



# **GLICERIO LANDRIANI**

AN ANGEL IN THE PIOUS SCHOOLS

Leonardo de Marco

**FR. LEONARDO DE MARCO**

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Publicaciones ICCE  
(Instituto Calasanz de Ciencias de la Educación)  
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*Adventus tuus est breve sidus lumina praestans*  
*“At dawn it was opened and immediately the evening came”<sup>1</sup>*

## INTRODUCTION

**G**licerio wrote to his relative, Cardinal Frederick Borromeo, on September 29, 1612: “I am in the Pious Schools in Rome, where there are as many as 800 children and young people... I am certain that it is God’s vocation. And I hope that the Lord will to make use of me for this work of his, which is so important that it marvels me...”. What has seen this young man, 24 years old, from Milan, already decorated with the tonsure and the title of abbot? He was pushed to Rome by Cardinal Frederick, cousin and spiritual heir of St. Charles Borromeo, archbishop of Milan, and himself also Archbishop of Milan. Glicerio, who at his baptism had received the name of a holy ancestor, St. Glicerio Landriani, he too, by chance, Archbishop of Milan, seemed to have already had his path marked out from above. In Rome, introduced by his brother, Mgr. Fabricius, into the papal court, in contact with princes and prelates, he had inserted himself so well in the environment that he identified himself with all those who, to the sacred honor splendors, united a tenor of life more than mortal. And now what is the discovery that Glicerio communicates by letter to Cardinal Frederick? That the moment had arrived, finally, to

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1 From a hexameter to Glicerio Landriani, from Fr. de Marco, Arch. Sch. Piar. N. 41, year XXI, Rome 1997.

choose Jesus Christ, without hesitations and compromises. That all that glitters is not gold. The veil of the spell has been torn, and he has seen that luxury and pomp are not his way. His mother, the example of his father, and the teaching of Frederick himself had kindled in him the family traditions.

“And like the one who with panting breath / out of the sea / heads for the shore”<sup>2</sup>, Glicerio leaves behind him the golden world, with the Roman “dolce vita”, to venture toward the infinity, with Jesus as his guide and Mary as his Mother. Glicerio Landriani will be Glicerio of Christ. The choice is radical: the love of poor Christ. A fire that will give him an extra gear and will make him enthusiastic, dynamic, indefatigable, day and night. “Deus super omnia” –God above all things– is his motto. Thus, it is easy for us re-read God’s plan, the mysterious thread that from Milan guides Glicerio to Rome: the ideal of a universal reform, inspired in him by the environment of the Borromeo family, the intense participation in the life of the humble and the marginalized, after the “conversion” and, finally, his arrival at the Pious Schools, the synthesis of his aspirations and the crowning of his brief existence.

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But why have I decided to tell you the story of Abbot Glicerio Landriani (1588-1618)? From 1600 onwards, there are already various and precious manuscripts, and valuable and interesting publications. Well,... I was encouraged by the conviction that the work of Glicerio, even after four centuries, at the beginning of the third millennium, is still relevant today. The wonders of God have been manifested in him tangibly, through his way of being and doing. His passionate love for Christ, which made him the poorest of the poor, his enthusiasm for the apostolate of the itinerant catechesis in 17<sup>th</sup> century Rome, they are aspects that are recognized and valued in favor of

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2 Dante, *Inferno*, I, 22-24.

the evangelizing mission of the Church, to respond, in an evangelical style, to the ever-increasing challenges of the times and, especially, through... a renewed preferential option for the poor. Glicerio, even by family upbringing, carried in his blood the love and the passion for the poor. He leapt for joy, as if for a personal success, when Pope Paul V wanted to add to the recognition of the Pious Schools, as a distinctive sign, the title of supreme poverty as a distinguishing mark.

While the Calasanzian charism is today expanding its capacity of work in Asia and Africa, and in the service of the poor rediscovers the inventiveness of the Founder as the very source, I believe that returning to Glicerio is a stimulating experience.

I have worked with rigor and passion to reconstruct the complex itinerary of Glicerio in a way that could involve the reader. The personality carved by the young Piarist, servant of the poor, inspired catechist, passionate for the Piarist mission among children, and sometimes brilliant, his anxieties, his affections, may awake in us immediate responses.

The approach of the work is a little different, it seems to me, with respect to the past. The intention is to give it a historical breathing space, which is perhaps largely lacking in previous biographers. An attempt at historicity, which allows us to see Landriani in the midst of the broader and more articulated problems of his own time, with documents and adequate study, and beyond any commemorative attempt.

I dedicate my humble work to the new generations, who are in need of reliable sources and models that can go beyond those sometimes offered by our society, destined in many cases to pass away, like the seasons, and which are not infrequently the origin of authentic fantasies.

## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AGSP	General Archive of the Pious Schools
BGSP	General Library of the Pious Schools
An. Cal.	Analecta Calasanctiana (Journal)
Arch. Sch. P.	Archivum Scholarum Piarum (Journal)
EC	Epistolarium Coetanorum
EEC	Epistolarium ex Europa Centrali
EGC	Epistolarium St. Joseph of Calasanz
EHI	Epistolarium ex Hispania et Italia
Eph. Cal.	Ephemerides Calasanctianae (Official Magazine of the Order)
o.c.	Work cited
Pos. s.v.	Positio super virtutibus
Pr. inf.	Informative process
Pr. O.R.	Roman Ordinary Process
Pr. Somm.	Summary Process
Rass. Hist. Bibl. Sc.	Rassegna (Magazine of the Italian Pious Schools)
Cal. Reg	Calasanzian Register
Reg. Hist. Bibl.	Register of History and Bibliography
Reg. Prov.	Register of Provinces
Reg. Serv.	Register of Servants of God
Rev.Cal.	Revista Calasancia (Journal)
Sch. P.	Pious Schools (Scholarum Piarum)



## BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE

It seems useful to me, for an agile reading of the biography of Glicerio, to advance a profile that follows a continuity of time. It illuminates in synthesis, almost at a glance, without commentary, the events from the beginning, the simple, but also intense and laborious journey. Our narration starts intentionally “in medias res”<sup>3</sup>, that is, from the most significant episode of Glicerio’s life, his conversion; and from there it points out in crescendo his spiritual elevations. A point of arrival that is like a point of departure.

The multiplicity of actions and the intensity of the experiences lived in the last ten years of his brief existence, especially in the Pious Schools, acquire, in the biography, a preponderant relief and sometimes lead beyond the notion of time. Glicerio, “*brevi vivens tempore explevit tempora multa*”<sup>4</sup>, in just a few years, he lived through many stages. The first twenty years of his life remain in the shadows, as simple points of reference, also because we have few documents and precise data that have come down to us.

In short, the biographical profile here aims to offer the reader the possibility of reconstructing an image of Glicerio from the outside, reduced and brief, but as clear and agile as possible. At the same time, it is meant to be a propaedeutic glimpse, so that the reader, more informed, will be able to enter into the history and the interior journey of the young Piarist.

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3 Latin expression meaning in the middle of the action. It is used with reference to narratives that begin in this way.

4 Living a short time, he completed many years (Wis 4:13).



## GLICERIO LANDRIANI

**H**e was born on March 1, 1588 in Milan, of Horace and Anna Visconti<sup>5</sup>, related to the Borromeo, S. Carlos and Federico. Of the eight legitimate children, four were boys. In order of birth: Fabricius, Thomas, Glicerio and Fabius. The four sisters were named: Legiandra, Barbara, Anna and Gieronima<sup>6</sup>.

He was baptized immediately by the doctor, since it was a case of necessity. Later on, solemnly, in the parish church of St. Bartholomew of Porta Nuova. His second name was Francis, in honor of the saint of Assisi, to whom his mother turned to during the difficult birth<sup>7</sup>. At the age of seven, the episode of the bread that the child distributed secretly to the poor is already worth mentioning. When he was ten years old, having lost his father, he was taken in charge by

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- 5 Anna Visconti was the sister of Jacob Visconti, who had married Elizabeth Borromeo, sister of Cardinal Frederick. Consequently, there is no blood tie between Glicerio and the two Borromeo brothers. Only *sensu lato*, by extension, we can call Glicerio *pronipote*, that is, son of the nephew of Frederick and Charles Borromeo. Those who call Glicerio nephew of St. Charles Borromeo oversimplify, even if in good faith, to bring the great Archbishop of Milan closer to the Piarist.
  - 6 Horace, a collegiate jurisconsult, in addition to his legitimate children, also had Francis, Luquino, Constanza, Perpetua and Monica. Gieronima and Constanza became nuns. With a will dated May 31, 1596, Horacio left universal heirs to the four legitimate male children, under the condition of not alienating "until they were thirty years old". Civic Historical Archive of Milan. *Milanese noble families*, by Felice Calvi. Ed. Vallardi 1884.
  - 7 To the name of Glicerio was added that of Francesco also in memory of his paternal grandfather, whose sons were Horace and Mgr. Marsilio.

Cardinal Frederick and, as tutors, his uncles Marsilio Landriani and James Visconti<sup>8</sup>.

When he was still a teenager, he used to visit a little church outside the walls of Milan to venerate the image of Our Lady of Loreto, to whom the church was dedicated. He would walk almost three kilometers from Porta Nuova, his residential neighborhood, passing in front of the church of St. Bartholomew, Porta Venezia and the Avenue of Loreto –today Corso Buenos Aires–. In those years the walls of Milan surrounded the Bastioni –the fortresses–. Beyond Porta Venezia the population was scattered in several hamlets. The small chapel was the only point of reference for worship, and almost insufficient for the few inhabitants of the area. Glicerio, a small pilgrim, frequented it assiduously, breathing, we might say, the Laurentan atmosphere of the family and tradition of the town.

One day he offered Our Lady his gold ring as a sign of perpetual consecration<sup>9</sup>. “He was formed in a good and holy education, and from his youth he dedicated himself to the service of God”, said St. Joseph Calasanz in his Process<sup>10</sup>. The biographers take it for certain

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- 8 Marsilio was Apostolic Nuncio in France, Bishop of Vigevano and Pontifical Legate in Bologna. He died in 1609. He donated his goods to his nephews: to Fabio he gave the abbey of St. Anthony of Milan, the gold ring with sapphire, many gold objects and sacred ornaments. Many goods to his cathedral of Vigevano and to a monastery. The rest went to Thomas, second son of Horace. To Glicerio the abbey of St. Anthony of Piacenza. In a letter to Cardinal Frederick, May 5, 1611, Glicerio laments that his uncle “died with so much money, silver and furniture, and left me nothing. Moreover, he had enjoyed the abbey that I have, for two years, and the fruits have not been given to me”. Perhaps the uncle thought that Glicerio would soon enter the Discalced Carmelites or another religious order. Marsilio Landriani is buried in front of the high altar of the cathedral of Vigevano. Before his death he was able to participate shortly in the provincial synod convoked by Cardinal Frederick for the canonization of St. Charles Borromeo.
- 9 “Later Glicerio told a student of his who was a confidant, that from that moment on he no longer felt the stimulus of the vehement flesh”. F. Baldi, *Vita del P. Abate Glicerio Landriani*.
- 10 “I knew it directly from Glicerio’s brother, Fabricius, bishop of Pavia, before governor of Camerino and then of Benevento, with whom I have had many dealings, and also with Sir Tomas, also his brother. *Pos. s. v.*, par. 29-30.

that Glicerio went to Bologna with his uncle Marsilio, to finish there his studies of philosophy, law and theology. He would have remained in the city for the entire time that Bishop Marsilio served as papal legate (1604-1606)<sup>11</sup>.

Admired by the piety of his nephew and his excellent results in his studies, in 1606, with an act drawn up by the notary Raphael Rucio, Bishop Marsilio ceded in perpetuity to Glicerio the *Abbey of St. Anthony in Trebbia di Piacenza* with the title of non-residential commendatory Abbot, *in perpetuity*. The abbey –hospital, church and convent– entrusted since its origin to the Order of the *Hospitallers*, had been granted by the Holy Apostolic See to Bishop Marsilio Landriani. In 1595 Marsilio had ceded the management to the friars of the Third Order of St. Francis, as well as the church, sacristy, convent, hospital, cemetery, cloister, garden, orchard, nursery, ornaments, utensils, with all the rights and the spiritual and temporary belongings, except *the title, rights, prerogatives and administration* of the goods of the entrustment, reserved to the abbot. Under the same conditions, the goods of the encomienda passed to Glicerio . The friars took care of divine worship and the service of the sick.

Glicerio, residing in Rome, administered the ecclesiastical entity through a *General Procurator*, who thus came under his high protection. Because of the magnificent behavior of the friars, Glicerio “confirmed and extended the concession of his uncle, assigning to the said religious in perpetual lease also the goods of S. Antonio de Castell’ Arquato”. In order to benefit from the copious rents of the abbey, Glicerio, on April 8, 1606, received the clerical tonsure<sup>12</sup>. In the first months of 1607 he went to Rome together with his older brother Mgr. Fabricius, to complete his theological studies at the college of St. Thomas Aquinas at the Minerva, and to begin his ecclesiastical career. He lived with his brother in a sumptuous palace on Via Giulia, in an apartment entirely his own, with servants and grooms. He liked to dress in silk, to ride horses, as was the custom in those days among

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11 See *Arch, Sch. P.*, 1982, n. 11, p. 9. 12.

12 See *Arch, Sch. P.*, 1982, n. 11, p. 6.

people of his rank. An excess of vanity which he will atone for later as an *ignominy* of youth.

In the autumn of 1607, the sudden conversion. Occasion? A paternal reproach from Cardinal Carlo Pio, his advisor. "God spoke through the mouth of the prelate, and made those words effective, which fell on good soil. In the Church of Santa Maria dell' Orazione e Morte in Via Giulia he met Fr. Francis Mendez, who revealed to him: 'God has sent you to Rome to help souls.' "He dressed himself in vile and poor sackcloth, totally detaching himself from the affection for clothes, which like a hook usually clings to the human heart"<sup>13</sup>. He left his brother Fabricius and joined the community of St. Francis – which, in the meantime, had moved to Via Frattina<sup>14</sup>– and took an active part in its charitable works. In March 1609 Fr. Francis Méndez returned to Spain. Paul V assigned Fr. Dominic of Jesus Mary, a Spanish Carmelite, to Glicerio as his confessor and spiritual director. On May 31, 1612, Glicerio, advised by Fr. Dominic, entered, with five companions of Via Frattina, in the Pious Schools, although free of himself and under the direction of Fr. Dominic. In the meantime, struggling inwardly between the poor of the street and the work of Calasanz, Glicerio, in the following October, left with Mr. Diego for a sanctuary near Spoleto, to obtain from on High light in the definitive choice of his future. Returning to Rome, after a time of spiritual exercises in the convent of La Scala, he preferred to dedicate himself to the poor children in the Pious Schools. On December 17, 1613, with a notarial act, under the requests of Cosmas Contini, he finally ceded the Abbey of Piacenza to the Friars Minor of the city: "I try to lighten the burden in order to be more ready for Paradise "<sup>15</sup>.

In September 1614, Glicerio, a permanent pilgrim, obtained permission to make an extraordinary pilgrimage to Loreto –135 miles on foot-. On September 15 he went with Fr. Joseph Calasanz to Frascati. There he immediately became famous for his charity and many prodigi-

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13 F. Baldi, o.c., p. 8.

14 See *Ephem. Cal.* 1939, pp. 14-15; C. Bau, *Biografia Critica*, 1949, p. 311; *Ephem. Cal.* 1959, n. 22, p. 388.

15 A. M. Mistrangelo, *Il Ven. Glicerio Landriani delle Scuole Pie*, p. 164.

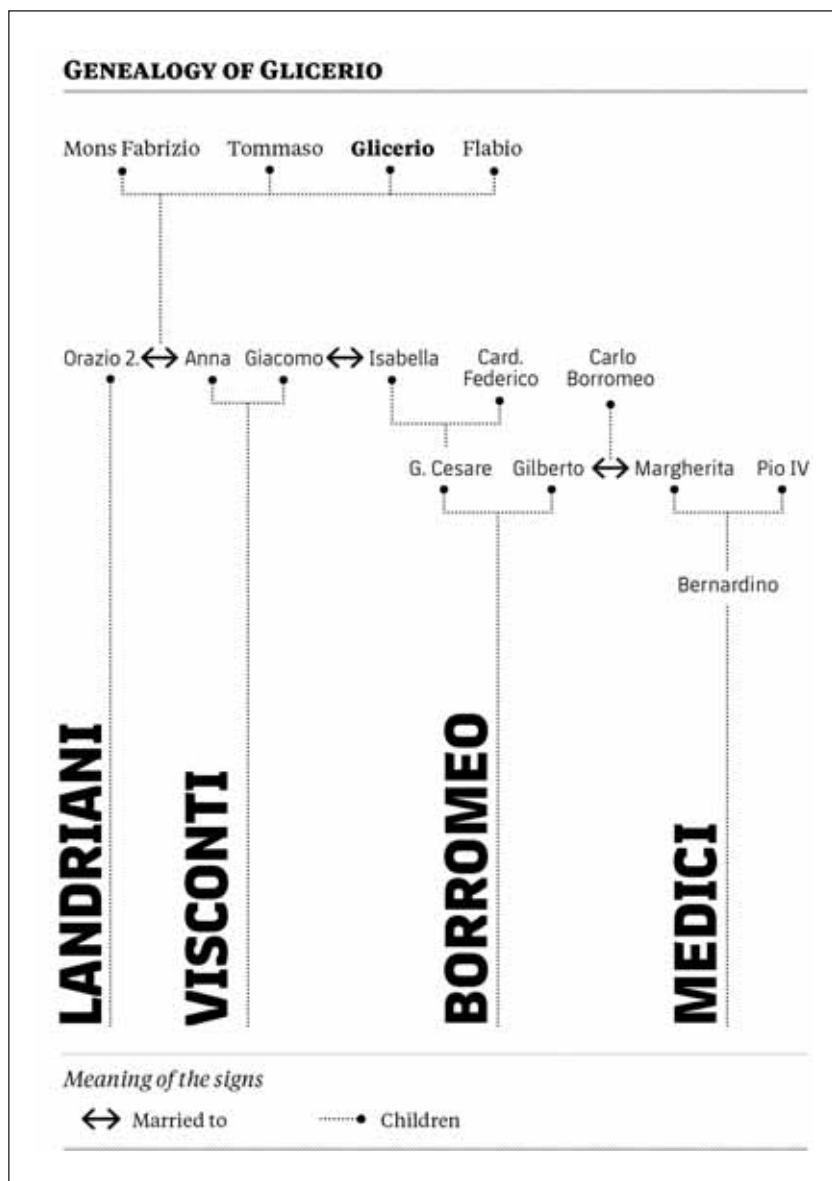
gious deeds. On January 25, 1617, Calasanz sent Glicerio to the Basilica of St. Paul to pray for the procedure that would take place that day: the relationship between the Pious Schools and the Congregation of Lucca. An hour of prayer and then, looking at his companion, he predicted: "Joy! The Lord will exalt the Pious Schools for the merits of Father Joseph". On March 25, 1617, in the Palazzo Giustiniani, from the hands of the Cardinal Protector, Calasanz received the Piarist habit and immediately afterwards, in the oratory of St. Pantaleon, he gave it to the first 14 companions. Among them was not Glicerio, because he had not yet received the permission of Fr. Dominic. On July 2, 1617, Glicerio finally obtained permission to wear the habit. Under the guidance of Fr. Casani, master of novices, he began the short period of novitiate at St. Onofrio on the Gianicolo.

On September 20, 1617, the liturgical feast of St. Glicerio Landriani<sup>16</sup>, the symptoms of a serious illness –it was tuberculosis– appeared. The seat of the novitiate had meanwhile been transferred to Santa Maria in Via, near the Trevi Fountain. At the suggestion of Father Casani, Glicerio went to ask Our Lady, venerated in the church of St. Caio in Montecavallo, if he would be healed or if he should immediately leave the vineyard that God himself had granted him. He concluded: *Here I am; I am coming, Lord*. By the grace of Pope Paul V, Glicerio was the first Piarist to profess the solemn vows of poverty, chastity and obedience in the Congregation of the Pious Schools. He died in the novitiate house at the age of 30. His body rests in Rome, in the church of San Pantaleo. On June 23, 1620, at the initiative of St. Joseph Calasanz, the Ordinary Process for the Beatification of the Servant of God, Glicerio Landriani, was opened before the Congregation of Rites. On May 31, 1931, Pope Pius XI declared his virtues had been heroic and conferred on him the title of *Venerable*.

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16 Archbishop Glicerius Landriani is a 5<sup>th</sup> century saint. He ruled the diocese of Milan from 429 to 437.

## GENEALOGY OF GLICERIO



# GLICERIO A NEW MAN

## 1. THE CONVERSION

We begin with the central and most significant event of Glicerio's brief life. It is a personal and profound encounter with Jesus. A dazzling experience, a radical transformation of life. The young Glicerio had realized that all he had sought up to that moment was vanity and smoke in comparison with the love of Jesus Christ. As the Apostles, after that fruitless night's fishing, found their nets empty, so did Glicerio. The fruit, after years of career and toil, seemed to him like the fruit of a dead sea: he opened it and found nothing. Deep self-knowledge and the need for forgiveness worked in him a true metamorphosis, which is a gift of freedom, and allowed him to realize the highest qualities and capacities given to him by the Creator:

- total self-giving to the last ones in the religious-social environment of Rome
- radical choice and fidelity to one's vocation, thanks to the encounter with providential people.

### *Rome, Via Giulia: the "Damascus Way"*

Via Giulia was the most aristocratic street in Rome. "The true heart of papal Rome, it can be said to have offered all the life that for centuries had been stirring in its neighborhoods, the great people who lived in its houses, the artists who made its face unmistakable". Among the sumptuous palaces that opened the way to the lavish pa-

rades and sacred manifestations, the Milanese nobleman, Monsignor Fabricius Landriani, well known at the pontifical court, had chosen his residence. His brother Glicerio, who had already received his first tonsure and the title of Abbot of St. Anthony of Piacenza the year before, arrived at his side in 1607 from Milan<sup>17</sup>.

Rome was for the 19 year old man the surest path that would allow him to fully realize the aspirations indicated by his family's traditions. He had the approval of Frederick Borromeo, Archbishop of Milan, who had taken under his care the young Glicerio, fatherless at the age of ten. The mother, a widow, sacrificing her mother's affection for her son's sake, let him go to his destiny, even though she foresaw that she would never embrace him again. Glicerio carried in his heart the heroic examples of his great-uncle, Cardinal Charles, who only three years later would be proclaimed a saint, the teachings of Cardinal Frederick and the dream of one day being able to walk in his exemplary footsteps. It is true that those sublime figures did not at all coincide with the image of many cardinals he had encountered in the Roman courts.

"The glory of the One who moves/shines in one part more/less in another"<sup>18</sup>, even in the persons covered by the same purple. Different were the pontifical habits of St. Charles Borromeo and the *uncontaminated purple* of Frederick, and those of the pomp and luxury that dazzled the eyes of Glicerio in the company of the sacred princes of Rome, and attracted his attention.

The Church of the early seventeenth century, with its God-given authority, a power at once spiritual and temporal, had become something like a *state organism*, half Roman, half Oriental. The pomp, not only in liturgical ritual, created prestige and suggestion. Appearance

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17 Abbot was then also the one who received an ecclesiastical benefit, linked to the fulfillment of a sacred office. The title was *commendatory abbot*. The benefice could not be granted to anyone who had not received the Minor Orders, or at least the first Tonsure. Glicerio received the Tonsure with the title of Abbot, although he would never become a priest. He said he was not worthy of the title, as James Vaquedano affirms, in a letter to Fr. Dominic of Jesus Mary, dated April 17, 1618 (see this letter in n. 6 of the Appendix of this book).

18 Dante, *Paradiso*, I, 1-3.

took the place of substance, the form stood out more than the content. Ideal beauty, more than a value referring to the spirit, often became an end in itself. Glicerio took the path of the new models. He studied with great profit the theological sciences at the College of St. Thomas Aquinas in Santa Maria sopra Minerva of the Dominican Fathers. His guide and teacher was Father Petronio, who later became master of the Sacro Palazzo. His brother was proud of him and to his friends who congratulated him he would say: "From Milan, with my brother, I have received a reproach and an example"<sup>19</sup>.

Glicerio loosened his vigilance over himself: "Little by little, the courtly fumes began to cling to him after the vanities, especially in his refined and elegant dress, cruel to the point of servitude"<sup>20</sup>. Everything seemed beautiful and easy to him, as in a fable. And in his youthful enthusiasm, he did not realize that he had given free rein in a dead end. But there was someone up who was watching over him. Glicerio frequented from time to time a personage close to his house, Cardinal Carlo Pio, who felt a paternal affection for him. The young man had perhaps abandoned him for some time. One day he turned to him resolutely: "Who are you? –You are certainly not the abbot of Piacenza that I know as a modest and pious young man! With those gummed hairs, that proud look and that tight dress... like a ladies' man... That is absolutely inappropriate in an ecclesiastic"<sup>21</sup>. For Glicerio it was like smashing his face against a wall. That was all he needed. In Cardinal Pio's mouth he heard the voice of Frederick, the gesture of Jesus, who knocked Saul off his horse on the road to Damascus. He looked at himself in the mirror<sup>22</sup>. He lowered his eyes filled with tears. In the depths of his soul he felt a force bursting forth and a new reality taking shape. As the prophet Ezekiel (36:26) had announced, "I will give you a new heart, I will instill in you a new spirit." He whispered: –What shall I do, Lord?" and he ran to find the man who would reveal God's will to him.

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19 A. M. Mistrangelo, o.c., p. 24.

20 F. Baldi, o.c., p. 6.

21 A. M. Mistrangelo, cfr. o.c., pp. 29-30.

22 J. Jericho, o.c., p. 1: "...on waking up, he opened his eyes to look at himself".

### *Meeting with Fr. Francis Méndez of Christ*<sup>23</sup>

Walking south along Via Giulia, adjacent to the Falconieri palace, just before the Arch of the Farnese garden, is the church of Santa Maria dell'Orazione e Morte. At its feet the waters of the Tiber flow into the sea. Glicerio, now entirely renewed, obtained the permission of forty continuous hours before the exposed Sacrament, so that the Lord would show him His will.

In the meantime, let us follow him, when, leaving home with two grooms, he enters the church illuminated for the feast and perfumed with incense, for adoration before Jesus-Eucharist.

He discreetly asked Mr. Francis Selvaggi<sup>24</sup>: "Where is Father Francis of Christ? –He is there, praying," he replies. And Glicerio, too, remains prostrate, completely absorbed in prayer. At a distance are the grooms, who follow any movement with astonishment. One of them, Honorius, says in a low voice to Selvaggi: "That is Father Abbot Glicerio, brother of Mgr. Fabricius."

After almost an hour in prayer, Glicerio was finally able to speak with Father Francis. What would they say to each other? Glicerio vented the bitterness of his soul for the time lost in the pursuit of vanities. In a tumult of thoughts and memories, feelings, cries and supplications, he confessed his whole life to Father Francis. With him she went through the various stages. A serene childhood in the family. A wonderful father. When he discovered the theft of the bread that little Glicerio was secretly distributing to the poor, not only did he not reproach him for it, but he ordered his provider: "Leave him alone. If he continues in

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23 Fr. Méndez, a disciple of St. John of Avila, the apostle of Andalusia, had gone to Rome from Spain to obtain approval for a clerical institute. He lived with other priests in the house of Mr. Francis Selvaggi on Via Giulia, then on Via Frattina, while seeking approval from the Holy See.

24 He was in charge of the administration of the Church della Morte on Via Giulia. Méndez and other clerics who lived with him in community, dedicated to works of charity, especially piety towards the deceased. He would remain forever united to Glicerio, even in the Pious Schools. Until his death he would be a guest at St. Pantaleo's, with the office of *almoner*; treated in everything, although a layman, as a religious. Cfr. G. Sántha, *Ensayos críticos*, Salamanca 1976, pp.126-142.

this way, he will be a man of God and will not detract from the name of his great predecessor, St. Glicerio Landriani”<sup>25</sup>. He also told her that his pious mother had imbued him with a love for the Blessed Virgin that culminated in his total consecration to her. And then there was the period of studies in Bologna, flawless in every aspect. And the first months of great enthusiasm in Rome. And the dark path into which, unconsciously, she had entered, a situation that was soon to be death!

Mr. Selvaggi, who, curious, had watched in some way, recounts that at that moment Father Francis “began to flatter him”, assuring him that the nightmare was over, that now he was safe in the Father’s house, and could savor the perfume of that bread that as a child he distributed to Jesus in the person of his poor. That the Father, good and great in love, had already clothed his nakedness, and Mary had placed the golden ring on his finger<sup>26</sup>. –“My son”, concluded Father Francis, “God has sent you to Rome to help souls”<sup>27</sup>.

Glicerio returned home and told his brother about the meeting with Father Francis, and his desire to follow him in everything, leaving his own house, and... soon! “he added with fire in his eyes, soon, to make up for gaps and delays, such as seeing and not looking, understanding and not acting. Bishop Fabricius listened attentively, he valued the diagnosis, but, as for the therapy, he advised calm and reflection”. It could be, –he said– smoke of straw! It is necessary to carry out this delicate journey with wisdom. Look! You could do the spiritual exercises first, for example, in the convent of La Scala. I

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25 A. M. Mistrangelo, o.c., p. 9.

26 Francis Selvaggi describes there in detail the events he had the good fortune to attend: “...while I was in the Church of the Death, as Provider of the dead in it, and when the Forty Hours Prayer was being said, at the request of Abbot Glicerio, so that the Lord would inspire him what His will was; one of the servants, still alive, named Honorius, told me that he was the brother of Mons. Fabricius Landriani... We prayed together for an hour, then Fr. Francis spoke... The said Father began to flatter him, saying: “My little son, God has sent you to Rome to help souls” - Pr. Inf., pp. 40-42.

27 Cfr. Armini, Alessio, *Vita del venerabile Servo di Dio P. Glicerio Landriani di Cristo*, Firenze 1878, p. 25; P. Mussesti, Pietro, *Vita del venerabile P. Glicerio Landriani*, ms. AGSP, p. 6.

know a truly holy religious, Fr. Dominic Ruzola, superior of the Discalced Carmelite Fathers. He could be an excellent guide for you, to see how to face the problem with lucidity and clairvoyance, avoiding useless rough edges and offering you possible solutions. In short, listen to your heart, yes, but... with your mind”.

Glicerio thought the brother's advice was fair. He spent a few days in the convent of La Scala, and was able to directly appreciate Fr. Dominic's holiness and his words filled with the Spirit of God. He returned home determined to follow Father Francis. He kissed the feet of his brother and the servants, asking everyone forgiveness for the bad example he had given them. He insisted with his brother that he wanted to move to Fr. Francis' community. In the meantime, he prepared himself with all kinds of humiliations, dressing poorly, cutting his hair, taking care of the lowest services and also serving the cook of the palace. He cast off all vanity, renounced the grooms and everything that had to do with personal service. “He abandoned all comforts and fineries. He gave himself to a simple life and to a most modest parsimony. The desire for the salvation of souls was more and more deeply affirmed in him, like a fixed nail”<sup>28</sup>. To his brother, who marveled, he replied: “This world is not worth it: he who leaves everything, finds everything”<sup>29</sup>.

Fr. Peter Mussesti recounts that “when many went to consult with Monsignor, his brother, he would take some of them to his office, admonishing them about the pains of hell and the precariousness of the things of this world, and discussing how to serve God”<sup>30</sup>.

Fabricius, doubting whether he had lost his reason, had recourse to the wise words of Cardinal Pio. And the cardinal, after a long conversation: –... he is not mad the abbot, no, my monsignor, but very sane, and he speaks with great certainty about the things of God. Let him work, because the Lord wants to accomplish something great through him<sup>31</sup>.

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28 F. Baldi, o.c., p. 8.

29 Pos. s.v., II, p. 119.

30 AGSP, Reg. Serv. 39, p. 40.

31 A. M. Mistrangelo, o.c., p. 4.

Meanwhile, the monsignor's house began to become the target of a procession of poor people. And this was the classic straw that broke the camel's back. Monsignor Fabricius granted the grace. Glicerio humbly asked his brother to give him out of charity and love of God a mattress and two blankets. With tears in his eyes Fabricius replied that he was the owner of everything, that he could freely take whatever he pleased". No, Glicerio answered, I want poor man's things, never again rich man's things". He took only two pieces of board and two sheets. He sent for Selvaggi, who in the meantime had moved to the small community of Father Francesco in Via Frattina, in a slightly larger house, next to S. Lorenzo in Lucina. There they brought the things that were strictly necessary. Fabricius also sent them some trunks with silk dresses and stockings, but Glicerio returned them to him, accepting in compensation seventy scudi which he distributed to the poor.

Bishop Fabricius secretly sent Honorius to observe and report to him in detail the tenor of life that his brother led with those priests. Like Mary in the Gospel, Glicerio had chosen "the better part", which would not be taken away from him.

## 2. THE OPERATING ENVIRONMENT OF GLICERIO

### *Rome, capital of the Papal State*

Rome, the center of Christianity, was also the capital of a State, the State of the Church, which in the 16th century extended until the Po River. Rome had more than one hundred thousand inhabitants. It had undergone a radical process of growth and urban restructuring under the successors of Julius II and Leo X. A building boom of wastefulness: 54 churches, built ex novo or rebuilt, 60 new noble palaces, 20 villas, two new neighborhoods, 30 new streets opened, three aqueducts restored, 35 public fountains. And also there were the Vatican Palaces of the Lateran, the Quirinal, the Palazzo Venezia and the Collegio Romano. The construction of St. Peter's alone cost 1,500,000 silver scudos, a sum equivalent to the State's income each year. Much of the money spent in Rome came from the alms and collections made throughout the Catholic world, but also from increasingly odi-

ous tax burdens. A river of money that served to feed, in addition to the urban policy, the ambitious international policy of the pontiffs and their patronage.

The ostentation of luxury and power, and a largely parasitic economy, with wastefulness that had no equal in other European countries<sup>32</sup>, ended up becoming a reason for idleness and weariness to the free deployment of the spiritual mission of the Church. Only crumbs were left over for the social welfare of the poor strata. Jesus had admonished Peter and his companions: “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them as absolute lords, and their great ones oppress them with their power. But it shall not be so among you, but whoever would become great among you shall be slave of all”<sup>33</sup>.

Jesus warned them against certain forms of contamination with temporal power, such as an overly accentuated sense of hierarchy, verticality, absolute power, in contrast with the spirit of communion and service. The master structures of the Church were secure and solid, founded on the cornerstone, Christ, and guaranteed the perennialism of his message. But it needed to be restored, its cracked walls and peeling plaster to be repaired. The Church is intact in its substance, but its human elements are defective.

