



# **Spirituality and Pedagogy of Saint Joseph Calasanz**

*Synthesis essay*

General Congregation

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AND PEDAGOGY OF SAINT  
JOSEPH CALASANZ**

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Author: General Congregation



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# Foreword to the second edition

## *Calasanz, saint and pedagogue*

The attempt, finally carried out in 1995, to publish a brief and complete exposition, by way of a synthesis, of the spirituality and pedagogy of St. Joseph Calasanz has overcome the fears of not succeeding. This is demonstrated by the need for a second edition. The revision has been carried out by Fr. Josep Anton Miró, who was already involved in the writing of the first edition, also making use of observations received from the readers.

St. Joseph Calasanz is known more as a saint than as an educator. In fact, he did not appear much in the histories of pedagogy or education. A gap that is being corrected little by little in recent times. His oblivion as an educator and pedagogue was due, in part, to the same lack of concern of the Piarists to make the figure of the Educator Joseph Calasanz known to the outside world. Even now, most of the publications about him are internal to the Order or mostly spread in Piarist environments. If the exposed gap is being covered, it is effectively due to the fact that recently works with external projection to the Order have been published. One thing and another must be done.

On the other hand, the Saint Calasanz is universally known since ancient times, even if only for appearing in the Christian calendar of the festivities of the saints.

Calasanz is a saint and a pedagogue or, better, he is a holy pedagogue or, as Fr Severino Giner titles his great biographical work, “master and founder”.

The synthesis that we present of the spirituality and pedagogy of St. Joseph Calasanz offers us the two things together: the holiness and the “mastery” of Calasanz. Indeed, his Calasanzian spirituality is nothing more than the historical embodiment of his spiritual experience that led him to holiness. Pedagogy, for its part, is the path

he followed in his long experience as a teacher of poor children and young people in Rome.

The synthesis of Calasanzian spirituality and pedagogy, and the fact that the book offers them together, is to be welcomed. It will undoubtedly help us to understand the person of Calasanz in a more unified way and will also motivate us to give unity to the spiritual and pedagogical experience of those who are inspired by him as a way of life or as an educational activity. Here we find, sharing the Calasanzian charism, the religious and the laity.

The simple, understandable and brief form of the book, very much in accordance with the methodology that Calasanz wanted for his schools, will help its reading and to be used frequently as a claim and reference of the work of the Piarist educator. It will also perfectly fulfil the purpose of being an adequate instrument of Calasanzian formation.

What has been done in this book with Calasanz, we should think of doing it with all the Piarist history after the founder. His spirituality and pedagogy have been enriched throughout more than four centuries of educational presence of the Pious Schools. A very rich patrimony of spirituality and pedagogy, contributed by Piarist educators, some today anonymous and others outstanding in the historical memory, which should also be known. We are just waiting for a passionate entrepreneur to get down to work. Undoubtedly, it will fulfill a good mission recognized and thanked by the same readers who will read these pages and who will be able to verify that what was given in Calasanz has been a good seed that has given its fruits throughout history.

I end these introductory words with thanks to those who, by preparing this book, have made it possible for us to approach the adventure of Calasanz, educator and saint, so that, knowing it, many will be encouraged to follow it in the present, dreaming of new and long futures.

Rome, March 6, 2005

*(Anniversary of the pontifical approval, by Paul V with the Brief “Ad ea per quae” (1617), of the “Pauline” Congregation of the Poor of the Mother of God of the Pious Schools).*

*Jesús María Lecea  
Father General*



## Matching souls

In the Liturgy of the Hours on the last day of the year, I was reading these words of St. Leo the Great: “Those who have been reformed according to a single image, it is fitting that they should also have souls that are quite equal”. And I was reading it, while I was giving it the umpteenth previous reading to what was going to be the definitive text of this, for a long time longed for, synthesis of spirituality and pedagogy of St. Joseph Calasanz.

It is not easy to achieve an acceptable synthesis. We had seen it in the dissatisfaction of the successive attempts. Dissatisfaction that always led us to the rejection of what had been elaborated, but soon also to a new attempt.

Finally, one discovers that “the” synthesis will always remain to be made. That of the “book of life” will be there where we will be able to admire it not in mirror or enigma; now, we have the double task of trying to venture something consistent that can serve as a basis -there it is offered, we hope, in this booklet-, and then let each one complete it and make “his” own permanently open synthesis: on the one hand, confronting it with the documents that bring us closer to a fuller understanding of his life and mission; on the other hand, for those of us who rightly and firmly call ourselves “Poor of the Mother of God of the Pious Schools”, our own spiritual and pedagogical Piarist experience can enlighten us successively, in a *crescendo* open to fullness, what was this original and originating experience of the charism in our Founder.

In this regard, the words of *Mutuae Relationes* (1978) are illuminating when it defines the charism of the Founders as an “experience of the Spirit, transmitted to his own disciples to be lived, guarded,

deepened and constantly developed by them in harmony with the body of Christ in perennial growth” (n. 11).

First of all, it is worth noting the totalizing and comprehensive richness of the charism that synthesizes the entire Founder: “a style proper to sanctification and apostolate” (MR 11) and which, in the Final Document of the Congress of the Union of Superiors General held in Rome in November 1993, is explained in the following way: “The charism implies a specific way of being, a specific mission and spirituality, style of fraternal life, and structure of the institute, at the service of the ecclesial mission”.

And, secondly, that the shared charism germinally binds all of us who have been called to live it, to adjust again and again our life and mission to this ideal that shapes us and makes us similar in spirit, according to the appropriation - I do not think unduly - of the words of St. Leo the Great, which he certainly applies to Jesus.

May this harmony with the foundational charism be, in reality, the one that moves us all to approach gradually and progressively, with amazed eyes and grateful heart, to this fountain of grace that is the spiritual and pedagogical experience of the one whom God placed and arranged as father and master of our own Piarist experience.

How right José Cristo Rey García Paredes was in the theological synthesis of the aforementioned Congress organized by the Union of General Superiors in preparation for the Synod of Bishops on Consecrated Life! Dispense with the long quotation, for I think it is worthwhile:

*“Each Institute will have to rediscover and assume its own itinerary of spirituality in the spiritual journey of the people of God. The charismatic revitalization will make it necessary to rethink the formative processes of initiation and will configure ongoing formation as an authentic charismatic reinitiation. Forming from strong and pedagogical experiences in line with the charism will allow consecrated life to rediscover itself in a new era and culture. As far as we are concerned, a great part of our future is at stake in formation. It must translate into the process of charismatic initiation the values of mission and communion that we have discovered. It is called to make possible the contact with the fire of the evangelical and charismatic origins”* (Charisms in the Church for the world. U.S.G. Editions S. Paul, 1994, pp. 311-312).

Today it is already something peacefully accepted that what we have always said in relation to the participation of the charism on the part of the religious, also applies to the laity who, moved by the Spirit, lean out of the well to drink sister waters. Hence the reading of this synthesis of spirituality and pedagogy of St. Joseph of Calasanz remains open, as an invitation and a call, to so many laity so that they too, conformed according to the same image, are called to share affinities of soul and spirit. Calasanz unites us!

There I leave you. And I, without wasting time, begin with love and passion my umpteenth-plus-one reading... of the text in creative fidelity. Nothing stronger than love.

Good luck on your way. I wish you from the bottom of my heart.

Rome, January 1, 1995.

*Josep Maria Balcells*  
*Father General*



## Acronyms and bibliography

### ***Calasanz' texts can be found complete and in their context in the following works***

- BC C. Bau, Biografía crítica de S. José de Calasanz, Madrid 1949.
- CC Constituciones de S. José de Calasanz, en J. M. Lesaga y otros, «Documentos fundacionales de las Escuelas Pías», Salamanca 1979, pp. 21-156.
- DC D. Cueva, Calasanz, Mensaje espiritual y pedagógico, Madrid 1973.
- EP L. Picanyol, Epistolario di S. Giuseppe Calasanzio, vol. I-IX, Roma 1950-1956.
- EV C. Vilá Palá, Epistolario di S. Giuseppe Calasanzio, vol. X, Roma 1988.
- FEP Congregación General, La Fraternidad de las Escuelas Pías, Salamanca 1988.
- GD A. García Durán, Itinerario espiritual de S. José de Calasanz de 1592 a 1622, Barcelona 1967.
- MRE M. Rodríguez Espejo, En cualquier frontera: Calasanz, Madrid 1988.
- SG S. Giner, San José de Calasanz. Maestro y fundador, BAC maior n. 41, Madrid 1992.
- SJC Gy. Sántha, San José de Calasanz. Obra pedagógica, BAC n. 159, Madrid 1984
- SL S. López, Documentos de S. José de Calasanz, Bogotá 1988.

- TONTI Memorandum to cardinal M. A. Tonti, in J. M. Lesaga y otros, «Documentos fundacionales de las Escuelas Pías», Salamanca 1979, pp. 177-193.
- VB V. Berro, *Annotazioni* (a cura di P. O. Tosti), Roma 1988.
- JL J. Lecea, *Declaraciones de San José de Calasanz a las Constituciones primeras de las Escuelas Pías*, *Analecta Calasanziana*, n. 50 (1983) 561-631.

***A complete bibliography on the subject can be found in Bibliografía Calasanziana, Analecta Calasanziana n. 73 (1995), sections E, F.***

***Fundamental bibliography used in this synthesis***

- Capítulo General Especial de las Escuelas Pías, *Declaración sobre la espiritualidad calasancia*. notas, Roma 1969.
- Capítulo General Especial de las Escuelas Pías, *Declaración sobre el carisma calasancio*, en «Declaraciones y decretos», Madrid 1970, pp. 20-79.
- AA.VV., *Seminario de Espiritualidad Calasancia*, *Analecta Calasanziana*, n. 63 (1990).
- AA.VV., *Seminario de Pedagogía Calasancia*, *Analecta Calasanziana*, n. 65 (1991).

## **Introduction**

**1.** In the life of St. Joseph Calasanz (1557-1648) his spiritual experience and his pedagogical experience are intimately united. This dynamic integration constitutes one of the most characteristic notes of his personal identity.

Calasanz was endowed with a great human personality and lived in historical circumstances in which he deciphered the will of God. Our Saint responded freely and generously, following a long path of identification with Christ and commitment to the Gospel.

The spiritual and pedagogical itinerary of Calasanz was personal, but as founder of a new ecclesial institute (the Pious Schools) he has served and serves others to live the Gospel in a similar way as he lived it, sharing the same charism received from the Spirit. St. Joseph Calasanz is thus the spiritual father of all those who discover in his spiritual and pedagogical experience an example to follow, and as disciples of Jesus learn from his teachings to shape and unify their lives.

This approach to the global vision of Calasanzian spirituality and pedagogy, which is now published, tries to present the essential of the spiritual and pedagogical path of St. Joseph Calasanz. It is the result of four successive seminars held from 1990 to 1993. As a synthesis essay, it is open to further studies to perfect it, but it aims to offer a qualified help to the Piarist religious and the Calasanzian family, and to the laity who feel attracted to Calasanz and share his Christian educational mission, so that they can identify more fully with the essence of their Calasanzian vocation.





## **Pedagogical spirituality of Saint Joseph Calasanz**

**2.** By spirituality today we understand the totality of a person's existence insofar as it is energized by the Spirit of Jesus.

In this synthesis, we present the spirituality of Calasanz in two parts. In the first part, we will review his spiritual itinerary as the fruit of his lived experience under the guidance of the Spirit; in the second part, we will attempt to systematize the path he proposed to his followers through his writings, a reflection of his personal experience.

### ***Spiritual experience of Calasanz***

#### *Family and Christian education*

**3.** Our Saint received the grace to begin his spiritual and human process in the bosom of a healthy family. As he himself said, "his father and mother educated him with the fear of God and made him learn the good letters, and so should all fathers and mothers educate their children in the fear of God" (Br. Lorenzo Ferrari, in SG, p. 61). According to an old testimony, the Saint explained on a certain occasion that "as a child, he was attentive to devotions and always prayed the Parvum Office of the Blessed Virgin and other devotions, but most particularly the holy Rosary" (Br. Lorenzo de Ferrari, in SG, p. 61).

Having expressed the desire to become a priest, he received an excellent university formation, and God helped him to realize his vocation in spite of the difficulties that seemed to prevent him from doing so and that forced him to frequent changes of place and even interruptions in his studies.

*Post-Tridentine priesthood*

**4.** Calasanz received priestly ordination in 1583. The Church was then living a post-conciliar period of application of the provisions of Trent. He was therefore a person concerned with the Reformation of the Church and society, and throughout his life he emphasized the theological values stressed by that council, such as the doctrine of grace and the sacraments, which he applied to the spiritual life and the educational ministry.

In the early years of his ministry in his diocese of Urgell, he was greatly influenced by his bishop, Andrew Capilla, a Carthusian and formerly a Jesuit, a disciple of Antonio Cordeses<sup>1</sup>. It was Capilla who, with his contemplative and reforming disposition at the same time, marked him in his spiritual itinerary. From him he received his first pastoral offices and, with his example and doctrine, he inclined him at the same time to the cultivation of the spiritual life.

*Decisive change in Rome*

**5.** For personal reasons, for a deep interior experience and, perhaps, also to serve his diocese, Calasanz moved to Rome (year 1592) with the intention of returning soon. The objective of obtaining some canonry became progressively more complicated; and at the same time that his projects failed again and again, the Providence put him in contact with the material and spiritual poverty of the people and made him know experientially living currents of renewed spirituality: Franciscanism with its love for evangelical poverty and its fraternal sense; the Teresianism of the Carmelites of La Scala<sup>2</sup> and their school of prayer and personal interior life; the catechetical sense of the confreres of Christian Doctrine, the pastoral simplicity of the Oratorians of St. Philip Neri, and their apostolic availability to the apostolate of Jesuits. All this generated in his life a new experience that strongly questioned him. Calasanz, in search of light, multiplied his prayers and works of charity, and asked for advice. These were brief and intense years of spiritual discernment and a sincere search for God's will and his mission in the Church.

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1 Jesuit, representative of the contemplative current in the early days of the Company (cf. SL, pp. 75-77).

2 First convent in Rome of the Discalced Carmelite Fathers, near St. Dorothea.

Finally, “from silk garments and worldly honors, touched by the Holy Spirit he left all the comforts he had before, and gave himself to a mortified and exemplary life” (GD, p. 58, n. 377), as he tells of Glicerio Landriani almost portraying himself; or as some witnesses tell us: “He came to Rome to seek some ecclesiastical benefit, but then, touched by God and knowing that everything of this world is vanity, he left the world and founded the Religion” (Francisco Gutierrez, in SG, p. 323). “He came to Rome [...]But then he resolved to another tenor of life [...] and gave himself totally to the Spirit” (Thomas Simon, in SG, p. 323). “He determined to abandon his pretensions and give himself wholeheartedly to God” (Francisco Motes, in SG, p. 323).

**6.** In this process of theological conversion of Calasanz in his first years in Rome, Mary was very present, whose sanctuary of the Madonna dei Monti<sup>3</sup> he visited frequently at that time. The Saint was convinced that “all the graces he had received from God he had received through the Blessed Virgin” (Summarium Magnum, p. 48, Reg. cal. XXXVIII), and consequently in a special way the grace that definitively oriented his life according to God’s plans. “He wanted his Institute to be called Clerics Regular Poor of the Mother of God of the Pious Schools, and because of the devotion he wanted to impress in the hearts of all, and especially of the religious, he coined a medal with the effigy of the Blessed Virgin and of a religious kneeling at her feet, in the act of receiving from the Blessed Virgin that medal and of calling himself her slave” (Fr. Provincial of the Roman Province, BC, p. 491).

