



# *A Fraternity on the Way*

*Letter to our  
brethren*  
DECEMBER 2024

**I**n the middle of this year 2024, an important meeting of the General Piarist Fraternity took place in Rome, attended by representatives of all the Fraternities, the Major Superiors of the Provinces where there is a Fraternity and the General Congregation. I would like to use one of my monthly fraternal letters to share with you some of the reflections we had at this meeting, because I believe it is very important that the path of the Fraternity is not only known, but also shared.

I would like to begin by recalling the words of Pope Francis about the Piarist Fraternity in his message to us on the occasion of the Calasanctian Jubilee Year 2017. The Pope said: *“In response to the wishes of the Second Vatican Council, which called for a more active participation of the laity in the life of the Church, you have paved the way for the Piarist Fraternities, which invite men and women of good will to share your charism and mission and to promote a rich diversity of vocations.”*<sup>1</sup>

It is important to be aware of these statements by the Pope: The Fraternity is an institutional response to the wishes of the Second Vatican Council; we share charism and mission; we promote vocational diversity. I think the Pope is reminding us of the ecclesiality of the option, of the depth of what we promote, and of the challenge to consolidate it further. It is good

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1.- Pope Francis, Message to the Pious Schools on the occasion of the Calasanzian Jubilee Year 2017.

to keep this in mind and to be grateful.

1.- I would first like to provide **some basic data about the reality of the Fraternity of the Pious Schools**. It is interesting to know how the Fraternity defines its own identity and the horizon towards which it is heading. Let us take a look at this:

- a. Identity: “We are a network of Christian communities that share the charism (spirituality, mission and common life) with the Order of the Pious Schools and focus on following Jesus Christ in the style of Calasanz.”
- b. Horizon: “To configure ourselves as a Piarist subject that actively participates in the life and mission and in the growth of the Piarist presence, strengthening our Piarist spirituality and identity and sharing priorities, projects and dreams with the Order”.
- c. The Fraternity is present in eleven Demarcations of the Order and consists of just over a thousand people with an average age of 50. About one hundred Piarist religious belong to the Fraternity. About sixty people have received some of the Piarist ministries.
- d. I can give you a lot of data, but that is not my aim. But I think it is very important to be aware of its reality, to thank it and to accompany it. The Fraternity of Pious Schools is a gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church, to the Order, and to the Calasanzian Mission. Therefore, if it is of the Spirit, it must live as such and assume that it is called to be a sign of something new, and it must be based on the event of the first Pentecost, which was so for the following reasons: the community was centered on Christ, the apostles were aware that they needed this Spirit, and they felt called and sent to proclaim Jesus in order to build the community and the Kingdom of God.

2- I think it is interesting to know **some of the priorities that were decided at the meeting** to which I refer, because they indicate the path that the Fraternity wishes to follow in its desire to continue building the Pious Schools together with the Order and so many people who are com-

mitted to the Calasanz project. The Assembly divided the options into three different areas: the processes of incorporation into the Fraternity, the life and mission of the Fraternity, and the role of the Fraternity in the construction of the Pious Schools, based on the dynamics of synodality.

- a. Regarding the processes of incorporation into the Fraternity, the two main options have to do with the relationship between the Fraternity and the Calasanz Movement, on the one hand, and with everything that has to do with the themes and materials of formation which are intended to be increasingly shared.
- b. With regard to the life and mission of the Fraternity, the following options were most appreciated: to improve the possibilities of the General Council in accompanying the Fraternities; everything that has to do with improving knowledge of the life of each Fraternity; to accompany well the missionary outreach of the Fraternity and the promotion of Piarist ministries.
- c. With regard to the construction of the Pious Schools, the Assembly emphasized two options in particular: the willingness of the Fraternity to collaborate in the initial formation of Piarist religious, especially with regard to the development of the process of participation; the clarification of the place of the Fraternity in the Order and in each Demarcation.

3-I am aware that the Piarist Fraternity is not yet known in all Provinces, and I know that its reality is very uneven. But I think we are facing a very important Piarist reality and it is good to share some reflections on it. This is the intention of this third section of my letter, in which I will try **to propose some options that I think we should promote**, taking into account, of course, the diversity of situations. I am writing primarily for the members of the Fraternity, but also for the Provinces that share the journey with them.

- a. The identity of the Fraternity. The documents are clear, but identity does not exist without a progressive process of identification. I dare say that the effort to live Identity in an accurate and honest way **always** calls us to an at-

titude of conversion. Identity is a mechanism of conversion, of change. It reminds us of the horizon and provokes authenticity, an effort to be worthy of the identity of which we are bearers. And that concerns us all. Identity, when lived authentically, always demands something more.