### *The Pope and the Reformation*

The profound crisis opened by Luther had shown, among other things, that the faith was rather weak. And this seemed to be related to deficiencies in teaching. It was indispensable to teach “what all must know in order to obtain eternal salvation” and to set forth “briefly and clearly the vices to avoid and the virtues to practice, in order to escape the pains of hell and to attain the life eternal”<sup>34</sup>.

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32 Under Pope Leo X the papal court comprised 2,000 people, while, for example, that of France under Francis I counted about 600. The artist Balthasar Peruzzi left the papal court “loving freedom more than the grace of the Pope”. E. Garin, *L'uomo nella storia del Rinascimento*. Laterza, 1993, p. 28.

33 Mark, 10, 42-45.

34 Council of Trent. *Decretum de reformatione*, can.4. 1563.

Papal Rome presented itself in this period as two vividly opposed faces:

- on the one hand, the beauty of its monuments, the sanctity of its tradition
- on the other, worrying aspects of civil and moral degradation and religious ignorance
  
- on the one hand, attention to the promising signs of autonomous development of the renewal, which were emerging preferably from below, and often even preceded the Reformation
- on the other hand, the reaction against the Protestant Reformation with particularly negative and defensive intentions and means, which were provided by the apex and were sometimes identified with the intolerance of the Inquisition
  
- on the one hand, the Council of Trent's favored demand for a return to the original purity of Christianity. In particular, in Milan, the air of renewal, wisely breathed by archbishops Charles and Frederick Borromeo, animated by great pastoral zeal and a strong reforming charge; in Rome, the birth and flourishing of numerous religious orders;
- on the other hand, an institutional Church, burdened by an earthly spirit and worldly behavior. In the Roman curia, which did not want to be inferior to other courts in wealth and pomp, humanity and poverty were little appreciated;
  
- on the one hand, a wise legislation encouraged the priest in the midst of the people, organized pastoral visits, synods, councils; it favored, in a joyful and dynamic tension towards holiness, the pastoral, catechetical and charitable action of the founders, the birth of new congregations and religious confraternities;
- on the other hand, it was the Roman Curia itself that was being reorganized, but with the main intention of preventing the spread of movements linked to the Protestant Reformation. Sixtus V (1585-1590) fixed the number of cardinals at seventy and the cardinal congregations at fifteen, coinciding with the modern dicasteries. But these institutes, more than representing a balance to the authority of the pontiff, they became an instrument of his power.

In a plastic way, such a situation of the double face is recognized in the two statues that flank the altar of St. Ignatius of Loyola in the church of Gesù in Rome: Two ladies, one of whom presents the monstrance to be adored by two kneeling kings; the other strongly whips two men, Luther and Calvin, who try to defend themselves by fleeing.

The intervention of the Catholic Church in various fields was becoming unbearable. In addition to the tensions that ended in excommunications or quarrels –Paolo Sarpi, Giordano Bruno, Thomas Campanella, Galileo Galilei– its absorbing presence often ended up conditioning freedom of thought and expression, as well as the growth of consciences. Many intellectuals bowed their heads to the dictates of the Church, even in the scientific and literary fields. On the other hand, Giordano Bruno was burned at the stake, Thomas Campanella was imprisoned for thirty years and Galileo Galilei was excommunicated. Popes John XXIII and later John Paul II have asked the world for forgiveness.

### *The historical and religious context*

S. Charles Borromeo in Milan had performed the miracle of reforming his entire diocese, creating a cultured clergy, a moral conscience, and schools for the poor.

The streets of Rome, on the other hand, were full of vagrants, farmers who the landowners had driven off the land and pushed into the city, transforming them into beggars. Add to this the terrible and recurrent famines, the waves of banditry and prostitutes and children left to fend for themselves on every street corner.

Throughout Europe, after the discovery of America, the political and economic upheavals were accompanied by displacements along the great trade routes, far from the Mediterranean sea. Wars, plundering, epidemics, famine and despair pushed an army of poor people towards the cities, who doubled the number of their inhabitants, victims of a society deaf to their cries. Without a home, without a fixed abode, they crowded hospitals and prisons. But in Rome the situation was aggravated by the incredible succession of famines in the last decade of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the plague of 1591, the flood of 1598, and the collapse of the banks, which left thousands of people in the street. And

the level of popular religiosity? Today the most difficult problem for scholars of this historical period is that of the sources, because rarely the subaltern classes, mostly totally illiterate, have left us direct testimonies. At best, we must be content with what comes from the educated classes, with the inevitable distortions that this entails. The parish archives themselves, and the records of pastoral visits, limit themselves to recording generic piety in devotional practices, the frequency of sacraments, attendance at Christian doctrine and deviant behavior. But, given the prevailing conformism, the data are of little significance. Indirect sources and witnesses are the popular folklore, sermons, catechisms, devotional booklets and trial records.

However, the very fact that many founders of religious Orders were present in Rome, such as Ignatius of Loyola, Camillo de Lellis and Joseph Calasanz; many confraternities, such as the Oratory of St. Philip Neri or St. Jerome of Charity; hospices and pious societies, such as Santa Maria in Aquiro and Santa Maria degli Orfani, means that there was much to reform. Proof of this are the numerous laws of the time and the relative penalties for usurers and blasphemers, sodomites and prostitutes. Undoubtedly, the activities of the confraternities were flourishing, and their primary penitential purpose was now secondary to the urgent prevalence of educational and welfare activities. Thousands of orphans and abandoned minors wandered the streets of the city.

From the whole it is clear that such a vast and complex field was open to the generous action of Glicerio, insatiable in giving himself to others for the love of Christ. It was only a matter of focusing ideas and feelings that burst forth from his heart in love. Anyone who knocked on his door would be an angel of God. To be able to give, even if it was only a glass of water, but with love and fraternal welcome, would be for him a source of great joy and spiritual consolation, in Rome or wherever he went. When obedience called him to Frascati, he would write to his friend, Fr. Garcia: "We, by the grace of the Lord, are joyful, and it seems to me to be much more lively than in Rome, especially today when we have hosted five barefoot Fathers and given them to drink"<sup>35</sup>.

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35 From Frascati to Fr. John Garcia, Rome, April 6, 1617. *Reg. Serv.* 38, 1.

### 3. IMPACT AND GRADUAL INSERTION IN THE MULTIPLE SOCIAL REALITY

#### *From Milan to Rome, in the footsteps of Charles and Frederick*

Glicerio lived his own drama of interior conversion in the light of the experience that the two Borromeo cousins had had before him in Rome. He discovered in them an apparently coincidence of events, and consonance of aspirations and style, fruits of the same careful family upbringing.

#### *A common goal*

Both Glicerio, like his relatives Charles and Frederick, went to Rome at a very young age, pressured by Milanese and Roman kinship, so that their presence there –highly recommended– could favor future events. We already know how Glicerio stumbled in Rome, for an instant, almost dazzled by the pompous forms of the Roman Curia, which ambiguously foster the ambitions even of the honest men of the Church of God. The three of them had gone to Rome in a devout spirit, because they considered it a holy city. But the atmosphere and, above all, that of the court, to them, who came from a family of holy religious customs, must not have made a good impression.

Frederick wrote to Renato Borromeo on October 25, 1586: “Believe me, truly, that I am in purgatory”. He alluded to the idle and drowsy Rome, and to the gout, from which he saw so many prelates attacked... “both by the air, as well as by rest at home and in the carriage”.

Cardinal Silvio Antoniano, a great friend of Frederick, was obliged to declare that “the road to the courts is full of dangers, and of many occasions of sin; a stormy sea, where at all times one is about to be shipwrecked, all full of insidiousness, envy and simulations”<sup>36</sup>.

St. Charles, Cardinal Frederick and Glicerio himself also had their court, with a more or less numerous staff of their own. Freder-

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36 Silvio Antoniano, *Tre libri dell'educazione cristiana*, Ed. Delle Donne, Verona 1585, p. 84.

ick's court numbered forty or fifty persons, but, frequenting the Oratory of St. Philip Neri, he found high personalities who were in harmony with him and, more importantly, the spiritual direction of Philip, "the Father of my soul", as he defined him. On the other hand, Glicerio, and especially St. Charles, were rather abandoned.

Charges and titles rained down on the noble families of Borromeo-Visconti-Landriani-Medici. At the age of seven, St. Charles received his first abbey, that of Arona; Glicerio, at the age of 18, obtained the title of the abbey of Piacenza from his uncle, Bishop Marsilio; likewise Frederick, from his uncle, Cardinal Altemps. With the offices and titles also rained fabulous honors and riches, which Bascapé defined as "absolutely regal splendor". Servants were dressed in black velvet from head to toe and the most beautiful horses in Italy.

We do not know precisely how much Glicerio's income amounted to, but the rents of Charles' benefices were valued at a total of forty-eight thousand escudos. Frederick was reluctant to "give evidence of pretentious ambition"<sup>37</sup> and thought of returning home. In 1595 he was appointed to the archiepiscopal chair of Milan, in spite of himself. At the insistence of the Pope, "devoting days and nights to tears and prayer"<sup>38</sup> he scoffed at himself, ready to leave the purple. It was Philip Neri who, as his confessor, told him that "there was no reason to resist the Holy Spirit". So, "in amaritudine animi cessit tandem", that is, he gave in with great bitterness. If it had depended on him, his life would have had a quiet context, made of contemplation, study, in a discreet silence, a little out of the world.

On the contrary, neither Glicerio nor much less Charles were by vocation ascetics, for, in addition to their attachment to the family name and glories, they indulged in hunting and frequent ball games. Such luxury, it was said, was demanded of them in those times by their rank. But the very high standard of living put their virtue at risk.

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37 Frederick Borromeo to his mother, December 27, 1586.

38 Cesare Baronio, Naples, October 21, 1595.

### *God's visit and conversion*

And then came the moment of grace and conversion. For Glicerio it was the words of Cardinal Pio; for Charles it was the unforeseen death at the age of 27 of his very dear brother Frederick, on whom the Borromeo lineage was based. A lightning bolt in the middle of the day. Charles saw in it a divine punishment, “*manus Domini tetegit nos*”, the hand of God has punished us, he kept repeating.

To this was added the strong request of Fr. Ribera, General Procurator of the Jesuit Fathers. He had gone to Cardinal Carlos, but had to wait in a long line. When he was finally received, he said to Carlos, who was trying to excuse himself: “I pity you, for I have seen many times how great is the multitude of the business you deal with. While I was waiting, I prayed to God for Your Illustrious Lordship, so that the business of the world would not take away your time to think of the salvation of your soul”.

Those words, Borromeo confessed, “were the beginning of my conversion”. Because of their enormous spiritual reserves, Charles and Glicerio, even in the midst of luxury and riches, remained unshaken. Touched by grace, they stripped themselves of all earthly ambition, fighting intimately against the insistent aspirations of relatives. Dreams of grandeur and the vanities of the world vanished. After the spiritual exercises, for Charles, under the direction of Father Ribera, and for Glicerio under the direction of Father Dominic of Jesus Mary, the penitential practices became so severe that even their spiritual directors, who encouraged them, were censured. They reduced or discharged the domestic staff. They subjected themselves to merciless mortifications and flagellations, despite their ill health. Almsgiving became so generous that the rents were largely exhausted. Prayer and penance, frugal meals, utmost poverty and service to all. For Glicerio, the motive was also the Gospel call: “If you want to follow me, sell all that you have and give to the poor”. He repeats it this many times in letters to Cardinal Frederick and adds: “My heart will not be satisfied with anything else, for I want to be a dispenser of the power that my Lord has given me”<sup>39</sup>.

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39 Letter to Card. Frederick, September 29, 1612.

A path no longer declining, comfortable, provocative, where the horizon could be seen, but ever narrower and more suffocating; but a path in ascent, which is difficult to travel, and which, nevertheless, allows the eyes of the heart to advance towards ever wider horizons.

*St. Charles Borromeo, model of life*

Cosimo Corsini affirms in the Roman ordinary process: “Father Abbot was a great servant of God and imitated the life of St. Charles”<sup>40</sup>. “Be imitators of me, –St. Charles repeated– as I am of Christ, the Lord”.

Glicerio would look to him in his first charitable action with Fr. Francis Méndez, in favor of the prostitutes and the poor of the city. He was later inspired by the intense catechetical activity promoted in the Pious Schools by St. Joseph Calasanz.

But Glicerio, more than the variety and quantity of St. Charles’ pastoral work, which was impossible to imitate, what he sought to imitate in his daily life was his spirituality. The practices of piety and charity preferred by Glicerio, which more closely recall the traits of the life of St. Charles Borromeo, are:

- the welcome that the archbishop of Milan gave to the pilgrims, humbly washing their feet
- the sackcloth, the rope around his neck and the very heavy cross, which he carried in penitential processions, especially during the plague of 1576
- the extraordinary endurance confronting the pain, the spirit of penance, courage and love for the poor.
- obedience to the confessor: Charles to Fr. Adorno, Glicerio to Fr. Dominic of Jesus Mary
- the assiduous practice of the Spiritual Exercises
- the care for the religious and cultural formation of the poor children

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40 Pos. s.v., p. 238.

- the ardent love that animated every thought, word, gesture; the courage of a soul given to God, never satisfied with any fatigue, when comparing the good things received with the sins committed. Until their health failed and both were prematurely extinguished.

*Full-time, to win everyone for Christ*

*A “new” presence*

After his conversion, Glicerio’s presence in Rome was no longer one of adaptation to certain realities taken as an example to imitate. It is, rather, one of denunciation. It is a proposal for change.

The guide was already Fr. Francis Méndez, an ardent figure of the apostolate, a little unbalanced, but fully inserted in the religious and social reality of Rome. It was he who, from the first meeting, had revealed to him: “God has sent you to Rome for the salvation of souls”.

His advisor par excellence would be Cardinal Frederick, distant in geographical terms, but very present in his memory and through his epistolary relationship. His constant source of inspiration was St. Charles, who had nourished his ideals as a child and adolescent. Along the way, there will never be lacking other eminent figures, holy persons, raised up by Providence, who will enter into his living experience and who will clarify God’s design for him.

The harvest is plentiful, the field difficult. Glicerio calls upon all his resources. All the gifts received from the Creator are now necessary, jewels that should not be kept in a safe. The challenge that Glicerio has for himself is to translate the educational values assimilated in his family and the experiences acquired into a new impulse. May the treasures of memory become ground of prophecy and projects of commitment! He must mediate between the best of a tradition or identity, and the best of an innovation or modernity, to bring about a harmonious change, which he knows is difficult, but which continues to be the dream to which he entrusts all his resources. An adventure that Glicerio was going to live with all his heart, with orientations and programs in tune with the demands of his historical moment.

### *In touch with reality*

Glicerio knew that reforms and changes are achieved through the commitment of each individual, rather than with laws. From the commitment and from the firm will, to swim against the current, opposing everything that degrades, humiliates, harms human beings and their way of salvation. He also knew that he could do little or nothing, but he demanded of himself to do everything possible. The rest would be done by the Lord. He had not yet defined anything, but he urgently needed to set out on an open process that required absolute personal dedication and also concrete experiences in already organized communities. Confraternities, religious institutes, hospices, orphanages, would certainly not solve these complex problems, which would require infrastructures that were still in short supply. Nevertheless, such structures infused the arteries of the Church with new blood, according to the spirit and the laws of the Council of Trent. They lent a helping hand, waiting for charity to flourish in more effective and lasting institutions.

Francis Méndez' community, which Glicerio had joined, was already a good beginning. Efforts to alleviate the most painful wounds. Dialogue to bring together cultural preparation and experience, to study projects that would go beyond simple social commitment, which does not change the rules of the game. To place the human person at the center, the last ones, in a global perspective of social healing.

Glicerio 's programs were concrete, of short and long term. With his radicalism in his daily activities, he was able to alleviate social demands. He was able to incorporate young people quickly, wherever possible: shepherding, laboring in the vineyards, in small businesses, in consumer goods stores, in some kind of occupation in rural works; to take off the streets the "lost" women, a source of scandal and an occasion of ruin for the young people; to establish centers for those who were disoriented, for any residential or occupational needs; to integrate them into Congregations that were a place of formation, insertion and space for social life, with the necessary tools to express and develop their own personalities; courses of study, of catechesis, for the promotion of man, to free the person from material and spiritual misery; to lend a hand to families struggling between moral

misery and extreme poverty; to change the situation of educational deficiency. In short, to create antibodies to immediately combat the virus of social evil, corruption and perversion.

Glicerio 's challenge will mature step by step, while he waits for the Lord to show him his plan more clearly. If the State does not act, or does not succeed in doing its part, Glicerio will try to invent something, to develop as best as possible substitute functions, starting from immediate needs, even if only as charity with the revenues of his abbey or with family inheritances. But he was betting on a systematic commitment to formation that would awaken consciences and lay solid foundations for the construction of a more secure future. How? Glicerio did not yet know. The works of charity, in emulation of Fr. Francis, prayer and penance, became for five years a spiritual training, a prolonged exercise, that would make him arrive in 1512, in full form, at the Pious Schools.

The school of St. Joseph Calasanz, the formation of children for a new society, fully realized his dream of a universal reform. The Pious Schools would be the goal of his long pilgrimage; catechesis and evangelization, his full-time mission.

#### 4. THE FIRST COMMITMENT: SAVING "LOST" AND "ENDANGERED" WOMEN

##### *Prostitution and the "House" in Via Frattina*

Having identified the concrete realities that were open to him in post-Tridentine Rome, Glicerio did not hesitate. He leapt into the arena. He was present where human life was subjected to offenses and violations, in order to guarantee defense, respect and dignity to the weakest strata of society. Only those who have made the Gospel their daily bread can measure themselves without false modesty against the phenomenon of prostitution, a phenomenon designed to scandalize. Jesus, who was never afraid of provocation, openly challenged the devout observers of the slightest prescription of the law, and unmasked their hypocrisy: "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes come before you into the Kingdom of God". We can imagine the fiery words that Jesus would launch today against the hypocrisy of our so-

ciety, especially for prostitution, which, while officially reprobated, nevertheless increases according to the laws of the market.

The *House* in Via Frattina was a building located in the parish of St. Lawrence in Lucina, where Fr. Francis Méndez housed eighty or ninety prostitutes who were trying to change their lives. The initiative was born from the sensibility of the couple Cristoforo and Fiorenza Todeschi, who used to pick up some women in their house in Trastevere. The couple, who had taken a vow of chastity, helped the women they took in with their own work and with the alms they received. As the number of women grew, a more convenient solution was sought next to the church of St. Lawrence in Lucina. Here in 1607 Fr. Méndez offered his collaboration and gathered around him a small community of clerics and lay people, ready to collaborate in the work of redemption of the women and willing to provide the means of support. The members of the community were: Fr. George Denis, the cook Gabriel, Francis Selvaggi, Fr. John García, Fr. Thomas Vitoria and Brother Diego. They were joined by Glicerio Landriani, who made a decisive contribution to the work with his enthusiasm and freed Fr. Francis from worrying about the serious financial problems. In this, too, Glicerio looked to his models:

- The charitable works promoted by Cardinal Frederick in Milan. Glicerio, barely a teenager, saw in his neighborhood, in 1601, the *Pious Place of St. Mary of Loreto*, founded by the Spaniard Fr. Martin Funes. It was intended to help young girls deprived of dowries and poor families.
- St. Charles Borromeo, who opened in Rome *Casa Pia*, dedicated to women who had been separated from vice. To its foundation, Charles had destined more than one hundred dowries, each of forty escudos, to decorously marry poor girls.
- The post-Tridentine religious climate. Among the heroic figures of saints, which the Church proposed as models to reaffirm its role of mediation against the Protestant heresy, the great personality of St. Nicholas, bishop of Myra, 4<sup>th</sup> century, was more than ever present. His miraculous action in aid of the poor was still alive. Three young women had received gold from the saint, to marry, thus avoiding to end up in prostitution.

Glicerio was inspired by these models. To this work of charity he devoted his first and precious energies.

### *A new Samaritan woman*

In the fourth chapter of John's Gospel we read of the sublime conversion initiated by Jesus with the Samaritan woman, who was not only a woman of light customs, but also a heretic. Jesus was sitting at the well of Sychar. A Samaritan woman came to draw water, a sinner, but one who, if only because she lived in torment, was unconsciously seeking a meaning to her existence. No honest person would have considered it convenient to approach her. Jesus, on the contrary, luminous in his demeanor, with the liberty that does not allow itself to be conditioned by human prejudices, attended to her, under a mid-day sun. Moreover, he asked her to drink. An exquisite courtesy that made the woman happy and prepared her to accept the gift of Jesus herself, a water with which she would no longer need occasional and fallacious substitutes to attain happiness.

Glicerio, moved with compassion for the many young girls whom misery and ignorance had driven to an immoral life, took upon himself to assist them with the companions of Francis Méndez. He made a preferential option for those people who were in a situation of greater weakness and need, inasmuch as he discovered in them in a particular way the painful image of the crucified Christ. To do this, he decided to share the sad condition of moral poverty, not giving up even in front of understandable criticism, misunderstanding and opposition.

"Glicerio showed his great charity by going to convert prostitutes and women of bad life. I remember that he went to the house of a beautiful Spanish courtesan, Catherine, to whom he asked how much he could earn that night. She replied "I don't know how many escudos". Glicerio asked her not to offend God, the Lord, any more, and gave her the money she had told him about. Having begged her many times to decide to leave sin, he obliged himself, provided she would marry, to give her three hundred escudos. He also converted Angela Velletrana, a prostitute, and a sister of his who was about to lose her virginity, taking one and the other to the house, and finally he married them, giving a dowry to each of them; and in addition to the

dowry, for some time, he gave them a giulio a day, a bottle of wine and bread so that they could live”<sup>41</sup>.

*“Expediebat ne...?”*

The scandalized Promoter of the faith asked in the process of beatification of Glicerio: “Expediebat ne Servum Dei, adhuc juventutis suae flore virentem ea ultra adire pericula? “That is: “Was it perhaps prudent that Glicerio, still in the prime of his youth, should expose himself so freely to such great risks, before which even men of age and proven virtue tremble and flee? Is not prudence perhaps the guardian and guide of all virtue?”<sup>42</sup>.

When the Sanhedrin condemned Jesus to death, among the charges of accusation it explicitly pointed out that he was often seen accompanied by prostitutes and sinners. Today, too, we know of many priests and nuns who defy a certain human prudence in the name of Christ. Yesterday, as today, the moral weight of the follower of Christ is measured by these behaviors, which does not mean that he will go to perdition! Ulysses had himself tied to the mast of the ship so as not to fall victim to the bewitching song of the mermaids. As a means of positively directing one’s emotions, living them in fullness, Glicerio used in an energetic way those that the Gospel and the example of the saints recommended. “Glicerio –it is St. Joseph Calasanz who testifies to this– was of the greatest chastity and purity. In order to maintain the virtue of purity, he used to punish his body with continuous disciplines, fasts, vigils and prayers, in such a way that he had very fat calluses on his knees... and he slept clothed, and very little, in a very rough bed”<sup>43</sup>. Father Garcia, who knew Glicerio very well, affirms: “He always walked very modestly... and I know of him that not only did he never look a woman in the face, but, even more, he fled from their company”<sup>44</sup>. This would go against what has been affirmed above and with what Mr. Selvaggi refers to in his testimony: “I remember that he

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41 Francis Selvaggi, in Pr. O.R., fol. 53.

42 Pr. “Super dubio”, III, pp. 37-38.

43 Pr. O. R., fol.40.

44 Pos. s.v., XIX, p. 572, para. 32.

had two houses in Trastevere, where he gathered single women, because the house next to S. Lorenzo in Lucina was already full; and that he ran them by paying the rent with the alms and with the income from his Abbey, which I know from having seen it"<sup>45</sup>. But, as far as we know, Glicerio always went to those places with Selvaggi or another companion, never alone. Mr. Selvaggi continues: "He has assisted various ladies abandoned by their husbands, in danger of falling into sin, and in the Parish of St. Lawrence in Damaso he directed four or five of them, giving for each one four or five giulii a week; this money was sometimes carried by me, sometimes by Fr. Tomás or Fr. Diego. And I know this because I was keeping the money"<sup>46</sup>.

### *A port of salvation*

These houses proved to be a port of salvation for many unhappy women. It is difficult, and Glicerio knew it, for a woman to freely choose to sell her own body and dignity for few coins. Most women prostitute themselves not because they want to, but as a shortcut to welfare, or because they do not see other way to go out of misery. "The imputability of guilt can be attenuated by misery, by blackmail and by social pressure"<sup>47</sup>.

Glicerio offered a house and the necessities of life, the possibility of changing one's life. In this way he took dozens and dozens off the street. He often found a convinced adherence to his proposal of conversion, even on the spiritual level. With gentleness, but, when necessary, also with a terrible voice, with the strong tone of the Gospel: Driven by his zeal, he went in the afternoon, at one, two and three o'clock at night, through the streets where the prostitutes lived, shouting in a loud voice: "Let us do penance because the tremendous judgment of God is at hand"<sup>48</sup>.

Insisting with all the means that love suggested to him, "he pulled many prostitutes out of the mire and prevented many from

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45 Pr. O. R., *De heroica caritate*, XII, p. 380, para. 74.

46 Ibid. pp. 381-382.

47 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 2355.

48 A. Armini, o.c., p. 98.

falling, distributing, in addition to the spiritual nourishment of the Word of God and holy exhortations, also continuous alms for their support”<sup>49</sup>. To some Glicerio married them off: “To some he gave the dowry to place them in marriage”<sup>50</sup>; to others he placed them with families; to others he oriented them to work, so that with their labor they could live with dignity, always assuring them a place to sleep. Some also chose the convent. And some others, unfortunately, reabsorbed by the environment, returned to their original occupation.

Once Glicerio entered the Pious Schools, he did not abandon them. He left to the Fathers of La Scala the task of carrying on their mission<sup>51</sup>. He would continue along another path in the effort to build a culture of life and create works that would highlight the dignity of the human person and the merciful love that God dispenses to those who suffer.

In the meantime, Glicerio had proven with his own hand that God can bring good even from evil itself. He understood why Jesus showed sympathy for the tax collectors and prostitutes. They had the courage of truth, they did not defend themselves and their own sin, and they lived the courage of conversion. Glicerio would no longer marvel at anything, especially at how much good evil can bring. He only marveled at God’s love when it transformed a life, renewing it, ennobling it before itself and before the world. God does not look at sin with the measure of the law, but looks at the person. Glicerio’s mission was that of the doctor who fights the disease to free and save the sick. Beyond the infractions of the moral law, he knew how to intuit that innate germ that is also in the heart of the most corrupt prostitute. Glicerio felt that he had to awaken the germ that responds to the most intimate demands of conscience, and turn it into the beginning of a new way of living. He believed in the capacity of the conscience to resurface and set out on a new path.

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49 Ibid., p. 99.

50 Ibid.

51 Father Dominic of Jesus Mary, also under the intervention of Paul V, carried forward the initiative and sought a stable seat for the institution, the house church in Via della Lungara. The work continued to exist until recent times.

## 5. THE POOR, THE SICK, THE MARGINALIZED

### *The spirit of poverty and love: glory and witness of Christ's Church*

Christ's disciples know that serving the poor or the suffering means serving Christ, and Glicerio had understood that you cannot truly serve the poor if you do not live with them. Jesus has brought us help by sharing our life, loneliness, agony and death. Sharing pain and poverty through acts of love and kindness.

His theological culture also sustained Glicerio's faith. The service in aid of the poor comes to prolong, in a certain way, the work of redemption, allowing the humble, the sick, the oppressed and those who are rejected by society, to recover their full dimension as men and children of God. Francis Selvaggi affirms in Pr. O. R.: –"I remember that, walking one day in Rome with the Abbot, a poor man asked him for alms. The Abbot said he had no money. –But you, replied the poor man, have a good pair of new sandals! I had bought them for him three days before. Suddenly he got up, gave them to him, and walked home barefoot from St. Peter's." Father Francis gave him a good scolding, but the Abbot replied: "I gave them to him because he asked me to for the love of God. –He also asked me, whenever the poor came to the door of the house, to give everyone the menestra, bread, wine and sometimes also meat".

It was as if something from within determined him to follow a certain behavior. Not destiny, but rather a force that impelled and dragged him; like a codex of the soul, which the pity for the poor had engraved in him from his childhood, and by which every needy person made him vibrate and become the voice of God. If someone came to him at mealtime, "he would get up from the table and bring him whatever he found in front of him. He would say that he had eaten and that he did not want to eat any more. And he did that countless times"<sup>52</sup>, the same as when he was seven years old and was already listening to a poor man at the door of the house; taking advantage of

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52 Francis Selvaggi, in Pos. s.v., XII, pp. 380 ff.

the fact that all the relatives were busy at the table, he would sneak outside, as if to play. It was an intense experience that would remain engraved in his memory and would become a true vocation.

Generosity, motivated by true supernatural love, leads to a service that implies not only knowing how to share what is superfluous, but also accepting to deprive oneself of what is necessary, because in the eyes of God each person is worth more than all the gold in the world or, as Glicerio said, “a soul is worth more than the whole universe”. “Thomas told me many times that once, when the solemn feast of the Rosary was being celebrated in the church of the Minerva, Fr. Abbot, having found there a poor man who was poorly dressed and had his cloak sewn in a thousand parts with rags of a thousand colors different from the color of the cloak, went with it into the palace and, taking off his cloak and hat, gave them to the poor man; he took the ragged cloak and, putting it on, went to the said church, where most of the court and a great number of people were present. And he went around the church in this way, asking for alms. This action was seen by all”<sup>53</sup>.

Cosmas Contini reports: “He frequently visited the sick... and also the imprisoned. I saw him at Santo Spirito, where he not only served the sick with charity, but also tried to clean the tables, empty the chamber pots and make the beds. And I accompanied him many times”<sup>54</sup>. And Fr. Juan Garcia: “He secretly took care of various very poor families in Rome. His income was not enough for the number of poor people who came to seek him out. For this reason he sought alms with great solicitude”<sup>55</sup>.

Francis Selvaggi, fourth witness of Pr. O.R., recounted: “Near St. Salvatore delle Coppolle, Glicerio went to the house of a cripple who had a very big sore on one leg. He justified himself with these words: “I do it for the love of God, so that He may heal the wounds of my soul”<sup>56</sup>.

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53 Fr. Juan Garcia, in Pos. s.v., p. 400.

54 Pos. s.v., p. 375, para. 57.

55 Father Juan Garcia, in Pos. s.v., p. 400.

56 Pos. n.v., p. 269.

When he taught the children in the Pious Schools, some years later, he would say: "It is necessary to apply the satisfactions of Christ to oneself in particular, with faith, the sacraments, good works and penance"<sup>57</sup>.

*"Like a donkey I stand before you, Lord"*

Every day he became more and more aware of how numerous were the families tried by destitution; how many were the single mothers struggling to support their children; how many were the elderly abandoned and deprived of necessities; how many were the children and orphans who lacked bread and clothing; how many were the sick who could not be cured for lack of means; how many were homeless in the streets and in the squares. A witness observes, opportunely: "The mission of Glicerio was according to the extensive objective of his charity, which begins with the children and embraces all social levels"<sup>58</sup>.

Certainly, it is up to those in power to direct the economy in such a way that these painful phenomena of life find a just solution. But it is also our duty to help according to our possibilities, so that Christ, present in the poor, does not suffer destitution. For this reason Glicerio, as a witness affirms, "would have sold himself a thousand times over in the service of the poor"<sup>59</sup>.

And he was not afraid to get his hands dirty, to go to the heart of the problem, where immediate moral or material help was urgently needed. He could repeat with St. Augustine: "Ut jumentum factus sum apud te"<sup>60</sup>, that is, I stand before you like a donkey. I had dreamed of studies and a career, and You, on the contrary, have destined me to be "a beast of burden"! Father Vincent Berro concludes his memoirs: "It would take a long time to write a thick volume that would be able to describe in detail all the works of charity towards the poor done by our Abbot"<sup>61</sup>.

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57 *Brief Statement of Christian Doctrine*, by Glicerio, in BGSP.

58 Nova Pos., II, 58.

59 *Ibid.*, p. 66.

60 Psalm 72, vv. 22-23.

61 V. Berro, o.c., in Arch. Sch. P. 1982, n.11, p. 36.

*Deus super omnia.* God above all things. All the folios written by Glicerio bear this heading. He will not put anything before his personal love for Christ and for the poor in whom he lives. Father Garcia's expression is magnificent: "Always cheerful in his labors, discomforts and entanglements, he tried to put more effort into serving God, in whom alone he hoped"<sup>62</sup>.

***"Go, sell what you have and give it to the poor"***

*"He exhorted everyone to love poverty, to possess nothing of their own and to have firm hope in God"*<sup>63</sup>.

A lot of money passed through Glicerio's hands, but he considered it as a gift received from God to please his neighbor: "Give and it will be given to you"; a loan to be repaid, not a selfish possession to be kept. Glicerio would have wanted *to lighten* his burden, as he repeated, by renouncing the large income from his abbey in Piacenza. The desire *to lighten* his burden did not derive from the inner dissatisfaction of not being able to administer the abbey of Piacenza adequately from Rome. He knew that he had entrusted it to good hands. It was no problem if, as a witness affirms, Glicerio, "moved by divine zeal and by the merits of the friars of the Third Order of St. Francis, who in the said abbey continually brought excellent fruits by their science, eloquence, example of their conduct and life style, he confirmed and extended the concession of his uncle, assigning to the said religious, in perpetual lease, with an annual canon of fifteen ducats instead of twenty-four, the goods of St. Anthony of Castell-Arquato"<sup>64</sup>.

Divine worship and assistance to the sick were, therefore, assured. On the other hand, the administration of the personal prebend was entrusted to the general procurator Francis Gentili; and from 1610 to John Baptist Roleri, men of proven faith and honesty. To get rid of things meant for Glicerio, to free himself from the superfluous and to

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62 Nov. Pos., II, p. 39.

63 V. Berro, o.c., in Arch. Sch. P. 1982, n. 11, p. 36.

64 Emilio Nasalli Rocca, *La bella Chiesa de S. Antonio a Trebbia*, p. 16; Cristoforo Poggiali, p. 28.

be content with the essential. It was Pope Paul V who several times opposed Glicerio's resignation, knowing well how that money was used.

Glicerio's desire was not only an act of virtue, but also an intelligent maneuver to arrive more freely and serenely at the goal, when God willed: "I try to lighten myself, to be more ready for Paradise"<sup>65</sup>. "Like a partridge that hatches... is he who accumulates riches; in the middle of his days he must leave them and he will end up as a fool"<sup>66</sup>. He wrote to Cardinal Frederick in 1611: "When the Lord called me to his service, I, thinking that to leave riches was to leave a heavy burden, as it is, I renounced what was mine".

