



Configuration to Jesus through the Constitutions of the Order of the Pious Schools

Miguel Ángel Asiain

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Publicaciones ICCE
(Instituto Calasanz de Ciencias de la Educación)
Conde de Vilches, 4 - 28028 Madrid
www.icceciberaula.es

ISBN: 978-84-7278-545-8

Depósito legal: M-30341-2018

Imprime: Gramadosa

Translation for the Communications

Office of the General Curia of Rome.

Email: comunicacion@scolopi.net

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Presentation

I feel deep joy and an act of grace to present to you this new book of F. Miguel Ángel Asiain: **“The configuration to Jesus in the Piarist Constitutions”**. It is a book we needed because centered on the life of the Pious Schools, to the most profound secret of our identity and the surest way for our Order, people who compose it, in each community and demarcation to grow in our ability to bring life and mission.

The Constitutions express and develop the fundamental keys of the Piarist religious vocation. Living, praying and deepening them helps us all to live our vocation with authenticity. Our Constitutions seek to incarnate the Gospel in the particular form of life given to the Church by Joseph Calasanz and offer ways that can help us to be real followers of God as Piarists.

Thus, the reason why it is so essential for you to have this book. This book analyzes in line with the Constitutions, the journey of configuration to Christ that we are asked to follow in our Piarist life. I am convinced that in reading and pondering on it we will find many useful guidelines for being better Piarists and humbly approach the ideal of all Christian and religious life: to live united to Jesus Christ, putting him at the center of our life. The authenticity of Consecrated Life is the future process from which we slowly configure ourselves with Christ, our only Lord.

Only by so doing can we give the fruits we are called to give because only:” *if you remain with me...you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing”¹, and only “when we put Christ at the centre of our life, we ourselves don’t become the centre! The more that*

*you unite yourself to Christ and he becomes the centre of your life, the more he leads you out of yourself, leads you from making yourself the centre and opens you to others*²».

The book unfolds, one chapter after another, a passionate challenge we as Piarists are facing: how we can walk, every day and become better followers of the Lord, aware that this is our vocation. In each chapter we find a reflection, on the spiritual keys that inspire it, suggestions to inspire and accompany our discernment and methodological proposals that help us journey. That is, deepening what the Constitutions are calling us to be, helps us to reflect on it and provides some ways that can help us to progress. In each chapter, we find a reflection, on the spiritual keys that inspire it, suggestions to encourage and accompany our discernment and methodological proposals that help us journey.

Therefore, the reason why I think this book is necessary and that it will produce fruits of life and mission in the Order by helping us to live focused on the sole centre. This is my hope and conviction. Let us never forget that: *“it is the totality of the encounter with Jesus that sustains every vocation. Without this encounter, vocation is not possible. Without this experience, kept fresh, young and authentic, it is not possible to move forward. The encounter with Jesus is not only the explanation of the first decision, it is also the reason for fidelity. If it is lost, it is attenuated, limited or adapted to my own inconsistencies, the reason of our life is lost”*³. Because, dear brothers, *“Following Christ is the supreme norm and rule of our life”*⁴

Thank you, Miguel Angel, for the new book you are offering us, and that we add to the long list of gifts, that throughout your life you have given to Calasanz’s children. Thank you also for your steady, humble and joyful witness of Piarist life. God bless you.

Fr. Pedro Aguado Sch.P.

2 Pope Francis, Address to participants of the International Congress on Catechesis, Rome, September 27, 2013.

3 47th General Chapter of the Pious Schools, 2015. “Disciples and Witnesses”. Part 2^a, 1.3

4 Constitutions of the Order of the Pious Schools n° 17.

Prologue

Configuration to Jesus is at the peak of Christian life and therefore a religious one. God gave himself gratuitously to us in baptism turning us into his children. As Christians following Jesus is compelling in our everyday life. Following him is the commitment to live and do like him, to unite ourselves always more to him, to resemble him. Like Paul a Christian must say, for me to live is Christ. He is the foundation and the essential element of our life. Life following Christ is focused on the final objective of our existence, the configuration to Jesus.

In this publication we want to see, how we Piarists have a path of configuration to the Teacher through our Constitutions. In abiding to them, working as prescribed, loving them with our heart and Works, we can achieve the configuration to his Son, always aware that it is a grace of God's mercy.

The book's structure is simply. We go through each one of the Constitutions' chapters trying to see how they contribute to the configuration to Jesus. Each chapter is divided into three parts. The first one is on spirituality. It highlights in ten points the spirituality included in the corresponding chapter, which will be helpful in the configuration goal.

The second one is on discernment, in 10 more point related to the ones on spirituality, in an attempt to discern the ones listed in the first part. Spirituality needs to be discerned if we do not want to be deceived as sometimes occurs in this field.

The third one is on methodology, which indicates with ten more points, related to the ten of the previous parts, the means we must

use through discernment, to live the spirituality present in each chapter.

Therefore, each chapter is composed of three parts, of 10 related points each.

After having finished writing this book I am more convinced that configuration to Jesus cannot be achieved with his love. Only his love can allow the love for him to be born.

Even the Three Wise Men in their encounter with the Baby Jesus in Bethlehem and giving him their gifts acknowledged him as the King of nations and in some way configured themselves to him.

Zaragoza, January 6, 2018

1º Configuration to Jesus

Since we are going to see the configuration to Christ through our Constitutions, before delving into the theme, we need to briefly explain what we mean by configuration to the Teacher, to our Lord. We will then see it developed in each chapter of the first part of the Constitutions.

1. The center of life

The life of a Christian is focused on the configuration to Jesus. He is the center of life. From the moment, he is baptized Jesus becomes his center. A Christian will have an occupation, a social and cultural and even political life and in most cases a matrimonial life. This will occupy most of his time and tasks, but the most intimate part of his being is the act of being baptized in the name of the Trinity. Therefore, the intimate path of his being is dominated by this divine relationship, son in the Son: thus, his life is centered in Jesus.

This is the reason why in the life of a Christian the encounter with Jesus is fundamental. If he is the center, if he leads life, shows us the paths to the Kingdom, teaches us how to work for the Kingdom, the Christian must meet him, just like the twelve disciples did.

The encounter can occur in different ways. It can be the *encounter of salvation*. It can happen when the Christian is facing extreme situations in his life, decisive moments in his life, in this case, he encounters the Lord and feels saved. They might be situations of illness, but also of sin or life threats. We find them very often in the Gospels: a person is sick and he meets Jesus starts a dialogue, even if this does not occur always, then the Word or salvific action of Jesus and the person is healed. Salvation is celebrated.

There can also be a *relational-encounter*. In this case, the person is not distressed. In this case, it is either the person who seeks the Lord or the Lord who seeks the encounter; let us think of the good Samaritan. This encounter almost always has to do with discipleship. The important thing here is the personal relationship, the outcome of this encounter, all the feelings that spring out from the person because of this encounter. Jesus arouses faith and following, although this may not be accepted, but rather rejected by the person. This encounter with Jesus, just like the one with the Samaritan, could lead to many other ones, where many people go to see him and perhaps believe in him.

And then there is the *mediation encounter*. Here the situation is different. In this case, Jesus' authority is subdued to that of God. In this case, there is no distance from Jesus and the person. He is introduced in another mode of centrality: Jesus is the authentic mediator in front of the Father, and our encounter with him produces a great blessing, the great joy of life because it places the person in direct communication with the Lord of heaven. And undeserving enjoyment of this encounter of mediation: Jesus as the authentic mediator of the Father.

The encounters with Jesus are not exclusive; one does not exclude the other, they can even occur in different moments of our life, sometimes as a chain reaction, one with the other. In other cases, they occur in different moments of our lives. The determining aspect is for Jesus to be at the center of the life of every Christian and consequently the encounter with him. When it occurs, one feels his life on fire, the heart burning inside. The blessing of our life, the heart's deepest craving. Faith leads us to unlimited self-giving.

2. The background of the encounter with Jesus

A person is defined by love. Tell me who you love, and most of all, how you love and I will tell you who you are and how you are. Love defines a person. Thus, the encounter with God has an emotional base. It is therefore essential to identify the emotional image we have of Jesus. In this sense, we must make a distinction; one must not discern the image we have learned, because in our childhood

or a determined period of our life, depending on people and their circumstances, we have learned or have been instilled with a specific affective image of God. What is important is the image of the relation, the living image. Because it might be the case that due to our studies or by what we read or different circumstances we might have developed an image of the Teacher that has nothing to do with the experienced emotions. Notwithstanding this is the crucial image. *La persona se define por el amor.*

Therefore: who or how is this Jesus with whom you have a relationship like? For some Jesus is like a second God. A God that rapidly passes in our world. There are some who have given importance to Incarnation and Easter without Jesus leaving a deep mark from the two events. One of the significant findings in the XX century's spirituality has been to recover Jesus in public life. Jesus was born among us, led the life we lead and we know how it ended. Sometimes we colloquially speak about God and Jesus with great indifference. Therefore, there is no history of Jesus there is no historical image of this concrete Jew.

For others, Jesus is just the model of identification. They could either be Christians or Muslims or belong to any other religion or institution, because there is no deep association between their beliefs and their intimate experience. Therefore, Jesus is relegated to the kingdom of ideas, dogmas but not in the personal emotional realm, in the most personal aspect of each person. In this case, the construction of a true relationship with Jesus has not been developed.

For others, Jesus is a close friend. In this case, there is an affective relation, but we would call it an elementary one. It is undoubtedly better to live this way with Jesus than having a distant God, or a God considered as a threat. But it is not a real affective relationship. Sometimes we say that the God of the Old Testament is a distant God, irritable, punishing, while the God of the New Testament is the close Father. Well, this is a false vision a mere psychologisation of God. Psychology is unable to achieve a synthesis between closeness and distance, humanity, and divinity: only the Holy Spirit can accomplish it. Thus, one must consider that when we live stuck to the pre-theologian psychological need, we are preventing a real relationship with Jesus.

3º *The development of life*

In the life of a Christian, there are two moments in the relationship with Jesus that includes his encounter with him. The first moment is more humane while the second one is more spiritual. The first thing a person, all human beings need is to extend life. After the first years, during adolescence, the world and new horizons start to unfold. A person begins to understand; he thinks, loves and lives. The desire is focused towards aspirations coming from the heart. Many of the things the person sees attract him. It is when all anxiety of his being opens up to the world and the stage of having a world of his own, of wanting to act in some way in the external world. It is the phase of expansion that will last for years when the person has his world, takes the fundamental decisions that will contribute to his existence. He chooses a way of life and lives, as Freud said, of work and love.

For the Christian there also comes a second moment, either when he is in his midlife or still young. We can consider the different age groups of the following figures: Therese of Lisieux, Therese of the child Jesus, Teresa of Calcutta, Father Foucault, Van der Meer and many more. It is the moment when one begins to feel that life must be focused on Christ the Lord. It does not mean that he is not at work, but that the inner part of life tends to be unified in Jesus, to concentrate in him, walking towards a configuration to the Lord. The rest is undoubtedly important, he will take care of what God asks of him, but it is not the most important thing. In his heart a new reality arises, a new look, an intense desire to be, to belong completely to the Lord. He feels something he never felt before. It can occur from an unexpected event or as the outcome of a long journey that has been leading to the Lord without the person being aware of it. The result is the desire to configure to Jesus, to join Him and concentrate on Him.

This step implies other important ones; while in the first moment he lived faith as an ideology in the second moment it is lived as an authentic life.

Faith as an ideology is the ability to assimilate beliefs, ways of conduct, values, and ideals because they foster vital interests. The ability to assimilate leads to identify with it, and often it determines the choices we take in life. One seeks ideology because it provides se-

curity and creates convictions. And religious institutes stress it because they want to create an identity among those who belong to it. The more closed Institutes, the more care is given to ideology and its assimilation. Suffice to analyze our life to see that this is true.

However, this way of living faith has a serious difficulty, ideology never transforms a person. It definitely can have some positive elements, for example, it can make people more open, less rigid and even change the doctrinal references, but it will never change the personal center. As the years go by, it will continue to reproduce the set up given when one was young. Ideology can never change a human being's roots, the most profound thing of life, where life in front of God lies.

Thus, the importance of crises. Only through them one can overcome ideology and leap towards true faith. It is not easy, but there is nothing more critical than to stop living faith as an ideology and start living it as a life that transforms the being. This is why those who have not undergone a crisis cannot understand many things, and not having lived them does not mean being better or living closer to the Lord.

A crisis can be (here are some examples): of self-esteem, when perhaps after many years struggling and making efforts, the person realizes he can not live with ideas or projects. All this does not lead to any positive outcome. Thus, the person feels groundless, naked, unprotected in need of a new fundamental encounter. And looks for it desperately.

Or a crisis caused by personal disappointments, that can be of many types, but that have the common denominator of helping to come out of the hole where the person is stuck. And therefore, good for the person. Blessed crises.

Or a real encounter with the Gospel, a real encounter if the person is aware of what is real and what is a mere fantasy, unraveling the farces of faith and turning them into a real experience. It is wonderful to disassemble all that has been lived previously to find God as the foundation of life.

And this is the step from faith as an ideology to a faith as life. Here are some traits of this new faith.

First, be oneself, obeying God as the source of one's own freedom.

Second, be true, meaning faithful to oneself, preferring truth to security. It is something significant that, unfortunately, is lacking in the Religious Institutes. They often try to look for ways to give identity based on security, often preventing people from living hardships, nor faithful to himself, even if he might make mistakes.

Third, solitude. When one is not backed by his ideology system, he faces his solitude. And when he discovers his uniqueness and who he is, he wants to be faithful to himself and free from the ideological expectations he belongs to and thus condemned to solitude. But it is a solitude that at the end becomes an inhabited one.

Fourth, the discovery of God: That is, he begins, initially softly, to discover the religious world and slowly this is going to configure the entire self to him. He will do things, centered in God. He will work, but his heart belongs to the Lord. He will give himself to others, but deep down inside he is becoming configured and joined to God. Because he belongs to the Lord, and belonging is a fundamental element. He can continue to do things like before, but everything is different. And then he understands the big difference between function and mission. He who is unable to tell the difference between purpose and mission is still living ideologically.

Fifth, this is how freedom of conscience is born, which makes the person make real decisions, which do not respond to learned models of behavior. The ability to decide in conscience is a good test to achieve de-ideologization.

Sixth is the time to put life in the hands of God, losing self-control, free from mechanisms of security, especially spiritual ones. Life belongs to God, and he works in each one of us his plan of love, the believer abandons himself to God who has entered in his life.

4. Unifying life

All of the above leads to a unified life. A crucial moment in the spiritual process: What do we mean by unifying? Unification for a Christian means a polarized heart by God. Jesus himself said: "For where your treasure is, there your heart will also be" Unification means focusing our energy in a vital center, in a totalizing love, and

what we love gives meaning to life. Frequently one does not unify one's existence, our heart in Jesus, because we look for a life of controlled combinations where also God has his place, but what he has, after all, is just part of the heart.

People are involved in many realities; we have jobs and are committed in many different sectors. But if we really want to carry out a unification process in Jesus Christ we must learn to distinguish what fills our heart from what occupies our life in many other realities, that we also love, interest us, for what we work for and can also be vital to us but that are not centered in our heart. All this is important so that life in that second moment to which we have referred before, is unifying the existence in Christ Jesus or, as we have indicated in the title of this chapter, is working towards our configuration to Him.

How can a person know if his life is aiming for the unification with Jesus? What are the essential elements to perceive, to understand if we are on our way and that God is guiding this configuration to Jesus, that should be the utmost desire of all Christian and all religious man and woman, at least in the second moment of our life, mentioned above? I list some elements to look for.

Firstly, the person feels the growing desire of God, the desire to be one with him, to belong to him. It is something that is not the same in all, or in all must be given. Let us remember the book of the Acts: God opens the heart of some people to believe, but not all. That is, those who have chosen beforehand believed. God chooses freely, he gives, donates, chooses, but he does so for everyone to know that God works by loving us all. But it is also true that all people cannot be leveled out.

Secondly, we must discern what is happening in our life, because new events do not all occur at the same way. For example, a tragedy occurs in a family; the mother opens up to God, and the father rejects him or the opposite. Three people are praying: one is focused on control, another is obsessed by the method, and the third is looking for gratification from the prayer. Some shield themselves from God they place some filters in front of his calls and others understand they must let go in front of the Lord and start the path prepared by him. Therefore, they cannot unify life or better there

cannot be a unification of life, configuration to Christ, which is the same for all. Sometimes perhaps so many obstacles are created that this unification cannot occur.

Thirdly, we must be attentive to the intuitions that appear in the heart. They frequently occur among those who are always working in their process of faith. It is a sign that they are making a synthesis of their faith. It is where real spiritual life comes into play. The Holy Spirit brings forth intuitions in the heart that have to do with true spiritual life, with Jesus in our life. Often these intuitions, signal, and help to carry out a path: meaning that they provide clarification. One must be very attentive to this.

Fourth, the main change occurs when we place our relationship with God at the center of our life. Life leads us to different places, actions, responsibilities, jobs; many paths; sometimes distancing ourselves from the Father and others driving us closer to him. But God was not always at the center of our life. God was meaningful for us but not the most significant things in our life. Until the coming of the day, with the grace of the Lord, when God becomes the primacy in our life. Everything else becomes secondary. The only important thing in life is God. Christian life is centered on faith, hope, and love for God. Three completely interconnected realities. Whoever has faith waits against all hope, and that is a sign that he loves. Whoever waits, does not despair even if the wait is long and tedious, and in that act, he loves and expresses his faith, his confidence. Who loves, indeed trusts, and due to his confidence waits for what is necessary. That waiting is an exercise of faith.

These theological virtues do not respond to methods, but are present in those who trust and give themselves. Only when one makes the act of faith, one discovers the presence of God. There is no interiority method of the many proposed capable of producing the presence of God, but only faith can. But to be more specific, not even faith captures the presence of God, but what it does is to perceive what is given, and from it the presence of our God.

Therefore, we must be involved in activities and tasks from our heart. Unification depends on it.

The process of achieving unification with God, configuration to Jesus, remembering it is always grace, forces us to concentrate. An

excellent authentic prayer process can help us focus. We will see this later on, in one of the chapters. A tailored prayer path, which is simple, constant and keeps our heart-centered in divine mercy.

5. The way of faith

There are many people that to carry out this path turns to interiority as if it could determine a real encounter with God or be the springboard to union with Jesus. However, this is not the case. The affectionate relationship produces more interiority than the processes of self-consciousness. It includes everything: self-analysis, personal development, self-giving to our neighbor, ethical attitudes, but there is nothing as transforming as the interpersonal, emotional relationship. Thus, the importance we stress in the following chapters on affectivity with God, the Lord of our life, because without theological affectivity everything falls into a void.

There is nothing that transforms me more than a personal affective relationship with the God of Jesus, who wants and can relate to me personally. Our God seeks an emotional relationship with us. Therefore, it is preferable to develop interiority through an emotional relationship, even if to begin to develop it we need some psychological assumptions, without having to achieve any great interiority.

It is essential for us to be clear on these two paths: that of interiority and that of faith. The keys of the interiority path are the following ones:

- Wisdom is within, and you must not look for it outside. Starting from this concept, we develop interiority techniques such as yoga and Zen, transcendental meditation where Eastern teachers are unique and admirable. They allow us to expand our conscience to higher levels, and not be at the mercy of external stimuli or mental discourses. When the moment of enlightenment comes, it will enable to break the level of consciousness. It is an interesting model. It is the greatness of Eastern masters and the reason why many people follow them:
- The keys of faith are otherness and interpersonal relationship. In the interiority path there is no otherness, but for faith, it embodies the starting point: someone other than me,

the Other, Otherness. Transformation occurs through emotional relationship, meaning with the emotional ability to be affected by the other, by someone who is essential in our life.

In this emotional process, there are different maturity phases:

- It begins with a child-like relationship: God is sought from the primary feeling to be at ease. Necessary stage. It occurs in the first moments of a personal path; thus, childhood relation.
- One must move to a mature relation by bonding to the other, who is important for me. We acknowledge it is the best thing that has happened to me, “knowing about your love is the treasure worthwhile selling all the rest,” like in the words of the Gospel; after all, in a simple human way, it is what happens to people who fall in love;
- Then one moves to a more particular relationship, a more mature one. It is the religious life of living God’s initiative, knowing who we belong to, basing our life in Him. Then one moves to a more special relationship, a more mature one. It is the theologian life of living under God’s initiative, knowing who we belong to, basing our life in Him.

However, you have to start where we are. Many adult people live a religious affectivity typical of childhood. Attention to this, the affectivity only changes through emotional bonds. There are people who unconsciously tend almost always to put barriers, protecting themselves, to avoid being robbed of the “I”. The Christian God has approached us freely to create a love story with us. He calls us personally, and reveals himself to us through it. Prayer understood and lived, as a personal relationship with Him is vital.

Therefore, one must choose between interiority and faith. They are not incompatible; interiority can only be an initial step. It is not a relationship because it lacks the element of otherness.

6. How to prepare oneself to live this configuration

The indispensable element to take this journey is definitely, that of living authentically. If one is not authentic, one cannot carry out the faith process that leads to the configuration to Jesus. When I

speak of authenticity, I need to pinpoint what we mean. We are not talking about moral authenticity but an existential one. The first one has to do with our behavior; being consistent in what we think and do, not deceiving oneself or others. We must confess that in Catholic moral and therefore its institutions, in seminars or formation houses of religious life, either male or female, a lot of focus has exclusively been given to this authenticity. Being true equals being consistent, to correctly accomplish what has been ordered, defined as “being good.”

Instead, when we speak about existential authenticity, we refer to something that is not objective. To live this authenticity, one must meet some requirements that are not easy to put into practice, assimilate and most of all genuinely live. And it is this existential authenticity, which entails, on the one hand, taking life in one’s hands: being the subject of one own existence. And on the other, that freedom does not coincide as simple responsibility of submitting to an order of someone with supreme authority, like God, or not supreme, like any other authority, but as something to conquer directly related to the person. The religious Institutions have not provided these two elements; I would say they have been neglected, if not excluded as something inconvenient for the person.

With this, we do not mean to confuse it with a mere whim, far from it. But rather to live the experience of unconditionally in life. Or, in other words, that we are accountable in first person. Consequently, this authenticity goes against the search of any security. It is important not to rest our conscience on the achievement of a task, assigned to us by someone, but to run the risk of being faithful to oneself beyond rules and ideologies of any sort. If this type of authenticity does not exist, we cannot make the process towards the unification with Christ, to a configuration to him, condensing our life in him. This is very important and is not fully developed during formation.

7. Need for discernment

Discernment is a necessary and fundamental tool in our journey of personal configuration to Jesus. Discerning in all that the Lord of heaven loves best. Every Christian, and now explicitly addressing the ones who are undergoing the process explained in these

pages, has only to look for God, his kingdom, and service. And this means that he must act with total rectitude in all the pleasant or unpleasant events of his life; the need to look for Jesus's interests and not his own. Your only criteria are to seek and find the will of God and commit to it. By doing so, you will reach the long-sought destination. Discerning requires leaving aside what is not according to God, according to the Gospel, according to one's conscience, because God reveals himself to the conscience of each person. Discernment depends on many factors that will help you in this exercise: the reading of the Word and applying it in one's own life, the advice of a brother who you turn to knowing his holiness and wisdom, or knowing that he has gone through the difficulties you are now facing; if you are a religious, the Superior who is also a support in the search for God's will and if you are a lay person often the dialogue with one's partner when both put themselves in the hand of God and evoke his help and in many other ways.

One thing is for sure, if you discern with a pure heart, prayer, humbly and merely invoking the intercession of the Lord, God will manifest his will, his desire and indicate the way to follow; you must just follow the path with courage and with your heart.

8. Parts of this book

Having said all of the above, one can understand the core in this book's chapters. The ultimate goal is to show a path towards configuration to Christ through the Piarist Constitutions. Each one of the chapters will indicate a direction. And in this direction, we will provide three necessary aspects to continue our journey, as mentioned in the prologue. The first one is the spiritual one referring to the related chapter, to capture better the content; the second one, discerning what is said in the chapter and that has been expressed in the spiritual aspect, since discernment is necessary in applying in our life the elements addressed: and in the third one, the methodology, or how we can conclude, remembering that all is grace, or how we can work to implement the spiritual element, discerned in the second moment. Through all the chapters we want to show the journey to take presented by the Piarist Constitutions to achieve the configuration to Christ, the principal element of Christian and religious life.

2° Configuration to Jesus through following

1. Spirituality

1. There is no configuration without following. He who wants to be unified with Jesus, in configuration to him must follow him. The undertaken process begins with us following him. Configuration to Jesus is a grace he gives to the small and humble. Thus, to follow him we must do what he said in the Gospel: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest”. If the configuration is grace, it is also following. This also includes God’s choosing us. One cannot follow him if he is not chosen. The act of being chosen is the impulse to follow him. This is manifested in the Gospels: he chose those who asked to go and see where and how he lived; he chose whom he saw mending the fishing nets with his father; he chose a tax collector. It is always a choice.

One cannot choose to follow, through a commitment or personal decision. He is always the one who takes the initiative. There is nothing in the person that deserves the call because he does not choose the best one or wisest or most prepared ones or the ones who want to be chosen. He always picks the ones he wants. He called the ones he wanted by his side and sent them to preach, according to the Gospel. But we must not think that the choice of some excludes the others. He chooses all even if for different roles, different missions and in all cases, the decision is a manifestation and embodiment of his love. And each one must live with love in answering from the place where he received the call of love. Thus, when he calls us, we must follow him and begin the process of life that finishes in the configuration to him

2. The following of Jesus is a doing of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives himself so we can love the Father and Son so that our life can be that of a son in his Son. Yes, the Holy Spirit is the love between the two people of the Trinity, possessing the Spirit means having the possibility of intensely loving both of them: Therefore, to live the following of Jesus, we must have the Holy Spirit, a grace. And consequently, to carry out the process to walk that path that leads to the configuration to Jesus, we must have the Divine Spirit.

Possessing in both ways, on one side that we possess the Spirit, and this is an immense grace because one can possess his only if the Father grants it, and, on the other, he possesses us, he introduces us into his life, into his reality, which is none other than love. Thus, the following is done in love; the configuration to Jesus is lived in love. The Holy Spirit is frequently forgotten in Christian and religious life, and one must go back, again and again, to implore his presence, ask for his coming, pray for her to stay with us. Come Divine Spirit; send your light from heaven. One can go to the Father only through the Holy Spirit because we go to him through the love of the Son, love that is nothing else but the Holy Spirit. And in the same way, you go to the Son through the Holy Spirit, because no one knows, loves the son if not the one who the Father gives this grace and love, that is, the Holy Spirit: The intimate interconnection among the three persons of the Trinity.

3. We speak about following him, but to do so, we must leave everything behind. This is precisely stated in the Gospel. They left their nets, families, jobs they were doing as tax collector, leaving a life that was not according to God because the tax collector was exploiting the situation to hoard as much as possible, this is why everyone hated them. If someone wants to combine what he has and follow him, he will hear the word of the Lord telling him to sell what he has and then follow him. If he does not, he will not be able to follow the steps of the Master. You have to be light of burdens, free of ties, open to the road that needs to be taken. Otherwise, that path is hindered; we cannot move forward smoothly, we are not free to go wherever the Master wants with the freedom granted by having left everything.

We must not only leave things, work and the family. The Lord asks for something deeper; we must leave ourselves. What is most im-

portant is not what seems convenient to us, but what is essential for him, his desires. And letting go of ourselves is more difficult than leaving things behind. The person without himself loses security, is left without sensible foundation, no place to cling to. We might feel the sensation of losing everything, of drowning. However, this is how we must follow him.

4. Following him is different from imitating him. It might have been the same in the first period of Christianity when Paul wrote his letters. But back then it did not have the mimetic meaning it acquired after. Slowly Jesus' actual life became the rule of life. It meant to imitate Jesus literally. And therefore, the famous question that was frequently asked: What would Jesus do in this situation? The Spirit's creativity was subdued to the reproduction, or better, to a certain representation of Jesus's life, interpreted according to the historical knowledge and ideological interests of the time.

But this evangelism had to be overcome. Suffice to deepen the NT. For example, in Paul, it is the imitation of Christ, but with no reference to any historical recalling of Jesus. In fact, when he claims, "we must have the same feeling as Jesus Christ," he does not refer to any passage of the Gospel, but to the essential existential attitude that involves all of the Master's life. For this, more than an imitation we must speak of following, intending that turning to the Gospel be not an imitation-reproduction, but to become disciples.

