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ACCOMPANIMENT



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Author: General Secretariat
of Ministry
Edition: September 2020
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ACCOMPANIMENT

A process of individualized attention, through which the children and young people of our Works feel loved and respected as persons, offering them all the means available to help their integral development: academic, psycho-affective, social, and spiritual.

ACCOMPANIMENT IN CALASANCTIAN PEDAGOGY

The valencian painter José Segrelles has a painting that expresses very well the idea of accompaniment that Calasanz had. The children are seen walking in orderly order and in line down the street guided by a guardian angel, glimpsed in the background, the image of Calasanz.

Christian tradition describes the guardian angels as great friends, placed by God at the side of every man, to accompany him in his ways: “God will send his angels to protect the righteous in all his ways” (Ps. 90:11). (Ps. 90:11) and Jesus Christ himself said to his disciples: “See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I tell you that their angels in heaven are always beholding the face of my heavenly Father” (Matt. 18:10).

When Calasanz writes the memorial to Cardinal Tonti, he does not hesitate to give to the guardian angels the protagonism they have in the educational process: The ministry of education is “*very noble, because it is an angelic and divine need, carried out by the guardian angels, of whom men become cooperators*”. The angels symbolize the action of the divine grace that takes care of, accompanies, and enlightens men.

Calasanz insisted on the practice of accompanying the students to their homes and made it obligatory when he wrote it in the Constitutions: *At the end of the school day, let no student remain in the classroom. Accompany them, according to custom, to their homes. All should perform this act of simplicity, even the confessors, and the Superior, at least once a week* (CC 116).

The accompaniment to the houses is only one of the brilliant ideas put into practice by the Pious Schools to prevent the youth from bad habits. It was introduced at the time of the union with the “luqueses”, it seems that with the insistence of Glicerio Landriani. It had a clear purpose of protection, in a double sense: so that the children would not do mischief, and so that no one could abuse them. In any case, it was a typical custom of the Piarists, until the buses appeared.

In fact, the entire educational proposal of the Pious Schools uses the **Preventive Method** solemnly collected in the memorial to Cardinal Tonti: The educational ministry is “*Most meritorious, for establishing and putting into practice, with fullness of charity in the Church, an effective remedy, preventive and curative of evil, inducing and enlightening for good, intended for all boys of whatever condition - and, therefore, for all men, who first pass through that age - through letters and spirit, good habits and manners, the light of God and of the world...*” (Tonti no. 9).

In this educational process, the educator is a Cooperator of the Truth, of Jesus Master.

The two greatest obstacles for students to reach human fulfillment (holiness) and eternal life are ignorance and sin. Therefore, to accompany them would consist in offering them the necessary means to grow in grace and wisdom in “the light of God and of men”; that is to say, with piety and letters, faith, and culture.

We point out some practices that the holy founder recalls in his writings and that show the exquisite care and accompaniment that he had with the students¹.

The saintly educator wanted teachers to accommodate themselves to the capacity of the students so that they could learn well. It is undoubtedly a gesture of closeness and respect for the psychology of the child.

Treat with respect and delicacy children who are like tender plants and easy to straighten when they are small but difficult when they grow up. Calasanz constantly exhorts teachers to be affectionate with children and to treat them with paternal love.

The teacher must keep track of the children’s learning in a notebook and make sure that they are fulfilling the assigned tasks. When the time came, the appropriate exams were given to pass the grade.

The local minister and the Prefect should visit the classrooms daily, encouraging the students to study, to be pious and to behave well. In addition, they should see to it that the teacher does his job well and is faithful in following the curriculum and schedule.

The Confessor of the school should always be attentive to the students so that they reject every occasion of sin and avoid bad company that could be harmful to them. He had to have special qualities to arouse the confidence of the pupils. When a student misbehaved, he was sent to the Confessor as the first and most effective measure of correction.

To guide the students to find their own vocation according to the “inner inclination” of each one and the natural talents they had.

The preventive method does not consist only of preventing children from being harmed, but also of helping them do good; not only of preventing vices, but also of helping them in what is positive, especially in good habits and the love of God:

Calasanz knew that the school, however good it may be, is neither effective nor complete without the support of the parents. If a stable and lasting success of the students is to be ensured, the cooperation of the parents is essential because they are the first educators, and they must be in tune with the school’s educational project.

Many of the first foundations were requested by city councils who wanted a school for their cities where they could collect the multitude of idle children who roamed the streets. They understood well that, with the Pious Schools, they could not only reduce delinquency but also improve the social climate. Calasanz expresses it masterfully:

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¹ ALONSO, J (2017) Santidad para el cambio social. El modelo educativo escolapio. Madrid PPC



ACCOMPANYING THE CALASANCTIAN SCHOOL TODAY

In Piarist schools today, accompaniment is being included as an essential feature of the educational project. We could categorize the different types of accompaniment taking as a reference the great pillars of education, knowing that all the dimensions are interrelated.

Pedagogical accompaniment and monitoring of students so that the educational process of each is oriented towards their integral formation and considers their personal characteristics and needs. The dimensions of integral accompaniment are outlined in the four learning processes proposed by the UNESCO in the Delors Report:

Learning to be: Students are accompanied in the construction of their personal identity: a process that involves the integrity of the person in all its dimensions. They are accompanied in the discovery of their own vocation, in the appropriation of the principles and values that give meaning to life, in moral conduct. In a school with a Catholic identity, spiritual accompaniment would be an essential aspect.

