



Hope sustains us

Letter to our
brethren
SEPTEMBER 2025

Dear brothers and sisters,

Allow me to begin this *Salutatio* by sharing a memory that still resonates strongly in the heart. We have recently lived the Jubilee of Young People in Rome, and I believe many of us still feel the emotion of those days: the Eternal City rejuvenated by the enthusiasm of pilgrims, and San Pantaleo overflowing with life, filled with young people from our groups who seemed to relive the times of our Holy Father Joseph Calasanz, when the General House was a bustling school, full of joyful and hopeful pupils.

For us Piarists, it was moving to behold so many young people conversing, singing, sharing the faith with authenticity and simplicity. Piarist Day, with the moving celebration in Sant'Andrea della Valle, helped us rediscover the true meaning of **being pilgrims, not tourists**, walkers on the road towards God, leaving comforts behind, discovering not non-places but the wonders of God in men, women, young people, boys and girls, and the greatness of putting ourselves at their service.

I wish to express my most **sincere gratitude** to the Piarist Jubilee Commission. Your discreet and steady dedication ensured that every detail was cared for and made it possible for all of us to experience **in these days the gift of hope**.

The biblical Jubilee, instituted in the book of Leviticus, is celebrated on reaching the fiftieth year, after counting *seven weeks of years, seven times seven years* (Lev 25:8). Yet we cannot reduce the Jubilee to a simple celebration of having reached a round number, as if it were merely a symbolic anniversary, but rather the fruit of a **time fulfilled, brimming and overflowing**, that opens to a new horizon. The Jubilee is the sign that time has been lived, laboured and cultivated with fidelity; it is the fullness born of daily perseverance.

In this holy year liberty is proclaimed, debts are forgiven, justice is restored and what was lost is returned. **The Jubilee is a time of grace**, which does not proceed from the arithmetic of days, but from God's mercy and the honest effort of those who have known how to sow. It is a sign capable of transforming history, restoring dignity and opening paths of new beginning. For this reason, every Jubilee is also a call to prepare the heart for deep renewal, personal and communal.

We live in times marked by uncertainty, injustice, armed conflicts, institutional crises and loss of meaning. In our communities too we feel weariness; routine wears us down and can even obscure the mission. There are tired cloisters, religious and laity who feel overburdened by immense tasks, and not a few face emotional or psychological fragilities. In this context, the **question of one's own destiny** rises forcefully in our hearts. It is a great question, beyond us, yet decisive: *What will become of me tomorrow?* Its answer requires fine, lucid and patient discernment, because a mistaken answer can drag us into fatalism or despair, or else into a false security which, in fact, does not sustain us.

In the face of this restlessness, hope does not appear as a luxury, but as a vital necessity. It is not naivety, nor mere optimism, but a real force that sustains and impels. As a theological virtue, **it opens us to the certainty that God walks with us**, even in the darkest night.

When the question arises in us that is born of discouragement—*where do I find hope when my strength fails?*—we might perhaps answer with

another equally decisive question: ***When was the last time I experienced a hope that truly sustained me?*** Looking back and remembering the moments when hope sustained us, when there seemed to be no way out, helps us recognise that it is not an abstract idea, but a reality we have already lived. In our personal and communal history there are concrete traces of that hope: occasions when we received unexpected support, when prayer restored peace to us, when someone reached out a hand, when faith gave us refuge. **This grateful memory is an antidote to despair.** It teaches us that, just as God sustained us before, he will do so again. Hope is nourished by that living experience, the certainty born of the concrete history of salvation that God writes with us.

This past Christmas, together with some brothers from San Pantaleo and Montemario, we went to St Peter's Square to receive the *Urbi et Orbi* blessing. In his message¹, Pope Francis recalled fourteen countries wounded by pain, seven of which have a Piarist presence. Those words moved me deeply, and I thought of so many Piarists who, in the midst of difficult contexts, continue to bring life, teaching, accompanying, evangelising, **being silent witnesses of hope.** To all of you, thank you! You are a concrete, living sign that Christian hope does not rest on illusions, but on the certainty that the risen Christ goes before us and accompanies us.

Hope, together with faith and charity², is a theological virtue that leads us to another existential plane. It is not a feeling, nor optimism, but radical trust in God's promises even—and especially—in the midst of straits. The more solid my faith is, the more undivided my heart, when I am convinced that Jesus is Lord and can save us, hope takes place.

To deepen the meaning of hope, we can let ourselves be enlightened by some authors who have reflected on its transformative power from differ-

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1.- <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/es/messages/urbi/documents/20241225-urbi-et-orbi-natale.html>
2.- 1 Co 13:13.

ent perspectives. I cite three: Jürgen Moltmann³, Erich Fromm⁴ and the contemporary Byung-Chul Han⁵. It is striking to see how current and relevant their reflections are, in dialogue with the spiritual and cultural challenges of our time, **offering us keys for living with orientation and depth**. If you allow me, I strongly recommend approaching the third, *The Spirit of Hope*. It is a brief text, almost like a sip, which offers a profound, realistic and integrative look at what it means to hope, and I find its reading especially timely in this jubilee year.