5. Let us listen to saint John of the Cross-, in these stanzas: "Where have you hidden, Beloved and left me moaning? You fled like the stag after wounding me; I went out calling you, but you were gone. Shepherds, you who go up through the sheepfolds to the hill, if by chance you see him I love most, tell him I am sick, I suffer, and I die".
6. For us, our following of Christ is something concrete. On the one hand, it is the rule of our life but implemented in what Jesus has called us in the Church, the evangelization of children and young people, especially the abandoned. The following is not fulfilled with an abstract love but implemented through specific, concrete actions enlightened by the focus on our Holy Father's charism. We have no other way of following him, pro-

vided that our efforts are not merely tasks or functions that anybody else could carry out: they must be for us exercises of our mission. The mission is not the same thing as a task, even if they might coincide in the material act carried out: mission has an inner dimension that distances it for work or a job.

Those who are unable to tell the difference in their life between work and mission live in a pre-theological status and haven't taken the theological step in life. Mission and function can be carried out as if they were the same thing, but they are not. Sufficient to look back at our Founder's experience and life.

7. Following Christ entails a cross. One cannot follow Jesus without following his same path. We must accompany the Lord to Mount Tabor to contemplate his Passion as Glorification. We are all tempted to do like Peter, center ourselves with the happy ending and skipping the suffering. Listening to the Father's voice while he says: « Listen to him, » is just like listening to "put aside the desire, for the light of faith in my Son; follow him even if you do not understand anything." We must always ask our Father to strengthen our faith in Jesus, to be attracted to Him.

And by following our Father's call to look at Jesus, we will realize that he continuously insists that we must let go of everything, and privilege and look for the last place, like the children whom we serve. The existential wisdom of following him, Jesus' love theologically identifies us with his journey to the cross. Our love for Jesus progressively becomes love for faith and not simply our desire. Let the spiritual indifference be a place of identification of love with Jesus' references: poverty, littleness, service, and self-forgetting.

8. To follow him means to love others the way he loved us. We cannot say we are following him if we do not live with him and don't do what he asks. And if something is evident in the Gospel, it is Jesus' love for the many people he meets in his life. Either friends or enemies are they for or against him that was not relevant. It is essential for us to see how he was able to love everyone and do it until the end: "Father, forgive them because they do not know what they are doing."

We should love others despite the way they affect us. Always, love more those who love us less. Love is limitless, it grows continuous-

ly, and there are no hurdles that can stop it. God is love, Jesus loved till his death, and death on the cross, and his legacy was the commandment of love. Thus, love is the fulfillment of the law. If one does not love, he is condemned; he who loves is following Jesus. Love all without distinction and what is beautifully expressed by Paul in 1 Cor 13.

9. To follow Jesus, we must have his same feelings. Feelings that we see in the Gospels and that in us can be reproduced by the Holy Spirit. She can make us live in the likeness of Jesus. But in following him, we must live anonymously. Many times, we look for the spark, appearance, the figurative, being above the others instead we must focus on the importance of smallness and simplicity, the anonymity of a life that does not want to appear but merely lives practicing love and self-giving.

God greatly appreciated anonymity, which was, in fact, Mary's way of life. The most important figure in the history of salvation, the most loved one by God, always available to the Lord, who accepted with all her heart the Father's will announced by an angel and who spent all her life anonymously and so appreciated by God. We can follow Jesus without showing off, shining or being seen.

10. Mary is the perfect example of how to follow Jesus. She precedes us with her light in this assignment, learning from her means passing the test. Furthermore, she, as a real mother helps all her children to follow Jesus, because she wants all to resemble him, all to configure to him.

2. Discernment

1. Following Jesus is a two-fold discernment. Without a doubt, all Christians have been called to follow Jesus. The word Christian comes from Christ. To be baptized as sons of God, and sons in his Son, coheirs with him. Discerning to know whether we have been called is simple. Suffice to recognize baptism itself includes the call to follow he in whose name we have been baptized.

Another different aspect is knowing whether we have been called to follow the Teacher in a particular way: to follow him as widows, virgins and those who belong to secular Institutes or another type of

religious life, who have been called to live according to Jesus' way of living in the world. In order to discern one must analyze: if in life we desire to live like the Lord; if one is indifferent to this call, not because you do not care, but because you think that what is really important is God's plan for you, his desire is beyond any individual desire; if you are willing to live any call manifested as the will of God. One does not want a specific way of following but something that has been discerned as God's will and welcomed as such. We can think of Mother Teresa of Calcutta.

2. It is important to discern if the Holy Spirit is acting in our lives fostering us to follow Jesus. The Holy Spirit is uncontrollable; we can only experience his effects. We know that the Spirit moves in a person if in him the love for the Father grows more significant, and becomes the restful place in life. We want to be enveloped in his divine mercy and tenderness, soaking like a sponge full of water by it. If the Holy Spirit feels our heart is open to his hints even if they are something challenging to detect. Achieving a synthesis of the opposites in our lives, something that pure human reason is incapable of doing, but always the Spirit's grace. The ability to consistently follow Jesus is something given that we are unable to achieve on our own. Feeling love pouring from the inside is not mere imagination, nor something ideal or idealistic, but provided like a spring that is not ours, but from which we can drink from and in abundance.
3. To discern on how to leave everything, including ourselves, focusing more on how and from where rather than in what we are doing, because even the most spiritual things can arise from a contaminated source. For example, it is not a matter whether we pray or not, but why we do, because it might have to do with the image we want to portray to God or others. We might pray because we are complying with the Constitutions or other similar reasons. And what is said about prayer can be applied to everything else.

At this point it is essential to discern on leaving our home and goods that is, living in poverty, by analyzing from where and why. And in this sense, we must also discern going out of oneself, seeing if we don't do so just to appear well, if we live utterly available to God if

we do not close ourselves to avoid being bothered or invaded in our life's space, in which we are entrenched. If we are not enclosed in a shell so that nothing and no one can make us leave, if we know how to suffer the humiliations that can occur to us, if we do not seek to be above others, wanting to be the center of everything and everyone.

4. It is not difficult to discern if we are open to suffering. The usual initial reaction is to run away from it. Nobody likes to suffer. Suffering for the sake of suffering is masochistic. But there is a suffering that saves us when one lives in a Christian way and not stoically. To be open to suffering one must not necessarily look for it. Even if, its search might come from a gift of God that pushes men to look for it as a way to join Jesus, who also suffered.

But it might also come from masochistic anxiety whose ultimate reason might also include the search for pleasure; we are in front of a situation of aberration. We are open when we are capable of receiving the sufferings of life, circumstances of pain that come without our wanting them. If we do not reject with all our might the events of life that make us suffer, and we cannot avoid. If when pain comes, and we know it will happen we submit our hearts to what is happenings and turn the suffering into a way of identifying with Jesus Christ.

5. Once again saint John of the Cross: "Oh! Who can heal me? Give me at once yourself; send me no more a messenger who cannot tell me what I wish. All they who serve are telling me of the unnumbered graces; and all wound me more and more, and something leaves me dying, I know not what, of which are darkly speaking."
6. The following of Jesus, for us Piarists, is put into practice in the Gospel through the children and young people especially the abandoned. This must be clear among the followers of Calasanz. And it is achieved when this self-giving is the passion of life when one lives for God and them, and God is loved through them and loving them shows the pure love of God. When one prefers the poor, the weaker, the migrant, those who have personal difficulties, those who are rejected by others or their families, those who nobody protects, who are alone and unprotected.

The discernment of a charism in which and with which one wants to live following Jesus. This discernment is carried out when we live the commitment of rendering children and young people more integral, less violent, more peaceful and work to insert them into society. We must be there for them. And also teach the ones who have secure lives that this entails the responsibility of working to help the others. When we work to avoid a poor person from hating a rich one, nor the latter from despising the other. We must discern if what we do with them is just a job or a mission received from God to which we heartedly dedicate all our life.

7. We must evangelically discern whether we are in Galilee or Jerusalem. Galilee was the place where Jesus manifested himself more clearly; where he carried out miracles, his most venerable speeches, where people were enthusiastic about him and followed him. Until the moment of Caesarea Philippi and his stay in Jerusalem, when people started to distance themselves from him, and he dedicated himself more to his disciples, foreseen what was about to happen, and that at the end did: his passion, death but also his resurrection.

Where are we? Galilee is a false triumph, confused, not in the desires of God and Jesus. Jerusalem was the place where the Lord was sentenced to death and died on the cross. One must discern the cross in life and if we are willing to follow the Teacher in those peak moments of his existence. Do we love the cross if we run away from the comfortable achievements of life that bring us joy but are superficial and not according to God? Do we love the cross when we heartedly accept the will of God who leads us towards uncharted paths, that with his help we can bare our aching feet? Do we love the cross if we can see in it the meaning of our life? Do we love the cross if amidst we ask the Lord to take away from us the cup, but at the end, we submit to his plans and wishes? Do we love the cross if we do not see it as the end, but a transit towards something better that God has for us? Do we love the cross because all that it entails does not destroy our life, our trust, and our hope? Do we love the cross if, after all, it leads to our resurrection?

8. We must discern whether in our life we give love to others, the love we received from God. Love is real when one does not judge himself better than others. Life is lived as a service to others,

taking off, if necessary the cloak, and washing other people's feet. Love is real when there is no residual of anger, hate or ill thoughts. When evil is overcome by good. When one is available for others, mindful of their needs, giving what they want, forgiving ill done, treating everyone as best we can, rejoicing of the triumphs of others, praising the good in each person and hiding what seems bad, forgiving faults and mistakes, turning offenses into simple misunderstandings. Love discerned through real facts, not pure intentions or useless desires.

9. The Gospel is the true word that helps to discern. By seeing God giving to drink to the thirsty, we wonder if we help others to drink. When Jesus gives himself as nourishment and we look to see if we are helpful to others in our lives. When Jesus promises eternal life, we wonder if we are life or a setback for others. When Jesus illuminates everybody's life to avoid us from stumbling, we ask ourselves if we are obstacles to other or rejoice if they haven't achieved the goals they are fighting for. When Jesus rises, and we do not help those in great need. When Jesus is trust, we deceive others. When Jesus is the way, and we do not accompany those who have asked for help. When we are approached by Jesus' feelings, and in spite of it we do not ask for his help achieve what we are unable to do. When Jesus is grace, and we commit ourselves only to efforts and commitments, that will be unsuccessful without him on our side.

The Christian must always live according to God's will. Do what he wants. Live according to his will. Therefore, we must discern daily the Father's plan on our own life. Discernment must be carried out in the crucial moments of our existence. To live Christianly is to live in constant discernment because we want to fulfill the will of God at all times. Discernment is not a sporadic practice; it is the Christian's way of life. At all times, one must know what the Lord wants of him and act accordingly. Sometimes the Lord wants life to be anonymous, not to call attention to anything, which no one be fixed particularly on someone, not to be considered when looking for someone for a particular job. God manifestation leads that person through the path of anonymity, and his happiness must be to live that way. God always knows what is best for you. You have been led to anonymity, are happy, do not struggle to get out of it, live in

peace and tranquility, that God is satisfied with you in that way. If the time comes that He wants something else for you, he will manifest it in the best way for you to understand it.

10. In history the relationship with the Virgin Mary went through very different moments, from normality to pious exaggeration, ending up some times in refusing her all together. In your personal story, it might have occurred that at a young age in formation a lot of focus was put in the devotion to Mary, but then almost forgot about this devotion and love for the Virgin. It is time to revise this relationship with Mary in our personal life and give her the relevant place in Christian life. A positive sign is the need to turn to her with filial confidence and the negative one would be to replace Jesus with Mary.

3. Methodology

The “methodology” we are addressing here is not trying to find a way to achieve the spiritual aspect of the first element, complemented in the discernment of the second moment. We know it is impossible. In the spiritual field everything is grace, and even if grace is not at odds with human activity, it is however merely only something we are given and receive. Therefore, the methodology indicates assumptions, actions or ways of acting that can foster the presence of grace, without hindering its action in the person.

1. As a fundamental principle we must point out what we have repeated in a general way: the following of Jesus is not achieved, it is received: It is not fulfilled it is accepted; closed fists indicating great efforts and commitments to follow him are useless. The attitude is that of raised and open hands, welcoming the gift of God. We know that as Christians we follow Christ.

Some activities help perceive the grace of the following: care for good and sensible people who recognize the steps of the Lord, like the two disciples of the Baptist who heard the Lamb of God passing and followed Jesus. Reading the word, where the Lord speaks, read with a clean heart as if it were the first time. The attitude of availability that always attracts the Lord and can build a perspective to receive the call. The constant and intense cry of the poor who knows he can do nothing by himself, but whom he turns to can do it all.

2. Asking the Father to give us the Spirit. Only he can do it. And as always, he gives it to the small and pure in heart. Thus, we must live that way. We must be attentive inside to the passing of the Spirit; coming on us, but often our tasks and concerns, our involvement in many things, lets him pass inadvertently.

Here are some elements that can help us: the supplication and prayer to the same Spirit. The interior delicacy with everything and all that refers to God. To learn how to wait, in peace and silence, even when that bores us because by so doing, he will feel attracted and come. To show our littleness, our darkness, our nothingness, so that he may fill, enlighten, grant all that our heart needs. The plea to the Father and the Son to send us his love because we need it and only in him, we can thank the Trinity, that we must recognize always more in our lives.

3. Some people undergo a deep trauma in leaving their possessions. They are not only attached to things, but they consider them their support and security. They need to let go, and in this case, we cannot say, "I can't and therefore wait for the Lord to do it"; this is a trick of the ego that wants to continue to hold what it possesses and avoid letting go. Here we must act, that is, leave, break off. Sometimes we have many things, way too many. We have everything, and nothing is missing in the houses of religious people. Undoubtedly there will be elements necessary for the development of the ministries, but in many cases, they look for all the best.

We let go when we leave what we have or something we like and is not truly necessary, and do it peacefully without any drama. Carrying out this break up is essential. Enough to look at one's room to wonder if all we possess is necessary if we cannot manage without some of our possessions if you are not willing to give away a lot of things. We often speak about the poor, but little is done for them, even if what we can do is a drop in the ocean. This drop of water is telling of what we have in our heart. And we must also let go of ourselves. How? By offering deeper realities more specific of our being: time, accompaniment, closeness, advice, love, listening. There are some things that we understand when we do them. Differently, everything is just mere fantasy, and one of them is self-detachment.

4. Take the Gospel, slowly read the different passages, see how Jesus behaves and examine your behavior to check whether you act in the same way. This imitation is following. You will need to do a transposition because you will not have real blind people at your side, people with paralyzed arms or crying lepers. But it won't be difficult to have all these realities or in some way similar ones with people you find along the way or who turn to you for help.

It is the time to put in practice "I was hungry, and you gave me food, I was thirsty, and you gave me water, I was in prison, and you visited me." The Gospel is a book we must continuously read; on the one hand, it sheds light on life, and on the other, the word gives us the strength to put into practice what we read in our own life. And, above all, through it, we encounter God who provides us with the strength to behave like him. Pray like I pray: live as Christians, help one another.

5. Saint John of the Cross: "My soul is occupied, and all my substance in His service; Now I guard no flock, nor have I any other employment: My sole occupation is love. If, then, the common land I am no longer seen or found, you will say that I am lost; that, being enamored, I lost myself; and yet was found."
6. Experiencing configuration to Jesus in the received Charism can be achieved in different ways: the young ones should prepare themselves for what will come; preparation that calls for serious studies, taking advantage of the time by carrying out experiences of what life will be like at the end of the initial formation. The young person must not, however, forget he is undergoing formation and therefore must focus on the fundamental aspect of this period that is mainly the preparation for the future because if he does not, he will notice it very much in the future.

After having finished the period of initial formation, he must thoroughly be involved in that the Providence offers for his wellbeing. Those in this situation must give themselves passionately, with illusion in the practice of the Founder's desire, serve, and help and teach the needy. And not only as a job but also most importantly as a mission carried out to continually make the Kingdom present

in the world. There are very positive experiences in this field, like dedicating oneself, in obedience, to live close to the poor, who lack the many things that others have. Or offering some months of their holidays to replace brothers in far away lands so that they can rest, and to experience the truth and live in person how the poor evangelize us, and see with their own eyes the reality that many suffer and how many things are lacking in these places.

7. The Christian takes advantage of the situations provided by the Providence for the love of the following. There are realities we are forced to accept: failures, sufferings due to misunderstands or humiliations, sickness, severe disabilities. All these realities are not or cannot be chosen or can be chosen; they are simply received and accepted. One must accept them asking for the grace to do so. It is the wisdom of the Cross-in the Christian who enjoys the intimacy with the Lord and in this intimacy with Him unleashes his best desires.

For example, the aridity in the prayer that teaches to detach from affective expectations, of the most legitimate aspiration of union with the Lord, of feeling love... The fruit is the obedience of love in intimacy with the Lord, but through the night of desire. Since, there are realities, the main one that we must accept and receive from God with limitless trust. But one must also make preferential options that prepare us to live this Cross of the Lord: for example: prefer certain disdains, special love for the excluded, availability in first person for others, choose unpopular services...

8. God's love for us is discovered by analyzing our life, our past; history of forgiveness, help, strength not to fall, undeserved graces, donation of so much good, salvation from dangers and salvation of the entire life. If there is something evident in the life of a Christian, it is God's incomprehensible, disproportionate, unprecedented love for him. One is confused about seeing how he is loved and must therefore often thank He who has loved him so much. This love has the power to make the loved one love others the way he is loved. God.

We must remember the words of Jesus "I will love you the way the Father has loved me." We are overwhelmed, speechless, in listening to what the Lord is saying. Thus, he must forgive any wrong-

doing we have received because for no reason we have insulted the Lord, and notwithstanding has been forgiven us; we must forget the wrong we received because the Lord has forgotten altogether the evil we have caused. We must give ourselves with love to those we dislike, because even if we are sinners, God loved us with divine mercy and infinite tenderness. We must help those who we deem unworthy, because being unworthy; the Lord has often washed our feet and has kneeled in front of us with mercy. The specificity of love is to lower oneself, and God lowers himself through Jesus until the misery of our life. We must act this way because this is what God did for us and we must do to others.

9. We must experience anonymity: try not to appear, never consider yourself better than others, praise the good done by others, remember you cannot always understand entirely the reason of what you think others have done wrong because only God knows the heart. In facing a bad behavior of others, think about how you misbehaved many times and hoped not to be judged.
10. Do you entrust yourself everyday to Mary? Do you recite the rosary for the Founder? Do you ask for Mary's intercession in your life for your needs and the needs of others? Do you frequently read the chapters of the Gospel with the presence of Mary so you can see and imitate her attitudes and behavior? Do you ask her to help you behave with God like she did? Is she your supporter in your conflicts? Do you look at her with love when you are tempted or living difficult situations? Do you ask her to help you imitate always more her Son? Do you know she really loves you and only wants the best for you? "Under thy protection we seek refuge. Holy Mother of God; despise not our petitions in our needs, but from all dangers deliver us always O glorious and blessed Virgin always defend your children."

3. Configuration to Jesus in community life

1. Spirituality

1. Configuration to Christ, even if a personal journey, for us religious people, passes through the community environment. The community, our brothers, plays an essential role in this process that seems so personal and only ours. The community is important because it is the place where our life unfolds: we cannot think that configuration to Jesus takes place in the stratosphere, almost outside our world or inside the person that has nothing to do with the circumstances of life, and consequently, in those who live close to us. Conversely, configuration occurs daily, in the environment where we live, and it helps and sometimes renders challenging the achievement of the goal we are aiming for. The community is affected when an atmosphere of peace, self-fulfillment, and love with one another is established. And even if it might seem a lie, sometimes community difficulties, oppositions, contradictions are helpful because amidst it all God's Cross appears, a fundamental element for the configuration to Jesus, as we have already mentioned. Therefore, both the positive and negative aspects provided by the community environment, play a role in the process of personal unification with Jesus Christ.

We must often ask ourselves: What specific situation or concrete person has opened a way in our heart in what we were hiding, and helped our process of configuration to the Lord? We can probably find reasons for our standstill, for not proceeding forward in the path we started, because it is hard. But suddenly a community

circumstance, a brother without him knowing what is happening inside us, is the reason for our progress in the journey of configuration to Jesus. There is no doubt; configuration to Jesus always passes through a brother. This step does not have to be taken under extraordinary circumstances. It usually occurs under normal daily situations, unexpectedly and in normal circumstance. In those moments, we play our role of Christians, and this is why we must be unprotected and free from social contexts and agreements.

2. Configuration to Jesus in our community life occurs slowly in living our vows. Through them, our brothers help us to walk towards the unity with Christ. We will talk of each one of the vows further on, but here we refer to them as a whole. Through chastity, we wholeheartedly love the other members of the community, and by this love become ever closer to Jesus. He loved as nobody else has ever done, and we imitate his celibate life, we desire and seek to imitate him, we look at his way of giving himself to others, complete self-giving to others. It is a configuration that we slowly want to have to Jesus in the celebration of love. After all, love is what unites us most, one of the realities that make us resemble him more.

By living in poverty, we share everything with the brothers of the community. No one calls “mine” something because we know that everything belongs to everyone, and sharing, apart from being an act of love, draws us closer to Jesus who shared everything with us, resembling us in everything, except for sin. He became a man among us and lived like us. And living in poverty, leading a simple life we gather around the poor Jesus like he lived in life. This also helps us to be closer to him every day.

And in obedience, we firmly join with others to accomplish with greater certitude God’s will. If something is manifest in Jesus, it is how his life was nothing other than achieving the Father’s plan. This is why he came to earth, lived thirty years in anonymity, preached for three years to inform on the Father’s loving plan for humankind. The reason why he accepted his life’s destiny loving us until his death on the cross. The life of the Master was one of total obedience to God. Through our obedience we unite to the Lord, we do like he did in his life and by so doing we configure ever more to him. Thus, living the vows in a community, helping one another,

allows us to resemble Jesus each day more, and this is a way to live the identification with the Master.

3. Configuration to Christ through the community has some special moments. On the one side, community life is centered in the Eucharist, and there is nothing that unites us more with Christ than to eat his Body and drink his Blood. In it, we are one with him, in it, we live the immense love he had for us being a piece of bread to accompany us throughout our life. In it, we receive the nourishment that daily keeps us in the mist of difficulties that we might encounter. The Eucharist becomes our sister, transforming us into him. In it, she lowers herself in front of us to wash our sins and recreate in our life grace, in it her mercy is limitless. Thus, the Eucharist is a moment of identification with Christ, and nothing can configure us more to him than the Eucharist experienced with a heart full of love. Therefore, the importance of the Eucharist in the community as a process of the configuration to the Master

On the other hand, the community is based on faith. Without faith, there is no community; in any case, it is a group of people who live together, with the advantages as well as disadvantages that this entails. What makes the group a Christian one is a faith that dwells in it. A faith that leads the group to center itself in Jesus Christ, as the power that attracts all to unite and avoid breaking up. A faith that makes all look at the Master as the Lord who comes to save us all. A faith not based on sentiment or sentimentalisms, a faith where all are treated like brothers in Jesus and co-heirs with him of eternal bonds. Thus, this faith fuels the process of configuration to Jesus. Without faith, there is no relationship nor unity, no configuration to the Lord. Without faith, all is just merely human elements that do not lead to the Lord or unity with him.

Therefore, the community is strengthened in its communal and interpersonal relationships. Thus, these relationships are essential in the configuration process. On the one hand, they can disrupt people who are negative or strange, if gossiping is plenty or refusal among community members, if the clashing is permanent, if dislikes are stressed and if people cannot stand one another. All this makes a person unfit to live a normal life on unity with Christ, except for exceptional cases. But if the relationships are real and lively, they help this journey.

4. The individual's maturity process in achieving the configuration to Jesus must be backed by some human virtues that are necessary in a religious person: Especially sincerity, friendliness, respectfulness of others, not passing judgment on anybody. All these virtues help to create an atmosphere of dialogue avoiding divisions among brothers. The spiritual element is not at odds with the human one, but a necessary requirement for individual maturity.

To these human virtues, we must also add some other essential elements. For example: give quality to human relationships in the community and work environment. Create an atmosphere of dialogue that eases the search for the truth in a true attitude. Promote the sensibility towards beauty and gratuitousness. Foster the primacy of love in human existence, more than other values that today are assessment more such as power, money, and individual independence. Dedicate oneself to people rather than to the institutions, show the love of God through the word and most of all through one's own life. This helps the individual who is embracing the life of Jesus and thus resembling him and configuration to him. The community is not an obstacle, but support, and if sometimes it is not, one must examine why, if it is the community itself that is not leading a life of faithful following of Christ or the individual who is closed in himself and is unable to live in the community following the Master.

5. The configuration process in community life is carried out through everyday activities. Nothing exceptional is needed. No unusual behavior is necessary. And it is through the wisdom of the trust in God, in the Abba; one must give intensity to the eternity of time. Jesus himself said: The kingdom has come and therefore we must live each day as if it were the last one. In fact, this is what we ask our father; thy kingdom be done, the end of history and his wonderful salvation plan for all humanity.

We must walk each day united to the Lord, knowing that each day brings novelty that we can perceive if we stay watchful. Each day, love bears the surprise of a never-ending source of life. Each day, the Lord continues to call us to his encounter. Each day the configuration of God is a reality that attracts us always more, being his grace. Each day the will of God achieved hope. Each day God wants

to enter more in the deepness of our heart. Each day we feel more loved. Each day he tries to make us rest in the Father, that we love him more, that the Holy Spirit be our legacy. Thus, the importance of “each day.”

6. While we look for unity with Jesus and configuration to him, we help others in their journey: those who have just entered the Institute, those with personal difficulties, the sick and elderly. It is necessary to help others because love for our neighbor is the criteria of the truth of God’s love. And this is where ethics and faith are intertwined. Indeed, the first one as a criterion of truth has the priority over the second, but it can never lay the foundation of life because the source of love for the believer is always the faith. The core of love of our neighbor is faith. What happens is that sometimes the paths are reversed. There are those who start from ethics and slowly discover the higher source, which is God, others instead begin with God and introducing God, in reality, discover the neighbor. The unification of both aspects occurs when God wants. Thus, both elements are essential in the path of configuration to Christ.

Therefore, we must progressively enter into the unification process with Christ, because this is the love of Jesus in his salvific role. Each time he forgives, it is the Father how is forgiving; each time that he gets close to the sick, it is God’s life that passes through him. There is no difference in him between ethics and faith.

7. The Superior must help in all possible ways the person in his journey towards the configuration to God. Here are some stanzas of Saint John of the Cross Spiritual Cantic: “O woods and thickets, planted by the hand of my beloved! O green meadow, created bright with flowers. Tell me, has he passed by you? Pouring out a thousand graces, he passed these groves in haste, and having looked at them, with his image alone, clothed them in beauty.”
8. The journey we are talking about does not belong to anyone. All Christians are called to a union with Jesus through baptism and thus achieving configuration to Christ. Consequently, not only those who have a particular vocation, for what might seem for what has been said so far, but also lay people. Therefore, the

layperson must remember the primacy in the Church's community that is the Church in the world and for the world. And must seek every day to be closer to Jesus.

This calls for some elements: one must value the vocational charism of the laity, either married or not, as a primary form of Christian life. Other charisms are subsidiary. Therefore, the need put all effort in valuing their vocation, as a call to live with Jesus acknowledging that it also includes the configuration to the Master himself. Aware that their spirituality is not defined in the world, but by Jesus Christ in the world. A layperson's configuration journey must undergo from the evangelization of the entire family since everything else is subsidiary and less important. Even if some laypersons have responsibilities in the ecclesial institutions, the Church's central promotion of laity is not centered in the responsibilities of the ecclesial institutions but in the world. The lay person, amidst the difficulties, troubles, and struggles must walk towards the peak of Christian life, to what his heart is yearning for, that is the configuration of his life and from there teach his family and others how Jesus Christ should be present in the world through all Christians.

9. Naturally, this journey is undertaken in the Church. Our place in the Church is different: suffice to read Paul in 1 Cor 12. The image of the Church as the Body of Christ is a metaphor, but as frequently happens; it barely expresses the profound real unity of Christ and the Brothers. Therefore, Christ's union to the Church is varied, multiple and different: Each person with a unique place, coming from the same Spirit and lived in an overall order. It is an inner journey, and no one knows that of the other, even if sometimes there are clues and something can be sensed.

In diversity there are differences, but no rivalries. Furthermore: what greater joy for each one than knowing that our brothers are called to the union with Jesus through different routes different from ours? Fraternal love and the feeling of being a body make us appreciate the other paths like our own. There might be people who from the social point of view consider their path as the most important one. But this is not true. We do not know what is happening in the heart of others, we can only see some signs, and sometimes some contradictions in the person. But just know the specific path

given to us by the Providence that belongs to us and nobody else. We must live the meaning of this with all the heart.

10. Christification is given to all men, as in Jesus Christ. He gave himself to all. This is the conclusion of this chapter of the Constitutions on community life. And it is that each one must be ready to serve, share the joys and hopes, grief and anguish willingly with all, for the good of all human beings. We might be aware of it or not, but this is not relevant. The essential aspect is that the life of those who unite themselves closely with Jesus becomes obedience in the same way as the life of the Master and his Mother.