And yet, he begged his relative the Cardinal to be his intermediary with the brothers, who promised him and never gave him the money corresponding to his paternal inheritance: "Because of what Our Lord has given me, I will be obliged to give him an account; I see the extreme need of my neighbor, and, on the other hand, I see the obvious occasion of pride, ambition and condemnation of my house... So to you, as to a St. Charles zealous for the cause of God, I beg you to lend a hand in this matter". And finally, he stigmatized, without half-terms, the avarice of his relatives: "It is clear the offense that is done to divine equity and justice, against all human reason and conscience. They cannot act in this way without offending Our Lord. How contrary it is to reason that the poor have nothing with which to live, sleep and cover their nakedness with a cloth, and the rich have so much vanity and diabolical snares."

Economic goods, with the concrete possibilities of a comfortable and carefree life that they allow, are a danger, because they can be understood as a substitute for God, an idol on which our life rests. But, used well, they are a real blessing. It will be seen in 1612, in the Pious Schools, what a providential manna were to be the revenues of Abbot Glicerio for the Work of St. Joseph Calasanz for poor children. Neither the Gospel condemns money, nor the Bible blesses misery. What is needed is a correct relationship between profit and solidarity, between living the prima-

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65 Pos. s.v., Ex document I, n. 7, p. 170.

66 Jeremiah, 17, 11. The partridge represents a fragile reality. Its eggs are fragile prey; although there are many of them, very few manage to hatch.

cy of man and living in abundance. Glicerio ended his letter with an exhortation to Cardinal Frederick: "I know that you will take care of this matter as if it were your own and more, because it is a cause of Christ"<sup>67</sup>.

### *Poverty, a social problem*

Glicerio's charity was certainly without measure, based on sharing and service, after the example of Jesus. But at the same time it was also a drop in the ocean. Moreover, a gesture of love cannot be limited to the simple donation of alms. We are tempted to suggest to Glicerio that we must go beyond the concepts of almsgiving and begging, which will never truly *liberate* individuals or communities. It would have been necessary rather to fight against this form of assistance, to promote the true liberation of the poor; to strive to change the structures based on injustice in order to change the situation of misery and social ills. In fact, we do not know that Glicerio gave a voice to the poor, denounced the powerful who create poverty, or thundered against the rich, princes and cardinals, in order to carry out his campaign. This is true. Because Glicerio's vocation was different. Like Mary, who at the foot of the cross did not recriminate, did not protest against those who crucified her Son. He suffered with Him. Like Francis of Assisi, he did not set out to solve the problem of the poor, but tried to be poor himself. Glicerio loved the poor, and that was enough; without conditions, without asking anything in return; not even that they would struggle to get out of their poverty. This was the duty of others. It is the social state with its institutions that must ensure a minimum of life for all citizens, implement an employment policy, reduce inequalities. The solution to social problems does not come out of the hat of a magician, but from wise laws that change the culture and mentality of the powerful.

Glicerio was called to be in solidarity with the poor, to be one of them. Love is expressed first of all by being with someone, rather than doing something for someone. Mr. Selvaggi, who followed Glicerio everywhere like a shadow, does not fail to mention the love with which, when he returned home late, he always invited one or two poor people at a time, to whom he washed and kissed their feet and gave them supper.

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67 AGSP, Reg. Serv. 38, 2.

Prolonging the conversation with them, he would also offer them a bed to rest in. He did not want “this to be known to anyone, although I could not avoid to know it, because I had the money with me. Glicerio did this an infinite number of times”<sup>68</sup>. Glicerio would kneel down and kiss the feet of the poor, like those of the priest after Holy Mass; even more, even the feet of the one who insulted him, because, weak and fragile, we have all been redeemed by Christ and made children of God to cry out “Abba, Father! Glicerio’s desire was to be able to alleviate, even if only a little, the mystery of human pain and to help those who suffer here and now.

However, he did not exclude other viable ways to combat the situation of poverty. All the testimonies agree in affirming that Glicerio sought every means to bring the unhappy out of their condition, the converted women out from the street and, especially, the unemployed youth from idleness, projecting himself with the fascination of the witness, who embodies with his life the great ideals. He also lent a hand to the parents to help their children. He helped one as a domestic, helped another to find a small job. He cared for their children and helped them to find a small job. He was concerned to offer non-fictional occupations to keep young people away from the temptation of easy gain or criminal activity. “In order to keep young people away from the path of idleness, the cause of all evils, and not to leave them vagabonds, he founded a Congregation for them”<sup>69</sup>.

In Rome, the young vagabonds were arrested and sent to the fortress of Civitavecchia or to the salt mines. For many, Glicerio obtained the release and a job: “Many set up a store; others, that he knew to be skilled, he placed in the service of some lord or in the Roman colleges. And many were helped in this way”<sup>70</sup>. “And he made them good men, which I have seen and known”<sup>71</sup>.

These testimonies of living love for the poor become a critical social conscience and, for the political world, a call to the primary

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68 Pos. s.v., p. 382, para. 81.

69 J. Garcia, in Pr. O. R., “*De heroica caritate*”, p. 404.

70 Fr. Mussesti, o.c., p. 44.

71 J. Garcia, in Nova Pos., II, pp. 59-60.

duty of defending the rights of the poor. A few crumbs; a small seed, but worth more than a revolution.

The daily commitment, the repeated attempts of Glicerio, will soon flow, like small streams, into the Pious Schools, a true river of perennial waters. Here Glicerio would join the ever-growing group of apostles who, guided by St. Joseph Calasanz, out of pure love of God, in humility and poverty, were committed to the integral formation of children, at the very roots of life, in order to give a new face to the society of the future.

## 6. ABRUPT FRACTURE OF THE COURSE. PROVIDENTIAL ENCOUNTERS

### *Father Francis Méndez of Christ*

Originally from Andalusia, Father Francis went to Rome shortly before the arrival of Abbot Glicerio. He took up residence in the house of Mr. Francis Selvaggi in Via Giulia<sup>72</sup>.

Alvaro Huerga defines him as “Portuguese by birth, a Jew by race, a New Christian by religion, a clergyman by profession”<sup>73</sup>. He came from a bitter experience. In Mexico he had been tried by the Holy Office as a Judaizer. The sentence is not known, but, according to the custom of the Mexican Inquisition, he was certainly condemned to exile. He chose Rome as his refuge, where he acquired a reputation for holiness, especially for his long prayers and devotions and for the Christian solidarity he showed towards the poor and needy. Glicerio found in him a loving father who welcomed him and led him on the path of perfection.

And yet, Fr. Méndez was not the right man to guide the young abbot to the heights of holiness. Glicerio’s confidence had rested too much on him. Father Francis’ fervor actually lacked the necessary balance, prudence and, above all, the spirit of obedience, within a correct concept of hierarchy. Since he had in his hands the direction of

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72 Cfr. Ch. 1.

73 *Historia de los Alumbrados*, Publicaciones F.U.E., Madrid 1988, p. 168.

the Work initiated by the Todeschi spouses<sup>74</sup>, his relationship with the girls in danger and with the prostitutes proved to be rather superficial and lacking in psychological foundations. He believed that it was enough to confide in them and give them communion, to provide them with a job and a sincere purpose, to solve their problems. However, it happened that a good part of them took up their own old trade. Pope Paul V, in order to have a greater guarantee of lasting results, ordered the intervention of Fr. Dominic of Jesus Mary, a Discalced Carmelite, superior of the convent of Santa Maria della Scala in Trastevere. The friar had only been in Rome for a short time, but he was already well acquainted with the atmosphere of the city. And it was not a field of activity that was unknown to him, since he had carried out this apostolate for years in Valencia and Barcelona.

The contrast was inevitable. Father Francis did not tolerate intrusions nor was he willing to accept advice. In the eyes of Paul V, his mysticism was revealed, as the Bible says, as a silver varnish on an earthen vessel. The pontiff not only did not want to know more of the religious association for whose approval Méndez was in Rome, but in 1609 he sent him to Spain. He moved to Seville. Here he founded a retreat house for poor girls, living on the alms he asked for them. The letters of Don John de la Sal, bishop of Bona, to the Duke of Medina deal with his numerous extravagances<sup>75</sup>. He died in 1616. The Inquisition

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74 Cfr. chapter 4.

75 Such letters were published by Don Adolfo de Castro in his *Curiosidades Bibliográficas*, Bibl. Autores Esp. Among other things we read there that every day Méndez celebrated the holy mass for the girls and he put himself on cross emitting moans. One mass lasted twenty-six hours. With raptures and ecstasies he earned his fame as a saint. When the mass was over, the women sang and he danced like a drunkard. And other oddities. Huerga, o.c. p. 155, titles chapter V *La farsa pseudomística del padre Méndez* (The pseudomistic farce of Father Méndez). He alludes to the farce of his death, which he predicted, but which did not occur on the day predicted. While awaiting death, he remained twenty-four hours at the altar, always standing without eating, reciting mass and breviary and hearing confessions. The author concludes ironically: "It was a miracle that he did not die". The women, who considered him a saint, said that he had done so to discredit himself, out of humility. Cf. A. García Durán, *Itinerario espiritual de S.J. de Calasanz*, p.118, n. 589; Menéndez y Pelayo, *Historia de los heterodoxos españoles*, Madrid 1956, II, ch. 5.

attempted a trial to his memory, as belonging to the sect of the *Illuminates*<sup>76</sup> which concluded with the “Auto de fé” of November 30, 1624.

With the departure of Fr. Francis, Glicerio and the small community of Via Frattina received a hard blow. They were left like a boat without a rudder. The women’s houses were momentarily closed. Young girls and prostitutes moved elsewhere, some again to the house of Fiorenza Todeschi. Glicerio and his five friends were guests of Cardinal J. M. Vives, the future founder of the College of Propaganda Fide. He had leaned too much on a man, who was always a fragile reed, and he had done himself wrong. He learned what it means: “I am the Lord. Outside of me there is no savior”. And also: “The government of the world is in the hands of the Lord. He will raise up the right man for you at the right time”<sup>77</sup>.

Pope Paul V, who followed the two Landriani brothers with particular affection, called Glicerio to himself and entrusted him to Father Dominic de la Scala.

*Father Dominic Ruzola of Jesus Mary. Confessor and spiritual director of St. Joseph Calasanz and the venerable Glicerio Landriani*

Father Dominic in his biography, written by himself at the request of his superiors, narrates that God granted him a singular gift. He placed in his custody, in addition to the Guardian Angel, an Angel of the highest hierarchy, “who is called the Forerunner, because he always walks before me and is often visible, warning me in all things and defending me in everything. And, together with the Guardian Angel, the three of us together praise and glorify God, the Lord”.

*Father Dominic and the Pious Schools*

Father Dominic was himself a singular gift of God to St. Joseph of Calasanz, before being a gift to Glicerio . He was an authentic Angel

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76 The movement reached its greatest diffusion in Seville. The Inquisition intervened harshly and without so many distinctions. Even St. Teresa and St. Joseph Calasanz were accused of Illuminism.

77 Sir, 10, 4.

Precursor, who was close to Calasanz in the most difficult moments of his nascent Work and explained the way to him.

He also traced safe paths of spiritual life, on which Glicerio realized his holiness. The first contact between Calasanz and Fr. Dominic, both Aragonese, probably took place some years after the Carmelite Peter of the Mother of God had founded in Trastevere, in 1601, a confraternity with an Oratory, later dedicated to St. Charles Borromeo. A short distance away, in Santa Dorotea, St. Joseph Calasanz had already opened his first school in 1597, the same year in which the Carmelite Fathers who had come from Spain had established themselves in the convent of Santa Maria della Scala.

Father Dominic, who arrived in Rome in 1604, collaborated with Father Peter of the Mother of God in the Oratory of St. Charles. Calasanz, who had been one of the first members, began to go to confession with him. "Father José Calasanz used to go to confession to Fr. Dominic de La Scala and, once the schools were finished, he went there almost every day, entrusting to him all his thoughts for the help of the new plant. From him he obtained excellent advice, not only for his soul, but also for the good of his Institute"<sup>78</sup>.

Through his friendship with the Colonna family, Calasanz helped Fr. Dominic to rescue the church of Santa Maria della Scala, of which he was prior. Father Dominic reciprocated by favoring the acquisition of San Pantaleo and, much later, by directing the young Glicerio to the Pious Schools.

Pope Paul V, as Father Pedro Angelini tells us, held Fr. Dominic in great esteem<sup>79</sup>. He entrusted to him the spiritual direction of his nephew Mark Anthony, Prince of Sulmona. And Paul V also wanted him as confessor and spiritual director of Glicerio Landriani in 1609, after the departure of Father Francis Méndez.

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78 G. C. Caputi, in *Rev. Cal.* 1 (1955), 192, note 34.

79 Peter Angelini of the Mother of God is the first biographer of Venerable Dominic. He was his secretary and confessor and accompanied him on almost all his travels. He makes Cardinal Borghese say: "Father Dominic is omnipotent with my uncle", II, 63.

### *Spirituality of Ven. Father Dominic*

Father Dominic did not know St. Theresa of Jesus, the great reformer of Carmel, who died eight years before he took vows in the Discalced, the new branch coming out of the old stock of Carmel. However, he had contacts with St. John of the Cross, and was formed in close relationship with the main exponents of the first generation. Ecstasies, visions and prophecies were attributed to him. To the contemplative rapture towards union with God, as in St. Theresa and St. John of the Cross, was united an admirable practical sense, which led him to travel throughout Europe, overcoming obstacles of all kinds. He led, in convents and outside, souls great and small. He founded and organized oases of contemplation and prayer. Sinners were a constant object of his solicitude: "He welcomed them with a smile on his lips and wrapped them in the mantle of tenderness and boundless mercy. He dealt with penitents with few words, but with an extraordinary power. God had enriched him with the singular privilege of discernment of spirits". "To the many penances practiced in the old Carmel he added unheard rigors. After the night office he ordinarily continued to pray until morning". "He was often content with only bread and water. In the little cell he had no furniture other than a board as a bed and the floor as a seat"<sup>80</sup>.

He nourished distrust towards intellectual knowledge, considered superfluous to attain Christian perfection. And this was only one of its limits. Enthusiasm produced some forms of excessive asceticism, not entirely foreign to contemporary religiosity, but which he transmitted to his penitents<sup>81</sup>. He retired to the desert of Bolarque to dedicate himself entirely to contemplation, but he was able to enjoy it for only four-

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80 Father Stanislaus of St. Teresa, *Il Ve. Domenico de Ges Maria, carmelita scalzo*, Ceprano 1925, pp. 51, 103.

81 Cfr. Silvano Giordano, *Domenico di Ges Maria*, pp. 263-264: "Certain forms of exhibitionism in their way of living their religiosity, if they did not reach the excesses characteristic of the enlightened ones, nevertheless enjoyed that particular disposition to accept and exalt the marvelous, typical of the religiosity of that time. Nevertheless, the social and ecclesiastical structures, the religious order to which he belonged and the Inquisition helped to moderate, before it degenerated, the excessive enthusiasms of the religious".

teen months. In the name of the Supreme Pontiff, who had heard of his exceptional qualities and his holiness, the Apostolic Nuncio invited him to Rome. The year was 1604. Paul V made use of him for important missions in Sicily, near the viceroy of Naples, and later in Bavaria.

We wanted to present some characteristic traits of the spirituality and style of Father Dominic, in order to better understand certain aspects of Glicerio's spirituality and those attitudes in which, as the third witness of the process of beatification said, Glicerio "could have fallen," humanly speaking<sup>82</sup>.

### *Confessor and director of Glicerio*

The Council of Trent, having rejected Protestant unilateralism, had reaffirmed the need for grace, which, through the action of the sacraments, makes possible the fulfillment of the commandments. In the sixteenth century, the sacrament of penance, which had already undergone a profound transformation in practice over time, was privileged in comparison with communion. Born in the beginning to bring sinners back into the Church, it had become a kind of *private* act. From an act of reconciliation with the community, as an ecclesial body wounded by sin, it gave way more and more to the subjective aspect, the need to hear that the confessor guaranteed God's forgiveness.

In successive epochs, as consciences matured, the faithful were invited to weekly confession as a means of perfecting their Christian life. There were saints who, in fact, went to confession every day. St. Philip Neri, who was among the first to spread the use of frequent confession in Rome, prescribed it three times a week for the brothers of the Oratory. And he, leaving any other occupation, sat in the confessional all day, and sometimes part of the night. His special charism of intuiting the deep secrets of conscience favored the natural passage from frequent confession to spiritual direction. He often invited the sinner to supper. A frugal meal, but seasoned with conversations that, starting from sin as a diminishment, which prevents man from attaining his own fullness, reaches a great spiritual depth.

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82 Nova Pos., 1920, p. 118.

A century after the death of Glicerio, with Pope Benedict XIV, one of the criteria for the beatification of a servant of God will be the assiduity, even daily, to this sacrament. St. Philip Neri recalled: “Whoever wishes to profit in the life of God must choose a fixed confessor and obey him instead of God”.

It is on this basis that the relationship between Glicerio and Fr. Dominic of Jesus Mary developed. “Glicerio did not do anything, even the smallest thing, without my permission”<sup>83</sup>.

Linked to spiritual direction, confession was not only a private dialogue with the confessor on a program of sins and personal virtues, but provided a growth in the inner life in an evangelical perspective. The sacrament of penance did not function as a simple psychological tranquilizer, in an attitude of passive obedience, but constituted a moment of authentic conversion, of recovery, of encouragement for a total gift to the Lord in the service of the brethren. Glicerio, with obedience to the confessor, not coerced at all in his free choices, was there to avoid the risk of a pretentious self-sufficiency or self-complacency for the results obtained. The direction would, in any case, serve as a necessary antidote to reject insidious and always possible exaggerations and excessive fervor.

### *St. Joseph Calasanz*

He was born in Peralta de la Sal in 1557. He attended courses in humanities, rhetoric, and university courses in philosophy, theology and law at various universities in Spain. Ordained a priest in 1583, he held important positions in his own diocese and in nearby dioceses in contact with the people. In 1592 he went to Rome to carry out important missions entrusted to him by his bishop. Faced with the multitude of abandoned children, he gave up the long-cherished dream of ecclesiastical benefices that would assure him a peaceful future in his homeland. In 1597 he opened a school at Santa Dorotea in Trastevere in Rome, in order to provide poor children with free education, religious and moral formation and a job in society. To guarantee the sta-

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83 Pos. s.v., p. 586, para. 25.

bility of his work, he founded the religious Order of the Pious Schools. He died in Rome on August 25, 1648. He was declared a saint by Pope Clement XIII on July 16, 1767.

*Glicerio at the table of Calasanz*

Among the favors with which Fr. Dominic tried to respond to the generosity, kindness and devotion of Father Joseph Calasanz, the most valuable was certainly that of having sent him Glicerio Landriani as a collaborator.

Who would have said to the young abbot, who was still suffering from the separation from Fr. Francis Méndez and the broken dream of a fascinating spiritual experience, that he would soon meet the man of his ideals? As soon as the eyes of Joseph Calasanz met his gaze, Glicerio would have been able to write in the book of his life *"incipit vita nova"* –now begins for me a new life; to say to Father Joseph: –Where do you live?" and feel that he answered him –Come and see. Joseph's house resembled the one described in the book of Proverbs: "Wisdom has built her house, she has carved her seven pillars... she has even prepared the table..." (Proverbs 2:1). –Come and partake of my food and drink my wine that I have prepared... –Come to the fountain of Wisdom. –Drink without having to spend anything"<sup>84</sup>.

All the streets that Glicerio had traveled led to that house. The projects of Charles Borromeo for the reform of the Church and of society, the teachings of Frederick, the studies of Bologna and of Rome, the originality of Francis of Christ, the severe discipline of Fr. Dominic of Jesus Mary. The banquet offered to him by Wisdom was the natural arrival of a tiring journey, but guided from above. With Calasanz there were 800 of the poorest children of the city. A golden plate for the missionary aspirations of Glicerio. Street children, unprotected and immature, easy prey to unscrupulous abuse, they were waiting for someone to pay attention to them, in the instinctive search for a safe hand, a friendly face, to understand a good reason to grow up. They were the society of tomorrow, the architects of the future

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84 Proverbs 9, 1-5.

that Glicerio dreamed of. They needed love and security. They wanted to understand who they were and what would become of them.

Until now, Glicerio had punished his body with fasting, vigils and cilices. Calasanz opened an immense field where he could channel his physical and spiritual energies in a serene and perhaps more useful way. He showed him a more direct way to serve Jesus: "As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me". "Whoever welcomes one of these little ones in my name, welcomes me"<sup>85</sup>.

### *Father Joseph, living school for Glicerio*

Calasanz had already traced the furrow. It was enough to follow in his footsteps. Glicerio still had Fr. Dominic as his guide. He had led him to Calasanz, together with five companions from the former community of Fr. Méndez. And it was he who ordered him to study his vocation calmly, remaining in the Pious Schools free to decide the opportune moment. Glicerio was still waiting to be accepted in a Carmelite convent, overcoming the handicap of his physical health<sup>86</sup>. In the meantime, he had all the time to observe closely the behavior of Fr. Joseph, to understand his ideal and to recognize God's plan.

In contact with Calasanz for four months, Glicerio had discovered in him interesting and significant affinities of life. Like him, Joseph had gone to Rome from afar, dressed in silk with the intention of conquering important positions in the ecclesiastical career. An ambition that was certainly not bad in itself, but which, in front of the need to serve God as perfectly as possible, had vanished like the mist before the sun. With a passionate heart Joseph had given his name to numerous charitable confraternities, tirelessly approaching wherever there was a sick person to relieve. Up to a year before, he had intentionally partic-

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85 Matthew 25:40.

86 Glicerio said this openly to Cardinal Frederick in a letter dated November 5, 1611: "When Our Lord called me to his service, I was all on fire for my Lord and I tried to enter as a Discalced Brother of Carmel. But those fathers prevented me because of my health", AGSP, Rome. Cf. Fr. Caputi, cit. In Sántha, *J. de Calasanz y su amistad con los Padres Carmelitas Descalzos*, Rev. Cal., I (1955), pp. 193-194.

ipated in the work of the Christian Doctrine<sup>87</sup>: “On feast days, he went with all diligence to teach Christian Doctrine in the churches to the little ones, using all diligence and charity, and many times he was an officer and general visitor of the same... He not only exercised works of mercy, teaching the ignorant, but he distributed to the poor, sometimes bread, sometimes money, nourishing both soul and body at the same time.” “He also preached in the public squares with great affection, especially in those places frequented by the poor peasants, leading them afterwards to the nearby churches, where he confessed them and with greater tranquility taught them the principal things of Christian doctrine, so that they might be true Christians and God-fearing”<sup>88</sup>.

Now Glicerio saw him working in silence, becoming a child among children, humble, to offer poor children the most precious gift, teaching, to acquire a sense of human dignity. In this he saw with profound intuition the liberalization of man. With instruction, Calasanz gave the little ones the instrument to grow and become active subjects in the renewal of society and of the Church. Calasanz did not make great gestures, like St. Francis Xavier, who converted with a single preaching five thousand people here, five thousand there. He worked with each child every day with immense patience, for years, with continual danger of failure, until he entrusted him, as a new leaven, to a new humanity. Father Joseph, who at night prepared, kneeling down, what was needed for the next day’s lessons, taught him a new way of spending the night hours in prayer. He fulfilled the same mission as Mary, who educated and prepared the Son of God for life: “*Inter divina opera divinissimum*”, that is, the most divine of divine works<sup>89</sup>.

Glicerio saw Joseph put all his income at the disposal of the poor and, very poor, go with his saddlebag on his back to beg for alms for his “piccolini”, his little ones, sweeping the classrooms and the com-

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87 The biographers of Calasanz do not agree on the date of his entry into the confraternity. Fr. Talenti puts 1592, Bau proposes 1595, Sántha prefers 1597, Severino Giner 1599.

88 Vincenzo Berro, *Memorie storiche*, P. I., chap.10, Arch. Sch. P., n. 21-22 (1987).

89 EGC, IV, p. 204.

mon places, so that the next day his “piccolini” could sit at ease and realize that there was a father who was thinking of them. Father Joseph Calasanz wrote to Fr. John Graziani: “Know that when the pupils see the love of a father in the teacher and diligence for their advancement, they gladly go to school”<sup>90</sup>.

Glicerio observed everything, participated in the common life, reflected on his own possibilities and lent a hand to everyone. He continued to marvel at the effects of the Calasanz school, and wrote to Milan to his relative and friend, Cardinal Frederick Borromeo: “I am in the Pious Schools, where there are up to eight hundred children and young people. I have come here without seeking it. Now I hope that the Lord will want to make use of me for this work of his, which is so important for me. I admire it, because these little children of the poor, who usually go around the squares without any restraint of fear of God, being prey to all shamelessness of words and ugly acts, withdraw from idleness and evil, and with divine help they occupy themselves with exercises, not only of intelligence but also of Christian doctrine”<sup>91</sup>. However, there was no great feast right away. The final decision was more difficult for Glicerio than expected.

## 7. GLICERIO AT THE CROSSROADS

### *“Show me your way, Lord”*

The departure of Father Francis Méndez had interrupted at the most beautiful moment the rhythm of an intense apostolate. Glicerio felt like an orphan. The first meeting with Calasanz, beautiful and interesting, and the four months spent in the Pious Schools had not succeeded in healing the wound in his soul. On the contrary, they seemed to have unleashed in him, with a feeling of disorientation, anguished questions. Had it all been wrong? Did he have to start all over again? Glicerio was once again at the crossroads. On the one hand, the multitude of the poor, who continued to knock at his door; on the other, a

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90 EGC, V, p. 285.

91 The letter is dated September 29, 1612. The original manuscript is in the General Archives in Rome.

vast field ready for harvesting, the Pious Schools, to which Father Dominic de La Scala had directed him. He also felt that without living with the poor something would die within him. He who lives in a situation of service does good to himself. He gives to others the smile of God, but to himself the joy of giving. On the other hand, Glicerio had already expressed his enthusiasm for the Pious Schools in his letter to Cardinal Frederick. Two equally saintly and engaging appeals. Two horses pulling in directions, if not opposite, then not convergent. Which of the two was God definitely calling him to? Father Dominic had said his, but leaving him, Glicerio, the decisive and free choice. To the internal confusion was added the frustration of all his attempts to be despised and considered crazy. The game had already been discovered.

The princes and cardinals also showed him only esteem and praise. Besides, Calasanz, if he did not proclaim him a saint, it would not take much. He needed a place far from the frenetic and corrupt city, an oasis where God could speak to his heart and he could listen to Him, and reflect on the present, facing eternity. A place of the spirit in which to find, in absolute solitude, in silence and prayer, inner harmony. And to discover, finally, the way of God.

October 1612. Glicerio decides to shortcut, with a clean break, all delay. And he leaves, *“insalutato hospite”*, without saying anything to anyone, not even to Father Joseph<sup>92</sup>. Perhaps... to Father Dominic of Jesus Mary? But if he insinuated it to him, it was certainly in confession, with a pact of absolute secrecy. Father Joseph, in fact, was looking for him for three days, like Joseph and Mary in the footsteps of Jesus in Jerusalem. The justification that Glicerio would later give Joseph must not have differed much from that of Jesus to his parents. Glicerio marched on foot with Fr. Diego Lopez, who had long shared his ascetic projects.

### *In search of a wilderness*

Glicerio and Diego exchanged their clothes for the rags of two men, and set out on their journey. St. Louis of the French, Via della

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92 Calasanz was almost certainly absent from San Pantaleo that day.

Ripetta, Piazza del Popolo. They crossed the Tiber, Prima Porta, and headed north, over Campagnano, which is almost thirty kilometers from Rome. Glicerio had even given up his sandals and stockings, and was walking barefoot without difficulty<sup>93</sup>. They were going to a desert to do penance, but almost certainly they themselves did not know exactly where. Diego realized that Glicerio intended to go very far. From Campagnano he would go on to Civita Castellana, and even further. He felt lost. He would try to persuade him with places near Campagnano. A few steps away was the hermitage of Mount Soratte, with the hermitage of St. Sylvester on one of the four summits; the ridges of the Simbruini and the Ernini. Or also to the north of Lake Bracciano, elevated places, covered with thick and intricate forests, scattered with sanctuaries and devout Romanesque churches.

But, seeing that any suggestion, any plea, was useless, he begged to be excused and set out on his return journey to Rome. At Campagnano, a feast day, the archpriest yielded to Glicerio's insistence that he wanted, for once, although so badly dressed, to explain the Doctrine. He realized, by the fine bearing and wise words of Glicerio, that he was not the one he appeared to be by his attire. And he gave him one of his garments<sup>94</sup>. In Civita Castellana, on leaving the church, where he had received communion, Glicerio began to shout in the street: "Long live God! Long live God!", happy because some people thought him mad. He walked towards Narni and asked for alms, which he then distributed to the poor. At the entrance to the city, a tavern keeper indicated a nearby hospice as a shelter, where he was lodged. But a sick man recognized him, and he was offered a bed with a mat-

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93 Father Peter Casani affirms that Glicerio once candidly confided to him that "although in his life he had ever put his bare feet on the ground, he then made many-days journey without his feet hurting. And it seemed as if he did not put them on the ground or step on the stones, but was continually carried through the air. Pr. O. R., fol. 78.

94 Writes A. Armini o.c., p. 30: "The archpriest, having finished the Doctrine, clothed him in one of his vestments; but he, as soon as he left the house, meeting a poor boy, immediately exchanged it for his ragged garments. When he saw this, the archpriest called him back and gave him others, throwing the poor man's clothes in a corner".

tress and supper. Glicerio slept, naturally on the boards, and in the morning he disappeared immediately. He set out again for Terni, begging with a child around his neck. He had kindly asked a poor mother who was carrying him in her arms. Glicerio returned it to her, with the alms received, in a tavern near Terni.

In the meantime, Father Diego, having arrived in Rome, reported everything to Mr. Selvaggi, and this to Monsignor Vicegerent, who himself sent someone to locate Glicerio, but not before sending him a letter in which, in the name of the Pope, he obliged Glicerio to return immediately to Rome. Mr. Selvaggi saddled his horse in haste and rode to Campagnano. The archpriest, admiring what Selvaggi had to say about Glicerio, wanted to accompany him himself to Civita Castellana, “spurring the horses to arrive as soon as possible”. Following the precise indications of the guests with whom Glicerio have been guest.

When they arrived at Narni, the archpriest returned to his village and Selvaggi continued on to Terni, accompanied by a gentleman from Spoleto, who was amazed at what was happening. “Happy he, – he had exclaimed– who despises the world to find God.” Arriving at Passo della Somma, near Spoleto, they met Fr. James Vaquedano of the Charity, who was returning from Loreto. He said, moved, that he had seen Glicerio at the crossroads that leads to the Franciscan hermitage of Spoleto, “barefoot, without cap or cloak, with a poor cassock, completely wet”. Coming down from the horse, he had embraced him, but without being able to convince him to return to Rome. He had left him two coins for charity, he who in Rome received from Glicerio a small monthly allowance<sup>95</sup>. Glicerio had confessed to him that he was going to the Convent to do penance. In the meantime, Fr. James generously offered to serve as their guide. Thus, the three of them finally arrived, without any possibility of error. Leaving the church of St. Peter on the right and skirting the Torri bridge on the

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95 Vaquedano, a close friend of Glicerio, provided, for his beatification, very useful information in a letter addressed to Father Dominic of Jesus Mary. As for the help he received from Glicerio, we have found in the Archives of St. Pantaleo (Reg. Cal. 12A, XIX) a note, in Calasanz’s handwriting, in which it says “He used to give Father James Vaquedano four escudos every month”.

left, they climbed, amidst beautiful views and through woods, to the terminal plain of Monteluco. Monteluco, the holy mountain of Spoleto, was thus the goal of Glicerio's long pilgrimage.

### *The holy mountain of Spoleto*

Not unknown to Glicerio, it was as beautiful as he could imagine. The mountain is linked to the town of Spoleto by the bridge delle Torri. On the back of the first buttresses of the Apennines, an enchanting leafy oak grove rises to eight hundred and fifty meters, and alternates with woods of kermes oak and cork oak. Near the summit is the small convent of St. Francis, founded by the saint of Assisi, a nest of eagles, a true oasis of peace. Monteluco derives from *lucus*, that is, forest. It was a *sacred forest* since the pagan antiquity, jealously protected with a special law, the *lex Spoletina*. During the fourth and fifth centuries of the Christian era it became a privileged place for hermits from the East, then for the Benedictines and finally for the Franciscans. Blessed Isaac, who lived in one of these hermitages, is mentioned by St. Gregory the Great in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Together with the hermitage of the Carceri of Assisi and Brogliano, on Foligno, Monteluco was included in the various reforms that arose in the Franciscan order, before and after the observance. The whole mountain was under *enclosure*. Women were allowed to enter three times a year. The first Franciscan settlement dates back to 1218. Saint Francis built for himself and his friars, with branches and mortar, some small cells next to the hermitage of St. Catherine of Alexandria, given to him by the Benedictines of St. Julian. In the convent of Monteluco lived, besides St. Francis, also St. Anthony of Padova and St. Bernardino of Siena. The stone that supports the pilaster of the altar, which served as a bed for the poverello, is preserved in the oratory of St. Francis. Next to the small cells, which are preserved today as in the time of St. Francis, there is the well with the water that the saint made flow from the pure rock. Certainly Glicerio found a way to relax in prayer on that rock, as in La Verna, and to quench his thirst with that miraculous water. The hermitage of St. Anthony, among the rocks of the forest, is preserved, and from St. Bernardino, besides his hermitage, the building that followed the one of 1218. From the Belvedere in the woods there is a wide view from Spoleto to Perugia. A tombstone recalls the

words of the poverello, "*nihil jucundius vidi valle mea spoletana*"—I have seen nothing more exciting than my valley of Spoleto. A valley that has become almost a symbol of Umbria, of its natural fascination, of its artistic beauties and of the mysticism that is derived from it.

From what we have described on this page it seems quite clear what were the motivations that drove Glicerio to seek a wilderness so far from Rome. First of all, the fascination for the *poverello* of Assisi. In a manuscript in the archives of the Portiuncula, completed in 1654, the monastery of Montelucio is extolled with this title: "*Paupertatis Asylum*", the inviolable place of poverty. Poverty, extreme poverty, is, and will always remain in the Pious Schools, Glicerio's most cherished ideal. For the rest, Glicerio was not unfamiliar with the dream that St. Francis had in Siena when he wanted to go to Puglia to fight. A voice said to him: "Why do you seek the servant instead of the master? And as a knight of Assisi, Francis became a minstrel of God. Immediately he left, a humble hermit, to pray in the solitude of the forest of Montelucio. Glicerio, also called by a voice to a new life, went with his Master to Montelucio, a humble hermit, to complete his mystical experience.