### *Surrender to the children for the love of God*

**7.** Calasanz’ interior transformation, energized by the grace of God and the mediation of Mary, was provoked externally by the material, cultural and religious poverty that he saw in the neighborhoods of Rome, and was also manifested externally by his decision to give his life to the integral salvation of poor children through education, convinced that in this way he was laying the

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3 Painting of the Madonna, found shortly before Calasanz’ arrival in Rome. On his deathbed he revealed that the Madonna dei Monti had appeared to him.

foundations for the true reform of the Church and society in a singular way and from the ground up. This is how he expressed it in this emblematic phrase attributed to him by Father Berro<sup>4</sup> : “I have found in Rome the best way to serve God by helping poor children, and I will not leave it for anything in the world” (VB, vol. 1, p. 73; cf. VB, vol. 2, p. 246).

For almost fifty years Calasanz lived this total and exclusive dedication to children as a visible expression of his dedication to God. His contemporaries were witnesses of it. Some witnesses of the Beatification Process noted that in this dedication his preferences were directed to the poorest, to the smallest and to their religious formation.

*“I have seen almost daily the Father attend with all charity to teach the infants and among these, to choose the smallest, the beggars and the barefoot; and he taught them with so much charity that I was edified; and the best dressed he left them to the other fathers” (Br Francis Noberasco, in SG, p. 622, n. 124).*

*“I saw the care and interest he took in the education of the little ones and I was edified by contemplating the great affection with which he instructed them” (Thomas Cocchetti, BC, p. 426). “(...) having been inspired by God to do this work of collecting the poor children who were seen in great numbers wandering around Rome, teaching and educating them first in the law of God and then in human and divine letters” (Miguel Jimenez Barber, BC, p. 266).*

**8.** In this giving of himself to the children, grace developed in Calasanz pedagogical virtues such as humility and simplicity, availability and total dedication and, above all, charity and patience, which the Saint twice mentioned as fundamental in the Preamble of his Constitutions (cf. n. 4,6). “I have seen Fr Joseph of the Mother of God, always adorned with many virtues, great humility, and perfect charity with sick people; and I am a witness of the great charity with which he taught the children, even the smallest and beginners, whom he taught to spell” (Christopher de Antoni, BC, pp. 426-427).

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4 Vincent Berro, one of the saint’s favorite religious, his secretary and one of the first historians of the Order. He died in Florence in 1666.

### *Towards a religious consecration*

**9.** From the moment of his spiritual transformation, Calasanz gave himself fully to his work with the approval of many, certainly, but also with difficulties and opposition. He had renounced his personal projects but not yet entirely to himself. God allowed these trials to help him to renounce himself and his things, and to trust only in him.

When everyone was praising Calasanz for his work, at the risk of flattering his vanity, feeling that he was the necessary protagonist, a serious fall that forced him to remain immobilized in bed for six months, helped him to progress in humility, renouncing all protagonism.

On the other hand, the pious work he had begun forced the Saint to dedicate all his goods to the schools, and he soon experienced economic insecurity and poverty. “I have heard, and it is publicly said, that he founded the Pious Schools and that he spent all his income there [...] and I heard this from the said Fr Gaspare<sup>5</sup> who affirmed that Father General’s income was abundant” (Thomas Cocchetti, in GD, p. 111, n. 563).

He also experienced the failure of various plans to give continuity to his work, entrusting it to some already existing religious institution, suitably reformed, and this prepared him definitively, as the culmination of his interior process, to place himself completely in the hands of God by embracing the religious life and founding the Pauline Congregation<sup>6</sup> (year 1617).

**10.** Humility, poverty and obedience were the virtues to which Calasanz gave us witness, especially since he made his profession as a religious.

*“Being poor and of advanced age, I do not desire superfluous things, but I would like to die poor of the things of the earth”*  
(EP, c. 4433).

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5 Gaspare Dragonetti, one of the first companions of Calasanz, died at the age of almost one hundred and twenty in 1628.

6 Name of the religious Institute of the Pious Schools before it was approved as a religious Order.

*“So far I have not objected to what Fr Mario<sup>7</sup>, Provincial of Tuscany, has written to me, but on the contrary, I have sent him many religious and I will send him even more to the great detriment of some houses, and I do not believe that this harm will be imputed to me in the presence of God, since I do nothing more than fulfill obedience to this Sacred Congregation” (EP, c. 3982).*

### *Definitive kenosis*

**11.** In the first years of his life as a religious, Calasanz received the spiritual consolation of seeing the expansion of his work, but at the same time he entered into a progressive experience of self-emptying, of “kenosis”, in imitation of the crucified Master, deepening his humility and poverty, emptying himself to fill himself only with love and dedication to God and neighbor.

Thus, when he placed his natural hopes in a capable possible successor, and so retiring and resting, given his age, he had to give them up because first Glicerio Landriani<sup>8</sup> and later Giacomo Graziani<sup>9</sup> in whom he had placed his expectations died. And when serious problems began to appear in the Order, he received from the Pope the appointment of Superior General for life (year 1632).

The General Congregation of 1627 and the General Chapters of 1637 and 1641 imposed determinations different from what Calasanz thought, and he renounced to what he believed convenient in some matters to give solidity to his work of the Pious Schools.

But his despoilment reached its peak when, very old, he was the object of calumnies before the Holy Office and before the Pope when he was pointed out as guilty of some internal disorders of the Institute, obeying heroically at all times. But above all he endured the limitations imposed on the Order by Innocent X, which foreshadowed and prepared a suppression of his work. This was his response

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7 Mario Sozzi, later Vicar General of the Order, until his death in 1643, when Joseph Calasanz was deposed from his office for an unjustified dispute with the Holy Office, orchestrated by the former.

8 Related to St. Charles Borromeo, great catechist, who died as a novice in the Pious Schools in February 1618. declared Venerable by Pius XI in 1931.

9 Successively Provincial of Rome, Assistant General and Visitor of Naples, died in 1634.

in the Oratory of St Pantaleo to the community saddened by the reading of the papal Brief of March 16, 1646: “The Lord gave, the Lord has taken away. Blessed be his name (Job 1:21)” (BC, p. 1111).

**12.** External events brought to maturity in the soul of Calasanz an experience of fuller communion with the Trinitarian Mystery of God. This is manifested in an immense trust in God the Father (“Our trust is in God alone, who never abandons us in time of need” EP, 287), in a total love for Jesus Christ, especially in the mystery of his Passion and cross (“None of the ancient philosophers knew true happiness and beatitude and, what is worse, few, not to say very few, know it among Christians, because Christ, who was our teacher, placed it on the cross” EP, 1662), and in a delicate docility to the Holy Spirit (“The voice of God is the voice of the Spirit that comes and goes, touches the heart and passes; one does not know where it comes from or when it blows; from where it is very important to be always vigilant so that it does not come suddenly and pass without fruit” EP, 131).

### *“God in the heart”*

**13.** In the last years of his life, Calasanz received the grace of being fully identified with the Lord in his passion, which the Saint had meditated on every day for many years in his prayer. It was an experience of total human emptiness filled with divine fullness. His secretary received more than once this mystical confidence: “I know of a person who, with a single word that God spoke to his heart, endured with great patience and joy fifteen years of great works and persecutions” (VB, vol. 1, p. 168).

**14.** Calasanz lived relying exclusively on God and on the help of his Blessed Mother in an ever more evident way. In his last letters written after 1646, he gives us admirable testimony:

### *Of full faith and hope in God*

He writes to a religious in Nikolsburg<sup>10</sup> moments after having heard the reading of the Brief of suppression of the Order: “Y.R. do not lose heart, because we hope in the Lord that everything will be settled,

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10 Today Mikulov in the Czech Republic.

as long as we remain united” (EP, c. 4344). A year later, he wrote to another father, also in Nikolsburg: “It is necessary to keep up one’s courage and fortify it with the hope of divine help, for it is a disdain of divine goodness and providence not to hope in it until the last. Y.R. be good enough to encourage others to this true faith and trust in the blessed God, and things will go as God allows them to go” (EP, c. 4456). And in his last autograph letter that we have preserved: “Be constant and you will see the salvation of God upon you. We pray for you that you may not be saddened, but that in tribulation your virtue may shine more brightly” (EP, 4463).

### *Of faithful love and devotion to children*

Shortly before hearing the reading of the Innocentian Brief, he wrote: “I cannot quite understand how an Institute so useful and in demand throughout Europe, and praised even by heretics, can be so easily destroyed by human malice” (EP, 4341). And a year later, approximately: “We all have the firm hope that blessed God will come out in favor of our Institute which is founded solely on the charity of teaching poor children in particular, so that it cannot be said that ‘the children asked for bread and there was no one to give it to them’. we all have the great desire to serve the Lord in his members who are the poor, so that we can hear in due time: ‘what you have done to one of the least of these you have done to me’” (EV, c. 4454/1).

### *Of active trust in the resurrection of the Institute*

“Your Reverence, be in high spirits, do not believe what some impassioned person writes to you, but be certain that the Institute will remain standing” (EP, 4354). “As long as I have breath left, I will hope to see it restored to its original state” (EP, 4341).

### *In his own words*

**15.** The spiritual experience of Calasanz, in addition to the texts already cited, is reflected in some paragraphs of his letters in which he speaks of himself.

*“God, by his mercy, will be our protector now and always. And he will bless us, as we hope, in his most holy goodness” (EP, 4270).*



*“I commend myself and will always commend myself to the most holy Crucifix and to the blessed Virgin, his Mother, that they may deign to protect this their religion” (EP, 3982).*

*“I dislike the word ‘affliction’ very much, because no one can with greater reason than I have affliction, for all kinds of serious afflictions come to me from all sides. But considering that everything comes to me from the hand of God and that I do everything for his love, since he is such a kind and loving Father, I bear everything with patience, resolved to die rather than abandon the enterprise, and so I cast out all affliction and melancholy” (EP, 1148).*

*“I act out of pure charity, because I desire your health as my own” (EP, 1149).*

*“I desire and I am very pleased to be able to contribute and cooperate everywhere to the health of souls with our Institute” (EP, 2029).*

*“I am more obliged to the common good of religion, forming the religious well, than to give satisfaction to any particular, which I have given too much in the past. And when they do not help Religion, we will not lack, on the other hand, the help of the Lord” (EP, 539).*

*“My will is that the Constitutions be observed. Whoever does not observe them, and it seems to him that they do not oblige him even to venial sin, I say that such a one will not be long in failing to fulfill some commandment of God. Because the religious goes from that to this” (EP, 2229).*

*“Since last year I have had a hernia on one side, and since a few days ago, on both. But this does not mean that I have less courage to serve and suffer for his love whatever is offered, especially in our ministry, which is the education and reform of children” (EP, 247).*

*“As for the progress of our Religion, I hope that the Holy Spirit, who inspired the Sacred Congregation of Cardinals, will also give strength and spirit to those who with humility, charity and patience exercise it” (EP, 237).*

*“There is no wound so great that it does not have some remedy. I am sure that God will make up for what men lack. May he, in his mercy, guide all our things to his greater glory” (EP, 4340).*

*“I hope in that authority which says: God intervenes in all things for the good of those who love him” (EP, 3910).*

*“Be in high spirits and do not be bitter because of the upheavals that are now happening. For I hope in the mercy of God that all things will be resolved well, if with patience and prudence we know how to navigate while this storm lasts” (EP, 3841).*

*“As long as I have breath, I will not lose the desire to help the Institute, in the hope of seeing it secured again, basing myself on those words of a prophet who says: stand still, and you will see the salvation of Yahweh, which will come upon you” (EP, 4309).*

*“I, as a poor man of advanced age, do not covet superfluous things. I wish to die poor in earthly goods” (EP, 4433).*

*“Let God work” (VB, vol. II, p. 61).*

### *By way of summary*

**16.** The spiritual experience lived by Calasanz has two complementary poles: one of annihilation and stripping, of personal kenosis to overcome the obstacles to God’s plan in his life; and the other of loving surrender to this plan, filling his existence with dedication to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and to his neighbor, in particular through the apostolic ministry of educating children, carried out under the protection of Mary, educator of Christ.

At the end of his long spiritual journey, the Mother of God comforted him in the last hours of his life and flooded him with confidence and peace, before Calasanz pronounced his last words three times, “Jesus”.

### ***Calasanz’s Spiritual Teaching***

**17.** With his faithful and generous dedication to God’s plan according to the charism he received, Calasanz configured a style of life and evangelical mission that constitute for all his Piarist sons an example and a path to follow. And being the Founder of our religious family, he proposed to us, especially in his Constitutions, the spiritual itinerary characteristic of our charismatic vocation and he encouraged us to follow it with the practical advice of his letters.

In one of them he presents himself as a spiritual Father who wants to communicate to us the spirit that the Lord has given him: “I have written a letter to Fr John Luke, in which I let him know with paternal affection how much I wish to communicate to him with charity the spirit that the Lord has given me and I exhort him, with all the affection I can, to come to Rome and to stay with me for a while, so that he may learn the narrow way that leads to paradise, which, once learned, becomes easy and safe” (EP, 3913).

### *The charism of “Co-operator with the Truth*

**18.** According to the Preamble of the Constitutions, carefully written by Calasanz, the Piarist style of life and mission, that is, our identity, was born in the Church by the work of the Spirit as an evangelical way. The specific mission entrusted to us consists in evangelizing children and young people through Christian education, giving priority to teaching from the earliest years, to the education of the poor and to religious formation. But according to the same preamble, this pastoral and social mission can only be carried out from a personal experience of life steeped in evangelical attitudes of poverty and humility, patience and charity. Only by integrating mission and life will the Piarist become a true cooperator with the Truth, a charism received that will progressively transform him and shape his whole existence in a new way through a long spiritual journey (CC, 1-7).

### *Knowledge of oneself, the beginning of the spiritual journey*

**19.** The starting point of the spiritual journey of the Piarist in his life and mission is a double knowledge, that of oneself and that of God who grants us his gifts or talents. Calasanz speaks to us about this beginning in the first chapters of the first part of his Constitutions, dedicated to point out the objectives of the Christian life of the Piarist.

*“It is a good beginning of the spiritual life that of one’s own knowledge and misery in which we are all born and also of the ingratitude with which after so many benefits we have corresponded to God and if you exercise yourself in it with diligence [...] I assure you that you will have in this life as a reward some knowledge of God, which is a science so great that a particle of*

*it surpasses all human sciences [...] The knowledge of God be-  
atifies man according to the degree that after the knowledge he  
grows in divine love. I exhort you to make every day the first  
thing that study after which the Lord will grant you all the oth-  
er things that the world does not know” (EP, 1339).*

As a fruit of this double knowledge - the smallness of man and the greatness of God - there springs up in the heart of the Piarist “the holy fear of God, the principle of Wisdom” (EP, 4321, 1931).

The knowledge itself leads, on the one hand, to the discovery of one’s own passions that “with difficulty are diagnosed and with greater difficulty are uprooted”, and on the other hand, to the search for the “profound tendency and orientation of the Holy Spirit” that will indicate “the path by which each one must reach the summit of perfection”. This double knowledge is so important and basic in the spiritual life that Calasanz does not believe it can be left only as a personal task, but needs the help and accompaniment of a spiritual guide and community discernment (CC, 16-25).

This whole interior process disposes the Piarist to place himself in God’s hands to fulfill his will, and to live stripped of everything in order to follow the Lord as a true Poor of the Mother of God. He can thus consecrate himself by religious profession to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and also to the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, as a perpetual slave (CC, 28-31; EP, 296).

### *Process of identification with Christ in prayer and liturgy*

**20.** Guided by the Spirit, the Piarist, according to Calasanz, must continue throughout his life the process of progressive adhesion to Christ the Lord without ever looking back, desiring to live only for him and to please him alone (CC, 33-35).

