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# FAMILIES INTEGRATION

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## Piarist Identity Notebooks SUMMARY 06

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# FAMILIES INTEGRATION

Orientation by which the involvement and integration of the family in the piarist presence is sought.

## THE INTEGRATION OF THE FAMILY IN CALASANCTIAN PEDAGOGY

In their founding period, the Pious Schools were able to provide free schooling to a good number of children, which was a great help to poor families who did not have the resources to pay for a good teacher for their children. Most of the parents worked in manual trades and had little cultural formation, so they did not value too much that their children spent a lot of time in school. Moreover, school attendance was not compulsory; rather, it was considered a privilege.

Calasanz understood that good student achievement necessarily required a close relationship between the Pious Schools and the parents of the children, especially when many of them were poor and poorly educated.

One of the great concerns of Calasanz was that the children attended school daily and for this he needed the cooperation of the parents. In case the children were absent a lot, did not perform well in their studies or were undisciplined, the prefect would warn their parents, letting them know *“that if the children did not make good use of their time, it was not the teacher’s fault but the fault of the students who did not attend school”* (Ep 4147). Also, in case of illness or other forced absences, the parents themselves had to bring the justification to the prefect.

One of the reasons Calasanz did not accept money from parents was to maintain total independence in the educational process. Nor could the teacher visit the homes of the parents unless one was seriously ill and needed his assistance as a priest.

The school’s official relationship with parents was through the Prefect who received them in a private office for that purpose. The parents of the students could talk with the Prefect and the teachers to keep abreast of the progress of their children, and, at the appropriate time, they discussed the vocation of each child according to his talents and performance, whether it was towards professional training or towards the school of humanities.

When the children came home, the parents were to accompany them in their studies so that they would not waste time, but according to the method taught by the teachers, would apply themselves to serious and methodical work. In addition, they were to watch over the good conduct of their children.

School books should be simple and understandable so that parents could benefit from them: *“Therefore, every local Superior will be diligent that the children who are learning to read use books that are not only beautifully printed, but of such content that they and their parents can benefit from them.”* (CC 213). This was an attempt to extend the benefits of education to the parents themselves, who were also in great need.

“The Order suffers a “growth crisis” which leads to Calasanz to fend of certain accusations”

Cultural events (academies, recitals, performances) were an opportunity to strengthen the ties between families and the school.

Calasanz ensured that each school had a church for the use of the students and open to public worship. In these churches, confraternities and congregations for adults were founded with the participation of the parents of the students themselves. In this way the action of the Pious Schools was extended through pastoral care: *“Since you have taken on the responsibility of helping the Confraternity, without being absent from school, try to behave in such a way that all those members of the Confraternity benefit spiritually and at the same time gain affection for religion (EP 2993);* this apostolate was especially effective in Protestant countries where parents were often converted by their children.

Calasanz wanted the just criticism of the families regarding the progress of the schools to be respected: *“I have heard that many of the people are not as satisfied as they should be, and no doubt there will be some lack in the schools, since the laity do not appreciate them as they used to. I hope that this year they will be attended to with all diligence” Ep 1287),* but he did not allow the community to listen to what were whims and incompetent observations.

On another occasion, he encouraged the priors of the town of Narni to reach an agreement between teachers and parents for the good running of the school: *“I have received a letter from your Lordships in which you appear to be complaining that the Pious Schools are not going as your Lordships wish, attributing the fault to the fact that the teachers are too young and not suitable for teaching. As for aptitude and age, you should not worry about Fr. Santiago, who runs the high school, because he has taught for many years with great profit. He has written to me many times that, since the pupils entertain themselves with games and pastimes and go to school when they feel like it, and their parents (except for a few good ones) are not diligent enough in this, it is impossible for them to make a profit, either in virtue or in letters. If the parents of the students agreed with the teachers, there is no doubt that they would be satisfied” (EP 143).*

## FAMILY INTEGRATION TODAY

In the audience granted by Pope Francis to the Piarists on November 11, 2017 on the celebration of the Calasanzian Jubilee for 400 years as a religious Family, he recalled that education is a big challenge and lamented that *“The educational pact between school, family and young people, is broken”* and encouraged the Piarists to *“rebuild that pact, which involves involving the family. Today, in education, the family cannot be absent”*.

José María Balcells, General of the Order from 1985 to 2004, always promoted in his messages and visits the need for the family to be a fundamental part of the Piarist ministry, which was crystallized in an important document of the Order<sup>1</sup>:

*To consider the family as the explicit purpose of our ministry. They are the ones who first educate, train, motivate and support their members. Our educational action will also be directed to them and, therefore, will promote a close relationship with the parents of the students, especially those most in need, encour-*

<sup>1</sup> GENERAL CONGREGATION. (1999) Misión compartida en las Escuelas Pías. Publicaciones ICCE. Madrid. nº 28.1.

aging everything that promotes educational improvement, the benefit of the parents themselves and family-school collaboration.

The conciliar declaration “Gravissimum Educationis” on Education pointed out that parents are the main educators of their offspring whose obligation is “to form a family environment animated by love, by piety towards God and towards men, which favors the integral, personal and social education of their children” (GE n° 3).

