



Tibi derelictus est pauper

*Letter to our
brethren
OCT 2025*

Dear Piarist brothers and sisters,

Allow me to begin this letter with a personal memory. In 2006, I lived in a suburb of Dakar, Sam Sam, where we have a community and very Piarist works. I arrived during the rainy season, and to enter the house I had to cross a small rubbish dump. On the first day, I did so scandalized, jumping from stone to stone to avoid touching the refuse and its stench that enveloped everything. Two months later, I would already pass through the dump like any neighbor, without paying it any mind. Then I drew a couple of lessons: **the invisibility of poverty**—perhaps its greatest problem; no one mobilizes for what one does not see, or does not know how to see—and **the need for people who keep us awake**, to prevent us from *getting used* to it, like the rich man who several times a day crossed paths with Lazarus without perceiving him.

Over the years, I have seen how the Piarist mission can change lives—even save them—or, put more personally, I have had the good fortune to witness how many Piarists, brothers and sisters, have been decisive **for a more dignified life for many people** whose faces and names I know.

Why speak of poverty now?

Because it is a topic that can never be concluded; therefore, we must revisit it recurrently in our communities, works, and Demarcations—**questioning** ourselves without fear of our own contradictions, and always **encouraging** one another.

October invites us to look to Mary and to remember Saint Francis of Assisi, a model of evangelical poverty, with its radicality, incomprehensions, and persecutions; to prepare for the World Day of the Poor¹, instituted by Pope Francis; to align ourselves with the eagerly awaited first apostolic exhortation of **Pope Leo XIV, *Dilexi te***², on love for the poor; and to inform ourselves about their situation with the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, promoted each 17 October by the United Nations, with this year's theme centered on families—so that they may *remain united, prosper, and forge their own future*³.

I would like to focus on this theme in **three dimensions**: evangelical poverty, Piarist poverty, and that of the people trapped in it.

The beauty of evangelical poverty

Jesus opens the Beatitudes by proclaiming: *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”* (Mt 5:3). Throughout the Gospel, poverty appears constantly: the widow who gives all she has, Zacchaeus who shares his goods, the rich young man who resists, the rich man indifferent to poor Lazarus...

Evangelical poverty is not misery, nor forced renunciations, but a life with purpose, coherent with the Gospel. It is to live without false securities, trusting fully in God and opening oneself to one's brothers and sisters. It is beautiful because it sets us free, humanizes us, and allows us to love without attachments.

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1.- I share with you the compilation of the eight messages that Pope Francis addressed to us on the occasion of the World Day of the Poor, which he himself instituted on the XXXIII Sunday. I invite you to read them: <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/es/messages/poveri.html>

2.- The apostolic exhortation *Dilexit te* will have as its theme love for the poor, according to the Vatican press.

3.- <https://www.un.org/es/observances/day-for-eradicating-poverty>

Poor of the Mother of God, poor like the Mother of God

As we know, Saint Joseph Calasanz called us **“poor of the Mother of God”**⁴ as early as 1618⁵—probably the first documented mention of this expression for the brothers in a letter, included even in his own signature. In another letter of 1620⁶, he not only uses this expression, but explains its theological and spiritual meaning:

“Let him note that we are poor of the Mother of God and not of men, so that our importunity be with our Mother and not with men, for she never tires of our importunity, whereas men do.”

Calasanz understood that our poverty was to be an **absolute trust in divine providence through Mary**, not a dependence on human charity. That is why we can also say: we are called **to be poor like the Mother of God**.

Mary was one of the anawim of Israel, the poor of the Lord—the little ones who have no other wealth than their trust in God. In her Magnificat, she proclaims the greatness of a God who brings down the mighty from their thrones and exalts the lowly. Her poverty was not misery, **but fullness in faith and discipleship**. To be **Mary's poor** means to belong to her; to be **poor like Mary** means to imitate her trust and total self-giving. She is the model of the one who clings to nothing so that God may be all in all.

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To you the poor one has been entrusted—what a beautiful vocation.

What a beautiful vocation is ours: the poor entrust themselves into the hands of God, but also, mysteriously, into ours. **It is to us (to each one) that their fragile life is entrusted**. That *tibi* of the psalm is direct, insistent, and unavoidable. It points us out by name. We cannot look the other way. The poor person's trust in God becomes a

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4.- April 4, and signs as Vice-Prefect of the Poor of the Mother of God. Opera Omnia, vol. 1, p. 54.

5.- On October 19, he wrote a letter to his brother in Christ, John Peter of Our Lady of the Angels, poor of the Mother of God, in Frascati. Opera Omnia, vol. 1, p. 63.

6.- December 23. Opera Omnia, vol. 1, p. 105.

mission placed in our hands: to be **there where the Lord hears the cry of the poor**, to share their lot, and to sustain with them the hope that pushes through in the midst of fragility.

Poverty is not just a statistic or a cause; it has **a face, a gaze, and a name**. Our Piarist vocation is to welcome each entrusted life with tenderness, intelligence, and commitment. In every poor person entrusted to us, God entrusts something of himself.