*“The odor of the good religious consists in making himself  
a living portrait of the exemplar of all virtue, Jesus Christ, so  
that all his actions, words and thoughts make all those who see  
him feel the odor of Christ” (“Brief Writings of St. Joseph Cala-  
sanz” in SL, p. 242).*

*For this it will be necessary the assiduous cultivation of in-  
terior prayer in community, “contemplating Jesus Christ cru-  
cified and his virtues every day according to the example of St.*

*Paul, to know him intimately, to imitate him and to remember him during the day” (CC, 44).*

*“The true book in which we must all study is the passion of Christ, which gives the wisdom suited to each one’s state” (EP, 1563).*

This prayer should continue in a personal way in one’s own room according to the suggestions of the Spirit (CC, 48). The Saint writes: “God knows with how much affection I wish Y. R., the continual assistance of the Holy Spirit, so that by dealing with him “behind closed doors”, at least once or twice a day, he may know how to guide the little ship of your soul along the path of religious perfection towards the port of eternal happiness, this being the first and principal matter that each one of us must deal with, and if this goes well, all other matters will be resolved with good success in the presence of God, even if they seem otherwise to human prudence” (EP, 3858).

In this way Calasanz showed himself to be a follower of St. Teresa, from whom he received favors and whose works he read. He recommended to his religious: “If the time that you could not spend helping children according to our institute, you would spend it reading the Way of Perfection of Saint Teresa, you would see how your hearts would be inflamed, because the words of this saint have a great efficacy for those who read her with devotion” (EP, 2860).

For Calasanz, prayer occupies such an important place in the Piarist vocation that in the Memorandum to Cardinal Tonti<sup>11</sup> he speaks of the contemplative ministry of the Order, intimately united to the educational ministry, making ours a mixed life, more perfect in the sense explained by St. Thomas (cf. TONTI, n. 26; cf. Summa Theologica II-II, q. 188, a. 6).

The climate of prayer, recollection and silence, and the experience of the presence of God in the daily tasks dispose the Piarist, according to Calasanz, to a full participation in the liturgical celebrations, especially in the Eucharist (CC, 49-63). In several letters full of unc-

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11 Memorandum in which Calasanz defends the recognition of his Institute as a religious Order. Cardinal Tonti bequeathed his goods for the foundation of the Nazarene College in Rome, which still exists.

tion Calasanz exhorts to celebrate it with reverence and interior devotion (cf. EP, 3706, 3669).

*To participate in his passion by daily self-denial*

**21.** The mortifications and renunciations that religious life entails, the contradictions and sickness, the limitations of age and death are different ways of participating in a real way in the passion of Christ, and they are to be received with peace as a gift of the Lord (CC, 64-65, 72-94). “The Lord accustoms ordinarily to mortify in this life those whom he loves as sons, so that he will not have to make them suffer in the next. This being true, we must all take from his fatherly hand all things that happen to us, especially sickness” (EP, 1468).

In the sufferings of daily life, we enter into communion with the Passion and actualize it in a salvific way.

*“For love of the Lord, who without sin suffered for each one of us, without being obliged, so many tribulations and opprobrium, we must suffer great things, as the elect of the Lord do to please him, although we must first consider that we deserve it because of our sins, so that we may always humble ourselves” (EP, 1353). “In blessed Christ crucified are hidden infinite spiritual treasures for those who abhor the pleasures of the senses and love those of the spirit. Let us pray the Lord to give us the spirit and the fervor to imitate him as far as possible” (EP, 2921). “I exhort you to have a little patience, for the fatigue will not last too long, and when you go begging, consider that you are following blessed Christ when he carried his cross, even though yours is no comparison with that of Christ, who carried it for our love” (EP, 2219).*

**22.** Identification with Jesus Christ crucified engenders happiness, interior peace and spiritual tranquility in the heart. Calasanz wrote of them: “True happiness and beatitude were not known to any of the ancient philosophers and, what is worse, few, not to say very few, know it among Christians, because Christ, who was our teacher, placed it on the cross. And this, although it seems to many to be very difficult to practice in this life, nevertheless, has within itself such internal goods and consolations that it surpasses all the earthly ones” (EP, 1662). “I consider as a great servant of God the one who is not disturbed or moved in his tranquility in adverse or prosper-

ous circumstances, but who always remains whole, that is, of the same being, without being moved from his place by passion, and this 'being the same' is what wins the prize" (EP, 2457).

*To follow him with haste and perseverance through religious profession*

**23.** But to live the gospel more fully (the perfection of charity) there is no easier or more direct way, as Calasanz affirms in his Constitutions, than that of religious consecration, through the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience, whose most visible expression is the renunciation of external goods in order to adhere exclusively to God, following the Lord more quickly (CC, 95).

Calasanz rightly regretted that not all the Piarists were faithful to this vocation.

*"I am very sorry that passion has blinded many and that they do not know the way they are going, since Christ blessed by his mouth said 'narrow is the way that leads to life and few are those who find it' and this is a truth that is true among the religious, for there are few who walk in the narrow way of imitation of blessed Christ who also said 'wide is the way that leads to destruction and there are many who walk in it', and it would please God that there were not so many religious who, guided by self-love, walk in this wide way. May the Lord enlighten us all and bless us always" (EP, 3673).*

The narrow way of true discipleship is lived and manifested by the profession of the vows of obedience, chastity and poverty, by fraternal charity lived in community, and by the dedication to the specific apostolate of the Piarist mission.

**24.** In order to walk this spiritual path with a surer step and ever new enthusiasm, Calasanz recommends renewing the vows every day in the presence of the Lord (CC, 32, 98). To Fr John Francis Apa<sup>12</sup> wrote in the nocturnal silence of his room:

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12 Religious of the Province of Tuscany, highly esteemed by Calasanz for his great religious spirit and his profound pedagogical ability. He was born and died in Naples (1612-1656).

*“The renewal of solemn vows or profession made for the pure love of God is an action so pleasing to God that it surpasses in merit all the actions that man can do, except martyrdom; and he who loves God as he should, should many times renew an act that pleases God so much, and even more so if it is with the good example of his neighbor. I appreciate it very much and I pray the Lord to give everyone a new fervor to become heroic in the pure love of God, which is the first and principal precept of the most holy law of the Lord, who always blesses us all” (EP, 4024). And a few days later he added: “Regarding the renewal of vows, I, as a spiritual Father who desires the perfection of all the sons of Religion, would like in all a great spirit to serve God and to unite themselves to him through charity and love, because when there is true love there are no particular ways but a great sincerity in the service of His divine Majesty” (EP, 4028).*

### *To obey out of love for God most beloved*

**25.** The Piarist “if he does not conform himself to obedience [...] will never be a disciple of the school of Christ” (EP, 526). For Joseph Calasanz, on this point with the Jesuit tradition, the vow of obedience is the first and fundamental one. our Saint gives it a clear Christocentric sense in the corresponding chapter of his Constitutions.

*“Our Lord having said ‘I did not come to do my will [...]’ it seems rather meaningless that someone should enter the Congregation with the desire to do his own will [...]. [...] This (obedience) you will easily achieve if you try to see in any superior Christ the Lord, even if he commands things that are difficult and repugnant to the sense, since he himself said to the superiors: ‘he who hears you hears me’ [...] Get used not to look at whom you obey, but rather at who is he for whom you obey and whom in everything you obey, which is Christ the Lord” (CC, 99, 101, 103).*

Together with the Christocentric sense, Calasanz emphasizes in the cited texts the mediating role of the superior on which he insists in the Declarations to the Constitutions prepared for the General Chapter of 1637 and in not a few letters.

The conflicts that can arise with this way of understanding obedience, Calasanz interprets them as follows: “The Lord can test his subjects many times through their superiors so that they may see



who is humble and know that all the fatigue and torment of this life cannot be equaled by the penalties that their sins deserve. By making this consideration, all fatigue becomes gentle according to what the Lord said [...] he does not always guide his servants according to human prudence and thus few are those who find the hidden treasure although many are called to seek it” (EP, 1127).

In short, Calasanz invites his children to place themselves in the hands of God “most beloved” (CC, 102) in order to “conform themselves to the will of God both in adverse and prosperous things” (EP, 4229).

*“If you consider the absurdities that pass through your imagination from morning to evening, since you should always be in the presence of God, you will see that you do not know how to take two steps without falling, which is to stop looking at God and to see creatures with your thoughts or imagination. Whoever reaches this practice of knowing how to behave like a two-year-old child, who falls many times without a guide, will always distrust himself, and will always invoke the help of God. This means that sentence, so little understood and much less practiced: ‘If you do not become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven’. Learn this practice and try to reach this great simplicity. And you will find to be true the sentence that says: ‘His intimacy is with the upright’ “ (EP, 912). “They will adopt an attitude very pleasing to God if they allow themselves to be led and guided by Divine Providence through their superiors, like the little donkey that Christ rode on Palm Sunday, which allowed itself to be led and guided everywhere” (CC, 108). this is “the way to become wise and prudent in the interior school” (EP, 2300).*

*We strive to be very poor and very simple, and clean of heart*

**26.** A characteristic expression of communion with others as Calasanz lived it and proposed it in his writings to his Piarist sons are the evangelical virtues of poverty and humility, virtues at the same time pedagogical in helping us to be in tune with the little ones and the poor in order to be “men of apostolic life, very poor and very simple” (TONTI, n. 26), and which are also manifested in austerity and simplicity in clothing and food (cf. CC, 117-136, 154-164). Likewise, the purity of life, according to Calasanz, attracts the children of pure heart towards the Piarist who exercises on their behalf an

angelic and divine work and tuning with them can teach them to love the Lord and to pray (cf. EP, 16; TONTI, n. 8).

The tandem poverty-humility recurs frequently in the Saint's writings:

*“Religious will love venerable poverty, mother of exquisite humility and other virtues, as the firmest defense of our Congregation; they will preserve it in all its integrity and will strive to experience at times its consequences” (CC, 137). “The Fathers (of the Pious Schools), if they believe me, will strive to be humble and truly poor, since between these two virtues dwells at ease the holy charity which is the end of all Religions” (EP, 1662). “To paradise one goes only by love; and according to the degrees of love or charity that one has, so will one have of glory, and the more we humble ourselves for love of God, it is a sign that we love him more. Likewise, the poorer we make ourselves for the love of God, the greater love of God we show” (EP, 2630).*

Obedience and patience, and above all humility and poverty, are the virtues most recommended by Calasanz in his epistolary. On religious poverty, the end of this document addressed to Father Casani<sup>13</sup> is significant: “Assure everyone that the more they distance themselves from property and imitate holy apostolic poverty, the richer they will be and the more fervent they will be in spiritual gifts from the blessed God. May he in his mercy be pleased to spread this spirit of apostolic poverty in all our religious. Amen. Amen. Amen.” (EP, 727 a). With these words Calasanz shows himself to be a follower of St Francis of Assisi, whose spirituality he imbibed from the first years of his stay in Rome.

### *Living united by the bond of fraternal charity*

**27.** “In order to imitate Christ,” Calasanz says, “in our Congregation all will observe modesty in the way they look, in their composure, in the way they speak [...]” (CC, 165), that is, in the way they relate to one another, in mutual respect and reverence, avoiding anything that could disturb or divide (cf. CC, 166-174).

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13 Coming from the Congregation of Lucca, he was Rector of St Pantaleo, Master of Novices, Provincial of various provinces in Italy and abroad, and Assistant General. He died in 1647. Beatified by John Paul II on October 1, 1995.

Calasanz wished that in the communities the Superior would procure a convergence towards unity in the way of feeling, of expressing oneself, of judging “so that united in this way by the bond of fraternal charity, they can dedicate themselves more effectively to the praise of God and the service of their neighbor” (CC, 171).

He recommended different forms of community meeting to agree in thinking and acting, giving advice regarding dialogue and listening (cf. EP, 315), “each one looking more to the common good than to his own particular good” (EP, 1199) and assuring that “the Holy Spirit will always show, through someone, his will” (EP, 3198).

Not absent in these and other letters of Calasanz is the theme of discernment - although he does not mention it under this name - recommending not to be hasty and to have recourse to prayer especially in the most difficult questions (cf. EP, c. 360, 1199).

### *Becoming little ones by educating in the Church*

**28.** The last four chapters of the second part of the Constitutions are dedicated to the specific Piarist ministry (cf. CC, 175-216). But the directly spiritual aspects of the same appear from the Preamble: “Since we profess to be truly the Poor of the Mother of God, we will never despise poor children, but with much patience and charity we will see to it that they acquire qualities and virtues, especially since the Lord says: ‘What you did for one of the least of these, you did for me’ “ (CC, 4). Indeed, “if our people [...] were to consider that what is done to a poor child is received by Jesus Christ in his own person, I am sure they would be more diligent about it” (EP, 2441).

Not all of Calasanz’ contemporary Piarists grasped this message, and some shunned this humble and burdensome task. To one of them, he wrote in Spanish:

*“The shortest and easiest way to reach the proper self-knowledge, and from there to the attributes of mercy, prudence and infinite patience of God is to come down to give light to the children, and particularly to those who are helpless; because it is a work so low and despicable to the eyes of the world very few want to take it, and God gives a hundredfold, especially if by doing it well we have persecutions or tribulations in which, taken with patience from the hand of God, the*

*hundredfold of spirit is found; and because few know how to practice this doctrine, few receive the hundredfold in spiritual goods*" (EP, 1236).

From this Calasanzian perspective, educating is not an office, but a mission of our consecrated life, the object of a fourth vow in the Piarist religious profession (cf. CC, 31). "On those words 'and according to it (obedience), special care about the teaching of children', it is declared that it is an essential vow, so that one is not free from mortal sin who does not want to do school when commanded to do so by the superior" (JL, p. 574).

In the Memorandum to Cardinal Tonti and in numerous other writings and letters, Joseph Calasanz explains the meaning and importance of the mission of the Piarist educator dedicated to a "different, necessary and specific ministry in the Church of God [...] an irreplaceable and active ministry" (JL, p. 574). ...] irreplaceable ministry and perhaps the principal one for the reform, a ministry truly very worthy, very noble, very meritorious, very beneficial, very useful, very necessary, very rooted in our nature, very much in accordance with reason, very much to be thanked for, very pleasant, very glorious" (TONTI, n. 46).

**29.** In order to carry out this ecclesial ministry, Calasanz instilled in his children the need to cultivate the spiritual life and the virtues that we could call pedagogical, without which neither cultural nor pedagogical preparation would make sense (cf. CC, 203, 210, 211). Among them, love and the paternal spirit "so that all will respect and love him as a true father" (CC, 193). Accompanying this love will be the human and Christian virtues necessary to educate, among which Calasanz lists simplicity, patience, humility, poverty, purity of heart, joy, hope, love of neighbor, diligence, etc.

This donation to the little ones also entailed a Christological dimension: the poor represent Christ the Lord. He had repeatedly affirmed it: "As for receiving poor students, you are doing a holy thing by admitting those who come to you. For it is for them that our Institute was founded. And what is done for them is done for Christ. The same is not said of the rich" (EP, 1445). A witness affirmed that "he swept the classrooms where the poor of the schools had been and cleaned the common places of the children. And when the wit-

ness himself asked him why he used to do such vile things, he answered that he wanted to serve the poor, who represented the person of Christ our Lord” (Fr Jacques Bandoni, BC, p. 232).

### *The Poor of the Mother of God*

**30.** The painter Francis Gutiérrez declared in 1650 speaking of Calasanz: “he used to say that he was undeservedly a slave of the Virgin.... And when I asked the same Fr Joseph ‘what is the name of the Congregation that you have founded’, he answered me in Spanish: ‘it is called the Poor of the Mother of God, of which I remain an undeserving slave’” (BC, p. 491).

This is the true charismatic name given to us by our Founder. In his time, “poor” retained the meaning of previous centuries more than it does today, and was synonymous with evangelical man. Hence the expression “apostolic men” linked to poverty (cf. TONTI, n. 26).

