

04

GOSPEL ANNOUNCEMENT

**Piarist Identity
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Author: General Secretariat
of Ministry
Edition: September 2020
Piarist Identity Notebooks
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GOSPEL ANNOUNCEMENT

Pastoral process through which in our works the Gospel is explicitly announced, trying to live in conformity with it and where catechesis, solidarity actions, continuous prayer, spiritual life, sacramental life, vocational discernment, insertion are promoted in the church.

ANNOUNCE THE GOSPEL, THE SOUL OF THE CALASANZIAN SCHOOL

Our Piarist mission begins in the seventeenth century in Rome, with a man in love with the Gospel and able to discover the face of Jesus in the educational needs of those children and young people. We are in full Counter-Reformation, in which the Catholic Church is making a great effort to cultivate and train all people in the faith. It is true that religious and moral formation was intended to be attended, mainly, through Sunday catechesis, which had been established in the Catholic world, for all the children of that Christianity society. Calasanz, who had seen so closely the degradation and misery in which many families in Rome lived, understands that the best remedy for that situation was a good intellectual formation of children. And educating is already, in itself, the Good News, and, therefore, evangelization of children and young people.

Calasanz assumes that in that formation the explicit proclamation of the Gospel and a good religious and moral formation could never be lacking that would separate students from vices and help them practice the best virtues of man and Christian. In this formation, I also entered the religious and moral formation, which Calasanz considers as the most important: *“above all, Christian piety and doctrine”, “prepare them for the earth and heaven”, “help them to live well and die well”*.

In the school project, an explicit evangelization proposal was included: *“It will be the responsibility of our Order to teach children, from the first rudiments, the correct reading, writing, calculation and Latin, but, above all, Christian piety and doctrine”* (CC No. 5). *“Know the teachers that, if they plant in the hearts of children a degree of love of God, the Lord will give one hundred to them if they are in the grace of God. And being in this exercise so safe interest, everyone should be able to make their students pious”* (EP 3042).

Calasanz developed a “spiritual pedagogy” that linked the most innovative aspects in pedagogy with the depth of an experience of God, tested in him and spread to his entire school, especially children. Calasanz used several methods with his students to help them in a good religious-moral formation and an authentic Christian life. Although the language is from the 17th century, and the social and religious context ... its proposals are perfectly current. Let’s see some:

- The teaching of Christian doctrine (today we call it faith education, or religious teaching). This was taught both during school hours and after school.
- *Catechesis in extra-academic hours*. We highlight the activity of Glicerio Landriani who, in his short passage through the work of Calasanz, due to his early death,

“In each
Piarist
presence, our
communities
strive to read
these signs
of the times
and to listen
to children
and young
people in
order to adapt
the Christian
proposal”

incorporated catechesis after academic hours - an advance of the Calasanz movement. The methodology of catechesis was plural and dynamic: dramatization, storytelling, cardboard or wall posters. We also highlight the creation of brotherhoods in which young people could exercise various forms of apostolate.

- Daily prayer and the Eucharist at the beginning of the day. The prayer continues, with small groups of students. Tools and moments for prayer incorporated into the school routine.
- Frequent reception of the sacraments of Reconciliation or confession, and of Communion, with careful preparation. The Confessor was a permanent position in each school, and his intervention was also requested in cases of misbehavior of a student.
- Brief training talks that all teachers should give at the end of the day.
- Teaching to pray at home and procuring books for the teaching of faith: to confess and receive communion well, to know the mysteries of the Passion of Christ...
- Education in values through animation and cultivation of the pedagogy of the faith through its witnesses: following the Catholic saints, celebrating simple celebrations in their memory, with reading of lives and their explanation.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE GOSPEL TODAY IN THE PIOUS SCHOOLS

In four centuries since the foundation, there are innumerable evangelizing proposals that have been made, both within the classroom and in the school context (religious teaching, prayer and celebrations, cultivation of evangelical values, proposal of models and witnesses of life, living together, dialogue faith and culture, weeks and campaigns, vocational proposals ...) as in extra-academic and non-formal education contexts and parishes (scouts, sacramental catechesis, group processes, vocational itineraries, volunteers, popular missions, etc.)

