



Calasancian spirituality and piarist spirituality today

Daniel Hallado Arenales

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SPIRITUALITY AND PIARIST
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Presentation

From a young age I felt that our spiritual formation required greater continuity and cohesion. This impression is greater when it comes to thinking of a spirituality for the Pious Schools today.

There is a perception shared by many that Piarist spirituality is still a pending issue in some respects.

First of all, I distinguish Calasancian spirituality (that of our founder) from Piarist spirituality¹: that of his followers, who embody this spirituality of the founder with accents specific to each time and place, as well as each vocational lifestyle.

I will not discover anything new, the most basic nuclei have been strongly worked and deepened, especially the key experience of Calasanz in the years from 1597 to 1606. In this regard, I cannot fail to refer to Fr. Adolfo García Durán, may he rest in peace and, particularly, to the fine-tuned works of my juniors Master, Fr. Miguel Ángel Asiain.

What I will try to do is a more comprehensive, less analytical reading of Calasancian spirituality (sometimes it is presented as a story and a list of virtues or themes, which usually leave one rather cold), and do it from the richness that gives us a current perspective.

1 I am aware that some brothers are contrary to separating these terms, but I do not find alternative if we want to name the spirituality that lived our Founder, the one he wanted to transmit and the one that today we are called to live. The Piarists are to receive this precious treasure of Calasanz, but –like him– we must march with the Church and with the times, how later I will try to explain.

Because the “recipient receives the way it is” (in free translation), the understanding of Calasanctian spirituality is enriched according to the perspective, sensitivity and keys that in each person and time we discover. Hence, a reading of the rich contributions to Christian spirituality that the twentieth century has offered us, confirmed at the Second Vatican Council and converted into a particular call to religious by ecclesial documents and reflections, helps us to discover some nuances and other ways of formulating the Calasanctian experience, its profound meaning and the “spirit” that it wanted to transmit to us.

At the last minute, with the text already edited, the doctoral thesis of Fr. Ángel Ayala, entitled² “The spirit that the Lord has given me”, has reached my hands, which allows me to refine some aspect as I will point out in footnotes. Obviously, the study of Fr. Angel has a greater authority in research, but there are also others, although not alien, the pretensions and characteristics.

I have to admit that the foundation in East Timor and the experience of confinement due to covid19 have been the final fuse to launch myself into this adventure by offering me a context and a long time for reading and reflection, moving forward and correcting what I had already been forging.

I do not claim to be exhaustive. There are enough authors and previous writings to which I will refer and they will have their reflection in the content.

I will begin with an introductory chapter that clarifies some concepts and helps us situate Calasanctian spirituality and Piarist spirituality.

Next, a first section addresses the spirituality of St. Joseph Calasanz, trying to understand the historical and spiritual context, his background upon arriving in Rome (formation and sensitivity) and the encounter with poor children as a decisive experience. From there and from his writings and subsequent trajectory, I will pro-

2 In fact, the full title is: *The way of life of the Pious Schools, texts and theology: “The spirit that the Lord has given me”*, Madrid, January 2021. It is worth your study, which has received the highest rating.

pose a way of presenting the content of the spirituality of our Holy Father enriched from our perspective, which supposes in some cases a certain interpretation, even avoiding projections or additions. I will complete the section with a short chapter on the spiritual formation of the Piarists in their time.

The next section concerns Piarist spirituality today. At first I will point out the accents of our time that I think we must take into account to enrich fidelity to Calasanz with fidelity to the present of our world and our Church (something, on the other hand, very Calasanctian too). From these signs of the times, I will seek a certain drawing, so to speak, of our spirituality today, accepting that the way of embodying it must be plural, although sharing some essential common elements.

I complete the section with formative suggestions regarding spirituality, trying to offer a small contribution to the exciting and difficult formative task, which to a large extent is what has motivated me to write these reflections.

*In Makili (Ataúro), on April 17, 2022,
Easter of Resurrection.*

Acronyms used

Analecta	Analecta Calasanciana magazine
CC	Constitutions of Calasanz
FEDE	The Formation of the Piarist (2015)
Giner	GINER, S., <i>San José de Calasanz. Maestro y Fundador</i> , BAC 1992
M	Moradas, from St. Teresa, preceded by the number of “dwelling” and followed by the numbers of the quotation.
Sc	Scripta ³

3 I have chose this term as it is not limited to letters; follow the numbering of the Epistolary of Picanyol -previously they had EP in front of the number-, so that when other documents were added they were placed by putting subscripts to the letter number closest to the date; these Scripta can be found online, on the web *scripta.scolopi.net* and in the *Opera Omnia* of Saint Joseph Calasanz, although here they still use EP before the number.

To situate ourselves

What is spirituality?

When we hear about spirituality, we rightly associate it with interiority, and we often oppose it to the action, to the world in which we are or, more directly, to the body and the flesh (although this in its Pauline sense can oppose it).

The concept we have of spirituality is decisive when it comes to discovering its content, limiting it or opening it. This concept will allow us to formulate a more or less coherent synthesis of each foundational spiritual experience... or reduce it to a series of statements with little connection.

There is no doubt that cultivated interiority⁴ is an essential aspect when talking about spirituality. The inner world is inhabited by thought, emotional flow, memory, imagination and the possibility of self-awareness that allows us to dialogue with ourselves, stop, ask ourselves. While interiority demands moments of disconnection with the outside world, it would be a grave mistake to oppose interiority and the outside world. There is no possibility of healthy interiority or experience of God without this connection with the real understood in a broad sense (which includes my own awareness of reality, and my history-memory).

4 Cf. TORRALBA, F., *La interioridad habitada*, Edelvives (Khaf), 2019. Contrasted with the religious thought of Zubiri (especially the concept of religation, experience of God and religious experience) and with some interesting analyses of interiority and mysticism in Edith Stein (who studies Saint John of the Cross in his posthumous work unfinished *La ciencia de la cruz*, after doing it before with St. Teresa).

God is given to us as the foundation of reality and as the one who makes it possible for us to be a person. God is present in man's "being a person", beyond his mode of constitutive presence in all things. But above all, God is given to us in a new way in history in Jesus Christ. For his part, man can respond to this gift from another form of donation: the "surrender" which, in turn, makes possible a new mode of access to God, as we will now see.

In Jesus Christ the unity of God and man is fully realized. That is why it is in Him—and in Him alone—that access to the Father is complete. And the one who "Christifies" us is the Holy Spirit, it is He who makes us participate, in the Son, in the life of God, in his communion of love. And, in this communion in God, we also participate in the fullest communion with other people, with humanity, and with the cosmos of which we are part. Access to these realities (people and cosmos) is not the same when it is done from union with God.

From what has been outlined here, it is understood that for the Christian to speak of spirituality is to speak of "living by the Holy Spirit", "allowing oneself to be guided by the Spirit" or also to speak—in a perhaps more external but eloquent way—of "following Christ".

There is, however, an important key that cannot be relegated when we talk about experience of God and re-ligion⁵, it is the key of the "Covenant", in which there is a commitment of God for man and man for God, being God who has the initiative. This presupposes a loving relationship, a mutual knowledge and a recognition of God's excellence⁶, so to speak, which leads to a loving response of man to God in "total obedience" (the surrender we said above).

The Alliance highlights:

- the origin in an encounter with the Lord; I find that is reflected in the world of the real, historical, although called to be lived from the interiority;

5 Alluding to the concept of "re-connect" ("re-ligare") used by Zubiri and that later I will connect with piety.

6 In Hebrew terms one speaks of three key words: *emet*, *sedek*, *hesed*.

- the constitution of a people, the people of the Covenant, who walk in history faithful to God, in the following of Christ (criterion and foundation) we would say in our case;
- and listening to the Word of God, which illuminates this journey and –in it– makes it possible to enter into the experience of the real, of history and, consequently, of the knowledge of God: it is not only or mainly to see, it is to listen.

Thus understanding spirituality, we cannot reduce it to the realm of pure interiority or, at most, of the virtues with which we decide and act. The relational realm is not alien to spirituality, nor is the vocational and transformative response. It will be necessary to limit, because everything is “touched” by spirituality, but today there is no doubt that from each spirituality there are different ways of approaching fraternity or community and mission, areas that are often separated.

Spirituality is a dynamic reality

Although God is one, and so the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ, human beings are many and we also have our own characteristics, more because of the circumstances of each one than because of genetics. Already this fact leads us to talk about different spiritual experiences.

On the other hand, the approach to the mystery of God, the contemplation of Jesus Christ, the challenges that reality offers us... they are typical of each time, place and person, and this allows us to speak of different “spiritualities” as personal experiences that can be transmitted to other disciples. They form a charismatic community, which has its particular way of responding to the gift received from God with a way of praying and living with God, some underlining of the Gospel, a way of living consecration, mission, community...

But, in addition, humanity as a whole advances in history, discovering new opportunities and facing new challenges as well as interchanging experiences. This walk is not alien to the experience of God and the responses that the Holy Spirit elicits. That is why spirituality, life according to the spirit, cannot be framed in rigid preconceived schemes. It is what is meant in the expression “The Spirit blows where He wants” and how He wants. The Lord and giv-

er of life is no stranger to life and life changes profoundly throughout history and space.

An authentic spirituality, then, is attentive to the voice of the Spirit and scrutinizes the signs of the times in order to discover in them new calls and new lights. It is then understood that spirituality is in itself dynamic.

Even more. Because we are a people who walk and the gifts are for the whole Church, the charisms also enrich each other, the spiritualities enrich each other. And this is what the Church asks of us today: our charismatic identity, our spirituality, is born in the communion of the Church, and only from communion can we live, with the corresponding mutual recognition and enrichment. For us it is not something new: this is how our holy founder lived it.

A bit of history with this matter of spirituality...

The fact that spirituality is dynamic and historical entails the existence of processes of enrichment and evolution, but it is fair to recognize it, also of involution due to the pressure of some historical circumstances or the simple “entropic”⁷ tendency that not only affects physics, but how human beings live our deepest realities.

It does not make much sense to present here a history of spirituality, but I think it is appropriate to offer some brushstrokes that help us to situate ourselves, that offer us a framework to better understand the time of Calasanz and ours in terms of spirituality.

One of the richest moments was the time of the first Christian communities and the holy fathers. A time when they had to fight against many deviations and laid the foundations of our faith, sharing with surprising freedom and depth their experience of God. Despite the challenges, the freshness of the faith and the symbolic, rich and profound reading of Scripture contrast with the rigor and obscurantism of some later moments.

7 I remember that entropy is the tendency to disorder, we could say to the degradation of systems, by the use of energy. Also in culture and in the life of the spirit there is a tendency to degradation, to simplification (in the worst sense), to the search for the easy.

The seventh century is of great importance in the further conception of life according to the Spirit. The influence exerted by Germanic thought and culture, and with it the Irish monks, leads to a more “dark” view of faith: the expiration of the world, private confession and penance, the sense of sin and the fear of judgment are underlined. All this is valuable, but partial and in contrast to the joyful claim of the Gospel understood as “good news”.

In the tenth and eleventh centuries the concept of the “Majesty” of God and the Marian feasts developed. The Cistercian in the twelfth century invites us to resemble Christ in his humanity and presents us with Mary as an aid in spirituality to rise to the supreme love of God.

These are also the times of a liturgical change that led to greater uniformity and consolidated a conception of worship perhaps more Judaizing than evangelical.

In the thirteenth century there are some important phenomena: lay movements that seek a greater approach to the life of the Gospel in critical contrast with the ecclesial hierarchy are more widespread. St. Francis will resolve it with adherence to Christ crucified, a joyful humility and extreme poverty, basing both virtues on a new fraternity that was already sought after in the socio-economic and political environment of the moment. From this minority he also assumes communion with the Church beyond the sins and miseries that it then presented.

Also at that time, the adoption of Aristotelian thought favored the dialogue of theology with science and culture... at the price of moving theology away from spirituality.

Finally, the Dominicans were extending three important practices for the spirituality of the following centuries: devotion to the passion of Christ, the recitation of the Rosary (which is fundamentally meditation) and Eucharistic adoration.

At the end of the fourteenth century appear in Germany and France the sketches of what will be called “*Modern Devotio*”: they are *the brothers of common life* and the *regular canons* of Windesheim, where poverty, common life, inner prayer and tradition are important keys. They will be characterized by the seriousness of their life and the simplicity of their sources. An affec-

tive, realistic, devout and, in a way, psychological spirituality. Of this movement is particularly significant Thomas of Kempis and his book *The Imitation of Christ*. In meditation, much emphasis is placed on the method; as for the content, the vanity of human things, the judgments of God and the love of Christ towards us will be addressed. It is intimate and advances in this divorce between theology and spirituality.

The *modern devotio* will extend its influences, to a greater or lesser extent, to St. Ignatius, but also St. Teresa, St John of the Cross or St. Joseph Calasanz are recipients of a good part of their riches.

In the meantime, the hundred years' war increases the pessimistic feeling and sense of sin, or, made the jubilees particularly appreciated. The Mass, however, loses its sense of community, only preaching brings closer the people. Spiritual individualism is exacerbated.

The Renaissance brings a humanism that seeks a return to the classical, to the biblical and patristic, to nourish spirituality with Sacred Scripture.

St. Ignatius in the Exercises seeks to know and love Christ. He uses methods of the *Devotio Moderna* but is more open to divine inspiration and the call of God. He wants to integrate the divine and the human, the service of God and of men.

During the sixteenth century Spain presents a particular spiritual richness and theological renewal after completing the reconquest and reform of the diocesan and religious clergy initiated in the times of the Catholic Kings. We will talk more about this when we will soon approach the spiritual historical context of Calasanz.

The seventeenth century presents a more internalized reading of scripture, the mystical experience is studied and priestly and episcopal spirituality is deepened. The *Traité de l'amour de Dieu* of St. Francis of Sales, maintaining a certain psychological influence, recovers a more optimistic view of man as the image of God and offers a path to the people of God through a devout humanism. In contrast, Jansenism will advocate austere piety, moral rigor, pessimism in human nature, intransigence in the face of the world... the condemnations received, together with its seriousness and moral authenticity, stimulated it more than they slowed it down, and its

success in France will degenerate into a reduced sacramental practice and little sense of the Church. At this time, John Eudes will shape the devotion of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Throughout the eighteenth century a progressive rejection of mysticism is generated, particularly in the face of extreme positions of some presumed mystics such as quietism or those who said that the exercises of piety are useless... and at the other extreme secularism, rationalism and deisms are opposed in France to the Christian vision. In Spain and Italy traditional piety will continue, aided by popular missions.

The nineteenth century will open several avenues of spiritual growth. Highlight the biblical societies in Germany, the publication of classics of priestly spirituality, devotionals, documented lives, the most frequent communion, the increase in devotion to the Sacred Heart and a greater union with Christ, who is served in the apostolate, manifested particularly in numerous foundations of religious congregations. It remains mainly a moralized spirituality, affective and individualistic, although more concerned with the good of others.

Finally, since the beginning of the twentieth century, the biblical, liturgical, patristic and ecumenical movements have been developed, as well as a greater connection of spirituality with real life, as a response to the awareness of disconnection and intimate devotions. A dialogue with the world is sought that contrasts with a certain myopia in the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

It will be the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council that will pick up these changes, confirm them and promote them. We can specify it in these aspects⁸:

- Revision of traditional spirituality, away from the great sources (liturgy, Word, Church, community and mission); since the VI-X centuries more based on the Old Testament, less Christocentric, more devotional, ascetic, mixed with the Judaic and pagan... resulting in a divorce with theolo-

8 Daniel de Pablo Maroto, OCD: *La espiritualidad emergente del Concilio Vaticano II*, Analecta 62, pp. 295-343.

gy, sentimentality, abandonment of the laity, concern centered on one's own salvation, and disincarnate angelism...

- Return to the primordial sources: Sacred Scripture (*Dei Verbum*), Liturgy (*Sacrosantum Concilium*) and the Church (*Lumen Gentium*)
- Rediscovery of the Holy Spirit, almost ignored in "traditional" spirituality, and of the Trinitarian dimension. The spiritual man is under the action of the Holy Spirit, listening; he is the new man whose life is Christ. The category of "experience of God" and of the founders as "men of the Spirit" is recovered.
- Worldly and earthly dimension: in the face of Neoplatonisms, a spirituality of immersion, recognizing the Christian value of the world, of man and of his history. The world is a place of sanctification, militancy, participation. It highlights the anthropocentric turn that puts the poor at the center: taking up their cause generates a new theology and spirituality. It is illustrative that Paul VI, in closing, presents the Good Samaritan as a guideline for the spirituality of the Council (No. 8).
- Spirituality of the man in solidarity, towards the civilization of love: in solidarity with man, with the earth and with the future.
- From individualism to communitarianism: discovery of otherness, of community and of religion as a relationship and encounter, open to commitment and history. New communities founded on the Word of God with a rhythm of growth and maturation (which believe, celebrate, live, commit). In this context, the value of popular religiosity that makes the people more protagonist is also recovered.

The Church has continued to deepen in these directions and has made concrete appeals to all Christians and, in particular, to religious. In particular, we are invited to consider our own community life as part of the mission, as a school of prayer and spirituality of communion and we are invited to an authentic refoundation that starts not so much from the Constitutions but, like our founders,

from the Word of God, and that leads us to new radical options to meet the poor, of the discarded by society, affecting this attitude of “being going forth” both personal and community options as well as institutional ones. Later we will return to these accents that the Church asks of us today.

Calasanz spirituality, Calasanctian spirituality and Piarist spirituality

As I stated in the introduction, it is necessary to distinguish three realities if we want to better understand the Piarist spirituality (or spiritualities...) that we are called to live today.

Saint Joseph Calasanz is a concrete person in defined historical, social, ecclesial and cultural environments. It has his own trajectory and his influences. His way of following Christ cannot be imitated or repeated as such. It is his own spiritual path, marked by concrete events and his personal response to them, and even by deep, mystical experiences that the Lord granted him.

But his spiritual journey has essential basic elements that he wanted to transmit to his Piarist fellows and to the new vocations in the institute, so that they could be faithful to the call of God from the Charism received and the mission entrusted. These basic and inalienable elements that he identifies, and the following generations refine or enrich as they deepen more in the life of the founder, is what we could call Calasanctian spirituality.

I want to call Piarist spirituality the actualization of Calasanctian spirituality in the times and places that we Piarists have to live. Calasanz was faithful to his time and allowed himself to be enriched by other spiritual paths, in addition to listening with humility and authentic disposition to the voice of the Church through its Pastors. In this sense, it is fidelity to Calasanz to continue doing the same. Today the Piarist must enrich his spirituality by accepting the calls that the Church made at the Second Vatican Council and, subsequently, through his pastors. We are also called to enrich our spirituality personally or communally with some aspects of what the Spirit arouses in the charismatic experiences and ecclesial movements of our time, especially as they appear as responses to the challenges and opportunities of the time or place.

SECTION ONE

SPIRITUALITY IN SAINT JOSEPH CALASANZ

Historical spiritual context of calasanz, riches and limits

In the brief framework of the history of spirituality presented above, we could point to a long period of time influenced by what some would call spirituality born of the Germanic peoples, in which judgment, death, fear, personal salvation, the greatness of God turned almost into remoteness... weigh more than other evangelical aspects, weakening the sense of community and distancing worship from life, although not from an important part of morality.

The time of Calasanz maintains this influence, although nuanced by the different historical movements reached the sixteenth century. We could say, in this sense, that the *Modern Devotio*, already “entering in years” and touched by Renaissance influences, together with the renewed clerical spirituality of the Spain of that rich century would synthesize the main spiritual influences in Calasanz, without forgetting a decisive fact that will profoundly mark the life of our founder: the Council of Trent and the reform of the Church.

The Modern Devotio

The so-called *Modern Devotio* arises in the Rhineland at the end of the fourteenth century. Its main referent is Gerard Groote⁹ who founds the Sisters of Common Life. These are communities of strong coexistence, who live from their work, initially as copyists and later

9 Which, in turn, was influenced by other authors, including Eckhart, although he does not quote it directly.

with the printing press and with a strong sense of Christian humanism. In 1378, in Windesheim a follower founded the Regular Canons of St. Augustine, where simplicity and poverty are key in their style.

This spiritual current seeks to overcome the limits of scholasticism, moves in the Augustinian affective line, is Christocentric (importance of the humanity of Christ), seeking an ethical life that imitates Christ in his human and emotional facet (in front of scholastic abstractions). The means are: methodical prayer, examination of conscience and meditation. Thus, the Brothers of Common Life are founded to create solid archetypes of holiness, arousing in society the desire to imitate Christ. A brother stands out in his later influence: Thomas of Kempis, author, around 1425, of *The Imitation of Christ*. This book has strongly influenced later Christian asceticism, being for a long time the most widespread after the Bible. In this book the most important concepts of Divine Majesty are based on personal connection with Christ, giving active signs of love to Him. In the sixteenth century this movement and its communities declined, being absorbed by other movements, possibly because of their scarce apostolic spirit, although they valued preaching and lay groups that met to comment on scriptures or moral principles (*collationes mutuae*).