And being so of the Mother of God, Calasanz wanted that in the life of the Piarist there should never be a lack of daily community prayer addressed to her, in addition to personal devotions (cf. CC, 47; EP, 1459).

*“Warn that we are poor of the Mother of God and not of men, but our importunity be with our Mother and not with men, for she never becomes tired of our importunities, but men do”* (EP, c. 58). *The Blessed Virgin is so gentle that she accepts every devotion, however small it may be, provided it is done with great love or affection”* (EP, 641).

*From the day of our profession we Piarists, like Calasanz, are slaves of Mary, “under whose protection this work was founded”* (EP, 4417). *“May she have [...] particular care for the Religion of her poor”* (EP, 1452), *“since we profess to be truly the Poor of the Mother of God”* (CC, 4).

### *Giving glory to God and serving our neighbor*

**31.** The path proposed by Calasanz to the Piarists concludes in the *third part of his Constitutions*, of a more organizational and juridical character, but which also has its spiritual value.

The Christian and religious maturity that the Piarist is acquiring in the process described in the first two parts, make him apt and avail-

able to participate with his counsel and to act with his decisions in the global progress of the Order without personal ambitions or intentions different from the glory of God and the service of the neighbor, always trusting more in the providence of God than in his own effort.

*“Let us recognize ourselves as useless instruments of the Lord, because we rather hinder than favor his works” (EP, 1817). “I understand that all the effort made by you and that which will be made in the future will be in vain. And for this I thank the Lord, as if it were the happiest thing that could happen to us. For everything must be received from the provident hand of the Lord, as from the first and principal efficient cause, who directs everything to a perfect end by ways hidden from human prudence. so that, enlightened on this point, we will direct our thoughts wherever his divine majesty wishes to guide them” (EP, 1869).*

Calasanz ends with the same motto with which he began his Constitutions and which he repeats in them at key moments: For the glory of God and the usefulness of our neighbor (CC, initial motto, 8, 171, 200, 345). Like to Fr. Alacchi<sup>14</sup>, our Holy Father says to every Piarist also today: “You will prove to be truly poor of the Mother of God if you have no affection for anything other than the glory of God and the usefulness of your neighbor” (EP, 1601).

### *Help to the laity*

**32.** Among the numerous letters of Calasanz that have been preserved, some of them were addressed to lay men and women, friends of the Pious Schools and devotees of the saint, to whom they asked for help in the midst of the vicissitudes and problems of their lives. In them St Joseph Calasanz manifests himself as an authentic mystagogue, who knows the heart of man, knows his lights and shadows, and discerns in the midst of the daily circumstances of life the will of the Lord. “In the present I exhort Your Excellency, considering how good the Lord is, who for temporal and brief evils

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14 Melchior Alacchi (1591-1642), a Sicilian, was commissioned by Calasanz to make several foundations, among them that of Guissona in Spain, in spite of the opposition he aroused in some because of his original temperament.

has prepared an eternal Kingdom, to praise and bless him, and to conform to his most holy will with joy, telling him that if he wants you healthy, you are ready to serve him, and if you are sick, you are more ready to serve him, sick as you are; this joyful conformity to the Lord is great perfection in the Christian” (EP, 1468). “If the Lord shows you great love by giving you tribulation, Y.E. should strive with your heart to love him who loves you so much, because with love you will not feel pain so much” (EP, 1627).

At the same time, the general doctrine of the saint, which appears in the letters sent to his religious, except for what deals specifically with the religious life, can also be applied to the laity, in such a way that we can well affirm that Joseph of Calasanz is a good spiritual director of the laity to whom he proposes a path of initiation and Christian progress. “The ways that the Lord has to guide souls to paradise are all holy and mysterious, and all are straight with total and paternal providence; and he leaves no one without a cross, which in some the sense makes very heavy, but, with patience, the spirit finds a great gentleness” (EP, 1565). “Holy simplicity is very dear to the Lord, and with the truly simple he is accustomed to deal gladly” (EP, 862).

### *Spiritual Sentences of St. Joseph Calasanz*

**33.** This collection of sentences forms a precious collection on the Christian and religious life. Some of them are his own and others reflect his reading of spiritual authors. They were published for the first time during the life of the saint in 1620, and traditionally they were commented to the novices to help them get in tune with the Founder and the “hidden” part of his spirituality (DC, 611-670). They were frequently quoted by St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori in his spiritual writings for religious.

1. In Religion, the crown is preceded by work and struggle.
2. He lives securely in Religion who does not live for himself, but for God.
3. The religious who does not always profit in his vocation works always in vain.
4. The Religious who takes care of other people’s things is lacking in himself and in his own things.

5. The religious who does not master himself cannot serve God.
6. It is not profitable to have lived a long time in Religion, but to have lived very well in it.
7. He commits robbery who lives in Religion without fruit.
8. How can a religious die in the Lord if he does not work for the Lord during his life?
9. He misuses the room who in it either does not speak with Christ, or does not work for Christ.
10. The religious who gives too much to himself does not know how to love himself.
11. God wants his servant sensible, not delicate.
12. He serves himself, and not God, who in the service of God seeks his own comfort.
13. Woe to him who is evil among the good ones!
14. The religious is not humble who does not wish to be despised, or bears it unpleasantly.
15. He is not poor who does not experience the discomforts of poverty.
16. He is not chaste who does not promptly drive away the enemies of chastity.
17. He is not obedient who, obeying, follows his own judgment.
18. Knowledge adorns the religious, but virtue crowns him.
19. Woe to you, who instruct others by word, and by example destroy them!
20. His own will is poison for the religious.
21. When you walk through the city, remember that you are a religious and not a painter.
22. Woe to the religious who is more interested in health than in holiness!
23. The servant of God does not live to eat, but eats to live and serve.



24. The servant of Christ is not concerned with his own discomforts, for the love of God.
25. The lazy religious is the joy of the devil.
26. The curious religious forgets himself.
27. The more you work for Christ, the more you owe to Christ, because he is your fruit.
28. Let the religious beware of having the voice of Jacob and the hands of Esau.
29. The tongue of the religious is the trumpet of his thought and heart.
30. The examples of the religious are the death or the life of the laity.
31. How can you be the light of the world if you are not a light to yourself?
32. He does not know how to win Christ who does not know how to suffer for Christ.
33. The good religious is as beloved of God when he is sick as when he is healthy.
34. There will be no noise in the infirmary if there is patience in the sick person and charity in the nurse.
35. He does not live as a religious who does not pay attention to venial faults.
36. If venial faults in a layman displease God, will they perhaps please him in a religious?
37. The devil hunts and ensnares the idle religious.
38. The litigious religious is an officer of the devil.
39. He is not a friend of God who is not a friend of prayer.
40. He is not a religious who, having left the world, is possessed by the love of his relatives.
41. The devil plays ball with the futile religious.
42. To be of advantage for others and to harm oneself is folly, not charity.

43. The good religious despises the world and rejoices in being despised by it.
44. The servant of Christ seeks to be holy and does not wish to appear holy.
45. You have given nothing to Christ unless you have given him your whole heart.
46. The fervent religious is the scourge of demons.
47. The wrathful religious is the thunderbolt of hell, which disturbs everything.
48. The meek religious is the honor of the state and the ornament of Religion.
49. What good will it do you to have left the world if you do not do penance in Religion?
50. The servant of Christ suffers patiently, speaks little, and works much for Christ.
51. The indifferent religious is a precious pearl of Religion.
52. It is a good thing that you have left the world, but it is better to behave in such a way that the world despises you.
53. He is a true religious who says with truth: My God and my all.
54. The religious owner loses more than he steals.
55. You will live with restlessness if only one passion reigns in you, even though the others are mortified.
56. It is not the superior who is deceived, but himself, the subject who, instead of not wanting to, says I cannot.
57. He who does not have the superior in the place of God, God will not have him in the place of a son.
58. He who desires to have peace with his brethren in Religion, let him not contradict anyone.
59. If in Religion you are not good among the good, how will you be good in the world among the bad?
60. The religious is ungrateful who thinks that he has given more to the Religion than he has received from it.

### *By way of summary*

**34.** The spiritual teaching of Calasanz, present in a spontaneous way in the letters addressed to his religious, we find it harmoniously and dynamically structured in his Constitutions, written at a moment of human and spiritual fullness in his life.

In them our Holy Father proposes to us a life project that, assumed by profession, progressively transforms each religious according to the Spirit in the depths of his person through the daily experience of sharing with his brothers and diligent dedication to the Piarist ministry.

From this perspective, the insistence of Calasanz on the observance of the Constitutions, expression and way of fidelity to our charism, acquires a new meaning: “Your Reverence cannot give me greater consolation than to see to it with all diligence that our Constitutions are observed” (EP, 3898). “In the observance of the Constitutions consists the perfection of the religious” (EP, 554). “The observance of the rules is the way to perfection” (EP, 1786).

### ***Traits of a pedagogical spirituality***

**35.** The spirituality of Calasanz, which matured in the exercise of the educational apostolate, is characterized by traits such as the following:

- primacy of God, strongly felt and lived;
- central place of reference to Christ, as the way to the Father and as the good Teacher who welcomes the little ones and the poor;
- docility to the guidance of the Spirit;
- maternal intercession of Mary;
- ecclesial sense;
- great emphasis given to the liturgy and the sacraments, especially the celebration of the Eucharist;
- sense of transcendence, united to an appreciation of man’s effort in the present;

- theological charity that translates into human and social sensitivity;
- love of poverty as an expression of the following of the poor Christ and as a way of sharing the destiny of the poor whom one wishes to serve;
- a sense of gratuitousness, born of the love and example of Christ;
- emphasis on pedagogical virtues such as love, patience, gentleness in dealing with others, and the humility proper to those who know that they are at the service of the growth of others;
- humble and joyful adherence to our Calasanzian identity of “co-operator with the Truth”;
- generous and persevering dedication to one’s vocation and mission (FEP, n. 6).

## **Spiritual pedagogy of Saint Joseph Calasanz**

**36.** We commonly call pedagogy the activity and reflection that deal with education and teaching.

In this synthesis, we present the pedagogy of Calasanz in two parts. The first explains the birth and evolution of his educational and pedagogical vocation. This was born from his spiritual experience stimulated by the lack of piety and letters that he detected in the children of the popular classes and by the increasingly firm conviction that their integral education constituted the basis of true reform. In the second part, the aim is to systematize his overall pedagogical teaching, underlining the originality of many of his contributions. In conclusion, the most significant features of his spiritual pedagogy are presented.

### ***Pedagogical experience of St. Joseph Calasanz***

#### ***Background in Spain***

**37.** The spiritual pedagogy of Calasanz that developed in his Roman years had its roots, undoubtedly, in his previous personal experience, especially in the careful education received: in his family, in the school of the Trinitarians and in the universities of Lérida, Valencia, Alcalá de Henares, again in Lérida and, possibly, in Barcelona. On the other hand, in his intense priestly work there appear some signs of what would be his future mission as creator of the first religious Order dedicated exclusively to the education of children and young people. We can mention among these his student activity as “consellor” in Lérida, his function as “study assistant”

in Barbastro, his interest in forming his servant in Urgel and his friendship with Gervás de las Eras<sup>15</sup>, promoter of the foundation of schools in his diocese of Urgell to achieve the desired reform.

### *Foundational period of his educational work*

**38.** Already in Rome, Calasanz was tutor to the nephews of Cardinal Colonna<sup>16</sup> and belonged to various confraternities that sought to improve the spiritual and material conditions of the people.

The contact with the real poverty of the common people and his own spiritual evolution made him discover a new and fundamental means to carry out the reform from the base: the education of the popular classes.

Calasanz came to the world of education without being an educator. This fact, apparently paradoxical, definitely marked the orientation he gave to his educational work, conceived as an operative means of reforming the Church and society. From the beginning, he wanted to educate not simply for instructional purposes, but with a broader social and pastoral objective in mind. He later wrote in his Constitutions that the purpose of our Congregation through the exercise of the Pious Schools is the education of children, both in Christian piety and in human letters, in order to achieve the reform of Christian society and the temporal and eternal happiness of persons (cf. cc, 2, 175, 203).

Joseph Calasanz focused his attention and compassion on children. He noted their religious ignorance, despite the catechetical work being done in the Roman churches. He also noted that, with few exceptions, the few schooled students in the neighborhoods of Rome had to pay, and the very poor could not do so. Hence the illiteracy and all the scourges of children, loose and idle all day long, in a city like Rome at the end of the 16th century.

All this, together with the disappointment he suffered in his canonical aspirations, resulted in a profound change in his life. From the traditional pastoral ministry centered in the church, he moved to

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15 Priest of Urgell, visitor together with Calasanz of some officialates of the diocese.

16 Marco Antonio Colonna, in whose palazzo Calasanz resided during the first years of his stay in Rome.

a new pastoral ministry located in the school as the nucleus of a global reform of the Christian society of his time.

**39.** The year 1597 is traditionally considered the year of the beginning of the work of the Pious Schools when the saint began his collaboration in the little parish school of St. Dorothea in Trastevere. He intended to transform it by giving it a more social character in favor of the poor, which he achieved by transferring it to the interior of Rome in 1600. The Congregation of Christian Doctrine did not want to assume it as its own and Calasanz took responsibility for it, giving it the name of Pious Schools, that is to say, popular and Christian schools (SJC, p. 415, n.1).

Two later events helped to shape the work more precisely: the approval by Clement VIII, in 1602, of the Congregation (or association) of the Pious Schools and the decision taken in 1604 by the members of this Congregation to live in common in order to dedicate themselves to these gratuitous schools. Since then, the spiritual atmosphere of the group led by Calasanz intensified, giving the living together a markedly similar nuance to a community of apostolic life.

The schools that first occupied the palazzo Vestri moved to the larger palazzo Mannini, and finally in 1612 to palazzo Torres, bought by the members of the Congregation, which would eventually become the headquarters of the future Order, called the house of St. Pantaleo since Pope Gregory XV gave to the Pious Schools the annexed church dedicated to this martyr.

In these early years the schools were maintained with alms obtained by begging in Rome, with the money of Calasanz and with the contributions of Popes, cardinals and other benefactors.

**40.** A reflection of the experience of Calasanz in this period are his writings of pedagogical content: “Norms to be observed by the workers” (1604; cf. SL, pp. 97-99) and, above all, the “Brief relation of the way used in the Pious Schools to teach the poor students, who are usually more than seven hundred, not only the letters but also the holy fear of God” (1604; cf. SL, pp. 125-135), an important document in the history of European pedagogy, known as “*documentum princeps*” or magna carta of Calasanzian pedagogy since it was published in its entirety for the first time in the twentieth century.

### *Period of consolidation of the Pious Schools*

**41.** The relatively advanced age of Calasanz and the precarious solidity of the bonds that kept his companions united did not give well-founded hope for the continuity of the work. It was necessary and urgent to find a satisfactory solution. In 1614 the union of the Pious Schools with the Congregation of the Secular Clerics of the Virgin Mary, founded in Lucca by St. John Leonardi<sup>17</sup>, was consummated under the new name of the Congregation of the Mother of God. Calasanz would continue to exercise the office of Prefect or director of the schools; he and his companions would continue to live with the Rules they had; those who would be admitted in the future should profess the Rules of the religious from Lucca, and the latter committed themselves to take the schools as their principal ministry.

The union with the Luccan Congregation did not prosper. And on March 6, 1617, Paul V signed the founding Brief of the Pauline Congregation of the Poor of the Mother of God of the Pious Schools, with Calasanz as superior general and prefect of the schools. From now on Calasanz would be busy in the development of a religious Order and of a new school with unique characteristics.

In November 1621 Pope Gregory XV approved the Institute of the Pious Schools as a religious Order of clerics regular, and in January of the following year the Constitutions drawn up by Calasanz in Narni were approved.