Our Piarist Creed, formulated in the XLIV General Chapter of 1997, speaks of “giving ourselves, as envoys in the educational diakonia of our ministry, committing ourselves to work together with the laity in the new evangelization.” And in the chapter document of the same year entitled “The Piarist charism today”, evangelization is given priority, the pastoral is discussed as a preferential objective of our educational projects, dedicating enough people and means, and privileging catechesis as dedication fundamental of the Piarists to promote a sincere reception of the message and the person of Jesus and an integration into the Christian community; It is also said to make faith a transversal axis that fills and integrates the whole person of the student, as well as promoting dialogue between faith and culture¹ (# 28 of The Piarist charism today ”)

The Piarist closeness with children and young people and with their families reports to us day by day a reflection of the reality in which we move, and which must be evangelized. Thus, the Piarists are in Europe with a growing indiffer-

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¹ XLIV Capítulo General Escuelas Pías (1997) *Carisma y Ministerio. Una historia que recordar, una historia que construir II*. ICCE Madrid.

ence and a manifest ignorance of the Good News of the Gospel, which in many occasions is seen more as a threat against security and comfort to defend than as liberating news: what do I have to save from? It seems to be the motto of many of our young Europeans; but also, Europe is witness to many communities that embody the joy of the Gospel in their new relationships and commitments.

In America, disembodied Christian proposals grow that seem rather to satisfy a religious narcissism rather than a good transforming news of all personal and social reality; but there is also a young faith that promotes the change of structures along with an authentic evangelical joy that contrasts with many realities of violence and lack of love.

The Piarist Africa lives with hope the efforts for the transformation of the unjust structures that so many young people suffer, and receives from the African religious soul the capacity to transcend this reality and dream the dreams of Jesus, which can come true through education.

Asia invites us to make the message of Jesus meaningful in a deeply spiritual society but in need of concrete and effective good news that removes historical inertia and recovers the fraternity that love gives.

In each Piarist presence, our communities strive to read these signs of the times and to listen to children and young people in order to adapt the Christian proposal to the new codes and references. Without distorting Jesus, calasanzian pedagogy invites us to bring Jesus' message closer to the diversity of ages, situations and vital moments.

From Vatican II until today, the voice of the Church insistently repeats the need for the Evangelization of the world as the central mission of the Church. Serve as an example two quotes from *Evangelii Gaudium*, from Pope Francis who invite us to do it with creativity and courage:

- *"I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the objectives, structures, style and evangelizing methods of the communities themselves. (EG 33).*
- *The centrality of the kerygma demands certain characteristics of the announcement that are necessary everywhere today: that it expresses the salvific love of God prior to the moral and religious obligation, that it does not impose the truth and*

that it appeals to freedom, that it has some notes of joy, encouragement, vitality, and a harmonious integrality that does not reduce preaching to a few doctrines sometimes more philosophical than evangelical. EG 165.

The call of the Synod on young people, faith and discernment (2018) invites us to renew our love for young people as a subject of evangelization, but also as bearers of Good News. The Synod fully touches our evangelizing work as it puts in the center of the announcement to young people the call that God makes to love, inviting them to learn to listen to the signs and discern a generous response. Our way of evangelizing by educating finds in the synodal reflection a special echo towards that daily task of helping each young person to discover his position in the human adventure, and to understand himself called to a mission that leads him to a life in fullness while surpassing him in God.

The document *Keys of life of the Order*, lines of action for the sexennium 2015-2021² also gives us some elements to consider:

- Point 1.1.a) To relate closely the youth ministry and vocation, through a diversified program of missionary actions, retreats, meetings, that provoke the vocational call.
- Point 1.3.l: Consolidate the Calasanz Movement as an educational and pastoral process in terms of vocational culture and also various actions of school pastoral.
- Point 5.5: Continue to develop our pastoral ministry through comprehensive and complete processes, especially promoting the Calasanz movement

The proclamation of the Gospel is, therefore, a transversal axis of both the calasanzian school and any non-formal education or parish work. We emphasize the proposal of the order to create integral processes of maturation of the faith in group, linked to our works and to the order as Calasanz Movement. Its creation in 2007 has begun a fruitful path for new groups of children and young adults, as well as institutionally linking many groups that already existed inside our works. *The urgency of announcing the Gospel to children, youth and adults leads us to create pastoral itineraries lived in groups that allow a personal process of discovery and maturation of one's vocation, as well as a clear ecclesial insertion. (Manifesto of the Calasanz Movement, 9).*

2 Congregación General (2015) *Claves de vida de la Orden. Líneas de acción para el sexenio 2015-2021*. Ediciones calasancias. Madrid/Roma.

PROPOSALS FOR OUR EDUCATIONAL PROJECTS AND EVANGELIZERS

We can group in five dimensions the key elements of our calasanzian way of evangelizing by educating. We will highlight for each of them some concrete proposals.

Lifestyle and vocation:

We propose the experience from **the keys of the Gospel** always seeking the vocation to which God calls us. To make pastoral is to help the child and the young to grow and to discern from that being love that we are all called as sons and daughters of God.