### *In the convent of St. Francis*

When they arrived at the convent, the three of them stopped for a few minutes in the chapel of St. Francis, to the right of the entrance. Then they asked the doorman if he had seen a young man dressed as a hermit. The little brother's face darkened, recognizing, by the discretion that the gentlemen were showing, the rascal who a short time before had caused a disturbance in the convent. —A rascal?," exclaimed the three in one voice. —A real rascal! A scoundrel," answered the friar. He has dared to steal fifteen eightpence from two good men who serve in the convent.

And leaving the cloister with the well on the right and crossing the narrow corridor with the old cells on the left, he accompanied them downstairs to a room where Glicerio, wrapped in a blanket while his rags were drying on a large fire, was reciting the breviary. Putting on a kind of tunic, Glicerio embraced the friends with effusion. Then he helped them take off their soiled boots and dry them. And before he realized what was happening, he saw in Selvaggi's hand a sheet of

paper. The friend read it aloud to him. The little brother understood everything like a flash. He went out and in an instant he was there again with the guardian and the whole community. They took advantage of the exquisite brotherhood, characteristic of the Franciscan style, recreating and enjoying the wonders that the sacred place offered to the spirit with its silence and its mystical and salutary claims.

As they said goodbye, “Farewell, Father Abbot! –exclaimed the old doorman: “You are not a thief! What you want is to steal the paradise.

One of those present, truly happy, happy and astonished by that scene, was the gentleman from Spoleto. Returning home, he immediately “sent a lot of food and also all the clothes necessary to dress the Abbot”<sup>96</sup>.

### *The return to Rome. Spiritual Exercises*

Glicerio, obedient as always, humbly set out on his return journey. Let us imagine with what spirit. Father Diego had given him a hard time. But Glicerio knew how to recognize God’s plan in events. From time to time he turned to look at the sacred mountain, where his dream of a praying and penitent hermit was buried forever.

It would have been too beautiful to stay there to contemplate that spectacle of paradise. He had deluded himself that he had found and touched the summit of his aspirations. Instead, he had to wake up, to come down from the mountain before he had reached the summit; he had to set out again to actualize the plan of the heavenly Father. He still had a long way to go. Above all, he had to climb another mountain, much more difficult, where his own story would come to full fruition. Along the way, the first poor people appeared, and Glicerio, who had not lost his vice, began to insist to Mr. Selvaggi to get some money, since the two from the convent had taken everything. Near Narni, no longer knowing what to do, to a poor man he gave the new cap. –Crazy! –shouted Selvaggi– the hat was not yours, you should not have given it<sup>97</sup>. And Glicerio, poor thing: “Brother, don’t be angry. I won’t do it anymore.”

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96 A. Armini, o.c., chap. IX, nn. 1-2, p. 48 ff.

97 Selvaggi, notes Fr. Armini, rescued the cap by giving a coin to the poor man.

They arrived in Rome. Glicerio, after a brief stop at Selvaggi's house, hoped to be able to recover, at least in part, that time of the spirit that had been abruptly taken away from him on the holy mountain of Spoleto. Some spiritual exercises at the Fathers of La Scala. Prayer and penance.

The words, the experience and the charisms of Fr. Dominic finally succeeded in giving full light to his soul. –Dominic told him clearly, “Your star has set upon the Pious Schools. The Lord has called you. And he added sadly: “Here our paths will part. Here my mission as guide and teacher will come to an end. To reach the summit of the highest perfection... *“entrust the soul to another more worthy than me / with him I will leave you when you depart”*<sup>98</sup>.

Glicerio and Joseph Calasanz shook hands. From now on, in synergy of ideals and responsibility, they will be one soul and one heart. The joy of the first meeting became the promise of a feast forever.

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98 Dante, Inferno, I, vv. 122-123.

## THE PIARIST IDEAL

### THE REFORM OF SOCIETY BY EDUCATING CHILDREN



The contrast between the mission of Glicerio in favor of the poor in the streets of the city and the one developed in the School of Calasanz was only apparent. In reality, children are, among the poor, the poorest, because they are the weakest and most defenseless, easy prey to rapacious wolves, to perverse adults. They are the source of life, the healthy roots, active subjects for a new flowering. “If children from early childhood receive a serious training in piety and letters, it is to be expect-

ed that the whole course of their lives will be easy”<sup>99</sup>. The children will be the yeast that will leaven and save a renewed society.

The program of Calasanz did not fail to excite the young Glicerio. *Piety and Letters* was the educational program in the Pious Schools; the two wings for a safe flight. Calasanz did not lack courageous teachers for the Letters, nor will he lack, even at the international level, Galileo and Campanella. On the other hand, he was pressed by

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99 Constitutions of the Pious Schools, Rome 1986, Preamble, 5, p. 4.

the search for suitable people who could guarantee the necessary balance to the other wing, the most unprotected of the two, and which, therefore, awakened a more urgent concern: Piety.

The children had found in Joseph an affectionate father and infinite dedication on their behalf. But what was missing was an older brother who would also be a generous friend to the little ones, who would take them by the hand with youthful impulse. Calasanz recognized in Glicerio a gift from heaven. And so he entrusted to him the strategic points of his educational system, the two secret keys to a complex world, which is the soul of children and adolescents: Continuous Prayer and Catechesis.

## 1. CONTINUOUS PRAYER

*"A way of friendship with Jesus Christ"<sup>100</sup>*

*It is a "genial practice that is genuinely Calasanzian"<sup>101</sup>*

"Every day, from the beginning of school until the end, there is Continuous Prayer of nine students, with the assistance of a competent priest, who instructs the students on how the prayer should be done, and it lasts half an hour, and then they are exchanged for nine others. And they pray for the exaltation of the Holy Roman Church, for the extirpation of heresies, for the union of princes, and in particular for the ordinary benefactors of that place. To this prayer, all the students go by order, beginning with the first class up to the last"<sup>102</sup>.

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100 This is the title of the work published by Rosalia Haro, Piarist. Rome 1986. Other documents on Continuous Prayer are: Sántha, *"La Oración Continua, según S. José de Calasanz"*, in Rev. Cal. 12 (1957) pp. 649-664; Dionisio Cueva in *Catequesis calasanziana*, ibid. p. 118, n. 33; S. Giner, *S. J. de Calasanz Maestro y Educador*, Madrid 1992, pp. 65 ss.; A. Martínez, *La O. C. en el primer siglo de las Escuelas Pías*, in Arch. Sch.P., 35, (1994), pp. 25-116.

101 J. Sántha, *"P. Crisostomo Salistri"*, in Eph. Cal. (1965), pp. 146-167. Spanish translation by Fr. Valeriano Rodríguez, ICCE Publications, Madrid.

102 From the *Brief Report*, written by Calasanz between 1602 and 1605, and destined to a personality not well identified, to inform him about the work he had undertaken. It is also called *Documentum princeps* (The main Document), because of the importance and the particularities it offers on the original organization of the Pious Schools and on the pedagogical principles of Calasanz.

The practice of Continuous Prayer may have begun in 1600. It certainly already existed in 1602, presided over by the priest Gellio Ghellini<sup>103</sup>. It underwent a change when the Pious Schools moved from the Vestri building (1605) to that of Mannini, and then, definitively, to that of San Pantaleo (1612), and the number of students doubled, from about 600 to 1200. Now, each prayer group, instead of nine students, had 10 to 12, and perhaps more. Some enrichment was to come from the Lucchesi, who directed the Pious Schools from 1614 to 1617. But it was above all Glicerio who gave to Continuous Prayer the form later codified in the Constitutions of 1622:

*“A priest, if possible, will preside at the Continuous Prayer, which is done in turn by ten to twelve pupils in the morning and in the afternoon during the lessons, for the exaltation of the Holy Roman Church, the extirpation of heresies, concord among Catholic princes and the good government and increase of our Congregation. The said Father will teach the children how to prepare themselves for the sacrament of penance, and the older ones for Communion. He will likewise (teach) a simple way of praying, and other subjects according to his ability”<sup>104</sup>.*

And in the Common Rites: “Let there be continuous prayer during the school exercises, in the morning and in the evening, with some of the scholastics, called by order, from all the schools, which will be attended by one of our own. And he will also be able to instruct the little ones with an easy and brief method to make this prayer. Moreover on, how to confess one’s sins well, and to examine one’s conscience well; and how they should prepare themselves worthily when they are fit to receive the Holy Eucharist”<sup>105</sup>.

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103 A priest from Vincenza, who was one of the first collaborators of Calasanz. He writes to his brother on July 20, 1602: “Calasanz has put in the Memorandum that the lessons and the Continuous Prayer be attended by a priest of mature age, of letters and of great spirit; and, since it was about me, I wanted to be relieved, but he does not want to.

104 *Constitutions*, Part II, Ch. IX, n. 194.

105 The *Common Rites* together with the *Rules* were born from Calasanz’s demand to give a certain unanimity to the common life of the Piarists after having composed the *Constitutions*. The manuscript is in AGSP, Reg. Cal. XII, n. 47.

One of the strongest experiences of Calasanz was the conviction that the prayer of the little innocent children had an extraordinary power before God: "I hope that the Blessed Virgin will intercede, not for our merits, but for the supplications of the little innocent children, in whose Continuous Prayer I trust"<sup>106</sup>.

As the Work grew and with it the difficulties, Calasanz turned more and more to the prayer of his little angels, and he was concerned about finding the most suitable person to take care of their spiritual formation. For Glicerio it was a simple and natural thing to instruct them in prayer and to keep them in purity, two fields in which he had been a true specialist since his childhood.

### *The Sacraments in the Calasanzian educational system*

Continuous Prayer had a specifically practical and exceptional purpose. It insisted not so much on the content as on the way of receiving the sacraments, "well and fruitfully". It sought to create an atmosphere of prayer and piety in the whole school environment<sup>107</sup>: "*As regard to spiritual things, the school children go to confession once a week, and are taught how to make a true confession. Those who are in Communion receive communion every eight days, and others every fifteen days; they are taught how to receive communion fruitfully*"<sup>108</sup>.

One of the principal duties of the assistant at Prayer was to instruct the children to receive the sacraments of confession and communion. Calasanz gave maximum importance to the illuminative, preventive and medicinal efficacy of the sacraments in his educational system<sup>109</sup>. He recommended to the teachers that they adapt themselves as much as possible to the capacity of the audience. He exhorted his religious to make use in particular of one of the most powerful

106 Pos. Cas., Pr. Summ. N. 24.

107 V. Caballero, *Orientaciones pedagógicas de S.J. de Calasanz*, Madrid 1845, p. 233.

108 St. J. de Calasanz, *Brief Report*.

109 "Let them go to confession many times and let the older ones also go to communion, because the sacraments usually enlighten the understanding and inflame the will to abhor sin and to love the works of virtue. Insist much on this, because it is the whole of our institute". To Father Castille, Rome, July 4, 1626. EGC, II, p. 405.

means for true moral and spiritual progress, that is, the examination of one's own conscience<sup>110</sup>. Without inner and careful self-control with regard to the proposed ideals; without a clear, profound and impartial criticism of one's own feelings, any progress is impossible.

Glicerio knew the art of entering with discretion and respect into the sanctuary of conscience, the mysterious meeting place of the divine and the human. The first steps were for the rehabilitation of those who entered the Pious Schools wounded by the influences of idleness and the corrupt environment of misery and sin. A necessary condition for becoming a student of the Pious Schools was a general confession, helping to break completely with the past and to begin a new life on the path of friendship with Jesus. For the youngest pupils, education tended to prevent them as much as possible from the harmful influence that sin could have on their innocent souls.

### *Punishment, a helpful medicine*

Every good educator knows from experience that self-control, that is, the control that each one imposes on one's own actions through the judgment of conscience, is not a point of departure, but a point of arrival, and presupposes a careful and long work of formation. To expect self-control from children, who most of the time follow natural instinct and are so far removed from reflection and reasoning, is to expose oneself to many disappointments.

As for physical health it is not enough to prevent illnesses and a proper nutrition, but sometimes medicine is necessary, so also for spiritual health the vigilance of the educator and sacramental help are not enough. A bitter and salutary medicine, punishment, is necessary. It is a medicine. Therefore it is necessary to use it with prudence, in the cases really necessary, and under the direct control of the *doctor*. Calasanz writes:

“As for the disobedient pupil, he does well to punish him, but I would like the punishment to be imposed always with so much mercy

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110 “One of us will be present at the prayer and... He will be able to instruct the little ones in the way to examine their conscience well”. *Reg. Cal.*, XIV, 74.

and prudence that the pupils themselves see that they deserve much more”<sup>111</sup>. And again: “To punish the pupils with kindness and mercy pleases me greatly, because when the pupils know the love of a father in the teacher, they do not feel the punishment so much, nor flee the school so easily”<sup>112</sup>. “Try to attract the pupils by showing yourself more as their father than as a rigorous judge”<sup>113</sup>.

Recurrent in Calasanz is the idea that confession is a valid alternative to punishment. It is a more effective means because it obtains amendment. Thus, he writes:

*“As for the punishment of the students, make it so that, whenever the confessor asks that one be forgiven if he confesses, then he is forgiven, because the sacrament has a greater effect than the whip”<sup>114</sup>.*

How many times would Glicerio intervene to calm the wrath of the teacher, the rigorous judge, and free the unfortunate rebellious child from his clutches, bringing him, little Judas, to the group of his twelve praying children, touching up the curls and the clothes of a frightened angel!

### *Jesus, a friend to know*

Freed from the harmful influences of sin, the children were able to take the first steps towards evangelical perfection. The Eucharistic Jesus was the privileged point of reference. Glicerio knew that the little ones with their healthy and fresh energies tend naturally to total surrender to the Lord. For this reason, he considered it a pastoral priority to lead them to Him, to make them discover Christ, so that they could face the problems of life with serenity. His was an ethical challenge to the forces of evil in favor of life.

To deepen the knowledge of Jesus sought with the weekly catechesis, Glicerio had at his disposal appropriate books, such as *Life and Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, by Calasanz<sup>115</sup>, *The Young*

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111 EGC, II, n. 224, to Father Cananea. Rome, June 20, 1624.

112 EGC, III, n. 893, to Father Pietrangeli. Rome July 7, 1628.

113 EGC, IV, n. 1618, to P. Bandoni. Rome May 15, 1631.

114 EGC, IV, n. 1441, to Father Garcia. Rome July 19, 1630.

115 These are three pious exercises of Calasanz.

*Christian*, by Father Franciotti, *Clear and Easy Preparation for the Sacrament of Confession and Communion*, by Father Philip Angelini, and the *Brief Statement of Christian Doctrine* written by himself<sup>116</sup>.

Glicerio, just as he chose, following the example of Calasanz, to orient the little ones towards the virtues of the martyrs children, so he did especially with the image of the Infant Jesus. In this he had a zealous collaborator, Caspar Dragonetti<sup>117</sup>. With great enthusiasm he prepared the children for their first communion. Holy Communion contributes to integrate and achieve the multiple and salutary effects of confession. Being par excellence a sacrament of the living, it can better exercise its enlightening efficacy of prevention and encouragement for good.

Glicerio fully shared Calasanz's thought:

*"The Lord very often gives in the communion a more complete health than that which the best medicines of the world give... health and joy"*<sup>118</sup>. *"Let the students go to confession and receive communion many times because the strength of this sacrament is great, accompanied with the pious exhortations of the teacher"*<sup>119</sup>. *This sacrament is one of the principal, or rather, the principal means for making copious fruit in our Institute with the young"*<sup>120</sup>.

All this was mixed with Glicerio's paternal affection, and he could repeat with the prophet: "I drew them with bonds full of humanity, with loving ties. I was with them like one who lifts a child to his cheek, I leaned over him and fed him"<sup>121</sup>. In Glicerio there was indeed something maternal in his solicitous and delicate gesture, which made him especially close and kind.

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116 Manuscript of Glicerio, in the BGSP. Cfr. L. Picanyol, *El Ven. Glicerio Landriani*, Rome 1938.

117 Calasanz wrote to Fr. Cananea on April 19, 1618: "Fr. Caspar has bought for these Pious Schools of Frascati valuable figurines to make the Crib, which will be of great devotion, and he brings with him many things necessary to make it perfect in some time", EGC, II, n. 27.

118 EGC, IV, n. 1565. Rome, January 18, 1631.

119 EGC, V, n. 2258. Rome, August 16, 1634.

120 EGC, III, n. 871. Rome, June 10, 1628.

121 Hosea, 11, 4.

*Jesus, the friend to talk to*

*The exposition of Jesus on the altar* was a form of prayer that made the presence of Jesus more alive among the children in the oratory, and the atmosphere more devout. It seems to me a legitimate hypothesis that, in the Pious Schools, this was an invention of Glicerio, who had a long experience of the devotion of the Forty Hours.

Calasanz, in order to create in the room of the oratory a pleasant atmosphere of prayer, to fix the attention of the children and to restrain their fantasy, had ordered to paint and place on the altar a large image of the Virgin and Child, in the center of a group of children kneeling on the steps of the altar, next to a Piarist priest.

Glicerio placed on the corporal the monstrance with the consecrated form. The display did not show the children the blue eyes of the Son of Mary, as in the painting, but offered them the concrete occasion for an act of authentic faith: "*In cruce latebat Deitas, at hic latet et humanitas*" (On the cross the divinity was hidden, but here, too, humanity is hidden). Here the word of the Lord resounds clearly: "When two or three are gathered in my name, I am there in their midst"<sup>122</sup>. A presence that the priest made complete and more concrete in the Eucharist. Jesus promised: "Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it"<sup>123</sup>.

Here is the strength that Glicerio gave to the prayer of his children. They recited the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Litany of the Virgin Mary and of the Saints, the Creed, the seven penitential Psalms, the *Veni, Sancte Spiritus*, the Rosary, the Crown of the Twelve Stars, the *Sub tuum praesidium*<sup>124</sup>. They sang the Lauds, they learned to visit the Blessed Sacrament.

Glicerio helped the children to get in touch with their inner world, to discover themselves, to have a realistic perception of their quality, of the gifts received, of their aptitudes. A learning to think

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122 Matthew 18, 20.

123 John, 14, 13.

124 With this beautiful prayer, "We fly to your patronage..." still today all the Piarists end their community prayers.

positively, to become aware of the richness that is in each person and that is waiting to be expressed. The “literate” father was leading them little by little to worry not only about themselves and their own family, but also to look generously outside of themselves. He aroused among them feelings of gratitude towards God, but also towards the people who took their maintenance to heart and gave them the possibility of acquiring cultural formation and providing for their future. They prayed for the needs of the universal Church.

Glicerio helped them to become aware of international problems as well. Not only those of the Turks, who threatened the Church and Western civilization, but also those of Central Europe, tormented by hatred, wars and massacres among brothers.

Calasanz at first assigned to the priest in charge of the Continuous Prayer the task of teaching prayer to the children. After the experience of Glicerio, he added to the constitutions the obligation to deal also with “other subjects suited to their capacity”. Father Gellio Ghellini, who preceded Glicerio in the office of animator of the Continuous Prayer, while writing to his brother Paul Emilio, asked him for didactic aids, so that “leaning on me the business of the spirit of these children and of their prayer, I have to do many activities”<sup>125</sup>. Yes, because the duty of the educator demands continuous updating and permanent creativity. Routine and the instability of adolescence are two capital enemies of their harmonious spiritual growth. To this end, Gelini asked his brother to send him books, printed images and other material.

Glicerio also had to do “many activities”, a lot of work: reading, taking notes, evaluating, deepening, reflecting and adapting both sacred and profane material. Literature was equally important, because it helps to multiply the points of view, to broaden the cultural horizon. It opens another door to enter the world of others. Glicerio helped young people to understand the problems of the Reformation and the renewal, even from the point of view of the Protestants. Without his correct contribution, the efforts of Catholic Rome

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125 EC, p. 1555.

would have been extinguished because of their intrinsic fragility. He knew well what concrete solutions, inspired by the Gospel, he could propose to his children, to make them active and capable of stimulating and reforming the natural evolution of their religious and civil society, and to offer their invaluable contribution to the progress of humanity.



## 2. THE CATEQUIST

### *“The most worthy office in the world”*

From apostle of the poor and of prostitutes, Glicerio became, within the Pious Schools, a specialist in catechesis. He used the theological knowledge he had acquired<sup>126</sup> and the experience of Milan with Frederick Borromeo, in the footsteps of St. Charles. He warned, in the spirit of the Council of Trent, of the need for a renewed and creative catechetical action, incisive and constant, capable of giving, with the power of the Gospel, and through his own fatiguing exercise, a Christian soul to the world. To help young people to free their minds and hearts from everything that hindered them on their way; to spur them to give the best of themselves in a constant tension of human and Christian growth. He considered the task Calasanz entrusted to him as a gift from heaven, that is, to dedicate his attention especially to children. He did not consider himself in any way inferior. Christ, the wisdom of God himself, had a predilection for the little ones and treated children with confidence: “Let the children come to me”<sup>127</sup>.

The intellectual and religious formation of youth is an essential presupposition for the future of the Church. The main source from which Glicerio drew for his catechesis was Sacred Scripture.

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126 St. Joseph Calasanz affirms: “I know that he studied philosophy and theology, because he reasoned about it with much foundation”.

127 Matthew, 19, 14.

*“On the street... he was always engaged in mental or vocal prayer, and in reading some passage of Sacred Scripture, which he always carried with him, to the great profit of his companions”<sup>128</sup>.*

He considered it the most worthy and effective office to expound faithfully and to explain the correct interpretation of the Word, the sure way to find God and, as he wrote in a letter to Cardinal Frederick, “so much forgotten indeed, against which the world has raised a flag”. He prepared himself thoroughly through study, prayer and reflection, making the Bible his daily bread, because, he wrote, repeating the words of Jesus, “if anyone loves me he will observe my words and my Father will love him and we will come to him and make our abode in him”. “Only if his Word remains in me, –Glicerio concluded– I will obtain much fruit”<sup>129</sup>. His daily effort was to actualize and accommodate the eternal Word in his teaching, so that every event would be illuminated by it. To better understand the meaning of the divine Word, he assiduously read the works of the holy Fathers and the Doctors of the Church, especially St. Gregory the Pope and St. Thomas Aquinas<sup>130</sup>.

### *Places of his catechesis*

The proper place for catechesis has always been the family, helped by the parish community. But sometimes the starting point, that is, the family environment and the insufficient proposal of the ecclesial community, make the contribution of the school, always precious, indispensable for the integral formation of young people.

All week long Glicerio worked in the school; on Sundays and holidays in various parishes in Rome and its surroundings.

*“His zeal for the salvation of souls was, as far as I know, most ardent. The assiduity and diligence he used every day in our schools, being from morning to afternoon in the Oratory, catechizing the students, or teaching them how to do and making continuous*

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128 Fr. Garcia in Pos. s.v., fol. 128, p. 274.

129 Letter to Cardinal Frederick dated November 5, 1611.

130 Glicerio transcribed in a book the Sentences of the Fathers and Doctors, and made use of them for the apostolate and ordered them to be read at the last illness. Cf. Appendix 6.

*prayers or exhortations with them and trying to get them to confess, seems to me inexplicable*<sup>131</sup>.

*“He took great pleasure in teaching the doctrine in the Pious Schools to the children continually. With a most beautiful order, he catechized the children in all the things necessary to live in a Christian way, instilling in their hearts the holy fear of God, obedience to their elders and to be ready to lose their lives rather than to offend God”*<sup>132</sup>.

*“He attended for a time to the Christian doctrine in the church of St. Mary in Grottapinta... When he had the doctrine well organized in that church, so that it would go well, he went to establish the doctrine in St. Hadrian in Campo Vaccino, that was totally abandoned, having been appointed prior of the Doctrine by Monsignor Vicegerent, so that he would re-establish the doctrine in the places where it was lacking. And he used so much nobility and so much good work that in a short time that place was one of the first doctrines in Rome”*<sup>133</sup>.

*“I know that he established a good doctrine in Campagnano di Roma, having been told by the archpriest of that place, and another in Formello; and I know that he taught doctrine to the children of the Pious Schools where he lived”*<sup>134</sup>. *“He restored the doctrine in St. Bernard, which was lacking, having been ordered to do so by Mgr: Fedele, vicegerent”*<sup>135</sup>.

The centers of his activity were, first, St. Lawrence in Damaso, near San Pantaleo; then St. Mary in Grottapinta in Campo dei Fiori, and St. Hadrian in the Roman Forum, where, thanks to Glicerio, the doctrine reached the peak of flourishing and organization. Outside Rome, besides Campagnano, where the chaplain was a good friend of the fathers of San Pantaleo, and Formello, not far from Campagnano, he carried out intense work in Frascati, where Glicerio, with Calasanz and Gaspar Dragonetti, moved from San Pantaleo in 1616.

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131 B. Peter Casani, in Pos.s.v., p. 271.

132 Fr. John Garcia, in Pos.s.v., p. 401.

133 Fr. Garcia, in Pos.s.v., p. 275.

134 Francis Selvaggi, in Pos. s.v., p. 270.

135 Fr. J. Garcia, in Pos. s.v., p. 276.

### *Models and organization*

It is worth recalling what Mr. Cosmas Contini affirms in the ordinary process: “Father Abbot was a great servant of God and *imitated the life of St. Charles*”<sup>136</sup>. Glicerio, who had reflected on the many facets of the life of St. Charles, now, in the tireless catechetical activity, recognized the aspect with which he was most in tune.

Immense was the mass of pastoral activity that St. Charles carried out in Milan: seminaries, synods, visits and audiences, pilgrimages, assistance to the sick poor, music and singing. But the first among his many pastoral concerns was that of the schools of Christian doctrine for children. Saint Charles went from one church to another to check on the functioning of the Doctrine. He sent laymen and priests to establish schools in all the parishes of the diocese. He prescribed statutes and norms for them. In each school there was a Prior, a director who, after catechism, gathered the teachers to discuss difficulties, impediments, absences, disorders, and to make decisions. It seems already the description of how Glicerio would act half a century later in the catechetical centers of Rome, as attested in the processes of beatification:

*“He wanted each worker –this is what he called the teachers– to have “in scriptis” –in writing– what he should do in teaching the doctrine, wanting to maintain the method that St. Charles followed in teaching it. To this end, he ordered a book from Milan and always carried it with him, together with Holy Scripture”*<sup>137</sup>. *“Everyone said that as long as Glicerio had the doctrine, he brought it with great charity, and that his example was so good that everyone had been very well edified by it, and the fame had remained that the doctrine had been explained by a nephew of St. Charles”*<sup>138</sup>.

As in Milan the catechesis of the Borromeo, in Rome the teaching of Glicerio was interspersed with hymns, psalms and prayers. And it also extended to the elementary notions of cultural acquisition, such as the rudiments of the written language and the doing of accounts. Saint Charles Borromeo wrote in 1571: “And so useful is this work of

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136 Pos. s.v., p. 238.

137 Pos. n.v., p. 276.

138 Pos. n.v., p. 277.

Christian schools on feast days that, for me, I cannot see that anything else has borne so much fruit in this my diocese as this one". Trained in the Borromeo school, Glicerio had clear ideas, and already a certain experience. He structured the catechesis in a systematic way.

### *Calasanzian style*

Glicerio found the programmatic lines of St. Charles also largely codified in the statutes of the confraternity of Christian Doctrine in Rome. But he went beyond the simple catechesis that the confraternity proposed. In the objectives of the pious association he infused a new spirit, the Calasanzian spirit, which aims at the *integral education* of the students. No longer simple evangelization, but piety and letters, faith and science; not only religious formation, but also cultural and professional. The essentials, presented with simplicity, love and full-time dedication. Word and witness. First to be, and then to *communicate* effectively.

In the school of Calasanz, the privileged moment of the catechesis was that of Continuous Prayer, of which we have already spoken. The atmosphere of the Pious Schools offered ample space for organizing academies and small hagiographical theaters, formal academic disputes, competitions on catechetical themes with small prizes –pictures, rosaries, agnusdeis, little books, writing materials– which aroused emulation and increased the diligence of the children<sup>139</sup>. The rival groups were often given characteristic names, such as “Carthaginians and Romans / Knights and Infantry / Pious Gate and Angelic Gate”. But, it could be argued, “is this not the method so much reviled today... because it leads to rivalry? Yes, but here winning was secondary. Competitiveness, in a certain way, is part of the psychology of man and child, as long as it is not taken beyond certain limits. It is necessary to subordinate the competitive moment to solidarity and communion.

### *Formation of the Laity*

In parishes today, one of the most felt needs for a quality catechesis is the formation of zealous and capable lay catechists. Part of pastoral knowl-

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139 Cfr. C. Vilá Palá, *Fuentes inmediatas de la Pedagogía Calasanziana*, Rome, Arch. Gen. F 8/6, pp. 261-278.

edge consists in appreciating the abilities of talents, perhaps hidden, but within reach; to give adequate encouragement to those who have the necessary gifts to reach very high, developing new strategies and initiatives. All Christians, by virtue of the sacrament of confirmation, have received from the Holy Spirit appropriate charisms for building the community.

Glicerio helped the laity, men and women, to discover their own role in the Church's evangelizing mission and gave concreteness to their ministry. He recognized and respected the laity as legitimate subjects of apostolate and Christian witness. "By their vocation, it is proper for the laity to seek the Kingdom of God, dealing with temporal affairs and ordering them according to God"<sup>140</sup>. At St. Hadrian, Glicerio had more than thirty lay workers and fifteen women workers –catechists– for more than four hundred boys and girls. They also attended catechism classes about sixty peasants. With curtains they separated the men from the women. And this was not for any other reason, but, as St. Joseph Calasanz affirms, "*so that they could do their work with greater tranquility; and I know this because I have seen it many times*".

And he adds:

*"He had such great fervor in teaching Christian doctrine in Rome to poor children and other people, that on feasts, in order to go early, he did not worry about eating badly and quickly. And it lasted for as long as he lived, teaching the doctrine with such a diversity of orders, classes and teachers, that it was marvelous the number of people"*<sup>141</sup>.

He had nurses, and also teachers for those who wanted to learn to read and write. "*Many learned on such an occasion and some became religious because of the good examples that the said Father gave them*"<sup>142</sup>. There were always confessors available for everyone. Each "team", that is, a group of boys or girls, was entrusted to a teacher. Each section, male or female, was supervised by a prior or a prioress, important roles who Glicerio himself chose from among the most committed lay people and which he trained appropriately.

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140 Conc. Vat. II, Dogmatic Const. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 31.

141 Joseph Calasanz, in Pr. O. R., p. 376. 142.

142 J. García, in Pos. s.v., p. 403.

Written by Glicerio's own handwriting, a precious page entitled "*On the Office of the Prior*"<sup>143</sup> has come down to us, albeit mutilated. The name was well known in the brotherhoods of the Christian Doctrine of Milan and Rome. However, in Glicerio the name of prior is charged with a value that transcends that of a simple person in charge of order and of the good functioning in general. He must "think often about the things of his school", "be solicitous to foresee... to bring about good". "Let him be in all things excellent and in Christian virtues blameless as much as he can... as a lamp burning and set on a lampstand". He must be able to repeat "like Gideon to the soldiers: – You do as you see me to do". He must frequently visit the different classes to "encourage the lazy, to spur on the negligent with charitable severity and gentle reproof".

Glicerio was a worker of the first hour in the Pious Schools. It was he, together with the Founder, who established in practice what was later sanctioned in the Constitutions, and would become a Calasanzian charism and tradition. Calasanz will write that "the superior must spur to holiness *imprimis* –above all– with his example, correcting the defects *benigne* –with love–, exhorting more with sensitivity than with a severe command"<sup>144</sup>. In Glicerio's page, the main characteristics of Calasanzian didactics already emerge, especially intense diligence, in its rich semantic value of care, attention, love, delicacy. Calasanz insists in his letters: "...attend diligently to the school and consider that you serve God"<sup>145</sup>. Glicerio recommended to the Prior: "*He will be diligent in the communion of each month that none of his own be absent, warning them one or two Sundays before and advising them to go to confession and prepare themselves*". And in order for the summons to be effective "*he himself should do it more frequently*". Writing to Fr. Garcia from Frascati on May 29, 1617, he implores him to see to it that the members of the Doctrine notify one another for communion on the following Sunday, if he is not sure that it has already been done. In such a way that –and this is also emphasized in

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143 *Eph. Cal.* N. 11, 1981, p. 413.

144 *Constitutions*, Salmanticae 1979, ch. VII, n. 75.

145 EGC, IV, n. 1374.

the Constitutions as a Calasanzian characteristic— *“the catechesis predisposes to the liturgy and arouses apostolic commitment”*<sup>146</sup>.

As director and supervisor of doctrine, Glicerio required that after catechism each teacher give an account of his own experience. From the confrontation and verification with the programmatic lines, new orientations for the future were to emerge. Just as today ministerial decrees order professors and teachers to hold meetings to adopt texts, to unify evaluation criteria, to approve new techniques, to propose experimental courses, to examine other possibilities, in order to verify the validity of one’s own didactic strategies. In the *Roman Ordinary Process*, the second witness, Cosmas Contini, refers:

*“Once the doctrine was finished, he would gather the workers and teach everyone how to teach it and what was to be done from the opening of the door to the end”.*

Beyond all didactic strategies and techniques, Glicerio knew that, in his field, personal testimony was of fundamental importance. The prior was required to *jump immediately* at the ringing of the bell, and he was always the first in the church, at work, to create an atmosphere of joy, and in difficulties, to encourage and help.

*“I know,”* Father Garcia says, *“that in Saint Hadrian’s, in a room where the pews are kept, Glicerio took off his shirt and gave it to a poor man who was in a corner almost naked.”*

Jesus had gathered around him a group of disciples who shared his apostolic zeal and to whom he entrusted tasks adapted to their abilities, respecting the time of maturity. Glicerio’s presence in the field also required, for the purposes of effective missionary and evangelizing action, the collaboration of many disciples with particular roles and tasks. His concern was that the action should have, as much as possible, characteristics of homogeneity and organization, but especially of humanity and spirituality, with a mentality of communion. To this end, the collaboration of the priests was precious. Here are some significant gestures. Once he met a priest in a hospital. He could

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146 *Constitutions and Rules*, Ch. VIII, n. 87, Rome 1986.

no longer eat. Glicerio bought four fresh eggs, opened his mouth and made him swallow two. With this, he began to recover and, cured, he became a very talented worker of the Doctrine<sup>147</sup>. Especially in Grottapinta, where the poor were more numerous, he distributed alms and bread. Jesus also united the two demands, material and spiritual, and the Our Father exhorts us to feel that we are children of the Father who is in heaven and to ask for bread to satisfy our daily hunger.

