



The Truth that Cares

On the Safeguarding of Minors and Vulnerable Persons in the Pious Schools

*Letter to our
brethren*

NOV 2025

Dear brothers and sisters in the Pious Schools,

A step forward in Madrid.

A few weeks ago, representatives from all the Demarcations of the Order, along with many Provincials, **met in Madrid** to address the safeguarding of minors and vulnerable persons. It was an intense, honest, and necessary gathering.

The chosen motto – “*We listen. We prevent. We care.*” – aptly sums up the spirit in which we wish to proceed. We are fully aware that a single week of work cannot resolve such a deep and complex matter; it is not possible to “conclude” something that, by its very nature, will always remain open. **But we can, and must, take a significant step forward.**

I recall that, at the end of one session, there was a profound silence in the room. It was the silence of a weight that was overwhelming, yet shared. It was not simply the end of another day, nor a gathering where one attends, listens to presentations, and then goes home. **This meeting moved and changed us;** it has opened a process – a step of conversion – that calls for continuity, a commitment we must now allow to grow in our Demarcations, in our commu-

nities, and in every Piarist work.

This *Salutatio* is intended as a fraternal and humble word about a path we still need to walk together.

The wound and the truth.

Abuse is the night. It is the “*noonday devil*,”¹ the inner void, the spiritual desolation that robs all joy even in the midst of light. It is devastating for victims and their families, and it leaves wounds in those who lived with or worked near the offender. It is a total loss, a suffering that spreads and reaches everyone – including the institution that endures and laments it. Yet only by approaching this reality with justice, compassion, and humility can we begin reparation and a change of culture.

To listen, to accompany, to ask forgiveness, and to make reparation – these are the only actions that restore.

To hide nothing. Nothing can be concealed.

We know that, at certain moments in our history, there has been suffering, pain, and grave wrongdoing among us as well. **Truth does not destroy the Church; it purifies her.** Transparency does not weaken our mission; it strengthens it. Silence, cover-up, or minimization, poison us and make us lose credibility before the little ones, before society, and before the very Gospel. As Monsignor *Jordi Bertomeu*² reminded us: “*For victims, justice comes first. There can be no mercy without justice.*”

More than 400 years ago, **Calasanz showed us the way³: to stand without hesitation on the**

1.- Ps 91:6 (90), which we pray at Compline every Sunday

2.- Since 2018, a Vatican investigator, together with the Maltese Archbishop Charles Scicluna.

3.- “*It is proper to the Institute of the Pious Schools to teach boys, particularly the poor—many of whom, through poverty or the negligence of their parents, do not attend schools nor learn any trade or craft, but wander idle and, therefore, easily give themselves to various games, above all to cards; and necessarily, when they have no money to play, they must first steal it at home and then wherever they can, or else they will find it by other most deplorable means. To cut off from the outset so pernicious an evil for society, the Fathers of the Pious Schools offer themselves to the laborious task of teaching them.*”

Saint Joseph Calasanz, *Opera Omnia*, vol. 9, p. 313, *Memorial on behalf of Fr Dragonetti in favour of poor children* (1626).

side of the little ones, to protect and educate them. That is why he founded the Pious Schools – so that every child and young person might find a safe place to grow, to learn, and to feel loved. The protection of victims and the creation of truly safe environments are not external demands; they are absolute fidelity to the Calasanzian mission⁴. Our reputation does not depend on the image we project, but on the trust we generate when we protect and educate rightly.

A culture of care.

The Gospel has always reminded us that the little ones are at the center of the Kingdom. To care for, protect, and accompany the most fragile is not an addition to our mission; **it is the very heart of the Piarist vocation**. That is why, when a child has been wounded, the soul of the Pious Schools has been wounded too.

Prevention cannot be reduced to rules. Protocols are necessary, but they are not enough. Safeguarding is not a legal appendix; it is a **culture that cares**, a way of understanding Piarist life.

For this reason, we distinguish three inseparable dimensions:

- **Promotion:** fostering a living awareness of respect, responsibility, and care.
- **Prevention:** establishing teams, structures, formation, and processes that reduce risks.
- **Intervention:** acting promptly and justly at any sign of abuse, guaranteeing accompaniment and reparation.

This task requires a **scientific approach⁵**, help-

4.- “*To guarantee the safety of children and the integrity of his work, Calasanz laid down very strict and precise norms for teachers, especially to avoid any hint of bad example or inappropriate contact. He himself warned that such behaviours would be an unequivocal ruin for our schools.*”

Saint Joseph Calasanz, *Opera Omnia*, vol. 9, p. 79, *Declarations on our Constitutions, Rules and Common Rites* (1637).