The Church's Magisterium has reflected widely on hope as a gift that sustains and transforms life. Benedict XVI, in *Spe Salvi*, assures us that hope is not a fragile comfort, but a firm strength that makes even the most challenging aspects of the present bearable, **a certainty rooted in the risen Christ** that gives substance to the present and opens paths to the future, when *he says that hope has been given to us, a trustworthy hope, thanks to which we can face our present*⁶.

Pope Francis, in the bull *Spes non confundit* for the Jubilee of 2025, deepens this vision by recalling that *everyone hopes. In the heart of every person, hope nests as desire and expectation of the good, even while unaware of what tomorrow will bring*⁷. He invites us to recognise that hope is part of the **deepest identity of the human being**, a universal aspiration that the Jubilee wishes to awaken, enliven and strengthen. It is fitting and beautiful that Francis has chosen for this bull a title taken from Saint Paul—*Spes non confundit*⁸—reminding us that *hope does not disappoint* because it rests on God's faithfulness. This holy year thus becomes a privileged occasion to renew the breath of hope and share it with a world thirsty for meaning and compassion.

3.- Moltmann, J. *Theology of Hope*, 1964.

4.- Fromm, E. *The Revolution of Hope*, 1968.

5.- Han, B.-C. *The Spirit of Hope*, 2024.

6.- Benedict XVI. *Spe Salvi. Encyclical Letter on Christian Hope*, no. 1, Vatican, 30 November 2007.

7.- Francis. *Spes non confundit*. Bull of Indiction of the Ordinary Jubilee of the Year 2025, no. 1, Vatican, 9 May 2024.

8.- *Hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit* (Rom 5:5).

*“Pray and persevere in work with sure hope in divine help, which will not fail his servants at any time.”*⁹ With these words, written on 25 January 1647, Calasanz reveals the key to his spiritual life: a firm hope, rooted in constant prayer, absolute trust in Providence, and faithful work in the educational and pastoral ministry that God had entrusted to him. **To pray, to work and to hope**—this was the axis of his vocation and his legacy.

In a time of internal tensions, economic difficulties and external opposition, Calasanz never allowed himself to be overcome by discouragement. His vision, tempered in trial, rested on the certainty that the Pious Schools were God's work and that he would not cease to accompany them, even in the most difficult moments. For Calasanz, hope was not evasion, but an **active virtue and a daily decision**: to persevere, to pray and to work, trusting that God would open the way. His example continues to inspire us, reminding us that daily fidelity, lived with hope, transforms communities, sustains the mission and bears fruit in the lives of the boys and girls and young people we serve.

Hope is not a spiritual adornment nor a short-sighted optimism incapable of enkindling passion for what does not yet exist. **It is a way of living from God**. It is born of a present that **offers us meaning and purpose, it is oriented towards a future** we do not control but entrust to God, and it manifests itself in **a serene joy that no one can take from us**¹⁰. To live with hope is to accept life with its lights and shadows, but without resignation; it is to believe that the barren can blossom, that the hidden seed will bear fruit, that tears can become a harvest¹¹.

Fostering hope is more than an ideal; it is **the engine that drives our educational and evangelising mission**, the force that stretches us forward. Hope is neither taught nor explained; it is caught through our witness when we dream without being ingenuous, work with militant passion and live from faith. In the Piarist heart,

9.- Saint Joseph Calasanz, *Opera Omnia*, vol. VIII, p. 358.

10.- Jn 16:22.

11.- Ps 126:5.

this hope translates into educating and evangelising, convinced that **every child and young person holds a promise of future.**

To be Piarist, religious or lay, means to be an **Elpíforo¹², a bearer of hope.** This task is not individual but communal; **the subject of hope is a we.** God entrusts to us the gift of his hope so that we may share it and spread it, so that our presence may be a light that expands. Therefore, I invite you to let one last question resonate: *who needs you today to be, for him or her, a bearer of hope?* If we allow this question to guide us, our mission will be more fruitful and we will sow future where others see only uncertainty.

Today, in our Order, in our communities and Piarist presences, we need to **revitalise our hope**—not as an escape, but as an impetus; not as a distant future, but **as a concrete way of living the present with meaning.** Let this be our commitment as the Piarist family.

Lord Jesus, source of our hope,
Renew in us the joy of your Gospel,
and make us bearers of hope for all who walk
with us.
– Amen.

Fr Carles, Sch. P.

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12.- ἐλπίς, term used in Rom 5:5 for “hope”; φόρος from φέρω, to carry, to bear.