the Calasanzian Family” which, as you all know, is on November 27. On that day we celebrate the patronage of St. Joseph Calasanz over the Christian popular schools, and for that reason we commemorate the richness of this patronage by thanking the life and mission of the different Congregations that have emerged from the Calasanz root. I think it will be good to give this celebration of the Calasanzian patronage that “family life” tone with which we want to go.

We could go on like this, but I do not think it’s necessary. But it seemed very important to me to bring the challenge of building the Calasanzian family to the table, because growing the family is undoubtedly part of the dream and the project of Calasanz. And on this point, I would want to make a final reflection.

The Calasanzian family has a father, St. Joseph Calasanz. Without him, there is no Calasanzian family. Without living it as a father, it is not possible to live the family. And this is something that concerns us all and challenges us all. The charism of Calasanz is so rich and current that it has given rise to new charisms throughout history. All the founders and foundresses of the different Congregations have contributed to the Calasanzian charism with their originality, but they cannot be understood without the Father. And this is a tremendous wealth that we must cherish and appreciate.

This “life-creating” dynamic that characterizes the Calasanzian charism is neither finished nor complete. The various charisms have developed as responses to the promptings of the Holy Spirit in concrete situations or historical contexts. The Calasanzian charism has encouraged some founders to take care of the children of imprisoned women, young workers, families or women. In this way, the family is built up.

The Spirit created the Fraternity of Pious Schools in response to the Church’s call to share the charism with the laity. This was reaffirmed by Pope Francis in his message to the Order on the occasion of the Calasanzian Jubilee of

the Year 2017. I believe that accompanying the growth and life of the Piarist Fraternity is a very valuable step in building the Calasanzian family.

Will there be new incarnations of the Calasanzian charism in the future? Undoubtedly. But they will only be recognized if they are recognized by the Order of Pious Schools through its legitimate institutions and through its processes of communal spiritual discernment. This is how it has always been in history, and this is how it will always be. No institution can acquire the Calasanzian identity without the mediation of the Pious Schools. And for this to happen, some fundamental criteria must be taken into account. These include the special bond with the Holy Founder, the positive contribution to the life and mission of the Calasanzian Family, the deep respect for the Order and the institutions that belong to the Calasanzian Family, the recognition of their project as worthy of Calasanz, etc.

The future is open. To deny this openness is undoubtedly a sin against the Holy Spirit. But also simplify it. We are guardians and bearers of a treasure. To guard means to protect it, care for it, cherish it, deepen it, etc. Above all, being a bearer means living it, embodying it and bearing witness to it. I think that in addition to being bearers and guardians, we must also remember to pass it on, to offer it and to make it grow. Let us be apostles of the charism.

With my fraternal best wishes.

Father Pedro Aguado Sch.P.
Father General