But we must add that as a person carries out his tasks with obedience, taking steps in God's work, the Lord progressively leads him to a union with him and unique mission, even if many years are needed. When the time comes, one of these miracles sealed by God occurs: the union of the best of oneself with his pure gift, development of one's potential and more radical poverty, one's uniqueness and being in him and from him. It is the joy of belonging entirely to him, of sharing one's own life, the joy of being united to him and with him forever.

2. Discernment

1. In communal life loving our neighbor is essential. And it is what we must discern because this love is the key to de-ideologization. If one does not consider this point, the entire configuration process could be interrupted. Love for thy neighbor de-ideologies because our neighbor is someone concrete. It is enough to consider the difficulties of living together every day or human faces. It is when we live a concrete reality that all ideological schemes tend to break. Why does this occur? First of all, because reality makes our dark side emerge, revealing the negative side of our human condition. And, secondly, because it is in concrete love for others, in the contacts and conflicts of our human existence, where we also experience the great inconsistencies we have among the great values, the great cause we yearn for and what we give each day.

Thus, we need to discern whether the love for our neighbor, if the community is helping me in my process of unity to the Lord. If we

want to know if our love for the neighbor is idolized, it is sufficient to analyze some of the following points: if we compare the love for God and the love for our neighbor with Christianity's autonomous and global interpretations. Living our love for our neighbor in an abstract universal way without reference to specific responsibility. Our love for our neighbor does not have to be fulfilled merely in an interpersonal relationship but can also include the social and structural element. The communal discernment of the love of the other is essential because we concretely live and carry out in the community our inner process of the union to Jesus.

2. We must discern if the vows are taken in a real path by each one in their personal life. If chastity leads to love the Lord with all one's might or better, it turns into a behavior fueled by fear. The desire of gaining God, of an idealism, instilled in the heart ever since our childhood, a refusal of women or a desire of wanting to take hold of the Lord wanting in some way to dominate him because since we have offered our celibacy to him, he must get something in return.

If poverty is living like Jesus, with the freedom of possessing nothing and the richness of he who has nothing and needs nothing, or if through it we want to possess many more things because poverty opens the door to all the places that belong to the Institutes where we are.

If obedience is love-giving, the obedience of love, search and fulfillment of God's will, a gift of love, or rather the desire and search for security that guarantees a happy future, without problems, tranquil, because if we obey we acquire rights in front of him. We must also discern how the vows are related. That chastity is the poverty loved for the Lord's will, that poverty is a lack of loves that are not in line with the God's will for us, that obedience is a barefooted love to his plans and poverty of our littleness in front of him.

3. What is the Eucharist? Is it the insatiable love for a God who does the impossible for man? Is it the tangible manifestation of a desire to stay with man and accompany him throughout history to avoid him from facing alone a tough and difficult world, to give him the strength in the struggles he must face, the light that shows the way, the water that softens the thirst for

the many things he wants to have? Discerning on the Eucharist is to see whether God's love has reached our heart through our faith and a small piece of consecrated bread and a sip of wine. Thus, the importance of faith. The faith that is that small light that allows us to walk in the midst of the darkness of our world without stumbling or falling. In entering an untidy dark room, one stumbles, falls and gets hurt. Enough to light a match, little light is sufficient to walk without getting hurt. This is faith, and one must discern it in our life.

And we must also discern our community relationships. For example: that the love for the other makes me feel more like a brother. I am involved with the other, not only with my acts and things but also with my heart and bounds to him. But caution, binding love must not create dependency but giving oneself in a lively relationship where the other person is meaningful for me. And in interpersonal relationships, it is essential to live dependencies and independencies, that you need the other and that I am myself: that in this love I integrate gratification and renunciation.

4. In this journey of configuration to Jesus, it is necessary to discern whether the human and spiritual virtues mentioned in the previous part of spirituality are being given. If they are given, they will positively influence me, in my emotional maturity. That is to say, if love for our neighbor is perceived as the source of our being and freedom, even if that love is not felt as a gratifying feeling. We must take into account in the discernment that most of the help provided to our neighbor forces us to experiences of love that are not manifestations of primary feelings and, nevertheless, are authentic experiences of a growing heart, of going out of ourselves, perceiving the other, of personal meaning. This love becomes our source and freedom.
5. We must discern the community in every day life: love for our neighbor. To do so we should address past or current difficulties of love. That is where there are difficulties to love or closure tendencies: the places where anger, aggressiveness, resentment and sometimes-even hatred dwell.

It is good also to remember some difficulties of living together that we all experience sometimes; or remember people who have been

unjust to us or have humiliated us or ill spoke about us. But in the journey towards configuration to the Lord, it is important to realize if these same difficulties can turn into an area of growth. Or whether the love remains faithful to itself that has nothing to do with likings, nor gratifying feeling. And most of all if, notwithstanding all that has happened, what has been done to us, we continue to be open. If in the middle of bad deeds, I am capable of putting my feelings aside and try to understand the other.

6. It is important to discern if in this journey we help others, the little ones or the young ones, the elderly and sick, those who need it most. And just as the Lord helps us with his love, there is no other way to help those who we have mentioned except for love. Love is the authentic, effective help that we can offer to others; only love allows to grow, help, console, accompany and make us smile and is a good relief always. And it is here where we see how some difficulties that we might find in love turn out to be real graces to love our community. This because not being able to love others spontaneously, forces us to true love. Therefore, what we consider as negative, being incapable of loving, is, in fact, positive because it places us in our real place and helps us to love people for what they are without responding to our desires.

But we might also be deceived in this; therefore, to avoid love from being relegated to a pure nice desire, we need to see if it has to do with someone. If we do not find concrete faces with which we are involved emotionally, we must question the meaning of love. We must ask: "What is the level of involvement in daily life? It is not enough to work well. What is important is knowing who I am involved with, in my community, with a brother, who am I at odds with... Working on this is necessary.

7. To the question that Saint John of the Cross poses in the lips of the creatures, in spirituality, the bride answers: "My beloved is the mountains, the solitary wooden valleys, the Strange islands, the roaring torrents, the whisper of the amorous gales; the tranquil night at the approaches of the dawn the silent music the murmuring solitude, the supper which revives and enkindles."
8. To understand the existential meaning of lay vocation we need a special reference, which is the sermon on the mount. In the

light of it, we can say: that the beatitudes are the place of the laity, prior and more radical than any other vocation, and that it is the path that he take towards a union with Jesus, his identification with him; that he is called to be the light of the world and to leave the earth in the works that glorify the Father and that in everyday life, in the midst of the hustle and bustle of his work; that the three works that shape life according to God, that is, prayer, sharing of goods and asceticism, acquire their density of theological existence when they are realized in the hidden; that it is normal to have worries, linked to the insecurity of the family for economic subsistence like many other families, but who must live with the confidence of a son, evangelically unconcerned about the future; that his path of union with Jesus will pass through the habitual phases of all the others, even though he lives them in different circumstances, due to the family he has, to work, to the involvement in human tasks and among us to share in different ways the Piarist charism; that he has to embody a determined determination by following Jesus accepting the narrowness that supposes: incomprehension, loneliness, renunciation; that for him as for all, it is the golden rule to treat others as oneself and that this path will help him in living what the Gospel asks for; that he must live the joy that God has given him in the abundance of love he feels to make of his life a testimony of an evangelical life before the whole world.

9. It is important to discern whether we live within the Church's parameters, but not with the idea of a triumphant, powerful, socially recognized Church like in the past but rather if the journey towards Jesus embodies the notes of the Church's new life, the one Pope Francis wants. If we are ok with the meaningful social loss and drop in numbers, at least in the western world. If we peacefully accept to lose power and center ourselves in the essential, fidelity to Jesus and the Gospel. If we live with intense joy this new situation that is making this journey of configuration to Jesus more authentic.

Is all this helping us to regenerate the community and service the Church? Do we understand and live the fact that the forms of the mission have changed and that they have to be carried out "from the bottom" and "from the inside" of society? It is the parable of the small

grain of mustard seed and the yeast in the dough. And all this leads to assume from the heart a renewed hope, that is, one that does not rely on controllable effectiveness, but on the lordship of the Risen One.

10. Here we must discern if the community's work and mission are open to all men and all of humanity. The following of Jesus that through the community must lead to the configuration to the Master, grace shattered on all men. This is not given to a person as simple sanctification and perfection, but for the good of all men. Therefore, the heart opens up to the needs of humanity. And follows the steps of Jesus, in the same way as he completely gave himself, without any exclusion, he lived and died for all, the Christian who is configuration to Jesus must also follow the same path of the Lord, if not we will doubt his true unity with him.

3. Methodology

1. Community life must be lived according to the configuration to Christ. Therefore, work for our community, be involved in it and not look for our comfort zones where we feel at ease and preventing others from entering our personal space or be nagged. The community is much more than the simple sum of people who live in it; it is the personal relationship of those who seek for the same thing, work for the same cause and without knowing each other have been called to live in the same way to follow Jesus. Turning the community into the sum of solitudes leads to its failure. No one can distance himself from the brothers if he wants to live the vocation he has been called to live. It requires efforts in moments of community difficulties, but we must also admit that being together we feel how good it is to live united, following the Lord.
2. In this journey of configuration to Jesus, celibacy does appear to isolate us from one another, as influenced by rejecting love, but precisely the opposite, to love the others more: Celibacy does not break the ties of love, but makes them stronger. Looking at the communities, one should repeat once again the cry of the pagans when they saw the first generation of Christians "Look how they love one another." Celibacy is not the denial of love, but taking the tenderness and mercy of God to love others with the same kindness and mercy.

In living poverty in the journey of union with Jesus, one must become small; poverty is the preparation of the disciple who wants to imitate the Master servicing the others, their needs, sufferings and troubles to try to help them stop suffering or turning their sufferings as a path to purification and redemption.

Obedience is lived looking at God and behaving with our brothers, as God wants. Obedience to God calls for help to the needy. Obedience becomes concrete in our relationship with our neighbor and our nearest neighbors the brothers of our community. Thus, the vows have an anthropological dimension that is realized in the community, with the ones God has put next to us, converting them into our brothers. They are not our brothers because we have chosen them, but because God has chosen them for us and it is why we love them and give ourselves to them.

3. To take each day a step towards our Christification, we must live the three elements quoted in the Constitutions. First, the Eucharist. It is the center of the day. The moment of highest adoration and love for God, the place where we experience the Lord's unconceivable self-giving. Living it not as much as devotion but as an act of faith. Thus, the feelings that dwell in us are not so important compared to the faith we have. And in the faith, we are given the grace of limitless love. In the Eucharist, we receive the most significant thing that God offers us, his own Son. This calls for a preparation from us, welcoming attitudes in our heart.

Second, we already said that faith is irreplaceable. Without faith, there is no Eucharist. Without faith, the Eucharist is a simple social ritual. Without faith and communion, it is like going to a large banquet and not taste anything.

Third, interpersonal relationships. Receiving the Holy Body of Jesus strengthens the ties with the mystical Body. Each one eats the Lord's body. In banquets each one eats similar things than the other guests: during the Eucharist, we all eat the Body and Blood of the Lord, which feeds us all. Therefore we need to strengthen the relationships among one another; the Eucharist must create community, unity.

4. In our journey of union with Jesus, some virtues help us individually. Like in all Christians, these virtues are a gift, which

comes from the grace of the Lord, but at the same time a struggle, that call for a personal commitment and effort. The Constitutions addressed this aspect. Sincerity must be an essential element in the community. He who is not sincere does not act as a real member of the community. Sincerity is necessary for all the person's behavior, in his life and actions; publicly and privately, with the ones we like and the ones we have more difficulty to love. The one who is insincere loses the trust of the brothers, and it is often difficult to overcome the situation.

Friendliness is necessary: a reality that makes everybody happy with those who are friendly, fostering people to look for his company, where his presence animates the entire group. That when the group is spiritless immediately, they realize that they lack the one that usually encourages others with his joy and presence. It is a further grace when the friendliness is not tarnished or eliminated by a mean behavior of some community member, usually an envious person. The person, who received from God the gift of joy and making others happy, must protect this gift and avoid in any circumstance, as bad that it might be, to be deprived of it.

And, lastly, it is essential to be respectful of one another. Without respect, all the ties of the community are broken. Being respectful of the ideas of others. And when someone needs to be scolded it should be done respectfully because ultimately the person is more important.

5. Community life is a daily fruit. It is not the outcome of some special days that animate everybody. They do occur and are important. But real communities are built each day, in daily behavior, in the mist of routine and constant repetition of the same things, accepting the dullness that often appears when doing things in the same way. Each person must be committed to living the routine.

We must always get along with people, when they are well and when they are depressed, not uncommon in community life. One must avoid community depression it endangers communal life. The reason for a real community life unfolds every day. And those who walk in union with the Lord and closer in their configuration to him must be mindful of this aspect.

6. The union with the Lord makes us more sensitive to our brothers, especially with those who the Constitutions ask us to be more careful with. Those who have just entered the Institute. They come full of joy: with their eyes wide open, without knowing about the daily routine. They think that everything is beautiful in religious life. They will all find their way; they will slowly discover what religious life is all about, with its ups and downs. They will meet friendly brothers and shy ones, and those who live a close inner union with the Lord will provide the best care to these youngsters who entered community life avoiding disappointments that would shatter their first hopes. They will receive a warm welcome so that no one distorts their first illusions.

We must especially take care of those who are worried due to personal difficulties. Some brothers have a difficult life: illness, anxiety, meaningless, solitude, depression, severe temper or perhaps think they have been ill treated by other people because of their excessive sensibility. Often the community ignores the painful experiences of some or many brothers. Those who live in union with Jesus and his presence dwells in their hearts have a specific ability to understand these situations when they are not evident to all. One needs to be mindful, of the brothers and follow the grace of the union to Jesus as a call to join in the pain and suffering of those who have some scars in their spirit.

And then the elderly who have given their lives for the Institute. Some are pleasant and thankful and do not want to create any problem: others instead are resentful, troubled, difficult unhappy about everything. With all of them, we must be caring and protect the unity.

7. For those undergoing the process of configuration to the Lord, this refrain of happiness, enjoyment and rest of the Spiritual Canticle of Saint John of the Cross: "When You regarded me, your eyes imprinted in me Your grace: For this You loved me again, and thereby my eyes merited to adore what in You they saw. Despise me not for if I was swarthy once you can regard me now; since you have regarded me, grace and beauty have you given me."
8. We must awaken in laity the certainty that the journey of configuration to Christ is theirs also. Some lay people are more open either due to the formation or the life they lead or because

they found a place where they can genuinely live their life as Christians in a religious charism. They have a spiritual director who knows about these matters and thus have been able to start a path of union and configuration to Jesus. One must encourage them to move forward, to be attentive to the calls of the Lord and the insinuations of the Spirit.

Others may start this process, but for this to happen we must awaken in them the conscience of what it means and the certainty that the Lord can help them follow the way. It is absurd to think that this configuration to Jesus is only for specific vocations: one must also repeat that the fundamental vocation is the Christian one and the other ones are secondary. Helping a lay in this process means opening uncharted ways because he can become a multiplying agent and in the future, help many others. And therefore, in what is hidden in life, Christification of others is developed.

9. The union with Jesus is a common call even if the Christians' place in the Church is different. God calls whom he wants and for what he wants. One will achieve it with one path or another, but in the Church, we have all been called to live according to Jesus, to embody the blessedness, and be announcers of the Kingdom. Thus, we must foster everyone, discerning his or her place in the Church; occupy it with a grateful heart for the gift given by the Father. Because holding whatever place in the Church following His will is an immense grace given by His love of which we are undeserving. We must live in the Church, we must live for the Church, and we must be Church.
10. How can we embraced, as asked in the Constitutions, with joy and hope, the sadness and troubles of all men if we do not approach them some way? How can we not be close to the sufferings of men like Jesus did and imitate him? How can we live the configuration process to Jesus without personally living what he experienced? He who wants to do like the Lord must dedicate his life to men, starting with the ones closest to him, those who suffer more, the needy. He who lives this way has received the immense grace of resembling Christ, to live like him, a gift of which we can never be thankful enough.

4° Configuration to Jesus through prayer

1° Spirituality

1. We cannot live the process that leads to the configuration to Jesus without praying. This is what the Constitutions mean by the need of constantly praying. Christian life includes this necessary experience to walk towards the Lord and lead to a more profound union. Without union, we cannot focus on him. Without concentration, there cannot be configuration. Thus, the need to constantly pray. But there are different ways of praying.

One of them is the attentive passive reading. A text is chosen, from the heart, not about information or study but in another perspective. We must let the Word affect, resound without rationalizing it. It has to be a new word as if one had never heard it before. We open up to the personal relation to the Lord. The wisdom of this type of praying is based on the importance of listening. Some people pray and talk about everything with the Lord, but do not build an emotional story with Him, which is the most important thing. The story is achieved when one learns to listen. It is a prayer that can always be done, and that can nourish continually through the ejaculatory prayers, remembering the Lord, moving towards Him, and remember him with love.

The traditional prayer, started by Ignatius of Loyola. In the previous night, the text is read and summarized in three points of meditation. The prayer includes the presence of God, exercising the faith, petition of grace to open the person, to the word and will of the Lord. Then the set up of the place, remembering the scene that

one has read and meditated, and one is a character more in the meditation, then comes the emotional relationship, that Ignatius calls colloquium, which is at the core of the meditation exercise: thus, the affectivity relationship is the center that the Holy Spirit triggers inside us and ends with the prayer of self-giving to the Lord. Then, throughout the day, the emotional contact with Jesus is kept from the perspective that developed from the prayer. The wisdom of the method is found in elements of tradition: a process of enlightenment that leads to the affectivity relationship and ends with the self-giving; the importance of the person in his wholeness; feelings, imagination, intelligence and heart and the principle of faith where the history of Jesus includes our history.

2. In the Piarist tradition praying is a fundamental element, where each Piarist must be wholly committed and supported to live the union with Jesus, is centering the prayer in Jesus Crucified. The Lord's passion has always been the privileged aspect of the Calasanzian spirituality. Centering our gaze on the Crucified: looking at the Trespassing. In this case, it is not a matter of living in a sort of pain or being centered in a particular way to the Lord's physical sufferings. Even if also this is important. It is helpful in our life: seeing how he has suffered can help us to live sufferings and pain that might occur in life. It is why he was made similar to us except for sin. Similar in suffering and the love with which we live this suffering. It is not easy.

To love sometimes will merely mean to bear or put up with what has occurred in our life. Others, maybe, join him in his passion. The importance of the Lord's inner attitude: his acceptance of the will of the Father, the love he shows for his pain, his never faltering trust, even if he has to suffer, that faith is more intimate when it understands that the Father's loving hand is wanting our good. The important things are that Jesus in his suffering gives himself to for the salvation of man, for the forgiveness of all sins. This gaze at the Cross must have its moments of peace, its moment of self-giving and exercise during the day. A gaze, a word and elevation of the heart, a feeling and instant contact with him, and we are in this constant prayer that the Constitutions is asking us to have. And together with Jesus crucified the texts also mention the mysteries of his life following the example of Saint Paul. Thus, all the Lord's life

is the subject of meditation, prayer, and contemplation. We will be therefore united to him and carry out the process that leads us to the configuration to him.

3. The prayer must be backed by the word. It is the source of the prayer. Perhaps in the beginning and in other specific moments, it is necessary and good to use other books. The risk is of turning praying into a simple reading, that if spiritual is good, but that often turns into a reading of knowledge because the author is significant, well known or because you like the book. But if the Reading does not lead to a relationship of affectivity, to the personal encounter with the Master, to the acceptance of his will, all is but an intellectual exercise and not a prayer. The praying methods are entirely different. It is important to stress whether the Reading of the Word puts us in a direct affectivity relation with the Lord, that is sufficient, and there is no need for a praying method. The most profound meaning of praying methods is that they aimed at leading the person to a relationship of love with the Master.

If we want some criteria to shed light on the meanings of the praying methods here are some of them: the method is aimed at the relationship; if it leads to it is a good one, if not it does not deserve to waste time on other things that do not lead us to the objective of prayer. Furthermore, when the relationship is perceived as a gift, intimacy and listening to the Word enrich one another. One must, on the other hand also follow the dynamic of the process. In each case, in each phase, it is necessary to choose the method most fit for the person. It might be that the method is disturbing, and then you must do without it. We have already pointed out that when the Reading leads directly to the relationship, it is sufficient and no method is needed, because the goal of the prayer has been met. One must remember that each relationship is unique: thus, each one must find his personal method, the one that helps him to reach the core of the prayer, the affective relationship, and must do without all that disturbs the achievement of the goal.

4. The fundamental element of prayer is listening. We often speak about prayer. And Jesus had discarded this way of praying. Undoubtedly, we address God. Undoubtedly, it's our hearts that speak to him. Undoubtedly, we ask because he said: "Ask, and

you will receive.” All this is important, but the act of listening is necessary. The Constitutions ask for it in the following way:” The spirit of prayer is nourished and made strong by silence and moderation in speech, during which the voice of God, who breathes where He wishes, is heard more clearly” (n^o 44).

The act of listening entails the personal otherness of God. He is the other one who speaks to our heart. (HEARTS) He is a different person from us, and the relationship between the two of us is called communication. This can be done through words, but it is not the only way. It is possible to communicate in silence and to listen. Listening to the other is entering into communication with him. Be in silence with someone, can also be a communication, a glance, a smile, an elevation of the heart a thought of love. Silence and listening are ways of praying. And God gives himself to those who do so. Sometimes we have been educated in the wrong way as if praying was a constant talking to God. And what he needs is that we look at him, love him, and listen to him. This is how the union centered on God and Jesus is fulfilled. Thus, the path to the configuration to the Lord. Otherness implies freedom of self-communication. We can call this revelation, meaning that we relate to the Lord of history and the world, who intervenes when and how he wants. He also speaks to us. Anciently through the prophets: more recently through his Son who is the eternal Word that manifested itself.

It is like when two lovers are together; they do not speak to each other constantly, they look at each other, they understand each other, they love each other and that is the most important thing.

5. The prayer is a dialogue of love. Let us listen to the Bridge in the Spiritual Canticle of Saint John of the Cross: “Of emeralds, and of flowers in the early morning gathered, we will make the garlands, flowering in Your love and bound together with one hair of my head. By that one hair you have observed fluttering on my neck, and on my neck regarded, you were captivated; and wounded by one of my eyes”.
6. Praying also manifested in the deeds, in the positions we take when we address Him. The Constitutions, following the exhortations of our Holy Founder, insist on this at n.43. We know that the prayer is a relationship of grace since it is the Lord’s

gift of calling us to his presence to live with us a communion of love. Thus, why we feel dizzy and thankful on the one hand and given the position of sons, we see ourselves as sinners in front of God's greatness. Due to all this, we take in front of him different postures that come from our heart with the intent of showing what he means to us. Kneeling to adore. Lying down on the floor shows our littleness in front of him: Elevating our hands to beg, on our knees, with the head on the floor to show respect. And almost any other posture suggested by the Spirit. With all of them, we want to join Jesus ever more, center ourselves in him. Prayer is the path of configuration. We desire to be like him, in his image and resemblance.

Sometimes an event calls our attention, and we must be cautious. It is what spiritual masters call spiritual aridity. Like some spiritual authors say there can be confusion on the aridity phases. This aridity has nothing to do with indifference, that is the mortal poison of spiritual life. Spiritual aridity is a state of affective relation that occurs, rightfully, when this has previously been rich and easy. And this logically produces a surprise in the person.

To distinguish this situation, one can consider the following elements: first, the inability of affective relationship experienced previously and therefore, one knew well what it was. Two, in the person there is an intense desire for intimacy with the Lord, but when collected inside to have an emotional relationship, a block appears, a sort of desert, constant distractions and sadness. Three, it feels like a waste of time, that it is not worthwhile to try what produces no effect. Four, there is undoubtedly a strong determination to accomplish God's will, but the motivation is not gratifying. Five, and, nevertheless, outside of prayer, there are overwhelming moments that fill us with tenderness. Six, the feeling of guilt of what is happening tends to increase but analyzing there is no concrete reason, even if the perception of fidelity to the Lord is growing stronger. It is essential to be mindful of this reality that profoundly shapes with the person of Jesus.

7. Men are sinners, and therefore need to reconcile with the Lord continually. Reconciliation in many ways: a prayer to ask for forgiveness, loving gaze at the Cross. Putting our entire life of all personal evil in His hands. To go out of ourselves and open

our heart to Him. Many are the ways, but the fundamental one is the sacrament of reconciliation. Perhaps in the past in some environments, the need for this sacrament was exaggerated. Its frequency was exaggerated, and it became a moral issue. We must undoubtedly reconcile with God. Our life of sin and evil blinds us consistently, and we feel it inside. Evil attitudes that are rooted mainly in the deepness of our being. We are sinners. Sin leads us to do evil. Thus, the need for the sacrament of reconciliation.

Reconciliation experienced in a merely moralistic way means that we confess our faults and the sacrament is used to forgive our confessed sins. A clarifying example: in a field, there can be bad weeds. If with a cutting tool we continuously eliminate them, so the field is clean from them. But we haven't eliminated the roots, and therefore from time to time, the weeds will reappear. Instead, if we remove the soil and pull out the roots they will no longer grow; they die. This is the theological confession. We need God's blood given during the sacrament of reconciliation to penetrate us profoundly and transform our lives and slowly eliminate the bad roots in us. Jesus' blood purifies us intimately and changes our life. Confession perceived as a need to be more with him, identify more with the Lord, be more centered in him, to be more configured to him. Confession from a moral stand is different from the theological one. In the first case, many feel discouraged and leave it, or instead, they continue to do the same faults despite confession or do not give the right importance to their flaws or weaknesses. In the second case, one continues to receive the sacrament of reconciliation, the blood of the Lamb and to be cleaned and entirely purified by it.

8. All is grace. Saint Therese of Lisieux said so in an outstanding way. All events are grace, but to see them as such we need the eyes of faith. The eyes God gave us to understand that all that occurs in our lives are gifts coming from him. It is not easy to see it when events that occur in life are fatigue, pain, sufferings, and misunderstandings. Only by praying we can perceive them this way. Pure human courage is not enough. For sure some characters can have a steadiness to view all that occurs to them in life calmly. But this steadiness is insufficient to see in what is happening the hand of God the Father who cares for

his children and looks for what is best for them. To have this, we need to pray.

By praying, entering in God, asking for his divine mercy to fill eternal life, for his mercy to impregnate all our being. By so doing the heart will be replete with God's mercy and tenderness and open eyes of faith that allows us to see that all is grace. Christian prayer has as its source of filial obedience to God. It is the most definite sign that the prayer, being a human activity, is the prayer of the Holy Spirit to the Father, which transform us in Jesus, and makes the world our heart. Thus, the prayer must lead us to see in all events the presence of God's caring hands. And when we are undergoing difficulties, we must implore for his help. Often, we will welcome in silence the Father's will, and principal reference of Christian silence is Jesus on the Cross. He who abandoned himself to the Father in the mist of terrible anxiety. Not only the events that are difficult to accept come from the hand of the Father, but also those that give us joy, peace, and happiness. And therefore, we must be thankful in our prayer because it helps us to get closer to the Lord and configure to him.

9. In our prayers, we are accompanied by Virgin Mary's filial love in the participation of the Mystery of Christ. She who lived with Jesus is the one who can teach us better how we can live with the Lord. She can show us how in each situation we can access Jesus, how to invoke him, how to love him, what to ask and how to wait without despairing, whatever might occur. We must ask Mary to illuminate our lives and help us live intimately with her Son. Life is a process, and Mary can help us to follow Jesus, to live according to her Son's desires, to always configure to Jesus more.
10. Prayer transforms life, but a question emerges: Is there a correlation between the degree of prayer that the spiritual masters establish and the believer's transformation? Initially one must claim that commonly Christians are transformed by all aspect of life, including also the prayer, but not as the only determining element. This is true in most cases.

However, there is a correlation in those who are called by God to be transformed by the path of prayer. Identifying personal transformation and degrees of prayer does nothing more than confuse

the phenomenology of experience and the theological life, which in itself is trans-experimental. In fact, Therese of Avila that tends to systemize transformation in the lights of the “dwellings,” other times claims such correlations must not be made. Consider Therese of Lisieux, transformed by the love, by the terrible sufferings of the last eighteen months of her life, and not precisely by prayer. When we speak about people called to the apostolate or to serve other people, we can observe in awe the freedom of action of grace. Therefore, we must leave this reality in the hands of God. He knows how to work in each one of us, and no one can say in this or this other way. The grace of God is unforeseeable. Only God knows his ways, and we can do no other thing than prepare ourselves to what he wants to do with us.