Interesting to say that the Brothers of Common Life founded famous schools, of strong level, among which are notable disciples such as Nicholas of Cusa, Thomas of Kempis or Erasmus of Rotterdam. In prayer they used to write small propositions that served as a guide for meditation and numbered them as a pattern of conduct. At three in the morning they had two hours of prayer and meditated on the Sacred Scriptures by taking notes (to be awake), then they worked in the cells, they had a procession with psalms and mass... thus a whole schedule that defined the background of the community. They do not lack of working times and, of course, the examination of conscience at the end of the day. It is important to point out the key that separates them from other renewing groups of their time: their fidelity to the Church¹⁰.

There is no evidence that Calasanz had inspiration in these Brothers, although there are common elements in the description of the

10 Still, this individual approach to Scripture and little reference to the sacraments they are perceived by some authors as a foretaste of the Lutheran Reformation.

first communities of the secular congregation, possibly by shared influences. Having similarities in the austere and poor life, he does not share –however– the “living of work”, and opts for begging, especially given to dedication to poor children. Calasanz does receive, through various “intermediaries” influence on the way of understanding prayer (concrete, affective, methodical) and the provision of other acts of piety, in addition to disseminating *The imitation of Christ* for the formation of the Piarists.

The Spanish priestly renewal

As I said, in the century that saw the birth of Saint Joseph Calasanz de la *Devotio*, as structures, we can hardly refer to the regular canons of Saint Augustine. However, in Spain there is a renewed theological and spiritual richness. The Catholic Monarchs, with the decisive support of Cardinal Cisneros¹¹, promoted the quality of the diocesan and regular clergy through theological studies and seminary formation. This notably enriched ecclesial life and spirituality, highlighting the sacerdotal spirituality¹². Fernando Guillén highlights John of Avila and Ignacio de Loyola, along with the Italian Philip Neri (close to Charles Borromeo... which we cannot forget either¹³). Of all of them I believe that St. John of Avila is the one who most marks this time¹⁴ and possibly in St. Ignacio it is easier to highlight the differences than the similarities.

11 Franciscan. I think it's important here to collect some remarks of Fr. Enric Ferrer pointing influence in sixteenth-century Spain of Franciscan spirituality, which was the most widespread, known as “prayer of recollection”. Authors such as Francisco de Osuna and Bernabé de Palma that put of relief the humanity of Christ. Juan de los Ángeles (master of a deeply affective spirituality) and Diego de Estella are also highly appreciated. This will connect with what we will say more regarding to Alvarez and Cordeses.

12 It can help us un article in *Analecta* 50 (pp. 295-336) of our longed-for Fr. Fernando Guillén Preckler, with the title *Situación de la espiritualidad sacerdotal en tiempos de Calasanz*.

13 There are studies of the life of St. Philip Neri that connect him with Charles Borromeo and the Colonna.

14 Not only we can recognize aspects in Calasanz promoted by St. John of Avila as the organization of his seminaries or his vision of the studies that priests must have (more practical than theoretical), also among the few books that were in his room was the *Tratado Espiritual* of this saint.

As for St. John of Avila, he strongly influenced the Council of Trent. He pointed out as key causes of the clergy crisis false vocations and the need to restrict access to the priesthood as well as to improve intellectual and moral preparation. He questions the formation of his time by saying that it is too intellectualist and long and impractical, and that they do not study or read cases of conscience (something practical and pastoral), for example.

His theology of the priesthood is Christocentric: Jesus, Son of God and our brother, presents himself to the Father as a priest and victim and thus marries humanity. This is how the priest must be configured to Christ with his own feelings, virtues and holiness, also as a mediator (his disposition before the Father and before men) and a victim of reconciliation. He founded schools (seminaries) with an organization (in Baeza) quite close to that of Calasanz. He distrusts the university and prefers a simple, effective and quick formation to the priestly ministry, the rest is not necessary, rather it is long and expensive, and it is an excuse to avoid the basic pastoral activities (preaching and confession). The parallel with Calasanz in his priestly and formative thought is remarkable, we can hardly doubt the influence of John of Avila, given his weight in the formation of the XVI Century in Spain.

St. Ignatius of Loyola founds an institute of consecrated life centered on priestly ministry. They are regular clergy, seeking the exercise of the priestly ministry in a universal way without the canonical obstacles of their time and with special obedience and availability before the Pope, regardless of the more or less monastic customs that may hinder the pastoral exercise (this is reflected in the first chapters of his Constitutions). We are also regular clerics¹⁵, although in some aspects such as community or begging, Calasanz moves away from the Ignatian model.

St. Philip Neri enters the confrerie of the Holy Trinity, founded by Persiano Rosa, whose characteristics in part continue in the Oratory that he will create. Some are: the most frequent confession and communion, the less imposing spiritual direction, joy (rejecting melancholic thoughts), spiritual reasoning: reading, commentary

15 As we will say shortly, Calasanz' organizational model seems closer to the reformed mendicants than to the regular clerics.

(sometimes by the young people themselves), prayer, singing and proposals for personal improvement. Mass is the time of self-immolation with Christ that often illuminates knowing God's will better. Calasanz' closeness to some of these characteristics is clear, Calasanz himself invites to make sermons in the style of the "oratory", in addition to promoting communion and frequent confessions. Calasanz repeatedly shows his appreciation for Philip Neri.

The Council of Trent

The Council of Trent is possibly the most decisive element of the context in which Calasanz moves. Not only because of the influence that the Spanish theological and spiritual movement had on him, but also because of the very fact of promoting reform in the Catholic Church. Calasanz will have to work in Spain side by side with several bishops in the reform.

The expression "reform of customs¹⁶", centered on moral corruption, commonly used by Casani and with some frequency by the founder himself (as in the memorial to Cardinal Tonti) gives way to a broader and more sustained expression: the reform of the Christian republic (Christian society we would say), as it says in the document sent to the commission on union with the Lucca Congregation (Sc0073.1), definitely coined in the first issue of the constitutions (*Republicae Christianae reformationem*), and then repeat the expression reform in various contexts, for example by saying that our institute is the education and reform of young people (Sc0247), or when talking about reform versus relaxation or reform "of all Chris-

16 FERRER, E., *El memorial al Cardenal Tonti en la perspectiva de la Obra de renovación de la Iglesia posttridentina*, 2020 (unpublished), recalls the efforts of the Catholic Reformation before the "corrupted customs", pointing out the problems of residence of the bishops and parish priests, the establishment of seminaries, the promotion of the teaching of Christian doctrine, pastoral and canonical visits, provincial and diocesan synods and some important editions. Calasanz participated in a good part of these initiatives. There is a veritable catalogue of "non-straight" behaviors of both a personal and social and ecclesial nature. But this need for reform was perceived long before the Council: Castelli -in his memorial of 1644/45- collects, as a significant example, Jean Gerson was already asking for the reform at the beginning of the fifteenth century.

tianity". There will be no lack of a meaningful expression: "to be an inwardly reformed man" (Sc1367) that perhaps better illuminates the profound value he gives to reform.

Without the context of the Council of Trent, the Piarist charism and ministry cannot be understood, and it is important to point out that in this theme of reform there is also a part of spirituality, as fidelity to the Holy Spirit who guides the Church. He understands our Order as a Reformed Order and will often be compared not so much to regular clergy but, surprisingly, to the Capuchins¹⁷.

Synthesizing

If we are to make an assessment of the spiritual context of Calasanz, we could succinctly point out some values and limits.

On the positive side: we are in a time of great spiritual richness and in the context of reform. Meditation is an important part of the spiritual life with quite rigorous reflections on the methodology to be used and on the interiority of the person, we could speak of a psychological approach of great quality. The humanity of Jesus is consolidated as a privileged path towards union with God, following more affections (in contrast to scholastic dogmatics) but not abandoning memory and will. The value of communion and more frequent confession is recovered and there is a marked improvement in preaching. Mission is understood as ministry, as service, strongly linked to spirituality. The printing press, in turn, facilitates the dissemination of spiritual treatises and the writings of important mystics who, on the other hand, have not lost value today.

However: despite Calasanz' personal knowledge of the scriptures, they remain forbidden to the direct appreciation of the people of

17 It is a fact something unexpected and not too studied. Calasanz invites to make like the Capuchins our constructions of community, the way of singing, the mode of defend themselves, of being poor and of possess, even admit like them the active voice of worker brothers to choose delegates; in addition they are who often welcome us on long journeys. We remember that the Capuchins is a Franciscan reform of the first part of the sixteenth century. It was also a Capuchin who described Calasanz' passion in parallel with that of Christ: *Bitter passion* (cf. Opera Omnia EP4364.1 note 2).

God and sometimes the insistence on biblical approach becomes suspicious; the Eucharist is more an individual devotion than an encounter of the Christian community that celebrates and is sent; the liturgy is considered above all normatively, emphasizing the knowledge of the rites and fidelity to them, without missing a certain spirituality in how the priest should live it. Finally, despite the corrective nature of the affective approach to God through the humanity of Christ, and a certain purification of the meaning of the “fear of God”, spirituality continues to weigh on the negative charge of fear of judgment and condemnation¹⁸ that obscures the reception of God’s gratuitous love.

18 Actually the pessimism was seen reinforced by the circumstances of the seventeenth century as well collected FERRER in the unpublished article cited above: a strong climate of instability (small ice age) generates hunger, wages are low and coast increase, the socio-religious wars, the growing polarization between rich and poor, the progressive emergence of the absolutism in politics as a refuge from uncertainty, insecurity along with banditry and fear, if not hatred. All of that generates situations of fear, propensity to melancholy (Calasanz collects it and fears it in educators), pessimism, tendency to spectacle (source of power... and evasion).

His formation and sensitivity: the “spiritual backpack” that Calasanz carries to Rome

The historical context can help us to better understand the spirituality of Calasanz, this influences his concrete formation, of which here I limit myself to presenting examples of what we know¹⁹. From there and from some of his writings, I will synthesize his situation when he arrived in Rome, those aspects to which he was particularly sensitive, and which can explain his later evolution.

Joseph Calasanz Gaston is a relatively young priest (35 years old), who arrives in Rome with a good human formation (particularly in law) and theological, accompanied by a strong pastoral experience in favor of the Catholic reform serving directly to several bishops. His spiritual formation and situation are not far behind²⁰.

Since childhood he receives the influence of the family and the religious of Estadilla, of which we understand that much we can not assure, but to say that in his house he was educated in the fear of God, frequent prayer, various devotions (such as the Parvo office of the Virgin, the recitation of the miracles of Our Lady²¹ and especially

19 In some cases, being rather speculative, I have preferred to avoid it or just quote it.

20 The main references I follow are: GINER, S., *San José de Calasanz. Maestro y Fundador*. BAC 1992, pp. 61-63; 66; 106-107; 122-123; 130; 152-160; 222ss.; FLORENSA, J., *Espiritualidad de Calassanç (sic) en sus años españoles* in *Analecta* 63; ASIAIN, M.A., *La espiritualidad de San José de Calasanz* in *Analecta* 50 especially pp. 489ff.; I don't quote other minor inquiries.

21 In the thesis of Fr. Ángel Ayala, the reflection on content of “The Miracles of Our Lady”, in section 1.1.1.1 is interesting.

the rosary) and taking care of friendships... Joseph Calasanz himself was seen as a strong and devoted child, not lacking anecdotes known about his exhortations to his companions (both as a child and as a young man), or the epithet of “el santet” (little Saint) in Estadilla, put by his companions when observing that he always prays before class.

It is considered quite likely that it was also formed following the catechism of Fr. Pedro Mártir Coma O.P., for it was the text of teaching which the Bishop of Urgel from 1561 to 1571 decreed.

Interesting to mention some possibilities of influence during his university studies: in Lleida he could have gone, like a good part of his companions, to the preaching of the Lents of the Jesuits (Fr. Ayala and Montpalau, Fr. Pedro Prado), which would fit with a letter of August of 1641²², and with they also seem highly probable their relationship in San Pablo de Valencia and in Alcalá. Another interesting fact is that he could have met in both places –because the dates coincide– the also Jesuit Fr. Baltasar Álvarez, successor of Antonio Cordeses (whom he most probably didn’t know), and confessor of St. Teresa, who promoted a school of prayer close to that of Cordeses but less “extreme”.

Later, in his priestly service, he met in particular with two bishops whose influence was beyond doubt: Fray Felipe de Urríes and Fray Andrés Capilla.

Urríes, Dominican, had a well-deserved reputation as a learned and saint, living with a small community, austere and in a detached way thinking of the poor; certainly an important experience of about two years. On the other hand, Gaspar de la Figuera –Augustinian canon– spent a short time, finished off in the visit to Montserrat (where García de Cisneros had promoted the *Devotio Moderna*), a hard experience in the struggle for the Catholic Reformation.

But it was in Urgell with Fray Andrés Capilla, a Carthusian who lived in a community also austere and generous with the poor, where he consolidated his pastoral experience, became fully involved in the

22 Sc3704 “Preserve Y. R. the due reverence and servitude with such Fathers, to whom I have since I was young revered as Fathers sent by God to the world to enlighten it with doctrine and example very effective...”, almost the same in Sc4075; in Sc4232 it dates back to 7 years.

reform of Trent and strengthened his spiritual life. Possibly Calasanz read the three books of the prayer that the bishop wrote²³. Both Carthusians and Dominicans promoted aspects of the *Modern Devotio*, which together with the above, reinforces the influence of this in the formation of Calasanz.

In this sense, Calasanz will frequently recommend the book *The Imitation of Christ*, although we do not have really reliable data on when he was able to know it. On the other hand, the type of prayer of recollection promoted by Cordeses and Álvarez can be considered an advance in the line of affective prayer and meditation: it is about seeking a unitive mental prayer, suitable for all, especially for those who have not studied because they are more humble, consequently far away of intellectualism although at the risk of being accused –more Cordeses– of enlightened²⁴.

Calasanz, in fact, seems to have received from Bishop Capilla the manuscript book *Itinerario de la Perfección Cristiana*, by Cordeses, of which he granted a copy to the Conventual Fathers, which allowed its publication (unpublished until then) in Messina in 1627²⁵.

However, Calasanz never cites this book in his letters or recommends it. This does not mean that it did not influence him²⁶, but

23 Fray Andrés Capilla was formerly a Jesuit novice in Gandía with Cordeses. It was around this time that the influence of Cordeses in the Jesuit Order was cut, considering that it did not respond to the style of meditation that St. Ignatius wanted. Capilla passed to the Carthusians.

24 It presupposes a cleansing of soul, they look above all at the humanity of Christ and his passion. Cordeses speaks of the “*via receptionis*” as the earth to be watered, avoiding the intellectual inquisitive, but accepting a plain discourse with tranquility and rest of all man, waiting for the consolation of the Lord that will be received when it will come.

25 Cf. GINER, o.c. p.333s. See also: LEZCANO TOSCA, H., *Antonio de Cordeses: lectura y mística en la espiritualidad de la primera Compañía*, In VVAA, *Los jesuitas: religión, política y educación (siglos XVI-XVII)*, Madrid, 2012.

26 Giner’s reflection on this seems sufficient (o.c., pp. 335s), and although Cordeses inscribes in a greater spiritual current and affective prayer is not his patrimony, it seems of course it could be Calasanz’ way to deepen in this way, during Urgell’s time with Bishop Capilla, if he did not have some “scrimmages” previously when he was able to contact in Valencia and Alcalá with Fr. Basilio Álvarez and, more difficultly, with Cordeses himself, as I pointed above. See also AYA-LA, A., o.c. Section 1.1.2.3.

possibly does not spread it because the book was forbidden by the Jesuits themselves and that confronting mysticism with theology did not seem a good way. In fact, his spiritual director, Fr. Juan de Jesús y María OCD, will unite in his person and writings theology and mysticism. The one he does recommend is Saint Teresa of Jesus, his book *Way of Perfection*, which promotes this mode of prayer in a very pedagogical way and avoiding unnecessary polemics.

Finally, an important part of his background is his commitment to the Catholic Reformation. It is important for spirituality because it is a way of approaching and perceiving reality, as well as responding to it, assuming that it is what the Spirit asks of the Church and, personally, of Calasanz himself, as I have already said.

His experience, in this regard, starts from what he was able to know as a child (for example the catechism), then through the universities and, above all, in his work with the bishops. In the expression “reform of corrupted customs” Calasanz can see a reflection of his work both in situations of particular Christian communities (parishes, above all), and religious congregations; also located in this line the work of pacification in several places before discords maintained over time, or before the violence of outlaws who take advantage of the border and the mountain; finally, two other aspects appear that are repeated: the care of the liturgy and the importance of education for this reform.

His encounter with the poor, keys to calasanctian spirituality

The land is prepared for a new seed

Without going into the reasons that lead him to Rome²⁷, the truth is that his spiritual formation does not allow him idleness and the Roman environment offers him many possibilities.

He is a priest who wants to serve God, everything he wants to do is for God's sake. But it is he who directs his life, who makes decisions. He enrolls in various confreries, which are opening him to new paths of the spirit and new realities. Thus, the proximity to the church "of the Twelve Apostles" puts him in contact with the conventual Franciscans²⁸ – a relationship that brings him closer to Franciscan spirituality – and leads him to join the Confrerie of the same name visiting twice a week the poor and sick of the neighborhood. Looking at the years, you can see how this experience marked him in his discovery of real poverty and spiritual poverty. This contact seems decisive in the discovery of his "call within the call" that St. Teresa of Calcutta would say.

27 In this regard you can read the latest critical biography, of Fr. Severino Giner, already cited. In summary there is talk of a possible inner impulse (quite questioned), of the search for "canonries" as a source of stable income, and – perhaps at the same time – to represent his bishop in a cause in Rome. Asiain also cites it in *Núcleos fundamentales de la experiencia espiritual de Calasanz, camino para sus seguidores*, Analecta 70 (1993), he sees in the canonry the reason that would explain the search for a doctorate by Calasanz in the last minute (cf. GINER o.c., pp.284s).

28 This contact is important, because it will initiate him into a long and deep friendship with Fr. Bagnacavallo, which will be general and reformer of the Order. From 1597 and 1598, other friendships will also have a great weight in Calasanz, they are the Discalced Carmelites – which we will later mention – and the Trinitarian Reformer Fr. Juan Bautista de la Concepción.

A process of change that underpins a new vocation

In the period of the years from 1596 to 1599, a decisive change took place in Joseph Calasanz. It is in this time frame that he situates what we might call his “Piarist vocation”. A process in which converge his previous “spiritual baggage”, his contact with the poor, his perception that it is necessary to respond to the need for education of poor children –both for themselves and for the reform of Christian society– his failed search for institutional answers and his discovery of the school of St. Dorothea. In this process, accompaniment and dialogue with other people seems illuminating, if not decisive, among whom the Discalced Carmelites who had recently arrived in Rome would stand out²⁹, a spiritual environment in which for several years their closeness to the writings of Saint Teresa and his devotion to her grew, also deepening in prayer and in devotion to Mary.

The change is noticeable, regardless of the nuances you want to put on it:

- Calasanz who has fought so hard for canonries, stops doing it radically: “I do not claim residence benefits”, he will say in June 1599 (Sc0007)
- Calasanz who signed as a doctor until 1594 at least, goes on to sign in June 1599 “Joseph Calasanz”
- Calasanz who planned to return to Spain, decides to stay in Rome
- Calasanz, who wore silk³⁰, begins to face austerity and poverty by dedicating all his assets to the little school of poor children.

This change is called by some authors “conversion”, discussed by others. If we understand that there is a “first conversion” of moral key (from sin to the life of grace) and a so-called “second con-

29 Cf. Giner, o.c., pp.338-343 and 368-371.

30 It is true that this “dressing silk” is related to the fact of moving in the house of the Colonna, but the change is still significant as it looks when he insists on the poverty of the cloth to be used for the cassock and still more for what seems a projection of his own experience in his testimony about Glicerio Landriani who, like him, passes from silk to simple cloth (Sc0069.1).

version” of more theological key, which corresponds to a complete unreserved donation to God, in the so-called “obedience of faith”³¹, it seems that we could frame this process, coinciding also with the period of “middle of life”, in this second conversion³².

