



Your Root

Letter to our
brethren
DECEMBER 2025

Dear Piarist brothers and sisters,

We begin this Advent still filled with the joy from the recent celebration of the patronage of Saint Joseph Calasanz in our works and communities. It has been a radiant week, shared with our students and also within the Calasanz Movement, which this year offers us a motto as simple as it is decisive: **Your Root.**

It is a simple yet decisive word, because it invites us to look inward. It is a word addressed to young people, but it touches the entire life of the Order. A simple word, but one with enormous spiritual power.

Roots nourish and sustain. These are, for every Piarist, for every presence, for every Demarcation, the two tasks we can never neglect: **to nourish** what gives us life and **to sustain** what keeps us faithful.

The root as a place of truth.

We often live on the surface: activities, urgencies, trips, decisions, tasks. The root invites us to go deeper, to recover meaning, reasons, priorities, and direction. Spiritual life works like a tree. It grows upward only if it grows downward.

In the letter I wrote for the Calasanz Movement, I shared this anecdote: while visiting one of our farm schools in Karang (Senegal), I learned something that

later became a spiritual insight for me. A teacher told me: *You do not water a tree by the trunk. You water it under the outer crown of the canopy of branches, where the newest roots actually absorb the water.* And I thought: How often do we try to nourish ourselves where we should not! We water where we think we should, but not where it is needed.

The root is discreet, silent, and invisible; yet that is where everything happens. It is the place where God speaks, where vocation (that which does not change, even when everything else changes) is refined, and where the mission that animates us is rekindled.

Advent is a time of thirst. Sometimes we go through inner drought, weariness, or distraction. It is not a sign of distance from God; it is often a humble recognition that we need to return to the source. Spiritual thirst is a gift because it directs the heart toward living water. The root always knows where the source is; the surface does not. Good soil gives the root the depth where the Word finds space to germinate.

What part of my life is in danger of becoming superficial because I do not let it touch the essential soil?

The priority of the invisible.

In a world *captivated* by what is visible, fast, efficient, and spectacular, God always works in the invisible.

Calasanz understood this as well. His work began in what went unnoticed, in the discretion of a diligent life, in silent prayer, and in radical trust in God. Perhaps the noise came later, when his students and former students began *to transform society*, altering the established order. That was the true fruit of the Calasanzian school.

The Pious Schools were born from poor and hidden roots – but very deep ones. Our temptation today is to grow in size, presence, or activity, and, without realizing it, to diminish in interiority.

Piarist life can only be sustained if the roots continue to deepen in prayer that strips us bare, in fraternity that humanizes us, in poverty that dignifies us, in the shared mission that enriches our charism, and in contact with the little ones who evangelize us.

Psalm 36¹ warns us in surprising and realistic language: *The wicked will be uprooted, but those who wait for the Lord will possess the earth.* It does not speak of punishment, but of reality: those who lose their roots end up disappearing. They lose contact with the earth, with truth, with others. They lose consistency. The righteous – those who live rooted in God, in mercy, in justice – will possess the land. Not a geographical land, which is important to remember in this world full of conflicts, but the **land of the Kingdom, the Land-for-all**, where peace, fraternity, justice for all, reconciled humanity, and joy reign.

What important decision must I make from the root, and not from haste, calculation, or pressure?

Fruits for others.

The root does not exist for itself; it exists to bear fruit, and the fruits are never eaten by the tree – **they feed others.**

This is our Piarist commitment: to bear fruit that is opportunity, comfort, liberation, and hope... when a school designs new learning strategies for students with greater difficulties; when a non-formal education project offers safe and meaningful environments for at-risk adolescents; when social action supports vulnerable families, migrants, and so many other groups without a future; when the Calasanz Movement generates experiences that strengthen faith, community, and service; when our networks (of parishes, non-formal education and social action, alumni) collaborate to multiply creativity and reach places we could not reach alone; and when religious and lay people work together with

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1.- Psalm 37 (36):9. The French version uses the word "déracinés". *Les méchants seront déracinés, mais qui espère le Seigneur possédera la terre.»*

the same passion, sharing mission and charism; when a former student, educated in our schools, brings to his profession the honesty and social sensitivity he once received. Each of these fruits has a specific name, a specific face, a specific story. Because the true Piarist fruit is never abstract – **it is always someone.**

The root and the poor always seek each other. Only those who are well rooted can bend down to the little ones. Only those who have a foundation can be a home for the vulnerable.

When Muhammad Yunus speaks of **bonsai men**², he does so not to praise their appearance, but to denounce an injustice: the poor are like bonsai because someone has artificially limited the space where their roots could grow. If there were enough soil, they would grow as much as anyone else. This image clearly illustrates our mission: the Pious Schools exist to create educational, spiritual, and community spaces for those with limited access, so their roots can grow deeper and their lives can develop freely.

Poor children and young people were the roots Calasanz chose to dedicate his life to. There he found the good soil where God called him to plant his works, the Pious Schools. Returning to the poor is always returning to the roots.

What real poverty – personal, communal, or social – is asking me to open more space so that the roots of justice can grow in me?

Roots that intertwine.

With apologies to readers who are botany enthusiasts: it is not just one root that sustains the tree, but a whole diverse network. That is what community means for us. Piarist life grows when we are together, when we share the same land, when we endure hardships and remain, when we

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2.- *The poor are bonsai people. There is nothing wrong with their seeds. It is simply that society has never given them a base on which to grow. All that is needed to lift the poor out of poverty is for us to create an enabling environment for them. Once the poor are allowed to unleash their energy and creativity, poverty will disappear very rapidly.*
Yunus, Muhammad. *Banker to the Poor: Micro-Lending and the Battle Against World Poverty*. PublicAffairs, 1999.

accept the discomforts of living together, when the task is invisible and little recognized, but we continue to support it. This is how community is strengthened: when we truly know each other, when we pray for one another, when we share both light and shadow, when we accompany the mission of our brothers, when one generation supports another, when we understand that our mission begins in community.

What specific faces are expanding my roots today more than I expected?

The root as origin: Calasanz

Those who have visited the General House of San Pantaleo have surely passed by the room of our beloved Joseph of the Mother of God. Those of us who live here have the grace of seeing it every time we pray in the chapel. I am always struck by how little attention it draws. A simple bed, a small table, and a few other objects. Nothing superfluous, nothing that seeks to stand out. Calasanz did not live for appearances, but from within. He did not seek visibility, but fidelity; not structure first, but trust; not security, but mission. His roots were clear: Christ, children, and the poor.

If we return there, everything is renewed. These are also our common roots today: faith, the educational vocation, preference for the poor, community, pastoral care and spirituality, and evangelizing through education. From these humble and firm roots, a tree was born that today embraces the world.

I would like to thank the Calasanz Movement not only for the motto they have given us, but also for all the work they do in so many Piarist communities: work that is so discreet and yet so fruitful, which we see every week in group meetings and also in major events, such as the recent Youth Jubilee. May we pause each time we contemplate the motto and logo *Tu raíz* (Your Root) to reflect on what truly nourishes and sustains us.

May Advent remind us that only those who grow inwardly can grow outwardly, and that there is no fruitful mission without a well-rooted interior life.

Jesus,
living root of our vocation,
awaken in us the first love,
strengthen what is weak,
nourish what is thirsty,
and make our lives bear abundant fruit
for your little ones.
Amen.

With affection and in communion,

Fr. Carles, Sch. P.
Father General of the Pious Schools

November 30, 2025, St. Andrew, First Sunday of
Advent