Learning to learn: Students are helped to discover and enhance their abilities and talents. They are offered the necessary tools and guidance to build valuable knowledge from the information they receive from their environment. They are also helped to overcome difficulties in the academic process so that they can successfully complete their studies.

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2 ALONSO, O (2008) Acompañar. El acompañamiento pastoral de los adolescentes en la escuela. PPC

Learning to do: It is an educational accompaniment linked to the previous “learning to learn”; it only emphasizes the acquisition of manual skills: writing, drawing, building, designing...

Learning to live together: Helping students to integrate into a group, to have a cordial coexistence based on dialogue and cooperation and to discover the importance of living together in difference. When students have asocial behaviors, they should be accompanied so that they accept the rules and integrate into the ordinary coexistence of the school.

Pastoral accompaniment is an essential dimension of Calasanctian pedagogy that must be intimately connected to the pedagogical dimension. Its purpose is to accompany the students so that they may discover the living presence of God in their lives and learn to be reconciled with themselves, to love their neighbor fully, to discern God’s will and to live as children of God.

In a Piarist school, it must be possible to accompany students in three areas: environmental, group and personal².

The **environmental accompaniment** must reach all members of the educational community in a direct and provocative way. It is based on the conviction that a good school environment transmits values by contagion. This atmosphere is achieved through a good design and decoration of the center and the classroom, a good planning, coexistence, and social integration. An attractive pastoral proposal facilitates the opening of students to the experience of faith. An educational community that has a good project and

good relationships among them creates a positive environment that favors the growth of the students.

Group accompaniment. There are experiences, learning and discoveries that students have that can only be acquired in a group of peers. The group offers educational possibilities that do not exist in personal accompaniment and that are not possible in environmental accompaniment. Of the benefits of this accompaniment, we highlight the following:

- » It enables the need to take responsibility in all areas of life.
- » Enables community search processes and group options.
- » It reinforces personal accompaniment and authenticates it.
- » It allows for a communitarian discernment of one's own vocation.
- » It allows to exercise and contrast learning (concepts, procedures, attitudes) and the quality of interpersonal relationships.
- » It favors the sense of belonging to the group and builds personal identity.

The **personal accompaniment** is established between the educator and the student in a climate of dialogue and trust. The personal environment is much appreciated from adolescence onwards where the students feel the need to communicate their concerns to an adult and in confidence. It is not a psychological therapy; it is not a simple meeting of friendship... It is the help and guidance that an experienced educator provides to his students.

PROPOSALS TO INTEGRATE INTO THE EDUCATIONAL PROJECT.

1. Design a good tutorial action plan to accompany students in their comprehensive educational process.
2. Train educators in personal accompaniment strategies.
3. To strengthen the school's guidance department by providing it with people and resources.
4. Dedicate time and people to listen to the students from different areas: tutor teacher, school guidance, catechist, priest... Students should always have an open channel if they need to be listened to.
5. Ensure that in each school there is a priest who spiritually accompanies the students.

6. Accompany students in non-formal spaces (sports, arts...) as well as in informal ones (games, playground, trips...).
7. Activate protocols for the care and attention of minors.
8. Design and implement a good learning assessment plan to follow up with students.
9. Accompany each teacher in the elaboration of the learning plan and in the way it is implemented by writing periodic reports.
10. Promote the figure of pedagogical coordinators as companions for teachers.
11. Prepare a good vocational orientation plan from the early years so that students have the tools to make the right decisions in their lives.

PROFILE OF THE PIARIST EDUCATOR AS A COMPANION

The Piarist educator accompanies the integral growth of his students; therefore, he must be a qualified person who makes a synthesis between the different learning processes: intellectual, affective, social, practical, and spiritual.

1. Good human and spiritual maturity and practical wisdom.
2. Experience in being accompanied by others in their personal process.
3. Adequate training to guide their students.
4. Live the passion of following Jesus and feel the commitment to walk in faith with other brothers and sisters.
5. The ability to listen, which involves silencing personal voices to enter the world of the other, and to listen to everything that the other communicates through their words and gestures.
6. Understanding and able to put him/herself in the other's place.
7. Orients students without modeling it after one's own image.
8. Knows how to read and discern personal and social reality.
9. Animator of the life of the group and guide in the personal journey of each of its members.
10. Openness and availability.

It has been a characteristic of the Piarist schools the simple and cordial treatment with the students, the closeness of the teachers to their students, far from the protocol distancing that exists in other schools.



REFLECTION AND DIALOGUE IN GROUPS

- *Share what Calasanz's intuitions are regarding the accompaniment of students.*
- *How do I approach the pedagogical and pastoral accompaniment of students?*
- *What proposal does the school make to better accompany the students, and how do you evaluate it?*
- *What weaknesses do I have in my role of accompanying students in their integral development?*
- *How does the school serve students with special difficulties: behavioral and learning difficulties?*
- *How is the educator's relationship with the school guidance department and the pastoral department articulated?*
- *What is your experience of being accompanied?*