Such a complete, attentive and transparent catechesis, which did not neglect the legitimate needs of man, and which animated ecclesial projects in a Calasanzian style, could not fail to have great resonance. And not only in that century. The illustrious Abbot Charles Bartholomew Piazza, almost a century after the death of Glicerio, remembered him as the “Restorer of Christian Doctrine in Rome, to whom we owe in great part the good method and organization that is still evident today in this much-needed work”<sup>148</sup>.

### 3. HE DRAWS OLD AND NEW THINGS FROM HIS TREASURE

#### *Didactic aids*

The official text of Christian doctrine was ordinarily that of the cardinal St. Robert Bellarmine “*Brief Christian Doctrine to learn by heart*”, edited in 1597, according to the model of the Council of Trent, written in Latin by Poggiano and translated by Pius V mandate in various languages. There were 95 questions from the master to the disciple in two attachments: one for the master with easy questions, clear and simple explanations and with explanatory examples; the other for the student. Glicerio gave each officer a copy of one or the other.

Of the three catechisms of St. Peter Canisius, published in 1558, he used only the *Catechismus minimus*. The preference given by Calasanz, among many others, to Bellarmine’s catechism was due to its simplicity –it was addressed to children– and to the effort of having to pass continually from learning to practicing what was learned.

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147 F. Selvaggi, in Pos. s.v., p. 388.

148 C. B. Piazza, *Emerologio di Roma cristiana*, Rome, 1712.

From Bellarmine himself is *The most abundant Declaration*, whose addressees were the catechists. The questions were asked by the student; the answers, with explanations and examples, were given by the teacher. The course lasted three years, the time the students spent at most in the Pious Schools. Glicerio made much use of the small catechism, written by Calasanz in 1599, of which we have a copy published in 1691: *Some Mysteries of the Life and Passion of Christ Our Lord*. There are 64 questions with their corresponding answers. For example:

– Teacher: “On what day and year did the Son of God become man?”

Student: “On March 25<sup>th</sup>”.

– Teacher: “What feast does the Church celebrate in memory of this great mystery?”

Student: “The Annunciation”.

– Teacher: “And why did the Son of God become man?”

Pupil: –“For us.”

“To thank the Lord, they all kneel down and recite the Our Father”.

From Glicerio we still have, although incomplete, the *“Brief Declaration of Christian Doctrine”*, found in three booklets at the General Postulation in Rome in 1980. There, the concern to present Jesus as a friend and brother, who truly liberates man, rather than moralism to avoid falling into mortal sin and thus unburdening the conscience, is more transparent. Glicerio divides his written work into four parts: Creed - Our Father - Commandments - Sacraments. The articles of the creed are incomplete; nothing remains of the commandments, which Glicerio asked Fr. Garcia for in a letter of May 29, 1617<sup>149</sup>. Of the sacraments, we are left with only what Fr. Casani transcribed with wonderful writing about Penance or Confession<sup>150</sup>.

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149 Glicerio to Fr. García from Frascati: “We hope... that our charismatic brother from Brescia will please send me that copy of the *Commandments* right away” Rome, BGSP.

150 Cf. Claudio Vilá Palá in *Eph. Cal.* n. 11, 1981, pp. 413-434.

### *Method of learning*

The very etymology of *Catechesis* –to resonate– suggests the voice of the pupil who, like a parrot, repeats that of the teacher. Is it perhaps for this reason, in defense of the dignity of the pupil, that today we avoid giving children ready-made formulas? The catechism of Pius X, for example, would anticipate the conclusions, thus excluding the path of research. Without going into the substance of the question, we should keep in mind that for Glicerio the formulas of the faith came to the children as a response, after a journey of interiorization during Continuous Prayer. Only a purely rote learning would suppress personal work and nullify the joy of feeling oneself a living instrument of the truth, through dialogue, under the action of the Spirit.

*Catechesi tradendae* recognizes that formulas repeated without the necessary deepening lend themselves to an insufficient assimilation of the truths of the faith. Nevertheless, very authoritative voices made themselves heard on the occasion of the IV General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in 1977, to sensibly balance the function of reflection and that of spontaneity. The flowers of faith and piety,” the bishops affirmed, “do not bloom in the desert areas of a catechesis without memory. Thus, what is essential is that the memorized texts be at the same time interiorized. It was right for Glicerio to teach children to memorize, because it was necessary to “give” to the young people the documents of the faith, certain passages of the Gospel or of the liturgy, the Ten Commandments, the formulas of the principal prayers and the key notions of doctrine. In the Pious Schools, the method of competitive prizes was also used<sup>151</sup>. Creative tricks that served to animate the meetings and to memorize some basic information. In fact, even Jesus did something similar: “Did John come from God or from the devil,” once he asked the disciples.

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151 Calasanz asked (PBC, 2, pp. 1 ff.): “How long was the Blessed Virgin Mary in the stable of Brthlehem? “Exact answer: –No more than forty days. But the first prize went to the one who had also reasoned the answer (because then she presented Jesus in the Temple of Jerusalem). Cardinal Baronius was, with reason, delighted with the disputes that Calasanz improvised with the children in his presence!

Glicerio's catechesis was always a pleasant moment. To make it become "a game", in the deepest sense of the term, is not an heresy. Among other things, children learn precisely in this way. If the Gospel is "Good News", whoever gives catechesis in a banal, repetitive, heavy-handed way, is in a certain sense anti-evangelical and the result is that the children no longer want to know anything about Mark or John. Glicerio knew well that everything goes if it arouses interest: the dramatization, the story with drawings, cards or wall posters.

Also a holy selfishness. The important thing was that everything should be done as a catechesis, as a way of faith, and not as an end in itself.

### *Glicerio and the Ambrosian Library*

Alexander Manzini writes in chapter 22<sup>nd</sup> of *The Betrothed*: "The capital work of Frederick Borromeo was the Ambrosian Library, which he conceived with enthusiastic ambition, and erected with so much generosity from its foundations. To provide it with books, in addition to his own collections, he sent eight of the most learned and expert men he could find to hoard them in Italy, France, Germany, Flanders, Greece, Lebanon and Jerusalem. It was inaugurated in 1609. Illustrious personalities participated. It became a destination for scholars and travelers. It has been said that the Ambrosian Library is one of the memorable things of that century. And not only for its magnificence and riches, but especially because Frederick wanted it as a public library *for the elevation of the people and for the instruction of the poor*."

On this point, we cannot but recall the famous letter that Glicerio wrote to the cardinal in 1612. After thanking God for having called him to his service in the Pious Schools, he describes what takes place every day in the school of Calasanz:

*"The little children of the poor, who usually wander around the squares without any restraint of the Fear of God, here are removed from idleness". And he adds with astonishment that Father Joseph distributed them free paper, pens, rosaries, and books, for the love of God*<sup>152</sup>.

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152 The original was originally in the Arch. Gen. of Rome. Today, it is in the Bibliotheca Ambrosiana in Milan.

These expressions must have deeply touched Frederick's great soul. We regret, and rightly so, that we do not have in the General Archives in Rome the Cardinal's reply to Glicerio's letter. But what could be more beautiful than Frederick's initiative in the Ambrosian Library? "Cardinal Frederick gave free of charge to anyone who came to study *paper, pens, sand and ink*". Magnificent! Certainly Frederick had not only emulated St. Joseph Calasanz, but surpassed him with his economic means. To the normal furniture he added braziers of copper and carpets, so the poor children would not be cold with their feet on the nude floor. Calasanz, in order to warm his little ones, did not even have at his disposal the natural warmth, which even the Child Jesus had in the portal of Bethlehem<sup>153</sup>. But Frederick Borromeo put at the disposal of the poor children much more than the rooms of his library. He offered, like Calasanz, his own person in catechesis, with a great spirit of abnegation and humility. Manzoni, after having described the "table rather poor than frugal, the clothes rather poor than simple", in a burst of life, presents us the Cardinal absolutely *Piarist*: "Frederick instructed some poor children and at the same time that he questioned and taught them, he caressed them lovingly. A gentleman warned him why he caressed those children so much, because they were too dirty and hungry. As if the good gentleman supposed –Manzoni shrewdly pointed out– that Frederick did not have enough sight to make such a discovery, or enough perspicacity to fit himself with such a fine accusation!

### *Prophetic intuition*

Glicerio's impulse for the renewal of catechesis found a strong stimulus in the presence of the Oblate Fathers of St. Ambrose and St. Charles, who arrived in Rome from Milan. The Oblates were priests who, with a special oath of obedience, placed themselves at the disposal of the Archbishop of Milan. Under his direction they had established the catechetical school of the cathedral with four hundred lay catechists.

Cardinal Frederick Borromeo carried forward the initiative of his predecessor, St. Charles, and in 1612 sent Father Giovanni Andrea Galeazzo Bono to found a house in Rome. The theologian Airone was

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153 St. Joseph Calasanz had in St. Pantaleon two donkeys and... 1200 children!

also with him. Glicerio, who had already been thinking on his own about a school for the formation of lay catechists, was overjoyed. He had filled out hundreds of sheets of paper for a three-year course he was planning. They have come down to us, as we have recalled before, in the form of “illegible” notes because of the numerous abbreviations. They remain closed in their mystery, in the General Postulation of San Pantaleo.

Glicerio’s plan was approved by Calasanz. And he, encouraged, contacted Bishop Seneca, a great friend of Cardinal Frederick and formerly a collaborator of St. Charles. With Father Bono, was agreed the person to help Father Airone. A request from Glicerio, addressed to his relative, Cardinal Federico, immediately came out, and we transcribe here in its most significant features:

“My dearest and most Rev. Father in Christ: Since my dearest Father Bono is here, we have conversed a few times together... Father Prefect of our schools, seeing that it is a most opportune occasion to have these schools, as numerous as they are, as a living fountain that will always provide new individuals, thought to request from your kindness and charity the theologian companion of Father Bono to begin a short three-year course in philosophy and theology, because it seems to us an invention inspired by the Holy Spirit, for those who wish to know what is necessary only for the glory of God and the health of souls... Bono told me that he needed your permission to receive his theological companion in our house, and that he needed someone else to come from Milan to help him. Bishop Seneca promised to write to your charity, but first he said that he wanted to talk with Father Bono about who among the Oblate Fathers would be suitable to come to Rome. In the name of Jesus Christ O.L., we humbly ask you for this authorization, which is a thing of so much glory to God and profit to many souls; and with God’s help we promise you ten for one of workers for Christian Doctrine. And certainly vocations will be formed here for the service of your Oblate Fathers. Our desire is none other than the glory of Jesus Christ... As soon as possible, and better immediately, we hope that you will deign to give us an answer and a good solution. And prostrating ourselves at your feet, we humbly bow and recommend ourselves to your prayers.

From Rome, the 29<sup>th</sup> day of September 1616.  
The most humble, yours Glicerio of Christ.

As for satisfying Glicerio's request, probably the good Frederick hoped to be freed from the serious commitments of the Ambrosian. In April 1618 the cardinal finally inaugurated, after so much effort and expense, the Ambrosian picture gallery, with the celebrated works of art by Caravaggio, Titian, Leonardo, Raphael, Brueghel... But it had already been two months since Glicerio had flown off to heaven. Unfortunately, the three-year catechetical course remained Glicerio's dream. He certainly anticipated the modern institutes of theology for the formation of catechists and lay teachers of religion, which respond to an identical need for evangelization.

In God's plan, a true renewal of catechetics was reserved for our time, the fruit of a study conducted at the international level by experts and pastors of souls, guided by a General Directory. To achieve this, congregations and special commissions have worked in consultation with the bishops' conferences of the world. The directory will guide the particular churches along the path of catechetical renewal and will serve as a point of reference for both the content and methods to be employed. Meanwhile, in the 1979 encyclical *Catechesi tradendae*, the voice of John Paul II has been the answer to the apostolic yearning of Glicerio: "Lay catechists must be carefully trained... Such a formation obliges us to organize appropriate centers and institutes"<sup>154</sup>.

We can conclude that the four centuries that separate us from Glicerio Landriani weigh relatively the same as a grain of sand in the scales, in the face of the flourishing action of the Spirit who, who through a long course of centuries, raises up, at the right time, prophets, pioneers and saints, who reproduce the imprint of love and service of Jesus Master for the brethren.

#### 4. ITINERANT CATECHESIS. THE ROLE OF THE LAITY

##### *A marvelous discovery*

Glicerio was not fortunate in meeting Fr. Francis Méndez immediately after his conversion. He was a man with a reputation for holi-

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154 *Enchiridion Vaticanum*, n. 6, para. 1927.

ness, but in reality rather extravagant and pseudo-mystic. Perhaps he was not helped much even by the spiritual direction of Carmelite Dominic of Jesus Mary, who, with his words and example, was too much a burden on his enthusiasm as an ardent and emotional neophyte<sup>155</sup>.

Instead, the right man for Glicerio was Fr. Joseph Calasanz, who contributed decisively to stabilize the balance of his spirit. When he entered the Pious Schools, Glicerio's so-called *oddities* ceased forever. In addition to an activity that was in harmony with him, and evangelically praised, Fr. Joseph, by his example, offered to Glicerio's private devotion, popular, simple and effective forms of piety.

"When he arrived in Rome, Father Joseph devoted himself with great devotion and consolation to visit the holy places of this city, thanking His Majesty for having delivered him from many dangers... It gave him such great consolation to visit these sanctuaries, and particularly the Seven Churches, that he began to frequent them repeatedly"<sup>156</sup>.

For Glicerio it was a marvelous discovery and a source of brilliant innovations. Almost instinctively he knew how to infuse these expressions of popular piety with his imprint of missionary and born catechist. At first, the activity of the Piarist Glicerio took place during the week in the school of San Pantaleo and, almost at the same time, on feast days, in the catechetical centers of Grottapinta, St. Lawrence in Damaso, St. Hadrian, St. Bernard, Campagnano and Formello. Later, in the continuous exercise of planning and correcting, observing and praying, he soon came to understand that private visits to city shrines, schools, catechetical centers, and even the street –symbols of life in every city– instead of being watertight departments, one next to the other, could become *living environments*, because the only constitutive dimension of all of them were to be Church. Or, in other words, itinerant catechesis.

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155 Fr. Peter Angelini, the first biographer and companion of Father Dominic, characterizes him thus in chapter II, 7-8 of his book: "He despised and he vilified himself on every occasion". And Father Stanislaus: "He wore an iron chain, which, passing over his shoulders, encircled him five times. In some parts it had penetrated his flesh". O.c., p. 52.

156 Vincent Berro, o.c., book I, chapter 9, p. 65.

From a profound knowledge of love for Christ, Glicerio had the desire to proclaim, to evangelize, to lead others to the “yes” of faith in Jesus, wherever possible. In his letter to Cardinal Frederick of September 29, 1612, speaking of Father Bono, a Milanese theologian in Rome, he said: “We have sometimes spoken together about the preparation of some young people to help the infidels”. He often repeated: “Lord, make all creatures know you!”<sup>157</sup>. And is not the purpose of all catechesis to bring us into communion with Jesus, the only one who can lead us to the love of the Father?

### *The pilgrimage*

#### *A missionary commitment*

Pilgrimages, private and public, short and long, became for Glicerio privileged moments of catechesis. Pilgrimages are by their nature a journey of the soul in its longing for God, a path of transformation and transfiguration in the following of Jesus, who proclaimed: “I am the life”<sup>158</sup>. Glicerio would invite the people he met to recite the holy rosary alternately: “He would invite passers-by along the roads saying: ‘Help me to pray the rosary’. Most of them obeyed. Sometimes there were from fifteen to twenty people... When the vocal prayers were finished, they would begin some spiritual reasoning”<sup>159</sup>. He distributed a great quantity of spiritual booklets and rosaries, which he carried for this purpose, so that both the body and the spirit would have their nourishment”<sup>160</sup>.

In his incessant and indefatigable pilgrimage wherever the people lived with their difficulties, hopes and joys, he made them almost touch with his hand, even those who were far away, that they were part of the one and universal Church in which all count equal, rich and poor, because they are all children of God. For those simple and believing people, who often lived in difficult conditions, it was a feast to participate, noting the understanding that Glicerio showed for his religious and material needs and for the original way of approaching his deepest aspirations.

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157 Pos. s.v., p. 404.

158 John 14:6.

159 A. Armini, o.c., p. 58.

160 F. Baldi, o.c., p. 33.

Glicerio had understood that Roman basilicas, sacred places par excellence, were at the same time pleasant places, full of historical and spiritual messages. They aroused enthusiasm and devotion at the same time. Great architecture was born of the need for people to live together and communicate. There is nothing more sublime than the network of stupendous Roman basilicas, with their streets, where everyone could participate in a choral and joyful way in the monuments of the public streets, civil and religious. The solid nexus between art, piety and society was a vital aspect of Glicerio's catechesis, even if it seems almost strange to us today for our way of enjoying the city. With the industrial revolution and traffic congestion, under the thrust of technical demands, our culture, in fact, has reduced the urban fabric to a chaotic agglomeration, and the function of the temple has the value of service, without that symbolic and spiritual charge that in the past was referred to the spatial organization.

With Glicerio, catechesis in Rome went from a weekly commitment in the parishes to a permanent and itinerant mission. The Vicegerent, Mgr. Cesar Fedele had placed in his hands practically the entire catechetical movement of the city<sup>161</sup>. Glicerio organized it and made it into an association, obtaining a special indulgence from Pope Paul V. He also obtained for Formello the same benefit as for Rome. In a single day, so that the faithful could enjoy it during the feast of the following day, he traveled from Formello to Rome on horseback, round trip, about fifty kilometers, to receive from the Pope, with great joy, the Brief of indulgence<sup>162</sup>.

### *The "little Jubilee"*

It was not by chance that Pope Paul V granted the associations of Glicerio special indulgences. From the moment that Glicerio moved from the interior of a building, school or church to the street, he would automatically begin to organize small jubilees. "Jubilee" is the great gift granted to those who, having sincerely repented and having received Holy Communion, make a pilgrimage, that is, a journey of pu-

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161 P. Mussesti, o.c., p. 36: "He was made Prior of all the Doctrines of Rome by Mgr. Vicegerent".

162 F. Baldi, o.c., p. 33.

rification. The goal is a full encounter with Christ. John Paul II, in the Bull announcing the Jubilee of 2000, defines the indulgence as “one of the constitutive elements of the Jubilee event”, and the pilgrimage as “an exercise of laborious asceticism, of repentance for human weaknesses, of interior preparation for the reformation of the heart”.

Throughout the pilgrimages organized by him, Glicerio taught “to learn to confess well and to prepare for communion<sup>163</sup>”, and nourished the piety of the faithful with the profession of faith, with songs and prayers. A fervent convert, in order to show the Lord the sincerity of his feelings, he passionately dedicated himself to prayer, almsgiving and fasting, understood as abstinence from food and mortification of the body. When he entered the Pious Schools, in contact with Calasanz, he discovered pilgrimage as an important form of help. And he valued it by including it in his catechesis:

*“What are the good and pleasing works to God to make satisfaction for sins? –asks Glicerio in his page on penance–<sup>164</sup>. He himself answers: “All bodily asperities”. And he cites, “cilices, disciplines, sleeping on the ground, and also pilgrimages”.*

The journey to the sanctuary significantly combined the summons of Jesus: “Repent and believe in the Gospel” with the need to return to the Father’s house, keeping alive the certainty that “where sin abounded, grace abounded more abundantly. Each pilgrimage had as its point of departure and arrival the celebration of the sacrament of penance and the encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist<sup>165</sup>:

*“Every first Sunday of the month, Glicerio went to San Martinello to receive communion and took with him all the workers and children who were fit for communion. And the lady workers who took care of the girls on his behalf did the same”<sup>166</sup>.*

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163 Pos. s.v., p. 261.

164 Manuscript of Glicerio, *Sacrament of Penance*, C. Vilá Palá, Eph. Cal., n. 11, 1981.

165 Confession and communion were the basis of the whole educational system in the Pious Schools. St. Joseph Calasanz wrote: “Let them go to Confession frequently and let the older ones also receive communion... Insist enough on this, which is the whole of our Institute”. EGC, II, n. 471.

166 Pos. s.v., p. 403.

The indulgence flowed as a salutary medicine in spiritually disposed souls. In the Bull mentioned above, the Pope says that sin operates deeply, and is extirpated with work and a long journey of purification. The pilgrimage led by Glicerio was not, as is often the case today, a touristic trip, but was characterized by effort and sacrifice. However, the faithful understood that with their own strength they would not be able to repair the evil they had caused to themselves and to the whole community through sin. To obtain the indulgence meant to enjoy a very special help, to enter into the *spiritual treasure of the Church*. Glicerio's commitment in his catechesis did not forget to teach the faithful that the indulgence is nourished by an immense patrimony, made up of spiritual goods acquired by all the children of God, to which all can have access, just as in our families all the children enjoy the full right to the family patrimony. "Everything comes from Christ, but since we belong to him, even what is ours becomes his and acquires a healing power"<sup>167</sup>. Read from this perspective, indulgence is a path that introduces us into the mystery of the communion of saints, whereby, by virtue of the *vicarious action* on which the mystery of Christ is based, the holiness of one also helps the spiritual health of the other.

Communion with the Body of Christ is communion with his whole body, that is, also with all his brothers and sisters in the faith. Communion with Christ means opening oneself totally to others. For this reason, the pilgrimage to Christ is, with Glicerio, a pilgrimage to one's neighbor, to the poor, to the sick, to the liberation of exploited women, to the places of suffering where Jesus is especially present. There is, in fact, no authentic pilgrimage if one does not come to love God in one's neighbor. "When he visited the sick in the hospitals, he made their beds, and often ordered those who went with him to make the beds"<sup>168</sup>.

In the processes of beatification of Fr. Glicerio, the expressions of the witnesses are recurrent: "I accompanied him many times", "I often went with him", "I went there many times"... It is not surprising that John Paul II, in the above-mentioned Bull, among the conditions neces-

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167 *Incarnationis Mysterium*, n. 10.

168 A. Armini, o.c., p. 115.

sary to gain the Jubilee indulgence, as an alternative to visiting the Roman basilicas, the Holy Land, or even the shrines of the dioceses, places the visit to our brothers and sisters in need or in difficulty –the sick, the imprisoned, the elderly in solitude– and makes explicit reference to Matthew 25:34-36. *Jubilee* does not only mean to go in search of the presence of God or of Jesus Christ in sacred places, but also to go to meet the living Christ, whom we encounter every day in the least of these.

### *The laity as protagonists in catechesis*

Glicerio's fundamental concern was –as we have just said– to involve, sensitize and support the well-disposed laity, in the conviction of being together with him responsible and protagonists in the mission of the Church. Mr. Cosmas Contini refers:

*“He taught to make acts of faith, hope and charity, humility and contrition. And he taught me too. He would order me to perform these acts and he and the others would repeat them. If I made a mistake, he would correct me in such a way that others would not know about it. He also taught me to know how to go to confession and prepare for communion. He did the same in the Pious Schools with the students. I know this because I have seen it”<sup>169</sup>.*

The figure of the layman Cosmas Contini is emblematic. He stands out as the protagonist of a layman committed to the animation of the itinerant community, in the face of the urgency of rebuilding the Christian fabric of society. The numerous workers that Glicerio gathered in the catechetical centers were trained so that they would be able to create among the people a mentality that would spring from Christian values.

*“He provided to many officers beautiful ways of teaching the doctrine”<sup>170</sup>.*

Even the correction, done with charity, was part of the formative apprenticeship, as well as the verification after each mission accomplished. Glicerio and the catechists were not only people who prayed

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169 C. Contini, in Pos. s.v., p. 261, para. 59.

170 Mussesti, o.c., p. 37.

and taught, but above all, people who gave witness. They went around the neighborhoods to get to know directly the life of the poor, to help them and share their sufferings:

*“He taught acts of faith, hope and charity in the streets, and he gave me money to feed the poor along the streets”<sup>171</sup>. “I often went with him to bring alms to different houses.” “He would have them brought by other people as well”<sup>172</sup>.*

Every meeting was planned and articulated around three moments: prayer, proclamation and commitment to charity. The nurses assigned in the catechetical centers helped the poor and needy, even among the families of the neighborhood. If a young man went to prison, Glicerio, with the permission of Fr. Joseph, recommended him to the governor. He had many of them released, leading them to doctrine and conversion:

*“Many young men released from prison we took with us and they dedicated themselves to serving God and to good works”<sup>173</sup>.*

The personal contact between the speaker and the listener had a particular significance. The closeness of the encounter and the sincerity of the gratuitous gift made it possible to show all the authenticity of the message. In Glicerio’s catechesis, everyone participated. Everyone listened and everyone was heard. And the testimony of faith was felt in the external environment:

*“He used to take some of the workers with him and made them to visit a church or the hospital of St. John Lateran, to make some act of charity for the sick”<sup>174</sup>. “When the exercise of doctrine was finished, he would take everyone to some church where the Blessed Sacrament was exposed, and here he would spend time with them in prayer”<sup>175</sup>.*

*“Catechesis, John Paul II would say, is intrinsically united with every liturgical and sacramental action, because it is above all in*

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171 F. Selvaggi, in Pr.O.R., p. 270.

172 Pr. O.R., 12, p. 398.

173 Pos.s.v., p. 399.

174 Pr. O.R., p. 452.

175 F. Baldi, o.c., p. 28.

*the Eucharist that Jesus Christ acts in fullness for the transformation of man*<sup>176</sup>.

### *Itinerant catechesis in the Pious Schools*

Glicerio's itinerant catechesis also influenced the school of San Pantaleo. Glicerio's catechesis to the little ones provided for prayer, study, but also *short pilgrimages and moments of physical and mental rest*.

#### *Short pilgrimages*

In addition to the solemn processions of Corpus Christi, Palm Sunday<sup>177</sup> and the most grandiose, that of Our Lady of the Snows in Santa Maria Maggiore<sup>178</sup>, Glicerio *“led the students in procession to visit various churches with no less benefit to them than a good example for the city”*<sup>179</sup>.

Common sense allowed Glicerio to offer the young people wholesome distractions, in addition to engaging them in the sacred. His personal experience revealed to him in the pilgrimages an excellent system of his educational ideals and an attractive and effective method to actualize them. Gifted with an intuitive spirit, familiar with young people and their needs, he understood from personal experience that prayer could not be separated from the beauty of nature and art. Involving young people in such manifestations meant for Glicerio to succeed in combining faith, folklore and culture in their eyes. Faith and culture, the two souls of the Pious Schools, were admirably united and manifested in the art of the basilicas. Moreover, especially for the younger ones, while participating in them represented a gratifying moment of

176 *Catechesi tradendae*, n. 23.

177 Berro, o.c. II, pp. 124-125: “It was customary in our house of San Pantaleo of Rome, in the procession of Palm Sunday, to lead our pupils with palms, going out of the small door of the church towards the Lords Massimi, through the small road of Lords Torres, turning around the entire large square of our church.

178 A. Bernardini, o.c., 1614, f. 47: “The Pious Schools were under the protection of Our Lady of the Snows. For this reason, one day during the octave of the said feast, all the little ones of the schools were taken in procession with the Fathers at their side, singing litanies and praises in honor of the Mother of God. About eight hundred little ones came together”.

179 A. Armini, o.c., p. 68.

collective grouping, introduced the acquisition of rules of behavior, such as punctuality, respect, moderation, parading in an attitude of recollection, which would later be useful in everyday life. Visiting churches became for Glicerio one of the key moments of his school catechesis.

### *Moments of relaxation*

*“To take the young people away from the occasion of vices Glicerio used, not only at carnival, but also at other times and on vacation days, to take them to some farm. There, in his presence and under his gaze, he would entertain them in some licit amusement<sup>180</sup>, ordering them to interrupt the game from time to time to sing spiritual songs or litanies of the Blessed Virgin Mary”<sup>181</sup>.*

“It is important”, John Paul II admonished, “to show, without any doubt whatsoever, the material demands of renunciation, but also the joy that the Apostle Paul liked to call *new life*”.

By his example, Glicerio enthused the children, making them little apostles committed to social work: *“He also took with him the pupils of the schools and other young people, so that they would follow his example”<sup>182</sup>*. Glicerio had created in the Pious Schools a climate of fervor and participation, and therefore of joy. A joy seen more from its interior dimension than in its external and noisy manifestations, according to the Calasanzian style, very close to the perfect Franciscan joy, which Calasanz had assimilated in the confraternity of the Wounds of St. Francis, to which he had given his name years ago. Calasanz was convinced that the ministry of the school is ineffective if it does not create a serene, stimulating, joyful atmosphere. He repeated: “God loves those who give joyfully.

### *Glicerio ‘s creativity was achieved in the Pious Schools*

Joseph Calasanz, just as he had regulated in the Documents of the Order, a few years after the death of Glicerio, his invention of *Continuous Prayer* and the accompaniment of the children home, immediately afterwards he extended to all the Pious Schools the practice introduced by

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180 F. Baldi, o.c., p. 36, cites some examples of “licit amusement in delightful places”: the game of hopscotch and ball games.

181 A. Armini, o.c., p. 67.

182 Pos. s.v., p. 453.

Glicerio of taking the children out, *at leisure*, on vacations and feast days. In the *Common Rites* Calasanz prescribes that this recreation “should always be in open places and in the presence of others”, that the children should always go “with the Fathers to other places in the city for recreation, making them exercise themselves in various games, and from time to time also in spiritual songs”. The most common games were ball games, and hopscotch. It was forbidden to play cards, dice, and in general all games of chance<sup>183</sup>. And always with the kind and prudent assistance of the Fathers. Precisely what Glicerio was accustomed to practice. For this purpose Calasanz in 1637 bought a villa near Velletri<sup>184</sup>. A confirmation of how Calasanz was convinced of the goodness of such an initiative is a letter in which he reminds Father Castille that “the students will go on vacation days –on Thursday– and on Sundays after vespers”<sup>185</sup>.

Glicerio ‘s catechesis was like an open-air construction in which there was always work in progress, the execution of which was sometimes improvised, in order to open up to new realities. He wanted all the souls be beautiful, adorned with virtues, because they are the temple of God and dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. With good reason, then, Calasanz will say:

*“The way that Glicerio had to order and teach the doctrine was truly more than human”*<sup>186</sup>. And again, writing to Father Castille on July 19, 1630, he says: *“Let Fr. Charles try to catechize the students and make them pray as they used to, so that again diligence is used, as it was done in the time of Father Abbot of saintly memory”*<sup>187</sup>.

## 5. GLICERIO, SOLITARY PILGRIM

### *In the footsteps of Calasanz*

In the preceding chapter we have discovered in Glicerio a missionary and brilliant soul, who succeeded in transforming pilgrimage into

183 Cal. Reg. 74, p. 51.

184 Cfr. Pascual Vannucci, *Il Collegio Nazareno*, p. 38.

185 EGC., IV, p. 168. In Frascati, February 15, 1630.

186 Pos. s.v., p. 377.

187 EGC, IV, p. 250.

an opportunity for itinerant catechesis. We would miss an important aspect if we did not see in the young Piarist also the humble pilgrim who, alone, walked to the holy places. It is a theme that, in a certain sense, reflects a new aspect of Glicerio. The pilgrim Glicerio, who from time to time allowed himself a pause in the pressing work, and chose with periodic rhythm a sacred place near or far away, when he was allowed, to make a stop in his Christian journey, to enrich himself spiritually and to verify in silence the meaning of his life. He was a pilgrim for ongoing formation. He was encouraged by the words and example of Joseph Calasanz, of whom we would like to reread a precious testimony: "I wish to visit some places of great devotion in Italy, such as the holy house of Loreto, the mountain of La Verna where St. Francis received the wounds, Montecasino and Montevergine. Up to now it has not been possible for me, but I hope to do so with God's help"<sup>188</sup>.

### *Rome "caput mundi"*

The first and longest private pilgrimage of Glicerio, we would say, was the journey from Milan to Rome in 1607. In addition to the practical reasons we already know, it was not secondary the desire to visit the eternal city, the glorious tombs of the apostles and martyrs and the great basilicas that his imagination enlarged over all the monuments of ancient Rome.

*"Roma caput mundi regit orbis frena rotundi"*. Rome, the capital of the world, holds the reins of the round orb. This ancient Latin hexameter pointed to Rome as the center of all peoples and all nations. An expression that, especially in the Middle Ages, was applied to Christian Rome, to the Rome of the Popes, evoking at the same time the archbasilica of St. John Lateran, called the *Mother of all Churches*. It was Rome where pilgrims from all nations flocked to venerate, in the Vatican or on the Via Ostiense, the tombs of the apostles Peter and Paul, and then to receive the pardon and indulgence of the Jubilee.

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188 EGC, II, pp. 45-46: From Rome, to the parish priest of Peralta de la Sal, Joseph Texidor, on June 27, 1955. From the historical *Memoirs* of Father Vicente Berro we know that such visits took place. "Even more than once, affirms Father Berro, Calasanz went to visit Our Lady of the Angels of Assisi for the pardon of August 2<sup>nd</sup>".

Rome, apostolic see par excellence, capital of Christianity, welcomes all those from all parts of the known world who move along the Via Francigena and the consular roads to admire, besides the tombs of the Apostles, the image of Christ imprinted on the veil of the Veronica and the *mirabilia Urbis*, that is, all that great, holy and beautiful Rome preserves, and shows it in a stratified sequence of centuries.

In his treatise on *Sunday Prayer*<sup>189</sup> Glicerio dwells on the expression “who art in heaven”, to make the children understand that “we are *pilgrims*, we do not have here the possession of our inheritance, we are in great need of God’s help”. Pilgrims are those who, in the great problems of life, public or private, ask for help in faith and look to the shrines as privileged places. There they can place before God their personal prayer, endorsing it with the intercession of qualified intermediaries, the Virgin Mary, and the great saints, present through their relics. The motive of the pilgrimage is not so much to ask for favors or cures, but the encounter with the supernatural. In Glicerio’s time, the settlement of the Turks had closed the Holy Land to the Christian world. The Church of the Counter-Reformation emphasized its support for pilgrimages and, reacting to the attack of the protestants who condemned everything that distracted people from their daily activities, encouraged the *localist* dimension, which did not involve great displacements. The alternative routes multiplied: Rome, Santiago de Compostela, Assisi, Padua and Loreto.

Glicerio was passionate about *mini-pilgrimages* to Rome and its surroundings, and, when possible, also about great pilgrimages.