Precisely for this reason, I think it is important to underline the substance of change rather than the concrete and external keys to it. This is someone for whom it is important to discover what God is asking of him. So far he sees his life as a “continuum” in which to serve as a priest in his diocese collaborating with the Tridentine reform. His trip to Rome is part of this “continuum”. However, the contact with reality in a new way, the ecclesial and social reality (poor and children), while the sensitivity already sown in his soul, make him feel an urgency³³, which is the education of these poor children, to which he will seek various solutions... until he feels that it is he himself who has to provide this solution, even if it means completely disrupting his life. Getting ready for this change, accepting this new call, took a while, a process. Hence the value of “definitive encounter” that had the discovery of the school of St. Dorothea in this same period (1597) and his search for alternatives to offer continuity and solidity to this experience, a search that failed and led him to assume that he was the answer to his prayer: “show us Lord whom you have chosen”³⁴.

Perhaps the richest expression of his own Piarist vocation is that recounted by Judiski in 1653:

Having asked him once what was the reason that prompted him to found this religion of the Pious Schools, he replied, “the reason I had was none other than the dissolution I saw

31 The term may be ambiguous. Calasanz was already clear about seeking the will of God and submit to it. The difference in a second moment would be in one renewed faith in the Love of God that generates a greater inner freedom, manifested in a firm detachment of one’s own desires and opinions in order to welcome God’s will with more lucidity and freedom, and not to confuse it with one’s own.

32 Conversion is also defined as a change of mindset. I will not insist on what can become Byzantine or simply nominal discussion. I think is sufficiently clarifying Miguel Ángel Asiain’s article on the subject in *Analecta* 63 (1990) pp.121-141 entitled *¿Es posible hablar de conversión en Calasanz?*

33 “Moved by this extreme necessity of the poor” Berro I p.72.

34 Cf. GINER, o.c., p.394.

*in the poor boys of Rome, who did not have a good education because of the poverty and neglect of their parents, reflecting on the words of the psalm where it is said 'to you the poor have been entrusted, you will be the orphan's shelter', I considered this sentence as said to myself and that is why I began..."*³⁵.

Several important aspects are glimpsed in this story:

- The perception of a reality common to many cities of that time, to which other writers of his time allude and of which there are even eloquent engravings. However, it is he who has the sensitivity at that moment to let himself be questioned;
- The concern for ecclesial and social reform against the corruption of customs: fight against the “dissolution” that he sees in these children;
- The acceptance of the Word of God (Psalm 9B of the Liturgy of the Hours, which shows a context of oppressors and oppressed) as a personalized Word, possibly with the help of an affective prayer that starts from the repetition of simple texts with which to “elevate the soul” to God.

I think we can call this transformative encounter the “irruption of the poor” in the life of Joseph Calasanz. Irruption that comes from the hand of God, as he himself perceives.

Another classic formula of his vocation is the account of the response, in 1600, to the ambassador of Philip III, who finally offers him a canonry, as Berro tells us³⁶:

“I have found in Rome a better way to serve God, helping these poor boys; I won't leave it for anything in the world”.

This answer, again, places us in a key of continuity (seek the best way to serve God) and rupture: definitive renunciation of canonries (now that he can finally have one) and definitive dedication to poor children.

35 GINER quotes GARCÍA-DURÁN here, A., *Itinerario espiritual de San José de Calasanz (1592-1622)*, 1967, p. 73. Work that I would dare to call historical in the reading of the biography of Calasanz.

36 Berro I, p.73.

Two keys in the renovated Calasanz who wants for every Piarist

Either by contrast with his previous life that, mainly, by the underlinings that he himself makes in his writings in his later life, these two keys of his spirituality are usually pointed out³⁷ as the fruit of the “irruption of the poor”, which coincide with the ideal of the “men of apostolic life” who only have in their minds the honor and glory of God (in Bernardini’s chronicle) and are “very poor” and “very simple”, as St. Vincent Ferrer said, in the words of Calasanz himself at the end of the memorial to Cardinal Tonti:

- The **humility** that Calasanz never ceases to recommend in the first place and that he asks for as a main condition for both simple profession and ordination³⁸. For Calasanz humility will not only be to stop being a “doctor”, or to lower oneself to the children, to sweep the classes etc. It will also be to trust God in all circumstances and not to demand justice and right in cases where it is not strictly necessary: to suffer the injustice of the poor, because they do not sue (at the end of their life, like the poor of Yahweh, he will point to God as his “Goel” or defender.) The peace that this attitude produces was manifested when they took him to the “Holy” Office. In quick summary: this humility is based on our own knowledge, leads us not to trust our own opinions and strength and trust God more, leads us to a more faithful obedience and inner peace and makes us pleasing to God. This humility of Calasanz translates into the very action of Christ: the lowering to the poor child. That is, a humility that is also active “humiliation” in charity and in the encounter with Jesus in the poor.

37 Many texts could be cited, including the “synthesis essay” of the Order, I limit myself here to two authors: ASIAIN, M.A., *Los dos ejes fundamentales de la experiencia de Calasanz, “sin nada” y “con corazón sencillo” y su incidencia en el proceso espiritual de sus hijos* in *Analecta* 79 (1998) pp.223-240 and GARCÍA-DURÁN, A., *Pobreza y humildad: la “kénosis” evangélica en el escolapio*, in *Analecta* 63 (1990) pp. 143-164.

38 Cf.: Novices: Sc1360, 1386, 1541, 3884, 4531, 4532; Priests: 1928, 1932, 2083, 2344.1, 3647.

- **Poverty** is total detachment, *summa poverty*³⁹, without anything of his own. Calasanz will live it in a very concrete way not only leaving all his economic “rights”, but living the consequences of precariousness and begging, as well as what was said here above of injustices. He will constantly defend what the *summa Poverty* means, aware that it offered a privileged testimony before the people and, particularly, before the Protestants. This poverty he asks for is concrete: he asks religious to become poor and to experience poverty in its limitations, not only as a follow-up to the poor Christ, but also because we care for poor children, and so we become little like them, experiencing difficulties and shortcomings, experiencing begging and experiencing insecurity. Calasanz’ entry in 1599 into the confrerie of the Wounds of St Francis seems part of the process carried out within him: from visiting the poor to being poor and falling in love with poverty and humility, finding a decisive model in this great saint⁴⁰. De fact, he maintained his membership in this confrerie until his death.
- As a summary and source of both we could agree with García-Durán in pointing out the **imitation of Christ** and his kenosis. To follow him is to deny himself, He is a teacher of humility. Valuing and recommending the Kempis⁴¹, he

39 It should be remembered that the *Summa Poverty* that Calasanz wants is prior to the solemn vows; we could link it to the Piarist identity (more beyond the discussion about its canonical opportunity), since it already appears in the Pauline Congregation, in the papal document *Ad ea per quae*.

40 The Franciscan influence of these decisive years seems notorious, not only for his friendships, his presence in the confreries, his visits to Assisi or his encounter with Madonna Poverty, but particularly for his internalization of poverty and humility as keys in the formation and life of the Order. Fr. Angel’s reflection on this matter is broad and interesting, in his thesis in section 1.1.3.1. On the other hand, the contrast of Calasanz with the baroque is striking: poverty and simplicity in a world of great social differences and ostentation... Calasanz, who lives in the splendid Rome of the Baroque, does not even mention it.

41 He quotes this book, *The imitation of Christ or the contempt of the world*, at least in Sc1009, 1020, 1563, 1569, 2371. The book itself says that it is to conform our life to Christ and serve only God, the rest is vanity. It underlines one’s own knowledge, humility, purification of desires, self-denial. In line with the *Devotio*

will say that the Passion of Christ is the true book from which to learn. The end of Calasanz' life speaks for itself about it.

From this initial experience, Calasanz will live another "continuum" now marked by the will of God, his Providence, and the voice of the Spirit. He will carry forward the configuration of his schools and of the religious congregation, then Order, with a clear vision of its unity and identity in the will of God manifested by the charism received, so that both the ministry and the community will be impregnated with this same "spirit". Finally, he will seek continuity through the formation of the new vocations that he wants to participate in the "Spirit" that God has given him, and he will defend until the end of his life the integrity of this whole (gift-institute-Order-formation) against adversaries, either with prayer, or with human means. But, above all, with the hope placed in God, who called him, and who, being faithful, He will be more so and will restore us.

The Calasanz Easter

The end of Calasanz' life is marked by the drama of the destruction of the Order, to which he has dedicated half of his life and which, in addition, was what God had asked of him.

It is a hard, almost cruel path of complete dispossession. But this path allows us Piarists to see Calasanz' finesse and coherence in his inner and outer life, as well as to adjust our perception of God's ways and to check his faithfulness.

Calasanz is clearly aware that they want to destroy his Order from an early age (Sc3302, March 1640) and that he has very powerful, visible and invisible enemies (for example in Sc4549, 4564, 4282s, 4285s, 4327, 4355 especially). He will give himself fully to the defense of the Order both internally: seeking calm, peace and obe-

Moderna, it is critical of intellectualism, favors simple and affective acts, the examination of conscience, familiarity with Jesus (for whom to love everyone), love for the cross of Christ. A meaningful appointment as an example: "*May you be deep within yourself and lord of yourself and have all things under you and be not you subject to anything, because you are lord of your works and master*"... "*the freedom of God's children, who have beneath themselves the present things and contemplate the eternal*" (book 3 Chapter XLIII).

dience, nourishing hope; as externally: writing memorials, seeking interviews and seeking the support of important people. But everything seemed decided. He receives the brief of destruction as a new Job⁴² with the difference that our Founder knows in whom he has placed his hope.

In all this time of passion, he does not deceive himself with Providence: he knows how to receive everything from the hands of God⁴³, but he also knows that decisions are full of human failures and evil intentions⁴⁴, although God draws good from evil (Sc4252). He wanted to die poor (Sc4433) and reduce the intentions to the pure love of God (Sc4445), and this is what God was doing in him, in this dispossession that, however, did not keep him passive: the love of God is manifested in the love of neighbor (Sc4495) and so he lived it until the last moment, supporting his brothers, particularly those of Central Europe (Sc4393, 4407, 4410...), and attentive to the children of the schools and to the concrete problems of each day, as the father of his children.

His faith that God will be our “Goel” or defender will remain intact⁴⁵ even as conditions worsen on the part of the Church. He will die with this faith without seeing restoration. Eight years later will come the “resurrection” of the Order. But Calasanz’ one was already in the minds and hearts of those who knew him. And it had to be a child, without false human respect, who “canonized” him by saying “the saint is dead”.

42 Even if he didn’t say Job’s thing.: “the Lord gave it to me, the Lord took it from me, blessed be the name of the Lord”, he did live it that way and there is no lack of allusions to Job (Sc3808, 4350, 4397). In this sense the reading of the comments by St. Gregory the Great to the book of Job (known as “Moralia” and recommended by Cordeses and by St. Teresa V5,8, book multi-volume that Calasanz read and is guessed in many of his expressions) undoubtedly prepared his heart.

43 Sc0265, 0380, 1468, 1537, 1627, 1869, 4205, 4397, which is the main cause Sc3877, it being our part to conform to God, but also prayer and human means (Vg. Sc3878).

44 Some examples: Sc4185, 4205, 4249.1, 4366, 4410s, 4471, even once he will say that we receive from the hands of God that “unfortunate brief” Sc2725.

45 Sc4195, 4336, 4337, 4345, 4433...

Proposal for the presentation of the content of the “spirit” that Calasanz wants for the piarists

Here I try to make a synthesis of the “spiritual landscape” that Calasanz proposes to his followers. I have previously tried to present a framework that helps us understand his own path in spirituality, his own history. This history cannot be repeated as it is in each of the followers, rather it is necessary to accompany the path of each one to be able to initiate him in the “Spirit that the Lord” has given to Calasanz (Sc3913). This “spirit”, then, I try to formulate it not by enunciating a series of aspects, which would lose the sense of the whole, but by connecting them with each other in order to perceive, I hope, the unity of the whole. That is why I do not start from the keys of the change in Calasanz, but precisely from the value that the “Holy Spirit” has for Calasanz, which will lead us to understand both the interior life of each religious, as well as the deep relationship he has with our ecclesial ministry and –in relation to it– with the community. This unity (interior life, ministry, and community) is important.

Given the connection of the various aspects of spirituality, the synthesis could be formulated in other ways, following a different but related order. What is important to emphasize here is that it does not seem possible to speak of a spirituality with its own entity without taking into account the strong interconnection of its different aspects and of these with the original experience.

Before talking about the means he uses, I will present the synthesis of Calasanzian spirituality in three sections:

- a) The voice of God is the voice of the Spirit
- b) The Perfect Charity
- c) Poor of the Mother of God

The voice of God is the voice of the Spirit⁴⁶

Something that may initially surprise a reader familiar with Calasanz' contemporary writings is the number of times he quotes the Holy Spirit, in addition to speaking generally of "spirit." Even –not without theological reasons– it sometimes occupies the place that we usually bestow on Christ, as for example when he quotes directly or indirectly Mt 18:20, he always speaks of the presence of the Spirit among us, he does not say of Christ Jesus.

Deep down it is about havint an attitude of ***obedience of faith*** to God who speaks to us by his Spirit, who guides our lives. The beginning of the constitutions is significant: "*In the Church of God and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Religious Institutions...*" (CC1). Calasanz sees in all the solid decisions of the Church a voice of the Holy Spirit, both in the approval of constitutions (Sc1840, 0237), or in other decisions (Sc3811, even dubious ones... for the Spirit also speaks there.)

Hence also his sense of ***Providence***⁴⁷: the Holy Spirit guides the vessel of the Church, and everything is for the good, we receive everything from the Eternal Father who loves us and knows what we need. Even –as I pointed out when talking about the "Easter" of Calasanz– knowing that many times what comes to us is unjust and negative, but living it in the trial will bear fruit both for personal salvation and for the good of all. This submission to God is born

46 I rely in a talk that I had to give some time ago after reviewing the use of the term "spirit" in Calasanz, as well as in the ASIAIN article in *Analecta* 76 (1996), pp. 243-264, framed in the end-of-millennium trilogy, titled: *La voz de Dios es voz de Espíritu que va y viene*.

47 Cf. Rom 8,28, Sc3910, 4252, and I quote here for its clarity Sc1673.1: "*As for our matter, we have to believe that God guides all things for his greater glory and our good although we, as weak and short in his things, sometimes have as adverse that which is useful to us and for convenient what is contrary to us, but let us guide the boat to H.D.M. and accept from his most holy hand everything that happens to us*".

of love and faith, although it is neither naïve nor passive: human means are set in motion until all possibility is exhausted. Ultimately, when “men fail,” trust in God is total.

If the Holy Spirit is the Father’s way of guiding the little vessel of the soul and of the Church, it is essential to discover what he wants to tell us, to be listening, and for this **silence**⁴⁸ and inner calm are decisive in the spiritual life (= according to the Spirit):” *“The voice of God is the voice of spirit that comes and goes, it touches the heart and passes; it is not known where it comes from or when it inspires; from where it matters much to always be attentive so that it does not come suddenly and pass without fruit”* (Sc0131).

This listening must be carried out in each person and in community.

Each one must be **attentive** to this voice, in silence, doing spiritual exercises (it usually refers to oral devotions that affectively elevate the spirit), also in dialogue with the formator or with the superior, who must listen thoroughly to try to discern the spirit that moves the person, the inner inclination or the passions that blind. Likewise, attention must be paid, and discerned which spirit moves the candidates (Sc0559) and the inner tendency that guides the Spirit in the novice (CC 16 and 23).

And, in Calasanz, listening to the voice of the Spirit **in** the midst of the **community** is particularly important. Discernment— as we will see later – is an important aspect of community and ministerial life, where it is about seeking what God wants. To this end, human means intermingle with the divine: we could say that, like education in school, discernment is done in the light of God and in the light of men⁴⁹. Here I emphasize only two aspects:

- listening to each and every one, even the last of the community⁵⁰, because the Holy Spirit speaks through the mouth of all;

48 He dedicates chapter VI of the constitutions to spaces, times and attitudes of silence.

49 Happy expression used in the Memorial to the Cardinal Tonti and that reflects an attitude of substance and form in the whole life of Calasanz.

50 Sc0132, 2581.1, 3198 and exhortation to superiors (note 138 of the *Declaración sobre Espiritualidad Calasancia*, 1969).

- and the illumination that the Holy Spirit offers to all when we gather in the name of Jesus⁵¹ (Calasanz will say, identifying it: seeking the greatest glory of God and usefulness of the students, or in perfect charity).

He invites us to ***ask for the gift of the Holy Spirit*** frequently, either in simple and spontaneous prayer, or in community invocation by praying the *Veni Creator*⁵². Calasanz himself will ask for it repeatedly in his letters as a greeting and wish⁵³. On this point, I cannot but agree with M.A. Asiain when he points out⁵⁴ that in speaking Calasanz of “spirit of...” it is not alien to the work of the Holy Spirit, there is a certain continuity, particularly noticeable when it comes to asking God for a spirit of: “suffering for Christ” (Sc0118), “helping the poor” (Sc0351), “of apostolic poverty” (Sc0727a, 0729), or when he speaks of little spirit or a great spirit⁵⁵.

In order to have these “spirits” and be guided by the Holy Spirit, a process of ***self-knowledge*** and purification is essential⁵⁶. The importance of this was reflected very well by Fr. Luis Padilla in his

51 Cf. Mt 18,20 in Sc0132, 0265, 0456, 0549, 1172, 2147, 2175, 2559.1, 2757, 2961, in contrast to the presence of “devil” in the midst of divided groups Sc2756.

52 Sc2038, 3486.1, 3502, 3534.

53 Sc0236, 3720, 3746, 3764, 3858, 3868, 3969, 4176, 4402; “May the Lord give (us) the spirit of... (for...)” about 40 times, at least.

54 In *Analecta* 76, o.c., footnote 43.

55 Sc0061, 0111, 0554, 0557, 0600, 1275, 1747. 2323.1 and Sc0073, 1246, 2163.1 respectively.

56 I refer briefly here to the **“Holy Fear of God”** that Calasanz explains clearly and briefly *“The fear of God, the principle of Wisdom, consists in always being very attentive not to do anything that is an offense of God and, since we are of a fragile nature, it is blessed that one who always remains in fear. We must all have it and always teach it to students”* Sc1931, interesting also Sc1558. However, in his letters he almost always refers (70 out of 97 citations) to school ministry, mostly to say it matters educate in the letters but even more so in the Fear of God. Only 21 of the 97 citations refer to religious, liturgy or superiors. He also points out that the motivation of love is better than that of fear. (Sc1277, 1432, 2104). From this we can infer that for Calasanz it has rather a pedagogical value. To deepen can serve the book of Rosalia HARO SAVATER, Sch.P., *El “Santo Temor de Dios” en San José de Calasanz*, Valence, 1987, in particular Chapter II in which she distinguishes the servile fear, the initial and the filial or Chapter III in which explains the “triple fence” of which Bishop Andrés Capilla speaks: fear of punishment, of losing beatitude and of displeasing the Lord (this is the subsidiary).

book *Intuitions of Calasanz on Piarist formation* when talking about the Piarist formative nucleus.

Indeed, if spirituality is life according to the Spirit, “*it is a good principle in the spiritual life that of one’s own knowledge and misery with which we are all born and the ingratitude that, after so many benefits, we have with God. And if you exercise in it... I assure you that you will eventually have as a reward in this life some knowledge of God. That it is such a great science that any particle of it surpasses all the human sciences... and the knowledge of God beatifies man according to the degree to which after knowledge it grows in divine love. I urge you to do so that every day the first thing is this study, after which the Lord will grant you all the other things that the world does not know either*” (Sc1339). It is about recognizing one’s own weakness, one’s own passions, interes, wounds, sin... that make us proud because we trust our own judgment touched by these realities. Discover the “crooked tendencies” of the soul, so that the inner inclination of the Spirit can be manifested and discerned. And this demands a child’s heart⁵⁷ that does not trust itself and always sets its eyes on God so as not to fall.

To overcome one’s own judgment is not to ignore it, but to put it in its place (Sc1127, 1919, among others), “to break one’s own judgment” is to subdue it from the knowledge of one’s own fragility and the freedom offered by trust in God. That is why he asks the superiors insistently to consult the communities⁵⁸, that they all say their “opinion”... dispassionately, with the key to decentralization: to seek the glory of God and the usefulness of others. In the end it is to follow Christ, who acted under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Lk 4:1,14) and had not come to do his will, but that of the Father (Jn 6:38 and CC99), so the religious find in the superior the figure of father (CC100) in whom they listen to Christ (C101). And it is understood that in this disposition, which is docility to the Spirit, to the Father and to Christ –following the Calasanctian statements– the other virtues are strengthened (CC99).

57 Mt 18,3-4, which Calasanz explains beautifully in Sc0912 and 4392.

58 Sc2972, 3327... Calasanz will insist on this consultation in general and also giving continuous touches of attention to some superiors to consult to the community or to specific religious, whether they are consultants or not, even a particular brother, as is the case with Marc’Antonio Corcioni (Sc2600.1, 2608.1.2664 among others).

