



## Young people evangelize us

Letter to our  
brethren

MAY 2026

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Piarist Schools,

Who is evangelizing whom today? Are we accompanying young people, or are they, perhaps unknowingly, showing us the way?

Pope Francis offers us a key to understanding this in *Christus Vivit*: the Church not only has something to say to young people, but also **much to learn from them**. This is an entirely new perspective.

Many times I have witnessed this in simple encounters, unpretentious conversations, and visits to our Piarist communities. When we truly connect with their lives, their searches, and their concerns, we discover in them **a force that unsettles us**. Pope Francis continues in this letter: *their youth enlightens us*, and they can help us *remain young* and rediscover dimensions of the Gospel we may have overlooked. Perhaps that is why we can say, with humility and truth, that young people evangelize us.

Young people possess a grace we should never let fade: **dissatisfaction**. This inner restlessness keeps them from settling. Sometimes we view it with suspicion, as if it needs to be tamed. Yet, it is a **blessing**.

From the perspective of evolutionary anthropology, this reality can be understood more precisely. Adolescence is not a *chaotic* stage, but a

phase with clear **adaptive value** for the human species. Various studies emphasize that, during this period, orientation toward novelty and risk-taking intensifies, due to specific neurobiological development that favors riskier exploratory behaviors. In evolutionary contexts, these behaviors were decisive for expansion and the opening of new possibilities for life. In this sense, the characteristic audacity of adolescents is not a challenge to be corrected, but a condition that has allowed humanity to advance beyond its own limits.

Perhaps that is why young people evangelize us: they pull us out of our mental frameworks and excessive caution.

I remember a congress in Rome, during a meeting related to the Synod on Young People, in which various congregations and religious orders participated. There, the need for young people to have a voice and to be heard, was rightly emphasized. Listening to that dialogue, I became convinced that the real challenge is not just having a voice, the ability to express oneself correctly, or even being heard; the challenge is, above all, having thought. I shared then an intuition that I still consider key: the challenge is to be **a voice, not an echo**.

This is a temptation of our time: to confuse having a voice with having thought. We live surrounded by rapid-fire speeches and endlessly repeated opinions. But not everyone who speaks thinks, nor does everyone who expresses an opinion have their own voice.

Here lies one of the great gifts of young people: the search - sometimes clumsy, sometimes passionate - for **their own thoughts**. They remind us that repetition is not enough, that nuance matters, and that truth is not simply inherited but conquered. Truth is not as a possession imposed, but a path traveled in freedom, in dialogue with reality, with others, and with God. In a world riddled with polarization, where truth is confused with noise or mere opinion, this attitude is simply evangelical.

When we live with them, something within us is

renewed as well. They **rejuvenate us** and bring us back to essential questions: What is worthwhile? Why do we live? For whom do we live? Within them beats the need and urgency for **depth, passion, and purpose**. Our task is not to replace this, but to help it emerge, take shape, and find its channels.

This leads to a crucial point: cultivating the **interior life**. Many young people sense within themselves a reservoir of meaning, a sustaining presence, a force that is not merely psychological. They need to discover it and learn to nurture it authentically, cultivating a **rich inner life** - one that is lived, developed, and capable of sustaining existence. Without this quality in the inner life, existence becomes fragmented and subject to the immediate; with it, however, life becomes unified, finds direction, and acquires depth and freedom. Educating today also means accompanying this process, helping young people access a real, embodied spiritual life that does not evade reality but illuminates and transforms it from within.

María Zambrano<sup>1</sup> presents the teacher as a mediator who neither transmits content nor imposes their own truth, but rather, through their way of being in the world, creates a space where the student can discover themselves and begin to formulate their own questions. *The teacher is not the one who teaches something, but the one who enables the student to be themselves, the one who helps them find themselves. The teacher's action is, above all, a presence*. Young people need this kind of presence: adults whose lives, more than their words, help them open up and awaken fundamental questions, accompanying them in the delicate process of becoming themselves.

That is why presence is so important: **being where young people are**, not as external observers, but as companions on the journey, in the style of Jesus with the disciples of Emmaus. If we are not there, we will hardly find them. This is a call for everyone - religious, lay men and women, educators, communities - because often a simple

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1.- Zambrano, M. (2007). *La mediación del maestro. En Filosofía y educación: Manuscritos* (pp. 121-128). Ágora

word, born in the most ordinary circumstances, is enough to touch the heart. Let us not underestimate the value of an encounter, even an unexpected one, with a presence that listens, accompanies, and believes.