2. Discernment

1. It is necessary to discern when we pray constantly. It is a fundamental aspect of the journey for the configuration to the Lord. Praying without respite does not mean that we must belong to a contemplative Order. One does not pray without pause because one is in the chapel all the time or retired in the room or alone. The prayer is more focused on the heart. When the heart is in God when he is the center of all activity, whatever they may be. When our spirit opens to him through a gaze, an ejaculatory prayer or a thought that rests on him. We fulfill his will in our doing. Our heart rests in him in the middle of the heat of the day. When we feel involved in his divine mercy, and it is this that permeates our whole being and doing. We pray without respite.

This constant praying is nourished by moments of explicit prayer, when we stop anything we are doing, and put ourselves intimately in front of him, and praise him, glorify, bless and thank him. It is a face-to-face encounter where love flows from our heart and, above all, love rests and strengthens our life. But if our life is dedicated in a unique way to acts, all the other moments must be devoted to implicit prayer, through our attitudes, behavior, and actions as already mentioned. Now, the Piarist must remember that the Founder wanted his children to be active and contemplative at the same time. Therefore, action and contemplation enter into the prayer continually among the Piarist. But that constant prayer should not

be confused with pure interiority. At all times, the believer must distinguish between interiority and relationship, between the silence of the self and the silence of the obedience of faith, between the process of enlightenment and the religious life. The prayer without truce is nourished precisely by the theological life, and experience (faith, hope, and love). It is a prayer that the Christian makes uninterruptedly to God.

2. That fact that the prayer must be Christ-centered and more specifically the Crucified Jesus is not merely the meditation on the acts of passion. If this were the case, we might fall into a sort of materialism where we materially meditate on the passion. Discernment in this element calls for us to penetrate in the internal attitudes of Jesus' passion. Because we can read about people, who have suffered the unbelievable, sufferings that make us shiver. We know that in the time of Jesus other men were crucified and suffered just like the Lord, but what is fundamental about the Master's passion are the inner attitudes with which he lived his passion.

Let us see. On the one hand, he was an innocent man who was suffering, at the same time he felt on him the sin of the world, and in front of the Father felt astonished by the cruelty of the world. All those men who put their sins on his shoulders and this is how the innocent one appeared as the great sinner in front of God. In the meantime, he lived all the events that occurred to him with total and loving obedience to the Father and subjected all his heart to what his Father asked of him and allowed to happen to him. At no time does he complain of suffering, and although he asks the Father, to avoid, if possible, the chalice but ends up saying that in spite of everything his will be fulfilled. Facing what is happening to him he never insults those who torture him; he excuses and forgives them because he says they do not know what they are doing. Therefore, discern whether our prayer is Christ-centered and is focused on Jesus' passion, which does not merely mean to take the Gospel and read and meditate on what happened to the Lord, even if it is good. The fundamental aspect is to enter into Jesus's inner attitude with which he lives his passion and try to imitate and live them as much as possible. The sure path to intimately join him and configure to him.

3. The prayer must be supported by the Word. Four aspects are part of this discernment. First, the “lectio” or direct reading of the Sacred Scriptures. It has been called the “passive attentive Reading” because it fosters the attitude of listening from the otherness of God. Reading that must continuously accompany our life and must be the daily bread of prayer. The rest is either a simple support in certain moments of our process, or useless.

Secondly, we have the “meditatio” of the Word with the introduction of the mediation of the reflection, so that our relationship with God can enlighten our mind, respond to the heart and put into practice in life. Here we provide feedback on what we read to integrate the different abilities of the person: memory, intelligence, and affectivity. One must discern the behavior of each aspect, its implementation, development, and intervention in the mediation process. We should be wholly involved in the prayer because we must pray God with all our being.

Thirdly, the “oratio” that is the personal encounter or intimate prayer. In it the moment when the emotional relationship prevails, that can sometimes emerge from the Word, or other times begins with a gaze of love, from a word that springs from the heart.

Fourthly, the time of “contemplatio” that occurs when the relationship is simplified. Affectivity is concentrated in the loving gaze of God. The other is the essential thing in life. Our entire heart belongs to him. He to whom we give ourselves in the intimacy of love, centered in him and thus configuration to him is born.

4. There are two elements in prayer: silence and listening. And often they lack in prayer because we received the wrong formation in this and need to learn how to live prayer in this perspective. Therefore, we must discern when and how these two elements are present in prayer. It is normal that in prayer there is a dialogue with God. Thus, man expresses himself, he communicates and like the Lord said, asks. But it is not logic or right that prayer is just that because it would be a monologue.

Therefore, we must discern what role silence plays in our prayer. Silence is not drowsiness. Silence is not to keep the mind blank as if we were in a state of nirvana. Silence is a positive attitude that can enclose thanksgiving, submission, obedience, adoration, to “be

with.” Silence in this sense is not negative, but positive. Thus, silence turns into listening. In the prayer, we are not the only ones speaking to God. Prayer is not a monologue, it is a dialogue, and one must allow God to speak. To do this one needs an attentive silence to perceive his whispering voice, the presence of his Spirit, the passing of grace, the call that attentive listeners can receive. We must discern our ability to be silent and listen to prayer and allow him to intervene. We cannot configure to the Lord if we don’t let him into our lives with all the power of his love. Silence is or can also be love. Examples that we have experienced: we have been together with our mother in the kitchen, and perhaps without speaking, that silence was love, real love.

5. And in this prayer, we tell the Lord together with Saint John of the Cross: “Catch the little foxes now that our vineyard is in flower; while we gather roses, and twine them together, and let no other come to the mountain here. Be still, cold northern wind; and southern wind, recalling love, come here, breathe throughout my garden, and let its fragrance wander, and my love will graze among the flowers.”
6. Also, spiritual aridity that can appear in the life of prayer must be discerned. For it, frequently, we need the help of an accompanier. The person in this situation feels lost and needs someone to open the way through the problematic rough tracks they are undergoing. Usually, this aridity is nothing other than the Holy Spirit that wants to transform the desire into love for faith and for it makes the person endure these moments. Life needs to be theologically purified.

Discernment can be done by examining the offered fruits. For example: a humbler life, love for obedience appears more frequently; theological hope gets stronger; disinterested love for our neighbor increases; inner freedom related to vital interests and at the same time attraction for the wisdom of the Cross. But during the discernment, we need to keep into account that the person is. It might occur to those who give themselves to prayer where a certain intimate aridity appears. Among people utterly involved in action, for example, the lay people, the same aridity can emerge but in different ways, such as emotional breakups or economic issues. We must be cautious because God can abruptly act among his sons in different ways.

7. Discern the importance of the sacrament of reconciliation is nothing more than the way we practice confession. Living it like a simple act of forgiveness to faults that will continue to occur, is to live it in a moralist way. It is positive but does not entail the necessary deepness. The way we practice confession is also related to the way we live the sin, the way it is conceived and the importance given to it. Sin must not be considered only for the act itself, but for the denied love. Thus, he who loves more sees sin where others do not. It is no trivial matter, because not giving the adequate to consider to sin means fail in understanding that it denies the love for God and his Son Jesus. In the sacrament of reconciliation, we must assess our sin in the awareness of the extent of the received love and that it comes from Jesus's Cross, the Son of God who died for us.
8. How do you react in front of events that occur in your life? Not only to the ones that make you feel happy, joyful and give you joy and enjoyment, but also the ones where suffering appears. Because people sometimes are pleased with God when everything in their lives goes well. But when something bad occurs or a painful experience happens they complain about God and think he has abandoned them and does not love them. If this were the case, how little must he have loved his Son! Pain is not a manifestation of negativity; it is the participation in Jesus' life and experience. One cannot join Jesus without participating in his fate, his path. And we know what the Master's was like.

Therefore, in all events of life, one must look for the Father's loving hand that wants the good of his sons and cares for them more than they can imagine. One must leave all fears and anxieties in God because he cares for us. The Holy Father always said that everything came from the provident hand of the Father who always wants the best for us.

9. We must ponder whether we are accompanying Mary in the Mysteries of her Son. Mary lived together with the Lord like nobody else. In the conception phase, she lived the mystery of God's intervention, even if she knew nothing else. In this event, she gave her consent and embodied the Son of God. The only thing she did was giving her consent. She lived the birth of her

son wonderfully that she virginally conceived and in the same way, gave birth to him and gave him to the world. She lived the time of Jesus' hidden life peacefully, but she kept everything inside her heart and continued giving her consent. Jesus left home and once again she consented. Undoubtedly, she received news about her son; she was not with him but agreed to God's plans. And what about her seeing him suffering his passion and having him in front of her on the Cross. Throughout the liturgical year we relive all the story of Jesus. Do we accompany Mary in all these different moments? Do we live with her the mysteries of the story of her Son? No one can help us more in joining Jesus than Mary. Thus, accompanying her in her participation to the Mystery of Jesus will make us feel closer to the Master, and our life will be more configured to his.

10. We spoke about the different ways of praying. But the true worship of the Father must be in spirit and truth. Places can be essential and helpful. Depending on the places and individuals. But the real worship of God must come from a faithful, hopeful and loving heart. It is the worship in spirit and truth. Without it there is no real prayer.

3. Methodology

1. We can prepare the heart by praying constantly. On the one side, it must be open, looking towards the sky. It is impossible to pray with a heart closed in itself, concerned only of its interests, unconcerned of what is happening in the world's surrounding. Prayer must envelop everything and everybody. Praying just for oneself or simple personal interests is a prayer that cannot reach God. He is concerned about everyone and makes the sun rise for all, good and bad, without making any difference.

Secondly, one needs a loving heart. Only through love, we can achieve a true prayer. Love as intimacy and love as a necessity. If there is intimacy, dialogue, and self-giving the prayer blossoms. Other times we pray out of need. And the Lord understands it. He understood the needy during his mortal life and gave himself when they asked him for help.

Thirdly, a heart that looks at men, all those who need many things, both material and immaterial goods. The need for attention, love, company, to be strong, to fulfill a goal. Looking at our world and especially the needy, the prayer bursts from deep down our soul. Thus, the prayer that embraces everything and everybody.

2. The Christ-centric prayer can be done in different ways. It is good to take the Word, turn to the texts of the Gospel that narrate the Lord's passion and meditate on them. One can do a recollection prayer in front of the great mystery. To do so, after having put oneself in the presence of God and invoked the light of the Holy Spirit for knowledge of love and his will, we must allow our heart to express itself, based on the reading. Looking and allowing to be looked by him. The relationship flows, persists, without any support, there where the Spirit is leading us. If affectivity is paralyzed, continue reading the text until when the relationships surface again. At the end of the prayer, we must give thanks for what has meditated and the intercession, because the relationship widens our heart and needs to integrate love into everyday life. But this prayer entails a relationship with Jesus and others. Intimacy cannot be improvised.

The other way is to put yourself in front of the cross, in a position that comes from the inside. Looking at the Lord, loving his scars, kissing them allows his blood to flow on our own life and permeate the entire being. The Spirit when he wants and in the way, he wants turns the prayer into a cry, an embrace, a presence that overwhelms us forcing us to come out of ourselves. And another way is to discover in the facts of the passion the most intimate feeling of the Lord; join them and ask the Lord to allow us to live in his likeness, knowing that it is all the grace of his love and that for love he can give us anything he wants. Thus, we try to configure to the Master always more.

3. The Word taken faithfully transforms our lives forever. It is the strength of the Spirit that creates a new heart that resembles that of Jesus who we listen to in the Word. But one must receive the Word virginally. Perhaps we are too accustomed to reading or listening to it: we know some landscapes almost by heart, and in hearing them again we barely pay attention. Even during the Eucharist, we might not remember precisely

the proclaimed Gospel. And frequently reading a passage, also meditating on it, we always focus on the same aspects. To receive virginally the Word means to listen to it as if it were the first time. Surprised by what is being proclaimed, that sounds completely new and opens different undiscovered horizons. It is undoubtedly the grace of the Lord, but requires the passive attention of welcoming the Word in a new way, to approach it differently.

Another fact: often the prayer turns into the Reading of important books of theology or spirituality: but in doing so we put aside the Word of the Lord that is the most important thing. We should always pray with the Word. And as previously mentioned, the relationship emerges, one is with the Lord, and when it is weakened, we must always turn back to the Word.

4. In the prayer, we must also take time for silence. To pray is to enter into an inter-relation. Prayer is not a monologue, but a dialogue of love: Like two people who love each other that sometimes talk and others are silent. They contemplate one another, a contemplation which is an exercise of love. Contemplation loves silence, warm gaze, and is the encounter with the other I, with no need for words. Differently, too much talking can deviate from the authentic prayer. Listening and silence are two necessary elements for a real encounter with two “you”, two who love one another. And one must not forget that prayer is the encounter with the essential you of our life, for whom we have given all our being and the reason for our existence.
5. And with a grateful heart we say to the Lord together with Saint John of the Cross: “Let us rejoice, Beloved and let us go forth to behold ourselves in your beauty, to the mountains and to the hill, to where the pure water flows, and further, deep into the thicket. And then they will go on to the high caverns in the rock which are so well concealed; there we shall enter and taste the fresh juice of the pomegranates.”
6. When spiritual aridity, of which we spoke about, appears during prayer we should remember some basic advice for this awkward moment the person is experiencing. Well, in this situation one must be mindful of these aspects proposed by spiritual authors.

Firstly, one must continue praying faithfully, faithfulness to the prayer and must not shorten it because he thinks what he is doing is useless or fruitless. Second, he must not force the feeling to the times when he felt well, satisfied with his prayer, nor has to push affectivity. Thirdly, he must take advantage of the visits of the Lord thanking him with all his heart, without a shade of a doubt. The Lord knows what he is doing. Fourth, he must care for the love of the neighbor in ordinary life, because the two commandments of life are interwoven and strengthen one another. Fifth, he must learn how to pray from the attitudes, notwithstanding distractions and mental efforts. Six, if there are doubts about the faith, do acts of faith and plunge into the Church, avoiding rationalizing. He must be constant in this way of acting because the Lord has his plans and knows what he wants of his beloved son, and knows where he is taking him. The faith increases under high pressure.

7. As to the sacrament of reconciliation, considering what we said in the previous chapter, here are some suggestions:

Firstly, do not stop confession because we do not think it is useful and that we fall in the same faults: we fall even if we confess ourselves due to our weaknesses and fragilities. Second, do not lose the meaning of sin. Think that it is assessed not only by what is done but also by denying love. Thirdly, understand sin from the Lord's Cross; kneeling in front of it, looking at it with love aware of what the Lord suffered because of it, sinner, and that the forgiving love of grace comes from the cross, Jesus who died for our sins. Fourth, do not make a moralistic confession that is only seeking forgiveness for the committed faults. If we live this way, the sin will appear and reappear all the times we confess ourselves. Five, confess oneself from a theological perspective, being touched once and again by the blood of the Lamb, so that it can penetrate in the intimacy of life and purify the existence, eliminating all roots of sin within us. Sixth, come out thankful that the Lord once again, as usual, has forgiven and not condemned us. Thus remembering: "get up, go and sin no more" Seventh, in admitting our weaknesses and fragilities, ask the Lord for his Love and grace, in helping us sin no more, may his grace be enough and be effective in our life.

8. In facing the events of life, two different attitudes must be followed. If they are nice and make us happy and keep us in

peace, live in continuous thanksgiving to God. Because sometimes when good things happen, we forget about Him and turn to Him only when bad things occur. If they are unpleasant events: first, acknowledge that there is also God's hand that guides and leads all our life. Second, think that if he enabled this to happen, there is a reason even if we cannot see it. Only God can see and understand the ultimate reasons for things, and how everything exhumes from the love of the Father that would surprise us in knowing him. We have already mentioned Calasanz's thought. Third, try to accept what is happening: "try" because we realize that at the beginning we cannot, it is too hard for us and we need to turn to his help. Fourth, live in peace as much as we can the events that occur to us because peace calms the heart; but this peace is a gift of the Lord, and we must ask him for it. Five do not rebel against God and what is happening to us. We feel abandoned by him; stick stronger to him, to his love and grace. What seems wrong God will turn it into something good.

9. Turn to the Virgin Mary in all moments of our life. She is the Mother, and a mother never forgets her children. Thus, let us analyze our devotion and love for her; perhaps we have neglected her too much, the strength of some time ago has weakened. We must go back to who loves us so much, who cares for us and loves us with all her heart.
10. Our life must be permanent worship of God. The worship of the heart that lives for the Father always and everywhere. There is no place as sacred as one's own heart, and from it, we must raise our prayer. The truth in our prayer is not in the word that we pronounce, but in what pours from our soul. It is not done only in the sacred places; we must know that everything is sacred because Jesus Christ has sanctified everything. We pray caring for our brothers. We pray caring for others. We pray forgiving offenses, insults, and wrongdoings suffered. We pray, enjoying nature. We pray giving strength to the weak. We pray giving time to those who need it. We pray when we do so in the spirit of and truth. We must always pray and with all we do.

5° Configuration to Jesus through celibacy

1° Spirituality

1. In the process of religious life, we look for configuration to Jesus also through consecrated chastity. Meaning that configuration to Jesus has in us a very special relationship with celibacy. Thus, with affectivity. This must be cared for specifically. In this chapter, it will appear as one of the determining elements of configuration to the Master. But talking about affectivity, we must distinguish three levels or dimensions: firstly, the pscho-affective dimension. The world of emotions, which is fundamental in life. It is when someone or some reality affects us. It is the opposite of knowledge; where we need distance ourselves to be objective; the reverse occurs in affectivity, in my relationship with the other I am affected by him. It is the world of emotions, impulses, and pleasure. Knowledge and affectivity are not on the same level.

Secondly, we have the motivational or existential affections. It occurs when affectivity goes beyond what stands out and opens broader horizons than mere satisfactions; man can live by universal and unconditional interests. It is not a matter whether I feel God or not; it cannot do without the satisfaction of feeling God if God is essential for us if affectivity surpassed immediate satisfaction if I'm interested in God if he is my deep desire if he is capable of polarizing me. Here God is essential, so important, that it is worthwhile giving my life to him. Thus, the affection to God is higher than knowledge.

Thirdly, the spiritual level. It is when the "you" is perceived as the other, withstanding my gratification, as something valuable in it-

self. This spiritual level requires second level motivations. Having a Christian spiritual experience without it is impossible.

Affectivity is deeply involved in the configuration to Jesus process. In celibacy, affectivity plays a determining role. There is no celibacy without spiritual affectivity. The celibate enters into a deep relationship with Jesus and ultimately gives himself. Affectivity is not distracted towards any other reality but centered in the Lord as the essential thing in life. But this is a gift. A man cannot live a life of self-giving affectivity in the Lord based on his strengths. Many other interests soon appear to distract him from the Lord, because they give immediate gratification. Affectivity as impulses and search for pleasure awaken with strength and man cannot overcome them without the help of grace. Therefore, the process of configuration to Jesus through celibacy begins with grace, in the gift of the Lord.

2. The process is achieved by following the Lord with an undivided heart. All the being is centered in the Lord and rests only in Him. How is this affectivity in following with an undivided heart? We must make a distinction to explain. There is the pre-theological affectivity, which is the one we habitually relate spontaneously to Jesus. He produces in our admiration and attracts us as we get to know Him. Desiring him means that our heart is concentrating in him. And there is a crucial moment when we begin to let go and start entering into the world of intimacy, approaching him with our defenseless heart.

From the pre-theological affectivity, we move into the theological one when we let him take the initiative in our life. And then we follow him with all our being that is with an undivided heart. He has won our life, and we can do no other thing but belong to him. For the following three reasons: first, because in meeting his glance, our most inner being is awakened, and freed. Second, we witness the Lord's intimate and total self-giving love for us. And thus, have nothing to argue. And thirdly, meeting Jesus Christ the Risen fosters us to let ourselves go to him emotionally. This is how the Lord has become necessary in our lives, and we can do no other thing but belong to him, and this total belonging translates into an undivided heart. If he has given himself to us, we feel the desire to give ourselves to him; a totality that means he is everything in our lives,

he is the sole most important being of our existence, and our heart belongs to him entirely.

3. In celibacy, we are firmly united to God with an undivided heart, as we said before. But the following question emerges: How does this undivided love for God affect other emotional relations: fraternity, friendship, love for the people who appear in our life, people whom we are emotionally committed to in the same pastoral activity?

An essential and delicate problem. What does it mean to unify affectivity and live, simultaneously, other affections that are not partial, momentary, but due to their dynamic tend to be totalizing, stable and permanent? Are these two affectivities in contrast? We must not clarify this at an intellectual level. We can claim in advance that God is nobody's competitor in love, but the problem is not an intellectual one, if we are unable to live the exclusive belonging to God. The love of the Covenant, the only one that radically affects the heart, without which one cannot love, because it is a love that gives meaning to life, simultaneously with other affectivities, such as brotherhood and friendship and others. It is a reality that can be clarified only at an emotional level. Differently, it is a clarification made out of moral norms that in the long run deteriorate the heart.

But all these realities are filled with ideology, which is ok, but we need to clarify them mainly from the inside, that is experiencing them. The person who does not dare to live affectivity can never embrace it. He who always assesses one's affectivity on moral grounds: "I can do this, I cannot do this," will never join it, because life will never unfold to love, thus creating a fragmented life. One must venture into love so that love itself can find a place, bearing in mind clearly where the unifying center is, and that it can only be God and not friendship nor an activity or people we run into. The experience of resting in God, of belonging to Him, are not transferable experiences. And each individual experience them according to how the Lord gives them.

4. In celibacy we configure the love of Christ, as the Constitutions claim. We unite with him. A passage that wonderfully explains this vocation is *John 21, 15-23*. And in the middle, Jesus's question: "*Do you love me?* Or more precisely "*Do you love me more*

than these?” Jesus wants Peter to understand that he is not loved because he is better, but because he wanted to, and from this experienced love he is asking him to love back as well as the one’s he entrusted to him. The “more than these” must feature from now on Peter’s love that is not a possessive one but characterized for being free and everlasting. We must see whether we can reply to Jesus as Peter did. Celibacy entails this love for him. Sometimes one does not dare to say “I love you” because by saying it a knot in the throat emerges. It does not come out, and one must understand why.

Some cannot say it due to shyness, false shyness, but in other cases, because the relationship is frozen, especially with Jesus, out of fear of feeling defenseless. But Jesus asked Peter the same question three times. He mentions the three denials. Jesus is reminding him the event with the delicacy of someone who loves intensely and gratuitously. He does so because Peter couldn’t love without remembering his sin, avoiding a possessive love. The acknowledgment of his sin will allow him to love Jesus without possessing him, from a grateful humbleness. Jesus is telling him: “I love you Peter; you denied me three times, but I love you.” And one feels grateful, humble and willing to give one’s life for Jesus. By so doing celibacy wants to be an answer of love to he who has loved us so much, notwithstanding our flaws, sins and the lives we have led. With our celibate life, we want to respond to the love we received. And we are doubly grateful because his love is grace and also our celibacy response is grace.

5. Saint John of the Cross expresses the love of the Bridegroom to the Bride: “O birds on easy wings, lions, stags, leaping fallow deer, mountains, valleys, shores, waters, winds, passions and terror in the watchful nights. With the song of the sirens and graceful harp, I ask you now, to put an end to anger and not to touch the wall so the bride may sleep in peace.”
6. In celibacy, we live perfect continence. It is normal for difficulties to emerge, nature calls for enjoyment. And frequently enjoyment is coupled with sexual pleasure. A pleasure lived honorably and rightfully in marriage. But we have been called to follow Jesus in the way he lived. When we look at the Lord and think about his life, we see him as a fulfilled person who

has friends, who love his disciples and other persons who pass through his life, showing tenderness and shedding tears for his friends' sufferings and death. We cannot say that Jesus did not love: he did love in another way. He gave himself entirely but remained celibate. His celibacy did not take anything away from his tenderness and the love he gave, nor did this in any way break his celibacy. His complete belonging to God and celibacy was mainly belonging.

And his belonging is the experience of knowing you only belong to someone. One can relate to many people but does not belong to them because we belong to God. And we experience what belonging is all about, what it is to belong to someone. One knows if he belongs to someone or only has a deep relationship with him. Thus, celibacy is the perfect continence but goes beyond it, it reaches belonging and it is to live in the heart of someone, to give someone all our heart. If the belonging fails, however perfect continence might be, celibacy fails. Celibacy is not that much the materiality of a dignified, clean and flawless behavior, but rather an open heart to a total self-giving. Not even belonging can break the perfect continence, nor the latter is simply a material fact, but belonging to the other. By so doing we configure always more to the Lord who personally experienced it in his reality.

7. Celibacy lived with integrity and witnessed with life attracts children to God, it confirms them in love for purity and fosters all to a sincere and self-giving love. The Founder was profoundly sure of it and, had a specific experience of it with a priest who had worked with him before he founded the Pauline Congregation. He gave a testimony of it with a letter addressed to the priest's brother who informed him of his death. He wrote: "Today, September 4, I received your letter written on April 25, and even if it arrived late, I felt deep consolations in seeing some of the graces our Divine Majesty concedes through the devotion of the memory of father Gellio, my companion for many years and brother in the Lord. Knowing the goodness of this Father intimately, it is not difficult for me to believe what has been told, especially of the integrity of his body, after having buried him for seven months. I am sure he would have been preserved for many years which is a grace granted to those who in their

life preserved a clean and pure body and soul, of which he was very attentive. He had reached the point of having a prayer expressing his greatest desire of being around young children of innocent age and teaches them how to love and pray the Lord. And because of his pureness, he attracted the hearts of children that did not find in the school any better enjoyment than to stay with this Father, that I have not noticed, as of today, in anybody else. I could continue talking about the feelings in prayer and meditation on the Passion of the Lord and a strong zeal for God.” (EP 16)

Thus, he wanted children always to be treated with immense tenderness, and that we are very mindful of this issue. All people transmit what they live, and he who lives celibacy with pureness and knows it is a gift of God and therefore continually asks for it, attracts children towards the cleanness of the heart. Therefore, celibacy turns into a way of doing well to children and the Piarist ministry for the children and young people is strengthened by it. And thus, when in configuration to Jesus we help others love him and produce in them a life that knows how to fulfill the commandments. The harmful behavior surfaced in this field is far from the Piarists.

8. The feeling and value of celibacy must first of all be discovered. It is given to us by grace, but we need to have an open heart to receive it. God is calling us all to live following Jesus in the same way. Some people are called to imitate the Master’s way of life. This call is a gift. But we must discover this gift in our own lives and if we don’t, we will waste the opportunity of doing God’s will. To discover it we must be attentive, listen and open to God accepting what God wants from our lives. We assume that those who live a religious life have already discovered this gift. However, there have been people whose vocation has not been correctly discerned. In a specific moment in their life, they realized that what they were living did not belong to them or that they hadn’t received the gift and turned their lives in a constant struggle to have it, acknowledging constant failures they suffered in their life.

Once we discover the gift, we must acquire it. This cannot be achieved with efforts, even if they are necessary. There is always grace and ef-

fort, gift and struggle, merciful self-giving and struggle. Thus, these two elements are joined, and one does not exclude the other. We need to plead and struggles. We need to be thankful and hold on.

And we need to preserve this gift. Meaning we must take care of it, that nothing must be neglected in this subject that always requires commitment, determination, and struggle. It is a constant gift, but also a continuous struggle: it is something we receive in one specific moment in our life, but not something we can play with considering its delicacy. Celibacy is a bond. We cannot say there is a single celibacy but there are many. Each one lives it in a different way. There are those who live celibacy centered in God and barely live other bonds. But this does not mean that they do not love. They generously give themselves but are not committed affectively. They are not personally bond to others.

There are others who live celibacy in another way; they know their belonging to God, chastity, covenant and ultimate bond to God, but live affectivity relationships that entail authentic bonds, but that do not jeopardize the celibacy vow. They can even be relationships of friendship with women. People who have been very important in the transformation process, with whom there has been an intense affective relationship, etc.... but God has always been the fundamental pillar of their lives. A celibate can live his total and absolute bond to God through much mediation. There are many forms and ways. Definitely, celibacy is an extraordinary bond with the Lord.

9. Celibacy is the call of God to live for Him with all our life. This love for God is experienced as an undeserved blessing. Lengthy spiritual processes in discovering God's love, and expanding our heart and life. But there can also be, a sort of unexpected event when we have the intuition that God has set an eye on us. When one feels within a universal unity- God loves us all- and he feels at ease. But when he feels that it is a personal call to a story of love with God, he feels a turn. And it is this unique experience, love as a gratuitous gift, a clear spiritual process, in the configuration to Jesus. And like this love of God is the love of the covenant he must create always-stronger bonds with him. And this is where the desire appears; it is not denied but must be repositioned, purified transformed to pass through a different affectivity.

All this must be lived in the prayer. No celibacy, love that chooses to live intimately united to the Lord without prayer. It is sure without absolutizing it. But naturally, so that affectivity is totalized, unified to God basically, the normal path to celibacy is prayer. We can understand it if we think of any relationship of love. We even see it between two people who love each other. If time is not dedicated to that relationship and one is concerned with other realities, it is difficult to have a totalizing love. The path to celibacy like that of continence can be short, one can, always with the grace of God, overcome the impulses he feels: Instead, it is a longer one considering a relationship of love and even more when that relationship is totalizing. It is therefore essential when we are laying the foundations of life to emotionally join God because it is more difficult to do so later on.