This self-knowledge is a fundamental aspect of Calasanctian humility, the others –of which I will speak later– are the lowering to children (which also bears fruit of knowledge Sc1236) and minority (smallness before the world, linked particularly to poverty). Humility is born at the same time from the realization of one’s own weakness and trust in God (Sc0130, 2300 and CCII2). In the novitiate this formation to humility was key: one could not pass to the “letters” if before one did not have the adequate formation of the “spirit” of which Calasanz asked almost always for humility⁵⁹, the same as before granting the priestly ordination.

Self-knowledge entails knowing our ignorance, knowing the dangers, managing our affections and passions⁶⁰; it requires a solid personal accompaniment, in addition to the daily examinations of conscience, as well as the grace of God that illuminates our interior. The community also helps both through fraternal correction and through listening to each other.

From our own knowledge, and based on the discovery of the Love of God that overwhelms us, we are in a position to let ourselves be guided by the Holy Spirit and to cement love for our neighbor “as ourselves”,⁶¹ even more: like Jesus. Calasanz recalls that self-knowledge and humility are not an end in themselves, but lead to Perfect Charity because under the guidance of this same Spirit, *Religious Institutions tend to the perfection of charity as to their true end* (CC1), the ultimate end of the consecrated life and of the Christian life.

59 In this regard, Calasanz cites for training one very interesting text from Sancho of Santa Caterina, titled “Of humility” which is the ninth meditation of the second part of the *Esserciti spirituali atti a spogliare il religioso di ogni vano affetto*, book published in 1625. It is an analytical meditation that proposes several considerations, through pride and humility in ordinary life, completing it with the corresponding resolutions. Saving nuances of language, I think it retains formative interest.

60 He repeatedly warns against the passions that cloud judgment and he opposes them, along with serene reasoning, the search for the glory of God and the usefulness of our neighbor (who de-center of ourselves): Sc2125, 2183, 2774, 2829, 2909, 3279.

61 Who does not know and accept himself, can hardly love his neighbor: the “as yourself” is very wise. Self-knowledge is the basis of love... when we also look to God who is the one who lets us know that we are “kind”, the foundation is not in us but in Him. That “growing in divine love” of which Calasanz speaks, from this double knowing (himself and God), it is a gift.

The Perfect Charity

It is the ultimate goal of consecrated life and of the Christian life, for the fullness of the Law is in love. Jesus himself reminds it to the scribe (Mk 12:28-34) with the important nuance of uniting in a commandment the love of God and neighbor. This unity, together with the measure of love (“as I have loved you”), is the novelty of the Gospel. You love God by loving your brother, and you love your brother because you love God, for the pure love of God⁶².

And it is this **unity of love** that is called “perfect charity”, which St. Joseph Calasanz uses in parallel with “for the glory of God and the usefulness of our neighbor”⁶³, showing the continuity of meaning of both expressions. He will say, like St. Teresa and st. John’s first letter, that love of God is manifested by love of neighbor⁶⁴: “for in these circumstances each one must show the affection and charity he has towards his neighbor, in order to test the internal one they have towards God” (Sc4495, see also Sc 2859). The love of God is at

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- 62 It is perhaps not the place for an explanation, only to point out that this expression spoken in different ways is the usual one in Calasanz and in most of the saints. It can be understood in different ways, complementary to each other: we launch ourselves to love our brother, because we have been loved by God and he asks us to do so; for thus we respond to the love of God; and because we recognize the Lord in our brothers and sisters, thus being able to love them with a love fuller and freer, that contemplates them in their deepest identity as the image of Christ.
- 63 For example, unites these aspects in Sc4297 and 4116, but particularly in interpreting that being gathered “in the name of Jesus” is in perfect charity or for the glory of God and the usefulness of our neighbor, cf. quotations above around Mt 18:20.
- 64 St. Teresa says it clearly in the Moradas “*The most certain sign that, in my opinion, there is of whether we keep these two things, is to keep well the love of neighbor; because whether we love God cannot be known, although there are great indications to understand that we love him; but the love of neighbor, yes. And be sure that the more you are profited in this, the more you are profited in the love of God; for so great is that which his Majesty has for us, that in return for that which we have for our neighbor, he will increase that which we have for his Majesty in a thousand ways; in this I cannot doubt*”. (5M 3,8) (see also: 1M2,17 = 5M3,7), adding “*that if it is not born from the root of the love of God, we will not be able to have with perfection that of our neighbor*” (5M 3,9). In fact, in chapters 9 to 11 of the Way of Perfection, recommended by Calasanz and dedicated to prayer, it develops the “way of loving our neighbor”. Previously, it says that only three things count to grow in the life of prayer: love for one another, detachment from everything created and humility, the main virtue that embraces all of them (this is how it develops the book). In the fourth chapter of his first letter John expresses it masterfully.

the base of everything we do, it is what moves us and is the purpose, only from there is the radicality and cleanliness in the love of neighbor understood⁶⁵. We see it in this happy expression, speaking of love for relatives, but which can be extended to all: “*Love them with well-ordered love; and remain united to Christ the Lord, earner to live only for Him and to please Him alone*” (CC34).

The aforementioned number of constitutions is in the chapter dedicated to the separation of the world and I think it tells us today more about the root of **chastity** than the specific chapters (more focused on concrete aspects that favor it). It begins, in fact, with a beautiful text: “*the religious... considere addressed to him the exhortation... ‘Listen, daughter, look: forget your people and the parental house: captivated is the King of your beauty’*” (CC33) This, moreover, links with the foundation of the vows for the pure love of God (Sc4024), which purifies the mind and heart and brings us closer to children.

Thus, from the concept of *perfect charity*, it is understood that service to children is **service to Jesus Christ**, who is recognized particularly in the smallest and poorest⁶⁶, expressly quoting Mt 25:40 in the proem of the constitutions and in several letters (Sc2425.1, 2441, 2688, 2812, 3041, 3903, 4465, 4422.1, 4454.1...) of which I do not resist copying these two:

“He has introduced into our church the exercise of Christian doctrine for poor children, to whom, after having taught them, he says that they are given a small bread, which is easily found by whoever supplies it out of charity, and since this work is in the service of the poor, it must be very pleasing to God and meritorious to those who carry it out. On my part, I exhort Fr. Thomas to attend to this with all diligence, reviving the faith that tells us “quod uni ex minimis meis fecistis, mihi fecistis” Do that work for the pure love of God” (Sc3903).

“As for receiving poor students, you work holyly by admitting all those who go, because for them our Institute has been founded; that ‘what is done for them, is done for the Blessed Christ’, what is not said of the rich” (Sc2812).

65 A selection in this regard: Sc0591, 1892, 2843, 3042, 4024, 4445.

66 For whom it is chiefly our institute Sc1319 and 2434. Thus, God gives back to us what the poor cannot Sc2291.

In this sense we could speak of a very clear “principle of incarnation” in almost all aspects of Calasanz. It is not a question of theorizing or feeling, it is of being concrete in the love of God⁶⁷, who not only addresses his brothers and children, particularly poor, but also **seeks efficacy**. This note is not always taken into account, however I consider that part of our spirituality is the search for efficacy as a concretion of love.

Thus, the expression “utility of the neighbor” can be translated according to Latin usage also by efficacy. Good wishes are not enough, we must seek utility and with it efficiency. Thus, unlike other education theorists, Calasanz concentrates his efforts on what helps poor children in a practical way, because they do not have much time and need simple and effective methods⁶⁸ (CC216). Calasanz will defend this utility as a criterion even on the edge of the “politically incorrect”: “*the work of the Poor of the Mother of God of the Pious Schools, with an irreplaceable ministry in the common opinion of all (...) and perhaps the first for the reform of the corrupted customs of the world; a ministry which consists in the good education of boys, in as much as on it depends all the rest of the good or evil life of men (...) it will be favored and graced with the name –as it is in fact– of true and observant religious Order, name that so many others have received so far, perhaps not so useful and necessary...*” (Memorial to Cardinal Tonti)⁶⁹. This effectiveness is born of love for poor children and is

67 Also Calasanz –like St. Teresa– understands that God walks among the pots and pans, in a beautiful confession of his Sc1892.

68 “*Et quoniam tam in tradenda Grammatica, quam alia quavis scientia, ad discipulorum utilitatem plurimum confert, si aliquo facili, utili, et quoad fieri poterit, brevi modo Magistri omnes utantur, operae praetium erit, ut ex peritissimis, expertisque in hac materia viris, qui optimus fuerit, seligatur*”. CC216 The term “useful” is underlined motivated by the “usefulness” of the students, which is what produces profit, fruit, what can serve (in terms of the dictionary of the RAE), and that in Latin it can also be translated by useful, profitable, advantageous, healthy and effective.

69 Regarding how Calasanz considers that our ministry is “the most effective”, is also clarifying the note 255 of the cited book by Severino Giner, on p. 583. Also curious are the quotes from St. Teresa on the effectiveness of education, in an article of Domeño in *Analecta* 48, in reference to the number 2 of the constitutions of Calasanz when it says that, if children are “diligently imbued” in Piety and Letters, it is to be expected “a happy course of their whole life.”

also concretized in the way of organizing the school and the very formation of the Piarists, which avoids intellectualism and seeks the most practical and useful (including new methodologies)⁷⁰.

Perfect charity being a response to God's love through our brothers and sisters, this fontal love has no measure: ***even giving one's life***. It is, in fact, what identifies us as disciples (Jn 13:35 and 15:12) and this is received and learned in the Master's school⁷¹. It is not only about loving Jesus in children, but about loving ***like Jesus***: learning from Him to lower oneself and knowing how to suffer patiently for pure love of God⁷².

In his letters, Calasanz remarkably insists⁷³ on the importance of suffering for the Lord, both as a way of showing love from God, who suffered for our sins, and also in the sense of suffering now (purification) so as not to have to do so after death (influence of the spirituality of judgment already mentioned). It should be remembered that the meaning of mortification is not so much a "price" for our sins to be paid as the ascetic part of purification, the "deny yourself" of the Gospel (Mt 16:24) or the "dead to sin" of Paul (Rom 6:1-14). Thus, for Calasanz the example of Christ crucified allows us both to receive the difficulties and setbacks of life as part of our mortification, to give our lives for the love of God and our brothers and sisters. That is why he will ask to contemplate Him daily in order to know Him, imitate Him and remember Him frequently, and thus identify with Him.

It is noteworthy that Calasanz' vision of Christ Crucified is both realistic – it connects with both the everyday and the extraordinary in this being willing to suffer for God's sake – and positive, pointing out the goods and internal consolations that it entails, and recalling

70 It is still an "incarnate" aspect of the spirit that moves us. Consequence of this is the different perception people had of Jesuits and Piarists in the society of the eighteenth century, and not only in Spain.

71 Disciples of his school Sc0526, 2593. To dig deeper I suggest ASIAIN, M.A., *La imitación de Cristo bendito es el tesoro escondido encontrado por pocos...*, in Archivum 40, pp. 1-22.

72 Sc2336: imitate Christ – the door through which we enter – in his humility, also in Sc3888, 4381, 4521, 3303.

73 Sc1353, 1496, 2646, are some. In the moments of trial he will insist more and contrast with those that look for the easy.

what St. John of the Cross points out: there is no other way to enjoy divine goods. **To contemplate the passion** is to contemplate the love of God who has regenerated us at the price of his blood (an expression that he will use on more occasions such as when he will defend the dignity and right of the poor to education), and the fruit of this contemplation will be the willingness to love and suffer –in that love– for Christ. I let the word to the founder himself:

For the rest, it seems to me that God gives the religious, who does not lack food and clothing, a great opportunity to use intelligence in his own object that is the blessed Christ Crucified, in which there are infinite spiritual treasures hidden for those who abhor the tastes of the senses, and love those of the spirit. Let us pray to the Lord to give us the spirit and fervor to imitate Him as soon as possible. Sc2921

It is necessary that the religious feel in this pilgrim life, and that for him there is no other homeland than Heaven, where his father blessed Christ is, which has generated him with the shedding of his blood. Sc1510

And pray to the Lord, so give you the spirit to suffer something for Christ by giving back some of what he suffered for our love. Sc0081

None of the ancient philosophers knew true happiness and joy and, what is worse, few, if not very few, know it among Christians for having put it Christ, who is our teacher, on the cross, which although it seems to many in this life that it is very difficult to practice, nevertheless has within itself so many goods and internal consolations that advantage all the terrains and if it were not so, Fr. Dominic would not have persevered until death with his companion, who in a certain sense can be called martyrs for having given their lives for love of God in the service of their neighbor. Sc1662

But the true book in which we must all study is the Passion of Christ, which gives wisdom convenient to one's state. Sc1563

It is a lack of prayer, because if we delved into the passion of the blessed Christ with patience and perseverance, any mortification would seem very light to us and we would go looking for them, but self-love prevents us from doing so great good. Sc2646

In deep silence and tranquility of body and spirit... we will strive, following the example of St. Paul, to contemplate and imitate Christ crucified and the various steps of his life. CC35

Consistent with this centrality in prayer and meditation that leads us to imitate Christ and to return to him his love with ours, is the composition of the booklet *Some Mysteries of the Life and Passion of Christ Our Lord*, and its interest in children learning it so that, together with acts of faith, hope, humility, and contrition (“exercises...”) move their affections.

The Holy Spirit guides us to the perfection of Charity. It is manifested in Christ, whom we contemplate, imitate and love. And, by following Christ under the action of the Spirit, we not only lower ourselves out of love (Phil 2:2-11) to poor children, but, moved by this love, in this lowering we acquire a new identity.

Poor of the Mother of God

You will love venerable poverty, mother of exquisite humility and other virtues, as the strongest defense of our Congregation (CC137). If obedience strengthens the virtues, **poverty** engenders them.

For St. Joseph Calasanz, poverty did not refer only to the possession of the religious’s property, but also to the institution that was not to have anything of its own⁷⁴.

I believe that we can start from two keys to understanding the Piarist value of this original summa poverty: on the one hand, the founder’s own experience of disappropriation and, on the other, the ideal of the “apostolic life” as a Piarist way of life. And, at the bottom of these two keys, two motivations: the approach to poor children and the following of Christ poor⁷⁵.

As for the **disappropriation**, we have already explained what the Roman experience meant in Joseph Calasanz as a change of life. He

74 It is a concept and a key experience to understand Calasanz and his spirituality, hence I stop a little to try to facilitate its understanding beyond topics that, in my opinion, have done so much evil by hiding the background and distorting the form of the summa poverty.

75 The proem is eloquent in itself: “*And since we profess to be authentic Poor of the Mother of God, under no circumstances will we despise poor children*” (CC4), which places us in parallel with them before the Mother of God (“do not despise our pleas” of who we are “your poor”).

will stop looking for economic security to trust completely in God and his providence. From there the coherence of the sum poverty is understood: it does not accept to disguise institutional wealth as personal poverty; the extreme poverty entails not being able to have real estate (all the buildings and land or are in the name of the Church or the institutions that have offered them for our mission), nor fixed incomes (although it does accept –with realism– that if there are, they do not belong to us but that they are administered by the local authorities giving just enough to live, as alms)⁷⁶ in addition to not touching money (only who was authorized and under strong control). This also means identifying with the poor in suffering deprivation (CC137, Sc1272) and in being mendicants (humility and faith in Providence).

Life will show that it wasn't that easy... that the alms often did not arrive because also the people and the collaborators suffered serious deficiencies at some times. On the other hand, it seems reasonable that exceptions should be considered in the face of incomes, thinking above all of the houses of studies of our young people. But without ceasing to point out two things: the first is that Calasanz was realistic when looking for alternatives respecting the vow of extreme poverty⁷⁷; the second is that the consequences of extreme poverty have been exaggerated by attributing damages that do not withstand a comparative study (such as mortality, poor diet, poor care for the sick).

As for the **apostolic life**, it is an evangelical ideal⁷⁸, that of the “apostolic men” that Calasanz receives and expresses directly in the memorial to Cardinal Tonti: “*the reform of all Christianity through men of very poor and very simple apostolic life predicted by St. Vincent Ferrer*”. This one described them as follows: “pauper, very simple

76 Good analysis in the article by ASIAIN, M.A., *Acercamiento a una visión de la vida religiosa en tiempos de Calasanz*, in *Analecta* 46, pp.411-449. In my opinion, it would be necessary a more objective study of the discontent of the religious (not all or perhaps not even the majority) with the summa poverty. It is clear that a crisis of realism must lead to action, but I maintain the suspicion that the easier solution was sought.

77 Some examples: Sc 0032, 0039.1, 1958, 3581.1, 3681, 3616.1, 3854.3, 3997, 4275

78 Here I point out two articles that can bring the topic closer: GARCIA-DURAN, A., *Pobreza y humildad: la “kénosis” evangélica en el escolapio* in *Analecta* 63 and ASIAIN, M.A., *Espiritualidad apostólica escolapia* in *Analecta* 56.

and meek, humble... ardent charity... knowing but Jesus Christ and him crucified.” In this sense, this letter from Calasanz is eloquent:

“I will send the crucifix of Fr. Antonio Maria, which you should wear as your guide and authentic patent of the superiors, as the apostles did when they went to distant provinces to preach the Holy Gospel. And when you take with you the fewer things you carry with you, it is a sign that you will trust the crucifix more and the more things, the less; and if the Lord gave you that trust in him, he would do you great benefit and grace to do great good to your neighbor. (...) because the Lord wants his ministers to be apostolic, as true apostles or ambassadors of Him, and in this true trust then consists the effect of the fruit of the fatigues made out of love for Him”. (Sc1301)

Thus, the characteristics of these apostolic men go through the poverty and humility of which our habit is also an expression.

“And assure all that the further they turn away from property and imitate holy apostolic poverty, the richer they will be and the more favored in spiritual gifts of the blessed God. May he, by his mercy, be pleased to spread this spirit of apostolic poverty in all our religious. Amen. Amen. Amen. (Sc0727a)

I believe that this apostolic ideal can also express some aspects of how Calasanz understands and organizes the Order in relation to the models of the moment, given that the structure is called to express the charism.

Calasanz will speak of “mixed life” in the memorial to Cardinal Tonti itself, making a comparison that places the Order at the same time as contemplative and active⁷⁹. From there it is understood that Cala-

79 Although Cordeses wrote about “mixed life” (arguments in clear contrast with his Order that silenced it), it can be seen in Cristóbal de Fonseca (which was provincial of the Augustinians of Castile) in *Vida de Cristo nuestro Señor* (1596 and 1601) a reflection pretty much coinciding with the brief assessment of Calasanz in his memorial: “*melio rem partem; but after that we must confess that the mixed life, which consists of the occupation of the one and the other life is better: man it is composed of body and soul and the soul is the best part, but not better than all man: the active life is part and the contemplative life is part; mixed life is the whole*”. Also St. Teresa talks about Marta and María and how both are necessary. Calasanz will quote her talking about the exercises: “*so that Martha and Mary may be together*” (Sc2475).

sanz chooses the model of consecrated life of regular clergy: priests of an order with rules and solemn vows, with secular ministry but with greater freedom of movement and less community obligations. However, and I think this is important, if the structure of the Order is notably far from the monks, we cannot say the same about the mendicant orders: we live on almsgiving, we renounce all kinds of property, we are not –as I said– linked to the structures of the monasteries and these orders were considered, precisely, of “mixed life”. This, together with what was said above regarding the Capuchins as a reference for Calasanz in several aspects, makes us relativize the name of regular clerics. Calasanz will not hesitate to call our communities convents, in addition to organizing them physically in a similar way. Perhaps the most appropriate nuances that bring us closer to the regular clergy are: the apostolic inspiration, the search for reform, by which he repeatedly indicates that our “choir” is the schools⁸⁰ and the fact that he wishes the teachers to be priests as far as possible⁸¹.

For Calasanz these two virtues of the “poor of the Mother of God”, which are humility and poverty, **bring us** together with purity⁸² **closer to the poor children** to whom we dedicate ourselves. The fatigue of the school is the most natural mortification (denying oneself), and the love of the child is clothed at the same time with the love of Christ who lowers himself to the little ones (showing how to make us small with the little and poor with the poor Sc1236, 4135) and a father’s love⁸³ that welcomes cordially, but knows how to have the distance of respect that promotes the growth of children. Calasanz is concrete in the love of children and knows that the affec-

80 Sc2226, 2174, 2529.1, 2646. Even saying this, Calasanz organizes the community with solid schedule and dynamics, very far from the Jesuit model, for example. Eloquent in Sc2034 and 4125.1 10^o.

81 You can qualify my statements with the clarifying study that makes Fr. Ayala in his thesis, when speaking of the different regular clerics from the paragraphs 3.1.2 and 3.2.1.