At the same time, we cannot ignore their **wounds**. Some young people, when speaking about themselves, use words like *emptiness*, *abyss*, and *exhaustion*. This is a silent cry that affects many lives. Sometimes, patient and attentive listening is enough – listening that looks with respect and without judgment. There is a way of being that is inherently healing because it helps the other person feel recognized, understood, and accompanied. Ultimately, caring means being close without forcing processes and allowing time to wait for life to emerge again.

In this atmosphere of contemporary pessimism, often stifled by nihilism, where fear and a lack of horizons seem to dictate the rules, a question arises that we can no longer avoid: **Where have the great dreams gone?** We are not called to settle for a diminished existence, built on fear or the short-sightedness of those who only survive from day to day. Our mission as Piarists is not to offer answers that close off the mystery, but **to propose a life with a capital L** – one that does not fear the immensity of the future and embraces it as the stage where God continues to act.

It is important to revisit the poignant question that arises in the realm of social leadership: **What would you dedicate the next 90,000 hours of your life to?** This figure invites us to place our existence before a true horizon of meaning, far from the inertia that leads to mediocrity. Young people, in their passionate search, need questions that challenge their audacity and capacity for dedication. When they see in us a life joyfully devoted to something great, they too will dare to pursue a powerful dream, forged with each life decision.

Amid so many questions and vulnerabilities, **there is a beauty we cannot overlook**. It is not only about highlighting the extraordinary, but also about illuminating concrete lives that, with simplicity, are full of meaning and commitment.

I think of a young woman from Barcelona who, after a year of volunteering in Tijuana, is now a brilliant teacher at a school with high-needs students; a young man from Budapest who creates a journal of thought; another who composes a Mass; a young man from Agboville who beautifies our parish with his art; a young woman from Buenos Aires who, after a long teaching career, continues to educate as a volunteer in our Hogar; and the young people of Zolochiv, Ukraine, who, in the midst of war, remain faithful to their commitment to the activities of the Piarist community.

I also think of the countless young people who encourage, organize, and sustain groups, especially in the Calasanz Movement and in the many social initiatives of our communities, such as Itaka Escolapios, Solca, and Camins Escola Pia. I also think, along with all of them, of so many who choose to become teachers or even take the step toward Piarist religious life. What a joy and what a responsibility!

To all of you, young people, I look with admiration. Thank you for who you are and for what you do; in you we find a strength that sustains and propels us forward.

That is why it is so important for them **to meet each other**, get to know one another, and share the journey. **The networks we are building** through the Calasanz Movement, Alumni, and digital spaces are **true places of communion**.

The upcoming **Youth Forum**, scheduled for this July, aims to be exactly that: a space where young people can meet, reflect together, and grow in leadership, critical thinking, spiritual life, and commitment to our mission. In the Piarist Schools, young people are not merely recipients but **protagonists**. They are active agents of evangelization. They evangelize us through their search and remind us that the Gospel is always young, always new, always on the move.

Perhaps, in the end, the most important question is not what we do for young people, but **what we are willing to learn from them**. Because, in many ways, they are the ones showing us the way.

This reality calls us to recognize, as the Magisterium of the Church reminds us, that young people are not only the future but also **God's present moment**<sup>2</sup>. In the context of the Piarist Schools, this perspective is especially significant: by accompanying their boldness and search for meaning, we discover that the Spirit also acts through them, transforming their dissatisfaction into creative energy.

As Saint Joseph Calasanz understood, within the smallness and impetuousness of youth lies a presence that not only needs accompaniment but also transforms us. He experienced this himself when he affirmed that *humbling oneself to enlighten children is the shortest and easiest path to self-knowledge, and God usually gives a hundredfold*<sup>3</sup>. In this sense, the young person is not only the one who receives but also the one **who evangelizes the teacher**, introducing him to the humility and mercy of God.

Good Father, give us a youthful heart  
to embrace their lives and their search.  
Teach us to walk with them,  
without fear and with hope.  
Make our lives a place  
where they can find you.  
Amen.

*Fr. Carles, SchP.  
Father General  
Saint Pantaleo, Rome, May 1, 2026*

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2.- Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit. Apostolic Postsynodal Exhortation on youth, faith and vocation discernment*, 25 March 2019, n. 178.

3.- Joseph Calasanz, *Opera Omnia*, p. 234, letter of 19 October 1629.