The work then began to spread to the different Italian states and later to different Central European nations. There was an attempt, unsuccessful for the moment, to introduce it in Spain. From his tiny room in the house of San Pantaleo, Calasanz would direct, one by one, all the new foundations and would maintain the reins of government of the Order with extreme integrity and meticulousness. For this he made use of the epistolary correspondence, very abundant in this period of his life and, even more, in the following one. He must have written between ten and twelve thousand letters. Up

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17 Died in 1609, he was a friend of Calasanz who gave testimony in the cause of his beatification. Later, when the two Institutions separated, the Congregation of Lucca became the Order of the Mother of God.



to now, about five thousand letters have been published, all that are known, and that are a true treatise on school organization and pedagogy, unsystematic but solid and vital.

**42.** The process of consolidation and juridical configuration of the Pious Schools forced Calasanz in this period to express in writing, in a more thoughtful way, his pedagogical convictions and the need for the new religious congregation to assume the education of children as its characteristic dedication. Important in this sense are the memorandum to Paul V and to several cardinals, both written in 1615 (cf. SL, pp. 170-174), and especially the Constitutions finished in 1621 and the memorandum to Cardinal Tonti of the same year, both documents that constitute the clearest written expression of the pedagogical experience of Calasanz. Of more directly organizational content are the regulations he wrote for various schools (Frascati, Nazareno, Campi Salentina, Florence).

### *Period of crisis of the Piarist institution*

**43.** Calasanz had expressed his desire to leave the general government of the Order and retire to Naples, but as a result of the non-canonical general chapter of 1631 he was confirmed by the Pope as Superior General for life. In this meeting three important things were decided for the future: not to open new houses without the Pope's consent to avoid an excessive rapid expansion, to concentrate all the novices in Rome and to start a house of studies for the young Piarists, all aimed at achieving a better formation and a qualification of education in the schools. At that time the Order had 300 religious and 23 houses.

Urban VIII himself, who had appointed him Superior General for life, suspended him from office eleven years later, in January 1643. They were eleven years of growing expansion, at the end of which seventeen other schools were opened and many more remained in simple petition due to lack of personnel, in spite of the fact that there were almost 500 religious. But they were also years of enormous problems, created within the Order by the non-observant and their memorandums, the claims of the cleric brothers and of some brothers, the complainants, the Piarists Sozzi and Cherubini<sup>18</sup>, and

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18 He was a collaborator of Sozzi and after his death Vicar General of the Pious Schools.

from outside by Pietrasanta<sup>19</sup>, Monsignor Albizzi<sup>20</sup> and the Holy Office and the Jesuits who opposed the teaching of higher grades (Latin language and literature).

From outside and some from within provoked this institutional crisis of the work founded by Calasanz. The Saint then lived a Calvary until his death in 1648: debts, poverty, fatigue, internal dissensions, support for the schools, support for the faithful religious, defense against opponents inside and outside the Order. His martyrdom culminated with the suppression of the Order decreed by Innocent X, two years before the death of the aged and hard-working Calasanz. But nothing deterred his fidelity to the Church, his love for children and his hope in God and in Mary's intercession. "In spite of what is said about our Order, you should know that the Lord will always protect it and it will go from good to better, on condition that we put the diligence that we should in educating the children, particularly the poor, in the holy fear of God" (EP, 893).

**44.** The tragic experience of these last years led Calasanz to clarify and firmly defend the ministry proper to the Pious Schools in favor of the children in writings such as the "Declarations on the Constitutions" (year 1637; cf. JL, pp. 570-631) and in various memorandums, especially the one addressed to Cardinal Roma (year 1645; cf. SL, pp. 363-378). Also in this period he wrote other regulations for some schools (Nikolsburg, Naples, Litomysl).

### *Pedagogical contributions born out of his experience*

#### *a) In the field of pedagogical literature*

**45.** Although Calasanz was not a theoretician of education, he left his thoughts written in the *Constitutions* of the Pious Schools, several *Memorandums* in defense of the education of the poor, a *Brief Account* of how teaching was carried out in his schools, and several *Rules* for students and Marian congregations (SL, pp. 321-360).

But the most practical of his pedagogical thought are his *letters*. They contain a multitude of pedagogical norms and suggestions drawn from personal experience and dialogue with his companions.

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19 Silvestro Pietrasanta, Jesuit, appointed by the Pope as Visitor of the Pious Schools.

20 Francesco Albizzi, Advisor to the Holy Office and later Cardinal.

He also composed a *Catechism* for the little ones, a *Crown of the Twelve Stars*, a prayer full of pedagogical content in honor of Mary (cf. EP, c. 755b) and a *Clock of the Passion* of Christ (SL, pp. 100-109, 243-245).

He was the inspiration for five important works written by his friends in favor of the Pious Schools: *Liber de pia educatione*, by the Spanish Carmelite John of Jesus and Mary (1610); *Libro apologetico*, by the Italian Dominican Thomas Campanella<sup>21</sup> (1632?); *Apologia delle Scuole Pie*, by the Piarist F. Castelli<sup>22</sup> (1645?); *Difesa delle Scuole Pie*, by the lawyer F. Firmiani<sup>23</sup> (1645); *Apologia delle Scuole Pie*, by the Capuchin V. Magni<sup>24</sup> (1646).

#### *b) In the formation of teachers*

**46.** His work was the first essay, a little systematized, of selection and formation of the teaching staff, as a logical necessity to prepare the Piarists before introducing them in a school. In his Constitutions he wrote: “In the attainment of the purpose that our Order intends, we have thought it indispensable not only to offer the example of a *life according to the Spirit*, but also to possess the *doctrine* and the *method* to teach it. Therefore, when serious *progress in the authentic virtues* on the part of those who have been admitted to the profession has been ascertained, it will be necessary to think of *grounding them in the science and methodology* of teaching” (n. 203).

#### *c) In the organization of the school*

**47.** To Calasanz we owe the first attempt at the Graduate School. For L. Von Pastor<sup>25</sup>, to him also belongs the *foundation of the first free popular school in Europe*.

It is true that before Calasanz there were theoreticians of pedagogy, educators and statesmen, cordially occupied with the problem of education, both in the Catholic and Protestant fields. But the the-

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21 Philosopher, author of the famous utopian work, *The City of the Sun*.

22 He repeatedly held the offices of Provincial and Assistant General; he wrote various memorandums in defense of the Order.

23 Illustrious Roman lawyer whose services were requested by St. Joseph of Calasanz.

24 Valeriano Magni, brother of the Count of Strásnice, who founded a Piarist school in this Moravian city, whose church is now run by the Piarists.

25 *Storia dei Papi*, Rome 1942, vol. XI, pp. 438-440.

orists never went beyond the limits of pious reflections - including Luther and Saxon statesmen. The Pious Schools of Calasanz, on the other hand, perfectly fulfilled the three qualifiers of “universal, free and obligatory”.

He broadened the cultural and intellectual program in force in the elementary schools of his time, orienting it towards humanistic culture and giving importance to subjects that opened access to paid professions, such as mathematics, calligraphy and music.

*d) In the educational system*

**48.** He initiated the practice of the preventive system, whose theory would later be developed by St John Bosco, who confessed that he had already seen it practiced in the Nazareno School in Rome, founded by Calasanz. St John Baptist de la Salle sent Br Brolier to this same school in 1708, to learn about the Piarist method.

The letters of Calasanz are full of the recommendation of the sacraments -penance and Eucharist- and of prayer, as preventive and enlightening forces.

His objective of educating from the childhood years is the globalization of the preventive method to the whole Christian education, beyond the purely pedagogical aspect, and constitutes the fundamental nucleus of his argumentation in the Memorandum to Cardinal Tonti. The Saint affirms in this document that the future Order wants not only to educate everyone, but to begin to do so before each of the students loses his malleability. And for this reason he considers the Piarist ministry as the foundation and compendium of all the others to which it opens the way (cf. TONTI, n. 5, 9, 10, 14, 15, 24, 25, 26).

*e) In didactics*

**49.** He promoted every innovation, wherever it came from, thus defending the evolutionary principle of following in each epoch the methodology that the specialists and experts in the subject advice as the best.

He perfected the teaching of Latin, encouraging Fr John Francis Apa to publish the first Latin grammar written in Italian, an example that would not be extended until a century later: while the Protestant John Amos Comenius wrote in Latin his books dedicated

to the study of the native language, Calasanz and his Piarists composed in vernacular language the Latin grammar.

He introduced the study of mathematics in the popular education being pioneer in this aspect.

*f) In the apostolic-pedagogical aspect*

**50.** He created a typical form of youth apostolate, by means of a *specialized priest* within each school, “the confessor of the students, who with charity and kindness, attracts the hearts of the young people to God” (CC, 193).

Calasanz was the first founder of a religious Order *specifically* dedicated to teaching. Benedictines, Dominicans and Jesuits, among others, were engaged in teaching children, but none of these Orders was founded for the specific purpose of educating children and preferably the poor.

He conceived his school as a synthesis of faith-culture-life, animated by authentic Christian educators both for their life and their commitment.

*g) Social and political*

**51.** The work of Calasanz prepared the emancipation of the popular classes in the social and political spheres. This emancipation was linked to their instruction and education. The foundation of the Pious Schools also contributed to the practical consolidation and historical validation of the rights of the Church in the field of education, at a time when the Protestants consigned the schools to the civil authorities (MRE, p. 23-28).

*In his own words*

**52.** If we wanted to summarize with textual words of Calasanz himself his pedagogical experience, these quotations would suffice:

*“As for the beginning of the schools, I found myself with two or three others of the Christian Doctrine who went to Trastevere to teach in certain schools that were made in Santa Dorotea, in which, since a large part of the students paid each one a certain amount per month and of the companions there*

were those who came in the morning and those who came in the afternoon, I decided, upon the death of the parish priest who lent us a small room and a room on the ground floor, to put them in Rome, knowing the great poverty that existed because I had visited all the districts of Rome, being a member of the Confraternity of the Holy Apostles for six or seven years. And of the companions I had in Trastevere, only one followed me, and the institute was established in Rome, which little by little became a Congregation and then a Religion" (EP, c. 4185).

"I bear it all with patience, resolved to die rather than abandon the enterprise" (EP, 1148).

"I am here with so many labors and disturbances, that I have not time to perform half the business" (EP, 202).

"I desire that this house be well cared for, not only because it is the first in which I myself have worked, but also because it has a greater number of students and is in a place where poverty is greater: which we, according to our ministry, must serve and help with all our strength" (EP, 1214).

"I sympathize with you for the prolonged illness, and I wish I could console you more with deeds than with words. But the need of our poor house in Rome does not permit me to do so, having nothing to send you" (EP, 2055).

"I have always occupied myself in various things and have learned to write to perfection, and also many parts of arithmetic, in order to be able to teach it to our own religious. In case of necessity, I have conducted the school of calligraphy and arithmetic, of reading and grammar, when occasion has arisen through the illness of some teacher or by accident. And I have lost by this nothing of the dignity of the priesthood, nor the reputation of the office" (EP, 3672).

"Order that whoever has talent for calligraphy and arithmetic learn them, even if he is a cleric. I, for having studied it, have not lost a point of my priesthood, which is the greatest dignity I have been able to attain" (EP, 2162).

"At the beginning of the work, for many years, I did all the vilest and lowest offices in the house, until worker brothers came and helped me" (EP, 1892).

"I have not only washed the dishes, working as hard as those who make school, but I have also gone to the bread collec-

*tion with the saddlebags on my shoulder for Rome and to accompany the pupils. And I am willing to repeat it now” (EP, 2757).*

*“I have often wished to be a janitor or a nurse in any house rather than to have the position I have. And God is my witness that it is so” (EP, 1516).*

*“Being as I am over eighty years old, I often go to help, either in one school or in another. And that is the way every superior should act, even if he did nothing more than teach ten or twelve pupils at a time, passing through different schools” (EP, 3036).*

*“I myself, old as I am, often go to lend a hand in the schools” (EP, 4204).*

*“I have been offered house and church in Prague and in more than ten other places [...]. If I had ten thousand religious now, I could in a month distribute them all in those places that have asked us with great insistence. So that our Religion is not like many others, which by various means seek to penetrate the cities. For ours is wanted and sought after by many cardinals, bishops, prelates, great lords and principal cities, as I can prove by many letters” (EP, 2027).*

### *By way of summary*

**53.** We can conclude this section on the pedagogical experience of Calasanz by pointing out that the Saint was a teacher of children and religious; he taught daily for fifteen years, organized and directed the Pious Schools of St Pantaleo until his death; he personally intervened in the creation and implementation of those of Frascati, Carcare and Naples, and through his letters in all the others. His attention to the young and adult religious covered the spiritual sphere and the pedagogical-didactic dimension: for them he wrote clear rules of arithmetic and mathematical problems for their students; he corrected the compositions of the Piarist seminarians, he proposed them concrete themes of composition and taught them the way to correct the compositions of the scholastics. He provided them with books and the best teachers, even if some of them were questioned by the Catholic officialdom, such as Galileo Galilei, Thomas Campanella, etc. He encouraged his teachers to follow the best method, the easiest, clearest and shortest, always

open to the best at every moment; and he even encouraged them to discover new methods. He was a good catechist, confessor of adults and children, preacher and spiritual director of laity and religious. He died like Christ, apparently a failure, but also in his case, according to the promise of the Lord, from death a new life was born.

### ***Pedagogical teaching of St. Joseph Calasanz***

**54.** The overall pedagogical teaching of Calasanz, the fruit of his own experience and of his considered knowledge of the educational reality of his time, is centered above all on the agents of education (students, educators, parents of students, environment) and is developed dynamically in the educational activity (integral education of piety and letters, graded school and organizational structures). All this is neatly summarized in the following points.

#### *The student*

##### *a) Descriptive portrait*

**55.** Calasanz conceives the child as a being -child of God, explicitly- who, from a very tender age, is capable of developing his human personality and his supernatural life, if, with greater affection the younger he is, he is provided with an integral instruction and education in piety and letters (cf. TONTI, n. 5, 9-12, 25-26).

The student is the Christ whom the educator loves and serves (cf. EP, 3041) and his poverty is not an impediment, nor should it be, to access the entire field of knowledge, without any limitation whatsoever.

##### *b) Poverty and gratuity*

**56.** At first, Calasanz attended exclusively to the poor, demanding from the students the “certificate of poverty” issued by the parish priest or, in the case of impoverished nobles, by the confessor or by another person worthy of faith, in order to silence the protests of the teachers of the neighborhoods.

Later, particularly after 1617, while affirming that his school “is more for the poor than for the rich” (EP, 2434), he attended also to the rich because everyone is in need of education, as Calasanz explains in the memorial to Cardinal Tonti (cf. TONTI, n. 5, 9, 25, 26).



After much insistence from his religious and from outsiders, in 1638 he finally allowed the opening in Florence of the so-called “School for Nobles”, for the exclusive service of the nobility, although the gratuity of education - at least formally - was also rigorously observed here.

This gratuity would not have been enough for many poor people who, lacking all economic resources, would not have been able to attend the Pious Schools. Calasanz provided them with paper, pens, ink, books and, not infrequently, even clothing and food.

For those who did not have the conditions at home to do their school work and for those who came from far away, he allowed them to stay in a classroom after lunch, under the supervision of a religious, and to study there until the beginning of the afternoon classes (SJC, p. 383-392).

The “*praecipue pauperes*”, referred to the children, is a transversal axis in the thematic of Calasanz (Constitutions, letters, memorandums).

*c) Minimum and maximum age*

**57.** To give instruction to the “little ones”, as Calasanz called them, was a gesture of social importance, because it took care of the poorest, most numerous and most abandoned part of the population, at the same time as the most susceptible to help and remedy (cf. CC, 2).

He demanded that they be at least six years old, although his own religious pressured him not to admit them at such an early age, because they understood that education at that age was something totally “womanly”.