“He often visited the Seven Churches and all the other sanctuaries of this city, especially the tombs of the glorious princes of the Church, Peter and Paul... He also went to visit St. Clare of Montefalco and many other places of devotion. And he would have gone more often if his superiors had allowed him to do so”<sup>190</sup>. “He often visited the bodies and relics of the saints in various churches of the city, where he spent much time in prayer. And I know this because I have

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189 In *Brief Declaration of Christian Doctrine*, manuscript of Glicerio, in BGSP.

190 P. Mussesti, o.c., pp. 19-20.

gone with him many times”<sup>191</sup>. “He also frequently visited the churches dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, making very often the Seven Churches –so they call in Rome the churches where there is the image of the same Lady painted by St. Luke–”<sup>192</sup>.

Among the sacred places that Glicerio preferred as pilgrimage destinations, we will describe, because they are rich in values and particular significance, and are better documented, the sanctuary of Loreto, the Porziuncola of Assisi, and in Rome the Seven Churches. The visit to the sanctuary of Loreto deserves a separate chapter, because of the significance that Our Lady of Loreto had in the life of Glicerio, because he consecrated himself to her since he was a young boy. The biographers describe the extraordinary pilgrimage giving a detailed account in the form of a true and authentic spiritual diary. And we will follow in their footsteps in the next chapter.

### *The “Porziuncola”*

It is the small church near Assisi, donated to St. Francis by the monks of Mount Subasio. The saint received there the inspiration to the apostolic mission (1209). It is now part of the Basilica of St. Mary of the Angels. In a cell near the Porziuncola –the Chapel of the Transitus– St. Francis, on October 3, 1226, passed from earth to heaven. The name Porziuncola is linked to many episodes of early Franciscan history and especially to the famous *indulgence of pardon*, which the saint himself obtained from the Pope on August 2, 1216. Together with the grandiose basilica on the Mount of Paradise that guards the venerable mortal remains of St. Francis, with St. Damian, linked to the memory of St. Clare, and with the Carceri desert, where St. Francis retired to pray, the Porziuncola constitutes a complex of sanctuaries that has preserved in Assisi an aura of mysticism and grandeur.

On the pilgrimage to the sanctuary of Loreto, together with his companion Dr. Cosmas Contini, Glicerio had calculated the time re-

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191 Fr. J. Garcia, in Pr. O.R., p. 280.

192 V. Berro, *Life of the Servant of God Glicerio Landriani*, in Arch. Sch. P., Rome 1982, n. 11, p. 21.

quired for the various stages in order to be able to be in Assisi on October 4<sup>th</sup>. The Porziuncola and the other Franciscan sanctuaries held an irresistible attraction for him. For Glicerio, any occasion was good enough to make at least a quick visit to Assisi. The Franciscan places had the power to reinforce his highest evangelical ideals. Glicerio was literally influenced, says our father Vincent Berro, by St. Francis, a pilgrim in fatigue, who went to the Holy Land as a messenger of the Gospel of peace, to St. Michael on Gargano and to Santiago de Compostela. But are there particular facts in the life of Glicerio such as to explain the strong suggestion by Francis of Assisi? Certainly Glicerio could not forget that his second baptismal name was Francis, the name that his mother wanted to give him in the difficult moment of childbirth, because of the great trust she had in the saint of Assisi. She entrusted her son to him as a spiritual father and guide. Glicerio, in the narrations heard from his mother, connected a great part of his own life in parallel with that of St. Francis: the youth, that in spite of the splendor of the riches and of vanity remained pure, blameless and generous; the *conversion* to a life of prayer and penance; the vocation to the eremitical life at Monteluco, at le Carceri in Assisi or in the Holy Valley of Rieti; the love for the poor to the point of exchanging clothes with them and begging on their behalf at the gates of St. Peter's in Rome. What to say of Francis' heroic care for the lepers? And then the voice of the Crucified One: "Go, Francis, restore my house"; his body weakened by continual fasting; his spiritual joy as he approached the sister death; his profound humility as he considered himself unworthy of ascending to the priestly dignity. The biographers affirm that it was precisely in Assisi that Glicerio made the resolution not to aspire to the priestly dignity. Finally, the testament in which Francis recommended poverty, his mystical spouse, to his friars: "He recommended his dearest spouse/and commanded them to love her faithfully"<sup>193</sup>.

Even Francis' devotion to Our Lady of Loreto, half a century before the transfer of the Holy House! It was precisely during the years of Glicerio's adolescence that a document was circulated that referred to the prophetic vision that St. Francis would have had in the convent of Siroco, near Loreto: "While there, he looked from afar at the valley and the forest

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193 Dante, *Paradiso*, XI, pp. 112-113.

and foretold the coming, through the angels, of the sacred House of Mary. Seeing the valley of the convent, he said: "Oh, fortunate valley!"

The Porziuncola was for Francis *the tent of encounter* with Christ himself. "One day, as he wept bitterly remembering his past, he was overcome by the joy of the Holy Spirit, from whom he received the assurance that all his sins had been completely forgiven". The saint wanted to make everyone share in this personal experience of his. That is why he asked for and obtained full indulgence for repentant pilgrims who came to the little church to receive forgiveness. And Glicerio was one of the pilgrims most afflicted by the memory of past sins and one of those most in need of feeling fully forgiven.

In the chapel of the Porziuncola, which he had restored with his own hands, Francis, enlightened by the words of the tenth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, decided to abandon his brief eremitical experience to dedicate himself full time to the service of the people "with the simplicity of his word and the magnificence of his heart," as his first biographer Thomas of Celano testifies. Having made the specific message of forgiveness and reconciliation his own at the Portiuncula, and having experienced a profound sense of reconciliation with himself, Glicerio renounced forever all nostalgia for the wilderness in order to dedicate himself full-time and serenely to his typical ministry of itinerant catechesis in the Pious Schools.

Of Glicerio's visits to Assisi, the most significant testimony is certainly that of Peter Mussesti:

*"Glicerio went to visit the body of St. Francis in Assisi and Our Lady of the Angels and all the places where the saint had been... prostrating himself and kissing; and he did not know how to leave there if the companions had not raised him up"<sup>194</sup>.*

Father Alexander Armini highlights the moment when Glicerio arrived where Francis was lying down to sleep "on some stones", he too immediately threw himself down and there he remained for a long time praying<sup>195</sup>. In the frescoes of the upper basilica Giotto depicts the story

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194 Mussesti, o.c., p. 21.

195 A. Armini, o.c., p. 65.

of St. Francis as a moment in the larger history of salvation. That is why the scenes of his life are placed with the stories of the Old Testament. It was easy for Glicerio to decipher in them that the life of St. Francis was nothing other than a new episode in the one story that begins in the Old Testament and continues with the lives of the saints. Glicerio's soul and eyes could not get enough of contemplation. As in the Basilica of Loreto, who knows how many times he repeated: "If in this world there are such rich and beautiful things, made by men, what will not be in Paradise?"<sup>196</sup>.

Art, as Pope John Paul II writes in his Letter to Artists, is a path of access to the deepest reality of man and the world. It invites man to rise to the contemplation of perfection, not to alienate himself from concrete life, but to return to it with the purpose of making it truer, nobler, in a word, "more beautiful". It is also true that Glicerio preferred most the truest and most beautiful image of Christ, the living image of the brethren, to artistic beauty, which can certainly manifest something of heaven; but the sanctuary of Assisi clearly presented, in its art and mysticism, a privileged place for man's encounter with God in time and space.

### *The visit to the Seven Churches*

A happy invention of the Church of Rome, revitalized by the creativity of St. Philip Neri, the visit to the Seven Churches was one of the most popular and suggestive practices of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, organized with pre-established itineraries, which in the 16<sup>th</sup> century were defined as the "Tour of the Seven Churches". Almost the whole city moved in a choral and heartfelt participation. A festive liturgy, rich in human values and spiritual motives for each one and for the community.

### *Purpose and development*

The main purpose was to propose a program of holiness clothed in joy. A gentle but committed invitation to self-education, to value one's own energies in a path of healthy human and Christian growth. Especially during carnival time, in addition to the strong times of the liturgy, the Seven Churches offered young people a valid alternative to the sometimes unrestrained and licentious entertainment.

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196 F. Baldi, o.c., p. 40.

The tour included the four patriarchal basilicas, St. Peter, St. Paul, St. Mary Major, St. John, and the three minor ones, St. Lawrence, St. Sebastian and the Holy Cross. The visit was generally completed in two days, for a journey of about twenty-four kilometers in thirteen hours. The pilgrims, divided into two or three large groups, all gathered at Santa Maria in Vallicella, and from there, after having recited a special prayer for the itinerary, they departed, each group preceded by a banner and a cross carried by the Capuchin friars, who traditionally led the processions. The procession stopped from time to time to listen to preached brief meditations. Afterwards, the procession would resume with the recitation of prayers and the singing of sacred hymns, among which the most common was the Hymn of Vanity, in which each stanza ended with the refrain: *“Vanity of vanities / all is vanity / all the world / and what is in it / all is vanity”*. The pilgrims in procession sometimes numbered two thousand. As Jesus had satiated the people who came to listen to his word, so the organizers also took care to distribute food to the pilgrims.

St. Philip Neri used to distribute the food, placed in baskets and carried by little donkeys, during a midday break, with everyone seated in order in a meadow. Father Pedro Bacci, contemporary and first biographer of the saint, tells us, “Each one was given enough bread and wine, an egg with a little cheese and some fruit. While they were eating, either a motet was sung or a concert of instruments was given, partly for recreation and partly to keep the mind united to the divine praises. Finally, continuing their journey, they returned home with great joy and spiritual fruit for their souls”.

### *Glicerio and the Seven Churches*

St. Joseph Calasanz practiced intensely the visit to the Seven Churches<sup>197</sup>, and Glicerio, following his example, made it one of the

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197 Father Berro, after having affirmed that Fr. Joseph visited the Seven Churches very often, adds: “At midnight he would get up to pray Matins with the devotion that we can already imagine. Then he would go to the Seven Churches, in one of which he would celebrate Mass with such devotion that he would spend several hours, especially in the chapel of the Column of the Lord in St. Praxedes, or in St. Mary Major or in the chapel of “dei Monti”. And in the peregrination, God only knows what time of meditation and contemplation he spent”. *Annotations*, T. I, 1, I, Ch. II, p. 70.

strong points of his spirituality. As a solitary pilgrim, he was driven by the need to live ever more deeply the presence of the divine, to sanctify himself in order to be an authentic witness of hope. It was also the need to obtain for himself forgiveness, peace and inner light; the desire to shake off from his back the dust that, even unconsciously, accumulated along the way in daily contact with the world. He strove to carry out the advice repeated by Calasanz: "When you go to the shrine, make the shrine enter into you". Glicerio involved in his experience, in addition to the common people and the students of the Pious Schools, also other state and civil institutions that had understood the social value of one of the most original manifestations of the time.

With St. Philip Neri, a notable part of the pilgrimage was reserved for music. The saint tried to imitate the first Christians, who expressed their faith in God through song. Glicerio, who did not ignore the praise of Philip Neri<sup>198</sup>, would enrich such a practice, besides with the acquired interior richness, with the enthusiasm of a soul strongly sensitive to the musical message:

*"He was always ready to sing spiritual praises. And this he did with such joy that he would have moved, one could say, even the stones"<sup>199</sup>.*

On his last day of life, his fellow novices, to make the hours pleasant for him, sang spiritual songs. Among them, as a novice, was Fr. Baldi himself, who recalls that they repeated in particular Glicerio's favorite song: "Vanity of vanities / all is vanity / at death, what will it be? / all is vanity". That was precisely the motto that accompanied and rhythmized the procession of the Seven Churches, and that still produced so much mystical resonance in his soul.

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198 The collection of *One Hundred Spiritual Lauds*, which the children of St. Pantaleon sang in the time of Glicerio, has come down to us. The booklet was printed in S. Pantaleon in 1624. We have in the Piarist Library of San Pantaleo (B1/4) a reprint made by Father Gabriel of the Annunciation.

199 F. Baldi, o.c., p. 58.

## 6. PILGRIMAGE TO OUR LADY OF LORETO AND BACK THROUGH ASSISI

### *Loreto*

Loreto owes its fame to the little house that, according to tradition, the angels flew from Nazareth in 1294, first to Tersotti by the river, and then to the present site by the laurel forest (Lauretum). This small town, in a panoramic position on a hill, facing the sea, is crowned by the famous sanctuary, one of the most important in Italy. The House of Nazareth recalls the moment when the Word became man in the womb of the Virgin by the work of the Holy Spirit. Here the sick flock in great numbers to the House of Mary, which we invoke in the Litany of Loreto as “*Health of the Sick*”, “*Comfort of the Afflicted*”. John XX-III defined it as “the synthesis of all the shrines of the world” when he went there on pilgrimage on October 4, 1962, on the eve of the Second Vatican Council. Loreto was the powerful name capable of evoking in Glicerio the voice of that oracle of Virgil: “*Antiquam exquirite matrem*”, *Seek the ancient Mother*, the one who in the little church of Milan was the luminous reference of his childhood and adolescence.

The origin of Glicerio’s great devotion to Our Lady of Loreto is to be found in the example of the two ideal figures of his life, St. Charles and Frederick Borromeo. Saint Charles was very devoted to Our Lady of Loreto. He went there as a pilgrim at least four times, and at that time it was no small trip. He wrote to Cardinal Altemps that at no other shrine had he gained “a deeper religious impression.” There, where Our Lady pronounced her *fiat*, he sought the strength to embrace the arduous task of moral and religious reform that he was preparing to undertake in his diocese. In 1579 he wanted to walk barefoot for almost fifty miles. Arriving in Loreto at dusk, he went immediately to the Holy House and stayed there all night in prayer. It was he who had the first idea of founding a shrine dedicated to Our Lady of Loreto in Milan. It was instead his cousin, Cardinal Frederick Borromeo who realized it in the area of “fuori dei Bastioni di Porta Venezia”.

Glicerio, docile as Jacob to the angel’s invitation, left Rome barefoot to return *to his ideal homeland*, Loreto, and, following in the footsteps of St. Charles, to find inspiration and new energy for the

future. The chapel of Milan, consecrated to Our Lady of Loreto, the ancient Mother, no longer existed, as it was included in the new construction of Cardinal Frederick.

### *Preparations*

The occasion to visit the sanctuary of Loreto was provided by his friend, Dr. Cosmas Contini, who had decided to go, and then the encouragement given to him by Fr. Joseph Calasanz. Glicerio hastened to ask permission to go also to his confessor, Father Dominic. The only condition he imposed on him was to obey in everything, as his legitimate superior, Dr. Contini, his collaborator in Christian doctrine, and now a companion on pilgrimage. The date was fixed, which was to be in the first days of September 1614. The agreement was made to do it on foot, although Contini was quite corpulent. “Lucky you –Glicerio jokingly told him– since you have to carry that burden for the whole journey, you will have more merit for it!”<sup>200</sup>. The prayers to be recited each day were also programmed. Clear agreements: “It is necessary, dear doctor,” smiling Glicerio said, “that you also leave a little control to me. You will take care of the expenses, the stops, and the rest. And you won’t find a more obedient subject than me. Let me command what concerns God. Is that all right with you? –And Contini: “Fine, as long as I’m in charge of your alms. Not for nothing, but you have holes in your hands”<sup>201</sup>. Glicerio dressed as a pilgrim: sackcloth, wide-brimmed hat, thick staff, water bottle, bag with the breviary, Bible and some bread. He entrusted his prayer to Our Lady, with the purpose of doing penance and conversion, and... let’s go! We have been able to follow, in a precious and detailed diary, the steps of Glicerio in this emblematic and long pilgrimage, thanks to the care of his first biographers.

### *Towards the “Holy House Stops in Terni and Camerino*

In pilgrims’ habit, Glicerio and Cosmas, after receiving Holy Communion, went out through the door of St. Pantaleon reciting the prayer

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200 A. M. Mistrangelo, o.c., p. 149.

201 Ib. P. 149.

“Actiones nostras”. Glicerio took out his rosary. He recited it many times, inviting everyone he met along the way, as many as twenty-five or thirty people. The doctor carried rosaries, medals and stamps. Perhaps he wanted to save money, but Glicerio distributed them with broken hands to all the people who joined the group, “so that –tells Father Baldi– not only the body, but also the spirit had his support”. He also offered booklets as a useful aid for brief and effective catechesis. The remaining time was spent in spiritual conversations and mental prayer. At Contini’s suggestion, they stopped at every canonical hour; Contini to wipe his sweat, Glicerio to recite the breviary. Every morning they heard Holy Mass, served by Glicerio. As for the alms, they began by giving a ‘giulio’, something like fifty cents, which they called “flowery charity”. Contini began to worry and they agreed to give only the small change that was returned to them at each necessary purchase.

They passed successively through Monterosi, Civita Castellana, Narni, and stopped at Terni, where they arrived at sunset. Armini tells that in Terni they were guests of a relative of Dr. Contini, Mr. Cesare Ferentillo, who kindly offered Glicerio a stately stay. Glicerio, who had left Rome only to do penance, upon seeing the son of the owner retire to a hovel, convinced him to change rooms with him.

Terni and its entire basin is a gift of the river Nera, as Egypt owes its existence to the presence of the Nile. Mr. Caesar would not fail to show his guests the famous Marmare Falls, a marvel of poetic inspiration. And Glicerio, contemplating that exceptional scene of grandeur and divine power, with his breviary would exultantly sing praises to the Lord: “Bless springs, seas and rivers, mountains and hills, to the Lord”.

Two days later they resumed their journey. Between Spoleto and Camerino, four ultramontanes<sup>202</sup> who were begging alms stuck to Glicerio. And Glicerio, smiling, said to Contini: “In our pact we have not named the Ultramontanes, therefore they are not included... And they gave a ‘giulio’ to each one.

They have already arrived in Chianti valley, from where they can see the great rock of Camerino. Glicerio’s brother, Mgr. Fabricius, was

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202 They were those who came from beyond the mountains, that is, foreigners.

governor of the small town. They pressed on. The Monsignor, who had been warned by a letter from Calasanz, was delighted to embrace his brother. Prudently, he had prepared for him a simple room with a matress over a board. Then, knowing that he was pleased, he invited him to say two words to the servants. Glicerio was delighted, but did not stay. He preferred the house of Don Sebastian de Grandis, a friend of his and of Contini, a pious priest, who had founded a congregation in Camerino, similar to the Oratory of St. Philip Neri in Rome. A person of great kindness, he immediately put Glicerio at ease: prayer and participation in the discipline and other practices of the congregation. When he was shown the grotto where the young martyr St. Venantius was said to have done penance, he remained there for a long time lying motionless on the ground.

Don Sebastian humbly asked Glicerio and Contini if he could join them, together with three friends, as far as Loreto. He received them gladly. Glicerio promised his brother to stop by his house again on his return. And they set off for Recanati. It got dark and, to make matters worse, a storm suddenly arose. The fog prevented them from seeing the road, but a faint light restored their confidence, and a voice that Glicerio advised them to obey. It was a peasant who came out to meet them and accompanied them to a safe place, to a nearby farm. The owner, unfortunately absent, had the keys of the pantry and the rooms. They all pooled what they had, including a carafe of mass wine that one of Don Sebastian's friends was carrying. This made everyone happy. Mr. Contini recounted amidst cheers the phrase that Glicerio had said to him as soon as they were out of Rome: "Joy, doctor! You are going to see miracles on this trip". And this was certainly one. The next morning, Sunday, having left at dawn, they arrived in Loreto.

### *In the Holy House*

Glicerio's soul was already expanding in that little house where Mary, from the day of the Annunciation, gave herself body and soul to her Son, in life and in death. The Shrine of Loreto offers the opportunity to remain where the fundamental mystery of the Incarnation of the Word was realized, to receive the light and strength of the Spirit, who transforms the human heart into a dwelling of hope. Glicerio, wounded with memories and nostalgia, with a yearning for renewal and perfection, en-

tered the monumental esplanade, where the Maderno's new fountain promised rivers of living water. His heart expanded at the thought of the heavenly Mother who awaited him. Among so many pilgrims, Glicerio would walk on his knees without pain, through the calluses of long prayers, while in the sanctuary the words of the prophet resounded: "Exult, rejoice in her love. Dance with shouts of joy, as on feast days!"<sup>203</sup>.

Our pilgrims entered the basilica, heard Holy Mass, received Holy Communion and, while waiting to enter the Holy House, were also able to admire the masterpieces created in honor of Mary by Sangallo, Bramante, Signorelli, Sansovino, Lotto and so many other great artists. Father Armini tells us Glicerio's expression: "If in this world there are such valuable and beautiful things made by men, what will be in Paradise?" Love and amazement, concretized there in the contemplation of so much artistic beauty. Finally, it was Glicerio's turn to enter "in the holy chapel, in the place where the hearth of the holy House is shown; and placed face down, he remained like that for almost four hours with the earth for a pillow"<sup>204</sup>. All the witnesses agree on this.

In this shrine the religious have always identified not only one of the inspirational sources of their charism, but also the criterion for verifying the authenticity of their perfection, apostolate and ecclesial service. Mary has been proclaimed the star of sacred life because she was ready for the realization of God's plan in the history of salvation. It is in those stones, now smoked and worn, where Mary welcomed the angel's announcement, where she said her "yes", where she conceived by the work of the Holy Spirit. Entering those poor walls is like stepping into the Holy Land, the center of God's salvific project, because, as we read in Latin on the altar: "*Hic Verbum caro factum est*", Here the Word was incarnated.

Glicerio entered with trepidation and renewed the consecration made as a child with the golden ring in the little church of Milan. This time with the purpose of serving Jesus in the Pious Schools, poor with the poor.

He felt the words resounding within those walls: "Here I am! Fiat". He too declared himself a servant of the Lord in an attitude of

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203 Hosea, 3, 17.

204 F. Baldi, o.c., p. 40.

complete availability. He was not aware of the four hours that had passed, but the custodian was. Cardinal Antonio Maria Galli, protector of the Holy House, had to be allowed to pass. Glicerio would have wanted to extend the departure from Loreto, at least until the following day. But his traveling companions did not agree. However, they waited long enough to participate in the singing of Vespers, and then resumed their return journey.

### *Return to Rome, via Assisi*

They reached Recanati at the sound of the Hail Mary; but they wanted to continue on for another nine miles, so they sent the fastest of them to warn the innkeeper not to close the inn before their arrival. In the meantime, a storm broke out. They tried to take a shortcut, but, not knowing the place, they ended up in a dead end. Glicerio got everyone out of the predicament because, having ordered Contini to look for the road again, after a few steps, he said, "There it is! -There it is", he said. They recovered their spirits and, soaked, but happy, as God willed, they arrived at their lodging. The next morning, in the early hours of the morning, they set out again. At Glicerio 's insistence, they climbed up to a small mountain village. Don Sebastian celebrated mass for them and for about thirty people from that poor place without a priest. They went on, happy for that good deed, to San Severino, where they stayed for the night.

The next stop was Camerino. Glicerio wanted to stop again at Don Sebastian's house. Fabricio was displeased. However, he provided him with everything he needed. On the second day, Don Sebastian "ordered" Glicerio to satisfy his brother by making him a visit. He obeyed. The next day, Glicerio and Mr. Contini left again for Assisi. In Foligno they were guests of Father John Baptist Vitelli, a student of St. Philip Neri and well known for his kindness. As it was the eve of St. Francis, Vitelli wanted to accompany the two guests to Our Lady of the Angels and Assisi, to see the body of the saint again and to visit the Franciscan places. When Glicerio was where St. Francis used to lie down on stones to sleep, he too lay down and prayed for a long time.

They returned to Foligno and spent one more night in the house of Father John Baptist. The next morning, having heard Mass, they

took their leave and, after a brief visit to St. Clare of Montefalco, they arrived at Cesi, Contini's homeland, where the doctor, exhausted, was finally able to rest for two whole days. Thus the return to Rome could be more expeditious. There were no difficulties or things worth telling.

### *The siege is closed*

The Loreto of Milan was for Glicerio not only a formal reference, but a living claim, as the satisfaction of a spiritual composure and measure. The mystical betrothal with Mary was not a simple child's game, but a gesture of a young man in love, who returns again to the place of the rendezvous. Like any son of a family, Glicerio left his home, looking to the future. He was accompanied by the affection of his mother and Mary with her gold ring. There was no tearing or solution of continuity. His life flowed like a limpid stream under the rays of the sun. Mary lowered her loving gaze as Glicerio recited each day the Lauds of his Queen and unraveled the beads of the rosary. It is true that, through human frailty and for a moment, Glicerio had been brought to Rome, the worldly splendors had enchanted him, and he, as it were, had fallen asleep. But a light touch, a friendly word, was enough to awaken him and give an irresistible impulse to his existence. He realized that up there was a heart that loved him. Now, in the real Loreto, he remembered, that is to say, he "carried in his heart" the mystical raptures and promises of his childhood. To Mary, who shines on earth "before the pilgrim people of God, as a sign of sure hope and consolation"<sup>205</sup>, now, in her beautiful sanctuary, he entrusted himself and consecrated his life to her.

Mary's protection would be decisive for him and his definitive victory over evil. For Glicerio, remembering was the same as stepping on living and familiar ground, where a seed had taken root and was now growing in blessing, to open up to new heavens, the hundreds of children that Mary had begotten in the Pious Schools. His commitment was to preserve those children of Mary at all costs and in every way. He knew that Mary would be pleased with this and would comfort his effort. Perhaps it was precisely because of the experience that Glicerio

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205 Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 68.



had in Camerino, in the grotto of the little martyr St. Venantius, that the cult of the child martyrs in the Pious Schools was accentuated. It was an intuitive psychological insight to place before the eyes of the children the example of other child heroes, capable of showing at such a young age such a strong faith. The example would necessarily arouse enthusiasm and the desire for emulation. Along with the children, Glicerio would gladly turn his eyes and heart to Milan, to the altar of the little church of

Loreto and to his consecration to Mary. When the occasion arose for them also to offer their gold ring to the Virgin, falling in love with her and with Jesus, he told them that “from then on I never again felt the stimulus of the flesh vehemently”<sup>206</sup>. St. Joseph Calasanz recounts:

*“He ordered to print a very large number of little offices of the Blessed Virgin to give to the children, so that every Sunday they would come to learn to recite them”. “On Sundays he also made the children recite the rosary and sing the Litany of the Blessed Virgin every day”. “He took the students in procession to visit various churches, with no less benefit to them than as an example for the city”<sup>207</sup>.*

Faithful to his consecration, stimulated by his great purity, Father Garcia testifies: Glicerio “always walked with great modesty and punished his flesh with sackcloth and chains; he slept on boards, and often on the ground”. And Mary, faithful to the *covenant*, remained as a sure guide and valid support of his activity, predisposing his mind and heart to receive and communicate the gifts of the Spirit. In the pilgrimage to Loreto, Glicerio had had the confirmation that his journey was unfolding under the sign of Mary’s benevolence, under her gaze, as on the background of a rainbow in which heaven is united to earth in a festive embrace of light and color.

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206 Francesco Baldi, o.c., p. 5.

207 A. Armini, o.c., p. 67.

## 7. THE GUARDIAN ANGEL

### *Accompanying the children home*

One of the characteristic practices at the beginning of the Pious Schools was to accompany the children home as soon as classes were over, in agreement with the families, in order to prevent physical and moral dangers.

*“The Fathers resolved, after good consultation, that it seemed good to them that the schoolchildren should go home in the morning and in the afternoon accompanied by our religious. All the pupils left the school in six groups. It was determined that each of these groups would be accompanied by two of ours and that they would see to it that the little ones walked modestly. These groups went to those parts where the children lived, as for example, those who lived in the Borgo were all together and the teachers morning and afternoon walked to San Pietro, and the children, when they were near their homes, with their license, quietly retired. Another group went to Piazza del Popolo, another to Santa Maria Maggiore, another to San Marco, another to Trastevere. In this way they distributed the little ones throughout the city. Each group was very numerous, given that the number exceeded two hundred children, who were so well trained that they went with great modesty and decorum and with their rosary in their hands, so that, seeing those processions morning and evening in Rome, it was a pleasure to see them, and the people and the gentlemen, the prelates and cardinals were praising the work greatly”<sup>208</sup>.*

A historical precedent could be recognized in classical times, when the pedagogue or tutor accompanied the little master to the school, bringing him the books and tablets. According to the degree of culture, at home he made him repeat the lessons and corrected the faults. Important obligation of the pedagogue was to watch the child in the street, to reprimand him and to inculcate in him the good education. But the effects of such education were scarce, because the pre-

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208 Pos. Cas., I, 276. This is the first time we find this practice documented, June 1615. In fact it is found neither in the Brief Relation of Calasanz (1610), nor in the letter of Gellio Ghellini (1602), nor in those of Glicerio (1612).

ceptor was at most an old servant unfit for work and, if he was young, unfit for anything else because of some physical defect. A completely different reality from what was practiced in the Pious Schools.

*The “Guardian Angels” in Calasanz’s dream  
and in the memorandum to Cardinal M. Tonti*

John Charles Caputi, a close friend of Calasanz, and one of the first historical Piarists, describes, in a charming page of his memoirs, the dream that St. Joseph of Calasanz had in Spain shortly before going to Rome:

*“To clarify the fundamental motive from which the Work of the Pious Schools originated, it is important to know the vision that Father Joseph had when he was Vicar General of the Bishop of Urgel. Many times he told it to me, who, curious to know all his actions, always asked him to get something out of his mouth. One night he saw himself in Rome, preaching to a group of children. He taught them how to live a Christian life, blessed them and then accompanied them to their homes. He saw angels joining him in leading these poor children. He paid no attention to the vision, thinking that it was only the fruit of fantasy and an absurdity, for he had no intention of going to Rome. But not many weeks passed, when he began to feel an inner voice saying to him: ‘Joseph, go to Rome. Go to Rome, Joseph’<sup>209</sup>.*

In the Bible there are many cases in which God speaks to man through dreams. The dream of Calasanz would probably not be decisive for his going to Rome. However, the vision of the poor children of Trastevere<sup>210</sup> must have been influenced, in a game of connected fusions, by the dreams of Calasanz in his homeland. The material that constitutes the content of a dream always derives from some kind of experience. And Calasanz, especially in his pastoral action as parish priest of Claverol and Ortopeda, in the Pyrenees, then in his thirty years as secretary, visitor, reformer and vicar general of the diocese of

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209 John Charles Caputi, *Historical News*, III, 1673.

210 Arriving in Rome in 1592, Joseph, passing frequently through the alleys of Trastevere, he observed waves of children abandoned to themselves and rebellious. And each time the problem of their education came to his conscience.

Urgel, had many experiences as a teacher and educator of children and adolescents<sup>211</sup>.

As the years went by, he became more and more convinced that it was necessary to lend a hand to the Guardian Angels of these children; to invent something, a formative and effective means of preserving them from evil and directing them to good; to the point of defending that the education of children is indispensable for the universal reform of the "Christian republic". The families would have the satisfaction of seeing their children straightened on the path of good; the civil authorities would be able to have honest citizens and faithful subjects; the Church, above all, would gain in them active and valid persons for the different fields of its apostolate<sup>212</sup>.

When Glicerio proposed to him that brilliant initiative, which admirably related the Piarist to the guardian angel and the scene of the dream he had in his homeland, Joseph could not fail to recognize in it a message from heaven, the confirmation of the dream, the inner voice that had been haunting him for years. Glicerio, by accompanying the children home, suggested a gesture that would unite the educational action of the school with that of the family. The street, that is, the main danger for the little ones, would become the link between the two most important educational institutions. The Piarist, accompanying the child as a companion, would become the link between the two most important educational levels. He would explain to the parents the precious work done that day in class and in the Oratory. Facing Landriani's project, Calasanz no longer needed *to interpret his dream*. The meaning, even with its latent content in the symbol of *angels*, was clear, as realistic had been the vision of Trastevere.

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211 J. Sántha, *S. J. de Calasanz*, p. 20, speaks of an affirmation of Father Picanyol, according to which in Tremp there is a popular tradition, which assures that the restless nature of the children of that city had influenced not a little in the foundation of the Pious Schools. Father J. Poch, in *An. Cal.*, 15 (1966), p. 193, affirms that Calasanz was a teacher of the children in the episcopal palace of Barbastro. He taught reading, writing, grammar and Christian doctrine. S. Giner, *San José de Calasanz*, BAC, 1992, p. 201, shows that Calasanz, guest of Mr. Janner, was teacher and guide, among others, of the young Coromines.

212 Cf. Memorandum of Calasanz to Card. Tonti, in *Arch. Sch. P.*, XV (1991), pp. 1-48.

We know that any dreamlike manifestation can be a symptom of feelings in contrast with what the dream expresses. In Father Joseph, from the first Roman years, the conviction that he had to do something concrete and great for the children contrasted effectively with personal projects and interests. Henceforth, the desire to obtain some ecclesiastical benefit and to return peacefully to Spain gave way, after hard inner struggles, to higher demands. In 1600, in a letter to the secretary of the embassy of the Catholic King, he wrote, refusing the canonry of Seville: "I have found in Rome a better way to serve God, helping these poor little ones, and I will not leave it for anything in the world"<sup>213</sup>.

Calasanz, with good judgment, thought that with his work he was fulfilling quite well the office of *guardian angel* for the little students. And he warmly recommended to his collaborators: "It is convenient to use all patience and charity with the youngsters to set them on the right path"<sup>214</sup>; "Do not fail to use all diligence in helping the schoolchildren and especially in bringing back to the right path those who have gone astray"<sup>215</sup>. For Father Joseph, his work was "*inter divina divinissimum* –the most divine among the divine"<sup>216</sup>. To the Father Rector of Savona he writes: "You will tell Father Hilario –the children's teacher– that he must show all his diligence... which he will do easily if he is humble and devoted to the Guardian Angel, with whom he should have a very close relationship and familiarity"<sup>217</sup>.

But Glicerio was now asking Calasanz for something more committed, which certainly Joseph had already matured in his conscience, because he embraced the Abbot's idea was immediately with enthusiasm. It was the month of June 1615. He wrote to Cardinal Michelangelo Tonti three years after the death of Glycerius: "The divine majesty grants us men to live like angels in the world". And, even if it seemed presumptuous, he finally defined the Institute of the Pious Schools

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213 V. Berro, *Annotations*, I, 12.

214 EGC, letter no. 225.

215 EGC, n. 386.

216 EGC, n. 1374.

217 EGC, n. 3672.

“most noble, inasmuch as it is an angelic and divine office, exercised by the guardian angels, of whom, in this, men become helpers”<sup>218</sup>.

To Father Marcos Manzella he wrote on May 17, 1647, that is, a few months before his death:

*“The exercise of accompanying the students, doing it as it should be done, is of great merit for those who know how to do it, and of great example for the students”*<sup>219</sup>. *And he asked all his religious to “gladly embrace the charity of accompanying those poor children, and to have the office of guardian angels, and to exercise it with the humility of Christ”*<sup>220</sup>.