We consider the person as an **active subject** of their growth, encouraging discovery and search, based on elaborated content, their own experiences and daily events.

We also favor **personal accompaniment** to help people contact themselves and learn to self-regulate and make their own decisions.

We are firmly committed to an integral education that makes our young people, critical people, **with a calasanzian lifestyle**, impregnated with its virtues (charity, dedication, humility, patience, joy, love of truth, generosity, community, listening of the Spirit).

We will use methodologies that favor a continuous **review of life** and the elaboration of the **personal project**. From a **vocational culture**, which encourages the personalized reading of the evangelical message, the offer of various vocational possibilities, the discernment of life options, proposals and personal approaches, helping them to elaborate their Christian life project as the result of the whole pastoral process carried out with them.

The pastoral animator cannot fail to offer, because he himself is a living proposal, the Piarist vocation, both religious and lay. **The horizon of the Piarist Fraternity** and the testimony of the various vocations in communion that are shown in it, will be a continuous reference in the vocational process.

A section, within this, for **the vocational pastoral specific to the Piarist religious life**: actions of **sowing**, actions **to awaken and detect** from the conviction that God continues to call everyone; and later **accompanying** actions with those who aroused their interest in a greater adventure as religious Piarists.

God's experience:

We help children and young people to live from the encounter with the God of Jesus, the **personal encoun-**

ter with the Lord in prayer, the sacraments, the Word, the believing reading of reality, the close solidarity with the face of Christ in the poor, the presence of the Spirit in the community and Church and Piarist history, etc.

With respect, but with determination, we make a **first announcement of the Good News of Jesus**, from a motivating methodology, which starts from the reality and the moment of the child.

We are guided by the Piarist tradition, and that is why we will promote **religious practices typically calasanzian** such as: Intimate relationship with Christ, which was given to the end in the Passion; common practice of mental and oral prayer; be attentive to the motions of the Spirit; take care of the sacramental and liturgical celebrations; seek to live in the presence of God ("mixed life"); devotion to Mary, mother and educator; devotion to St. Joseph Calasanz.

The **liturgical life** will also be a school of faith, with joyful and careful celebrations, both specific for children, or young people, or of a specific group, such as those in which the whole community meets and the Word and Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist and in the same community. Behind the Calasanz icon showing the sign of the cross to a child, we can intuit a whole **pedagogy of personal and group prayer**, which is full of tools for the child and the young.

We want to highlight, as Calasanz did, the **experience of forgiveness** as a precious moment of encounter with God that shows me more his love when I did nothing to deserve it, but rather the opposite. Our moments of personal review of life, of dialogue with the catechist or the religious, of community reconciliation ... also direct the child and the young person to live this experience.

Also, with Calasanz, we will highlight the **devotion to Mary** who in life was a model of faith and an example of a follower of Jesus, and who continues to intercede on behalf of children and young people.

Formation:

We offer children and young people the human, Christian and Piarist formation that allows them to be able to **give a reason for their hope** and adapt their life to Christian and Piarist values, while growing as people. We adapt the language for God to its vital moment and we will give priority to the revelation of God in his Word, especially in Jesus and his Gospel, always in dialogue with the youth's culture and vital context.

First, **internalize, reflect, name, share and illuminate from the evangelical proposal their personal and social life**: we will learn to listen to the voice of God



in events, starting from that inner voice that speaks in the depths of being, to come outside and listen also there the call of God to build the utopia of his Kingdom. And there, the young person of Jesus who embodies the proposal of the Kingdom, the experience of salvation expressed in the Bible and especially in the Gospel, the Church as a community of followers of Jesus, the moral consequences of our faith will be made known to young people. , the lifestyle that arises from being Christians, the analysis of reality from evangelical values, the specific contribution of Calasanz to the Church and the world...

From there we will make a **believing reading of reality** together with our children and young people: the needs will be called of God and the achievements, testimony and prophecy, active presence of the Spirit; present a mud waiting for the potter's hands; the future, the utopia of Jesus of a family as big as the world, and full of God.

Our formative pedagogy does not put the center in a transfer of knowledge, but in the invitation to **live experiences**, different depending on the ages: moments of sharing, forgiveness, contact with pain and injustice, times of coexistence, retreat and silence, actions of denunciation and solidarity, approach to other ways of seeing the world ... in many cases it will be the reflection on the lived action that is sufficient to draw lessons that return the child back to the action.

The **religious language** we use will be experiential, like that of Jesus, looking for formulations and expressions of faith that maintain fidelity to the message of Jesus in current forms and ways of life, that evoke the Mystery of transcendence, touch the center of the human heart , and invite to live with joy the project of Jesus. We will use, also like Jesus, the **narration** as a means of deepening, because all life that seeks its meaning is conceived as narrated.