Our mission among the poor

The **Pious Schools began with Calasanz's encounter with a poor child**. He refused to accept poverty as destiny and sought to transform it through education. Therefore, our mission is not merely to talk about the poor, but to **reduce poverty effectively in the world**.

This requires three attitudes:

1. To feel poverty.

Since the word “poverty” entered my vocabulary, I have never stopped asking about its mystery. It is not only a matter of understanding or analyzing it, but of feeling it—letting it touch us, challenge us, and hurt us.

We need *ptōchogogos*⁷: people who lead us toward the poor, who wake us from lethargy and restore our capacity to look with compassion. They help us develop a sensitivity that neither sleeps before suffering nor grows accustomed to injustice.

I invite those reading this *Salutatio* to pause and remember with gratitude those people (perhaps some Piarists) who have opened our eyes and hearts. Let us also share the readings and testimonies that have accompanied us on that journey; among mine, one of the first was Majid Rahnema's *Quand la misère chasse la pauvreté*⁸. I would be glad to hear yours—the names, experiences, or readings that have helped you look at

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7.- πτωχός + γωγος poor, in the story of Lazarus (Lk 16:20), and lead or guide.

8.- Rahnema, Majid *Quand la misère chasse la pauvreté* (When misery drives away poverty), Essai. Actes Sud (2003).

poverty with greater depth and hope.

2. To know poverty.

It is not enough to feel it; we must understand it in all its complexity—its multifactorial causes: economic, social, cultural, political, educational, and spiritual. **If we do not understand them, we risk acting in an assistentialist or superficial way**, easing symptoms without addressing the roots.

But to know poverty is not only a matter of ideas; it is a matter of **interior location**. As I often say, **our head is where our feet are**: if our feet are far from the poor, so is our understanding. The challenge is not only to think or to study, but to think from the right place. Environments shape our gaze, and if our environment is comfortable and stable, we may, without realizing it, become bourgeois—even justifying our distance.

3. To live from where the poor are.

Only from the reality of the poor is our mission credible. It is not enough to work for them, or even with them; we also need to do so **from them**—that is, from their way of understanding life and of resisting. This “from” repositions us not as benefactors, but as brothers and sisters.

To work for, with, and from the poor redefines our identity. We are not mere service providers or functionaries of educational or social institutions; we are **religious and laity moved by a vocation**, who give their lives *without looking back*.

It is not only a social commitment, but a spiritual experience: *When you draw near to a poor person, it is Jesus who draws near to you*⁹. *The one who receives the most grace from almsgiving is the giver, because he allows himself to be looked upon by the Lord*. In that nearness, something decisive happens: the one who receives the most grace is not the one who gives, but the one who lets himself be looked upon by the Lord through the poor person.

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9.- Pope Francis, Angelus of October 27, 2024.

A social and Samaritan gaze

Where we cannot change reality structurally—because of context or history—we are at least called to have a **social and Samaritan gaze**: to live with an awareness of injustice and a desire to repair it. Let us recall the parable of the *Good Samaritan*: if we cannot care *directly* for the wounded one, we must at least entrust him to the *innkeeper*¹⁰ who will help us do so. Our alliances, networks, and social projects are those *innkeepers* that enable us to continue caring for the lives of those cast aside.

I also think of Don **Antonio Brandini**, parish priest of Santa Dorotea in 1597. His desire to help led him to open some simple rooms next to the parish where a couple of teachers gave lessons to neighborhood children. But it was the arrival of Saint Joseph Calasanz that transformed that good intention into a lasting work. With his ingenuity and passion, he gave structure and vision to what would become the first free popular school in Europe. This episode reminds us that, at times, we are called to be like Brandini—people who offer what they have (spaces, time, trust) so that others can give shape to projects that change young people's lives. The Piarist mission is also born this way: **from humble collaboration between those who dream and those who make the dream possible**.

A fidelity that examines itself.

I wish to congratulate the many Piarist religious and laypeople who, through their daily dedication, offer real opportunities for life and hope. Many are unaware of the good they do; others suffer and exhaust themselves because of the complexity of the environments in which they work. To all of them, I offer my gratitude and my prayers.

However, we also need **ongoing self-examination**—not a distrust of who we are, but a **humble attitude of discernment**. Piarist communities and Demarcations must ask themselves, with simplicity and honesty, whether we continue to respond to the charism of Calasanz, to the founding intuition that gave rise to our mission, and to

the deep meaning of our Piarist vocation.

Perhaps it is worth allowing ourselves to be challenged by some questions:

- Are we truly present where we are most needed?
- Do our works continue to provide answers for the children and young people who most need opportunities?
- Do we keep alive the educational and evangelizing passion that set us on this path?
- Does our way of life still express the simplicity and hope of the poor in the Gospel?

May the Lord, through the intercession of Mary, grant us the grace to live as poor of the Mother of God, and poor like the Mother of God, so that our lives and our works may be good news for the little ones. With fraternal affection,

*Fr. Carles, Sch.P.
Father General*

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10.- Lk 10, 35.