



# The Pious Schools Are Alive (I)

Letter to our  
brethren  
MARCH 2026

Dear brothers and sisters of the Pious Schools,

Does it not happen to you that when you experience something extraordinarily valuable, you spontaneously feel the desire to share it, to let others partake in it, to say with a mixture of emotion and gratitude: If only you too could experience this!

When something true and luminous enters our lives, an irresistible need to share it arises within us. It is as if the heart cannot keep it to itself, as if our joy, to be complete, must open itself to others, as if silence would ultimately diminish it.

The classics expressed this with a simple and accurate insight: **bonum est diffusivum sui**<sup>1</sup> – good, by its very nature, tends to spread itself. This is what I have been experiencing in recent months.

I have changed the topic planned for the March **Salutatio**. Thus, this letter is born, without pretension, as a simple narration of life. It could be called a kind of travel chronicle, written out of emotion, gratitude, and recognition – a brief report from the soul, born of one conviction:

.....  
1.- Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, I, q. 5, a. 4, ad 2. In this passage, the Angelic Doctor assumes the pseudo-Dionysian axiom *bonum est diffusivum sui*.

The Pious Schools are alive.

Yes, **Piarist life continues to spring forth with astonishing force.** When one experiences this life, a joy inevitably arises that cannot be hidden. It is the joy of which Jesus speaks in the Gospel: *your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you*<sup>2</sup>. It is not a superficial or naïve joy; it is the paschal joy, woven of cross and hope. It is **the joy of the Gospel**<sup>3</sup> that becomes visible on the faces of so many pupils who feel happy and safe in our schools, in young people who continue dreaming even in marginalized contexts, in educators who continue giving themselves, and in Piarists who live their vocation with authenticity.

Perhaps here lies the spiritual key to what we are living.

The Gospel knows well two attitudes of the heart. One is *sklerokardía*, the **hardened heart**, incapable of recognizing the action of God even when it is right before it; it is the heart over which Jesus laments when he says: *Do you still not understand? Are your hearts hardened?* (Mk 8:17). But there is also the other attitude, the one that defines the **heart of Jesus: *splagchnízomai*, allowing oneself to be moved in the depths of one's being.** It is not only a matter of perceiving God, but of feeling the need to draw near to those who are most abandoned. This is what happens when, on seeing the crowd, *he was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and downcast* (Mt 9:36). Between the hardened heart and the moved heart, what is ultimately at stake is our ability to recognize **the life that God continues to give** and to respond to it with closeness and self-giving.

What I am perceiving is *life*: a sincere, courageous, and generous life, at times veiled. **A life that confirms that the charism of Calasanz is a fruitful seed**, capable of continuing to germi-

2.- In John 16:22, we find one of the most beautiful promises in the Gospel, spoken during the Last Supper, just before his Passion.

3.- Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 1: *The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ, joy is constantly born anew.*

nate in our time, of engendering life, and of helping others to grow.

I would now like to share **what I have been treasuring** during these past months. Naturally, I can only highlight a few moments.

In Peralta de la Sal, we experienced **Pedro's episcopal ordination**, with significant representation of the whole Order. It was a moment of great Piarist communion in the land of Calasanz, in which we thanked God for this gift that the Church receives.

In **Benin**, within the framework of *Pious Schools Going Forth*, I encountered a first, small community of Piarists that sustains a great mission and, literally, builds it: the school, the boarding houses, the parish beneath the palm trees, and various creative projects aimed at improving the social environment and the life of families.

The **Ruta Calasancia**, the preparation for the solemn profession of our brothers from various Demarcations, is affectionately known as the *Piarist summer camp* of San Pantaleo. There, they form a new and vibrant community – intercultural, open, and passionate about the mission – a place to share both the challenges and the joys of being Piarist religious today.

In **Vietnam**, we have witnessed a historic event: for the first time in the country, three Piarists – Ph m Văn L ãng, Nguy ãn H u L i, and Ph m Văn Lê – were ordained. Our relationship with the bishops, who welcome and encourage us to continue growing, confirms that our presence is both welcomed and needed. Young vocations are emerging there, with a fervent desire to live as Piarists.

In the **United States and Puerto Rico**, an increasingly intercultural reality is taking root, both in our communities and ministries, especially in the parishes. There, the faithful witness the **fidelity and closeness of their pastors**, and our presence becomes a place of welcome and accompaniment in complex contexts.