We try to assume how positive there is in **today's culture**, especially certain values in the Gospel line, but we also contribute to the culture the elements of faith that our society and world need.

Within the formation, knowledge of **the figure of Calasanz** will take place, as well as the characteristics of his **spirituality, lifestyle and mission**.

We will cultivate in our recipients **a great love for our saint**, knowing and admiring his spirituality, his life, his mission, and from a commitment to continue **his Piarist work** making Calasanz present in so many places in the world in which we are present. That is why we will announce our identity signs, as they were formulated in the General Chapter: the centrality of children and young people; the option for the poor; educational and pastoral quality; the announcement of the Gospel; the reform of society; the shared mission; the integration of the family; the accompaniment; the

“The religious language we use will be experiential, like that of Jesus”

training of educators and the sense of belonging to the Church. The reality of the Pious School will be presented to you in the concrete people of the local and universal Piarist reality, the works, the history, the spiritual tradition, the way of life, the pedagogy, etc.

Commitment:

We invite children and young people to work for **social transformation** (Reform of the Republic, Calasanz liked to say), promoting among them volunteering and service to others, especially with the most needy and from the intuitions of Calasanz

The commitment begins with a **believing analysis of reality** convinced that the Spirit is present in our world inspiring new horizons of justice and dignity.

From there, we offer a **pedagogy of commitment**, facilitating at all ages different channels of commitment, which, accompanied by appropriate expressions and words, advance the Kingdom of God as the main motive of our volunteers and cooperation, services and commitments. They will also be an occasion to read one's life, which is not understood otherwise if it is not committed, delivered. It is about "losing myself so that the other and the Kingdom win", of giving life by dying and germinating, like the grain of wheat, bearing fruit.

We will invite them to commit to our own **Piarist mission**: educate and evangelize. That is why there are many young people in our works who want to be teachers, counselors, catechists, psychologists, social volunteers, pedagogues, street educators, trainers, reenactors, ministers of the Word ... and even Piarist religious!

Group life and community sharing:

We invite the child and the young person to share the following of Jesus and all aspects of life with the brothers and sisters in small groups and communities as well as in clear communion with the Pious Schools and with the entire Church, renewing the Church as communion of communities.

We take community and **community as the source, path and goal** of all our pastoral efforts.

The Calasanz Movement here becomes a privileged medium, more than the class group, in a true community, pardon and party workshop.

But the small group does not exhaust community experience: the largest community is needed, the one that meets in the Eucharist and we have called the Christian Piarist Community. It must be visible to children and young people, in their solidarity action, in their evangelizing mission, in their celebration, in their formative work...

And it must also be offered as the mouth of the young or adult group, as a place **to continue living the faith in adulthood** and from it **belong to the Church**. Not only belong, but also participate in it, building the Church of the future.

In this Church everyone is welcome, and everyone has something to contribute, so we organize ourselves, we recognize the different **charisms and vocations**, and we confer the necessary **services and ministries** that energize it and make it grow.

QUALITIES OF THE PIARIST EVANGELIZING AGENTS

We echo at this point the great lines of the pontificate of Francis: mercy and joy. Mercy understood as a sensitive heart and companion of the way of our children and young people, of our families and also of all the collaborators, people in shared mission, communities in Piarist fraternity, religious. And the joy of the blessed, which is easy among children and young people because they give it to us every day.

We also rely on the synodal spirit to insist on listening abilities for children and young people, for accompaniment, for helping to read the signs of God in the vital trajectories of those who participate in our works, to make people think and discern from the deepest part of the human being that is the same divine essence of love.

We also rely on Calasanz to encourage in our evangelizing agents the profound experience of God along with the lucid reading of reality; the ability to descend to the child and the little evangelical, and to abandon himself to providence, working as if everything depended on us, knowing that everything depends on God.



REFLECTION AND DIALOGUE IN GROUPS

- *Do you recognize in your city, in the work in which you work, school, parish, cultural center... the evangelizing style of Calasanz? How do you think the religious and the laity who embody this charism live it in your place? What stands out in them so that you could say... “this was Calasanz”?*
- *Evaluate the work in which you are according to the evangelization proposals provided, making a note from 1 to 10 as you think they are fulfilled or not.*
- *The synodal call for listening, accompaniment and discernment among young people is a nuclear part of our Piarist mission. How is this process experienced in your Piarist presence? Something to improve?*
- *Making an analysis of the reality of your presence, which of the five dimensions of faith we propose needs to be reinforced? How? Can we be more creative at this point?*