Regarding the older ones, he did not want to admit them if they had already passed the age of sixteen and showed bad conduct; or he accepted them only as a test and after a previous general confession. In the case of boarding schools, he reduced the age to a maximum of 14 or 15 years. He also wanted the older children to be always separated from the younger ones (cf. EP, 2236).

*d) number of students per classroom*

**58.** Calasanz saw clearly that only with a very limited number of pupils per class could good results be obtained, both in the instructional and educational aspects. Hence he wanted, in spite of the short-

age of teachers at his disposal, that no class should have more than fifty pupils, reaching sixty only in extraordinary cases (cf. EP, 3022). In practice, social criteria took precedence over pedagogical criteria. The heart of the father won out over the mind of the pedagogue.

*e) External and internal*

**59.** Calasanz, faithful to the Constitutions of the Order, was quite contrary to employ his religious in the care of boarding schools and seminaries (cf. CC, 184).

During his life only two boarding schools operated: The Nazareno in Rome and the Lauretanus in Nikolsburg. In both of them he sought, above all, the careful selection of the students, demanding that they be from honest families, of good health, of good talent and of proven morals.

The Regulations he wrote for them reflect an education with a certain ascetic rigor, not very different from the University Colleges of the time.

*f) Their participation in education*

**60.** Calasanz admits, in certain cases, the decisive participation of the students in educational, didactic and disciplinary aspects, through the “Decurions”, the “Emperors” and the “Academies”.

The “Decurion” pupils contributed to a high degree to the work of the educators, particularly in the disciplinary, but sometimes also in the didactic aspects. Chosen with the approval of the companions and their teachers, they helped the Prefect in discipline: control of absences and vigilance in common acts; they helped the teachers by controlling the fulfillment of the daily duties of their fellow pupils and by taking the lessons of the previous day (SJC, p. 320-321).

There were two types of pupil “emperors”: the first reigned for a week and the second for an entire school year. They could impetrate for a certain number of cases the amnesty of their companions from certain small punishments (cf. EP, 1425).

The academies exercised, with their monthly sessions, the literary composition, in prose and verse of the students, and promoted their active participation in the humanistic culture (cf. EP, 1983).

*g) Catholic and non-Catholic students*

**61.** Calasanz' broad mind and open heart led him not only to deal with personalities who had had difficulties with the Holy Office (Galileo, Campanella, Scioppio), but also to admit in Rome - at the time of the Reformation - Jewish students, committing himself to respect their faith without proselytizing; and in Lutheran Germany, Protestant boys, without the slightest pressure to convert them (SJC, p. 618).

*The educator*

*a) Profile*

**62.** Calasanz had, perhaps like no other before him, such a high concept of the educator, and particularly of the elementary teacher, that he believes him to be a missionary of the truth who, spreading the light, dissipates the darkness of ignorance and helps the students to free themselves from intellectual and moral slavery and to reach true happiness (cf. CC, 3-4, 6-7, 203).

He held that the good educator is born and made. Hence he demanded diligent selection and careful training. He wanted certain physical and psychological qualities to exist as a substratum in the future educator: good wit, good character, good manners, good health of body and spirit. He demanded of them dedication and self-denial in their work as workers in the Pious Schools and provided them with the means to lead an exemplary interior life, to acquire a sufficient culture, to develop pedagogical attitudes and the best teaching methods (cf. EP, 16).

*b) Co-operator with the Truth*

**63.** Calasanz defined the educator as "co-operator with the Truth" (CC, 3), because he considered that the first cause is God, the Truth. And because he understood that in order to educate and reform the interior of children and young people, men chosen by God are needed. In this definition is perhaps where the implication of spirituality and pedagogy appears best. His was a pedagogy of holiness that could only be realized by God through the Holy Spirit as interior teacher and supported by the holiness of the educator, whose function should be nothing less than that of facilitating the divine action (cf. TONTI, n. 8; SJC, pp. 75-76).

*c) Remote and proximate training*

**64.** The attention that Calasanz gave to the future educators included three dimensions: the being (the person), the knowledge (knowledge) and the knowledge to teach (didactics and methodology). In fact, the Constitutions that he wrote prescribe a conscientious formation of the future educator and provide that, after a solid spiritual foundation, he should be instructed both in letters and human sciences as well as in pedagogy, particularly in didactics and in the method of teaching (cf. CC, 203-210). For Calasanz, if there is not previously an adequate spiritual formation that concerns the future educator as a permanent learner, the rest will have value, but it will lack the fundamental basis.

**65.** As regards the intellectual formation of the educator, he ordered that the novices, after taking advantage of the spiritual formation, should study grammar (Latin) and the interpretation of classical authors, and learn the method of Christian doctrine, calligraphy and the abacus (cf. CC, 207).

In the following years, humanistic-literary and scientific-mathematical studies, philosophy, theology, sacred and profane music, the vernacular language, etc., were continued. (cf. CC, 205-206; SJC, p. 134-140).

In order to be more sure of the good formation of future educators, he introduced obligatory examinations for teachers before they began their work and each time they were to pass from a minor school to a major one. He wanted each one, according to his ability and talents, to apply himself to the school work and apostolate most suited to his character and intellectual faculties (cf. CC, 189-191; EP, 1226).

Not only did he want specialized teachers, but, for understandable reasons, he also wanted the various countries to have native educators (cf. EP, 1907).

The neophyte teacher always began with the lowest class and counted on the help provided by the Prefect - who visited all the classrooms daily -, the exchange of pedagogical experiences that Calasanz requested in the community recreations and in the weekly conferences; and on the well-equipped libraries of the houses (cf. EP, 1182).

Regarding the intimate union that should exist in the educator between study and piety, he wanted his students to always study with humility and that all their studies be accompanied by an intense pious fervor. But in the case of an eventual incompatibility, due to human weakness, he preferred virtue to knowledge (cf. CC, 93, 210-211, 299-300).

*d) Renewal*

**66.** Calasanz wanted that every six or eight years a time of renewal (sabbatical year) was given to the educator, so that he could recover his strength, take stock, know new achievements in his field and return to the task with greater vigor (Memorandums to Cardinals Giustiniani<sup>26</sup>, Lancellotti and Soana, SL p. 173, n.3).

*e) Spirituality*

**67.** It cannot escape the gaze of a deep observer of the spirituality of the Calasanzian educator that it always develops in function of a particular pedagogical purpose. The exercise of virtue, the common practices of piety, the living of his four vows (poverty, chastity, obedience and teaching) serve not only to attain an ever greater likeness to the Lord, but are also useful and indispensable for perfecting his pedagogical character. And vice versa: all his pedagogical activity becomes a very powerful means of spiritual progress.

There is no doubt that for Calasanz the main virtue of the educator is love for God and neighbor, which crystallizes in practical love for the students, in pedagogical charity (cf. CC, 6).

He wants love to the child - Christ for the educator - to be always accompanied by great patience “so as to know how to make use of the talents he discovers in the pupils and to know how to remedy their faults and imperfections with paternal affection” (EP, 3721).

The educator must practice humility and poverty, not only because he has to teach the first elements and this to poor children, but also because both virtues are inherent to the very office of the teach-

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26 Second protector of the Pious Schools in whose palazzo, today the Senate of Italy, Calasanz received the religious habit in 1617. Giustiniani presented to Pope Gregory XV the request for the elevation of the Pious Schools to a religious Order.

er, who must continually adapt himself to the capacity of the little ones (cf. EP, 3761; SJC, p. 88-91).

#### *f) Different educators*

From the various documents at our disposal, it is clear that, according to Calasanz' intentions, the teaching staff of a school should be as follows:

##### 1. The local minister

**68.** He was the director of the center, both of the teaching staff and of the students. His office lasted for three years and he could be re-confirmed for another three-year term (cf. CC, 186-192).

Above all, he was to provide the school with the necessary teaching staff, taking special care of the "elementary section" and the first grammar class, in order to better serve the poor who needed to start work early (cf. CC, 198).

He had to ensure that a single intellectual and spiritual patrimony was taught in all classes, and that the same teaching method was used. Calasanz demanded homogeneity not only within each school, but also among all the schools. To obtain such uniformity, the local Minister was to give in writing to each teacher the program to be developed, the way to use it, the books to be used and the timetable (cf. CC, 212-216).

He was to visit the classes frequently, to encourage, exhort and exclude inept teachers (cf. CC, 190-191).

He reported weekly to the Superiors and held a pedagogical conference in the community in which concrete "cases" were studied. On more than one occasion, Calasanz advised him to give some classes and even to accompany the students to their homes on the "routes" (cf. EP, 167; SJC, p. 283-292).

##### 2. The Prefect of Schools

**69.** He immediately followed the Minister in the organization. He was his representative and the guarantor of the good running of the schools (cf. CC, 202).

He saw to the integral formation of the students and to the fulfillment of the timetables, programs and regulations. He opened and closed the schools.

Enrollment depended on him. After examination, he assigned each student to the class he was to join. He presided over promotion examinations.

He frequently visited the classrooms, thus controlling absences, the development of the programs, the texts used, etc. He met with the parents of the students, when the child's progress required it.

The Sunday Oratories, recreations, extracurricular activities, the accompaniment of the children on the "routes", the monthly confession and communion, the continuous prayer, everything was organized and controlled by the Prefect (cf. SJC, p. 293-301).

### 3. The teacher

**70.** The most important person in the teaching staff. Calasanz wanted him to be erudite, pious and full of love for poor children.

Before he could finally exercise his profession, he had to spend at least three years in a training period, beginning with the lowest class until he reached the school of the humanities. He underwent an examination and had to make the profession of faith (cf. CC, 206-209).

He was in the classroom before his students arrived and did not leave them until the ranks of the "route" were broken. In the classroom, in church, in the Sunday Oratory, in the courtyard, in the streets, each group had the company of its teacher (cf. CC, 115-116).

Neither could he enter the classrooms of others, nor should he let others into his own without the permission of the Prefect. Nor could he expel any pupil without this permission.

He kept his classroom clean, reported absences and paid particular attention to the good habits, conversations and games of the pupils.

From among the best pupils, he chose the decurions and other officers who helped him in the running of the class.

His indispensable contact with the parents should take place in the presence of the Prefect, at least with his authorization. And he could not accept anything from them, nor visit them in their homes, except in case of serious illness of the parents or the child (cf. CC, 38, 113, 114).

As for his didactic activity, he had to be absolutely faithful to the program (books, exercises, method) that he received from the Min-

ister. He could use notes to help his memory when explaining the lessons (cf. SJC, p. 301-307).

#### 4. The confessor of the students

**71.** Given the great importance that Calasanz attributed to the efficacy of the sacraments in his educational system, the figure of the Confessor, the true Spiritual Director, could not be absent from the teaching staff (cf. CC, 193).

He should be exempt from classes, be of mature age and an expert in the cases presented by the students. Possessing an easy method of questioning the boys and proposing attractive ideals to them (cf. CC, 316-317).

Always at the disposal of the students, he had to confess them all at least once a month and guide them as a true spiritual director. When one had to be punished with a whipping, he could offer him the opportunity - in agreement with the Prefect - to exchange the punishment for confession, because, according to Calasanz, "the sacrament is more effective than the whipping" (EP, c. 1441).

He had to see to it that every new student made a general confession as soon as possible, so that, knowing him by it, he could better guide him in the future (cf. SJC, pp. 307- 311).

#### 5. The Prefect of Continuous Prayer

**72.** The prefect of continuous prayer became the confessor's assistant and the one who spiritually directed the students in the external sphere, especially in the practice of prayer (cf. CC, 194).

Such a prefect had to be "of mature age, cultured and of great spirit", because his office and responsibility were, for Calasanz, very important (cf. SJC, p. 311-313).

#### 6. The Corrector

**73.** In an era of harsh and even capricious punishments, Calasanz softened the practice of corporal punishment, entrusting to a religious, distinct from the teacher and the prefect, the execution of eventual corporal punishments.

It was not up to him to establish the measure of the punishment, but to execute it according to the orders of the Prefect or the Min-



ister, “with great prudence, piety, benignity and mercy” (cf. SJC, pp. 313-315).

## 7. Minor Offices

**74.** In addition to the offices already described, which were always carried out by fixed persons, there were others of lesser importance, not always carried out by specific persons, but by the entire teaching staff in shifts: the *prefect of the courtyard* assisted the Prefect of the schools in the discipline of the recreations; the *custodians* of the schoolchildren watched over the boys gathered at the school gate until the signal was given to enter the classrooms; the *librarian* took care of the conservation of the books and the silence of the teachers and students who consulted them; the *guides*, two per group, who accompanied the pupils from the school to the parental home along the routes established in the city with the help of the decurions (cf. SJC pp. 315-319).

## 8. Members external to the teaching body

**75.** The fact that the Pious Schools was a religious Order meant help “from the outside” in the running of the schools: The *Provincial*, the *Visitors* and the *General* did what today the Ministry of Education does through its Inspectors.

According to Calasanz, no one could occupy the office of Provincial (superior of the various colleges of a religious demarcation) without six years integrally dedicated to teaching and at least three years as local Minister (cf. CC, 282-283).

The Provincial was in charge of appointing the local Ministers, organizing the teaching staff of each house, appointing the examiners of the teachers, receiving the weekly information from the Minister and visiting all the schools every year.

Calasanz, as the first Father General of the Order, maintained a permanent and detailed contact with the houses, as is attested by his extensive collection of letters.

The Visitors were representatives of Fr. General or of Fr. Provincial who inspected the schools and controlled their good running, the facilities, the programs, the teaching of Christian doctrine, the functioning of the Sunday Oratories, the Academies, the Congrega-

tions. They would decree the opportune remedy for irregularities and transmit the positive experiences of some centers to others (cf. CC, 310-311; SJC, p. 325-328).

*g) Participation of educators in the running of the school.*

76. Calasanz insisted on listening to everyone in the weekly meetings and always encouraged the good initiatives of his teachers, so that the running of the school was not only the work of the Minister or the Prefect (certainly the latter was the “strong man” of his system), but the work of all.

*h) Catechetical activity inside and outside the school*

**77.** Christian Doctrine was the main subject of teaching in the Pious Schools. Calasanz made every effort to ensure that his teachers were well prepared for this office and that Christian Doctrine was taught with the regularity and normality of all the other school subjects (cf. CC, 5, 200).

He also wanted Sunday and festive teaching to be held publicly in the church. While in the classes the subject was always advanced a little, on Sundays and feast days it was rather a public expression of what had been learned, lasting at least an hour. There was never lacking a spiritual exhortation by the catechist, nor a repetition of the lessons. But it was often the boys themselves who played the main part with their disputes or with their discourses (cf. SJC, pp. 434-437).

Calasanz wanted Sunday catechesis to be given not only to the students, but also to outsiders, generally boys and children. The first Piarists, with the Venerable Glicerio Landriani at the head, taught with great zeal and success the Christian doctrine in various churches in Rome, Frascati and neighboring towns (cf. SJC, pp. 442-446).

*Parents of students*

**78.** Calasanz knew that the school, if it wants to ensure stable and lasting success for the student, cannot neglect cooperation with the parents. That is why he wanted to have as close a relationship as possible.

The first point in which he asked for the parents’ collaboration was in the daily attendance of the children in class and in the control of

their learning progress. They had to justify all absences and control the completion of homework, as well as the good conduct of their children.

The Prefect had an office in which to welcome parents to receive or give information. Teachers could also be visited by the parents in the presence of the Prefect.

The collaboration was extremely close when it came to deciding whether the child would pursue “literary studies” or remain in the “professional training” of the first classes.

Calasanz wrote in his Constitutions that the books of the students should be such that even their parents could draw fruit from them (cf. CC, 213).

In the churches of the respective schools, the parents of the students could be attended to. There were even congregations or associations of adults for them.

Solemn performances, recitals and academies also contributed to the contact between parents and school.