10. We finish this paragraph with an important number of the Constitutions. It says: "Our chastity, which is the fulfillment of life and love, demands from us moderation and constant watchfulness, maturity in true personal friendships, a daily renewed commitment of our faith and an indefatigable concern to know Christ and turn our whole life to Him with undivided love" (n° 61). They are necessary elements to live celibacy. On the one side, it considers the fulfillment of life and love. Celibacy does not reduce life, nor denies love. It is rather the fulfillment of both realities. To live celibacy the need for moderation. This moderation refers to all types of manifestations. And we must include the two elements that we just mentioned in the fulfillment of life and love and this fullness is referred to God, but without denying love for others. This is where moderation must be considered: love with moderation, we give ourselves but do not belong; one can be strongly bond but not more than a moderate relationship.

Next to moderation, one must also be aware of constant watchfulness. We know how in this field impulses to transgression are many and we must be vigilant not to give in to what very attractively is proposed to us. This is why affective maturity is necessary, and we never must assume we have completely achieved it, and thus requires attention and watchfulness. We do not distance ourselves from people. We do not break relationships with them or deny them, but we must live them serenely in a spirit of maturity. We

must focus in Christ our entire life like the only love and make celibacy as the strongest bond we have with our God and Jesus.

2. Discernment

1. To live celibacy, decide to choose a way of life that includes this way of living we must discern if God has given us this gift. If it is a gift, it does not have to do with the will. But even if it is a gift it does not mean that one can achieve it at the first go; it might take a process to love what God has given us.

Normally at a specific moment something that envelops our life is awakened. It is the gift of the Lord that completely unifies our existence. Without this totality, even if only momentarily, one cannot enter religious life. Precisely because of its momentarily totalizing, it needs to be developed and motivated. The gift focuses life in the Lord. In the beginning, it is the first focus, this at least what normally occurs, which does not mean that a fast and deep focus can fulfill life completely. It is a gift that does not destroy human freedom and therefore needs to be cultivated. This love that is focusing our life needs to be nurtured not to forget what has been received and take other steps. What would be responding positively to the impulses that occur in life? It is a gift when one feels that alone one could not live this way: it is a gift because one has had to take many times a particular path, sometimes hard and tiresome and with falls, to live it. There have been difficulties on the way, anguishes, problems and falls but all have served to understand that what is lived now is not the outcome of his effort, but a grace from above. He has constantly struggled but experienced that his struggles were sterile and fruitless. Now, reconciled, he is aware that what he lives is a grace of the Lord, a gift that is entirely his.

2. In celibacy, we follow the Lord with an undivided heart. An undivided heart shows that we are entirely in what we love. Also, this needs to be discerned. Reaching this total self-giving normally takes time. Often, more than a reality achieved immediately, it is a goal achieved after having undergone a long way. I do not mean to say that it has to be long; it depends on the grace of the Lord, of what he has and the individual, his work, care, attention, and delicacy.

Undivided heart is the one with unified affectivity in the Lord. Affectivity must be unified to live celibacy in a mature adult way, and lived with an undivided heart. It occurs that often the celibates do not live celibacy together with affectivity, but live it as a practical option related to some specific commitments. Those who are in religious life must question themselves where they have their heart, and there is where the radical problems lie. Thus, it is so important that the heart is in the one to whom we have given our life radically.

3. Celibacy entails a strict unity with God. And this must be discerned. How to achieve it? For example: if sometimes the religious, emotional background focused on God has not been awakened, if God as a person does not affectively interest him, it is impossible to have a true celibacy. Celibacy might be a response to other motivations. If we do not have the feeling that God loves me or that I love him, and that affectively he is for me the most important thing, the heart will necessarily be at the mercy of other instances and there cannot be a strong bond of love with God, which is what authentic celibacy supposes. And we must confess that many religious people have not awakened from religious affectivity background. Therefore, in this field we must analyze what emotional image we have of God. If God does not respond to a positive image, if he is a sort of super consciousness or law, one cannot have a strong unity with him. To discern this element, we must discern what the quality of our emotional relation to God is, what is the conscious or unconscious image we have of him. Only if it is positive, we can live a strong relationship with him. It is a critical discernment.
4. Configuration to Christ is a reality that unfolds in a process. Thus, to discern it, is to discern the process. We must see whether the person's behavior is like that of Jesus. It is logic that this resemblance is always exaggerated, because who cannot resemble him completely? But we must see whether steps are taken in following Jesus.

Through our behavior we are imitating him, following his footsteps, there is an evident desire to be like him, to resemble him: If we forgive as he forgives. We love as he loves. We help others as he did. If we forget the evil suffered as he forgives it. We have our eyes fixed on him because we want to imitate him. There is a considerable dis-

tance between Jesus' and us, but the dynamic must be the same. A dynamic that after all the individual receives from the grace of God, but that walks towards the unity with the Master and the configuration to him. We must discern not only the behaviors but also our feelings. Also, in this case, the distance is unbridgeable, but again we must see if the dynamic of our hearts is in line with that of Jesus. The feeling of gratefulness to the Father, service to men, commitment to extend the Kingdom, closeness to men. Jesus lived these realities, and if we want to configure to him, we must live them, definitely with the Master's grace. But we already mentioned that they are done in a process that is slowly progressing in these experiences, which imitate him always more. Only by so doing we can configure to the love of Jesus.

5. In the dialogue between the Bride and Bridegroom, this is the Spiritual Canticle of Saint John of the Cross: "O virgins of Judea, while the perfume of amber hangs on flowers and the rose tree, live in some far-off place and don't appear before our door! Hide, my darling, and turn your face to look upon the mountains, and don't tell what you know but look at friends of her who goes to legendary islands."
6. We must discern if he who wants to follow Jesus in the life he led among us celibacy is given as perfect continence. This discernment is quite delicate. The instances can be different. There are those who live in this continence as soon as they enter religious life and being young might not have had any experience against it. There are others who do not completely live this reality from the beginning. In their journey, there is a significant decision to live it, and they struggle to fulfill it. But sometimes there can be mistakes or lack of strength and continence is impaired.

It must not discourage us because they are precise moments in this journey that progresses towards our donation to Jesus. On the other side, those small failures do not break what is the intimate tendency of the heart, belonging to the Lord. It is the strongest thing in our lives, and for nothing in the world, we want to deny it due to the faults that every once in a while, occur in life. We walk in the right direction, and we are in the hands of the Lord. The time will come when the grace will clean and purify the impulses thoroughly and find a peace that does not come from your effort, because also

before we did it without achieving anything, but it is the grace of the Lord. The fact is that we do not know the ways of the Lord or the reasons for his plans, because, on the other hand, those small obstacles might not have disappeared entirely but that God calls us to follow his son in religious life. Many and different are the ways of the Lord, and what is essential at this point is to belong to him with the commitment that almost always feels like a victory of living celibacy in perfect continence.

7. Perhaps it is not so easy today like in the past where through experiences of fully lived celibacy, children were led to God. In modern society, children and young people are not encouraged to live in chastity. We must discern how to render attractive this virtue in the midst of all the requests that they encounter and many technological means that do not favor this virtue.

We must educate them with care and delicacy in this subject before the external means introduce them to the wrong paths. It is true that they will have experiences of love and sex, but it is essential that this task is carried out by their parents, and if they do not, by the educators. We must realize how they live, study their behavior and language, be close to them so they can trust the educators or a specific educator and can open up to him. When they see that he who gives himself to them lives openly and in a clean way, and when they listen to their judgments and on these subjects, they are not betrayed or hidden to what they should know, the educator can lead his mind and heart towards God. Knowing about adolescence, we must help them overcome the whirlpool they might be experiencing and foster them to mature in Christian life in love and sexuality.

Analyzing one's own life and living the tendencies that dwell in our heart reach.

8. Discovering celibacy as a gift. In itself, these tendencies push the person towards realities that have nothing to do with celibacy. One feels the power of these tendencies and like all that we find in the world and our surroundings do not help celibacy. Thus, the person discovers that if he wants to live it, he must struggle in the two fields: the external one, facing all the realities coming from the outside, and internally, with all the tendencies that he feels emerge inside him.

It is when he perceives he cannot live celibacy with his strengths and discovers he needs to receive it, as a gift from God. Having discovered it, celibacy must be acquired but in the awareness that it is a gift knowing it is a gift a fruit of grace that flows all over one's life. And after having acquired it, one must preserve it; and this is but the ongoing task of keeping this possession. The heart is, in fact, a very delicate reality, and one must attend to its needs.

9. Celibacy as a call to live our entire life for God has lately surfaced as a topic in the community. The community is not only valued as a lifestyle or common acts, but mainly as interpersonal relationships. In assessing fraternity vocationally as interpersonal relationships, we must live on these emotional dynamics. But we cannot live fraternity as dynamics of affectivity when from the spontaneous and natural point of view our emotional relationships do not have a sufficient foundation because we are not necessarily friends or relatives with those who belong to a group.

It is an important and positive conquest in religious life. It means being a sign of the Kingdom of mutual love. But when this mutual love is understood on the bases of emotional relationships, we attach to this affectivity specific labeling of psychological, natural, spontaneous, friendship posing serious problems.

When the community achieves a determining value, if a crisis occurs, it almost always becomes a vocation crisis. If one cannot distinguish inside what it is to love it, belong to it and love and give yourself to the brothers, and attach to it some specific psych emotional expectations, it immediately backlashes on the fundamental values of life. When this type of crisis appears, it affects the vocation: "our life is not worthwhile". However, for the one who has learned to love it from other connotations, in the middle of a community crisis, it does impact his vocation. In the typical realism of our human life, the greatest difficulty in human life, where we are more limited, is in the world of interpersonal relationships.

It is why we must love God deeply for our celibacy to be well backed in the community because our relationship with it depends highly on the ability to live in celibacy.

10. Each one must assess the meekness applied in this field. Meekness does not mean detachment, lack of tenderness or care, a

shield that covers an individual like a shell. Thus, we must discern the way we live celibacy. If one lives detached from others in an isolated way; if our behavior annoys others; if our way of life puzzles others because it does not seem to abide to the Gospel and the way Jesus lived. If the others feel refused, if they cannot establish friendly relationships with us. True celibacy does not scare others, but rather attracts to God as well as to the one who is living it. This is what happened to Jesus. We must be mindful of this.

3. Methodology

1. If celibacy is a gift, to be sure we received it we need to: discern whether it is our path and we are not being led by the sparkle of some eyes. Realize if it is something that attracts merely the mind or intimately affects the heart. You have to live a time of experience that is given by the Institutes with temporary commitments, to see if it is our path. Since it is a grace, we must insistently ask for it to the Lord. Convinced that God wants the best for us, and therefore do not praise it over marital life. Do not reason on celibacy in itself, but as the destiny of our life. Do not feel discouraged for some falls, because often celibacy is not perfect at the first go. But take this issue seriously.
2. Commit ourselves to making the Lord everything in our life. Do not flirt with the heart, because celibacy is a serious matter. Allow affectivity to rest on God entirely. Do not live false contrasts, like it would be to love God without an undivided heart, and at the same time, love tenderly someone else. One must be watchful and understand that the love of God is the first thing and it is transcendental, and tenderness towards someone is subdued to the love of God, and this is something categorical. The undivided love subdues any other type of love to God, any other self-giving to the God, any other reality of the will of the Lord. The undivided heart is the one where affectivity is focused on God. And he is the essential thing in our life.
3. Life is based on love. He who loves; he who does not love is dead. Thus, in celibacy, all the emotional capacity is centered in God. If we are celibate, if we live the truth of celibacy, we must be

strongly united to God. Our entire affectivity must rest on him. We must be intimately united to him. Jesus must be the center of our configuration. It is not a matter of whether we love, but how we love and where we love. All Christians must love God. But the celibate must love without any other belonging and must love him from the most profound roots that arise from our heart. Jesus loved everybody, but his heart belonged to God. And thus, lived in celibacy. And this is highlighted in the Gospels.

4. To configure to the love of Christ, he must be the center of our life: affectivity must be centered in him; our love must not be except for the anxiety to be entirely his. Gradually as time goes by, time is more for him. Before, in what we were doing we were looking for him, and doing everything for him; now always more time belongs to him, and our time is concentrated in him. It is not important whether we sometimes feel bored or thinks we are losing time. Do we waste our time when we spent it with he who loves the heart most even if you feel nothing?
5. The Bridegroom answers the Bride with all his heart's love in the Spiritual Canticle of Saint John of the Cross: "The little White dove has returned to the ark with the bough; and now the turtle-dove it desired mate on the green banks has found. In the solitude she lived, and in solitude built her nest; and in solitude, alone has the beloved guided her, in solitude also wounded with love."
6. Perfect continence forces us not to be weak in this field, and not flirt with no one and nothing. Not to do things that seems to us in this field as modest. When the heart loves without receiving anything in return, what to one seems insipid to one disturbs the view and feels it as a lack of delicacy; to more love, greater the small indelicacies seem; to more love that nothing escapes it.
7. Love the children and the young so they feel respected. Do not permit the slightest indelicacy in this field, not even out of naiveness. Even more so in the times we are living. Children and young people see us as friends, but friends who educate, that show the way that leads to God, that are willing to do it all for their well-being. Help them to pass through the ups and downs

of the first years of their adolescence without harm or the least possible, and behave in such a way that we will be remembered as authentic educators that truly influenced their life.

8. If we are in religious life, we assume that we discovered celibacy (grace of God) and we acquired it (even if there is a long way to go to perfect it and always according to the will of the Lord). The important thing, therefore, for now, is to preserve it. It is not a matter of maintaining it in its material aspect but in its most intimate reality. That is, as we grow we must let go of many things of life to reflect more clearly love. Love can be less passionate but must be more profound, more self-giving, and more complete. The only focus of lasting affectivity is to be in God. God is always more present in our life. We must grow only in love, availability, and self-giving.
9. Why do we want time if it is not to pray? It is an experience that I heard from more than one elderly: now we have more time to pray, but want to do it less. But one of those wise elderly sick men told me that words did not come out, but that his thought was centered on God. We must live celibacy in prayer, because it is God's love that is with us, and celibacy is an experience of total intimate and unconditional love for God. If celibacy is a gift, we must ask for it in prayer.
10. To live the truth of celibacy we need affectivity maturity. It is the one acquired throughout the years; thus, also celibacy with the passing of years becomes more intimate and deep. We live in a world where impulses against celibacy are frequent, and we can meet people of every type and experiences with whom we work and stay with. Only a faith lived every day, and a love that is continuously strengthened by the Lord can help us live friendly relationships without imperiling the heart. And when it is in danger, it is good to have someone who knows your life and can provide the right accompaniment in the journey towards the configuration to Jesus. It is good to have someone who accompanies through life, in any period of our life, notwithstanding his age, even if logically with the passing of time the relationship with him will be different.

6. Configuration to Jesus through poverty

1. Spirituality

1. If we want to configure to Jesus we must follow and imitate him. One of the fundamental aspects of Jesus is poverty. We have the example of our Master in front of our eyes: he became poor for us. We can analyze poverty from two points of view. On the one side, the undreamable fact he became a man; Son of God; “God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God”. The Jews who worshipped God, who had a story with him throughout the centuries, to whom God had revealed and led through a tormented period, couldn’t accept this fact. And today also the faithless cannot accept it. God becoming man is something inexplicable. That God continued to be God and took human flesh is something senseless. But Jesus, Son of God, did so. He lowered himself to be becoming a man. He humiliated himself becoming one of us; he impoverished himself to be like the ones he loved, equal to them in everything except sin. It is the first example of Jesus’ poverty, which logically, cannot be imitated, but praised, acclaimed and be thankful.

The second example refers to the Master’s mortal life. He lived poorly. Apart from his birth that is narrated by the two evangelists, and coming and going of his first years until he left for Egypt, with Mary and Joseph under the direction of an angel. His hidden life unraveled in a simple family: son of a carpenter, or of the “kid” of the town, as some translated. And then during his public life, he had nowhere to rest. He led an itinerant life, with all that this en-

tails; living out of what he received from the people he meets. Thus, our journey must be one of poverty such as that of Jesus.

2. We can see that God loves poverty, apart from what is said by his Son, in two examples of the Constitutions: The Virgin Mary and Calasanz. The Lord Jesus, among all the poor and humble, chose as his Mother the Virgin Mary who excelled all others in poverty and humility. Mary lived a poor life. She belonged to a simple family and married a simple man, and her family life was also simple. During the time of Jesus' hidden life, Mary took care of the house and helped as best she could her husband Joseph, caring for her son when he was small and admiring him as he grew up. She always lived in a working family, poor but not miserable.

Furthermore, Mary lived anonymously, another form of poverty. Poor like most of the people in those days. She never appears as the mother of the great preacher who travels around Galilee preaching and making miracles and who so many spoke about. She only appears in moments of discouragement and suffering. Confusion, when the family clan- cousins, close family members, neighbors- themselves do not understand the Master; confusion when they come to take Jesus away because they ill-speak of him. How much must Mary have suffered facing all this? And then she shows up in front of the Cross. Pain, tiredness, poverty in seeing her son this way. Mary must be our example in our journey of configuration to the Master.

The other example offered by the Constitutions is that of our Founder. He was convinced in claiming his Institute: "There is no religion poorer than ours" (EP 2364), "thus those who profess the poverty we profess, can do with little" (EP 557). Live in poverty, extreme poverty, was Calasanz's great inspiration, and intensely living poverty must be the path of his children, thus by imitating their Founder, following the path of configuration to the Lord.

3. Poverty in our life must have two goals: to be the proof and requirement of our love to Christ and other men. Witnessing that our poverty embodies the love for the poor. Especially in our time facing truly delicate and severe situations on this topic. We want to be poor like the poor. We think that if the Institute was created to help poor children and youngsters, even if it was

initially open to all, we must be faithful to the first vocation, always tailoring it to our times. We think that just like in the beginning when the pagans seeing the Christians said: “look how they love one another,” today looking at the Institute some will say: “look at the way they serve the needy children and youngsters”. The Institute cannot lose the foundation of its the vocation. Let us remember that when the Institute was degraded to a Congregation without vows, and the Founder in his final days wanted it to remain as long as it stayed faithful to the poor. And this was a fact. The Institute is for the poor and therefore also its religious men must be. They wouldn’t belong to the Institute if this were not true. If not they cannot be Piarists.

Poverty is not only the testimony of the love of God and men but also a requirement. Poverty in our vocation emerges and develops as a vocational need. We cannot love Christ, if we are not poor; we cannot say that we love poor children and youngsters, the part of humanity assigned to us, if we do not live in poverty. We would not feel sons of Calasanz if we do not live in poverty and this is noticeable in our personal life. Thus, an important aspect to assess ourselves.

4. The Constitutions explain to us which elements poverty must be embodied and manifested. On one side, to live a personal life of austerity. It is a broad field that each one of us can deepen according to the Lord’s grace and one’s availability. It is important to keep into account the delicacy of the conscience because based on it, what might be austerity for someone is abundance for another. Love provides the guidelines of austerity. Like all the vows it is a vocation, and God calls within the constitutional austerity a more profound or lighter deepening of it. We must have special eyes to distinguish what God is asking each one of us.

The element of the observance of the universal law of work is valid for all men. But the observance can be stronger or weaker. We must be willing to dedicate every day all our efforts carrying out the work assigned to us. This does not mean that we aren’t entitled to rest, some leisure time and time of formation. It is a requirement also included in the Constitutions. But we must be mindful every day from turning our work acquired obligation and experience into something accidental.

Poverty also manifested in the balanced and moderate use of goods. It might be the case that without even realizing it we hoard many things in our bedroom; perhaps we do not need many of them and could do without them if we truly experience poverty.

A simple element in the house of poor people is the care for common things. It is a way of being watchful of the common good, being respectful of the others who need to use the things and shows a spirit that allows others to enjoy what belongs to all.

5. Saint John of the Cross said: "One dark night, fired with love's urgent longings – ah, the sheer grace! - I went out unseen, my house being now all stilled. In the darkness, and secure, by the secret ladder, disguised –ah, the sheer grace! –In darkness and concealment, my house being now all instilled. "
6. Sometimes poverty is turned into a merely juridical element. And this is not so. Poverty is not assessed juridically, but spiritually. Obtaining the permission from the Superior is a requirement, but it cannot put our conscience at rest. Each one must evaluate himself on this for what God is asking of him. The Superior often does not know the love between God and the religious, nor knows the needs he has in front of God. Trying to solve this dialogue and needs with permission, is something meaningless and without value; it is something entirely wrong. The permission can often be a requirement and might even be a sign of delicate spirit; what is essential is to be mindful of what God wants from him.

The Constitutions provide the minimum standard that we must all stick to on the bases of what we have professed. From this point of view, one can advance a lot in the different vows, if one listens to the voice of God if one is attentive to his will if one hears the whispers of the Spirit. Each one has a love story with God and has to behave according to what God asks in this story. By so doing we can and must fulfill the journey of the configuration with Jesus.

7. Poverty is not a simple personal and spiritual fact; it is also a social one. It means it is also manifested externally in buildings and places. For this reason, the Constitutions tell us that poverty must shine in our houses and the Works. It is true that we have buildings, which are schools, and that they exercise an

educational service and require all the necessary elements to impart a good education, precisely in favor of the needy. On the other hand, more and more the house of the religious is separated from the schools. The schools in which we work have to count on whatever is necessary for the service they exercise, but there should not be any luxury there.

The house of the religious must always be clean, decent without excesses. It is still a complicated issue to address. On the one side, it is true that this care is present in the new foundations; we must do what we can in the classic Works. A school cannot be judged only from the outside: the internal part is the most important one. Where the students are welcomed, the immigrants study, the particular classrooms for the disabled, the attention to all kinds of people. Even if this is true, it does not mean that we must neglect the external part. It has to be an overall testimony.

8. We mentioned it, but now we are going to highlight it, the material goods must be used when they are necessary for exercising our ministry. And this is the love of the poor. That those who attend our schools can enjoy the means that prepare them for life in our time. As religious, we must be poor, and it is an element we must examine regularly. It is the way for the configuration to Jesus. But as educators, we must have all that is necessary to exercise well the ministry. Both elements are required and the two must be cared for.
9. True poverty also includes caring for what we already have. We possess the goods for the service to others, and so that they can be fruitful and help the needy. It is what the right and prudent administration needs. Thus, always more, under the supervision of a religious who is knowledgeable on economic issues, the administration of our great bodies is assigned to competent lay people. In the small realities, such as the communities, the economic management is usually in the hands of the religious, while always more demarcations and skilled people manage schools; but it is always good to have the dependence and supervision of some religious person.
10. In the commitment to live in poverty it is essential to discover new forms. For this we need a deep love for poverty, attention

of the intuitions the Spirit awakens and attentive listening of what the other Institutes are doing, always considering our ministry.

2. Discernment

1. We must discern poverty. If we are truly poor like Jesus. If poverty is a way of living well, perhaps even better than our relatives, or if it is a reality that has penetrated into our heart. If poverty leads us to humiliate ourselves in front of others like the Lord who humbled himself by becoming a man like us and for us. Poverty goes hand in hand with humility. We must examine our entire life. And see whether poverty has a meaning in it. The two sides of poverty like in Jesus. Poverty from inside, where Jesus lowered himself so much as to become a man which for us is not a material one, but entirely different. Poveities that are sometimes weaknesses and other impossibilities or things that occur, like reduced existence. The poverty of the falls in spiritual life, of not being able to overcome some things that torment us, of aging, pain, tiredness, depression, of not being able to do things we did before. They are real and tough poverities that sadden our heart. The Lord is also in those poverities. And facing and accepting them and often putting them in the hands of our God, helps our journey of configuration to Jesus.

We must also discern the external side of poverty, the material one. Are we poor? What is poverty in our life? Have we experienced its stings or do we avoid it in many ways without feeling guilty?

2. Do we imitate Mary in poverty? The poverty of being a simple person who never stands out. Sometimes we want to stand out, to be on top of others, valuing our judgments and feeling entitled to do so. We can discern this poverty by noticing if in our life we do not seek to be the center of everything or of the ones with whom we live. It is the poverty of anonymity, of not being considered, to be unknown. That we are not interested if another passes in front of us, are more than us, praised, triumph while our life is forgotten because considered irrelevant. Welcoming with joy the victory of others perhaps in the middle of our failures or just because nobody pays attention to us. And

live it with joy, peace, serenity and no bitterness. This discernment must be carried out also from a very important reference person for us, the Founder.

Apart from the poverty we just mentioned, there is also the practical poverty, of possessions. Calasanz went from being a person with more than enough economic assets, to live in absolute poverty. And he promised this for all his life. He professed the vow of extreme poverty. And even if indeed our saint's charism must not necessarily be our own, we must live in material poverty. And in this aspect, we must examine ourselves personally. It is always a complicated topic – are we or are we not poor-, and the debates leave us empty-handed. In front of the Lord's Cross-, we must discern poverty as a journey for the configuration to him.

3. We often wonder how to manifest our love to God and men. In poverty, we find a way, and, therefore, become the testimony and need of this love. It is why we must discern whether our poverty is close to the poor. There is a poverty of being and another of "being with." We must live both of them, even if the second one is more significant. Giving is necessary. We are usually not so poor as to not help those who are poor. To what extent do we do it? Do we dispossess ourselves of material goods, even if few; to help a little bit other people? Even if it is a drop of water in the sea of needs, we must do it. If someone feels a little aided by what we offer him, this gesture of help is a manifestation of love to the other. And by helping the other, we live the love of Jesus, because what we do to one of his poor, we do to him. And there is also the poverty of "being with." It is something that involves us wherever we live. It is "to be with" the poor. Helping them provides an experience that usually touches and changes our heart.

But it is not only the witness; we must enter more in ourselves, to see whether the help comes as a need. We realize that the poor have an absolute right over what we exceed. The Holy Fathers have spoken a lot about it, but their knowledge and intention, unfortunately, have not become followed by Christians or by us religious people. Thus, examine, discern what the needs that we notice and what can we do to help the needy.

4. Some questions are useful to discern our life in this field and thus make us see if we are journeying towards the configuration to Christ the Lord. Are we austere in our life? Austerity is more than possessing all and only what we need because there are different ways of valuing what we need. Sufficient to see what we have in our bedrooms and all you have available. Is it necessary? Up to what point? Can we do without it, or possess it but in a simpler way? The anxiety of possessing is great among men; now that always more sophisticated and perfect devices appear, we look for them with the excuse that we need them. And we do not realize that we are well equipped with what we have without having to purchase something more perfect. And what we have perfectly satisfies our needs. We must confess it; in this field we deceive ourselves quite easily. And there are some wrong reasonings, which we often give ourselves: if our companion has this or this other thing we must have it. Why shouldn't I have it too? And this turns into a sort of tide that always affects more religious people.
5. For Saint John of the Cross, the heart has to be the light and guide in our discernment: "On the glad night, in secret, for no one saw me, nor did I look at anything, with no other light or guide than the one that burned in my heart. This guided me more surely than the light of noon to where he was awaiting me, him I knew so well, there in a place where no one appeared."
6. An important point is to discern our heart on this issue and see whether we deceive ourselves or not. Sometimes we have and receive things that the delicacy of our heart would require us to inform the Superior. And I do not mean what the Constitutions at n° 69 regarding having to give to the community, even if it is received by a religious. What the Constitutions say on this point must be followed because we have committed ourselves.

But it is more than this; the delicate conscience is aware that for many things we depend and must turn to the Superior. It is not a matter of infantilizing a person. Thus, we must discern on the things we need permission for. Do we proceed this way? Are we delicate in this field? Do we take advantage of everything and are the possessors of everything, living as if we had not professed the vow of poverty? It wouldn't be wrong to analyze things in this perspec-

tive. But much more. Are we tranquil, whatever we own as long as we have the Superior's permission? It is not a matter of going to the Superior. Personal maturity requires us to behave knowing that the Superior's permission does not legitimize everything. It depends on each one of us, of the relationship with the Lord, of the intimacy we have with him, of what he asks us. Why after having felt God's hands on them did the saints feel compelled to leave everything? Why have they always tried and desired to be poor? We must think about it and apply it in our life.