### *A message for today*

In the midst of the wave of indignation, confusion and alarm at the recent episodes of violence against children, in order to stop the plague of social degradation and to have a common line of interventions, today there are meetings at every level. What can be done, what can be invented to launch an incisive, effective fight against violence, pedophilia and the horrors to which children are increasingly falling victim? Coercive and other means are being tried throughout Europe. Children will be taught about healthy sexuality and, consequently, also about bad sexuality. There will be courses for parents, teachers, school staff, so that they learn to distinguish the suffering of the molested child. The laws also will provide budget allocations ad hoc. Will there be an end to crimes against the weakest?

Glicerio and the first Piarists, with a truly prophetic gesture, without special courses and without state funding, resolved the problem. They made available –and they were sufficient– the riches of their heart in love with God, and their time used up to the last minute. Children and young people thus found loving security and guarantees for the future. Then... let us read again what Calasanz wrote to John Dominic Romani from Rome on April 3rd 1638:

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218 *Memorandum to Card. Tonti*, o.c., p. 2.

219 EGC, n. 4461.

220 J. Sántha, o.c., p. 364.

*“To our misfortune this good example of accompanying school children to their homes has been lost in that house... I would like it very much if the teachers were what your reverence desires; but some of them, who do not know what humility is, and are possessed by pride, have abandoned the humble exercises, which were the true way to go to paradise. Even if they are teachers of others, they do not have the spirit to communicate it to the school children”<sup>221</sup>.*

Should we not be indignant today and be more concerned about the absence of good than about the presence of evil?

## 8. THE INVENTION OF GLYCERIUS: PEDAGOGICAL DEMAND OR EXAGGERATED PRETENSION?

### *Educational-social motivations*

Juan Carlos Caputi, who attributes to Glicerio Landriani<sup>222</sup> the initiative to accompany the children home, clearly describes the motivations:

*“Glicerio was told by some ‘normadori’<sup>223</sup> that some students, after leaving school, were called by certain individuals in the palaces and did bad things; others played in the streets and others gave a bad example. Father Abbot referred everything to the Founder and told him that they had to find a way to avoid offending God and that he should give him permission to accompany them with another to their own houses or a little farther away. The Founder was very pleased with this thought of the Abbot, and since he saw that he was enlightened by God, he thought of supporting and encouraging him in his holy intentions. He prayed about it and God inspired him to accompany them. So the founding Father gave a conference to all the fathers and brothers so that they would gladly embrace the office of guardian angels and exercise themselves in the humility of Christ, because by it they would obtain great merit before God. He would put it into practice the first; he did not want anyone to be*

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221 EGC, VI, n. 2835.

222 J. C. Caputi, *Fragments of Historical News*, t. I, p. 30, p. 92. Also Fr. Bartlik attributes to Glicerio the practice of accompaniment: Eph. Cal., III (1934), p. 127.

223 This was the name given to those who were charged by the superiors to report the daily events.

*free, both superiors and confessors, at least once a week. The founding Father began to accompany the group of the Rotonda, which went as far as Trinitá dei Monti; the Abbot took the one of Campo dei Fiori, which went as far as Pecuaría; two others, the one of the Gesù, which went as far as Santa Maria Maggiore; two others, the one of the Scofra, which went as far as the Popolo”.*

Glicerio, therefore, knew well the environment in which his children moved. And he knew that just four coins were enough for them to fall into the net. He knew that the little ones are *sensors*, that they absorb and internalize what surrounds them, they elaborate it and identify with it. It is useless to recommend them to be good, if their whole environment is bad. Children are like accumulators, who later, with time, give back with interest all that they have received. All educational action was a game, if it was accompanied by those stupid pedophiles who swarmed in certain neighborhoods of the city. Certainly, the easiest and most instinctive way to exorcise evil, yesterday as today, is to invoke exemplary punishments. Punishments, condemnations, severe laws, are required. And some pontiffs, for example Sixtus V, did not joke in the face of this plague. But they were of no use –as Glicerio knew– if in the streets, in homes, in public offices, and especially in schools, a *culture* of respect for children, for the rights of God’s children, was not established. It is more difficult and more laborious to prevent evil, because it is necessary to change the environment and to commit oneself every day, not only when a victim comes to the attention of the entire community.

Children “do not know right from left<sup>224</sup>, good from evil. To remove them from danger is not to violate the right to freedom and autonomy. In the Pious Schools of Calasanz it was not about taking away the joy and autonomy of the children and imposing an armored and super-protected life, but rather to protect the little plant, so that the wheat does not become a kind of *transgenic transformation* in contact with the weeds present in the field. To guarantee their safety, with an activity of friendly presence and vigilance. In the Declaration to the Constitutions<sup>225</sup> Calasanz expressly ordered the teachers “not to

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224 Joshua 4, 11. Deuteronomy, 1, 39.

225 *Reg. Cal.*, XI,5, p. 18.

carry whips when they accompany, nor to slap the pupils in the street, nor to pull their hair or their ears, but to have the decurions<sup>226</sup> watch over those who are not formal, but not taking in account the trifles and lightness proper and natural to the little ones”.

In the Pious Schools, the children were offered many opportunities to develop their capacity for learning and autonomy. They were exercised in observing and confronting religious and social realities for their moral and cultural growth. To form them spiritually, a former student of Glicerio affirms:

*“He was always inventing new methods to stimulate the children to devotion, either with new prayers, or with little books... “He taught lots of little ones how to pray, to go to confession, to receive Holy Communion, to attend Mass and other things of the law of God. And this he did with such a spirit –I remember because I was a young boy– that I could not help but feel in me –and I know that it happened to others– great enthusiasm and love of God. He made sing the spiritual praises. And I did this with such joy that it would have moved even the stones. Not being able to bear the fervor of his joyful soul, sometimes he danced with great affection for God”<sup>227</sup>.*

A formation of the first order, thanks to serious studies, united to religiosity, and also thanks to the saintly examples of the entire early Piarist community, to their concerted efforts, sustained by the hope of attaining, with God’s help, the objectives foreseen.

But forming consciences is not the same as switch on a light. It takes a long time to internalize the moral and evangelical orientations and to integrate them into daily life. The tender little plant, before it can face the wind and the storm, needs a stake and support. Glicerio felt that inside the children was stirring up an imprisoned spirit, a devouring yearning for freedom. He, too, would have liked to burn stages, to insert the youngsters into society as soon as possible. But he understood that a path, a slow educational accompaniment,

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226 The pupils elected by their peers and voted by their teachers and peers were called decurions. They were especially pious, diligent and mature, they collaborated in discipline, but also in didactics.

227 Father Francis of the Annunciation, Proc., *De heroica virtute fidei*, fol. 117, p. 273.

was absolutely necessary, that they had to make the journey together, even outside of school, so that the little ones, growing little by little, would mature and not feel themselves victims of abuse and perversion, of profanation of the soul and body. It should not be underestimated that not a few of these children had already contracted bad habits. And a habit is a habit. It cannot be thrown out of the window. It is necessary to show oneself to young people as a witness every day, with infinite patience, teaching with one's life the fascination of Christ; to set up an educational project for the future, and to make it clear what each one must take out or put in the saddlebag he carries in his life. A light saddlebag with fundamental values inside.

Children have developed the ability to discern, to know how to defend themselves from those who want to abuse their ingenuity, even without terrorizing them. In short, Joseph Calasanz and Glicerio Landriani, convinced that it is better to prevent evil than to cure it, accompanied the children home from school. Who could guarantee that, left free at the mercy of themselves before they had been properly trained, they would not return to their old ways?

### *Internal difficulties in the Institute*

The custom of accompanying pupils home from school was prescribed by Calasanz in the Constitutions of the Order in 1622, and was extended outside Rome in all the communities of the Pious Schools<sup>228</sup>. Apart from a few exceptions, the accompaniment of children was in practice very burdensome for the religious communities. The main difficulties are expressed very freely by Fr. Castelli, a faithful collaborator of Calasanz and Assistant General:

*“They write to me from Florence that Fiammelli does not consider it good to accompany the students home in that city; and as for me I would have no difficulty in banishing him from our institute, because it seems to me, if I am not mistaken, that he impedes the entry of many distinguished persons into religious life. It also prevents many who have already entered religious life from benefiting from it, obliged, for lack of time, to neglect all our exercises. And*

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228 Reg. Prov. 42/13, July 21, 1629. Cfr. V. Berro, T. I, L. 1, fol. 52.

*it alienates many others from our schools, who for this reason do not want to come here. Finally, this action does not achieve its intended purpose, because the older students do not want to come, who are also those who are in danger of scandal; not even many of the younger ones, who are well educated, from where it reduces not only those who are small, but also those who are ragged and less dangerous. All of which, even if it is charity, does not seem to me to be the charity of a religious person, or at least such that, for a little more of appearance than of substance, it has to prevail over the previous reasons... It serves only to exhaust and distract us after the fatigue of school, instead of recovering our spirits after the lessons... At present here in Genoa our groups have been reduced to children from eight to ten years of age, the most miserable, whom it is certainly no small mortification to accompany; and it rather discourages our work this our daily procession. For the love of the Lord, your Paternity should reflect better. I hope in the Lord that you will try better than I do<sup>229</sup>.*

In his *Discourse on the Pious Schools*, Father Castelli insists on the subject. In addition to describe as “totally womanish” “the teaching of children under the age of eight years” (and it was precisely those children who Calasanz preferred, because they are incapable of education). He wanted to free the Pious Schools... “from what is most pedantic in them, such as accompanying schoolchildren home. At the most, this office could be taken care of by lay Brothers; but it would be better to eliminate it altogether<sup>230</sup>”.

On the other hand, Calasanz himself went and wanted the teachers themselves, the priests, the superiors, the confessors. We can understand that for many, spending at least two hours in the street, sometimes in bad weather, after the fatigue of school and with all the work at home, including sweeping the classroom and cleaning the toilets, was an exaggerated pretension. Returning home exhausted, how could they fulfill their other religious and didactic commitments? All was true. But from the contrast of opinions two dimensions of the spirit emerge clearly: on the one hand Glicerio and Cala-

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229 EHI, pp. 585-6. Genoa November 10, 1629.

230 Reg. Cal., XIV, 60.

sanz, new men, servants of Christ, who fly high encouraged by the Spirit; on the other, Father Castelli and Fiammelli, whose logic is that of the common man, cowardly spirits, who resent the fatigue of the day and the weight of exile.

Calasanz in the Common Rites exhorts his religious to use for themselves all those spaces that the same works of charity put at their disposal:

*“On returning home –from the accompaniment of the children– observing due silence and religious modesty, they can in the morning make the examination of conscience or, if they had gone far away, recite the rosary..., but without carrying the breviary. In the afternoon, they can prepare themselves for mental prayer... See to it that you do not have to give an account of that time badly spent, being obliged even for the smallest moment”<sup>231</sup>.*

We do not know in what terms he would respond to each one of Father Castelli’s requests, but it is certain that Calasanz, in spite of everything, remained faithful to the end of his life<sup>232</sup> to the thought of his beloved Father Abbot: to preserve the children in their innocence at the cost of any sacrifice and any discomfort.

## 9. TOWARDS THE GOAL

### *The Pious Schools between light and shadow*

In 1600, the transfer across the Sixtus Bridge, of the first Calasanz school from Santa Dorotea to Piazza del Paradiso, then to the Vestri building, then to the Mannini building, was almost a triumphal journey. The children, who came especially from the poorest districts of the city, grew day by day, until they reached the number of 500, 600, 700, and filled every corner of the house with their joyful cries. But it was not long before trials and storms came.

In 1602, in the Vestri building, a first dark shadow fell over the Pious Schools. It was the ruinous fall of Father Joseph and the crutch

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231 From the original manuscript of Fr. Graziani. AGSP, p. 31.

232 Cfr. V. Berro, II, pp. 91-92.

that would accompany him throughout his life. Immediately after, a ray of light; the meeting of the courageous Spanish priest with the Sicilian teacher Caspar Dragonetti, who had come to visit him while he was in bed with a broken leg. –Caspar,” Calasanz told him, “how much good you would do and how grateful the Virgin would be to you, if you came to lend me a hand here, among so many children. And Dragonetti, with 90 years old, but fresh and strong as an old oak, went with his students and remained at Calasanz’s side until his death, that is, until his 119<sup>th</sup> year. Two were the main concerns of Father Joseph: the lack of a fixed location, appropriate to the school activity and the number of workers, too few for so many children. The dream was the same: to give stability and universality to the Work, so that it could be enjoyed by children of all times and from all over the world. A goal that seemed more like a mirage than a hope.

### *The presence of the young Abbot Glicerio*

It was decisive. Glicerio joined the Calasanz Work in 1612. Thanks to him, about 800 children finally enjoyed a large and comfortable house just for them, that is, the palace of the Marquises of Torres, near Piazza Navona. Glicerio was guarantor of the purchase contract, deposited as a donation the sum of two hundred escudos, and contributed to the refurbish of the building<sup>233</sup> with the income from his abbey, with the inheritances obtained on the death of his father –and later of his brother Fabius– with the offers he obtained thanks to his contacts and those of his brother Bishop Fabricius, and with the alms that, together with Father Joseph, he collected house by house. The school was free. The children were given free paper, pens and anything else they needed. Faced with the situation of extreme poverty, Calasanz obtained permission from the Pope to collect alms for the Pious Schools. But the darkest shadow that hung over the Work of Father Joseph was not so much poverty –which could even appear as an element of distinction and veneration, even of divine blessing– but the instability of the teaching staff. The number of students was increasing; on the oth-

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233 Cfr. Bernard Bartlik, in *Eph. Cal.*, III (1934), pp. 164-165; J. Sántha, *Ensayos Críticos*, pp. 259-260.

er hand, the teachers, all volunteers, as they had no security of future, were decreasing. In twelve years, about eighty-one had joined him, but only eleven remained committed to the idea of Calasanz.

The appearance of Glicerio and his five companions was a manna, a true vital transfusion of fresh energy and a sign of great hope for Calasanz. The Pious Schools immediately gained in quantity, but above all in quality. They were men full of enthusiasm and experience and ready for any sacrifice. Calasanz dared to open a school also outside Rome, in Frascati, in 1616. He took Glicerio with him. Within a few months, the young Piarist was immediately the idol of the city. Everyone sought him out. The exercise of the school became really problematic, as Calasanz testifies in the process of beatification:

*“So many people came and asked him to visit their sick, that it seemed advisable to return him to Rome, so that he would not be impeded in the exercise of the schools”<sup>234</sup>.*

And from Frascati he wrote to him in Rome on November 23, 1616:

*“Here, not only the students but also those of the city often request your return, which everyone wishes to happen as soon as possible”<sup>235</sup>.*

The perfect didactic organization and the esteem of the people aroused the envy of the municipal teachers, who had been worried for some time, seeing their own classrooms emptied and their already miserable monthly salaries reduced. Glicerio, with his inexhaustible inventiveness, perfectly translated the thought of Calasanz, who saw how the identity of his Work was incarnated in the young Piarist day after day:

- Complete dedication to the ministry of the Christian education of children, especially the poor, an indispensable condition for an effective reform of the Church and society.
- Teaching them to read, write and do arithmetic, for a secure integration of young people in the field of work.
- But, first of all, piety and Christian doctrine for a solid formation in evangelical values.

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234 St. J. Calasanz, in Pr. O.R., p. 651.

235 EGC, II, p. 60.

- Devotion to the Virgin Mary, Mother and educator of Christ.
- Constant attention to the needs of children and the hopes of men, to make the world a more just and fraternal place.
- Obedience and fidelity to established norms.

As the flower, it has been said, is the effort of nature to become light, so Glicerio was the expression of the anxious dreams of Calasanz, who promoted utopian and ambitious ideals.

*The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.  
Hypothetical solutions*

Few resisted the intense and tenacious rhythm of Calasanz, of Glicerio and also of the elder Dragonetti<sup>236</sup>. Most, in spite of the example and encouragement of Father Joseph, withdrew after some voluntary attempt. It was impossible to go ahead in this way, by dint of debts, in the midst of extreme poverty. There could be no illusions about the future. Father Joseph, in spite of the many satisfactions of the results, evidences of esteem and requests for new foundations, he always found himself systematically short of workers<sup>237</sup>.

Father Dominic of Jesus Mary, who had taken the Pious Schools to heart, had already sent Glicerio and his companions to Calasanz and was trying in every way possible to support Father Joseph and his arduous undertaking. Upon the death of Cardinal Ludovico de Torres, the first protector of the Pious Schools, following the request of Calasanz, Father Dominic intervened with Cardinal Benedict Giustiniani, his penitent, to take care of the Institute<sup>238</sup>. The new protector, en-

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236 Calasanz, in the aforementioned letter to Glicerio, also wrote: "The zeal for the salvation of souls, which our Father Caspar has so deeply rooted in his heart, as you well know, deserves that each one render him all kind of services".

237 In his few hours of rest, how often Fr. Joseph would dream of Piarist stories! He wrote to Fr. Melchior Alacchi on October 29, 1633: "If I had ten thousand religious, I could distribute them in a month everywhere where they ask me for them with great insistence". EGC, n. 2027.

238 *Rev. Cal.* 192 (1955), n. 34e.

couraged by the Carmelite Father John of Jesus Mary<sup>239</sup>, and with the enlightened collaboration of Fr. Dominic, suggested to Calasanz a structural change of his Work, to guarantee the necessary stability: to join the Clerics of the Mother of God, founded in Lucca by John Leonardi, who had been a friend of Calasanz. In fact, it did not seem possible in any way to create a new religious Order, while there were plans to reduce the number of those already existing. A decree of the Lateran Council IV, year 1215, later revalidated by the Council of Trent, had been expressed in these terms: *“In order not to create confusion in the Church with the excessive number of religious orders, we absolutely forbid –firmiter prohibemus– that any more be created. He who wants to enter an Order, let him seek it among those already approved”*.

*Glicerio “more dedicated to exercises of mortification than to anything else”*

Calasanz gladly accepted the wise and generous advice of the Cardinal Protector. To this end, a meeting was held in the convent of Santa Maria della Scala, presided by Cardinal Giustiniani and organized by the Carmelite Fr. Dominic of Jesus Mary, who was also present at the session. On one side of the table, Joseph Calasanz, founder of the Pious Schools, with Gaspar Dragonetti and Glicerio Landriani; on the other, Fr. Alexander Bernardini, Superior General of the Lucca Congregation of the Clerics Regular of the Mother of God, with John Baptist Cioni and Father Peter Casani. This was probably Glicerio 's first meeting with Father Casani.

The meeting was very positive. Bernardini in his Chronicles, describing the procedure and the solution, which foresaw the leadership of his Congregation over the Pious Schools, with a hint of satisfaction notes that in the end it had to be so. Calasanz, in fact, was already of age with his infirmities, Dragonetti was over ninety and Glicerio, the Father Abbot, was “more dedicated to the exercise of mortification and devotion than to anything else”.

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239 In 1613, Father John of Jesus Mary dedicated to Cardinal Giustiniani his *Liber de pia educatione sive cultura pueritiae compendio scriptum*, cfr. Arc. Sch. P., n. 16 (1984). The Carmelite took up the project of the same Cardinal to give a structure to the project of the Work of Calasanz.

Father Casani in the Pious Schools will become, as before with John Leonardi, the right arm of Calasanz, *column and asset*, that is, *founder*; if we can call him so, of what in 1621 would become the Order of the Pious Schools with solemn vows. But on the other hand, Calasanz, for the continuation of his work, did not count so much on Casani as on the young Landriani. Father Casani himself will humbly confess that he was not a suitable person for government<sup>240</sup>, precisely what Father Bernardini had thought of Glicerio. In reality, neither Father Casani nor Glicerio were men of government. They were people in search of the “*unum necessarium*; one thing is necessary, salvation. And, caught up in the complexity of an active life, which absorbed, in spite of themselves, the whole arc of the day, they were truly unhappy in an activism which, by its very nature, tends to obscure the whole of the being. On the other hand, they felt the need for prayer, as necessary as breathing, to find the right balance between earth and heaven, between concreteness and transcendence, between willpower and absolute dedication to God.

#### *A dramatic historical moment*

The union of the Pious Schools with the Congregation of Lucca in 1614, after the first enthusiasm, which seemed to ensure the future of the school for poor children, did not take long to show the human cracks. For the Lucchesi, it was not only the regret of the original charism, but also to live an extreme poverty not foreseen in their Constitutions, but on the other hand essential for those who developed their mission among the poorest of the poor. Bernardini, describing the happy beginning of collaboration between his religious and the Piarist Fathers, tells us that it was lived “*with much parsimony, but with equal joy and satisfaction of spirit, knowing that God delights in founding his work in this way*”. The strength of God’s works is not in

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240 “Our Lord God having made known to me, with the experience of many years, my incapacity for all things, but especially for any government, I have finally made up my mind to freely resign the office.” Pos. Cas. p. 1122. Cfr. The letter of Calasanz to Fr. Stephen (Cherubini): “As for temporal things, it seems to me that the Father Provincial (Peter Casani) lives very far away, so your paternity will try to replace him”. EGC, III, n. 819, dated June 8, 1628.

the means, but in the message. Father Bernardini concluded the same as Luke, when he describes the first Christian community in the Acts of the Apostles: “They enjoyed the sympathy of all the people”. For Glicerio the index of acceptance on the part of God and of the faithful was the alms, which flowed in abundance.

But as soon as the weariness of the school and the narrowness of poverty began to weigh heavily on Lucca Fathers, the climate in the community and outside changed. There was much excitement, with real and authentic uprisings, on the part of those who did not want to be bound by the signed pacts<sup>241</sup>. As a logical consequence of the refusal, donations and alms were decreasing. Father Bernardini also writes:

*“To this internal discord was united the external one, for which the cardinal Giustiniani, very displeased, wanted to suppress the annual help of one hundred and twenty escudos that he gave. And it was taken for granted that the Abbot (Glicerio) would withdraw from the Congregation, and would not contribute the usual (personal) alms, nor would he seek any subsidy from various important personalities, as he has always done, with much utility for the house, because of the great consideration he had from everyone”<sup>242</sup>.*

The day when Glicerio returned exhausted from the collection, with few little coins in his hand –a quarter of ‘giulio’– was the saddest day of his life. It was a clear sign that God had departed from him and from the Pious Schools. Father Casani used to recite the breviary with Glicerio in the oratory of St. Pantaleon. During the prayer he would be guided in ecstasy, in slow transfiguration, that face, “otherwise always pale”, blushed all over, from the forehead to the cheeks<sup>243</sup>. And it seemed, he adds, that his eyes were shining. But on that day of passion, Fr. Peter would notice with anguish that the young man’s face darkened and a

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241 The formula of adhesion to the union with the Pious Schools, signed by the Fathers of Lucca and sent by Father Cioni to their General on December 31, 1613, has the following apostille at the bottom of the page: “I am sending you the folio signed by all except one”. Pos. Cas., I, pp. 167-168.

242 Pos. Cas., ch. VI, fol. 93, p. 283.

243 Pr. O.R., p. 271.

veil of tears covered his eyes<sup>244</sup>. These were the symptoms of one of those storms that the devil did not fail to unleash from time to time against the Pious Schools, and that one day would end up also unleashing against him and Father Casani a deep psychological depression.

In the hour of trial, only prayer and the example of fortitude and patience of Fr. Joseph Calasanz contributed to restore serenity to the soul and spirit of the two holy Piarist Brothers<sup>245</sup>. For a three-year period (1614-1617), Glicerio and Father Peter lived together in San Pantaleo community. Casani as the main person in charge, and Glicerio as the animator of their spiritual activities. Together they shared the anxieties and hopes of Calasanz.

### *The “goal”*

#### *Glicerio 's mission in the Pious Schools ends*

“For those who love God, all things work together for good”, says St. Paul, even suffering and poverty, because love is never wasteful. “Be constant, –Calasanz repeated to his religious– and you will see the help of God upon you<sup>246</sup>”. Alms were scarce, and the house of San Pantaleo was burdened with debts and expenses. The Lucchesi Fathers were already working very little in strictly scholastic activities, dissatisfied for not having obtained from the Pope the recognition as a religious Order, as they had hoped for when they joined the Pious Schools. They wished to be free from the worries of school work. It was necessary to recruit school teachers and to pay them. It was a very

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244 In the general postulation of Rome, among the relics of Glicerio there is a folio written in his own handwriting with sentences of the Fathers of the Church, on chapter III of Isaiah. Certainly in this circumstance Glicerio would write, with bitter reflection, the verses of the prophet: “For behold, the Lord is taking away from Jerusalem all sustenance and support, all sustenance of bread... You have set the vineyard on fire, the spoil of the poor you have in your houses!” (Isaiah 3:1 and 14).

245 On the urn containing the remains of Father Casani, venerated in the church of St. Pantaleon in Rome, we read the characteristic expression of the Blessed: “Let us be calm and pray”.

246 This is an expression from the Bible that Calasanz made his own, and which we find especially in his last holographic letter of May 20, 1647. EGC, VIII, n. 4463.

difficult moment, which put to a hard test the faith and perseverance of those who believed in the mission in favor of poor children. It was necessary, in the midst of such storms, to guide the *small flock*<sup>247</sup> of the Pious Schools to their goals, but without throwing into the sea – to save the situation– the precious burden already acquired for the charism itself: *extreme poverty and gratuitous dedication to the formation of poor children in school*.

Father Bernardini, General of the Lucca Fathers, asked the Pope for the definitive separation of the two congregations. What would have become of the Pious Schools otherwise? Glicerio had to have a part quite important in the solution of the thorny issue. Joseph Calasanz from Frascati wrote him a letter to Rome to remind him “to speak to Bishop Monaldeschi, to inform him of the manner in which today the Fathers of Lucca run the school, with their eyes fixed on their ancient institute<sup>248</sup>”. And it was precisely he, Calasanz, who sent him to the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, on January 25, 1617, to pray for the success of the attempts underway with the Holy See. After an hour of prayer, Glicerio said to his companion Simon Castiglioncelli: “*Rejoice! God will exalt our Congregation for the merits of Father Joseph*”<sup>249</sup>. In the process of beatification, Calasanz cites this fact as a prophecy, a gift granted by God to Glicerio in reward for his great virtues<sup>250</sup>. In fact, only a few days passed and the Brief of Pope Paul V, “*Ad ea per quae*”, was received.

The Pious Schools, finally separated from the Lucca Congregation, recovered their own identity. The experience suffered was defin-

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247 *Pusilli gregis idea* –ideal of a little grey– is the title that Fr. Peter Casani gave to the draft of constitutions that, on his initiative, he wrote for a hypothetical future congregation, which would result from the fusion of the two, Lucchesi-Pious Schools, which he supposed to be united juridically and in purpose. He calls this congregation the “little flock” and the religious houses the “sheepfold”. A very personal idea of Casani. But this writing was not taken into consideration because it was too harsh and austere for an institute of active life. AGSP, Reg. Serv., 59. Cfr. Latin text and commentary by Fr. Sántha: Arch. Sch. P. 1978, n. 3, pp. 87-134.

248 EGC, II, n. 10.

249 Pr. O.R., p. 649. Cfr. F. Baldi, o.c., p. 49; A. Armini, p. 132 ; A. Mistrangelo, pp.

250 Pr. O.R., Summary, p. 649.

itively closed, and an entirely new phase was opened, from the juridical point of view, and unexpected flourishing. The Pious Schools were assured, with apostolic authority, stability and perpetuity. It was the culmination of a twenty-year journey. The title *Pauline Congregation of the Clerics Poor of the Mother of God of the Pious Schools* signified official recognition by the Church and a sure and firm step towards the definitive goal of elevation to the Order of solemn vows.

It was March 6, 1617. The Pious Schools were officially born in the registry of the Church. The goal dreamed of by Calasanz, and which events had made almost unattainable, had become a happy reality. The bells of San Pantaleo could ring for a feast, and the choir of a thousand children filled the church with praises. Calasanz again chose Glicerio to go with Fr. Casani to pick up the papal document at the palace of the datario, cardinal of Santa Susana. Father Casani thus testifies in the informative process about the virtues of Glicerio Landriani:

*“When we had the Brief of the foundation of our Congregation, at the time of Paul V of holy memory, Glicerio, taking the Brief from the hands of the Cardinal, asked him if the word supreme poverty was expressed in it. When the Cardinal replied that it did, he was overcome with such fervor and joy that he could hardly contain himself until he left the Cardinal’s palace, and immediately, holding up the Brief in both hands, he went as far as the Pious Schools of San Pantaleo, jumping up and down the street and singing: “Supreme poverty! Supreme poverty!”<sup>251</sup>.*

With this gesture of satisfaction, with his cry of liberation, which sounds like a hymn of victory over the powers of evil and of the triumph of supreme poverty over the insidiousness of the evil one and of men of little courage, the mission of the Piarist Abbot Glicerio Landriani of Christ in the Pious Schools could be considered virtually concluded. Involved in the complex and difficult problems of the nascent Pious Schools, and already in danger of extinction, at the side of Calasanz, Glicerio had suffered and prayed. Now he celebrated with him the promise of a new era of history. His mission as a Piarist was over. The taking of the religious habit would only be the official recognition of a status – a state of right–

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251 P. Casani in Pos. s.v., p. 557.

that Glicerio had already conquered by his works and his exemplary life. The novitiate, more than an entrance into the religious life, lived by him already fully, will be the ticket to heaven; the profession of vows, before expiring, only the expression of a thanksgiving to the Lord with his life.

## 10. THE EVENTS ARE PRECIPITATED. THE NOVITIATE, SICKNESS AND DEATH

### *Taking the habit*

Long and laborious was the road that the Work of Joseph Calasanz had to travel, from the first school, opened in Santa Dorotea in Rome in 1597, to the first document stamped by Pope Paul V in 1617. With the Bull "*Ad ea per quae*", already the Pious Schools constituted as Pauline Congregation with simple vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, Fr. Joseph was finally able to open the novitiate, to reward the faithful wait of the first collaborators and to give the Piarist habit to numerous young men who asked to enter the Pious Schools. The novitiate, that is, the period of apprenticeship for the religious life, begins with a rite called *dressings*. The lay clothing is laid aside and the person takes that which is characteristic of each particular congregation in the Church.

The Cardinal Protector of the Pious Schools, Benedict Giustiniani, wanted for himself the privilege of giving the Piarist habit to the founder. The ceremony took place in the chapel of the Giustiniani Palace on March 25, 1617. Moreover, the cardinal himself wanted to buy the habit for Calasanz, and also for the 14 companions, to whom Calasanz imposed it successively in the chapel of San Pantaleo on the same day. *Father Francis Baldi*, one of the fourteen, has given us a list of their names:

*Peter Casani, Viviano Viviani, Octavio Bonarelli, Thomas Victoria, Joseph Pancraccio, Antony Bernardi, Andrew Marzio, Ansano Lenzi, Martin Ciomei, Simon Castiglioncelli, John Baptist Moranzi, George Mazza, John Prosper<sup>252</sup>.*

Landriani is missing from the list. What a strong impression for all of us! He, the favorite disciple of Father Joseph, the indefatigable and irre-

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252 F. Baldi, *Life of Father Abbé Glicerio Landriani*, AGSP, Reg. Serv. 39, p. 50.

placeable collaborator, almost fanatical enthusiast of the Piarist mission among poor children? Was it not he who, just a month before, was sent with Father Casani and the archpriest of Campagnano to receive the Brief of Paul V? And upon hearing the news that the obligation of extreme poverty was affirmed in it, had returned to San Pantaleon singing and dancing? Everyone, in commenting on the things of each day, recognized in this the intervention of Glicerio's austere confessor, Fr. Dominic of Jesus Mary, who surely had wanted to test his patience and humility. It was not surprising that perhaps it was attributed to Fr. Dominic that Pope Paul V had prescribed for the new congregation the supreme poverty? Was it not also due to his prestige over Calasanz that the latter had copied the *modus vivendi* –style of life– of his religious on the model of the reformed Carmelites? High degree of contemplation, thirst for perfection, but even sandals “apostolic style”, stockings without insole, rough hirsute habit, and no shirt; under the habit, coarse hempen cloth without sleeves, underpants of very coarse cloth, besides, cilices and disciplines that, writes Father Baldi<sup>253</sup>, “they often applied to the rebellious flesh during the week”. Others spoke of canonical impediments, such as family interests, to which Glicerio was perhaps linked, especially the abbey of Piacenza, from which the pontiff had not wanted to dispense him. Some, perhaps, would think that for Fr. Dominic, Glicerio's weak physical constitution was not suitable for the austere life and extreme poverty of the Pious Schools. One thing seemed certain to all, that the obstacle did not come from Calasanz.

Glicerio, in pure faith, interpreted the momentary exclusion from the group of the first chosen as a sign from heaven. The Lord wanted him, the greatest of sinners, through a meritorious purification and self-annulment, to become a transparency of Christ and a suitable instrument of his divine action. Father Dominic was for him the angel of the Covenant of which the prophet Malachi speaks (3:3). He, a man of God and rich in supernatural gifts, “will be refined like gold and silver, and so he will be able to present genuine gifts to the Lord”. The day that Glicerio went to St. Mary della Scala to ask Fr. Dominic's consent to wear the Piarist habit, when he heard that he was advised to delay

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253 F. Baldi, o.c., p. 51. A metal cilice, used by Glicerio, is kept in Rome in the general postulation.

the fulfillment of that desire that had made him happy, he certainly received a hard blow. No one likes to wait. But God, who chose to make himself wait during an Advent of centuries, wanted to make waiting a time of conversion. Glicerio understood very well that Fr. Dominic was making him pass through the *narrow way* with all kinds of trials, which is what the Lord does with his saints. Holiness passes through the narrow way, not through the highways of the world.

Finally, one day Father Joseph told him that Fr. Dominic wanted to speak to him. Glicerio went at once to La Scala.

*“They remained in conversation for more than two hours. He came out of the Carmelite priest’s small room with a radiant face. His director had allowed him to put on the religious habit, to enter the novitiate, to become a member of the Pious Schools. Glicerio was happy”<sup>254</sup>.*

He entrusted the catechesis to Dr. Cosmas Contini, whom he convinced to leave the procuration of the rich and to become, without interest, procurator of the poor. He arranged his family interests. In May 1616 his younger brother Fabio had passed away. Glicerio was entitled to a third of his estate. He ceded it to his brother Thomas taking only two thousand escudos, which he donated to the Pious Schools. From the older brother, Bishop Fabricius, he obtained another two thousand escudos. He gave it all to the poor. Already in 1613 he had left, with an apostolic Brief<sup>255</sup>, the Abbey in favor of the Fathers of St. Anthony of Piacenza<sup>256</sup>. With this he intended to lighten his burden, as he said, to be free of all encumbrances in order to go to paradise. The rite of taking the habit was set for July 2, 1617, feast of the Visitation of the Virgin Mary, in the oratory of San Pantaleo. On the advice of Fr. Dominic, according to Carmelite custom, Glicerio left the family name and called himself Glicerio of Christ. From now on his spiritual director would be Fr. Peter Casani, whom he had already known and loved as a father for three years.