Calasanz’ delicacy in this matter went as far as the prohibition of asking for alms in the pupils’ homes, in order to safeguard total gratuity.

Teachers could visit their students and their parents when they were seriously ill to bring them the consolation of faith.

Calasanz wanted the just criticism of the families regarding the running of the school to be respected, but he never allowed the whims and incompetent remarks of the parents to be heard (cf. SJC, p. 359-362).

### *School environment*

**79.** The so-called “preventive system” was used with full effectiveness in the schools of Calasanz, although its systematic exposition would be made much later by Don Bosco. It is the essence of his educational system presented in the Memorial to Cardinal Tonti (n. 5, 9, 15, 17, 25, 26).

The educational environment began with the education “*a teneris annis*”, the continuous control of the student and the opportune use of the sacraments. Consistent ideals were proposed to the stu-

dents so as not to remain in the “training” of an external discipline; they were solidly formed in the cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance), and they were initiated in the spirit and life of prayer, opening them to the concern for the great problems of the Church and Society (cf. SJC, p. 603-607).

### *Integration of Piety and Letters*

**80.** Calasanz affirms that to the students well taught in letters and educated in piety, one can foresee a happy course of their whole life (cf. CC, 2).

The Pious Schools of Calasanz were truly schools, in the most modern and concrete sense of the word, and not only an Oratory destined only to the moral and religious education of the boys.

Piety and letters, science and piety, culture and faith, are integrated in the mind and in the pedagogical praxis of Calasanz and his followers. When speaking of future educators, Calasanz wrote: “let them harmonize study with piety and let both render reciprocal service” (CC, 210). The motto was primarily for the teachers and as a consequence for the students.

### *Piety*

**81.** The school of Calasanz has as its main goal the good moral and religious education of the children (cf. CC, 2), whose ultimate goal was, no doubt, to make each student “able to sanctify himself” and an active subject of the moral reform of society. The saint speaks of educating in piety and Christian doctrine, that is, in Christian spirituality or experience and in religious knowledge or culture (cf. CC, 5).

Calasanz insisted on beginning education “from the tender years” in order to prevent any harmful influence. Those who had already lost their innocence were invited to make a general confession, upon admission, to break with the past and begin a new life (cf. SJC, pp. 470-473).

#### *a) Holy fear of God*

**82.** Strictly religious formation had as its initial goal to awaken in the students “the holy fear of God”, understood as admiration for the greatness of God (he often used the expression of the time “His

divine Majesty”) and a filial relationship with regard to the divine fatherhood, which led the boy to lovingly watch over the fulfillment of the commandments.

This “fear of God” - the principle of wisdom - which was transformed into “reverent love”, into filial piety, has remained forever the main basis of Calasanzian religious education (cf. SJC, pp. 474-475).

#### *b) Christocentrism*

**83.** Calasanz wanted that, besides the regular teaching of Christian doctrine, the whole life and passion of Christ, according to the book written by Calasanz himself, be proposed and explained to the students with particular care; that the feasts of the Lord be celebrated with great solemnity; that Continuous Prayer be made before the Blessed Sacrament; that those who were old enough to do so receive communion at least monthly; and that the figure of Jesus be the first of the ideals to be proposed in the classrooms (cf. SJC, p. 476-479).

#### *c) Sacraments*

**84.** Among all the natural and supernatural means of Calasanzian education, the sacraments of confession and communion (Holy Mass) undoubtedly occupy the first place.

Calasanz said of these two sacraments “that they tend to enlighten the understanding extraordinarily and, by frequenting them with devotion, they tend to inflame the will so that it hates sin and loves the works of virtue” (EP, 471).

He wanted Mass to be obligatory for all, but he gave a certain freedom to the elders; he wanted it to be daily, but he did everything possible so that the participation of the students would be more and more active, fruitful and disciplined. If the temple was for him the main school-room, the Mass was the most important lesson (cf. SJC, pp. 523-537).

#### *d) Continuous prayer*

**85.** It consisted of an uninterrupted adoration of the Blessed Sacrament made daily during class hours by the entire student body in shifts of nine, ten or twelve pupils at a time, at thirty-minute intervals, under the guidance of a priest. They prayed for the needs of the Church, society and the Pious Schools. The principal truths

of the faith and the devout and frequent manner of confession and communion were explained (cf. SJC, pp. 311-312; SL, pp. 112-116).

*e) Marian devotion*

**86.** After Christ, the second ideal that Calasanz wanted to propose to the students was the Virgin Mary, Mother of God and of the Pious Schools.

Classes began and concluded with invocations to the Virgin. In the afternoon, everyone went to the church to recite the Litany of Our Lady or the Crown of the Twelve Stars, a simple and theological praise, work of Calasanz. The rosary was recited in the rows or routes on the way home. The Angelus, morning and evening. All the practices of piety concluded with the prayer “We fly to your patronage, oh Holy Mother of God ...”.

Saturday was especially dedicated to Mary. On Sundays and feast days, the older ones, before the Eucharist, prayed the Office of the Virgin, and the little ones, the rosary. The seven feasts of the Virgin were celebrated with vacation and Oratory.

The most devout students were freely enrolled in the Marian Congregations of the schools (SJC, pp. 480-494).

*f) The cult of the saints and of the guardian angel*

**87.** After the presentation of Christ and his Mother, Calasanz proposed to the boys the figure of the saints more appropriate to their mentality and circumstances: the holy children Just and Pastor; the three young martyrs of Sicily; St. Thomas Aquinas, model for his purity and love of science. They entered the real world of the students as models that enlightened their understanding and attracted their will. Calasanz did not forget either the figure of the guardian angel, reference of the good educator (cf. SJC, pp. 480-494). g)

*g) The exercise of virtues*

**88.** Calasanz prescribed that his disciples should make an attentive examination of conscience every day, and that they should be taught how to do it well.

The day began with the offering to the Lord of all the acts, by means of a text composed by himself (cf. SL, p. 110).

Acts of faith, hope and charity were repeated daily in the form of prayers, for which special sheets of paper were printed. Acts of humility and contrition were added.

Great insistence was placed on the formation of the moral virtues of the student. Calasanz put all his efforts to achieve the spirit of sincerity and truth in the children, as a condition without which a solid education in truth could not be achieved. He took special care in the education of the young to purity (cf. CC, 201; SJC, pp. 502-516).

#### *h) The practice of prayer*

**89.** One of the main objectives of Calasanzian education was to promote in the student a deep spirit of prayer, which had first of all to permeate his whole person and then be projected in the unceasing praise of God and in helping his neighbor.

Prayer was considered by Calasanz as one of the most effective means available to the teacher for education, both intellectual and moral.

The teacher and the Prefect of Continuous Prayer were the ones in charge of teaching the child the way to pray vocally and mentally, personally and communally.

Everyone had to know by heart the principal prayers of the Church. Most of them were impetratory and of thanksgiving, and were used as a means of social help in favor of men and of the Church (cf. SJC, pp. 516-523).

At the beginning of the lessons, the “Come, Holy Spirit”, the Salve and its prayer were recited. At the ringing of the bell in the morning and in the evening, the Angelus. And at the end of the lessons, the litanies were recited along with other prayers.

#### *i) Pious practices at home*

**90.** Calasanz included in the Rules of his schools the regulation of the extracurricular conduct of the young people, even in the field of piety (cf. SJC, pp. 345-349).

#### *j) Extracurricular catechesis, Oratories and Congregations*

**91.** We have already mentioned catechesis. The Oratory consisted of a meeting prior to the celebration of the Eucharist on Sundays and

feast days. After a brief spiritual reading and an exhortation given by one of the Fathers, the older students prayed the Office of the Blessed Virgin and the little ones the rosary (SJC, pp. 339, 485, 583). In the time between catechesis and Vespers, some religious accompanied the students to the countryside, outside the city, where they played.

Another of the means that Calasanz used for the formation in piety were the Congregations. The inscription was free, and its members, forming an autonomous association - with directors chosen by themselves and a common treasury - obliged themselves to be more faithful servants of Mary. They had their Sunday and festive meetings, their pious practices and voluntary mortifications (cf. SJC, pp. 488-491).

### *Letters*

**92.** For Calasanz, intellectual education had an appreciation at least equal to moral and religious education (piety). He always defended that a true moral and religious education cannot be given without a solid intellectual education, nor can the will be induced to good if before, or at least simultaneously, the understanding is not enlightened by the truth.

#### *a) The core of the subjects taught*

**93.** Calasanz wanted the following to be taught in his schools founded for the service of the poor: reading, writing, abacus (mathematics), Latin (grammar) and Christian doctrine. Each of these five subjects - apart from being a formative element of the intellect - had its social value, function and purpose.

The merit of Calasanz lies in his insistence on the teaching of mathematics (abacus), quite neglected at that time; and in the teaching of Latin (grammar) to the poor, against the opposition of society to give a literary culture to these children (cf. SJC, pp. 417-420).

#### *b) The teaching of reading*

**94.** The main objective to be attained was a clear, correct reading of any Latin or Italian text. The program was developed in three different periods: knowledge of the sounds with their spelling and of the syllables; reading "the Psalter without stopping" (easy reading of a



Latin text); and reading of books in the vulgar language. Each one of these periods lasted, at least, four months.

Everyone was taught simultaneously, using intuitive methods. Calasanz insisted much on the need for a good printing of the textbooks, to facilitate the work of the students (cf. SJC, pp. 423-425).

*c) The teaching of writing*

**95.** The teaching of writing was perhaps more important in the Calasanzian school than that of reading, given the great practical usefulness of calligraphy for various jobs of the time accessible to the poor.

The aim was to achieve a light, disciplined, almost calligraphic handwriting, flawless in spelling.

The pupils imitated the samples provided by the teachers, often printed. Calasanz even determined what the desks should look like and how far apart they should be, so that the teacher could move between them.

Sometimes the best works were exhibited to the public at school festivals; other times they served as ornamentation in the classes (cf. SJC, p. 425-429).

*d) The teaching of arithmetic (abacus)*

**96.** Calasanz made arithmetic one of the main subjects of his popular school. The motives that impelled him to do so were of a practical order (it enabled many poor people to become accountants, bookkeepers, army mechanics, merchants...) and of an intuitive order: he foresaw the new scientific-positive orientation of Kepler, Galileo, Newton.

It was necessary to teach at least the four operations with integers and fractions. Special care was taken with commercial arithmetic and often also with military arithmetic.

The teacher prescribed daily a large number of problems that the students did at home.

During the life of Calasanz, in some of the schools, higher mathematics was taught, according to the "new science" of Galileo; a group of Piarists were his disciples, encouraged by Calasanz himself (SJC, pp. 429-434).

*e) The teaching of Christian doctrine*

**97.** Calasanz considered indispensable a teaching of Christian doctrine as regular and normal as that of all the other school subjects.

His school teaching was systematized as follows: on a certain day of the week, the teacher explained the doctrine in class (almost always by the catechism of Cardinal Bellarmine). The students had to learn seven or eight lines of it by heart every day. In two or three years the catechism was completed.

In addition, each day, both in the morning and in the afternoon, the last quarter of an hour was almost always reserved for a verbal explanation of some topic or some practice of Christian life.

To this double teaching given to the whole class, we must add the instruction that the student received in the small group of Continuous Prayer.

Outside of school hours, on Sundays and holidays, Calasanz wanted public catechesis, of which we have already spoken (cf. SJC, p. 434-437).

*f) The teaching of Latin (grammar, humanities)*

**98.** The knowledge of Latin had for Calasanz - besides a cultural value - a social value, inasmuch as it constituted the indispensable condition to pursue higher studies and also to exercise certain professions of minor importance, of great diffusion and generally practiced by the poor (notaries, copyists...) (cf. SJC, p. 162-163).

The immediate objective of their teaching was therefore twofold: for those who, after three or four grammar classes, finished their studies for good, they sought a rather technical possession of Latin, with which to achieve certain trades; for those who aspired to higher studies, they sought to achieve all that the Roman College of the Jesuits gave to its students in order to gain access to them.

In this teaching of Latin, Calasanz was not as original as in the teaching of the five elementary subjects. Latin generally comprised four classes and was well structured by the *Ratio Studiorum* of the Jesuits.

*g) Aesthetic education*

**99.** Calligraphy, rhetoric and poetics had their aesthetic function. But this education was favored above all by singing and music.

Calasanz was a zealous promoter of the sacred music reformed by Palestrina. He himself created the music school, among other reasons, so that poor schoolchildren could earn their daily sustenance by playing an instrument or singing.

These music and singing schools did not provide a scientifically based musical education. They were modest centers of diffusion, where the students obtained a complement to their culture, a reinforcement for their religious sentiment and, in other cases, a means of earning their bread.

In addition to singing and music, stage performances, essential at that time, also played a part in the aesthetic education of the students. Calasanz, however, allowed them only with many reservations, because he understood that they disturbed the development of the students, fostered vanity and other negative inclinations (cf. SJC, p. 550-566).

#### *h) Physical education*

**100.** Calasanz attached great importance to the good physical and psychological health of his students and paid great attention to their personal hygiene. The means he used were the common recreations or walks, which were held at least twice a week: Sundays and Thursdays. They would go out of town and there they would play ball, bocce or shuffleboard.

Apart from these outings, we find no trace of a physical education systematically practiced in the first Calasanzian schools (cf. SJC, p. 567-573).

#### *i) Social education*

**101.** The fact that Calasanz was open, after 1617, to admit in his schools the rich and the nobles with the poor, together and without any distinction of class, had its indisputable social significance.

To this equality and mutual respect among the students also contributed the obligation that upon arriving in the classroom, classmates had to greet each other, and in their conversations they had to address each other as a sign of respect, following the customs of the time.

The students were instilled with a sincere appreciation for poverty, the sure basis of all social formation, and for work. No advantages or

privileges were allowed for any reason other than integrity of morals or greater diligence and achievement in study (cf. SJC, pp. 402-405).

The collegial regulations prescribed the affable treatment and cheerful obedience to parents, teachers, authorities and, in general, to the elders, in fair correspondence to the respect, adaptation and external veneration that Calasanz demanded from the educators towards their students (cf. SJC, pp. 345-347).

*j) Major sciences*

**102.** Calasanz did not stop at the simple knowledge of the rules and didactic method of the five elementary subjects. The foundation of the Superior School of Mathematics in Florence (1630), his admiration and the close relationship that some of his students had with Galileo and with other famous mathematicians and physicists of the time, his personal inclination and his intuition, which foresaw the scientific-practical direction of the new times and the important part that mathematics would have in them, made him oblige a good part of his religious to study higher mathematics (cf. SJC, p. 149-150).

The teaching of Latin in Italy was promoted by Calasanz himself, very competent in this argument, by promoting a new grammar -that of Fr Apa- that would serve “to help the poor, who cannot spend many years in the study of the Latin language” (EP. 3769).

Since for Calasanz the total educator is the pedagogue-priest, he also encouraged the necessary studies of philosophy and theology, with greater openness on his part as the years went by, although without arriving at learned specializations (cf. SJC, pp. 200-206).

It was not until almost a century after Calasanz’ death (1731), with the Bull “Nobis quibus” of Clement XII, that the controversy on the possibility of teaching the Piarists to their students the “higher sciences” was settled, although we know that during the Saint’s lifetime, higher mathematics, Greek, philosophy and Cases of Conscience were already being taught in some schools (cf. SJC, pp. 266-267).

*k) The teaching of the common language*

**103.** Its teaching did not constitute a subject. It was done through the classes of reading, writing and Latin; the “talks” or sermons that the students had to pronounce in the Sunday catechesis and

academies; and through the scenic representations (cf. SJC, pp. 231-235; 427- 428; 459-462; 565).