7. The other element of poverty asked by the Constitutions might not depend on us specifically. It has to do with the poverty that shines in our buildings. Here each one must play his part. The Superiors who have to take the decisions in this field: they are in charge of watching and taking care of a Work in construction making sure that the employed material is adequate and check if plans are followed. And then there is the simple religious that has to be consistent with what he has in his room. Now we are talking about the building and the experience of poverty in itself and not in the function of the ministry that is fulfilled in it. What do the Constitutions mean and want from us when they state: "Poverty must shine in our life and also in our Works? It is true that in this sense we must consider the place, as the social environment where we live. An important request from the Constitutions that also obliges to discernment "We will avoid the appearance of luxury, immoderate profit and accumulation of goods."(n° 70). Religious life, demarcations, the communities and the individuals are test cases.
8. All in the school must be for the benefit for the poor. Discern up to what point the centers fulfill this goal. Undoubtedly all that is purchased in the center is for the good of the students, but we must make sure that this is true. The love for the students, the concern about them, the desire to educate them well, the anxiety that they are well prepared to finish their studies and live with dignity, makes us look for all the means that can help us fulfill it. Poverty is not in contrast with purchases made for this goal. This fact must not discriminate in any way welcoming the students. The Piarist ministry is such a passionate element that the religious must do his best so that students receive a forma-

tion and education. In this case what we need to discern is if this is indeed true when we purchase goods, and if the fruit we hope to achieve is in line with the expenses.

9. Being watchful with what we have and not ill-treat things that belong to all is also a way of living poverty. There might be things that seem of little importance, but we must take care of them. Thus, in assessing our poverty, we must check if we act accordingly. Discernment is quite simple; we just need to check how we use things that belong to everyone. Also, the Constitutions include it even if it might seem something of little importance. And next to this simple act, something more important: Do we manage well and prudently the goods we own? It is up to the person in charge, under the vigilant supervision of the Superior, to examine this point. We must be attentive to the management of goods and try to do it always as correctly as possible, according to the evangelical counsels.
10. Are we open to new forms of poverty? Just like everything else that has to do with religious life, we try to make our following of Jesus always more demanding, so that we can follow him with our entire heart and progress in the field of poverty and avoid remaining stuck in the usual situations. Already the discernment of the previous points must serve to grow in love and poverty and to turn it into the real focus of the following of Jesus. But we want to take a further step: Are we open to new forms of poverty? Are we looking for them? Are we available to the voice of the Spirit that can enlighten us in this field? It would already be sufficient to live poverty the way the Constitutions are asking us to do. But the Constitutions themselves teach us that it is necessary to be faithful to the voice of the Spirit when she wants to communicate or suggest to us to take a step forward in this field, in discovering new forms of poverty more fit to our charism and the needs of our time.

3. Methodology

1. We must not be seduced by material goods. They attract us and sometimes very powerfully. We cannot fall into this attraction. Thus, we need a strong will, to examine our behavior of poverty

and immensely trust God. Trust that will light all our hidden corners. We must look to the Lord and the way of life he led. And translate it into our times with the light of the Spirit, to act appropriately. Attraction to goods is powerful and so we must ask the Lord for help, knowing that he is our true good. In front of him everything is null; in front of the desire of living the way he did, any other desire has no value or meaning. We must trust the Lord and ask for his help.

2. Are we focused on Mary's attitudes to live like her? In the previous paragraph, we have seen her attitudes; we must implement them in our own life. Among the many attitudes, we can focus on anonymity, which includes many more. Do we want to be seen first of all for what we do, for our achievements, for what we are praised for, the successes we have achieved? This is not living anonymously. Sometimes it occurs to us without us looking for them, due to different circumstances of our life, because God has his Providence, and others in which we do to be visible in front of others. And the opposite: Do we hide our failures, what is negative in us, so they won't consider us less? Where is the poverty of not being recognized by others?

Simplicity is poverty, not being considered is poverty, and not being cared for is poverty. Discern to see how our life is doing in this aspect. As sons of Calasanz we must see if we have a conversion like him of not having or desiring to have nothing. It is true that the more we have the more we want, and when we have less it is easier to do without many things that are not necessary.

3. We must live many types of poverty. We can mention different levels. The material level, where the material poverty lies. We must live it according to the example given by Jesus, Mary, and Calasanz. Always attentive to what God is asking. Because at this level God does not ask us all with the same intensity. Thus, we must be mindful of the suggestions of the Spirit who speaks to each one's heart.

Then we have the psychological aspect that can lead to poverty. There are people with depressive tendencies, somewhere depression manifests in advanced age and others who suffer from the ups and downs of depression. It is a type of poverty known only by

those who suffer from depression. Nobody can know this poverty if you do not suffer from it.

And we also have existential poverties: sufferings, sickness, old age, and low moods. A person can experience it and must learn how to address this type of poverty. We must offer them to the Lord; ask for his help, aware that through them we journey in our configuration to Jesus.

4. We have already mentioned in the previous paragraph how poverty is manifested according to our Constitutions. Here we must only stress the need to commit ourselves to putting it all into practice. It is why we need to love austere, without going beyond what is allowed, living like the poor; we must work each one according to our assignments, without finding excuses not to do so. Even more, our work centered fundamentally in our ministry must create the passion and intensely carry it out with our heart because ours is more than just a job. We love nothing more than giving ourselves for the children and youngsters who need our help. Poverty must also be manifested in the fair and moderate usage of the goods; no one must exceed in this field. We must also take care of the common goods, and we already spoke of it. They are simple rules that we need to follow as simple families do.
5. The Loved one appears to help us in the night of our many worries: “O guiding night! O night more lovely than the dawn! O night that has united the Lover with his beloved transforming the beloved in her Lover. Upon my flowering breath which I kept wholly for him alone, there he lay sleeping, and I caressing him there in a breeze from the fanning cedars.”
6. We must join two elements, on the one side personal maturity and on the other the vocational meaning to depend on the Superiors. Maturity forces us not to behave strangely, like children; the vocational aspect leads us to ask for permission in all that is required. But we must not fall in casuistry which prevents us from just and sincere experiences of poverty; and at the same time, even if it might seem contradictory, we must be aware that receiving permission does not entitle us to do all we want. If we do, we will not achieve the goal we have set in our life, configuration to Jesus Christ.

7. We must personally be witnesses of poverty, and this is up to each one of us. We have already provided many elements on how we can live poverty and manifest it in the way we follow the Lord Jesus. We must also provide collective testimony. Sometimes it can be considered as the sum of all the personal witnesses, but can also mean the testimony of the entire Works. We must understand the difference between the past and present-future. The present-future requires us to be careful of the new buildings, especially the houses of the religious and the Works focused on the ministry. Poverty and simplicity must be exercised everywhere, but we must be especially mindful of the social environment where we build and of not being offensive to those who live in that area. We must examine our houses in relations to the people of our neighborhood.
8. It has repeatedly been mentioned that the Works where the ministry is exercised deserves a specific clarification. The use of material goods fulfill our ministry. The purchase of the pedagogical and auxiliary tools for the good of the poor and our apostolate, mindful of the social environment. It would be an insult to give poor people products of lower quality. We must offer them all the possibilities to get a good education and have a better future according to their knowledge and abilities, always without being offensive to their poverty.
9. Select well those who are in charge of managing goods. It is important because this determines whether the economic goods are profitable according to justice and honorability. We must be mindful of it. The past can teach us many things in this field. Money must be profitable, but always in line with social and evangelical criteria.
10. We must be concerned in finding new forms of poverty. It calls for reflection, attentive to what is happening in the world, looking at what others are doing, living the circumstances of our time, asking the Holy Spirit for help.

7° Configuration to Jesus through obedience

1° Spirituality

1. One of the fundamental elements of a journey of configuration to Jesus is to live in obedience to God the Father. Thus, doing the will of God becomes the central principle of Christian life and therefore religious life. Fulfilling the will of God in prayer, action, and sufferings. What connects us to God is not the feeling, but the love for the Holy Spirit that achieved through the obedience to the Father. When someone lives this way, life becomes meaningful- and what is true for prayer and action is also true for the mission. The mission is not just carrying out a task, a project, but fulfilling the will of the Father so that God can act, as he wants. Therefore, it is not important where we are, or the task we are carrying out but what God wants from us. It is the crucial point of religious life. And to accomplish our Father's will, we be guided by the Divine Providence that leads us in the paths it wants for each one of us.

It is why primacy in life to God's will is essential. But this does not come from any ascetic principle, but from the experience that we affectionately belong to God. He loves us; he has given himself to us, continually, and we know and experience his love, thus our reasonable desire to do what he wants for us because love is paid with love. "You are my God". "I am yours. What do you want me to do?" We express the love of obedience or obedience of love. In all the love, at its peak, we have obedience: "I belong to Him". It also happens in human love. Thus, the primacy of the will of God is cen-

tered in love, but not any love, but that of belonging. In the chapter on celibacy, we have already addressed this aspect.

Freedom based on self-giving to the service of God. It is the love of the mission. Love of belonging becomes the love of obedience and the transformation of our desires wanting the will of God primarily. What Jesus wanted to do throughout his life. Thus, the configuration to Christ passes through obedience. It leads us to join Jesus Christ and act as he did, and so resemble him.

2. Obedience is essential, and we must discover it. If we want to do what pleases the Father, we must find his will, because it is the only way to act accordingly. The Constitutions indicate some ways. One of them is the exchange of views among the members of the community. The Lord manifests himself when some of his sons are gathered, and Jesus is with them. They look hard for what the Father's will in tackling issues. There, God's will is manifested, as Jesus said: "Ask, and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you." And he said that we should do this always, tireless, with all our efforts, adding the example of the parable of the lady who receives the visit of friends and has nothing to offer them. Even if it is night, she asks her neighbor for something to offer to her friends, and despite their servants were asleep at the end they give her something.

Another means is the communion of prayers. It is also in line with what we just mentioned of Jesus. If we ask God to make his will known to us how will he do it? It is important here to have eyes capable of perceiving his manifestations. Not being distracted or preoccupied with other things. Addressing him, focused on him to receive his voice. But to hear his voice, we must completely be abandoned to him. I do not know why we men have considered abandonment as something that belongs to women. It is good to work socially to free ourselves from dependences, but the critical point is to be autonomous and live love abandoning oneself to the other. Facing God is the normal way of living and receiving his word, will and configure to him.

3. The search of God's will is done personally but also as a group. And we religious live in a community. It is not only practical

ways to help in daily life so that each one can do something, and we can all do our assignments, but it is also a religious fact. We live together with the love of God, the manifestation of his charity and the search for his will. When the group is present in the name of the Lord and invokes Him, the Master is among them. And when it prays the Father; the Spirit manifests herself among some of them, sometimes the simpler ones, the less cultivated ones. God's ways are not those of science and human wisdom, but of the heart and love for others.

In the group meetings, we must freely express our points of view, without wanting to impose them, but rather to contribute with the thought and feelings on the facts, each one of us can know what the Father wants with our life. After all, it is the will of the Father that has united us all in the community, and each one is trying to continue to fulfill this will during life. To find together the love of God, we must have a clean heart; we cannot act deceptively, hiding or disguising what does not suit us; in the meetings, the behavior must be explicit, and one's opinions must be freely expressed. All this will serve so that, knowing the Father's desire, each one can dedicate himself more effectively to the service of God and the benefit of his neighbor.

4. Our obedience is at the service of the Church and thus must obey the Hierarchy as the leading interpreter of Christ's will. So, to have this obedience, like in all obedience we must relate autonomy with obedience to faith; that is autonomous and owner of our life to give it freely. That is the believer's autonomy most become obedience. When this is true obedience is not subdued to an external authority, but the experience of belonging, that fosters obedience of faith. Obedience to any authority, now we speak of Hierarchy is based on this theological fact: "Lord what do you want me to do? Why are you asking me this obedience?"

We are in the theological world, where God assumes the anthropological subsoil, autonomy, otherness and the supreme form of love, which is also obedience. We obey human authority because it rests on God's authority. And in the end, it is to Him that we submit ourselves in human mediations. What happens is that in our culture we do not value love as abandonment, which is the proper form of the covenant. We cannot build a covenant if we do not come out of our-

selves, and we tell the other: “I am yours.” In the relationship with God, being a grateful unsuspected relationship of love, the normal dynamic is the loving abandonment that is obedience: “What do you want me to do?” And at this point, the Lord asks us to obey, with the maturity of the faith to the Hierarchy that represents him in front of us, and to whom we have committed to follow in virtue of the vow of obedience. This obedience to the Hierarchy profoundly marked the life of the Founder, and especially at the end of his life, and as such is always an exceptional example for the Piarist.

5. We often do not understand obedience and it is the Lord that explains it to us: “I entered into unknowing, yet when I saw myself there, without knowing where I was, I understood great things; I will not say what I felt for I remained in unknowing transcending all knowledge. The perfect knowledge was of peace and holiness held at no remove in profound solitude; it was something so secret that I was left stammering, transcending all knowledge.”
6. We owe obedience also to the Superior. It is the obedience of mediation. With our vow, we committed ourselves to obey the Superior. Sometimes this fact is understood and lived moralistically and not theologically. We say that the Superior might be mistaken in what he commands, but the subject is not mistaken in obeying. Undoubtedly the Superior can make mistakes and often does. What occurs is that God in his Providence wants us to obey, because through obedience we connect with him. It apparently does not mean to obey to sinful or unjust things; this is a given. In this case, at a psychological –inter-rational level we must balance abandonment with autonomy. On the one side, we have our autonomy and on the other the abandonment to God. Thus, in the relationship with God, there is nothing to balance, just consent. God takes care of the rest. The great difficulty in the relationship with God is in the consent, just like in interpersonal relationships. With God, autonomy always loves abandonment.

To the Superior, in virtue of the vow of obedience, we must undergo his approval and also discern the personal talents, in the service of the community. Subdue means that he can use those talents for the good of the group, or the ministry, encouraging the religious to do

one thing or another, in line with them. And he must experience that there is no greater autonomy than giving oneself to God in obedience, through the mediations that facilitate this obedience. Thus, he will get closer to God and configure more to Christ the Lord.

7. But also the Superior is subjected to obedience. That is, he has some responsibilities in his service of obedience to his brothers. The first thing he must attend to is the pastoral care of the religious. In this he must imitate the Master, who cared for the twelve, he dedicated himself to them, lived with them and on sometimes spoke only to them, especially in the phase of Jerusalem. The Superior's care must cater for all the needs of his brothers. He will take care of them in the difficult moments that they might have, for illnesses, the crisis they suffer, either manifested or because they have talked to him about them. Just like God takes care of the Superior, and he feels his love, he must take care of his brothers and must show them care and be concerned about them and everything that concerns them.

He must have a dialogue with them, even if the Constitutions say that he has the last word on an issue when they cannot find consent. But to do it he will have to try to discover the will of God on his brothers; only then he can exercise his major authority. He must manage his community with the word, but especially with the example of his life.

And he must take care of the council given to him by the Constitutions: "Keeping in mind that he leads human beings, he corrects their failures with gentleness, showing kindness in counseling, rather than severity by commanding." (nº 86).

8. To live an obedience, that leads us to the configuration to Jesus, we must try spiritual indifference. Only when we start from it, we can reach theological obedience to God. The indifference based on placing on a scale: on one side our vital interests, what one loves and desires, projects, spiritual realities, work, self-referential attitude, and on the other the will of God. And see which one according to the principle of spiritual indifference means: "As much as God loves you". It is not just a matter of doing well, but of doing good "as much and how God loves you". Once we know what God wants, we must try to do it well,

because he wants it. If we start this dynamic, we see the vital interests that commit us always more.

There are two objectives in working on spiritual indifference. On the one side, to center life on the will of God, and not on our projects. He who is not centered on the will of God has poor foundations because we have already illustrated that the key of Christian life fulfilling this will.

And, on the other side, the aim is not to reach a goal but to understand whether we have entered into this dynamic. We notice it if we have inner freedom, and do not depend on our interests and desires. We have all shaped our hopes, our heart beginning from determined realities we consider as our good. What good does security give us? It is going vary from one person to another. Therefore, we must examine if we are in the dynamic where we give primacy to the will of God over our plans, projects, desires, illusions, whatever else. Thus, we can configure to the Lord Jesus ever more, which is our lives the desire to resemble him, be like him.

9. A delicate element that might emerge in obedience is when there is a conflict between what the Superior commands and what the religious thinks he must do. It is what the Constitutions claim: "If the decisions of the Superior and the conscience of a religious sometime conflict with each other, both parties, keeping in mind the common good of the Order and of our brothers, must weigh the reasons with serenity, and, through prayer and timely advice, must try to discern the will of God. If, in spite of this, no agreement is reached, and it is necessary to proceed further, always upholding charity, the religious has to obey." (nº 88). It is not easy to do this and there have been some painful cases, but the Constitutions pronouncement is clear.
10. In obedience, we have the example of Mary who completely fulfilled what God asked her. We certainly often have to acknowledge in front of God that we cannot give many things to him. We are unable to take that decision. We must analyze ourselves and give a name to these realities that prevent us from giving ourselves completely. We mustn't find excuses or hide it. But recognize humbly that we still do not have enough strength to give to him these goods we are attached to; perhaps he must take them

away from us. We must confess it sincerely: “Lord, I still cannot do what you are asking me.” In fact, often until he decides to take them away from us, we do not give him the primacy.

But we must be mindful of one thing: we readily associate doing the will of God with giving up. And it is not true. Sometimes it is due to the education we received and the processes we have experienced. But the will of God might ask us to live gratifications. The will of God is not always a call to sacrifice, withdrawal, and nothing else. We must discern every time.

But it is true that the normal path, according to God gives us inner freedom, is taking things away from us. But is it quite different accepting that he takes it away in total freedom, that giving up for asceticism and sacrifice. When it is done with sacrifice and not inner freedom, as soon as we can we take it back. It is not a matter of a heroic sacrifice, but to truly position ourselves in front of God and discover what he wants to do with each one of us. This way we will also walk the path of configuration to him, living like he did.

2. *Discernment*

1. The theme of obedience is closely connected to the experience of Christian liberty. Therefore, to classify obedience, we need to distinguish different levels of freedom. First of all, the psychological freedom that entails the integration of the needs, tendencies, that allows a person to show a specific spontaneity. It is essential as a biopsychic assumption, and if it were missing other levels of freedom would be impaired. We need minimum psychological freedom because if the person is at the mercy of his repressions or fears, they will absorb so much energy that he cannot employ them in other fields. Therefore, psychological freedom.

We also have the freedom of option, which is the freedom as the ability to choose different possibilities. I can choose one thing or the other. It is also essential because people, who cannot choose, tend to confuse the other levels of freedom. A lot has been said and done related to freedom in religious life. We stressed on the active and passive aspect of doing God’s will through the Superiors. We cannot be free outside the truth and God’s will manifested by the

Superiors. Reasoning this way is a trap that prevents a person from maturing and thus, keeping him subdued.

Thirdly, we have autonomous freedom. It is intimately connected to authority. It is when someone discovers freedom, which grows inside rather than from the different external possibilities. It implies the subject is having a strong sense of himself as a person and includes or assumes a great inner maturity.

We also have the freedom that derives from love, which occurs in the interpersonal encounter. But it must truly be an interpersonal encounter, because often love; instead of freeing us it enslaves us. Some ways that the love of interpersonal encounter expresses itself: when one experiences that the other enables us to be: that I am truly myself with the other: or knowing what I am for him is the source of my freedom. Those who are truly in love know this well.

Evangelical freedom. This form of freedom occurs when love becomes a form of supreme spirituality. It is the freedom freed of the self. Obedience is this type of freedom. Thus, all the Christology of the NT introduces us to obedience: The Son had to learn how to obey through suffering, based on suffering. An important and challenging element to live. Living by attempting to configure to Jesus ever more, assimilating oneself to him, joining him. And we must ask this to the Holy Spirit.

2. We must discern the will of God in our own life. But how can we know it? The Constitutions can help us in this sense. On one side, we are informed by the thrust of the Spirit. Unfortunately, we must admit that the Holy Spirit is very neglected in the spiritual experience of Christians, but we are sons of God through the Spirit. Thus, we must be open to the Spirit's impulses, permanently listening to his word, because he manifests God's desire.

Another way is to care for the desires of the community. When it is in prayer, when it gathers under the name of Jesus, when it is tackling its issues or those of its members, the Lord is there, because when two or more get together in my name, he is among them. And thus, the influence of the brothers and events. We must think how, indeed, if we ask our Father to unveil his desires because we want to put them into practice he will respond. Let us remember the words

of Jesus when he said that if someone asks bread to God, he would not receive a stone.

Everything is connected to the freedom we mentioned in the previous paragraph. To know the will of God freedom must be real and therefore free itself from our will. Only this way the vow of obedience can be understood. If we intend it only as a way to do group work well, that is, institutionally or in a moralistic way as ascetic and withdrawal, this cannot produce freedom. And we cannot have true obedience, which for us is the way to configure to Christ the Lord.

3. The will of God must be known personally to fulfill in our life God's desire. Thus, searching for his will, the foundation of Christian life. Because if we do not do what God wants what is the meaning of life? This will, as we said, can be known in different ways, and it is not necessary to always look for it as such. Some people do not ask themselves this question and accept the facts of life with an open heart, receiving with a pure soul the events taken as the God's Providence. Sometimes these events are painful other times gratifying connected with this will.

But we, as religious, must ask ourselves the question. Sometimes it is the individual himself to be directly connected to God's will, but the constitutional document speaks of the community as an important element to answer the question of God's will. It requires a very attentive attitude of mind and heart, and a commitment to which sometimes we are unaccustomed. But we cannot journey in the religious life without it.

Now, related to what was said in the two previous points, it is good to clarify and see where we are heading. If we want to be obedient but cannot choose, we won't even have the ability to obey. And we must be firm on this. If we are not autonomous, we won't be able to perceive self-giving. Nobody can give what he does not have. If I do not have autonomy, I cannot give myself that is what one does in obedience.

4. It is necessary to discern whether in our life we are obedient to the Hierarchy. But here there are two elements that we can compare. On one side, considering obedience as a simple submission. A submission that might lead to infantilize the person if it takes away his autonomy, if it denies his judgment and

ability to reason, if the only thing requested is to merely accept what is being said from above, from the Hierarchy. It is not an evangelical way of behaving. Even if there are people, who think it is straightforward, tranquilizing and confident to act this way. True obedience never darkens the judgment or denies the ability to think, examine and even criticize what is heard.

On the other side, the opposite attitude, of those who suggest that the Hierarchy has not received the power to expose with authority Jesus's message and cannot speak authoritatively on doctrine or moral. Not even this case is fair.

Between these attitudes, there is the one that acknowledges the ability received by the Hierarchy, but with the right and obligation to think, reflect and peacefully subscribe to the teaching or criticize some things we do not agree with. It is not for simple snobbism or dislike of the Hierarchy, but because being a mature adult, with sufficient maturity to judge things, we see inadequacies. It means to be obedient adults, people who are not looking for security, but the truth and know that it is not infallible, and that the Hierarchy itself can be mistaken.

Our Founder is a clear example. When the Order was belittled to a Congregation without vows, Calasanz accepted the decision. But considering his age he did not lock himself up in a monastery (something quite reasonable), nor he withdrew at home and prepared for his death. He stayed in the Institute and fought with all his strength to get it recognized again: he made religious and political requests. And this is how he died. He obeyed, but since he did not agree inside with what had happened, he worked the two last years of his life tirelessly in trying to change the fate of the Institute. And the outcome occurred after his death. Perhaps he lived a personal crisis between the two realities; both conceived as the will of God: the birth of the Work, considered as loved by God, and the reduction of it coming from the representatives of God on earth.

5. In situations of crisis it is good to remember the words of Saint John of the Cross: "I was so overwhelmed, so absorbed and withdrawn, that my senses are left deprived of all their sensing, and my spirit was given and understanding while not understanding, transcending all knowledge. He who truly arrives

there cuts free from himself; all that he knew before now seems worthless, and his knowledge so soars that he is left unknowing transcending all knowledge.”

6. To discern on the obedience to the Superior, we must consider the following steps: first of all, it must be an entirely free act; we say this because sometimes in obedience one might simply be looking for security. Obeying to be safe; obey because I need stability, obey because I won't be mistaken. It is not an act of complete freedom. It is prevented by the fear that often is the consequence of a mistaken education. And since all people seek security, we cannot rule out this from occurring in cultivated people. Christian obedience is a mysterious summary of freedom- limits, and love. If obedience is not freedom, it is not worthy of man.

This freedom must be rooted in faith and love. A faith that does not assume limits is not worthy of the love of God. Of the God, we know as a love that dignifies us, he who allows us to assume our limitations in his covenant. It is the obedience of Jesus where freedom- possession- and love are inseparable realities.

We must also discern whether this obedience leads us to inner freedom. If this is not the case, obedience is neither good nor healthy. God does not want to take away from us one of the greatest realities he granted us, inner freedom. Freedom is given to us only if we fulfill his will, manifesting it as it is.

7. The Superior in seeking God's will in the relationships and responsibilities towards his brothers, he must just turn to articles 84 and 86 of the Constitutions and assess his behavior. His duty in carrying out God's will is to provide pastoral care to his brothers like a father, mindful of their spiritual and personal needs either personally or through other people. According to God's will, he must do his best so that the brothers can live following Jesus. The Superior must listen to the religious who go to talk with him, pay attention to what they say and interpret it considering all the talents and qualities that each one has. He must present himself as the symbol and foundation of the community unity and not of separation or exclusion. The Superior must remember he has the last word in the process of deciding and he must do so in a simple way. Even if it might be difficult.

The will of God is that he lives religious life together with his brothers as an example and aid because they all belong to the same Institute.

And something important: “Keeping in mind that he leads human beings, he corrects their failures with gentleness, showing kindness by counseling, rather than severity by commanding.” (n^o 86).

8. We spoke about spiritual indifference. In this reality, one must ask oneself: What do I feel? The person can perceive that he wants to defend his interests or give himself to God’s will. We feel a deep peace in putting our desires and plan in the hands of God, and even if it difficult, it produces peace. It is one of the signs of the Spirit. As human beings, we find it challenging, but at the same time, we feel free of many things: our plans, our interests, and our possessions. We are confident that God’s will produces more peace, more inner freedom than all the personal successes, no matter how spiritual they may be. Or the opposite occurs: we place our interests ahead of God’s will; we feel resistance and inability to adhere, to give everything to God. It is like a wall that we are unable to cross. Anyone of these situations or feelings is deeply meaningful.
9. In our conflict of conscience, we must have a clean of heart. There is no need for us to put all our efforts in defending our positions. By doing so, we will not achieve God’s will or configuration to the Lord. We have to wait, listen, reflect on the Superior’s request and try to understand its rationale. We must pray to God with the spiritual indifference that we have explained. It is good also to turn to some person of confidence, who understands the problem and can illuminate us. If in the end, the agreement between the religious and his Superior is not achieved concerning the mandate received, with simplicity we must obey with an immense trust in God. In the Founder, his trust in God settled everything out, although we must remember that the saint worked intensely for what he believed to be just. And everything was fixed after a few years, but in his case, the problem was not personal, but of the Institute.
10. Mary was perfectly obedient. She obeyed trusting God: she didn’t exactly know what was going to happen with the angel’s

announcement, but she knew that it came from God and that was enough. She gave her consent, hoping that God would do the best and that she should leave it in his hands. She was faithful out of confidence and hope because an immense love for God dwelled in her heart.

3. Methodology

1. We must be led by the Divine Providence. In the awareness that God wants the best for his children. Considering the events of life as enabled by God, and therefore knowing that in them one meets God. Not denying what happens because it goes against God who is enabling it. Live evangelical freedom, where love reaches its highest spiritual form. Offer God one's own will. What ever happens having the certainty that we are meaningful for God. And that this fact is the source of our own freedom.
2. Having a dialogue with our brothers with the intention of seeking God's will. Entering into prayer and desiring the manifestation of God's will, that is what we yearn for most. Being attentive to the signs of our world; there are many signs that we must receive and interpret because in them we also find God's will. Events are not neutral; in them we can see God's Providence, the doing of the Father, his desire to which we must be open and attentive not to lose it.
3. To live in the community without breaking away from it. Through participative-meetings, of sharing inputs, collaborating with the others, listening to what others are saying, accepting all the good that emerges, providing mutual help. Express one's own opinions on the topics, so all collaborate to the reciprocal enrichment. Living the community and its meetings, aware of the presence of the Lord, because where two are together in his name he is with them. Being aware that those meetings, when attended with a clean heart, amidst the different characters, apart from the different points of view and perhaps through them, the Lord unveils his will. Going to the meeting in the awareness and desire of God manifesting himself to all.
4. Do not distance our heart from the interventions of the Hierarchy. Have an open position on what is being said, commu-

nicating it in a sound critical way when necessary. Do not fear what the Hierarchy says as true Word of God, but that it has to pass the test of a sound judgment that loves and obeys the Hierarchy, but at the same time does not subdue the autonomy of a mature person. Do not be lead by prejudices that often are abundant among us, but at the same time do not be so naive as to accept anything just because it comes from someone who belongs to the Hierarchy. Let neither the Hierarchy destroy a sound autonomy or that it discredits or forgets the other.