82 Sc0016.

83 Sc0354, 1488, 2148, for example. Although it can be partially questioned depending on the value we assign to genetics or roles, I think would be good to delve into this role of “father” that helps to be more adult, consistent with be “cooperator of truth”, in so far as complementary to the “maternal” role (more emphasized by Calasanz with young children) which emphasizes affection and protection.

tive distance cannot be the same before the little ones as before the older ones... that's why he looks for "grandparent" teachers for the little ones and adult parents for the older ones. We could say more mothers or more fathers, depending on the case.

The name Mary appears in one way or another in most religious congregations, but rarely the title of "**Mother of God**", which Calasanz himself chose also for his name of religion. Although it would enter into the speculative, it is possible to think that this maternal aspect is the key that led Calasanz to choose the name, because he highlights her gentleness, her role as educator of Jesus and the shelter and protection of the poor of which we are part⁸⁴. The latter is manifested in the prayer with which he used to close the liturgical acts, the oldest Marian prayer, dedicated precisely to the Mother of God long before the corresponding dogma.

I point this out because it is precisely these Marian aspects that Calasanz wants to see reflected in the religious, I repeat them: gentleness, educators of the Lord whom we recognize in poor children, and shelter and protection of the poor (as Calasanz formulated his vocation, from Psalm 9⁸⁵). It is not surprising, then, that we Piarists also consecrate ourselves to Mary, for our vocation would have in this sense some Marian presence in the Church before children⁸⁶.

Mary as the shelter and protection of the Church is often represented in prayer with the Apostles, waiting for the gift of the Spirit. In the Gospels also the name of Mary represents the community. The poor of the Mother of God contemplate the reality of the poor and, with Mary, sing in the Magnificat the action of God of which they

84 Interesting is the reflection of Fr. Severino Giner indicating that our title of poor does not refer only to the summa poverty but particularly to the relationship of trust in the Mother of God, quoting Sc0058. Cf. GINER, S., o.c., p.570. Calasanz also recalls this title of poor of the Mother of God alluding to to have no other affection than the glory of God and the usefulness of one's neighbor and therefore to risk one's life Sc1601.

85 Calasanz quote is 9B (10), 14; but at the end of his life it can be also identified with verses 17-18 in which the Lord *Defends the right of the orphan and the oppressed*, reminding us with her action of what Mary also proclaims in the Magnificat.

86 Again a more documented reflection appears in section 8 of the thesis of Fr. Ángel Ayala.

are cooperators. In order for this cooperation to be real, they are a community listening to the voice of God, so that they can then say their own “Let it be done.”

For Calasanz this discernment, as we said, is very important and brings the community together at least twice a week, one of them with respect to schools. He pointed out that this discernment is made in the light of men and that of God, trusting that the presence of the Holy Spirit can not only speak through each member of the community, but be experienced as an effective presence in the midst of the community⁸⁷. This is also how the Piarist community is the subject and guarantee of the mission. Calasanz will offer very concrete keys to this discernment in community, which connect the human with the divine: to look to the common good or to seek the glory of God and the usefulness of one’s neighbor; he listens to all the brothers without despising any⁸⁸; dispassionate, clear, brief and reasoned speech; pondering everything together seeking agreement; to know how to postpone if there is no agreement, through prayer and –only if necessary– to reach the vote.

The community, finally, is concrete in its love for children through formation, either in adapted methodologies (particularly abacus and grammar), or in cases of conscience or even in the liturgy. I point out it here because in our identity as “poor of the Mother of God of the Pious Schools” formation was a response born of love –which seeks effectiveness– and humility –which recognizes ignorance– and which occupied an important part of the time of the community.

The Mediations of the Spiritual Life

Our Holy Father was a person with a strong practical sense, his thing is not to theorize but to act, to accompany, to organize, to propose solutions, in a concrete and, sometimes, surprisingly de-

87 Here we can glimpse a Marian resonance, in the community as the Temple of the Holy Spirit.

88 Sc0132, 0993, 3198 and exhortation to superiors in note 138 of the Declaration on Calasanctian Spirituality of the Special General Chapter of 1969, source also of what follows. On dispassionate reasoning you can also read Sc1958 and 2774. Also about postponing and praying to Mary Sc0361.

tailed way. In life according to the Spirit it could not be otherwise. He organizes the life of the community so that so-called “acts of piety” and other occasions are guaranteed and so the community can maintain the spirit and grow in the spirit.

He attaches great importance to the fulfillment of these acts, otherwise the community would relax. Hence, he asks for them even if there are only two in community (Sc1818 and 2122).

The first thing is a community schedule that marks the times to the smallest detail, so it was with the initial community of 1604, both school and house (Sc0007.05), and much more in the religious community as defined in the *Common Rites* in 1628, where it is said “so as not to waste a minute of time”⁸⁹. For Calasanz time is lived in the will of God because everything is for his glory and usefulness of the neighbor, to lose it if it is not sin is approaching.

Among the details that affect life according to the Spirit I point out the following:

- **Silence**, which allows us to hear the voice of the Spirit and which, at the same time, avoids vain if not negative conversations. It could be said that silence is characteristic of the whole day, except for prayers, listening to reading in the dining room and interventions –always ordered and with a clear purpose– both in “recreation” and in community meetings.
- **Vocal prayers** as an elevation of affection and soul to God, at various times of the day, some with children. They are often like ejaculatories, also the so-called “spiritual exercises” (or “acts”) that not only children but also religious (and the crown, litanies, rosary) did. It is important to understand that it does not seek a mere recitation of vocal prayers but, through these, the affections for the Lord are raised. I want to highlight here the first, Psalm 83 (84), when the religious rose: it is a declaration of the heart, a recognition that helps to lift the spirit and contemplate the day as a “holy journey” or pilgrimage in which the moors can flourish thanks to those who walk in the presence of

89 Sc0911.1 in c. 12 when speaking of the time after the afternoon classes.

God and set their sights on destiny, so important for Calasanz when it comes to sustaining hope and joy.

- In the **room** the religious are invited to do the aforementioned “acts” of faith, hope, charity, humility and contrition to elevate the soul through affections as well as to have an interior dialogue with the Holy Spirit and the Guardian Angel⁹⁰, or to read spiritual **books**, which he himself recommends in many cases⁹¹.
- Within the vocal prayer there is no lack of **intercessions**, usually the same of the crown of the twelve stars (Catholic Church, propagation of the faith, unity of Christians -Catholic triumph-, peace in the world and Pious Schools), but also for concrete causes, needs, which can be read frequently in his letters. Intercession is a way of praying thinking about the good of others, it puts us in love and in a way that is considered useful, because it starts from the faith that God is the ultimate actor.
- **Daily common** readings of the Bible, Martyrology, Holy Doctors, lives of Saints... in the time of the meal, which later served as conversation and formation in the times of recreation.
- **Meditate**, particularly the **passion** of Christ⁹². They have an hour of meditation in the morning and a half in the evening. The practice of an organized, methodical and regulated meditation spread with *Modern Devotio*, as we have already said, and was further enriched in the Tridentine post-Council. Calasanz defines a scheme, common to other institutions but perhaps with some particular accent, and a five-part structure:

90 Sc3858, 3672, 3673...

91 We cannot quote all here, although I would highlight the *Path of perfection*, the *Imitation of Christ* (the most cited) and the book of Fr. Sancho. I will say that there was a daily time designated for the personal reading of spiritual books and that each religious had a book assigned for a time (in the common rites and Sc3898).

92 Cf. CC44 and Sc0911.1 in c. 2. I recommend reading the n° 22 of CUBELLS, F., *Estudios Calasancios*, Veracruz, 2011, pp. 84-87. As for the methodology is interesting also the reading of Sc2974.

- Remote preparation (avoid what harms...) and close (become aware of who I am addressing and who I am... it reminds us of what St. Teresa said about the fact that mental prayer is not separated from the vocal prayer if when reciting the *Lord's Prayer* I think about who I am, who I am addressing and what I say)
 - Composition of place (in which imagination is important)
 - Petition (what I want to ask of God as fruit)
 - Points of meditation or matter (the intellect moves the affections –not speculation– such as thanksgiving, compassion, joy, hope, conformity with the will of God and imitation of Christ).
 - Colloquium (which includes worship, thanksgiving, and offering)
- If the principle of spirituality is one's own knowledge, there could not be a lack **of the examination of conscience**, which they did twice a day, for a few minutes: to thank God, to ask for light to know the faults, to examine recognizing particularly the defects to which we are most inclined, to ask for forgiveness in order to be more careful, to be grateful to be able to be instruments of God and to seek adequate penance.
 - In the self-denial that they call "**mortifications**" appear the interruptions of the meal remembering the passion of Christ, the disciplines appear in common three days a week, but also the awareness of Calasanz that the true mortifications are those of life, both in the lay world and in our ministry (for example Sc0926, 1661, 2646).
 - On Fridays **the Chapter of faults** took place, in which each religious could accuse himself and receive the corresponding penance. The superior and another custodian could also say something that seemed notorious, but the religious were asked not to act as guards or judges. Here there is part of one's own knowledge, humility, the possibility of fraternal correction and avoiding a harsher judgment at the end of life.

- The importance of the **sacraments**, both frequent confession and particularly the Eucharist to which our Founder gives great value in the sacrificial line, as an “embassy” to the Holy Trinity. He wanted a more frequent communion than usual at the time, on the part of both the religious and the students. The value placed on communion was so high that they sought a solid preparation to receive it and devoted a good time of prayer and subsequent gratitude. Calasanz speaks with some frequency of how to celebrate Mass⁹³, just as he asks to expose the Blessed Sacrament in situations of need⁹⁴.
- As we indicated above, the Piarist **ministry itself** is also a path of spiritual life: it specifies in Sc1333 that the humility of our ministry is a sure way of salvation, and as we said “supplants the choir”, not insofar as it is dispensable, but insofar as the ministry takes precedence at some times (Sc2174).
- There was also a **Prefect** of spiritual things in the community⁹⁵ who also facilitates personalized spiritual **accompaniment**.
- **Community**, finally, is mediation as seen in the common rites, both by praying in common by accompanying meditation and other common acts of piety, and by the community meetings themselves, to which we have already alluded, as an area in which to seek the will of God thanks to the presence of the Holy Spirit in the midst of the community and listening to each brother.

In time many of these mediations have changed, in some cases, as in liturgical prayer or *Lectio divina*, we believe that for the better, in oth-

93 Sc0911.1 c18 and 19 in common rites, in letters 0453, 0459, 0604, 1201, 1350, 1452, 2128, 2226, 3459, 3669, 3683, 3706.

94 For example, Sc1060, 1086, to ask for peace.

95 Common Rites Sc0911.1 chap. 25: *To the Prefect of spiritual things belongs to teach everyone how to do prayer well, to discover the temptations of the Demons and overcome them, to restrain the impetus of the passions, to comfort all, to relieve the afflicted and to succor with words and prayers those who come to him. Only to this should give an account of conscience weekly and one by one all those in the house, and more often if there is a need.* Also Sc1385, 1392, 3050.

ers, they have rather left a void that would need to be rethought, as for example happens with the chapter of faults that disappeared possibly due to rejection of degenerate ways of it, not being recoverable. It was tried to replace it with the “revisions of life” and currently there is no established mode of exercise of fraternal correction, something that is a basic part of the life of the Christian community⁹⁶.

96 A glimpse of how all of this has evolved can be seen in RODRIGUEZ ESPEJO, M., *Evolución legal de los elementos que conforman la vida espiritual del escolapio* in *Analecta* 59, pp.189ss.

Spiritual formation in the Pious Schools of that time

Spiritual formation took place mainly in the novitiate, particularly the first year. Indeed, those who came from our schools had already acquired some good habits (vocal prayer, affective, daily mass, daily examination of conscience) with their corresponding fruits, and after the novitiate a certain accompaniment and formation continued, as has been pointed out to a large extent. Here I try to focus on this first year of novitiate and its objectives⁹⁷.

I think it is important to point out that it was first and foremost a **process**, with some fairly definite moments and with the relevant discernments before each step.

It is also important to have the background framework, the **purpose** is always to acquire “perfect charity”⁹⁸ under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. I point this out, because if we do not keep it in

97 Although I rely directly on Calasanz’s writings, I quote here two articles about it: CORONA, C.F., *El noviciado que deseó Calasanz para sus hijos* in *Analecta* 63 (1990), in my opinion quite well founded, with a historical introduction and an assessment of the process, in addition to frequent quotes from texts by Calasanz. The second is from CARBÓ, G., *Itinerario de la formación espiritual y ministerial del educador escolapio según las constituciones de Calasanz* in *Analecta* 65 (1991), in which he makes a clear synthesis of what is stated in the constitutions and underlines the sense of initiation he had and the steps of discernment; in my opinion, some aspects of the purgative route would need to be qualified and there would be plenty of speculation about the Christological sense and about the *Lectio divina* (to which I think evident that Calasanz does not allude, although the scheme of meditation resembles).

98 Or “fullness of charity” as they translate into Spanish, in my opinion very aptly.

mind, we can “lose the north” and misinterpret what is said during the process⁹⁹.

In order to reach the aforementioned end, the first **part** of the process is **kenotic**: of denial of oneself following the way of Jesus, to be configured with Him in full obedience to the Father¹⁰⁰, that is, in full disposition to the Holy Spirit.

Before, to point out that the young man who asked to be a Piarist should be examined and the community had to intuit, at least, that he was guided by the Holy Spirit in his request, with information from the people close to the candidate; then he spent a short time as a guest for mutual knowledge, being able, after a new discernment of the community, enter the novitiate¹⁰¹.

In addition to the community, which participates fully in discernment¹⁰², the master is more decisive in this service than the place¹⁰³. He was to guide the novices by distinguishing their inner inclination, with prudence, wisdom, experience and example, towards the fullness of the virtues (CC19 and 23), being also their confessor. When they finish the novitiate, or even earlier in certain cases, for at least three years, they have a similar follow-up with the prefect of spiritual matters (Sc. 1385, 1392).

I point out, below, several aspects that help us understand this kenotic part that can also be assimilated with the so-called purgative pathway:

99 Thus some new congregations have been intervened by abuse of authority, confusing self-denial with inhuman submission and, of course, not Christian.

100 In achieved expression of C.F. Corona. I invite you to read, in this regard: Mt 16:24-25, the call to deny oneself and know how to deliver his life and particularly Flp 2,5-8, where St. Paul asks them to have “the same feelings as Christ”, that was stripped away of himself lowering to a death on the cross.

101 CC16 and 17. Not having fold ni simulación was an important condition Sc1567.

102 With quarterly or semi-annual scrutiny, not just at the end (Sc1540, 1541, 1542, 2685), to be finally semi-annual in the declarations to the constitutions (Sc2655.1). Because it is better few than many and relaxed (Sc1258, 1540...).

103 Sc1007; *Cum ad regularem* (1603) already pointed out the conditions of the place and the teacher, as well as some practical aspects of the novitiate house, separation of novices from professed ones, spiritual reading and writing activities, body exercises, vocal prayer and meditation twice a day, Mass and daily examination of conscience.

- Basically, it is a process of mutual knowledge and, above all, of one's own knowledge on the part of the novice, which we already point out as the principle of the spiritual life. The fruit of this knowledge arises the recognition of one's own misery and learning to renounce one's own impulses and interests (denying oneself) in order to trust in God, that is, to accept the guidance of the Spirit. This self-denial is an ascetic effort that will progressively lead to a freer inner disposition before God, before his will, and before his brothers and sisters¹⁰⁴.
- It implies, therefore, a deep knowledge and a diagnosis of the crooked tendencies that nest in the heart (CC16);¹⁰⁵ discover also the most frequent temptations by seeking a remedy for them (linked to one's own desires) (CC26)
- The novice will have to learn to break one's own will and one's own thinking (self-denial) in a long process of testing, so that he learns to be "very simple" (S22)¹⁰⁶.
- For this they use positive means, prayer, reading, meditation...¹⁰⁷ and negative means such as corrections, the chapter on faults and mortifications¹⁰⁸ (CC21).
- It is important to understand all this in the context of the struggle between flesh and spirit (Sc10.2 and 10.3) and, humanly speaking, also between reason and passion, very Calasanctian insistence (Sc2909, 4383, 4391.1).

104 *I desire that our novices generously despise the century and all that is in it; and even more, let them throw themselves jubilantly into the arms of divine providence; that, as soon as they have reached a little of this level, they will be prepared to deal without any danger with all kinds of people.* (Sc0941).

105 A good, more concrete description can be seen in two texts on the "true religious": Sc0010.2 and 0010.3.

106 In this test, the novice must be ready for correction, with charity; but if it is not corrected, it is better to expel him than to force the situation (Sc2565, 1386, 1612).

107 Teach him how to pray, subdue the will and self-love... Sc3801 and also 3781, 3928, 4121.

108 Among the examples of mortifications Calasanz points out: wearing older clothes, doing low services, modesty of sight, silence. At other times, for the religious, mortifications are cited that today would not make sense. It's about getting down and learning to do it with enough freedom of heart.

- With all this, an advance in humility is expected, the novice gets to know himself and discovers how much he is wrong, how the passions frequently guide him and that if he is not willing to lose his opinion and feel, he cannot be guided by the Spirit. An aid to advance in humility was the book, already cited above, by Sancio di Santa Caterina, especially the meditation 9 of the second part on humility (Sc1541, 1838...). Recommended.

This part of the process alludes to the first four sentences that Calasanz offered to the first novice master (Pedro Casani)¹⁰⁹.

The process continues with the discernment of the deep tendency or orientation of the Holy Spirit (CC23), which we can easily counter with the “crooked tendencies” diagnosed above.

It is important to clarify a couple of aspects that can help us avoid an obscurantist vision of what this ascetic process of the first year of the novitiate entails:

1. It is not a question of seeking a simple “submission” from the person who enters to be a Piarist religious. It is he who must learn to subdue his passions and to doubt his impulses and even reasoning, and be free enough to welcome the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in a deep attitude of listening, as well as the mediations of obedience (superiors and community). In fact, this denial of self will allow him to offer his own opinion in the different consultations and community meetings in a dispassionate way, and listen to the opinions or inspirations of others. Something that Calasanz emphasizes reiteratedly as we have already said: telling the superiors to always consult, and explaining the way to discern in the community. Thus, to deny oneself, to lower oneself, is not to annul oneself, but an act of freedom¹¹⁰ based on faith and love for God.
2. Calasanz wants humble novices, it is what he asks most when talking about them as when talking about those who are going

109 They can be read in the article cited from CORONA in *Analecta* 63, in addition to BAU’s critical biography. Matches the content of the sentences largely with those of the “rules for those who walk according to the Spirit” (Sc0015.1).

110 The freedom that the rich young man of the Gospel (Mk 10) did not have.

to be ordained. Humility is part of knowing oneself, it is a sense of reality. But this humility cannot be confused with certain pietistic, tritonic and even degrading images. Calasanz enjoyed seeing “healthy and cheerful” novices¹¹¹.

From discovering the “deep tendency” or orientation of the Holy Spirit, the novice learns to open his mind and heart to it, and thus grow in the virtues, especially in charity. Perfect charity is the goal: to grow in love for God by being concrete through love for the brothers in the community and for children in school (effectively and for pure love of God, as already said). Thus the second group of four sentences of Calasanz on the novitiate is oriented precisely to charity (to pity instead of judging, to be like a mother, to rejoice in the good of the brothers, to love everyone equally).

Consequently, once he has advanced in the Spirit as it is said, the novice in his second year may devote part of his time to the studies that will enable him to be a teacher of the children¹¹². He can not yet be an official teacher or replace another, but –we would say today– do internships. The studies were directly practical, on calligraphy, reading, abacus and, at the time, Latin, as well as how to teach it. He avoided any temptation of intellectualism or speculation: what moves us is the concrete love of the child, not of science or wisdom, hence also the search for simplicity and effectiveness. That is why humility and concrete charity are a good and necessary starting point.

After these two years in which the novice has learned to detach himself from his desires, passions, own opinion... then he can also detach himself from all his goods and be received into the Order of the Poor of the Mother of God as total poor (CC2).

111 Sc0638. Calasanz frequently invites to joy. It has more merit to do things with joy (Sc0035, 0091, 1144, 1148, 1360, 1672, 2104), even suffer with joy (Sc1468), joy comes when the Lord is served (Sc1565, 1896, 2115) and when we look to the prize that awaits us for caring for poor children (Sc0196, 2065), that look at “Paradise” (which reminds us of St. Philip Neri) is frequent and from the morning it is already promoted with the recitation of Psalm 83. He has particular value when he invites joy in the hard years of the end of his life: continue on mission happily, also because God will put an end to these evils (Sc3889, 4020, 4336, 4342, 4444).

112 First the spirit and then the letters (Sc4120, 4126). And to grow the talents received from God (Sc1342).

Subsequently the following three years they continued their spiritual formation, as has been said, with the corresponding prefect, and their studies according to their talent. Initially two in each community (Sc1267, 1275, 1283, 1525, 1702) until there was a house of studies or humanities (Sc0613, 1543...).