### *Method*

**104.** Once Calasanz adopted the system of separate classes for each age group and for each didactic unit, he followed, as a necessary consequence, the so-called *simultaneous* method: all the pupils in a class are taught at the same time and in the same subject. This, which was already in force in secondary schools (middle schools), was introduced by him in elementary schools. He encouraged the *intuitive* method, based on weekly discussions, held every Saturday, on the subjects developed in the preceding days, and monthly exercises in prose and verse; with the little ones he used large posters, where they learned to read and grasped the biblical scenes.

One can observe signs of the *mutual* method in the Calasanzian school: the decurions (advanced pupils who helped the teacher) sometimes instructed their companions and took the lessons from them. An advocate of memorization, Calasanz asked at the same time that the pupils be made to reason, and he proposed literary compositions in which to argue for or against a thesis.

There is also evidence that Calasanz applied the *mixed* method (conjunction of simultaneous and mutual) in the humanities section.

Calasanz prescribed in his Constitutions the single and uniform teaching method in all classes and colleges. Such an orientation of a disciplinary nature did not in any way nullify the possibility of educational innovation and progress. On the contrary, he always sought and ordered to seek a method “simple, effective and, as far as possible, brief” - in opposition to the baroque style of the time -, “adapted to the student”, “the best among those recommended by the most learned and experts in the field” (cf. CC, 203, 194, 317, 332, 207, 216, 215, 212; SJC, pp. 273-276).

#### *a) Prevention*

**105.** In another order of things, we have already pointed out that Calasanz employed a preventive method, which removed the children from the corrupting power of leisure, from the degraded envi-

ronment of misery, from sin and from bad companions. He made use of the continuous vigilant control, the attractive exemplarity of the educators and the meticulous prescriptions of the regulations, in reference to every particular of the life of the student, inside and outside the center, and to eliminate every easy occasion of sin (cf. SJC, pp. 92 471-473). One of the Calasanzian practices that contributed most to this prevention of evil was the accompaniment of the students to their homes (“the routes”) (cf. SJC, pp. 362- 370).

Calasanz gave much importance to the occasional lessons, which, without being programmed, penetrate so deeply in the student.

His school was not pure theory, but he wanted an intellectual and moral teaching that would be useful for life, that would be practicable (cf. SJC, pp. 416-417; 503; 547).

#### *b) Emulation and punishments*

**106.** According to the custom of his time, Calasanz fostered among his students the spirit of emulation, in order to obtain from them the greatest possible diligence. Both the classes of writing, reading and abacus, as well as those of grammar (Latin), were divided into two “opposing” groups, with their respective decurions and other officials.

In the elementary classes, on certain days the outstanding student was appointed “Emperor” for a week. In the upper classes, the winning section received rewards. There was also an Emperor for a whole school year.

The local Minister used to distribute prizes to the most diligent in his frequent visits to the classrooms. So did the Provincial. In addition, two or three times a year there was a public distribution of prizes to the best (cf. SJC, pp. 462-465).

With the prudent use of emulation and verbal corrections to the negligent, only in extreme cases was it necessary to resort to corporal punishment, in force at the time, but much softened in quantity and crudeness by Calasanz. The scale used in the punishments was: the denial of the prize given to the most diligent; the correction by words; the “bench of the lazy”; and, in extreme cases, corporal punishment, executed by the Corrector. Calasanz used, with the incorrigible, expulsion from the school (cf. SJC, pp. 538-545).

### *Graded school*

Calasanz is the one who transforms Elementary or Primary Education from unitary to graded and adapts to his purposes the existing graduation in the Jesuit Secondary schools. And he proposes it as an open system, with easy access both to the world of work and to higher studies (cf. SJC, p. 284-294).

#### *a) School structure*

**108.** Classes were always grouped into two sections: elementary school and secondary school (grammar or middle school). The elementary section was based on three different classes. The secondary school consisted of six.

From the existing documents, it can be deduced that in the main schools the three basic classes of the elementary section were not lacking, but the “reading school” was divided into two and even three or four classes. The first (eighth for Calasanz) was called the “school of the Holy Cross” or the “school of reading by spelling” or “school of the little ones”. In it one learned “the sign of the holy cross and the spelling”. The second (seventh) was the “school of the Psalter”. In it one was taught to read the Psalter, to which was added, in addition, aloud voice, the principle of Christian doctrine and the necessary prayers”. The third (sixth) was called the “school of reading without stopping” and there was taught “to read without stopping books in the vulgar language, such as the book of the virgins” or the lives of saints. The fourth (fifth) was the writing class. In it “writing was taught with such ease that, in the space of three or four months, those gifted with a good pulse learned a sufficient form of handwriting”.

In some schools this fourth class “of writing” took three options, once a good handwriting was obtained: 4a) school of abacus and writing, “made available to those who had to exercise some art”; 4b) school of the first elements of Latin grammar and writing, for those who “wanted to continue in letters”; and 4c) school of music and writing, for those who wished to earn their living with music.

**109.** As for the classical or grammatical section, whose main objective was the perfect learning of the Latin language and literature, the classes of grammar always formed the preponderant part, and

those of humanities and rhetoric were often completely absent. Its program was as follows: in the fifth class (fourth of grammar) the elementary principles were taught, the rudiments of Latin grammar, the declension of simple and compound nouns, the active and passive conjugation, and the rules of concordance; and of course, Christian doctrine. In the sixth class (third of grammar), the knowledge of conjugations and concordance was deepened and the *Dialogues* of John Louis Vives or the fourth book of Cicero's *Familiar Epistles* were read; and Christian doctrine was continued. In the seventh class (second of grammar) the study of the verb was concluded and the main rules of the syntax of propositions were given, a book of the *Familiares*, by Cicero, and the *Eclogues*, by Virgil were commented; and the study of Christian doctrine continued. In the eighth class (first of grammar) the rules of syntax were completed and some stylistics were given; the *De officiis*, by Cicero, and the *Aeneid*, by Virgil were explained; Christian doctrine was not lacking either.

In Calasanz' time, in addition to these four classes, there were also classes of humanities, rhetoric and poetics in some schools (cf. SJC, p. 256-265).

*b) duration of the school year*

**110.** It began on November 3 and ended on October 20.

*c) School day*

**111.** School lessons were morning and afternoon and lasted two and a half hours in the morning and two and a half hours in the afternoon. The starting time varied according to the seasons. In the afternoon, preference was given to easier subjects and to the exercise of things learned (cf. SJC, p. 330-332; 337).

*d) Regular examinations*

**112.** Every four months there were examinations for promotion, but if the teacher saw that a pupil was ready to be promoted earlier, he requested a tribunal, presided over by the Prefect, to verify whether or not he should be promoted. This system shows both a pedagogical intuition and a practical purpose (cf. SJC, p. 276-278).



*e) number of teachers per classroom*

**113.** In the classes of the elementary section, given the relatively large number of students, Calasanz preferred two teachers: the principal and the assistant. The former was absolutely responsible for his class. He guided it from morning to afternoon, accompanied the students to church and to their homes, guided their spiritual life and directed their intellectual progress. He was the one who closely watched over the entire educational process of each student.

In the classical section, because of the relatively small number of students, one teacher was always sufficient for each class.

The original intention of Calasanz was that each teacher should specialize in one subject and always remain in the same section (cf. SJC, pp. 269-270).

*f) different types of schools*

**114.** Already during Calasanz' lifetime, there are particular cases of other types of schools, such as the School of Nobles in Florence (1638) and the Higher School of Mathematics also in Florence (1630), the Boarding School of the Nazareno school in Rome (1630).

*Structures and organization*

*a) Building*

**115.** Calasanz demanded that those who requested the foundation of a school provide: housing for the religious, a building for the schools, a church, a library and an adjoining garden (cf. CC, 145 and 178).

He preferred that his schools be located in small and poor cities. If they were in large cities, he sought the heart of the poorest neighborhoods, always those with the largest child population. When it was necessary to build from the ground floor, he wanted the work to be "simple, inexpensive, but well ordered" (CC. 181; TONTI, n. 23, 26).

The classrooms had to be separated from the rooms of the religious. They were decorated with works of the students and every autumn they were to be whitewashed and the furniture was to be repaired.

The building of the classrooms had to have communication with the church and with a room for the Academies (literary exercises).

There was a classroom for Christian doctrine. The writing class had to be large enough so that the teachers could walk between the tables and guide the students.

Calasanz gave great importance, for reasons of hygiene, to the location and care of the “common places” or toilets (cf. SJC, pp. 352-359).

#### *b) Didactic material*

**116.** Calasanz was concerned about textbooks, encouraging the Piarists to publish them; they had to be written in the vernacular language, including Latin grammar. He also ordered the publication of books of piety, some of them adapted to the capacity of the students. He himself wrote and had printed a catechism, entitled *Some Mysteries of the Passion of Our Lord, a Clock of the Passion, a Crown of the Twelve Stars* and numerous prayers, religious cards, etc.

He wanted the printing of the books to be of high quality and that their contents could be of use to the parents of the students (cf. CC, 213).

With the little ones, he used posters for the intuitive initiation of reading and Sacred History.

He provided the poorest pupils with work material free of charge and wanted the teachers to prepare in advance the pens with which the boys were to write, in order to make better use of class time (cf. SJC, pp. 387-391).

#### *c) School regulations*

**117.** In addition to what today we would call the “manual of functions,” contained in the Constitutions and Common Rites, we have numerous Rules for the schools, boarding schools and teachers, some of which he himself drew up, others simply revised and approved.

In them shines the obsession of Calasanz for the uniform method “easy, useful and brief”; the interaction of piety or “holy fear of God” and letters; his organizational capacity; and his concern for educational nuances, bordering on the meticulousness (cf. SJC, pp. 343-350).

#### *d) Compulsory schooling*

**118.** With the obligatory nature of attendance, which would have to be controlled not only by the classroom teacher and the prefect, but

also by the public authority, according to Calasanz, he wanted to exert some pressure on parents who did not watch over the welfare of their children or who, because of their extreme poverty, wanted to apply them immediately to any utilitarian work; and on the older students themselves, who, accustomed to idleness, did not give importance to daily attendance in class (cf. SJC, p. 71).

*By way of summary*

**119.** As a synthesis of the pedagogical doctrine of Calasanz, we can point out the following points of his educational thought:

1. Calasanz discovers the reforming value of education from the loving compassion with poor children and youth. Hence, his long and varied pedagogical practice has a unifying principle: patient love or loving patience that permeates the whole fabric of Calasanz' pedagogy. The "Holy fear of God" is also rooted in love.
2. For Calasanz, it is Christ who educates through the action of the Spirit. The teacher is an "instrument", who "in a humble attitude must expect from almighty God the necessary means to be an effective co-operator with the Truth, since he has called him as a laborer to this most fertile harvest (of education)" (CC, 3).
3. The ministry of teaching educates man "by means of letters and the spirit, the light of God and of the world" (TONTI, 9). They are two aspects of a single education, and therefore Piety and Letters must always go together. Both realities are perfected by interacting and must merge in the person of the educator (pious and pedagogue) and of the student (member of the Society and of the Church) (CC, 210 and 203).
4. Chronologically, his "second conversion" and strong mystical experience coincide in Calasanz with his definitive dedication to the ministry of education ("I have found in Rome..." year 1600). From this moment on, a pedagogical spirituality and a spiritual pedagogy grow in him.
5. The fruit of freedom of spirit is, in Calasanz, his fidelity to the hierarchy and to the doctrine of the Church and the great openness of mind and heart, manifested, for example, in the acceptance of Jewish and Protestant children; the choice of the best

- methods, whatever their authors; the approach to the controversial “new science” and to some characters censured by the ecclesiastical authority, but innovators in knowledge.
6. His most valuable contribution as a pedagogical principle was the conviction that, if education begins from the most tender years, one can expect a happy course for the whole of life (CC, 2). For this reason, he fought tenaciously against the common feeling of his time until he sowed in history the seed of a Christian and popular, public and compulsory school. In this way, he was several centuries ahead of the thought and practice of European society.
  7. The pedagogical philosophy of Calasanz is in line with personalism. It is profoundly anthropocentric as well as Christocentric.
  8. With respect to knowledge and the service of God, there are no class privileges and no respect for persons.
  9. Each pupil must be educated according to his own aptitudes and guided accordingly. Merely human tendencies, vitiated by sin, must be redirected. But attention must be paid to the “inner inclination” that the Spirit awakens in each one to guide him (cf. CC, 23).
  10. It was poor children and young people who won his heart, although he later opened his doors to all social classes, as he acquired a broader sense of universality and integrality. He wanted to give to the poor -through an easy, useful, brief method, the best among the best and a graduated school-, a human and Christian formation and instruments to be inserted in life with a dignified work or the possibility of arriving at the university well prepared.
  11. With this he was collaborating in the Reform of Society and of the Church, since the intellectual, moral and religious elevation of the popular classes resulted in the improvement of both. With his school, Calasanz does not only try to help the poor, but, above all, to fight poverty; he avoids the merely welfare.
  12. We can affirm that Calasanz is the discoverer of teaching as a new ecclesial ministry, “very different and a compendium of all other ministries” (TONTI, n. 20 and 25). And, consequently,

the founder of the first religious Order that has the teaching of children and young people as “its own institute” (CC, 1,5...).

13. Some later Founders and Foundresses discovered in the charism of Calasanz an image of their own, or developed it in implicit and complementary aspects, and placed their respective Congregations under the patronage of the Saint. These Institutes, together with the Pious Schools, form in the Church the Calasanzian Family.
14. The confirmation of the prophetic vision of Calasanz is manifested in the numerous Religious Institutions dedicated to education, in the dedication of many lay Christians to the educational mission, in the development of the mystique of education in parents, and in the transcendental importance that governments all over the world give to the educational task.
15. Sharing the educational, instructional and pastoral mission, and even its very charism, opens new possibilities for the future development of the work of Calasanz.

### ***Features of a Spiritual Pedagogy***

**120.** The spiritual experience of Calasanz informs his pedagogical conception and his educational praxis. Thus his pedagogy is a spiritual pedagogy characterized by features such as the following:

- the educational commitment - preferably in favor of the poor - is lived as a true apostolic “ministry”;
- education imparted in a timely manner is seen as the decisive intervention to ensure the good of the person and of society;
- the strongest commitment must be reserved for those most in need of help (the betterment of the people is the true progress of society);
- the cultural and human promotion of the new generations must not be seen as a luxury or privilege of a minority, but as a right of all;
- educational action must begin in early childhood, when children are most malleable;

- collaboration with the family should be appreciated and expressly required;
- public authorities should be urged to protect the universal right to education;
- education should tend more to prevent evil than to correct and repress an erroneous development of the person;
- if necessary, the educator must know how to correct promptly, reasonably and lovingly;
- the educational action must be imbued with a great love for the pupil and must be carried out with tenacious patience, without pretending to see immediate results;
- the educator is a “co-operator with the Truth,” but his collaboration is precious and indispensable and, therefore, must be translated into a constant and discreet presence;
- one must act with the firm conviction that it is possible to harmonize faith and reason; true science can never stand in the way of genuine faith;
- the educational action has to make man and Christian grow harmoniously, assuring to the life of the young person an integral and happy development;
- the Christian educator succeeds in discovering, in the instruments of grace given by Christ, precious resources for overcoming obstacles and favoring an authentic maturation of the learner;
- the educator must help the young person to attain skills that allow him/her a positive, rapid and dignified professional and social insertion;
- great importance given to para-school activities of a religious, recreational and formative nature;
- clear choice in favor of a short, clear and practical teaching method; and openness to new methods that prove to be truly effective;
- permanent validity of the school as the preferred and fundamental means of education;

- popular education is the most effective means of reforming society and the Church.

The formula Piety and Letters, which appears frequently in the Constitutions of Calasanz and which over time has become the programmatic and synthesizing motto of his work, is a fortunate expression of the synthesis of pedagogical spirituality and spiritual pedagogy; it indicates, simultaneously, the integral dimension of his educational program, which tends to make man and Christian grow together (FEP, n. 7).