In addition to the education received at home, children need the help of other educational spaces; especially the school “whose benefits should be shared jointly by families, teachers, the various associations that promote cultural, civic and religious life, civil society and the entire human community” (GE no. 5).

Restoring the educational pact would mean building a true educational community in which parents and educators have unity of criteria and project. “*The responsible collaboration to carry out the common educational project is considered a duty of conscience by all members of the community – teachers, parents, students, administrative personnel – each one of whom carries it out according to the responsibilities and functions that concern him/her*”<sup>2</sup> EC 1977. 61.

The alliance between parents and all educators is essential to propose to students a full, good life, rich in meaning, open to God, to others and to the world. This alliance is even more necessary because education is a personal relationship and a shared commitment.

## FOR THE EDUCATIONAL AND PASTORAL PROJECT

A comprehensive plan of work with families should be designed so that parents are in tune with the Calasancian educational principles and participate actively in the dynamics of the school. This plan should consider the following aspects.

### Information.

1. To know the offer of integral education to be carried out in the Piarist presence and the philosophical principles that support it.
2. Have easy access to any concerns they have about the school’s administrative and pedagogical pro-

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2 Congregación para la educación católica (1997) La Escuela Católica.

3 Congregación General (1979) Declaraciones y Decretos. Oc.



cesses through social networks. There are already many schools that use good digital platforms that organize the relationship between the family and the school.

### Training.

1. Offer guidance to parents to educate their children through conferences, workshops, courses, and personal accompaniment.
2. Promote the creation of parent’s school groups.
3. Propose a personal accompaniment to parents who need it and want it.
4. In harmony with the Piarist tradition, *the Piarist community will take upon itself, as far as possible, the spiritual care of the parents of our students. In this way, by means of a good spiritual formation of the parents we will also help more effectively to the good spiritual formation of the children and in a certain way we will become educators and pastors of the whole Christian family*<sup>3</sup> (Declarations and Decrees n. 991).

## Involvement of families in the school carried out at various levels

1. Participation in specific activities required by the school.
2. Provide families with positive and meaningful spaces for social interaction with each other, students, and school staff.
3. Collaboration in the management of the school. It is necessary that in the Pious Schools there be an Association of parents, well organized and conveniently divided, if necessary, into several sections, according to the age and grade of education of the students.
4. Participation in the Piarist mission collaborating as a volunteer in the different educational and pastoral programs: sports, cultural or catechist monitor.
5. Offer families processes of reflection and clarification of faith, as well as a significant ecclesial reference.
6. Integration into the Piarist charism through the teams of the Calasanz Movement, the shared mission, and the Piarist fraternity.
7. To strengthen family pastoral care.

## EDUCATORS AND PARENTS

Since family is “the first and fundamental school of sociability”, the educator should, in particular, gladly accept and even seek the necessary contacts with the parents of the students. These contacts are necessary, on the other hand, so that the educational task of the family and the school can be jointly oriented in concrete aspects, to facilitate the responsibility of parents to commit themselves in a cordial and effective relationship with teachers and school principals, and to satisfy the need for help of many families to be able to educate their own children properly and thus fulfill the “irreplaceable and inalienable” role that corresponds to them<sup>4</sup>.

Part of the effectiveness of an educational project lies in the good relationships that exist between educators and parents focused on the good of the students.

We offer some clues to help improve this relationship:

1. Establish a good partnership between educators and parents based on mutual trust and collaboration.
2. Keep communication channels open. Parents need the educator to inform them of how the child behaves in class, how he/she works and how he/she relates to others. Likewise, the educator needs references from the child at home, how the parents act in the child’s education and in this way reach joint agreements for the benefit of the children.
3. To be in tune with the background on both sides; that is to say, to row towards a common horizon oriented towards motivation, objectives, effort, values, and feelings.
4. Be clear about each other’s roles: Parents should be in their place and educators in theirs. Often there are parents who try to tell teachers how to teach or grade their subject and teachers who think they are better than their students’ parents.
5. Ensure that children have a similar disciplinary regime. At school, children must comply with the school’s rules and at home with those set by the parents. These are two different spheres, but they should be along similar lines or, at least, pursue the same objective. It would be highly recommended that parents transmit to their children that what the teacher says is sacred because he/she is aware of what he/she is doing, just as one trusts the rules set by a grandparent who has educated the parents.
6. Learn to dialogue based on education, maturity, and respect, especially when conflict arises.
7. To value the professional dignity and social prestige of every educator. All teachers, to a greater or lesser extent, teach children.
8. Parents should hold their children accountable for getting along with the teaching staff.
9. Prevent both, educators, and parents, from transmitting derogatory messages regarding the educational relationship.

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<sup>4</sup> Congregación para la Educación Católica. El laico católico. Testigo de la fe en la escuela. LAICO CATÓLICO n° 34



## REFLECTION AND DIALOGUE IN GROUPS

- *Share what Calasanz's intuitions are regarding the school's relationship with parents.*
- *How do I live the relationship with my students' parents? Lights and shadows.*
- *What does the school propose to integrate families more? How do you value the effort?*
- *What can be done to make sure educators are in tune with their students' parents?*
- *How do you rate the quality of the school's communication with families?*
- *How to improve the parents' integration in pastoral activities?*
- *How to encourage the parents' participation in the proposal of integration into the Piarist charism?*