In the community, as already pointed out above, training is continued in various aspects: literature, teaching methods, some specific subject such as grammar, abacus or sciences, books of spirituality (always one assigned), cases of consciousness and talk about things of spiritual benefit in recreation, as well as the accompaniment above all of the superior and the spiritual prefect. The spiritual exercises are not lacking: twice a year, before Easter and before All the Saints, ending with the renewal of vows (CC211, Sc0536, and exercises also when people need them Sc0909, 2234.1).

Comprehensive assessment

I want to make a brief assessment of Calasanzian spirituality in the context in which it develops, an assessment that helps us to situate ourselves in the face of an updated proposal today of Piarist spirituality.

Calasanz drinks from the abundant and rich sources of his time, which we have been pointing out. He takes advantage of everything that God has put in his way, with balance and with the ability to offer a coherent experience: it is not a sum of spiritual aspects. Coherence is offered by his own personal experience of encounter with the Lord in the poor child and translates into the basic elements of all spirituality reorganized from our ministry (“choir”, serving the Lord, reform, mortification, lowering...) and with the corresponding transversal of poverty and humility.

It is a spiritual life of a more balanced conception: providential but not providentialist (he knows from whom decisions and events come and that in itself they are sometimes bad, but he knows how to receive them from the hand of God; in addition, he does his part in what he can), lives the “ora et labora” as love for God and has no problem in placing the ministry at the level of the “choir”; it is an incarnate spirituality, children are at the center of the Piarist spiritual life and we could even say that it has, in a certain way, a kingdom-centric vision: he recognizes with joy the conversions of Protestants, but receives everyone, Jews and Protestants, without demanding conversion, from the love of the Lord in all, for the reform of the society and the Church. He is balanced even in his relationship with the Inquisition that looks from a deep sense of obedience as an instrument of God, but does not cease to relate to people doubtful or persecuted by certain sectors of the Inquisition,

recognizing their value¹¹³. We would like to give more examples, such as his positive assessment of the Jesuits, being fully aware of their action contrary to us in many cases, or their position in the trials, particularly that of the worker clerics.

Part of¹¹⁴ Calasanz' balance is the relationship between asceticism and mysticism: the purification of the mind and heart is not only due to the effort of one's own knowledge or to the control of passions and thoughts, it is also a gift of the Holy Spirit, present in the community when one seeks to live perfect charity, and also the fruit of dedication to children, serving the Lord who gives his knowledge as a gift to those who know how to live and give themselves in this way.

However, in spirituality in its time there are also limitations by excess or by default. It is important to keep this in mind because it is not about blindly imitating, but about following. Calasanz knew how to search, recognize and respond at the time. Follow-up requires a similar open attitude, distinguishing the nuclear from the accessory. Among these limitations we can indicate the following:

- An excessively judicial conception of God is maintained, in which the filial Fear of God is accessed more from the fear of judgment than from the discovery of God's love and mercy. The fear of judgment, the "payment" for our sins... they are repeatedly present not only in texts of his time,

113 Despite his positive outlook (Sc2577), in addition to what is known in notorious figures such as Galileo or Campanella, we have the case of saying about Abbot del Bosco, taken in Castel Santangelo, he is a great man; is also the surprising case of Fr. Gaspar who led the defense of the Cardinal's Tonti inheritance with a lot of professionalism and was persecuted and imprisoned by the Holy Office, without apparent cause (Fr. Giner searched the archives of the Holy Office and there was no accusation), before which Calasanz –supporting him– acts with extreme prudence and silence (Sc2338, 2493, 2496, 2568.1, 2588, 3643, 3706, 3777...).

114 It is important to underline that we speak of balance as a virtue, not as a mediocre calculation. Calasanz has clarity in his ideas and is thoughtful and realistic, while remaining radical. It is perceived, for example, in his sense of the truth that contrasts with that of his time. He has no difficulty in uniting the light of God and that of men, instead of confronting them, and this not only in the memorial to the Cardinal Tonti, but throughout his life and in the formators chosen for the Piarists. His educational and truth vision can be considered more that of an pre-illustrated than that of a Baroque reformer.

but in his own letters, even though Calasanz focused his life on the love of God and on the love to God, trusting in his protection and mercy¹¹⁵.

- The liturgy of the hours is prayed particularly by the religious, leaving for the common acts other types of vocal prayers. Partly by praying with the students (at times), partly by the difficulties of the simplest brothers¹¹⁶. The time spent on vocal prayers, almost endless, is great.
- The Eucharist has an undoubted sacrificial value, but neither its pastoral nor the community value appears. Even Eucharistic communion, though Calasanz places it more frequently than usual in its context, is not everyday.
- Access to Sacred Scripture was limited in its time and the suspicions that this generated lead to be very prudent. There was a mediocre, if not bad, biblical formation¹¹⁷ that is now unjustifiable. Although it was read daily at Mass and in the dining room and Calasanz frequently quotes the scriptures, the Gospel did not have the centrality that it claims today.

I would also like to point out two aspects in which Calasanz points to the future, in my opinion. The first is the value given to community and communion (*koinonia*), noted above. It is perceived more in his letters and in his writings to superiors than in constitutions. It is a solid, coherent and defined thought. Listening to the community as listening to the voice of the Spirit is key, and systematically asks the superior to communicate with the community. The unity of the community is a decisive part of their concerns and exhortations to the end, as a key to God's presence and apostolic success.

The second is his experience and vision of spirituality with some characteristics close to the current spirituality of liberation, evi-

115 Although sometimes traces of judgment and negativity appear, it is far from the pessimism of the time, and of the melancholy that we said (cf. unpublished article by Fr. Ferrer pointed out previously).

116 It seems to be a "memory" left after the union with the Luqueses.

117 Calasanz acknowledges this in a letter: *Because I am sure that some young heretics, versed in their mistakes, will go to schools as students, and make fun of our own who do not understand Sacred Scripture.* (Sc1673.1).

dently without being able to identify them. Among them: the “irruption of the poor” as a key to conversion that makes us poor and leads us to opt for them that is an option for the people in general (option for God in the poor, encounter with Christ in the poor), conceive liberation as an integral process (Calasanz will say of the slavery of sin and ignorance¹¹⁸), the defense of the poor at the price almost of blood, the gratuitousness of our action with a strong sense of effectiveness, a strong sense of joy and hope in the midst of suffering, values of spiritual childhood from and for poverty and a certain kingdom centrism. Further away from this spirituality is the way of assuming conflict or prophecy, the struggle for justice as a process accompanied by the Spirit of God, the relationship with politics (as high charity), or biblical historical exegesis, particularly the historical Jesus¹¹⁹. These were not times for it.

118 Still aware of those who do not want the education of poor children, Calasanz doesn't make a reading in code oppressors/oppressed. Oppression is marked – for all: rich and poor– sin and ignorance. There is no lack of truth in this reading of the human background. They were not then times to talk about structures of sin and rarely for a reading of social, economic and political reality in that key.

119 In this regard you can read, for example: GUTIERREZ, G., *Drinking in your own well*, 1983, the introduction to the book and the corresponding article and Concilium, or the book of CASALDÁLIGA, P. AND VIGIL, J.M., *Spirituality of liberation*, 1992. More summarized the article of C. MACCISE in the *Nuevo Diccionario de Espiritualidad*, Madrid 1983, pp. 810-817 entitled *Espiritualidad de la liberación*.

SECTION TWO

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE PIARISTS TODAY

In communion with the church: accents needed today

As I indicated in the presentation, fidelity to our time is also fidelity to our Holy Father, a person attentive to the signs of the times and to the spiritualities of his epoch, a person attentive to the voice of the Church. As his children, we too are attentive to what the Spirit moves today in the Church and to what the Church asks of us through her authoritative voices, as part of our Piarist spirituality.

We can speak of three moments in this path of spiritual “aggiornamento”:

1. The **twentieth century**, before the Council, was a very **turbulent** century, with two world wars, the Russian revolution and the definitive fall of the “Christian Republic”, to use a term from the Calasanz era. But it was also a time of deepening the Christian and spiritual experience from the reading of what happened, with advances in theology, philosophy and the human sciences, and the emergence of new experiences and sensibilities driven by the Spirit. The originality of each person is highlighted, the value of the Word of God in the Christian life is rediscovered and, in various new experiences of spirituality, the community dimension on the way to holiness breaks with the individual drift. Anthropological language is also introduced into the spiritual language seeking to harmonize the different dimensions of the person and his process¹²⁰. It emphasizes the concept of “experi-

120 So it happens with psychology, the need for meaning, the fundamental choice, the stages in maturity.

ence of God” in contrast to fideism and doctrinarism and breaks the opposition between spirituality and worldly, earthly experience, rediscovering daily life and transformative commitment as a privileged place of experience of God, especially in the encounter with poverty and the dramas of humanity.

2. The **Second Vatican Council** takes up all these movements in its attempt to give a response to a tense and accelerated world that requires a new mode of ecclesial presence. Thus, it begins with a “return to the sources” of Spirituality, highlighting the value of the Word of God, the liturgy, the community and the mission. It underlines the role of the Holy Spirit in guiding the Church, his voice can be heard through the signs of the times, making history and earthly commitment a place of experience of God, of cooperation with the Reign of God.
3. Finally, **the Church continued to speak** to the various charismatic institutes after the Council, particularly through the Popes, synod of Consecrated Life and documents of the corresponding dicastery. The invitation to be a school of prayer and communion stands out, to have a community that is more open, that share experience and charism, to develop an authentic spirituality of communion, to start directly from the Gospel in the renewal of institutes, to give particular value to *Lectio Divina* and, lately above all, to have an attitude of “being on the way out” towards the “existential peripheries”, towards those who do not count in society. Without forgetting the ecological dimension of the Gospel and, with it, of spirituality.

In a way, we could say that all this is framed in a richest vision of man, which describes the person as a relational being, who does not exist by himself but forming part of a series of relationships that constitute him, that are part of him. This entails a fundamental decision, a fundamental option: to live these relationships from self-referentiality or from love and surrender. Thus, the relationship with God is not alien to our being and identity, the same the relationship with others human beings, society, history... and with nature. We are part of these realities and they are part of us. From there “piety” makes even greater sense, as we said before, because it is the “fundamental option” that moves us: “love committed to those (and that) of which we are part”. In Christ Jesus these relationships are restored, it is in

Him that we re-link (re-ligare), this is also how Perfect Charity makes sense uniting in the Love of God (and to God) to all other loves.

To be concrete, I try to present a synthesis of the most basic aspects that today the Spirit seems to show us as a way, or as accents in our spiritual path responding to the challenges of the moment¹²¹:

- a) The Holy Spirit: he has always been at the bottom of spirituality, but it could be said that the Second Vatican Council has recovered in its language the figure of the Spirit who guides the Church and the history of humanity itself in the direction of the “Project” of God, of the Kingdom of Heaven. Its leading role is revealed not only in the documents, but embodied in the Council’s own dynamics, and a more direct relationship is proposed to us all. In this, certainly, Calasanz has experience and left us a good legacy.
- b) Experience of God and mysticism: Rahner said that the Christian of our century or was a mystic... or wouldn’t be a Christian. There is no point in a Christianity of doctrine and “faith of coalman”, difficult to separate from a simple ideology. Faith and experience not only do not oppose each other but go hand in hand. Experience is born of human life that touches us, particularly when the human being opens himself to an objective reality that moves and recreates him vitally, it is not an intellectual deduction. Provoking this experience is decisive today, as is to verify it in the faith and formative itineraries.
- c) The sources of spirituality, particularly the Word of God: not reduced to message or doctrine, but as “Dabar”, living and effective Word, which is incarnated. To be concrete Gospel. The Word deepened (for example, through *Lectio Divina*) and lived, allows us to live Christianly when social support disappears, allows us to overcome the faith-

121 It is not easy to make a synthesis of the enormous wealth of the experiences and the spiritual theology of our time. Allowed me to, therefore, reduce the aspects to which they seem most significant to me, avoiding getting lost in a species of tangle, and offer for each of them a simple explanation knowing that the reader can go deeper at any time by other means.

life rupture and becomes a vehicle for the encounter with Jesus (Incarnate Word). In this way, a transformative commitment is made, and we are encouraged to share and discern this experience in community. In this regard, the last two Popes invite us religious to seek renewal directly in the sources of the Gospel, rather than in the constitutions¹²².

- d) Ecclesiality and community, spirituality of communion: from a more individualistic and devotional spirituality focused on one's own salvation, a progressive path is being made throughout the twentieth century towards community, the Church conceived as the People of God guided by the Holy Spirit, in which everyone counts. And it offers consistency by proposing the Spirituality of Communion as a response to the challenges of the twenty-first century. It explicitly invites religious communities to take part in this spirituality: as a school and place of spreading communion¹²³.

122 I cannot ignore here as a source the deepening in the "historical Jesus" of the last decades, which rescue Jesus Christ of some manipulations pseudo spiritualistic (ideological) and, well discerned, help us to discover better implications of the Gospel for life according to the Spirit. The experience of Latin American grassroots communities is particularly inspiring. As well they say: it is not an exercise in archaeology, but a passion for fidelity.

123 In *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, nn. 43ss offers a succinct and clear explanation. I allow myself to underline here the following: we are asked for this millennium "making the Church the home and school of communion" and for this John Paul II maintains that before programming concrete initiatives we have of "promote a spirituality of communion, proposing it as **educational principle** in all the places where man and the Christian are formed". Of this spirituality to be promoted, he says that signifies first of all:

A look of the heart towards the mystery of the Trinity that inhabits us and whose light must also be recognized in the face of the brothers and sisters who are at our side.

In addition, the ability to feel the brother of faith in the deep unity of the Mystical Body and, therefore, as "one who belongs to me" to know how to share his joys and his sufferings, to intuit his desires and attend to his needs, to offer him a true and deep friendship.

It is also the ability to see before all that is positive in the other, to welcome and value it as a gift from God: a "gift for me", in addition to being a gift for the brother who has received it directly.

Finally, it is to know how to "give space" to the brother, carrying each other's burden (cf. Gal 6:2) and rejecting the selfish temptations that continually haunt us.

- e) Historicity, liberating commitment, the poor as a theological place: in the face of cultural or prayer practices separate from life and society, history and social transformation regain their place in life according to the Spirit. My salvation is linked to my commitment to the salvation of others. The poor and the peripheries are not only a call that God hears and to which he asks us to respond (as in Exodus 3:7-10), but also a place of encounter with God and specifically with Christ, a criterion even of salvation. There is also a progressive change from ecclesiocentrism to kingdomcentrism¹²⁴.
- f) And in all this journey the cross as an experience of the resistance of the world –of my world too– to the Spirit, as the distance from the real to the ideal, in the transforming commitment, in the Christian community, in every conflict¹²⁵ and experience of limitation. It is not devotional Pietism, not even the decisive recognition of the “price” of our redemption, it is also a place of transforming encounter: the cross comes with the crucified Christ and in him, welcomed, the paschal path is purified, revitalizing, sanctifying.

These aspects are not alien to Calasanz’ life and Calasanz’ spirituality, but we must recognize that, especially in some, neither the formulation nor the way of living it then fully respond to what the Church, the reality of our historical moment and the guidance of the Holy Spirit ask of us today. Fidelity to Calasanz, as I said, means taking on these challenges.

124 A very slow change still. It is sad to see to what extent in the liturgy this change is far away, both in the official texts and in much of the commentaries, particularly to the psalms, leaving their burden of humanity to one side and identifying it almost only with the Church. The liturgy of the hours is a precious prayer of communion on the part of all the people of God with Christ suffering and triumphant in all humanity. Jesus didn’t preach Himself, not even the Church, but the Kingdom of God, lordship of the Father about all and above all. From there the Church is understood.

125 Conflict is also today an underlining in theology and, therefore, in spirituality: in the face of an irenism that tends to avoid it by confusing it with violence, today we are invited to recognize the conflicts existing and the violence they create. From there, to discern and assume our position in the face of conflict from the perspective of the Gospel, of the Kingdom of God. The love of God manifested in Jesus Christ does not shun the conflict, but makes live it in a new way, where faith, hope and charity become notorious.

Living piarist spirituality today, as a new piarist subject

I outline here a synthesis of how I consider today that we are called to live Piarist spirituality. To this target, I have in mind:

1. Calasanctian spirituality, in its most basic foundations that affect our identity.
2. The challenges of our time and the corresponding calls of the Church to the consecrated life and to the People of God as a whole, in the sphere of life according to the Spirit.
3. The richness that the Spirit has been sowing in the Church in the last century.
4. The changes that the Order has been making in how it understands itself and its mission in this time, guided by the Holy Spirit, especially through the General Chapters.

I do not pretend to be exhaustive because I understand that the whole synthesis matters more than the details of content. It is this set that offers us the perspective, the framework that in a way identifies us in this time.

On the other hand, the concrete instruments of spirituality, and even other aspects that may arise, are also embodied in the various realities that we have to live: communities large or small, formative, of more active mission or of old religious, and in different cultures and local churches.

I present it in four moments:

1. Starting from a look at the world and a listening to the Word
2. Community as mission
3. The Cross in life and ministry that makes Easter possible
4. The disposition of each one

Starting from a look at the world and a listening to the Word

Just as Calasanz formulates his vocation from his sensitivity and internal disposition, from the children he sees and from listening to the Word (Psalm 9), today we are called to situate ourselves, as Piarists, before the world and history of today, illuminating our decision from the Gospel.

We could point out many characteristics of ***our world*** that affect us directly, I refer to the most notorious: the crisis of truth that is doing so much damage to our democracies, to the maturity of our societies, to morality and to the capacity for dialogue; the rampant injustice in a world in which the rich are increasingly rich, the middle classes are seeing their possibilities increasingly reduced, working conditions increasingly precarious and the number of “discarded” is increasing; this injustice has a particularly harsh effect on impoverished nations, which see how their wealth is plundered, if not how they promote violence to facilitate this theft; a world in which violence grows by making cultural or ideological differences exclusive conflict rather than opportunity; a world that is destroying its future even in nature itself; a world that risks its own disappearance as never before, both because of damage to nature and because of the possibility of self-destruction.

In the face of such a society, the Order identifies our mission with the renewal of the Church and the transformation of society by creating fraternity.

Today, as yesterday, fraternity is a deep aspiration. As in the time of St. Francis¹²⁶, fraternity becomes possible by renouncing privileges and the struggle for one’s own interests, for money or power, and by opting for rights. It is the minority that so captivated Joseph Calasanz, with the poverty-humility duo.

The look at our world ***requires us to position ourselves***, to choose a place in society and to privilege some recipients from the charity lived

126 There is an interesting socio-historical reading of the Franciscan movement that coincides with the fall of medieval nobility and dreams of fraternity... who are frustrated by the emergence of the bourgeoisie and, with it, a new kind of inequality. Francis, in a simple way, would offer an alternative.

as mercy: it leads us to the **minority**, to be and be with the poor, those who do not count, (and)¹²⁷ the dispossessed. And our way of loving translates into educational charity, transforming society from education and from the community, a place of encounter and discernment, where we learn to live unity in diversity and where we can experience the mandate of mutual love, the fraternity that we propose.

As “Poor of the Mother of God” we choose the model of the “anawim”¹²⁸. We identify with the poor child, we learn to be poor and humble. We even assume that humiliation can come¹²⁹ for being so positioned: we expect our justice from God, like Calasanz, like Mary. Like Mary, too, we proclaim the work of God who has preferences and acts in the contrast between proud and humble, powerful and simple, rich and poor, participating in this process that is the struggle for the values of the Reign of God expressed in the Beatitudes and fully reflected in the life of Jesus.

Thus humility and poverty are still called to be basic characteristics of our Piarist identity today. And the “lowering” that Calasanz says, read as disappropriation following the example of Christ (Phil 2:6) also means a dispossession in terms of “power” and decision-mak-

127 I think it is important to clarify the conjunction: a good part of the poor is impoverished or dispossessed. But not all poverty is explained by dispossession. Justice is not enough to fight poverty, the key of fraternity is also necessary, so much to justify this struggle for all the poor as to discern the means of the same. Assuming the conflict means renouncing to defend justifications of one system that leads to injustice and learn to denounce them, not against people: we try to open eyes, propose alternatives, accompany the reflection and maturation of the positions of our students and educational and Christian communities, so that, from piety, their life be loving surrender in a transformative commitment.

128 Calasanz does not expressly speak of minority, but he lives it and manifests it as a Piarist identity. Much less were they times to talk about “anawim”, but today we can recognize an important tuning between our being Poor of the Mother of God and the anawim. Something to deepen.

