



Vocational consistency

*Letter to our
brethren*
JAN-FEB 2025

I continue to reflect on the visit I pay to the young-adult religious of our Order who are in the first six years of their adult Piarist life and are having their first experience of mission, of community life outside a house of formation, of taking on responsibility, sometimes in very challenging ways, etc. When I talk to them – especially when I listen to them – I recognize the clarity with which they formulate their main challenge: to live their vocation with *increasing authenticity*.

They are aware that in these early years much of what their Piarist life will look like in the future is at stake. They are also aware that this life is not always easy, and they want to avoid the risk of a life without radicalism, without center or without joy. They want to avoid it because, let us face it, they see that life in some of their elders. And they wonder, not without concern, how it is possible to achieve a religious life without passion, without courage or without the balance we all need to be happy? What has gone wrong along the way? What processes or experiences can help us achieve a consistent religious life?

This is the topic we are working on the most this year. As almost all of you know, I am holding spiritual retreats with all religious who belong to this age group on the challenge of *vocational consistency*.

After listening a lot and getting to know many personal situations, I have come to identify the basic points concerning our vocational consistency is at stake.

Obviously, the points I will present to you are my reading of this challenge, illuminated by the experiences of those I see who have achieved it, and by the mistakes of those I see who have been sidetracked. We have it all in the Order. It is my vision. Of course, each of us can add other keys, emphasize some of them or express them in other ways. I share with you what I see in the hope that it will help us on our paths.

Before I mention the “key points” that I see as fundamental, I would like to say a word about “vocational consistency”. It can be defined in many ways, but I have chosen a very specific one: a paragraph from the letter that a young Piarist wrote to me when he asked for his solemn profession. *“In these years I have had different experiences in my vocation process. I have experienced joy, passion for my vocation, discouragement, spiritual dryness, the value of accompaniment, the consolation of transparency, the disappointment of sin and my own weaknesses, the importance of the children in our lives – even if they are sometimes not easy –, the serenity of prayer, the strength of community... I have experienced a whole range of things that are unique to our life. But I have come to a conclusion that I live with certainty and that I share with confidence: I want to try with all my might to be a new Calasanz. I want to live my vocation with the consistency with which he lived it, so that my joy, my faithfulness and my witness do not depend on whether things go well or badly for me, but on whether I allow the Lord to support me along the way.”*

This letter is not the “spiritual high” of a young man about to be professed. It is the expression of a sincere desire: I want my vocation to remain strong throughout my life. I do not want to lose the treasure I have received. We can call this “*vocational consistency*”.

The task I propose to young-adult religious is to develop a “*roadmap for their vocational consistency*”. It is not a simple “personal project”, but the answer to the big questions that a religious must ask himself if he wants to become more and more faithful to his vocation. The gateway to this “roadmap” is his answer to five questions. I summarize them for everyone:

1-The first point, the first question, is something that our 48th General Chapter strongly urged us all to do: **To live from a single center, Jesus Christ the Lord**. I like very much how St. Joseph Calasanz puts it in his Constitutions: *“The faithful religious who wants to draw the most mature fruit from our Institute should remain united to Christ the Lord, desiring to live for Him alone and to love him alone”* (CC34).

This is a precious and exciting spiritual task that lasts a lifetime and that we have been working on since the beginning of our vocation journey. The secret lies in the “*day to day*” in which we offer the Lord our joys, our challenges, our difficulties and our vocation. We do this because He alone is the way, the truth and the life.

A few weeks ago, Pope Francis gave us the encyclical “*Dilexit nos*”. The entire encyclical is a hymn to the centrality of Jesus Christ in the life of the Christian. In this precious letter, in which he comments on the text from the Gospel of John in which Jesus invites us to abide in Him², or the text from the Gospel of Matthew in which the Lord says “come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest”³, the Pope quotes Paul’s saying in which the apostle summarizes the reason for his vocation: “*He loved me and gave himself up for me*”⁴. He simply “*loved me*”⁵.

The task I propose is very concrete: To recognize the clues (means, projects, dynamics, options) that can help us most in this challenge. I phrase the question this way: “*Choose the clues that can most help you live a Christ-centered life*”. Much of our vocational faithfulness depends on the answer to this question – or the courage to ask it.

2-The second aspect I suggest is something I have written about in several letters. I formulate it as follows: **To embody with growing and passionate balance the dimensions of our vocation:**

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- 1.- Jn 14, 6
 - 2.- Jn 15, 4
 - 3.- Mt 11, 28
 - 4.- Ga 2, 22
 - 5.- Pope Francis. “Encyclical Letter “DILEXIT NOS” October 24, 2024, n. 43-45

the experience of God, community life, and mission.

The phrase “*passionate balance*” is a simple oxymoron that can help us understand the demands of the challenge we face in living a consistent Piarist life. The 48th General Chapter clearly expressed this in what we call the “*configuring core*” of the Chapter’s proposal: an integral, balanced, mystical and prophetic experience of our vocation”⁶.