In the **Philippines**, a **new vocational vitality**

is evident, with novices and pre-novices living their vocation with enthusiasm and seriousness. In Cebu, there is a school, built inch by inch, the result of the perseverance so characteristic of the Piarists.

In **India**, we have a house of formation with **young Piarists full of talent, availability, and a spirit of service**. Schools there are also growing, increasing in classes and students each year, expanding the Piarist presence in different States.

**Catalonia** nurtures its pedagogical strength and capacity for innovation, with highly competent teams **sensitive to the most vulnerable students**. They are true experts in inclusion, making the charism an educational proposal of quality and equity.

In **Brazil**, *Piarist presences* are becoming more firmly established, and formation communities are helping **young Piarists grow in identity and commitment**. Attention to the social dimension remains strong through the socio-cultural centers of Itaka-Escolapios, led by dedicated and expert individuals. The inspiring *Sonoro Despertar* project also thrives there, where music becomes a path to inclusion and hope.

**Hungary** is developing teams that provide strong leadership in both pedagogy and Piarist identity. The Calasanz Movement continues to grow, with remarkable young people eager **to deepen their spiritual lives and commitment**. The presence in Kolozsvár (Transylvania) is also expanding, with impressive development in just three years. Dialogue with students open to life's big questions is always enriching.

**Mexico** is fertile ground for committed teams, eager to **grow in mission and educational strength**. There, true treasures are being safeguarded: the *Calasanz Schools* and the *Hogares Calasanz*, where education and transformative social action go hand in hand.

**The Californias** are moving forward as they reflect together on their future, discerning in a highly participatory way how to grow in ministry to young people and families, centred around their promising school and their identity in **ser-**

**vice to the most vulnerable**, through projects such as the *Doposcuola*, *Hocati*, and many other initiatives.

In **France**, in Bobigny (Paris), a Piarist presence is taking shape, seeking to forge its **own mission** and establish the structures needed for sustainable development.

**Japan** celebrated 75 years of Piarist presence, a joy made even greater by the priestly ordination in Fukushima of Kim Jae Yong, Tr ần Quô c C ường, and Vũ Đ ắc H ồng.

In **Equatorial Guinea**, the Piarist presence continues to grow in educational ministry with a **new school**. In **Burkina Faso**, the presence is located almost on the *periphery of the periphery*. In these places, Piarists are willing to leave their own countries to open new paths, forming intercultural communities in service of life and the Piarist mission.

The **Calasanzian Family** Commission has met for the first time, a result of the fraternity that unites the eight congregations sharing the charism of Calasanz.

Amid so much life, we have bid farewell to **Juan Frías**, rector of Peralta de la Sal. For the Order, it has been the farewell to a beloved brother; for me personally, to the one who was my novice master. If I had to sum him up in a few words: a man of God and a mystagogue. His memory reminds us that true fruitfulness is born of spiritual honesty.

Almost on the eve of this letter, we will be in Rome for the meeting with the Board of Trustees and the Executive Commission of **Itaka-Escolapios**, coinciding with the celebration of its 25th anniversary and the meeting of the **General Council of the Fraternity**. These will be days of communion, discernment, and gratitude, clearly showing how the charism of Calasanz continues to foster shared life among lay men, lay women, and Piarist religious in all the Demarcations.

Bishop **Erik Varden**, during the Lenten retreat preached to Pope Leo, recalled in one of his meditations that *having Christian hope does not nec-*

*essarily mean being optimistic; ... we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the pioneer of our faith<sup>4</sup>.*

It is the same gaze as Joseph Calasanz, who was able to recognize the action of God where others saw only difficulties. He **knew how to see life where no one else did**: in poor children, in the streets of Rome. His heart did not grow hard in the face of poverty; on the contrary, ... *he had mercy*. From that moved heart was born a mission that remains alive four centuries later.

Let us ask today for that same grace.

Good Father, thank you for the life you cause to spring forth in the Pious Schools.

Give us the heart of Calasanz to awaken life in others.

Amen.

*Fr. Carles, Sch. P.*

1 March 2026, on the day of the solemn profession of Lê Tiê n Dân and Trâ n Quang Dũng, Veracruz, Mexico.

(To be continued.)

.....  
4.- Erik Varden, meditation *To Communicate Hope*, Spiritual Exercises for Lent preached to the Roman Curia before Pope Leo XIV, Vatican, February 27, 2026. Vatican News.