129 The term “humiliation” is also expressed in the Magnificat, even if it is avoided in translations. It offers a parallel with the cantic of Ana and, although the concrete meaning in Mary of this “humiliation” can be discussed, several authors are inclined to connect it to her pregnancy before she lived with St. Joseph. And would this fit with the fact that in the village they said of Jesus that he was the son of Mary, which in its cultural context was offensive in not mentioning his father. Who, faithful to God and his Reign, are placed in perspective of poor, are good candidates for contempt and humiliation.

ing: today sharing the mission means listening to and knowing how to lose, letting oneself be corrected, a humility joyfully lived as listening to the voice of God and renouncing – like Jesus – our “rights”¹³⁰.

The disappropriation, the positioning as poor of God, takes us out of our assurances because the Spirit impels us to open the doors (as at Pentecost) joyfully assuming the challenge of interculturality, of the peripheries as a preferential place and of Kingdom centrism (in the face of ecclesiocentrism and proselytism). And this is not possible without that profound disappropriation that allows us to recognize the gifts of God and the voice of the Spirit in other cultures, in the discarded, in those who do not share our faith in God but do believe and fight for fraternity, for justice and peace. This disappropriation does not mean losing our identity, but relocating it, rediscovering it from charity and the guidance of the Spirit.

Listening to the Word, especially the ***Gospel, in community*** is the most important mediation to illuminate our vision of the world, to discern our presences (place and/or mode) and our actions, and to encourage us to live the only thing necessary, the daily dedication to children and young people, the concrete love for our brothers and neighbors. This shared listening bears fruit to the extent that we are able to make silence in ourselves, not only external but internal: to strip ourselves of our immediate interests, justifications (many learned from dominant ideologies), passions and “crooked” desires... but also insofar as we lose the fear of sharing, we also learn to do so¹³¹ and we trust in God: in his Word we are able to cast the nets after an unsuccessful night.

130 I refer here to the sense of loss that many religious have in the face of the rise of the laity and structures of shared mission. While it is true that in case of having civil liability (such as the ownership of a center) we have to reserve the last word for some decisions, it is also true that we are called to listen to everyone –something very Calasanctian– and, particularly, to recognize for all intents and purposes the voice of the Spirit in those who share the Piarist charismatic gift.

131 Losing fears: there are two frequent expressions of Jesus: “do not be afraid” and “get up and walk” that we can feel current. Nevertheless, disposition is not enough: we must also learn to read the Word of God and to share what we discover in it and what we experience as God’s work thanks to the Word. Deep listening in sharing is complemented by the ability to express oneself in a concrete, clear and brief way, out of love for one’s brothers and sisters. Something that we have already pointed out in Calasanz.

It is the attentive look at reality and listening to the Word that renew in us every day our vocation and our life. And we are called to do this today in community, in deep communion, at different levels. A privileged place for this encounter with reality, listening to the Word and discernment should be each team of presence and, more broadly, the Piarist Christian Communities.

Community as mission

A major shift in perspective from our time is discovering community itself as part of our mission. This is what is asked of us from the Church¹³².

The category of “Koinonia” (Communion) is now a key to understanding consecrated life, relationships within and outside the religious community and a central part of mission in the world. It is the gift par excellence of the Holy Spirit that resembles us to the Trinity in its dynamic of internal and external love. And it is our task to welcome it, feed it, live it and propose it.

In the image of the Trinity, the community does not close in on itself, it welcomes other people and opens itself to the world, embodying this communion in reality and assuming, consequently, the resistances that it opposes. These difficulties will always be a temptation for the community to retreat into itself. That is why it is important to base the spirituality of communion, to contemplate the Trinitarian God and his incarnation in Christ, to look at the Cross that realizes communion (and is actualized in the Eucharist) and to assume –in Christ crucified– our inconsistencies and the resistance of the real world to communion.

We cannot limit ourselves here to the community of religious, we speak of the Piarist Christian Community of which the religious community and that of the fraternity (if any) are the nucleus agglutinating and guaranteeing identity. It is true that the life and internal dynamics of the religious community will profoundly mark the life and dynamics of the Piarist Christian community and hence the re-

132 Nothing could be further from the truth to consider it a “fashion” of the moment. It’s part of the identity of the Church and particularly of consecrated life; and today, in addition, urgency in our world and in the Church itself.

sponsibility that we religious have to generate a quality community life, open our doors, welcome and also make us present. At the same time, however, the Piarist Christian community is called to enrich the life and community of religious. Reciprocity is part of communion.

This implies a series of realities and dynamics that make communion possible as an experience and as a mission of the community, looking especially at the broad community:

- To renew the gaze to the model of communion, and the vocation to it, through the profound listening to the Word of God in community: shared and discerned meditation on the Gospel, particularly through *Lectio Divina*, as suggested by the Church.
- It is also listening to the voice of God, of the Spirit: community discernment, as Calasanz so pointed out. Important discernment when the projects (of presence, of the community, personal) integrated among themselves and in communion with the project of the Province and the dioceses are carried out. The projects are only understood from this search and openness to the will of God¹³³. Discernment will continue in the follow-up of the mission. This discern-

133 Three notes regarding the Projects:

In the elaboration of the Community Project it is good to include in parallel that of the personal projects, initially sharing the moment we live in and the discernment of where we believe that we must move or the Spirit moves us to move forward. A moment that illuminates the very situation of the community and can at the same time allow a contrast to each one that enriches. From humility and search.

Presence Projects are a way to embody the mission in a specific place, it helps us to be faithful to the essential and to generate community. It means knowing how to disappropriate the “property” of the mission, on the part of the religious community and a disappropriation also of provincial congregations in some aspects too centralized.

The attitudes that the elaboration and monitoring of these projects require are part of our spirituality of obedience, to allow oneself to be guided by the Spirit, particularly in the community that seeks to live the *Perfect charity*. And it involves a lot of finesse of spirit to know how to differentiate one’s own desires and opinions of God’s will (cf. what is said above about the obedience of faith), a frequent insistence on Calasanz. In this, a permanent attitude of listening, openness to the voice of God, review and discernment in community, can help.

ment is impossible without leaving our interests, seeking the glory of God and the usefulness of our neighbor in an active and deep listening and through a simple and constructive participation (already explained or above).

- But communion is also listening to our brothers and sisters, sharing what we live and God's work in us¹³⁴. It is to worry about the good of the brother and his growth through fraternal correction¹³⁵, it is to forgive each other, to share moments of joy and celebration, also moments of pain and difficulty. It is mutual help and concern for each other. It is, in short, to incarnate in the human life of each day the model of communion that we contemplate in the Trinity, where nothing of the other is alien to me. When this is done in perfect charity, as we pointed out at the time, it is a guarantee of the presence of the Lord (Mt 18:20) or, in Calasanz' expression, of the Holy Spirit; presence that is noticed.
- Finally, it is the celebration of the Eucharist, which envelops and guarantees the other aspects of communion. And today the understanding and experience of the Eucharist is very different from that of Calasanz' time. Without detracting from the more individual aspect, the Eucharist is above all communal and is Mass (sending). I point out here some features that can facilitate today a greater profit for the life of the spirit from the Eucharist:
 - It is a moment of growth of the community gathered in Christ: His presence is not only the altar and the president, it is also the Assembly, the living body of Christ,

134 It's about experiencing God through life. Experience because it transforms our lives, because it gives meaning and fullness. But also experience of God's fidelity and of his concrete action in us and in others, sometimes surprising and always consistent with what the Lord himself proclaims in the Gospel. It is experience that consolidates us in faith and faith that moves us to experience.

135 What is being talked about almost always in the New Testament when speaking of community, both in the Gospels and in St. Pablo, James... but that we have so much trouble facing. Today spirituality needs to find new and systematic paths not only of revision of life, but of fraternal correction, if we want to take seriously the community challenge and the life of the Gospel.

and it must be reflected in dynamics of participation and exchange that overcome the rigid schemes of certain understandings little or nothing pastoral of the liturgy.

- Among the dynamics there may be prepared or spontaneous participation at certain times (forgiveness, echoes of the Word, petitions, thanksgiving), but also giving glory to God with concrete experiences lived in response to the Word of God or even a simple discernment of what this Word tells us, beyond the role of the president in the homily, also giving opportunity to a community that receives the gift of God (of the Word and communion) and is sent.
- It must be approached at all times as the “reasonable worship” that St. Paul tells us (Rom 12:1): the offering of himself “together with and in” the offering of Christ. It cannot be that we make the Eucharist a cult far from life and centered on an action only of Christ the Head, without a body¹³⁶. A simple example is to be able to renew vows or commitments at the time of the offertory, as it is best associated with the presentation of gifts.
- It is communion in Christ that generates unity and communion among us. That is why Christ does not ask us to be one, he asks it the Father as a gift of the Spirit. Hence also the value of the Eucharist. Our part is to prepare ourselves to welcome it: before entering, in prayer, at the moment of peace (so valuable and so little recognized) and, once the gift of the Eucharist has been received, to know how to thank it, to know how to pray

¹³⁶ There are approaches to the Eucharistic liturgy close, in my opinion, to heresy. An excessively formal approach to celebration where life has no place or only inside each one does not square with the way of doing of Jesus. Underlining the prominence of Jesus by reducing it to only one actor is to ignore its ecclesial incarnation as a Body also in the Assembly. As Calasanz so often insisted, we must study the liturgy well and understand it, but not only the rites and their *raison d'être* (which is what stood out in his time), but the deep and evangelical sense of the celebration and its pastoral possibilities that offer its meaning. The crisis of assistance is also a crisis of significance.

to the Lord asking for all those who form that new Body of Christ and to ask him to be “Body that gives itself”¹³⁷.

- And the celebration ends with sending. You do not always have to explain everything, but it does not hurt from time to time to offer a more explicit and concrete sense to this moment of sending. (The fruits of which could even be echoed to the community at the next celebration).

Accommodating all these aspects in the life of the community is a basic task of our mission. And it is also necessary to understand that it cannot be limited to the religious community, nor to the Piarist Christian Community: these must be understood in an expansive way, sowing communion in the educational community, in the local Church, in the neighborhood. And, in the aforementioned discernment, ways of doing so will be sought.

The cross in life and ministry that makes Easter possible

Minority, choosing to be with the poor and the discarded in order to build, with the gift of the Father, a fraternal society, is not easy. Jesus warned us of the animosity of the “world” and invited us to give our lives, to have a love that gives life by giving life. Perfect Charity, as we said, is the love of God in us returned through the brethren. The contemplation of the mystery of the Cross, of Christ crucified, moves us at first above all, to feel his immense love, the price of love that sin has, the realism of love... and to want to give it back to Him in others, especially in the small, weak and crucified.

The cross of each day does not basically refer to the sufferings that each one has in the ordinary of life. This could be manipulating the sense of the cross. The cross is above all the fruit of the “passion for God and passion for humanity” that encounters resistance, opposition, persecution. It is the distance between the real and the ideal. It is to take on the challenges of school, and education in general, which

137 We already commented on how for Calasanz and his time communion was so valuable that it was rarely done and required deep preparation through prayer, and a long thanksgiving. There were booklets dedicated to how to make communion fruitful.

often overwhelm us; it is to choose the most difficult, most hidden or least kind students for God's sake. It is to assume in the educational project the risks that faith in the Gospel entails¹³⁸, through values not always recognized or loved by society, which lead us to go against the current. The cross of Christ is for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

Certainly, our own miseries, sin and weakness can be lived from the cross, but precisely to come out of ourselves: we present them to the Lord of life and embrace them with Him on the cross so that we can lose it in Him, to be free to give life. This movement is what asks for the cross: to recognize it, to name it and to embrace Christ in it, to "resurrect" with Him to life, to the availability of a renewed and purified love in the forge of pain.

But it's not easy. Difficulty, pain, misunderstanding, opposition, misery tend to arouse in us flight responses, or paralyze us, or fold us into ourselves. Recognizing there the cross to embrace with the crucified and risen Christ is not immediate. We need to be prepared. Prayer, contemplation of Christ crucified and his mysteries helps us, in a second moment, to be more willing to welcome him in the crosses, and in the crucified people, helps us to recognize him¹³⁹. And the Paschal experience itself (recognizing him, embracing him, "resurrecting") is also memory that illuminates and moves.

It is not possible to choose the side of history that God proposes to us, it is not possible to choose minority and community, it is not

138 Calasanz assumed this cross also when he had to defend the right of the poor to education and it meant that he lost almost everything at the end of his life. We could do well to meditate on this when we sometimes avoid some educational aspects because they "sound bad" in society. It is not, in no case, about being fundamentalists, but to cooperate with the truth of the Gospel that is always dialogic and purposeful, which leads to the encounter... but which is also exposed to persecution. This aspect of our mission is impossible without a deep spiritual experience and a deep community discernment.

139 It is important to refine this aspect: we do not embrace the cross and, with it, the crucified **for** "resurrect" from our situation, which can be to instrumentalize it... but, in the manner of St. Francis, we recognize on the cross the presence of the Beloved at its best, and we give ourselves to Him as St. Francis when he shouted that "love is not Beloved" and became passionate in their encounter. Then the positive possible consequences, such as arranging for others, are that: consequences (From this interpretation, you can also read Sc1662).

possible to live on the periphery, it is not possible to assume conflict, it is not possible to serve God in the child, especially the poor, the discarded, the difficult, without knowing the greatness, the depth and strength of Christ's cross.

The disposition of each one

Because we must make the difference between a more communal and an individual spirituality, I reserve only a few lines now to recognize that we each have our part of the way to go and our responsibility for the community to be a place of spiritual growth, of experience of the gift of God. Without the part of each, it cannot be built.

The community needs subjects healthy enough to be able and know how to love. And you can't love others if you don't know how to love yourself. The path of self-knowledge pointed out when speaking of Calasanctian spirituality is as necessary today as it was yesterday. I would like to point out two differences today: that there are sciences that help to walk this path and, not least, that today we are invited to do so also with the help of the community. We do not forget, of course, an adequate daily examination of conscience that refines our disposition, that allows us to put our miseries in the merciful hands of God (giving them, so that they do not harm us) and that also helps us to recognize the work of God in us and through us.

It is also our part that which since ancient times they called "being in God's grace", not so much looking at it sacramentally –that too– but as a disposition of our inner before God and before the brothers. Willingness to receive from God what comes to us: his Love, in the first place, his call, but also events as an opportunity to live with God and from God; disposition, in all this, to "give us" for others. This is the voice of the Spirit within us. And this is nourished in personal prayer, already from the first hour of the morning, when we get up –as Calasanz invited– and in the renewal of vows or our commitments, personally and decisively, with passion.

Then, we can be humble custodians of Jesus, of his presence in the community, of the presence of the Holy Spirit in its midst, who is not only a voice that speaks, is also a light that illuminates the minds and force that moves the heart, that impels us to go out of the reality in need of transformation and above all to build fraternity.

Proposals for Initial Formation

I admit that I face this last chapter with a certain modesty. I am not a specialist in formation nor can I offer here all the keys, tools, criteria and indicators that would facilitate formation for spirituality much more. This limitation is more noticeable to me because precisely the need to strengthen spiritual formation has been a decisive reason for this writing.

However, it is not out of shame that I am going to give up on making some proposals that may be able to help in this field. They are proposals in connection with what has been said above and that I present in chronological stages, to facilitate their possible application in the way that each trainer, in each culture and situation, deems appropriate, if applicable.

Two premises

First of all, a few lines that can help to situate us, on the subjects of formation and on the conception of one's own spiritual formation.

On the subjects, I think it is important to recognize the value and role that each one has:

- First of all, ***the Holy Spirit***. It should not be forgotten. It is part of our rich tradition to discover the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the inner inclination of the young man. It is He who, in the midst of candidate and formator, or in the midst of the community, when seeking the glory of God and the usefulness of one's neighbor, makes Himself present and illuminates the way forward. It is He who configures us with the feelings of Jesus Christ (FEDE 17, Annex 4 consecration nº 6), only in this way can we live the "minority", the lowering ourselves (Phil 2:1-7).

- The ***candidate in formation*** himself, who is the protagonist of his own history, whom we accompany together with the Spirit on this formative journey. Whom we love and respect trying to discover his interior, the gift of God in Him and their fragility and turbulence as well. Only from this disposition and only counting on him can this path be traveled.
- Who officially receives the name of ***“formator”*** (FEDE 104), knowing that he is not the main protagonist but that he has an important role assigned. And that he lives the Piarist ministry mainly from this entrusted task that demands a high dose of self-denial, deep listening and unwavering love for the one in formation and for cooperating with the Truth.
- In some cases one can also think of the figure of the ***“spiritual father”*** that Calasanz promotes and, although we can identify today his role with the formator, there should be no lack of those who exercise this role at least when the formation is outside the house of formation (for example, in the pastoral year), or when there are numerous young men in formation.
- The religious ***community*** of the formative house, without which it is not possible to offer an example, without which the formator can do little. Shared responsibility for welcoming, accompaniment and discernment. Clear project. Exemplary almost martyrdom.
- And, let’s not forget, ***the laity***. Especially the Fraternity, for being charismatically Piarist. Vocational complementarity is very important, it helps the candidate to discover his own identity in the relationship with those who, having much in common, are different in other aspects. It also helps to be realistic when talking about life and vows: the laity offer a real experience of life and a wisdom that can help us a lot on the vocational and formative path. And on the spiritual path particularly, if we understand spirituality as a way to embody the ideal of the Gospel in the real life of each day.

As for how to conceive formation for spirituality, it is worth recalling point nº 6 of the FEDE that invites us to focus this formation on

Perfect Charity, which is the purpose of consecrated life as recognized by the Church and Calasanz collects. We cannot forget this in any case, we would run the risk of re-presenting spirituality as a set of norms and means or a set of virtues reports. Perfect Charity, as we saw at the time, is a very rich concept that is at the center of the Gospel and the conception of the term “Piety”.

Thus, spirituality is something fundamentally relational, as is our identity. It affects how we relate to God, to ourselves, to the formator, to the community, to the world... and from this relationality we can “read” the fundamental option that supposes the following of Christ, to let oneself be done and sent by God: to leave self-referentiality and live life in donation and loving surrender. Only possible from a solid personal process.

Pre-novitiate

It is invited in the pre-novitiate to discern the deep motivations of vocation and to cultivate the relationship with Jesus Christ (FEDE 68-69). I would like to emphasize here some basic aspects in my opinion before moving on to the novitiate, although barely outlined in the spiritual itinerary for this stage:

- A previous path of self-knowledge (principle of the spiritual life), which deepens.
- Have “experience of God”, guarantee a minimum in this field.
- Begin to locate what happiness is.

For this own knowledge we have the Piarists some means that can help:

1. work already from school a positive and enriching examination of conscience that refines our perception of evil and good and its reality in ourselves, as well as the work of God in our lives;
2. retreats with adolescents and young people, or with candidates for the pre-novitiate, which deepen this knowledge of oneself and allows it to be enriched by sharing with others in an intense and more complete experience;
3. the Piarist vocational accompaniment (PVA), which is bearing such good fruit for mutual knowledge, especially of the candi-

date and pre-novice, and to achieve a certain unity in the formative path.

In addition to these three paths, it is increasingly common and, in my opinion, should be obligatory the psychological study of the young person, not so much to make a selection¹⁴⁰, but to facilitate their own knowledge and acceptance and offer clues for a good accompaniment in their human and spiritual growth.

As for the “experience of God”, it is about verifying or provoking it. It is not very reasonable to ask to enter the novitiate without having somehow experienced the One who calls. It is very important that the vocation is not reduced to an ideology or a feeling. Experience is contact with the real thing in life, it is feeling questioned, it is letting yourself be surprised, it is the capacity for change in behavior. The impulse of God’s Word towards life is a good path of experience. The formator of this stage must know what experience is, know how to provoke it, accompany it and discern it.

Finally, an aspect that I sometimes perceive in a controversial way. The desire for happiness that young people have is often observed and the vocation is presented as a way of happiness. I think it is, at least, something to nuance, if not dangerous. No doubt God wants our happiness, but pretending to pursue it as a goal is selfish. The young man has to discover that he finds and lives moments of happiness when he forgets himself and gives himself to others. But also accept that this happiness is fragile, it is not always guaranteed, it is not lasting. In fact, the experience of concrete love undoubtedly leads us to a greater fullness and usually to feel happy... but it is always a gift and a task. And, on the other hand, it is necessary to discern happiness from complacency, which Calasanz already feared.

The vocation seeks to follow Jesus, to respond to his love by loving others, following his cause, even knowing that there will be cross. Happiness is interspersed with very diverse feelings such as soli-

140 How much evil it has done in the Church to present the psychological test as a sieve so that only “perfect” can enter. While it is true that some extremes must be considered, the main thing is that we ask ourselves more about the indicators of God’s call. From there psychology helps us to accompany the process. If it had been done a test to the apostles... would they have “passed” it?

darity pain, frustration, incomprehension, uncertainty, helplessness... that we overcome by welcoming in them the Lord of life, the one that cried out abandonment on the cross. Because then we live these feelings in a different way, in a way we resurrect them. Hence, a first initiation into the mystery of the cross is also part of the task at this stage. There, in that way of loving, of living faith and hope, is where there is a certain guarantee of inner peace.