To fulfill our *mission* and to live in *community* and *to be men of God*, we need passion, vocational intensity and a genuine desire to live what we have accepted as a vocation. Our Constitutions express this aptly: “*Called by baptism to the fullness of perfect charity, we leave everything for Christ and follow him in the community environment of consecrated life as the only necessary thing... and we place ourselves at the service of our brothers with greater availability*”⁷.

The question we must ask ourselves is as simple as it is complex: What experiences have we had in this vocational struggle to live the different dimensions of our lives with passionate balance? What can help us on this path?

3 - Thirdly, I propose to our young-adult religious that they live in depth **the spirituality of building the Pious Schools**. It is clear to me that the deep desire to build the Pious Schools is a spiritual choice. “Spirituality” manifests itself in what we do by being open to God, to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, and it has to do with what makes me live, because it is in the depths of my soul and it is something that deeply defines me, inspired by God, and that defines my vocation. It is the very reason I live, work and get up every morning to meet the kids. It is the deepest part of myself where God is at work, and He determines my decisions and my daily life.

This is the “Piarist spirituality”, the deep key from which “the Piarist” is lived, inspired by Calasanz

and embodied for many years by the Order of the Pious Schools and by the people who discover this spirituality and make it their way of life and their path. There is a reason why our Constitutions begin as follows: “*The Piarist Religious Family recognizes itself as the work of God and of the fortunate daring and tenacious patience of St. Joseph Calasanz*” ... *It seeks ... “to consolidate in the Church the inspiration and mission received”*⁸.

Calasanz placed the building of the Pious Schools at the center of his vocation, knowing that this was the best response to the inspiration received from God. To understand this and to give the best of ourselves to religious schools is to be a good son of Calasanz. Hence the question I ask everyone: *What do you need to enter into this dynamic?*

4 - The fourth point I make has to do with the conviction that **daily life is the crucible of authenticity**. And in the lives of each of us, there are two dynamics that strongly influence our process and that we need to be aware of: **The risks we have and the supports that can help us**. Naming the risks and appreciating the things that help us is typical of mature people.

There are many risks in our Piarist life. We have often talked about them: Worldliness, clericalism, superficiality, individualism, narcissism, etc. All of these are typical of human nature. And there are ways that help us, no doubt: Accompaniment, transparency, daily work, care for community life, reading, commitment to one’s own education, listening to wise people, humility... The mention of the risks and helps is typical of people who are serious about living their vocation.

Calasanz, for example, spoke specifically about one of the risks I mentioned. And he did it in the Constitutions: “*Try not to look back after you have taken up the plow. Leave the business of this world and purely worldly concerns aside*”⁹. The current Constitutions propose many concrete aids. Among them is spiritual accompaniment: “*We will give high priority to spiritual accompaniment*

6.- 48º General Chapter of the Order of the Pious Schools. Publicaciones ICCE. Colección CUADERNOS n. 65, p. 13, Madrid 2022.

7.- Constitutions of the Pious Schools n. 16.

8.- Constitutions of the Pious Schools n.1.3

9.- St Joseph Calasanz. Constitutions of the Pauline Congregation, n. 35

and dialog"¹⁰. The question we can ask ourselves is very concrete: *Name your risks and choose your supports*. This is the way to an intelligent and responsible life.

5-Finally, there is a fifth aspect that I propose to our brothers, inspired by the sensitivity I have learned from the young religious in the Asia-Pacific region: to be "simply Piarists", to be a "**simple Piarist**". This option is closely related to the dreams and projects we are involved with in the Pious Schools, and to the inner dynamic with which we are traveling.

Our Constitutions express this in a way that is as beautiful as it is demanding: *"Christ, who lives with the humble and blesses the children who come to him, calls us to the simplicity of the little ones and says: 'Unless you become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. 'Clothed with this attitude of Christ, we become coworkers of the divine Truth and become children with children and poor with the poor"*¹¹.

Using another oxymoron, we could say that the Piarist way is to "growing up to be small". Calasanz put it with the expression "to lower oneself"¹². It is good to ask ourselves honestly about our dreams, about our projects as Piarists. *What is our ambition? What is our dream as a Piarist?* We can aspire to many things, even if we are not aware of it. But the aspiration we are talking about is different: we simply aspire to be Piarists. Jesus himself had to work hard to educate his disciples in this matter of "aspirations"¹³.

With this simple reflection, I have tried to share with all of you the basic points that become clear in this year full of personal and community encounters with young-adult religious. I have done so because I believe they can help us to recognize what aspects we are working on. I also wanted to share these reflections with the people who regularly read these monthly letters (members of the

Fraternity, educators, people close to the Order, young people of the Calasanz Movement, etc.), because they too can help us on our journey.

With my best fraternal regards

*Father Pedro Aguado Sch.P.
Father General*

10.- Constitutions of the Pious Schools n. 50

11.- Constitutions of the Pious Schools n. 19

12.- St Joseph Calasanz. Opera Omnia, vol. III, p. 235. Ed. Calasancias, Madrid 2019

13.- Mt 20, 26-28