5. Saint John of the Cross wrote: “The higher he ascends the less he understands, because the cloud is dark which lit up the night; whoever knows this remains always in unknowing transcending all knowledge. This knowledge in unknowing is so overwhelming that wise men disputing can never overthrow it, for their knowledge does not reach to the understanding of not understanding.”
6. To be consistent with the professed vow of obedience leads us to a ready and joyful obedience to the Superiors. Have a dialogue with them on many occasions, when they ask us to do something important, but also if the will of God is discerned well. Explain, with an open and clean heart, the difficulties we might encounter in their order. Do not live in an attitude that can entirely get by without Superiors, nor judge them merely as the ones in charge of the community, forgetting their primary role of shepherds of the brothers. Simply, present for their approval and discernment also the personal talents in the service of the community. Do not forget that they are like fathers who guide the group and therefore must offer help to the brothers in all they need.
7. The Superior must take his role of community shepherd seriously. Look at himself often in the mirror of the Shepherd of souls, Christ the Lord, to know how he must carry out his work as pastor. Be especially mindful of those who are undergoing external difficulties, that all know, or internal ones, that he might be the only one to know. Be close to the heartbroken, the ones who suffer and are sick. Take special care of the depressed. Make sure that all of the ones who have these needs are well attended by physicians and specialists. Manifest to all these brothers the love the Founder manifested for them. Try

- to be elements of group unity. Scold them if necessary, but always keep a large and merciful heart towards all and forgive and forget the suffered humiliations. Know that all he must do is not merely functional, to guide a group, but the result of a role of obedience he received from the Major Superiors.
8. The Superior trusts his brothers and works for the common good and happiness of the individual, the talents they received from God. According to his mandate, he should assign each brother to a position where they can develop their personality and talents, and their work and service can be more fruitful for all. Remember that the Founder stressed on taking advantage of the “talents” of each religious. When someone feels ill at ease, try to investigate the causes, and as far as possible, within your means try to discern with him why he has reached this situation and what can be done to overcome it.
 9. In conflicts that seem unsolvable between the assignment and the subject’s conscience, the Superior must explain the reasons why the assignment was given. Manifest an open attitude and show that the assignment is not the fruit of a whim, but of a true need. But also try to avoid similar situations. Turn to prayer with the brother. Reexamine his position and assignment, but do the same with the subject’s attitude. When all this is done, remind the religious of what the Constitutions say: “the religious are obliged to obey”.
 10. Like Mary, we must gradually discover the wisdom of self-giving in life, in creating a world, in growing in simple autonomy and open to God, and in focusing on his will. Minimize many things, not assuming in itself a way of life superior to another, or some things to others, but living in the awareness that the most perfect, the best for each one is to do the will of God, even if we do not know where this path will lead us. We only know that the Father loves us and that everything that comes to us comes from his merciful love and infinite tenderness. If we act like Mary, at the end of the road, we will always find God. That after all, our desire is no other than to configure ourselves more and more with him.

8° Configuration to Jesus through the ministry

1° Spirituality

1. Before going to heaven Jesus asked his disciples to go around the world preaching the Good News that he had brought and explained to the people and that the Holy Spirit would have constantly reminded them through his coming. It is the mission. All Christians, on the bases of their baptism, must fulfill the Lord's command. They do so through their words and behaviors. It is not something just for the priests or consecrated, but all those who have received God's seal through their baptism as sons of God.

Each religious Institute carries out a mission entrusted by the Church, according to the charism received by God, and **they** way to fulfill the mission is what we call the ministry. Thus, the mission is unique, while the ministry is multiple.

The Pious Schools received a real evangelizing mission. They have received it through their Founder who, mindful of the realities he was living and seeing in his surroundings every day in Rome, understood what God was asking him. God wanted him to take care of that part of abandoned humanity, left on their own, that nobody cared for. The reality he discovered in Rome touched his heart. Through discernment, with the help of some people who understood him and attentive to what was occurring in Rome full of children without education, he understood that God was asking him to focus on this reality. This is how his vocation emerged, and it was

nothing else than the total and exclusive dedication to the needy children and youngsters in Rome. So, if one asks, which is the particular ministry of the Pious Schools, we must answer self-giving to the needy and abandoned children and youngsters, that is the poor.

2. In the general mission of all Christians and the particular ministry of an Institute, we can also speak of a personal mission, with a different meaning to the one we gave to the general mission. Some characteristics of this particular mission, that lead us to the personal configuration to Christ the Lord, emerges from the personal deepness, without any predefined plan. A specific level of interiority is needed to perceive personal dynamics; this does not have to do with the group to which we belong, that has its particular ministry. A call arises in the person without him even knowing how, to live a personal mission, inside the group where he is living.

This particular mission comes from the merger between fidelity to the self and obedience to God. In this case, the person finds himself first of all not in front of the group, but God, in front of his freedom and obedience. It is necessary to distance, oneself from the group, to receive the personal mission, because God is going to manifest to him his deepest personal mission. Therese of Lisieux lived her life as a Carmelite, she did everything according to her charism, but in the solitude of her heart, she received a call to live her mission determinedly, within the more general one of evangelizing as a Carmelite. It was the spiritual path of love: in the Church, I will be the love, she wrote. She had understood that God was calling her to this, but within the Carmelite life without leaving the Carmelite Order.

This personal mission is not given from outside, but comes from an inner process where God is present and manifests his desire.

Lastly, this mission is something personal. The person is surprised by what is happening. Sometimes the person is tempted to leave the Institution, not because he is in disagreement with it or believes he has been called to a form of superior life, but because he receives a personal call from God. The person feels and understands he must dedicate himself to it. Let us take the example of Mother Teresa of Calcutta who struggled to remain faithful to her mission that called her to leave the Congregation she belonged to. But usually, the per-

son stays in the Institute because he understands that in it he can live his mission and that God does not ask him to leave his current way of life.

3. The Piarist educational mission, or rather, its ministry is focused on the integral formation of the person. The Piarist ministry is addressed to the whole person. The integrality is centered on some traits in the education of children and young people: we want them to love and always seek the truth because it is going to be an essential aspect of their life as good men. It is the way the Piarist ministry contributes to changing the current society. It is also focused on their work as real collaborators to the Kingdom. Thus, the Piarist ministry is not only centered in the culture it can offer; education would not be integral if it did not also care for the soul, of their Christians students and respecting today also the different mentalities and religious experiences of the students, that can sometimes not be Christians. The education tries to foster in the students the desire to work for the building of a more humane world, which lives more in peace and justice, where they must always be and live consistently with their beliefs.

Thus, we can distinguish between the ministry and personal mission. The ministry must be lived theologically, but here it is not about that, but that each one has to discover his personal and unique mission for which he has been predestined for eternity. The above-mentioned example of Therese of Lisieux is clear. One can discover that God loves him very much but within the whole of humanity. But when he begins to suspect that God has focused on him, everything changes, and he starts feeling dizzy; it is the dizziness of the personal call that God has focused so deeply on him, whatever he might have done. And this call must be taken very seriously, because the ministry can and must be lived theologically, but it is another thing to theologically discover the personal mission to which he has been called.

4. What must we do to fulfill the goal of our ministry? If we want to work effectively with children and youngsters, we must lead an evangelical life, following Jesus, loving him, and resembling him. Thus, our ministry will have a special strength, the power of God towards our students. They will see men leading

irreproachable lives wholly dedicated to it. And this will attract or suggest in someone the desire to imitate them, and be like the educators they have.

It is also necessary to be attentive to the preparation in all the fields where we have to serve the students. It is not enough to have a standard education; we need to update and therefore we must be attentive to the preparation in the secular and sacred field. We cannot deal with children and youngsters without a sound emotional maturity to treat them well, be welcoming and loving, but at the same time mindful of the relationships we have with them.

As we live the richness of the received ministry, we can live a personal mission inside. This mission is beyond prayer and action: it is the obedience of love to the one who has called us to this mission. For the same obedience, we pray and for the same obedience we come out of prayer, of the intimacy with God to dedicate ourselves to others. Our great reference person is Jesus. The person who has been called to a specific activity and all goes well, but when God calls him everything changes. We have already mentioned, that normally it does not have to do with a change in status, but a new vocational experience. One can remain all his life in the same status, such as in the example of Therese of Lisieux, who continues to be a Carmelite in the heart and works, but radically changes her experience of mission.

5. And here is how we live according to the words of Saint John of the Cross: “I live, but not in myself, and I have such hope that I die because I do not die. I no longer live without myself and I cannot live without God, for having neither him nor myself what will life be? It will be a thousand deaths, longing for my true life and dying because I do not die. The life that I live is no life at all, and so I die continually until I live with you; hear me, my God: I do not desire this life, I am dying because I do not die.”
6. The Piarist ministry has always had a determined need, since the time of our Founder. If something preoccupied the saint, it was the professional preparation of his brothers. He worked for them to learn what they did not know and was necessary for the schools because no one can give something that he doesn't have. He created the formation houses, even if they weren't al-

ways very successful in this aspect. Sometimes because of few religious capable of managing these houses, others, because he did not give enough time for formation, do to the needs that arose, and he wanted to satisfy. He could not see a need, or receive a petition for help without doing all he could to fulfill it, even if the preparation of his brothers suffered from it. Especially today, we understand the need for formation of those preparing for the ministry before being introduced in the ministry without adequate formation. But our saint lived in a different time with other needs.

The educator must take advantage of all the good he knows to teach the children well. The Calasanzian tradition, already invoked by the Founder, has followed and asked for simple and effective methods, certainly consistent with the progress of sciences and education. In this commitment to teaching children, a new richness has come out of the Pious Schools: many lay people involved in the Institute in different ways and levels. They are active and courageous members of our apostolic work. We must treat them as brothers because they are, and they can carry out, often better than the religious, closeness to children given by the fact that they are lay, many are mothers, and fathers and thus know children better.

In this aspect and also from the personal mission, the critical element of authority emerges, because there can be no mission without authority, always merciful. Those who have this authority can notice it every once in a while, in the moments when the Word of God passes through them like fire, like a dart that goes directly to the heart.

7. The final goal of the Piarist ministry is education to faith. The specific trait of Calasanzian religious education appears with the catechesis. It is present in the Pious Schools from the very beginning. The great catechist in the time of the Founder, while he was still alive, was the abbot Glicerio Landriani. Catechist in the schools and catechist in the parishes on feast days. The catechism is at the heart of the Piarist mission. It is the fundamental means of the Piarist. A catechesis that sheds light on faith begins in the liturgy and prepares for the apostolic action. Catechizing is to enable children and youngsters to get to know what God has done for them and all men, that cultivates

a real Christian life, that deepens the Good News coming from the Lord, living according to the model of Christ, that can react in front of the proposals of the world like faithful disciples of Christ. The Catechesis must conform the life of the believer to that of the Lord.

And what happens to those who live the personal mission received by the Lord? Well, this mission has to do with freedom, but it is not a problem of self-affirmation. The catechist who lives this mission and is sent to whatever assignment has nothing to lose; he knows that he is just asked to sow and do so as best he can. The fruits belong to God. Here, we can remember the parable of the sower. It gives immense freedom because as we mentioned the fruits belong to God and they are his.

Something else, all person who loves the mission with theological love will often find himself alone forever. But, beware it is not an isolating solitude, but in communion. This solitude emerges from belonging to God; obedience and belonging are interconnected because I belong to someone and obey him with my heart. Thus, this solitude is an inhabited one.

8. In the Piarist ministry, the school is the necessary means. It is how Calasanz started. And back then there were schools, but the poor could access them in an almost neglectable number. The Founder realizes the need of educating marginalized children to provide possibilities for a better life. And with his wit and an eye at the Colegio Romano, in charge of higher education- students needed to know Latin to be admitted-, he created elementary schools, preparing students who wanted to go to the Colegio Romano or the ones who did not want to continue their studies. The Calasanz School, and therefore the Piarist School, has always wanted to be popular and animated by the evangelical spirit, freedom, and charity. Its function, together with the subjects taught provides a vision of the world, life, and man enlightened by faith. It is also aimed at providing its students with the skills to achieve a complete maturity and development. The Piarist educator, either lay or religious, spends most of his time in school and must try to take advantage of the time to turn students into real believers, man of peace, who struggle for justice and peace, and are capable of understand-

ing all those who defend the same values, without being concerned with any other religious or social reality that can separate them from it.

While the Piarist is fulfilling his tasks, how does he live when he discovers his personal mission received by the Father of heaven? We are addressing both at the same time, and they are both a means for the intimate configuration to the Lord. The mission reaches its peak moment when it becomes a mission of love. And two aspects emerge. On the one side, when the mission is concentrated on love. And when it becomes fate of death through suffering, intercession. On the other side, through sufferings it gives life to the world. There where God has put us in the mission, there we must give our life, total donation. There where we give ourselves totally, we will be asked the highest dispossession. Dispossession in the mission is another form of suffering.

9. The Piarist ministry cannot just be limited to catechism and schools, preferably elementary and high school, which make up the foundation of popular education. The Piarist ministry is fulfilled in all other activities that favor youth education. It broadens the ministry and paves fruitful ways of evangelization of children and youngsters. We must be mainly focused on the needy. The term “needy” can be applied to many realities, and undoubtedly the Piarist can dedicate himself to all of them. But without neglecting or forgetting the material needs. We must be grateful that the ministry of the Pious Schools is so broad, always in the field of childhood and youth. It is a grace given by the Lord that can never be forgotten and we must always feel grateful for having it.

If this is our reality, then the theological love of mission is essential. It is the first aspect that grounds the person and that he receives gratuitously from God. It is a love that is above all concerned with the dignity of the human person, regardless of the effectiveness of the cause. This theological love can be a feeling, but it does not depend on it, nor does it have this love, it is grace. The privileged moment to discover this theological love is when you cannot love just with our strengths. The mission is perceived as love and as a gift, and in the same moment that the mission is perceived as a gift of God, it transforms the heart. It is the obedience of love.

10. Due to the large ministry, in a community there might be religious who work in different places, have different jobs, and attend different needs. The request of the Constitutions is very wise: "In addition, our Communities embrace with the same love both the religious working in our centers as well as those who are sent by the Superiors to carry out their mission elsewhere, so that in the exercise of different tasks the full communion of religious life may be maintained, and the religious who exercise the ministry outside of our Works may be aware that they continue to be members of the Community from which they are sent. However, those religious who exercise their ministry outside of our Houses must remember that they remain members of the Community from which they came." (n 102).

2. Discernment

1. We must analyze how the Institute participates in the Church's mission. To do so, we must examine whether Jesus is being followed: if it is the loudspeaker of the Good News. If it educates the children and youngsters who study with us in what was the life of Jesus, showing his feelings, encouraging to follow him, stressing that they live the way the Master did. We must also analyze up to what point the children and youngsters are the objects of the work of the Pious Schools. Dedicating to it is what gives life to the Institute. Children and young people must be the child of the eyes of the Order. For them we must fight, to them we must surrender, worry about them. Is there passion in the Piarist for this fringe of society? We assess whether the Piarists are happy to be with them and if it is the object of their work and concern.

The personal mission, of whom we spoke before, usually arrives later on. Sometimes with tranquility and constitutes, when discovered a great joy in life: as Therese of Lisieux writes describing how she found her place in the Church. Sometimes, it keeps the person in the status he is in, while in others it pushes the person to leave his way of life or status where he is in and to begin a new life like in the case of Teresa of Calcutta when she discovered her mission. The one God granted her with love. The ways of God are unpredictable and with each one he acts, as he likes.

2. You will know your personal mission in life, your place in the Church when some of the aspects we mentioned will be reached. While listening about this personal mission have you felt encouraged? How deeply do you perceive personal dynamics that do not depend on the group of belonging? This mission emerges from a synthesis between fidelity to one self and obedience to God. This mission is not positioned in front of a group or ideology but in front of God. And it is precise and necessary to personally distance oneself because without it we would not develop with the deepness that is not pre-established. Do not be concerned of the outside, the mission begins and grows through inner processes, even if sometimes the external facts can be a means to make it come out, and once again think of Teresa of Calcutta. The inner process can last for many years, even thirty or forty, God is unpredictable, and can manifest himself when he likes. When it emerges in you, you will be the first one to be puzzled, because the fact that God focuses specifically on someone produces a strange situation of dizziness.
3. Do we integrally educate the people entrusted to us? Are we working so that our students achieve and always love the truth? The truth will set you free. What is the degree of freedom that we encounter in our students? Is it possible or impossible for you to enter in them, win their trust, and penetrate their mind and heart? Are you in tune with them? Have you taught them how to work for a more human world, and how this depends on their behavior? If they are older: do they come to you as grateful alumni thankful for what you did for them? Are you happy for having taught them to become fruitful men or did you just limit yourself to give the classes? Are they happy because the development of their life came from the germ they received when they were your students? And if you are young: What are your relationships with the people who are close to you, with the ones with whom you work?

Have you felt in your life the dizziness of the personal love of Jesus, of his unique call? It is not a matter whether you believe that God loves you or that Jesus is your friend. In this case we can rationalize. It is something more profound; it is as if you feel seasick in seeing the relationship that God establishes with someone. It is something entirely personal. It has to make room for the creative and salvific

life of God. Consider that Jesus's mission was not that of Mary, but there is no kingdom without Mary.

4. It might be the case that having finished my studies, tired of them and with a great desire to work, understanding the importance of the Piarist ministry, you might have set aside ongoing formation. By doing so it is easy to fall in the bourgeois attitude, in spite of working a lot. Work is often a repetition of acts, and we teach the same subjects year after year, without being open to new perspectives. Thus, the need for an ongoing renovation. We must examine our life under this perspective. We must progress in all ways, human maturity, affective maturity, so necessary throughout life, especially among unmarried people and spiritual maturity in the following of Jesus. At the same time, we must be mindful of the development of one's own human and religious attitudes. The educator must do all this if he wants to truly help those he is dedicated to. It is necessary for the Piarist, if not his educational service would not be updated and thus, would not be helpful for his students.

Look also at your unique, personal and special mission of the obedience of love. We already said that Jesus is our reference. It does not mean he must be a model to imitate, nor to do the things he did in the three phases of his life. Which were they? Nazareth when he lived hidden, like the son of the carpenter, without attracting attention even if he undoubtedly was appreciated for his work, goodness and because years went by and he did not show any intention of getting married, something quite strange back then. Then came the phase of Galilee, where he started his Kingdom, preaching the Word, doing good, trying to change the system where he lived. And, finally, the third phase, of Jerusalem, place of passion and death. In fact, such three different stages have a single trait, live in obeying the Father.

5. We must be united to the Lord, watchful of our vocation expressed by Saint John of the Cross: "When I am away from you what life can I have except to endure the bitterest death known? I pity myself, for I go on and on living, dying because I do not die. A fish that leaves the water has this relief: the dying it endures ends at last the death. What death can equal my pitiable life? For the longer I live, the more drawn out is my dying.

6. In some way, we have already said what the ministry requires from us. Take care of it renewing it at all levels of life, those who stay still, those who do not progress recede, and that is certain. Our world is rapidly changing. The new generations in some aspects progress quickly, almost exponentially. In others they are fragile, and we need to help them. Finally, in others, they are actively facilitated like in technology. Thus, we must make an effort, so that the authority in science can also give us the authority in the religious field and in the ones where children and youngsters show their fragilities.

And at the same time, we must live the mission personally with a pure heart. Being called should never give us a feeling of superiority, and we must have this very clear. In any case, it must be a grateful surprise of feeling called. Those who have been called know that it is a gift and cannot but acknowledge it, but at the same time recognize it does not belong to them. The opposite of mission is possession. Instead, dispossession always passes through humbleness, for humble gratitude. As we said, gratefulness without humbleness, stubbornness; humbleness without gratefulness, proudness.

7. If the Piarist ministry has catechesis as its main element, it is necessary to examine the presence of this in the education we give to children, if it constitutes an important element of the activity in the educational centers. It has to occupy a preponderant place in the educational pastoral care. And we must also see the contents of it. It is true that there are many materials that can help, some of common scope, others of the catechists themselves and their history of how they teach the subject, others published by schools or demarcations for the catechists. Is catechesis a way of entering into what is the religious experience of learners? Does it adapt to them? Is it fundamentally based on knowledge or is it aimed at attitudes, at life, at the heart? Mind without heart, do not create Christians, but just people who know the doctrine and nothing else; heart without mind, encourages sentimentality, and this disappears at the slightest difficulty that arises in life or before strange propositions that may come from other environments. Therefore, does the catechesis that is taught illuminate the faith so that it is stronger, stronger and more convinced? Do

you start the liturgy so that the students enter it and do not leave it as soon as they receive the confirmation or leave the school? Does it prepare for apostolic action so that it can be sustenance every day of tomorrow, especially when life poses problems and difficulties?

The mission grows in love. We like to measure the success we achieve by the number of people who come to our catechesis or celebrations or by those who belong to our groups. On the other hand, that is not true success. The Lord, to use the same expression, obtained success on the cross and from there, rising again, salvation came. Obedience to God gives inner freedom to face when necessary and be silent when one believes it is convenient.

8. Here we must examine if our schools follow the prescriptions of the Constitutions. We must continue to be popular. Undoubtedly, it is true in many places, even if “popular” should have a different content in some aspects compared to the time of Calasanz; that is, without downplaying what was claimed backed then, its meaning is wider. It must be filled by the evangelical spirit and thus, foster in the students of every classroom human, religious and interrelation values. This evangelical spirit must feature the students. It must foster freedom and charity. If it doesn't it cannot be considered a true Calasanzian school. The person must develop freedom in line with human progress, so as to not be harmful to anyone. Justice, together with peace must be one of the taught values. It should also help to give a vision of faith of everything, of man, of nature, of the world, of the people that is the most worthy thing that exists, of other religions. All is part of the Christian heart.

Thus, in the school, the educator, referring to Jesus must offer himself to others. Self-giving, the sacrifice that comes from solidarity to voluntary self-sacrifice. We are not talking about heroism. Only by assuming this dynamic can we assume in peace our current situation in the Church: the few pastoral fruits that are being collected in all fields. This is a moment of grace, to perceive the following of Jesus in self-giving. We must not cling to our plans but instead give way to God and live what we have to live. It is not heroism, but to live the mystery of giving life through death.

9. We have already said that the field of the Piarist ministry is very broad. And in any work we do, we have to put the Calasanzian style, concern for and dedication to abandoned children and youth. Always, wherever we are, we are called to deliver the Word, which is not ours or belongs to us. Many times, seeing that we do not live what we preach makes us feel guilty. To cushion this guilt, we tend to say “in our opinion”. But we have not been sent to preach our opinions, but the Word, which is not ours. Paul says, “We carry the treasure in clay pots, so that it is clear that the strength comes from God and not from us”. And we have to remember that you do not educate if you do not put the person above all pedagogy and method.
10. What are the relationships among community members? Is there the same caring and affection for those who work in different assignments, have different tasks, are in our centers or carry out their mission outside obeying to the Superiors? The important thing is that the Kingdom is spreading.

3. Methodology

1. Give thanks to the Lord for the received charism, a gift of love. The love of God is always free. We are always in debt towards this love. The only way to satisfy this debt is through gratefulness. The Lord expects this gratefulness as we see in the gospels with the ten cured lepers when only one returned to thank him. Let us not be the ones who do not thank the Lord for the healing we received.
2. Examine your person to see if the experience of God shows you what your personal mission emerges from the depths of your being. It is not about waiting for it to come from outside, it always comes through internal processes. When this mission appears, one is surprised but understands what God asks of him. It's something personal. Do not be surprised at what happens to you. Open your heart. Do not worry if he calls you after many years of working in the Piarist ministry. Many things of God arrive with time; they come apparently late. I know, on the one hand, faithful to yourself and, on the other, obedient to God. The mission springs from the synthesis of these two aspects.

3. Love the students who have been entrusted to you. Always, even if sometimes it difficult to do so. Do not be too focused on external behavior, and try to understand the reasons behind the behavior and work from there. Your task is to educate integrally. Do not falter in this perspective. Foster their culture, strengthens their spirit. Increase their knowledge; focus on making God important in their lives. Try to take steps with them to the life of God. That they can leave and when they are older can realize how much you cared for them, their dignity, and their overall development.
4. Truly to live your religious consecration. May your life be evangelical, that is, with the presence every day of the Gospel in the way you are and behave. Thus, you can offer more good to your students. Prepare yourselves in every field. Try to have spiritual affinities with the poor. You will make the good citizenship your mission and always be faithful to it. Think that we are all tasked in this world to believe, hope and love.

If you ask yourself about your personal mission, remember that you might have to live it unconsciously, without knowing anything. It might take time for you to discover it or even discover it when you are already in the Kingdom. And thinking about this mission, do not think about the extraordinary, special or exceptional things. This might occur in some cases; in others it is the opposite. We have already mentioned the two Thereses, each one an example of two different manifestations of the personal mission; in Therese of Lisieux, remaining where she was, in Teresa of Calcutta in a breakup.

5. As in Saint John of the Cross: “When I try to find relief seeing you in the Sacrament, I find this greater sorrow: I cannot enjoy you wholly. All things are affliction since I do not see you as I desire, and I die because I do not die. And, if I rejoice, Lord, in the hope of seeing you, yet seeing I can lose you doubles my sorrow. Living in such fear and hoping as I hope, I die because I do not die. “
6. Find ways of teaching that are appropriate for the students. The important thing is not to show that you are very knowledgeable, but that they learn. That is why Calasanz became small, and for that reason, he asked to follow simple and effective methods. It will undoubtedly depend on where you are and

on whom you dedicate yourself to. It is not the same to work in a University as to be in children's class, but the dynamics are always the same, to find the best way to learn what is taught, and therefore take care of how it is done, always being consistent with the progress of the education sciences. In teaching, be simple, because there is no mission without humility. Remember that the great joy of every teacher is that his disciples overcome him. When it is given, this fills the heart of the true teacher with immense joy.

7. Always keep into account that the final goal of our Ministry is the education of faith. And whatever subject you teach or age of your students, you must turn them into real Christians. Working for a person to become a Christian does not mean to insist on religious aspects tirelessly, but help students grow into adult people, always according to their age. He who educates in a Christian way teaches with rigor and manifests attitudes of love, understanding, acceptance, and simplicity in his actions. Christian education must not focus on religious elements that are denied by authoritarian attitudes, neglect, and disregard for the students.
8. May the evangelical spirit of the Calasanzian schools be present in the way you are, act and relate to your students. Create freedom and sow charity. And may this be noticeable in them. Intercede for each one of them. Try to know their needs, and also their family members, to understand them better. You might undergo the dispossession of the mission, due to age, illness or some destine that forces you away from the place where you are happy and at ease. Always remember that dispossession of the mission is great suffering that also helps in the configuration to Jesus.
9. The Piarist can work developing his ministry in many places and activities. But he must put in all of them the Calasanzian mark, that is the concern and dedication to the needy children and youngsters, and this can be done everywhere and in all jobs.
10. Pray for one another, wherever you are or whatever service or work you are carrying out. Thus, we will be true Piarists.

9° Configuration to Jesus through formation

1° Spirituality

1. “The Holy Spirit, always working in the Church, guides each faithful in the building of the Body of Christ, and towards a determined configuration with Christ, in which each vocation and state of life is defined. The saving project of God, the Father, is thus implemented both for the sake of humankind and for each person.

The Piarist religious vocations lead us to become members of the Order and, as such, to religious consecration lived in community, as well as to the Pious Schools specific ministry, as desired by Calasanz and approved by the Church.

Formation for the Piarist religious life is a process through which a response is given to the impulses of the Holy Spirit, who guides the candidates and manifests himself in the deep tendency to which he leads them, among other things, “to be authentic Poor of the Mother of God, and to pray and live as those who are simple, “a child among the Children”.

It, therefore, entails, the candidate’s growth in our ecclesial identity and the adoption of an evangelical way of life, which in many aspects does not match with the society’s standards, particularly those of the own social environment. In the midst of this world, our way of life leads us to incarnate the Beatitude of the little one, the simple and the pure in heart, and to be the leaven of the kingdom of God already present and operating in our midst.” (Formation and studies of the Piarists= FEDE n. 14-16).

2. “Vocational Gospel phases. In all vocational journey, there are three particular phases, of the so called “Vocation Gospel”: “seek for Jesus, follow and remain with Him.”

The dynamic process is realized in three steps or moments of *arousal, discernment, accompaniment*, the distinction based more on the methodology than chronology. Each one of these moments has an overall objective, its educational and pastoral characteristics and formative content.

The objective of the first moment is: to provide to all the most adequate adolescents and young people involved in our pastoral and educational activities the particular vocational proposal.

The overall objective of the second phase is to allow the adolescents and young people who are assessing a possible call to a Piarist life or another consecrated vocation to discern.

The overall objective of the third moment is to enable the adolescents and young people who after a period of discernment have seen a life option in Piarist life or another consecrated vocation to continue developing their vocational growth.” (Piarist Vocational Pastoral Directory =PV, n. 37,38,47,59)

3. “Called in community to work as “daily laborers in a very fertile harvest”, as “collaborators with Truth”, Piarists should assume since the beginning of their formative process the Initial Formation’s global objective:
 - to respond to the call of God:
 - through a process of personal maturation and autonomy
 - in order to freely and faithfully identify with the life and mission projects of the Piarist Order, thus incarnating it in today’s Church and world.