And there is also looking at the final triumph, in paradise: a certain updated reflection on the Novísimos and on the road to the final goal would put us in line with Calasanz and allow us to face happiness with more solidity. In this sense, the recitation of Psalm 83 suggested by our Holy Father for the moment when the religious woke up, can be illuminating of where to put hope and joy, thus making the way a source of happiness for others (*“when they cross arid valleys they turn them into oases, as if the early rain covered them with blessings”*).

Novitiate

It is a key stage for spiritual formation. No other moment allows us to lay the foundations that this special time offers us.

The beginning of the novitiate is the most important time to continue deepening ***self-knowledge***, to discover and formulate the wounds of life, and to begin, if it has not already been done, a process of healing them. Also recognize one's own experience of limitation and sin and refine the relationship one has with it: whether from the law or from the response of grace, how to live the struggle against sin (normative obsession or path we make with the Lord... or even a false assumption of human limitation that anchors us in weakness). It is also time to identify bad desires and crooked tendencies and discover to what extent we allow ourselves to be questioned by them and are able to question them.

This path of self-knowledge also allows us to discover what moves us to the good, to the encounter of love with others. Discover the grace of God's call and love. Discover in these motions of the soul the “inner inclination” or impulse of the Holy Spirit that can identify us with the “poor of the Mother of God”.

Necessary indicators of growth in this regard are:

- The ability to humbly expose one’s own twisted passions and sins and one’s own talents and motions according to the Spirit. It presupposes self-acceptance and recognition of God’s gift.
- The inner and outer freedom with which corrections are received from both the formator and the companions and the community. It is a progressive path, different in each one. But if you don’t win in this freedom, something basic fails.
- The ability to recognize bad desires and tendencies and how they feed. Recognize the difficulty in fighting sin and be sincere in asking for help.
- To be grateful for God’s work not only in history, in Jesus Christ, but in one’s own life. Accepting that he can get good out of even evil. Accept the vocation as a free call, despite my frailty and sin, knowing that it is the Lord who guides me to be able to respond.

The initiation to **humility** can also be based on “tools of tradition”, learning to value them, updating them today of course, helps us to overcome the “pride” of modernity and take advantage of the wisdom of the past, when it is recognized. I suggest two that I find valuable: what St. Benedict’s rule says about humility (chapter 7) and what the book of Sancio di Santa Caterina says quoted when talking about formation in Calasanz’ time. I think they can be inspiring with a proper and accompanied reading¹⁴¹.

When this path advances, then the call to follow Christ can be presented in more depth. I agree with FEDE 43 in the text of Mt 11:25-30: this is a text that can be read from the vocation of the poor and humble, with the characteristics of the “anawim” presented in the first place in Jesus, who invites us to follow him precisely like this.

141 This does not exclude other texts. I find particularly rich the text of the seventh option of the book of ASIAIN, M.A., *Ser escolapio, nueve opciones fundamentales*, entitled “Learn from Me, who am meek and humble of heart.” One text to be shelled little by little. Some authors who delve into the biography and the path of St. Francis towards humility and poverty would also help.

It will help to deepen, in this very important aspect of our vocational identity, a first approach to the Bible and to the biblical and spiritual theologies on the figure of the poor of Yahweh, which can be completed with a retreat and other resources (diary of the novice, notes for a personal project, for example).

It will offer doses of realism in the identification with the poor and their causes the approach to the real poor and poverty, both in a negative reading of what poverty is as lack, injustice, discard... as well as in a positive reading of poverty chosen as detachment, freedom and positioning of justice understood from the Kingdom of God. In the novitiate this approach is initial, but it can motivate for a later path. In this context, a Piarist reading of Psalm 9, which motivated Calasanz, can connect the reality of the poor – particularly children – without ignoring oppressive causes, with our Piarist vocation of “poor of the Mother of God”, which is a vocation to be –like Mary– a kind of shelter and protection of the poor. It would be good to take advantage of the renunciation of the use of goods at the end of the novitiate to verify the integration of what this renunciation means in the ordinary life of the religious.

The *meekness*¹⁴² of the Lord, quoted in Mt 11:29, is also the free and trusting disposition of the person to allow himself to be guided by the

142 Important is also the minority aspect which concerns how to live rights. A wealth of the West is the awareness of the dignity of each individual and of his own rights, a fragility the loss of sense of obligations and the social dimension of rights and obligations. This is transmitted to a greater or lesser extent to other continents. For Calasanz, as for Jesus, the dignity of each one is unquestionable (and is based on the divine sonship and redemption of Christ on the Cross), but the minority is also a valuable free election. Christ deprived Himself of, so to speak, His rights of divine status (Flp 2,6). In Calasanz this translates into a humility and almost disarmament when it comes to demanding one's own rights, not so alien (as the right to education of poor children). And so he sided with those who usually neither demand nor go to court. How one positions oneself on this issue is a good indicator of the extent to which one's humility has matured, balancing one's sense of dignity and minority. It is not only to balance rights and obligations, but the willingness to know how to lose, when necessary, one's rights freely and never against one's dignity. This can only be sustained by a profound experience of one's own knowledge, of adequate self-esteem, based on a look at the Lord (his concrete love, and how He lived this aspect) and in the look at the poor. Even I think it is from there how the legitimate struggle for rights is done piaristically and evangelically.

Spirit and by the mediations of God's will. It is a process with different degrees of freedom and personal availability that must be looked at realistically. The novitiate is rather a time to understand it – somewhat ideally– and to want to advance on this path, difficult to travel it thoroughly. That is why it is important to make some experiences of listening to the will of God, either through personal prayer, from the reading of the Word of God (and their subsequent shared experience of incarnating it), through the superior and, particularly, through the community (for example, preparing some activity and knowing how to contribute and “lose” one's own idea with inner freedom).

In the end, both vocation and obedience (to the voice of the Spirit, to the Word) are called to concrete love. Discovering this is also an important aspect of the Christian life that in the novitiate must be confirmed, analyzed and purified. The call to love is from the response to the Love of God and with the characteristics of love manifested in Christ. It is good to share and review experiences. Distinguish the simple feeling of love. Learn to love beyond the kind and appetizing. And to turn progressively to the “**Perfect Charity**” –a purpose already indicated– which is to love always and thoroughly for the pure love of God, or also to love Christ in all our neighbors.

Calasanz points out that being poor – and experiencing it – brings us closer to poor children, and also indicates that purity is an important success factor in our ministry with children, who know how to appreciate it. It is important to begin in what we can call the “**purification**” of the mind and memory. Let me explain: the young person must acquire a humble and profound awareness of the effects of sin in his mind, in his ability to justify himself, in the sensitive memory, in his desires. They are traces that are there and that must be healed. The struggle for purity is not possible (with respect to sex, for example, but also with respect to other desires and particularly, one's own interests and wounds) if one does not learn to break drastically with all bad thought and desire, as Calasanz said -following other authors-: crash them against the rock¹⁴³.

143 Cf. Psalm 137: Crashing the Children of Babylon (understood as power that makes us feel banished) against the rock, which some spiritual authors identify with Jesus: it is in Him that we base our capacity for renunciation and “knowing how to cut” in time. Pope Francis comments that with temptation we should not dialogue.

Learning to do it diligently and healthily is important, avoiding falling both into the extreme of the soft culture that fears any radicality, and into that of the blind obsession that seeks to cut without recognizing or working –opportunely– the origin of our passions.

It is also purification, and today particularly important, to recognize the weight of ideologies justifying injustice, violence or even our fears and insecurities and learn to detach from all this, recognizing their part of truth and their fallacies, as well as the interests – their own and others – that they serve.

As for **community life**, in addition to learning to discern and make some simple decisions together (such as some specific pastoral actions), it is important to begin sharing life, discerning it together and sharing experiences of God (for example of the Word lived, or of listening and echoing to the voice of God). It would also be very good if in the novitiate or, if it is not possible, in the juniorate at least, a concrete experience of **interculturality** can be made, an experience that questions security, that makes one feel something “unarmed” and somehow forces a certain conversion supported by trust in God, the only way to know how to love-lose and be “alternative” to a society that idealizes and then rejects the intercultural because it destabilizes its securities.

Finally, starting on the **path of prayer** is also one of the great objectives of the novitiate, there will hardly be a better time. I fear that often this initiation does not respect the natural process of the person. It is not strange to see in novitiates an extensive theoretical formation on prayer that runs the risk of generating a mirage in the mind of the young person: to believe that for what he knows he can already pray with a great degree of perfection. I dare here to suggest the following:

- To begin, as in the time of our Holy Father, by revaluing vocal prayer as an instrument that helps us to “feel” the relationship with God. St. Teresa – also a reference to Calasanz – explains it very well when talking about the Lord’s Prayer, saying that thinking about who he says, to whom he says it and what he says, it becomes meditation. Vocal prayer transformed into affective through small suitable prayers is a good and wise path of prayer. Not only should

we not despise it, I believe that we must propose its route as a true path.

- Avoid an excess of theoretical formation that leads to knowing many things but hardly connects in the intimate with the personal experience of prayer of the young man. Knowing things in the mind without tasting them, in this area, can be counterproductive.
- Yes, it can be interesting to start in some other methods of prayer, accompanied by concrete experiences: particularly *Lectio Divina*, but also others offered by particular groups or charisms such as Taizé prayer, Jesuit meditation, Pentecostal prayer...
- It is also convenient to begin on the path of meditation, in a simple but methodical way, starting from the Gospel, learning to avoid “speculation”, intellectualism. To promote more the movement of the heart and, if the conditions were met, contemplation.
- Liturgical prayer must be put in its proper place, it cannot be perceived as psalms, songs and prayers that can help me pray: it is a prayer of the Church for the Church and for all humanity. It is, therefore, a prayer of communion in which the young person must learn not to seek help in his personal prayer but to put into practice the effort of charity that moves us to tune into the feelings of humanity before reality and before God, and to pray with them in Christ.
- In this area of prayer, personal accompaniment is particularly important. The prayeral path has a lot of shared initiation, but also of a personal journey that must be discerned and accompanied, discovering new challenges and possibilities and learning to overcome temptations both to stagnate and to “greatness that surpasses” our capacity.

In any case, an important aspect of the novice that completes its year will be to know himself being precisely in the beginning. He has begun in several aspects and still has a long way to go of which he may have some “glimpses”, but of which he does not know the hardness of the challenges and the depth and greatness of what he

is called to live. This is important that he assumes as far as possible, both from humility and from hope, putting in the call of God, his Love and his own internal disposition the necessary confidence to continue his path.

Juniorate

It is the stage for a first consolidation of what was initiated in the novitiate. The young man returns to the world of daily effort, now in the studio, with what he has of realism and, at the same time, with the danger of relaxing the tension in spiritual growth by inappropriately prioritizing the world of study.

If at this time we must continue the path undertaken previously, it is also a time in which to take advantage of some of its own characteristics positively. To these characteristics I refer offering only a few brushstrokes.

The young man in formation is already a Piarist. His spirituality must mature to propel and sustain him for the rest of his Piarist life. So in his community life and in his ministry.

An instrument that favors one's own responsibility in this growth is the ***Personal Project***. It is now included in our Rules. A serious work of the same facilitates the personal and community accompaniment. Being able to present the project not only to the formator but also to the community is an opportunity to let oneself be questioned and verified, a sign of humility and maturity if it is done with a healthy disposition.

The ***spirituality of communion*** that the Church asks of us has its most solid moment of initiation in the juniorate. The substance of it, its source in prayer and the Trinity and the instruments that facilitate it, must accompany to a large extent the years and the process of the juniorate. Young people, in this sense, are called to be the source of spiritual renewal of our communities.

Thus, there should be no lack of experiences such as sharing around the Word or *Lectio Divina*; sharing life: what we have lived, experiences in ministry, what moves us inside, how we live interiority and what it costs us to be able to illuminate it together; fraternal

correction¹⁴⁴ (duly prepared); or even the “covenant of mercy” that Calasanz invites to realize, or that of mutual love, lived in the moment of peace during the Eucharist¹⁴⁵. The Community Project taken seriously and worked together, is another valuable instrument that would collect the above. And we must not forget another important experience: the encounter with the Fraternity and, as far as possible, participation in it and in the Piarist Christian community, which will help to discover both weaknesses and values, as well as to reinforce the sense of reality and one’s own vocational identity.

The **daily Eucharist** must be enriched by life, and by the significance of some moments, such as that of peace or the renewal of vows¹⁴⁶. Deepening the value of daily communion during the time of juniorate helps us to have the fear and respect that it deserves and that our Holy Father wanted so much: to prepare ourselves well to receive it and to accompany it in a prayer of grateful commitment, to be able to offer to the Lord –as St. Augustine said– the same thing that he has given us: to be a body that gives itself for others. This Eucharistic spirituality should be part of the objectives of this stage, being a key moment in daily life.

Within the community experience, **interculturality** is called to be something normal in the houses of formation. It is not always an easy challenge, but today it is necessary and the Church asks us to

144 As I pointed out above, the fraternal correction appears throughout the New Testament as one of the characteristics of the Christian community. We are called to find new ways to exercise it, in fact there are already beautiful experiences. It means preparing internally for it as a “gift” to the brother, concrete in mode and time, always from love. Several models include saying a blessing while a correction to the person. Correction about facts, not an interpretation or assessment of intentions or motions.

145 The moment of peace is more than just an external rite, expresses the disposition of the person to reconciliation and unity in love in the Body of Christ, prior to communion. In a way it is an opportunity to give peace looking at the eyes and expressing in the gesture the personal disposition to mutual love, to that giving to the other that I have by my side. Doing so, it is both demanding and motivating.

146 The daily renewal of vows has a prayer that precedes it and we usually read, the text of the same is a parallel with the the presentation of the offering of bread and wine in the offertory, because that is its rightful place in the liturgy. There the subsequent invitation to prayer makes sense: “this sacrifice of mine and yours” (of the Lord and of the whole community).

face it as wealth and as a witness. We should seek it positively, not live it as a kind of “accident” to suffer. It is worth what was said earlier in the novitiate.

As for the ministry, it is lived mainly focused on **study**, although always with some direct activities with children and young people. From the study, I want to point out:

- It must always be focused as a service, consequently its discernment, the quality of it and the dedication are marked by this quality of serving, we do not study for our prestige, not even by our ambition of knowledge (FEDE 156).
- The study of theology and philosophy should allow a “Piarist reading” of them, which could be systematized. And, in any case, move to a reading of reality, knowing how to contemplate the world¹⁴⁷, letting ourselves be questioned by what happens and by the interpretations that other people make of what happens. This reading of the world in community is very important to sustain and refine the vocation. Reading reality in the light of the Word, Calasanz took his step. Young people must know how to discern the many good things in our world and also its sins (even structural) and its challenges. Because education is not a simple survival instruction, we educate to transform reality. And this is not alien to spirituality: it is the Spirit who moves us, who stimulates our questions, who does not leave us calm in the face of the unjust, who speaks in the signs of the times, who moves our charity so that it is concrete, incarnates in this world and becomes the Kingdom of God. Our ministry is liberating or it is not. This is how our Holy Father conceived it.
- All this makes study an opportunity for charity: study for children, study for young people, study to improve our world. And a responsibility before God and men. Accompanying this in the Personal Project, in the community and in spiritual dialogue, is decisive for vocational maturity.

147 FEDE 11, 19, 20, 21, 110.

There are, in addition, a number of **occasions** in the path of this stage that should be taken seriously:

- Preparation for recognized **ministries**¹⁴⁸ must be done seriously, including science and experience. And a previous discernment (even counting on external people). The young man must discover what moves him in this ministry, what makes the actions become ecclesial ministry and what supports it.
- The **year of pastoral experience**: taking it seriously involves making a project participating in it, as suggested by the FEDE, and then being accountable. It is ministerial and community experience. It serves to reinforce or even to question the vocation. As far as possible it should facilitate the experience of the lines along which the Order goes: contact with the poor, interculturality, the new Piarist subject, the presences, the Piarist Christian community. An experience of joy and cross to identify and deepen.
- **Solemn Profession**: in its preparation faith in God counts a lot, to know how to trust God is to be able to put all the difficulties on the table, even to invoke him, but with the awareness that if the step is taken, there is no turning back. God does not deceive in the call and if everything has moved us to take the step and we have asked him for the necessary light, the deception would be precisely the subsequent doubt when we look back, because it is this look back that is not authentic. To take this step is also to accept from the heart, and in inner obedience, the project of the Order expressed in its General Chapters, without reservation, with joy. This is also welcoming the voice of God and must be discerned. Finally, the total renunciation of goods cannot be just a protocol, we must discover its profound meaning and joyfully accept its foreseeable practical consequences.
- Diaconal and presbyteral **Ordination**. Understood from the service. For Calasanz it was a suffering to see that some

148 FEDE 57, 62, 81, 84, 91 and 92.

Piarists as soon as they were ordained said goodbye to their vocation as teachers and considered themselves superior. That is why he insisted on both the novitiate and the presbyterate that the step should not be taken without first noticing a solid humility. Today this temptation continues, at least in the form of clericalism. The young man should see clericalism as an aberration from which to flee. Humility is also the experience of smallness before the mystery that is celebrated (“embassy before the Most High”, as Calasanz said). Today the presence of the Fraternity, and a healthy relationship with it, is an opportunity to better discover our Piarist vocation as religious and priests, as an ecclesial vocation, and to move it away from clericalism, so contrary to the “minority” desired by Calasanz.

I do not think it is necessary to return to the figure of the “spiritual Father”, but according to the conditions of each juniorate, perhaps we have to think that, in addition to the Juniors Master, there are some fathers who can exercise that role, knowing how to distinguish the type of accompaniment.

By way of closure

I end with a final “touch” and a thank you.

Saint Joseph Calasanz, a man of great interior wealth, knew how to propose a spiritual path suitable for our ministry and for that historical moment. Today this path has full value, even though some aspects must be qualified and others enriched. He has been and he is a gift for us and for the Church, also in his spiritual proposal and in his almost martyrial personal witness.

However, from very early on, he suffered from the relaxation of a good group of religious. Although the underlying reasons for the destruction of the Order seem to be clear to external minds, on the part of those who did not want the education of the poor (taking advantage of the wounded pride of the “Holy” Office), the relaxation and lack of control of some religious was used to justify this decision.

The so-called “relaxation” is a perennial threat, both personal and institutional and must be recognized and named. This is part of spiritual formation. Piarists must know that they are called to be radical (to live from the roots, without pacts of mediocrity), in tension towards holiness, which is the opposite of relaxed. This, of course, is not being extremists, because something Calasanz had in abundance was sanity. It helps us to distinguish the radicality from its caricature and the relaxation from a presumed “normality”.

As for the gratitude, first of all to all¹⁴⁹ those who have been for me a path of spiritual formation. Particularly to my juniors Master,

149 Although all is inclusive, I want to emphasize that some great women have been teachers of spirituality for me, starting with St. Teresa of Jesus, already from a very young age.

Miguel Ángel Asiain, whom I cannot fail to quote with deep recognition and gratitude to God. Also to so many other authors who have tried, in general with success, to approach Calasanz and present it to us, which I do not name here and I refer to the quotes from the text. I must make a major addition to the Special General Chapter of 1969 which adopted a very elaborate Declaration of Calasanctian Spirituality, the first great impulse for me, without which I do not believe I would have arrived here. I thank Our Holy Father, as we call him, for his spiritual fatherhood: for having been able to read his texts directly calmly, and the fact that they are above all epistolary, offers a perspective in which humanity, daily life and spirit intertwine and show the greatness of Joseph Calasanz.

Finally, I thank the Lord for having been able to receive so many testimonies of life according to the Spirit not only in saints or spiritual authors, but in concrete people in my different communities and, particularly, in personal dialogue with my religious brothers when I have had to exercise some responsibilities; and I thank Him for having been able to have this time, with the covid19 pandemic in a country at the extreme end of the world, which has allowed me to read all the writings of Calasanz¹⁵⁰, to delve into the critical biography of Giner as well as in other books and articles that have left their corresponding footprint in this text.

And with a certain humor... I also thank the reader for his patience in getting here. I hope that beyond my limitations, which are many, I have been able to transmit a little of the “spirit” of Calasanz and of which the Church asks of us today, as well as the way we can welcome it.

Thank you.

150 Go also my gratitude to those who have made possible the Opera Omnia of Calasanz and to Ricardo Cerverón for the pioneering on-line database of Scripta; José Mario for the scanning of the “Analecta”, etc.