- b. There is an important challenge for everyone, for the Order and for the Fraternity, which we call “growing fidelity”. This is the process of growth to which the Fraternity feels called. The Statutes of the Fraternity shape various aspects of the lifestyle of individuals and communities. These include more careful formation, economic sharing, participation in the Eucharist of the Piarist Christian community, organizational aspects, the accompaniment of people, the processes of definitive option, etc. Little by little, in growing fidelity.
- c. The participation of the Fraternity in the life of the Province, in the Piarist reality in which it lives and develops. Life helps identity, and this is verified and expressed in life. There is no identity without spaces of communion, without shared discernment, without concrete life. We must make progress on this central point: the Fraternity must be suitably integrated into the life of the whole of the Pious Schools. We are talking about teams, secretariats, meetings, Piarist presence, etc. We need to make progress in the institutionalization of this process. It is clear that this challenge will take time, but a time that is a process. A time without process is good for almost nothing. I think that we should analyze in the Provinces and Fraternities how the process of participation of the Fraternity in the life of the Province has gone, noting the positive elements and those that have not worked. This could also be enlightening.
- d. The strengthening of Piarist ministries. We spoke about pastoral, Christian education, service to the poor for social transformation, and listening and accompaniment ministries. The implementation of these ministries strengthens the Fraternity and the Piarist Christian Community and helps the Province to grow in its sensitivity to the precious challenge of building a synodal Church, to which we are called at this moment by the Holy Spirit.
- e. Fundamental synodality in the small community and in the Fraternity as a whole. Care of the meeting, prayer, community discernment, economic sharing, fraternal relationships, Fraternity building, accompanying people, etc. The daily life of the community is what truly expresses the direction and horizon towards which we are heading. This is true for the Fraternity and for the religious communities.
- f. Learning community spiritual discernment. Undoubtedly, we are facing one of the greatest challenges of the synodal process we are experiencing: community discernment, equipped with reflection, listening, acceptance of the opinion of the brothers, common search, decision-making, etc. It is a pending issue among us.
- g. Giving importance to the Shared Mission with the Order. It is our decision, both that of the Order and that of the Fraternity. We want to share the mission. This means several things, two of which I would like to emphasize: valuing the Itaka-Piarist network as a space of shared institutional mission and nurturing the different dynamics and structures from which we move forward in this shared mission.
- h. The missionary challenge. I think we need to consider how we can develop the missionary character of the Fraternity. Mission is the meaning of the Pious Schools; it is the reason for Calasanz’ life. Mission essentially means sending out. The Order and the Fraternity are sent to children, to young people and above all to the poorest. This mission outreach can and should be shared. This is already the case in many places of the Order and we have rich and fruitful experiences of this “sent out in shared mission”. We even have Piarist presences that have emerged in this way. I believe that we must accept this challenge and

renew this conviction. The abundance of the harvest calls for collaborative and courageous responses. This is one of the most interesting and fruitful issues we have raised.

- i. The “spirituality of building the Pious Schools” and, consequently, the spirituality of building the Fraternity. The Order and the Fraternity are two instruments of the Kingdom. They are small and humble, but they are. Building them therefore means serving the Kingdom. And building them up means many things: frequent and simple prayer for the Fraternity; concern for the incorporation of young people into the Fraternity; ongoing formation; offering the Fraternity in the various Piarist environments; formation for the leadership and accompaniment of the Fraternity; concern and interest in knowing the life of the Fraternity, and the web spaces where we can follow its life; reflection within the Provinces on what our General Chapters say about the Fraternity.

We are on our way. Let us move forward step by step, trying to walk together, giving everyone the time to complete their growth process, accompanying each other. I invite you once again to conclude these reflections by praying together the prayer that the Pope proposes to the whole Church in this synodal process. I think it is good that this prayer is often said in our communities, and so I will propose it in some fraternal letters.

*Come, Holy Spirit. You who stir up new languages and put words of life on our lips, free us from becoming a museum Church, beautiful but mute, with a long past and little future. Come into our midst so that in the synodal experience we do not allow ourselves to be overwhelmed by disenchantment, so that we do not water down prophecy, so that we do not end up reducing everything to sterile discussions. Come, Holy Spirit of love, make our hearts ready to listen. Come, Spirit of holiness, renew the holy, faithful People of God. Come, Creator Spirit, renew the face of the earth. Amen.*

With my fraternal best regards

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