The Order’s mission through persons and institutions is to cooperate in order that the young are aware of the divine gift of vocation, helping them to integrate their personal project with God’s plan and inviting them to give a grateful and generous response, offering themselves as instruments of God in the Pious Schools’ Order. The entire Piarist community shall hold this guiding responsibility, accompanying with particular care those who give signs of vocation; in practice, however, this responsi-

bility is actually held by individuals specifically appointed for that purpose.

The participation of itinerant formators, either from the same Demarcation or from others, shall be enhanced with a view of supporting the formative process with courses, retreats, workshops, spiritual exercises” (FEDE, n. 31,32).

4. “The *pre-novitiate* is the first stage of the Piarist’s initial formation . Its duration is of at least one year. In this stage, candidates may continue their studies, matching them with Piarist formation. What precedes the *pre-novitiate* is considered *vocational pastoral (VP)*, with a related *directory* in the Order.

The *pre-novitiate*’s objectives are: to mature and strengthen personal vocation through a deep self-knowledge process, including positive and negative moments of one’s life. To achieve a growing knowledge of Jesus Christ’s *person*, as a disciple who follows him, knows him, listens to him, prays with him and works for him. To scrutinize the person of Saint Joseph Calasanz and his works.” (FEDE, n. 36.37)

5. Saint John of the Cross: “Not for all beauty will I ever lose myself, but for I-don’t-know-what which is so gladly gained. Delight in the world’s good things at the very most can only tire the appetite and spoil the palate; and so, not for all of sweetness will I ever lose myself, but for I-don’t-know-what which is so gladly found.”
6. “The *novitiate*, as an initiation to the religious life within the Piarist community, is the period for vocation’s maturation, during which the personal option is clarified. It’s a special stage, both intense and challenging, but, far from moving away from reality, it must help to start in it a new life-style.

Objective of the stage. At the end of the *novitiate* each candidate in formation is able to discern, in an atmosphere of spiritual serenity, the call to following Jesus Christ through a real experience of Piarist religious life, aimed to shape his personality with the Gospel’s values and according to the life project as proposed in the Constitutions to be freely assumed with the first profession’s commitment.” (FEDE, n. 42, 43)

7. “*Juniorate* is conceived as a formative period during which already professed candidates living in a *formation house* mature their vocation and follow courses, in particular philosophical and theological subjects. This formative period is developed in two phases regarding the final vocational option: phase 1, far from the *solemn profession* and focused in the annual renewal of vows; in phase 2, next to the solemn profession, focused in the maturation of a religious option for the entire life, normally accompanied by theological studies.

Juniorate's duration is of six years, extendible to a maximum of nine, due to the convenience of extending the simple profession's period, or the need to complete ecclesiastical studies or the interruption of the formative curriculum with the special experience outside the *formation house*. Thus, the candidate who has professed simple vows and did not complete the ecclesiastical studies continues to be in the initial formation process.

Curricular experience outside the juniorate's house. During the years of simple profession, the junior may experience one year, at least, our life and ministry in a different community than that of the *juniorate*. This experience may take place after the first year of theology, half way through the *juniorate's* stage, or before the *solemn profession*, once completed theological studies. The major superior, along with formators and the candidate, outline the experience plan, which should be accompanied and eventually evaluated. The experience is part of the Piarist's formative “curriculum”.

The juniorate's formative period must be performed as a personal itinerary and a formative process in community, in which each phase and even course has a certain identity determined by:

- the various landmarks towards *solemn profession* and *ordination*;
 - the studies performed;
 - the ministries prepared and received;
 - the annual renewal of vows” (FEDE, n.47-50).
8. “Ongoing formation, as an ongoing process to actualize our vocational response, must embrace all phases of life. The regular FP is realized:

- according to individual and personal rhythms in coordination with the entire community;
- according to what has been established by the community (religious, educational..) considering different personal situations.

Both cases call for, as a previous condition, an attitude of availability and harmonization among the persons and their communities.

The regular FP must set and plan at each level procedures or means to achieve sector goals. Each person and community, considering the proposed suggestions, will device responsibly projects and programs for their regular FP.” (“Ongoing Formation Directory” n. 59,60)

9. “After Initial Formation we can distinguish three life cycles in adult Piarist life:
- first adult life, of young maturity, approximately from 25 to 45 years old;
 - second adult life, of full maturity, approximately from 45 to 65 years old;
 - third adult age, of serene maturity, from 65-year old to the moment of our death.

During each cycle, most Piarist undergo similar situations. Thus, highlighting for each age group a broad overall goal, common to all (addressed in the “discernment” sub-chapter) and the proposal of adequate means to achieve it (addressed in the “methodology” sub-chapter).

Specific features experienced by the young- adult Piarist:

- enthusiasm and total dedication to Piarist apostolate,
- commitments entrusted under his complete responsibility,
- extended personal relationship network,
- stronger awareness and involvement with social, cultural, ecclesial relations
- specialization studies,
- personal social reaffirmation,
- great expectations and critical attitude towards the Order and the Church,

- Piarist vocation assertion focused on the mission,
- Practical implementation of the Piarist life project discovered and assumed in Initial Formation,
- Life experience where “prophecy” exceeds “memory”.

Some of the most frequent difficulties:

- Excessive activity, that can distract attention from the community, spiritual life or personal focus,
- Individualism that subtly pushes towards approaches and activities not centered in the charism,
- First experiences of our limitations,
- Personal difficulties such as: falling in love, misunderstandings, professional failure
- Unexpected emotional imbalances due to easing up of some defense mechanisms,
- Possible routine and inner tiredness,
- Too frequent or unassimilated obedience,
- Being sent to a country with a different culture from ours,
- Loss of the meaning of who we are and do can appear during this cycle” (FP, n. 75-77).

“Specific features experienced by the mature-adult Piarist:

- Time of fulfillment when youth activism decreases but with more experience and information to address the complexity of events,
- Responsibility and positions inside and outside the group,
- Deeper awareness to new calls and challenges that trigger improvements,
- Vital need to be fulfilled in the Piarist identity,
- Assertion of the Piarist vocation through communion,
- Opportunity to live integrating stability and creativity,
- Realism takes the place of youth idealism,
- Balanced life experience between “memory” and “prophecy”.

Some of the most frequent difficulties:

- The second or midlife strong crisis, that can crush a person or give new life,

- Tendency to settle down and accept mediocrity,
- Risk of being locked in individualism or egoism,
- Temptation to reduce our relationships with God, others and young people,
- Desire not to be bothered (comforts, monotony),
- Possibility of not feeling fulfilled, or risking a strong vocational, professional, affective and even existential crisis,
- Risk of being too attached to the past, being self-absorbed, feel depressed,
- Accepting important responsibilities in the Order,
- Beginning a new phase of life or ministry in a different environment or circumstances,
- Some serious health issue,
- Seek compensation with exaggerated usage of goods, activism, laziness, imaginary illness, unclear emotional relationships “, (FP, n. 82-83).

“Specific features experienced by the adult or elder Piarist:

- Time of progressive spirituality, deepening self-knowledge,
- New apostolic opportunities different from the previous ones,
- More available time,
- Possibility to cultivate more intensely the core of consecrated life (personal oblation, lectio divina, ministry of intercession..)
- Affirmation of Piarist vocation in inner consecration,
- Progressive acceptance of the experience of kenosis,
- Increasing confidence in God reaching the final part of our life, life experience where “memory” exceeds “prophecy”.

Some of the most frequent difficulties:

- progressive reduction of the vital mood and dedication to the Piarist ministry,
- not always well assimilated experiences of solitude or feelings of uselessness,
- withdrawal from professional activities and psychological resistance in starting new ones,

- worsening of the negative aspects of the previous period, with manifestations of dissatisfaction, bitterness, criticism...
 - growing limitations due to age and greater dependence on others,
 - feeling of psychological and moral collapse in cases of serious or chronic illness.” (FP, n. 88-89).
10. “Importance of disease and accompaniment. We all have to feel especially committed to the Piarists who, due to illness or old age, experience the definitive decline of their health and live this third radical moment of their existence.

Each Demarcation should have a place prepared as infirmary to care for the most serious cases. To these religious, in addition to offering them with love and dedication all the necessary human and health care, we will accompany them psychologically and spiritually in this last stage of their existence of full configuration to Christ in the mystery of passion. We will not stop visiting them assiduously with feelings of love and gratitude.” (FP, n. 94)

2º Discernment

1. “This formative process is dialogical: called to be Piarists, we are shaped and converted by God to the extent of our response. It’s an ongoing process through which we collaborate with the Holy Spirit operating in us to follow Jesus Christ according to the Piarist living of the Gospel, and we strive to shape and continuously strengthen our identity before the community and the world, progressively performing our vital unity in Christ through the Spirit.

This vocational identity is a personal experience, which we live and express in:

- the spiritual life
- the inner peace
- the confidence in the future
- the capacity to love and to work with and for others
- the creative fidelity to the Piarist charism
- the Piarist ministry praxis

It accompanies us in each stage, and should integrate all the aspects of our personality under the dynamism of the following of Christ in the Piarist religious life.” (FEDE, n. 17,18).

2. All that was said in the first sub-chapter on the goal of the first moment must be done “through an adequate education and pastoral process, to discover more clearly that one’s life is a gift of God and that each one is called to live it as a personal response to the divine plan of salvation. (VP, n. 38)”.

And I highlighted that the second general moment must be fulfilled “through the human and Christian maturation process and monitoring his personal adequacy, to enable a free and conscious response to a special vocation in the Church.

Discernment in the vocational process is absolutely necessary because the vocation is neither created or built by the person but is a gift of God to spread. Thus, we must help young people to listen to their inner call and look for God’s will in their life; and help them receive, choose and respond freely” (VP, n. 47,48).

Finally, what is indicated in the general objective of the third moment must be carried out “by means of an adequate formative accompaniment, so that they can make their first options and build the bases that allow them to begin initial formation.” (VP, n. 59)

3. “To accept the vocational call to the Pious Schools entails:
 - an ongoing searching attitude,
 - fidelity to God, who is always faithful;
 - desire of serving within the community;
 - courage and commitment to overcome doubts and fears (discernment);
 - progressive integration into the Piarist family through formation in the stages of *pre-novitiate*, *novitiate* and *juniorate*.

In order to proceed with and attuned formation of the various facets of the candidate’s personality, the Piarist formative project provides certain objectives for each stage, with related indicators and formative mediations.” (FEDE, n.33)

4. “At the end of the *pre-novitiate* each candidate in formation will have performed an initial discernment of his vocation, tak-

ing into consideration his own reality, the light of faith, and the vision of Piarist life through a first experience of community life. He is now prepared to start the *novitiate*.” (FEDE, b. 38)

5. Saint John of the Cross indicated: “A generous heart will never care to go part way; it won't be cowed if there is passage anywhere, but set out on the hardest road: nothing can cause it misery, and with faith soaring like a cloud it feeds on something I do not know that one may come on randomly.”
6. “Requirements for admission to the novitiate are:
 - health and absence of canonical impediments;
 - vocational decision based on an adequate experience of faith;
 - capacity regarding the option for celibacy, obedience and poverty with an adequate equilibrium in psychological and affective terms;
 - ability for Piarist community life;
 - capacity to exercise our mission.” (PV, n. 44)
7. “Objective of the first phase of *juniorate*. At the end, each candidate in formation will have progressed in the maturation of his Piarist vocation, developing personal skills through studies and religious, pedagogical and cultural experiences, which characterize this phase, as well as experiencing with fullness and joy Piarist way of life.

In this phase of *juniorate*, those in formation are required:

- a personality initially integrated in all its dimensions, enabling them to experience in a comprehensive and satisfactory way professed life, and progress in it;
- professional qualifications through systematic studies, as a responsible preparation to pastoral and educational ministry;
- an increasing spiritual experience, with a positive utilization of the means for spiritual growth.

The Piarist community undertakes to:

- accompany the junior in his vocational growth and discernment;

- establish conditions and provide the necessary means for achieving the formation required;
- ensure the accompaniment and guidance of the religious acting as Master, and of a trained team, both for living together with the juniors in the community and for helping them in their growth;
- enable access to most appropriate *centers of studies* of greater excellency.

Fomators and candidates are requested by the Order to:

- walk together in the religious life, accepting mutual differences and various responsibility roles in community decisions;
- responsible work and study;
- development of personal and community project;
- participation in the life of the Order and of the *Demarcation*, according to their level.

The objective of the second phase of the *juniorate*. At the end, each candidate will have achieved maturity of an adult person, who has integrated formative dimensions and consolidated his Piarist personality. He will achieve this target through various formative means, as studies, prayer and discernment, and religious, pedagogical and cultural experiences, which characterize this phase, enabling him to address his life in a definite way with the solemn profession and with deacon and priestly ordination, as appropriate.

In this phase, juniors are requested:

- a personality adequately structured in all its dimension, enabling them to be prepared in a responsible and committed way for definitive options of their Piarist life;
- professional qualification through systematic studies, as responsible preparation to pastoral and educational ministry.” (FEDE, n.53-56, 58-59)

8. “Means for personal FP:

- personal prayer,
- lectio divina of the Scriptures,
- deepen the Constitutions and Rules,

- silence and time of solitude,
- spend time in our room,
- experience of the commitment of consecrated life,
- personal ascetic activity,
- sacramental life,
- spiritual accompaniment and evaluation, exercise of community virtues,
- care for physical and psychological health,
- daily work: domestic, apostolic, professional, update in theology, pastoral and pedagogical activities,
- adequate use of mass-media and other cultural means,
- develop some expertise and hobbies,
- informed on the situation in the world, politics..
- dedicate at least, one hour each day to personal FP,” (FP, n. 61).

9. “The objectives of FP for the first adult stage:

During the first years the young-adult Piarist will have to achieve maturity as a person and believer, as a religious and priest (or catechist) educator developing the traits that characterize him, to live in a satisfying way his identity of young religious adult.

Specific features of the young-adult Piarist. The characteristics are:

- gradually put into practice the global project of Piarist life assumed in initial formation,
- live fully committed to the mission,
- grow in fidelity to the Gospel and Piarist vocation in active life,
- foster one’s personal charism and the Piarist common charism,
- theory and practical update on topics pertaining to pastoral activity, education topics
- looking for and receiving the counsel of this first period of the religious adult” (FP, n. 78-79).

“Objective of the FP in the second adult age: In the years of the second adult age the Piarist must achieve a full maturity as a person,

a believer, a priest (or catechist) educator, developing the traits that characterize him through adequate processes and means, to live in a satisfying way his mature adult religious identity.

Specific features of the full-maturity Piarist. The characteristics are:

- have an open attitude to new circumstances and ability to adapt to them,
- live communion in a full and personalized way,
- desire to deepen the values of personal life in an extended period of spiritual and apostolic recovery, distanced from his normal life,
- refresh theory and practice on themes of theology and others related to our mission,
- seek for the necessary spiritual and psychological help to positively address this second phase of life” (FP, n. 84-85).

“Objective of the FP in the third adult age: In the years of the third adult age the Piarist must achieve a serene maturity as a person, a believer, a priest (or catechist) educator, developing the traits that characterize him through adequate processes and means, to live in a satisfying way his mature adult religious identity.

Specific traits of Piarist serene maturity. The characteristics are:

- dedicate more intensely to the Fontal core of religious life,
- live consecration more fully and innerly,
- share in the community life’s hardships and joys,
- compensate progressive decrease of strength by readapting his life and apostolate,
- refresh theory and practice in the new apostolic,
- look for spiritual and material help to boldly address his limits” (FP n, 90-91).

10. “Immediate preparation to death. Following our Holy Father’s exhortation, will help the brother with the celebration of the sacraments and the total and final self-giving to God, for him to live this moment with faith and love, as a supreme hour of confidence and hope as he prepares himself, under the protection of Mary, to follow The Risen Christ in the Mystery of God for eternity.” (FP, n. 95)

3º Methodology

1. “To achieve a formation thus designed, the following will help:
 - to have before one the evangelical and Calasanctian pattern of the ‘New Man’ required by today’s Church and the world;
 - to internalize and assimilate the set of values we have chosen as a comprehensive and unifying life project;
 - to be aware of and share social hardships and emergencies;
 - to be aware of and to work for the children and youth who most suffer injustices and related consequences;
 - to live the formative process, regarding the Gospel and the Calasanctian charism, as an experience of God incarnated in historical reality;
 - to prepare for the mission that is entrusted to us through a responsible dedication to main formation guidelines and to study;
 - to assimilate and achieve ownership of the specific, comprehensive and unified piarist project of life, as proposed by the Constitutions and Rules;
 - to go along the path of religious consecration, which through the Piarist ministry’s practice teaches Jesus Christ’s poor, chaste and obedient way of life;
 - to find out the inner trend that the Holy Spirit raises in each candidate for Piarist religious vocation specifying concrete elements contained in it;
 - to perform the exercise of self-knowledge leading to highlight capacities and “twisted tendencies” in the candidate’s heart when consciously facing personal, social, educational, ecclesial, institutional, communitarian realities, in order to learn to discern and to choose what is typical of the action of God in his inner life, thus preventing evil and supporting goodness;
 - to develop intellectual skills in line with the life of the Spirit in order to ensure the personal integration of pedagogical, philosophical and theological contents;
 - to cultivate personal faculties of intelligence, liberty and will in order that candidates learn to read their inner life in a realistic way, knowing to discern what corresponds to

their deepest identity (inner trend) and developing ability to freely choose what will lead them to the practice of perfect charity. (FEDE, n. 19)

2. “Thus, the vocational itinerary begins when the person perceives the gift of the call. To raise the vocation is to develop in the heart the ability to listen to the Lord and respond positively. The vocational pastoral agent must foster in the young person a personal approach of sensibility and availability towards special ways of life and evangelical mission” (VP, n. 40).

“Each Vocation Orientation Center will look for and use the most adequate means for the candidate to acquire formative content:

- establishing Christian educational environments;
 - good knowledge and maintaining a relationship with the candidate’s family;
 - strengthening group life based on evangelical values;
 - closely monitoring the young person and if necessary asking for the help of experts;
 - personal accompaniment;
 - organizing periodic encounters of the group; planning a basic catechesis on faith” (VP, n. 66)
3. “By their own nature, the above objectives must be:
 - phased;
 - mutually consistent;
 - appropriate for each situation and individual;
 - unifying elements of the existential dimensions of Piarist formation: human, Christian, religious and Calasanzian.” (FEDE, n.34)
 4. “Candidates entering into the *Pre-novitiate* are requested:
 - to have a personal psychological balance and the studies required;
 - a qualified experience of Christian vocation;
 - an explicit, even if not yet absolute, desire of becoming a Piarist religious;
 - the purpose to live in community group, accepting all its implications;

The Piarist Community undertakes to:

- receive them in a house appointed for that purpose;
 - provide a comprehensive vision of the initial formative process;
 - develop a formation plan for this stage;
 - accompany them in their vocational itinerary, on a personal and group basis, through an expert religious;” (FEDE, n. 39-40)
5. Saint John of the Cross said: “He who is sick with love, whom God himself has touched, finds his tastes so changed that they fall away like fevered man’s who loathes any food he sees and desires I-don’t –know-that which is so gladly found.”
6. “The Piarist community undertakes to:
- receive the candidates with joy and friendliness;
 - accept them as they are, with their initiatives and concerns, positive qualities and limits;
 - provide full dedication of an adequate religious, such as the Master of Novices;
 - provide an adequate House for Novices and a religious team that make up the community;
 - help to freely respond to God’s call in the Church;
 - provide the means to carry out a meaningful experience of faith in the community;
 - being open to welcome and accept new members in the community;
 - discern the candidates’ vocation;

Option of the candidate and final evaluation phase:

- At the beginning of the Novitiate each candidate will write his expectations.
- At the end of the Novitiate the candidate will request in writing the simple profession, stating the reasons.
- The formative team at the end of the Novitiate, will evaluate in writing the candidate in view of the phase objective, in his case, propose to the Major Superior his admission to first profession” (VP, n. 45,46).

7. “The Piarist community undertakes to:
 - Hold adequate accompaniment of vocational growth and discernment;
 - Establish conditions to finalize initial formation of juniors;
 - Choose appropriate *centres for theological studies*;
 - Provide a formative community particularly adapted to psychological and spiritual age of those in formation and to their studies and religious commitments;
 - Discern with them the option of ordained ministry;

In this phase, formators and candidates are requested:

- To build a community environment where interpersonal service relationships, fraternal correction and personal and community discernment are feasible;
 - A responsible study of theology;
 - The development of personal and community projects;
 - The participation in ministerial practices, preferably Piarists;
 - Live a deep and mature spiritual experience” (FEDE, n. 60,61).
8. “Personal projects and programmes. With this and others possible means of the normal FP, each religious must devise his concrete FP program, as part of his personal life project.

This project must include:

- Personal mindfulness, achieved with personal reflection, enlightened by the grace and helped by the remarks of others (*analysis*);
 - Critical evaluation of the situation related to personal relationship with God, with others, inside and outside the community, and the apostolic activities of the mission (*diagnosis*);
 - Some personal project, developed if possible with the help of another person, and properly disclosed to the community, with periodic planning, goals and formative areas, with adequate means and procedures to achieve them and specific evaluation stages” (FP, n. 62).
9. Means to achieve the specific characteristics of the Piarist young maturity phase:
 - accept a specific accompaniment in the first years;

- dialogue with the spiritual masters,
- help the young religious in his first insertion in a community other than that of initial formation,
- complete his formation with specialization studies
- live in a stimulating community environment with easy communication among religious,
- assign the young religious to an apostolic activity he can carry out responsibly and satisfactorily,
- organize some encounters of same age religious,
- attend courses in youth ministry, pedagogy, orientation...
- feeling closeness and understanding in initial difficulties,
- dedicate some special time every once in a while, to recover strength and spirit,
- participate in one month long exercises or extended spiritual retreats, progressing in the cycle or when convenient,
- receive appropriate psychological and spiritual help when first serious vocation issues emerge.” (FP, n. 80)

Means to achieve the specific characteristics of the Piarist full maturity phase:

- attend refresh courses on the Bible, theology, catechesis, moral,
- participate in some encounters on our Charism (Calasanz, Pious Schools, Piarist spirituality),
- deepen themes on how to support our mission (social doctrine of the Church, social media communication, faith-culture relationships, specialized pastoral care),
- celebrations and spiritual events with our co-brothers of the 25th anniversary of professed vows or priest ordination,
- address in an extended retreat the experience of the project assumed in the profession (Constitutions),
- accept adequate proposal for this age to foster apostolic fruitfulness, for example, spend some time in border situations, in missions,
- try to be open to a process of renewal, with capacity to adopt new values, methods....,

- receive psychological and spiritual help to positively solve midlife crisis.
- take a sabbatical year or similar experience” (FP, n. 86).

Means to achieve the specific characteristics of the Piarist serene maturity phase:

- “appropriately prepare for this period of life before it begins or as soon as it begins,
- share community life with religious of different age groups and mentalities,
- foster attitudes of tolerance, flexibility, good temperament, interests, availability, openness, dialogue, service..,
- develop a Piarist support apostolate, of persistence, with small groups of prayer, recovery, listening,
- design preparation courses for new activities, such as adult prayer groups, pastoral care for the sick, cultural groups for the third age,
- carry out sanctifying functions of priesthood ministry,
- to collaborate in priesthood activities in our churches, parishes and convents, in Christian groups,
- attend workshops for artistic inclinations or other activities,
- participate in easily accessible encounters of prayer, liturgy, spirituality, theology,
- plan in a rational and diversified way free time,
- dedicate to reading Christian classics, holy fathers, spiritual authors,
- communicate experiences and memories with religious of their age,
- feel useful in their position in the community in encounter and accompaniment,
- help younger religious: for example, through communication, listening, fostering, support ...,
- lead a more intense and prolonged prayer life,
- prepare to face with serenity, peace and hope the sun set that is the dawn of Life “ (FP, n. 92).

10. Pray for our deceased.

Epilogue: Resume our life

At the end of these pages, we understand what it means to resume our life. A lot has been said throughout these pages. We have presented a discerned spirituality and looked for the most adequate methodology to put spirituality into practice, in our personal life. Now with the grace of God, with his salvific love, divine mercy, we must resume our life, and deeply live it the way the Lord wants.

What does it mean to resume our life? Very simply:

1. Going back to all the basic feelings that surface when reading each one of this book's chapters. That is, to go back to the fontal experiences, for example: "Lord, my allotted portion"; but at the same time, live and announce the Good New proclaimed to us in the Sermon on the Mount.
2. Living also in ongoing discernment to please in all his wish. The Christian life has to be lived like that. Discernment is not something specific, it is the way of living as a Christian. Do not let yourself be carried away by ideals, but always begin from our authentic reality. Realism versus idealism. After what we have lived, what our life has been like, we can not be aware of idealisms that have not borne any fruit, what they have only achieved is that we find ourselves with our true reality.
3. It is necessary to realize what concrete experiences allow us to make the synthesis of the bipolarities that appear in life:
 - To be poor and not to be surprised by our own reality, how far we are from the configuration with Jesus.
 - Feeling poor and, at the same time, expecting everything from God.

- To know the reality of our clumsiness in the things of God and, nevertheless, to be in his arms, loving him with the whole being.
 - Feel free and, nonetheless, see how freedom becomes obedience of love.
4. It is to take life to give it totally to the will of the Father. To take up in a more responsible way, freely and voluntarily, the essential vocation that is the basic attitude of doing the will of God. It is fundamental to live the existence from the spiritual indifference, to re-center life in the will of God.
 5. Finally, to assume and integrate the specific vocation with the personal vocation, if it has already been found (has been disclosed to us), that is, we know our position in the Church. Sometimes you can clearly know that position, as in Therese of Lisieux, others, we live it unconsciously, because that is God's design on us. But from the position, that without knowing, we are occupying in the Church, we are configured to Jesus and we work for the extension of the Kingdom, which is what God wants from us.

Thank the Lord for what he does in us, whether we know him or not. May our God be blessed for ever.

Life goes through many different moments in the journey of configuration to Jesus. Below, we mention some biblical texts indicating the situation in which they can help us. We will put a short biblical text, and indicate the chapter of the biblical book from which it has been taken so that we can deepen it enjoying the Word.

1. *In moments of sadness*: “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.” (*Jh 14:1-3* and the rest of the chapter).
2. *If we know they speak ill of us*: “To you, Lord, I call; my Rock, do not be deaf to me, do not be silent toward me, so that I can join those who go down to the pit. Hear the sound of my pleading when I cry to you for help when I lift up my hands towards your holy place.” (*Psalms 28, 1-2* and the rest of the psalm).

3. *When we are distressed:* “Have mercy on me, God, in accord with your merciful love; in your abundant compassion blot out my transgression. Thoroughly wash away my guilt; and from my sin cleanse me. For I know my transgressions; my sin is always before me. Against you, you alone have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight.” (*Psalms 51, 1-3 and the rest of the psalm*)
4. *When we are worried:* “Do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself. Sufficient for a day is its own evil.” (*Mt 6,34*)
5. *When we are at risk:* “Though the wicked flourish like grass and all sinners thrive, they are destined for eternal destruction; but you, Lord, are forever high. Indeed your enemies, Lord, indeed your enemies shall perish; all sinners shall be scattered. You have given me the strength of a wild ox; you have poured rich oil upon me. My eyes look with glee on my wicked enemies; my ears shall hear what happens to my foes.” (*Psalms 92, 3-7 and the rest of the psalm*).
6. *When God seems far away from us:* “O God, hear my anguished voice; from a dreadful foe protect my life. Hide me from the malicious crowd, the mob of evil doers.....The righteous rejoices and takes refuge in the Lord; all the upright give praise (*Psalms 64, and the rest of the psalm*)
7. *When we feel alone and scared:* “The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I lack. In green pastures he makes me lie down; to still water he leads me; he restores my soul. He guides me along the right paths for the sake of his name.....(*Psalms 23, and the rest of the psalm*)
8. *When one needs to love:* “Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, love is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endure all things.” (*1Cor 13, 4-7 and the rest of the chapter*)
9. *When we know the secret of happiness:* “You were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him

from the dead. And even when you were dead (in) transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, he brought you to life along with him, having forgiven us all our transgressions; obliterating the bond against us, with its legal claims, which was opposed to us, he also removed it from our midst, nailing it to the cross;" (*Col 2: 12-17*).

10. *When trust among us must increase:* "What then shall we say to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but handed him over for us all, how will he not also give us everything else along with him? Who will bring a charge against God's chosen ones? It is God who acquits us. Who will condemn? It is Christ who died, rather, was raised, who also sits at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. What will separate us from his love of Christ? Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, nakedness, or peril or the sword? ...No, in all these things we conquer overwhelmingly through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor power, nor height, nor depth, nor any creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (*Rom 8, 31-39*).

Honor and glory to God for ever and ever. Amen