5.- In this sense, it is essential to consult specialised bodies, both ecclesial and civil, which provide knowledge, understanding and an objective reading of facts. Dialogue with associations of victims, governmental bodies on the subject, episcopal conferences that have developed solid frameworks, and university or research centres is valuable.

Among many other contributions, the following may be mentioned:
– Commission indépendante sur les abus sexuels dans l’Église (CIASE),

ing us identify risk factors and warning signs that may anticipate situations of abuse or vulnerability: progressive isolation, lack of supervision, rigidity in relationships, excessive closeness, absence of appropriate boundaries, abuse of authority or trust, and that phrase – “that’s none of your business” – which seeks to silence what needs to be said. All these behaviors, large or small, are symptoms of an environment that requires vigilance and accompaniment. We are all responsible for all. We must be more attentive and assertive in mutual care.

We are a network.

During the week in Madrid, I once again sensed that **the Order is a living network** – a communion of communities, people, and works that sustain one another. The Pious Schools are not the sum of Provinces; they are a body, a web of bonds and responsibilities that makes sense only when each part assumes responsibility for the whole. The credibility of the Order is at stake in the coherence of each of its presences.

If one part suffers, the whole body suffers.

What is done well in one Province strengthens all; what is omitted in one corner of the world affects the reputation and credibility of the entire Order. We cannot afford that. This commitment is not optional. It concerns every Province, every community, every Piarist work. We must act as one global community. *No one can be left behind.*

Humility and truth.

Humility is a key word in this process. Humility is not weakness, but the courage to see ourselves as we are. We must accept that evil has also dwelt among us. The image of the Last Supper – with Judas – expresses this well. Judas embodies evil, yet he was one of the Twelve. In some depictions, he has been erased from the scene; but when art preserves him, it becomes a lesson in humility: **even with Jesus, evil was present among his own.** Denying it does not purify us; accepting it with humility makes us more credible and trustworthy.

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Les violences sexuelles dans l'Église catholique : France 1950-2020 – Rapport final, Paris: CIASE, 5 October 2021.
– Hervieu-Léger, Danièle; Schlegel, Jean-Louis, *Vers l'implosion ? Entretiens sur le présent et l'avenir du catholicisme*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2022.

Clericalism, as the Australian *Royal Commission*⁶ noted, has been one of the most toxic roots of our resistance. It is a culture of distance and privilege. Only a humble and fraternal community can heal that wound.

Hope: the dawn is breaking.

Abuse is the dark, closed night. But, as Saint Paul says, “*The night is far gone, the day is at hand.*”⁷ Not everything is darkness. **At the end of every night, the dawn appears on the horizon:** that is hope. This hope is not naïve; it is born of work well done, of truth embraced, and of a commitment we share.

Let us not be afraid. We are walking toward a day when every boy and girl, every vulnerable person, can feel safe, heard, and loved. That day is drawing near.

A call to conversion.

This path is not an administrative matter; it is a **spiritual process**. We are not speaking of strategy, but of conversion – of looking ahead with responsibility, without denying what we have been, yet knowing that the Spirit continues to act in the midst of our frailties. *Forgiveness does not change the past, but it can change the future.*⁸

The Pious Schools as a whole are called to a profound pastoral conversion to be a **sign of hope**.

If we are faithful to the truth that cares, we will be able to say that the Pious Schools have taken a giant step – not only toward institutional safety, but **toward becoming a home where all can live well, grow, and feel protected** and loved.

I wish to express, with **special gratitude**, my recognition of the work⁹ of the General **Department for the Protection of Minors**, the **Demarca-**

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6.- Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (established by the governmental authorities of Australia), Final Report. Volume 16. Religious Institutions. Book 2, Commonwealth of Australia, 2017. <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/final-report>

7.- *Nox praecessit, dies autem appropinquabit* (Rom 13:12).

8.- Pope Francis, *Spes non confundit*, 23.

9.- These resources can be consulted on the website that the Safeguarding Department of the Order has put online: <https://scolopi.org/safeguarding>

Or write at any time to protezione@scolopi.net

tions' Commissions, and all those who have worked tirelessly for Safeguarding in the Order – discreetly, perseveringly, and decisively. I know it is a delicate, demanding, and often thankless task. But it is one of the most evangelical we can assume today: to care for those who have been wounded, to protect those who could be, and to educate in authentic respect. The task continues, the path is marked out, and we do not walk alone.

*May Saint Joseph Calasanz,
teacher of the little ones,
teach us to care as he cared.
And may Mary, Mother of the Pious Schools,
sustain with her love the wounds of the past
and strengthen our hope.*

*Let us pray together,
as one great Piarist community,
for all victims, for those who suffered and still suffer,
for those who seek justice and consolation,
and for a Church more humble,
more truthful, and more capable of care.*

With fraternal affection,

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