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254 Pos. s.v., pp. 182-183.

255 State Archives of Parma.

256 Glicerio, with the permission of Father Dominic, ceded it to the friars, with notarial act notarized by Contini on December 5, 1613. One condition was set: the obligation to teach Christian Doctrine every feast day, to celebrate a daily mass in the oratory of St. Anthony and to pay the Pious Schools 1,500 escudos.

*Fr. Peter Casani, the master*

The first disposition of Calasanz immediately after the pontifical approval of the Pious Schools was the appointment of the master of novices. The choice could not have been other than Fr. Peter Casani, who had twenty-three years of religious experience in the Lucca Congregation, some of which as master of novices. Moreover, Casani was, with Calasanz, the only priest of the first group to wear the habit. The see of the novitiate was a house on the slope of St. Onofre, on the Gianicolo hill. A little house where two saints, with the exercise of virtues, later recognized as heroic by the Church, with the gifts granted by the Holy Spirit to the Founder and to the first fervent Piarists, created a spiritual patrimony, the charism, of which future Piarist generations will share.

It can be affirmed that the ideal of the small community led by Father Casani was to forget themselves, to seek always the most perfect, to suffer, to do everything for the love of God. Father Francis Baldi, one of the novices and later biographer of Glicerio, certifies: "I can, as an eyewitness, to affirm it with certainty". And he describes the straits in which they lived, because of the extreme poverty, not yet imposed by any rule, but spontaneously embraced in an extreme form by "people eager to go out to renew the apostolic life in the world". The only guide was their own fervor, infected with the example and teaching of their master<sup>257</sup>.

Glicerio "gave himself to a most perfect life, which for him was nothing new, since he was in the tenth year of his transformation. And, like a stone that goes to the center, which the closer it gets, the more it accelerates its course, he longed for the summit of evangelical perfection, under the care of Father Peter of the Nativity of the Virgin. In the novitiate, the Abbot unfurled the sails of his fervor, as much in exact obedience and continuous contemplation, as in the afflictive mortification of the body, with very rigorous fasts and frequent vigils..."<sup>258</sup>.

Father Casani had to moderate him in his outbursts, rather than spur him on; precisely the same thing that the master, Fr. Giovanni Battista Cioni, had done with him in his novitiate, as Cesare Franciotti, the

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257 Pos. s.v., p. 20.

258 Pos. s.v., p. 51.

first chronicler of the Congregation of Lucca, writes. Moreover, Glicerio was the mirror of Casani's virtues, "*a man of much prayer and goodness of life, admirable in his love of humility and love for the poverty*<sup>259</sup>", so he preferred the Pious Schools and the service of poor children to his own congregation. Father Alexius Armini rightly writes, alluding to the fact that Fr. Casani expelled demons: "...as the great anchorite Abbot Anthony taught his disciples: –“Satan fears very much the vigils of pious souls, their prayers, their fasts, their voluntary poverty”.

Sometimes Fr. Casani would go out with the novices, broom on his back, to sweep and pick up the dirt from the streets. At other times they would go begging at the door of St. Peter's Basilica and then distribute to the poor what they had collected. In the Common Rules<sup>260</sup> Father Casani prescribes discipline and fasting on Monday, Wednesday and Saturday; bread and water on Friday; confession three times a week; that those who arrive late at the refectory should eat on their knees. He, who had imposed on himself never to possess anything he could do without, suggests that each one should be ready to suffer from time to time the lack of necessary things. Moreover, he wishes that the occasion would come to taste the effects of holy poverty. In the Preamble, he recurs to St. Augustine's comment on the two cities, the earthly and the heavenly, and concludes: "Know that the closer you come to the one, the farther you move away from the other. He prescribes that the novice should consider himself and desire to be considered the most vile and despised of all men, and unworthy of any favor except that of knowing and doing the will of God. And let him place himself in the hands of the one who guides him, "and believe him as if what he tells him were the oracles of God our Lord, not doing anything, however holy, without his express permission.

We even doubt whether it was in fact Glicerio, once under the guidance of Fr. Dominic of Jesus Mary, who influenced his master in many things.

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259 Positio Casani, p. 215. Fr. Rudolf Brasavola writes: *Paupertatis adeo vigilans custos et fervens amator ut solo pauperis cognomento in epistolis gloriaretur*, that is, he was so loving and so careful of poverty that in his letters he would be happy signing *Peter poor*.

260 The Common Rules were composed by Father Casani at the request of Calasanz between March and July 1617. Considered too severe, they were superseded by the Constitutions that Calasanz wrote at Narni in 1621.

### *The last illness*

Glicerio had never been in good health. So much so, that Father Dominic had not wanted to accept him into his Order, because he did not consider him physically suitable for the austere life of Carmel<sup>261</sup>. Moreover, when he arrived at the novitiate, the stressful work, vigils and penances had almost exhausted his physical resources. Father Casani, referring to the period spent with Glicerio in the community of San Pantaleon, states:

*“He was so assiduous in prayer that his knees were swollen and calloused... He stayed every night, after the communal prayer, in the oratory, many hours devoted to prayer. I was always afraid that he would fall ill and become consumptive”<sup>262</sup>.*

Unfortunately, that is what it happened. On September 20<sup>th</sup>, feast of the saint of Glicerio, after Mass and Communion, the young man felt weak and had to lie down on the boards that served as his bed<sup>263</sup>. After a few days, he returned to normal life, but this sudden indisposition was a wake-up call for everyone. He was getting weaker and weaker. Calasanz hastened to send him to Frascati and then to Campagnano, hoping that the change of air would help him. To those who were worried, Glicerio would say: “Thank you, pray for me. Father Joseph often went to visit him at the novitiate. From Frascati he would write to Father Garcia:

*“See that, for his good, Father Abbot goes to Campagnano for a few days, or to another place. It would please me very much if wherever he goes he finds such good air that he will soon return completely healthy. If he tells you to accompany him, go with him and be very careful to serve him in everything”<sup>264</sup>.*

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261 Glicerio himself affirms this in a letter to Cardinal Federico, dated November 5, 1611: “When Our Lord called me to his service, I was all on fire for my Lord, and I wanted to enter the Discalced Carmelites. These fathers prevented me on account of my health”. Reg. Serv. 38, 2.

262 Pr. O.R., p. 271.

263 Sleeping on a board or directly on the ground was a rule common to all the religious, according to the constitutions Casani wrote, and which remained valid until 1622. Cf. Reg. Cal., XIV, 743.

264 EGC, II, n. 21. Frascati, October 26, 1617.

Unfortunately Calasanz's hopes were not fulfilled. Francis Selvaggi tells:

*"Sick myself also, Glicerio came to see me. Unable to climb the stairs, he was helped by Joseph Barbieri. When he came to me, his fever and chills were so high that his teeth were chattering. My wife brought him a brazier of burning charcoal, and the Abbot, warming himself, exhorted me to have patience in my illness in order to draw fruit from it"<sup>265</sup>.*

Father Dominic says of him:

*"In his illness he was always most patient, enduring with joy and never regretting. For this he always gave thanks to His Divine Majesty, and entrusted himself to different religious so that they would pray for him, and he would draw fruit from that illness"<sup>266</sup>.*

He often asked spiritual books be read to him, sentences taken from the writings of the Holy Fathers, the Morals of St. Gregory, the lives of the saints.

*"Two months before leaving this life, –says Fr. James Vaquedano<sup>267</sup>– he wanted me to write down for him all the most useful sentences of the Holy Fathers, which deal with penance. Which I did, and reduced it to three or four pages, which he himself read every day with great feeling. . . I also recited to him some sentences of the Holy Fathers about the way to receive Communion spiritually and sacredly with great fruit. This doctrine was impressed on his heart, which for this reason became much more ardent at communion, as I could glimpse, since he often wanted me to say Mass for him, and give communion in the chapel of the Pious Schools, or in the chapel of the house of Monsignor Vives, where he would go, even if he was sick".*

Father Baldi remembers him "always with a cheerful and smiling face<sup>268</sup>", even when the doctors, who did not understand his illness well, subjected him to painful and often counterproductive interven-

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265 Pos. s.v., p. 613, para. 20.

266 Pos. s.v., p. 609.

267 Letter of April 17, 1618, addressed to Father Dominic Ruzola of Jesus Mary. In the general postulation of St. Pantaleon it is possible to read only some of the numerous sentences that Glicerio noted during the reading of the holy Fathers of the Church.

268 F. Baldi, o.c., p. 57.

tions. The severity of his illness was not continuous. From time to time he got up and walked around the house. Occasionally he went out. He often took part in the common recreation, rejoicing at the singing of spiritual songs, especially *Vanity of vanities*, which reminded him of the visits to the seven churches.

### *The omen of Our Lady of Montecavallo*

Seeing him one day more revived than usual, Father Casani urged him to go out for some fresh air. It seemed that it would help him. Glicerio chose his favorite destination, the church of St. Gaius in Montecavallo, a sparsely populated area with wide green spaces surrounded by villas. It was a rather long and demanding walk for his less than brilliant condition. It was also his last pilgrimage. The novitiate had been transferred from San Onofre to Via di Santa Maria in Trivio a few months earlier<sup>269</sup>. To go to St. Gaius one had to climb the Quirinal Hill, walk the present Via del Quirinal and a part of the Via XX of September. The church was then in ruins, but a beautiful image of the Madonna was venerated there. Father Casani, who knew Glicerio well and his filial devotion to Mary Most Holy, suggested that he humbly ask her for a sign to tell him if she would cure him of that illness. Our Lady had already given an answer in the Gospel: "Do whatever he tells you". Glicerio also knew that the problem for man is not whether Jesus delays or not in coming, but whether we are ready to welcome him. However, out of obedience, he asked Our Lady: "How many steps do I lack on the way of the Lord who is returning?, how much of the night do I have ? Mary suggested to Glicerio her key, clear and simple. "*Here am I*", which she pronounced by herself, and taught to all her children on the day of her Annunciation in the little house of Nazareth. She showed Glicerio the gold ring, which as a young boy he had

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269 This was the third time that the novitiate changed its seat. In 1614, with the union of the Pious Schools to the Congregation of Lucia, the common novitiate was held next to the Trevi Fountain -today the Academy of St. Luke- where the Lucchesi had already acquired the land in 1613, spending 8,000 scudi for the novitiate house and the church. With the separation of the two congregations in 1617, the novitiate of the Pious Schools was transferred to the slope of St. Onofre and, at the beginning of 1618, to St. Mary in Trivio. Glicerio died here. Cfr. DENES, Rome 1990, p. 708.

given her as a pledge of love and fidelity. Then, a smile and... *–Soon you will be with me!*

Dr. Contini and Francis Selvaggi, who did not want to leave Glicerio 's side, obtained special permission from Fr Joseph Calasanz, despite the noviciate strict rules. They came and went, and entertained themselves with Glicerio by talking about the love of God and of the brethren, and about the vanity of the cares for the things of the world. Glicerio was interested in how the Christian doctrine was going. Before the good news, he raised his eyes to heaven: "O Lord, he said, make the whole world know you and love you". On one of the visits Contini had the impression that Glicerio was better. However, when saying goodbye, Glicerio said to him:

*"I am very close to my goal; so now more than ever it is time to make prayer for me, and to command it to be made by the congregations and other religious you know, so that I may conquer the crown of patience"<sup>270</sup>.*

*"That night I observed that he was becoming more and more taciturn. During the communal recreation, one of us had a cross, and all around us were singing spiritual praises. Glicerio, from time to time, raised his eyes to look at the cross with a special feeling, but he did not answer any of the questions he was usually asked about various things. Hence the suspicion of what actually followed"<sup>271</sup>.*

### ***The death of Glycerius***

Visibly aggravated, the parish priest of the nearby church of St. Mary in Trevio came. Glicerio received from his hands the holy anointing, answering all prayers, including the recommendation of the soul. In the meantime, Fr. Joseph, who for some time had been anxious to bring to his beloved Glicerio a gift that he had asked for many times, had been informed. In view of the latest news, he immediately informed the Pope, begging him to deign to listen to Glicerio's wish, that is, to solemnly manifest his perpetual consecration to the Lord and to the Pious Schools

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270 A. Armini: *Life of the Venerable Servant of God Father Glicerio Landriani of Christ*, Rome 1694, p. 131.

271 F. Baldi, in Pos.s.v., p. 749.

with the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. The pontiff sent the cardinal protector. Glicerio was moved, in the presence of the Cardinal, the Founder and the Brothers, to pronounce the formula of religious consecration<sup>272</sup>. He was the first solemnly professed in the history of the Pious Schools, the first offspring and a fruit that quickly matured.

Father Joseph then entertained him. Glicerio asked him for forgiveness, knowing that he had perhaps exaggerated his penances. Father Joseph, with infinite kindness, tried to comfort him for the only pain that distressed him, and for which he asked prayers from all the saints he had known. What was unbearable for him was not the sufferings of the illness, but the thought of no longer being able to “suffer and work in the new vineyard of the Lord<sup>273</sup>”. Father Joseph exhorted him to rest trusting in the designs of God’s most pure love: “You, dear Glicerio, –he told him–, will certainly be able to help us more in death than in life”.

Having to return to the school, and as death was not foreseen to be imminent, Fr. Joseph said to him at his farewell: “Glicerio, do not go to heaven without my permission. He nodded his head and said yes. At six o’clock in the evening –about 11 o’clock today– Father Joseph was still seated at the work table in his little room in San Pantaleo when he heard a knock at the door. Three times he said: “Come in! Then he recognized Glicerio’s voice: “Benedicite! –Bless me, Father, for I am on my way to heaven. –Yes, go, God bless you. Intercede for me before the Lord”<sup>274</sup>.

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272 Pos. s.v., p. 16: “Adstante cardinali Giustiniani, facta Glicerio fuit facultas emit-tendi *sollemnem* religiosorum votorum professionem.” That is, it was granted to Glicerio to pronounce, in the presence of Cardinal Giustiniani, the formula of *solemn profession*”.

273 F. Baldi, o.c., p. 57.

274 On the door –still original– of the room of St. Joseph Calasanz, in San Pantaleon, we read: “At this door, on February 15, 1618, the soul of the Venerable Glicerio Landriani came to knock, at the very moment when he expired in the novitiate of Montecavallo, to obtain from his holy father the blessing of heaven”. Father Armini testifies: “The fact, besides being a public voice, was recorded in his man- uscripts by Fr. Vincent of the Conception, a very trustworthy priest, who says that he heard it from Calasanz himself, when he affirmed that the obedience of Father Glicerio was very great”. A. Armini, o.c., p. 131.

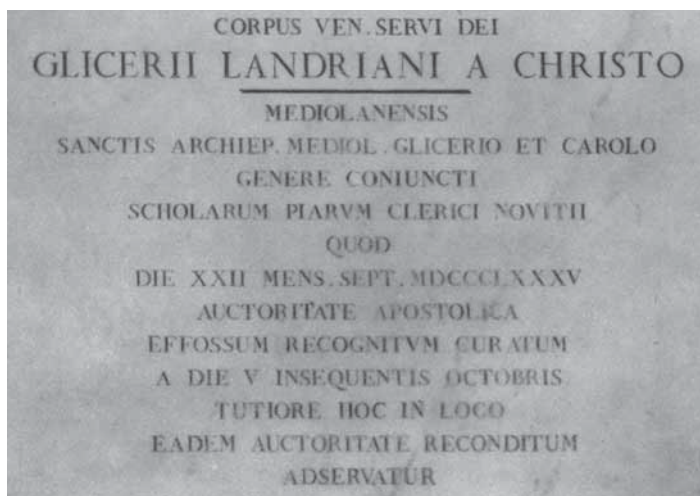
## THE TOMB

*First inscription in marble,  
on the tomb of Glicerio Landriani  
in the Church of San Pantaleo in Rome:*

*“Hic jacet Corpus Ven. Servi Dei Glycerii a Christo,  
ex Familia Landriani Mediolanensis.  
Abbatis S. Antonii Placentiae,  
Qui obiit die XV Feb. Anni Domini MDCXVIII  
Aetatis suae XXX”.*

*“HERE LIES THE BODY OF THE VENERABLE SERVANT OF GOD  
GLICERIO OF CHRIST,  
OF THE LANDRIANI FAMILY, MILANESE,  
ABBOT OF SAINT ANTHONY OF PIACENZA,  
WHO DIED ON FEBRUARY 15, 1618,  
AT THE AGE OF 30 YEARS”.*

*After a long interruption, the cause of Beatification was  
resumed in September 1885 and the body of Glicerio, closed in  
a double box, on the following October 5, was transferred to  
a new tomb and placed between the main altar and the altar  
dedicated to San Pantaleo, on the left wall of the Church. The  
new inscription reads:*



***THE BODY OF THE VEN. SERVANT OF GOD  
 GLICERIO LANDRIANI OF CHRIST,  
 MILANESE,  
 WHO ON THE XXII DAY OF THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER  
 OF THE YEAR MDCCCLXXXV,  
 WITH APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY  
 EXHUMED, RECOGNIZED AND CARED FOR  
 BY A CUSTODIAN  
 SINCE THE Vth DAY OF THE FOLLOWING OCTOBER  
 HAS BEEN PRESERVED HIDDEN  
 IN THIS PLACE,  
 WITH THE SAME AUTHORITY.***

## SPIRITUALITY OF GLICERIO

### 11. “DEUS SUPER OMNIA”

By *spirituality* we mean the energies, the inner charge, the idea-force, which characterized Glicerio’s new identity after the conversion, and which later gave tone and value to his multifaceted religious and social activity. We summarize it in four chapters:

- Primacy of God.
- Glicerio of Christ.
- Madness of the cross.
- Prophecy and Healing.



On the other hand, the Holy Spirit, who builds the Church, that is, the people of God, and who gives each believer particular gifts, also granted Glicerio special charisms for the service of the community:

#### *God, the only guide*

In the General Postulation of St. Pantaleon in Rome are kept numerous manuscript fascicles of the venerable Glicerio Landriani, strictly personal, with conventional abbreviations that make

them absolutely indecipherable. A single expression is clearly read, and it appears on each of the folios as a seal of authenticity, as well as the driving force of his ideal and life project: *“Deus super omnia,”* God above all.

Back from painful experience and stinging disillusionment, Glicerio gives a courageous prophetic witness to the primacy of God and of future goods. He places the true ultimate end in God alone. “Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our only God. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength”<sup>275</sup>. Not all of man’s conduct leads to happiness. Critical discernment is needed so as not to fall into misleading mirages.

*“Since the course of human life is a dangerous voyage through the stormy sea of the world, in order to avoid the pitfalls of earthly pleasures and adversities, it is necessary to straighten the path towards the clarity of the sky and fix one’s eyes on the polar star, in order to arrive happily at port. And Glicerio, as a very expert navigator, always had his heart fixed on God, continually seeking to thank God alone”<sup>276</sup>. St. Joseph of Calasanz testifies: “He used to raise his eyes to heaven with such affection that he indicated that only in God we should have hope”<sup>277</sup>.*

In storm and in prosperity, in pain or joy, the believer knows that God is present, active and salvific, in everything; that he loves us and does not allow trials to be greater than our strength. Glicerio’s ideal was to let himself be guided by God in everything; not to seek anything that was not his will, not to trust even the holiest feelings:

*“My heart desired it enough, but I did not show it so as not to show affection for anything, but to be in everything resigned to the will of God and of superiors”<sup>278</sup>.*

### *The one in love with God*

*“Hallowed be thy name, –Glycerius explains<sup>279</sup>– means to say that God is known, adored, confessed, praised and blessed by the*

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275 Deuteronomy 6, 3.

276 A. Armini, o.c., p. 82.

277 Calasanz in *Nova Pos.* II, p. 38.

278 Letter of Glicerio to Cardinal Frederick, September 29, 1612.

279 *Manuscript* of Glicerio, BGSP. Rome.

*world, while the infidels and bad Christians blaspheme Him and curse Him”.*

*“He felt great pain and melancholy when I heard the most holy Name of His Majesty blasphemed. Because of the great zeal he had for the honor of God, he made fraternal correction with great spirit and fruit of the blasphemers”<sup>280</sup>.*

*“If he heard a blasphemy, he was horrified. He would kneel before the blasphemer and beg him not to offend the divine Majesty any more. –Brother”, he would say, “what have you said? You have gravely offended God. If he was rejected, he would add: –If you do not repent of having offended my God, I will see to it that the justice of God, (‘my breath shall devour you like fire’ Isaiah 33:7) is added to the human (the galleys)<sup>281</sup>”.*

And the words of Glicerio were medicine for the violent one, who ended up asking for forgiveness. His was not a simple *no* to evil, but a *yes* to good, to God, absolute and eternal good. Total and irrevocable love for the one who had freed him from the dangers of the world. In the *Brief Declaration of Christian Doctrine*<sup>282</sup> Glicerio, explaining the word “contrition,” asks the children: –“Why do we say ‘sorrow for having offended God?’ He answers to one of them: –“Because if you had pain of sin just because the condemnation to hell, it would not be enough. It is necessary that this pain be born of the love you have for God, who has been so kind that he became man and died on the cross to save you”.

Passing through Civita Castellana one day, on leaving the church after having received communion, observes a biographer<sup>283</sup>, “he began to cry out: *Vivat Deus, vivat Deus!* –Long life to God”. Francis Selvaggi recalls that, often going with him down the street with his satchel on his shoulder to beg for bread at the doors, he would repeat with great joy: “Long live to God, who commands us to do this for the honor of his

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280 Pr. Somm. n. IX, p. 264.

281 Scolding and punishment are certainly not the best way for an educative action, but in our case, there is a need for a more but in our case we must keep in mind the zeal of Glicerio and other historical circumstances.

282 *Manuscript* of Glicerio in BGSP, Rome.

283 A. Armini in Pr. s.v., p. 200, para. 287.

glory!”<sup>284</sup>. In asking Cardinal Frederick Borromeo to kindly send an theologian Oblate from St. Charles of Milan for his theology course in Rome, Glicerio specifies that everything is “only for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, in the name of Christ, for the matter of so much glory of his”. He wished for the Cardinal that St. Charles would intercede, so that “the House of St. Charles would be filled with holy Oblates, preachers of the glory of God, and that they would set on fire and flame all Rome and the whole world with the true Good, which is divine love”. And while describing to his relative and teacher Frederick the wonders that God works in the School of Calasanz, and with how much “ease and gentleness” his children “are inflamed to serve God”, he bursts into a blessing to the Holy Trinity: “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit!” Before the Blessed Sacrament, carried away by an uncontainable love for God, he was seen jumping and dancing. That is why they took him for a madman. The same is said of St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi in the cause for her beatification. The measure of love, said a Father of the Church, is love without measure.

“I know that he had great faith”, Calasanz said of him<sup>285</sup>. With faith, man succeeds in recognizing God for what He is, the absolutely incomprehensible and impenetrable One, but also the foundation of all creation. “The highest reason for man’s dignity consists in his vocation to communion with God. From birth, man is invited to dialogue with God, and he does not live fully unless he entrusts himself to his Creator”<sup>286</sup>. Aware of this truth,

*Glicerio “often exhorted those who conversed with him to have faith and hope in God alone, who does not abandon those who hope in him, and to those who leave for him the vanities and riches of this world”<sup>287</sup>. “Concerned about the propagation of the faith, often raising his eyes and hands to heaven, he exclaimed: “Lord, make you known to all creatures”<sup>288</sup>.*

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284 Pos. s.v., p. 265.

285 Pos. n.v., p. 262, para. 62.

286 Vatican II, *Gaudium et spes*, n. 19.

287 Cosmas Contini, in *Pr. Somm.*, p. 261.

288 Pos. s.v., p. 250.

In the biblical vision, God is never the object of proof, but of encounter. His presence is felt through a call, the strength of which only a free conscience knows, if it welcomes him: “I will make you my bride forever in generosity and love”<sup>289</sup>. Glicerio lived by this love: “He did not act except in the supernatural light of faith. Motivated by faith, he renounced all his own, repeating: God alone, *Deus meus et omnia*, my God and my all”<sup>290</sup>.

*“Always joyful in fatigues, in discomforts and humiliations, he was more concerned with pleasing God, in whom he hoped”<sup>291</sup>.*

*“Always walking with his heart lifted up towards beatitude, he overcame the most difficult things that were put in his way, hindering him in the exercise of good works”<sup>292</sup>.*

He often raised his eyes to heaven and used to say: “*Sursum corda*, lift up your hearts to God and hope in Him”.

*“Once, seeing that he had many debts contracted to give alms to the poor, he went to the bank of Mr. Robert Primo and asked him for 300 escudos. The said Mr. Roberto did not want to, but he put a escudo in his hand and sent him away. Glicerio returned several times, and each time he gave him a escudo and sent him away. Finally, one day Mr. Robert gave him 100 gold escudos. Glicerio, all joyful, giving them to Francis Selvaggi, said to him: Look what God does! Pay the debts and trust in Him. God always provides for those who trust in Him, and He never fails”<sup>293</sup>.*

His attitude seems inspired by Psalm 131, which a great biblical scholar has defined as the most beautiful in the whole Bible, a song of the soul that abandons itself in God “like a child abandoned in its mother’s arms”.

*“One day, having come up the topic about the love of Christ, the Lord, Glicerio, out of his great tenderness of heart, began to weep like a child”<sup>294</sup>.*

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289 Hosea, 2, 1.

290 P. Jericho, o.c. pp. 31-32.

291 Pos. s.v., II, p. 310.

292 Nova Pos. II, p. 39.

293 A. Armini, o.c., p. 84.

294 Ibid., p. 87.

*God is love*, is the simple and understandable definition that the evangelist John gives us. It is not only a definition of God, but the synthesis of all biblical history and of the relationship between God and men at all times. Glicerio, admitted by grace to intimacy with the divine persons, unable to contain the fervor of his exultant soul, “leaped with great affection for God,” repeating the words of the Song of Songs: “I possess him and I will never forsake him”<sup>295</sup>.

*“A fervent lover of the Lord, by means of prayer, day and night he conversed with his beloved, even while he slept”<sup>296</sup>. “Feeling that he was burning inwardly, he could be seen clasping his arms before him exclaiming: Enough, Lord; enough, Lord!”<sup>297</sup>. “It seemed that in his heart he had nothing but God, for his mouth knew not, and it seems that he could speak only of the greatness of God and of what pertained to his honor and glory”<sup>298</sup>.*

### *Contemplative spirit*

Even in the midst of the chaos of the city, he knew how to dedicate time for God to enter his inner space and satisfy his hunger. This allowed him to invigorate his spiritual life. Continuous prayer widens the heart enough to contain God’s gift of Himself. Glicerio, as Abbot, even though he was not a priest, was obliged to pray the breviary. Father Casani, who recited it frequently with him, testifies that “when he began to pray the Office with me, although he was always pale... a great blush would come into his forehead, then over his eyes, and little by little it spread to his cheeks, and it seemed to me that his eyes were shining”<sup>299</sup>. Moses too, although he could not see God with the unveiled radiance of his face, because –God himself tells him– “no man can see me and still be alive”, but he could only glance at his “back”, he came down from the mountain with a radiant face, because

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295 Song of Songs, 3, 4.

296 A. Armini, in Pos. s.v., p. 352.

297 F. Baldi, in Pr. Inf., p. 272.

298 P. Mussesti, in Pos. s.v., p. 340.

299 Pos. s.v., II, p. 329. A pocket diurnal –breviary– printed in minute characters, which Glicerio always carried with him, is preserved in the archives of the general postulation of San Pantaleo in Rome.

“he had conversed with him”<sup>300</sup>. Father Casani’s words are confirmed by Calasanz, who adds, *“This used to happen to him because of the great fervor he had in dealing with God”*<sup>301</sup>.

*“Standing, walking, speaking, eating and doing anything else, he always seemed to be in contemplation and united to God. One could see that he was always united to God, having seen him many times as if he was abstracted”*<sup>302</sup>. *Even though he was engaged in various conversations, he nevertheless maintained perfect union with God... He was so united to God, the Lord, that all his actions were prayer, example and edification of his neighbor*<sup>303</sup>.

The sacrifice of Christ present on the altar was his sacrifice, his offering. The Eucharist gave him a spiritual thrust, as a sacrament of life. Every morning he heard one or more Masses and, on returning to the sacristy, on his knees, he kissed the feet of the priest as if in gratitude, “for having nourished him with God”<sup>304</sup>.

*“When he received the sacraments, the preparation was great. Afterwards, he remained on his knees, absorbed in the consideration of the benefit received”*<sup>305</sup>. With the Eucharist, as the ancient prophet Elijah, he walked along the paths of the world, guided by the living Christ, who becomes a traveling companion, a pilgrim with man towards the Father. *“His walk seemed more like that of a man who was always absorbed in thoughts of God”*<sup>306</sup>. *“On the street, standing or moving, he was always engaged in mental or vocal prayer; or in reading and dealing with some passage of Sacred Scripture”*<sup>307</sup>.

Glicerio placed the contemplative dimension at the center of his prayer. Encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist, conversation with God,

300 Exodus, 34, 30.

301 St. Joseph Calasanz, in Pos. s.v., p. 325, para. 34.

302 F. Selvaggi, in Pos. s.v., p. 328.

303 Venerable Fr. Dominic, in Pos. s.v., p. 319.

304 A. Armini, o.c., pp. 115 ff.

305 F. Baldi, Pr. O.R., p. 273.

306 Pr. Somm., p. 272.

307 J. Garcia, in Pos. s.v., p. 275.

prayer, were the starting point for a glorious search for the face of God, without fatigue or retreat. Prayer left his heart clean and transparent and allowed him to see God in everyone and in all the events of the day.

*“For this I bow my knees before the Father”*

*“Every evening –this is yet another testimony of Blessed Peter Casani, his master– he would remain after community prayer in the oratory before the Blessed Sacrament, spending several hours of the night”. And again: “Assiduous in prayer, his knees were so swollen and calloused that he was obliged by obedience to wear certain pads in a rounded shape and to put them under his knees every time he wanted to kneel”<sup>308</sup>.*

This testimony recalls what Egesippus, a writer of the second century, refers to James the Less, a relative of Jesus: “The skin of his knees had become as hard as that of camels, because he was continually prostrate to worship God”. It is a simple gesture, kneeling, but it denotes the interior disposition with which the believer, entering the temple of the Lord, “greet” Jesus truly present in the Eucharist. With profound humility, Glicerio celebrated his conversion by bending his knees in the Church of the Dead before Jesus Sacrament, exposed to adoration. The smallness of a gesture which, repeated with sincere devotion, with love, is the interior complement of the overall behavior with which we present ourselves to the Lord; a spontaneous expression for those who are ready to meet a Person who counts, and how! Glicerio always prayed kneeling, bending his knees before the one who in a particular way represented Jesus, the priest and the sick person. The meditated gesture of lowering himself helped him to understand that it was the Lord of the universe whom he was welcoming, and would lead him to a behavior of pleasant availability, and feelings of joy at finding himself in the presence of Love. Casani concludes, *“it is not surprising that Glicerio obtained from God, through prayer, many marvelous things”<sup>309</sup>*. For Glicerio it was an irreverence to be kneeling before the Lord with only one knee. The pedagogy that

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308 Pos. s.v., p. 239, para. 34.

309 Nova Pos., II, para. 46.

he developed in his catechesis also alluded to this “minimal” gesture, but indicative of the behavior with which we approach the Lord, for a particular audience that He grants us. Andrew Sacchetti, eyewitness in the ordinary Roman process, declares:

*“One day, being in the doctrine at St. Hadrian’s, when the time came for us to make prayer kneeling, seeing me the Father Abbot kneeling on one knee, he approached me and reprimanded me, telling me that it was shameful to be like that. When I answered that I could not, because my other knee was hurting, Glicerio put his hand on the place where the ailment was and, praying, I was instantly cured”<sup>310</sup>.*

Glicerio, totally consecrated to God and to his plan of salvation, could repeat to those who came to him the words of St. Paul to the Christians of Ephesus: “Therefore I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every fatherhood in heaven and on earth is named, that he may grant you, by the riches of his glory, to strengthen you interiorly through the action of the Spirit... and that you may be filled with all the fullness of God”.

## 12. GLICERIO OF CHRIST

### *Christ, image of the Father*

Glicerio of Christ is the noble title that Glicerio chose for himself, preferring it to the illustrious family name. He was displeased, according to witnesses in the trials, if anyone alluded, even in the slightest, to his noble origins. When his brother Fabricio was elected bishop of Pavia in 1617, Father Alexius Armini recounts: “He did not give the slightest sign of joy”. A witness affirms, on the contrary, that “he gave signs of sadness”. And Bishop Mistrangelo: “He remained calm and equanimous as if it was something that did not concern him”.

Jesus, for our love, emptied himself of divinity and supernatural titles to become the humble servant of his brothers. It is Jesus who Glicerio looked to as the only model. Jesus gave a human face, the perceptible aspect of man, to the person of God in the world. Before Him, Glicerio manifested his absolute choice of God. He bowed before

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310 Pos. s.v., fol. 90, p. 656.

Him out of love, as he suggested to the children in the catechesis: *“Out of love and gratitude, so that, as he stooped to become man and die for me, so I bow before Him”*<sup>311</sup>. God vividly feels the drama of the one who turns away and squanders his patrimony with sin. He anxiously awaits his return; even more, he sends his Son to look for him and lead him back to the banquet of celebration. Glicerio felt that he was one of these: “He loved me and gave his life for me”<sup>312</sup>. He was moved neither by a motive of glory nor of reward, but by an interior need which is nothing other than love. It is significant to note the greeting that St. Joseph Calasanz addresses in a letter to his dearest disciple: *“Jesus and Mary keep the heart of our dearest Abbot Glicerio always occupied”*<sup>313</sup>. Glicerio’s love for Christ was overwhelming in his gift of himself to the brethren.

### *Glicerio kisses the wounds of the poor*

The journey of conversion for Glicerio began with a gesture of love, as for St. Francis of Assisi, with a kiss to a leper. St. Francis refers to that experience as follows: “When I was in sin, it seemed too bitter to me to see the lepers. The Lord himself led me among them and I had mercy on them. And what seemed bitter to me became sweetness to me”. And his biographer, Thomas Celano, narrates what happened as follows:

*“When he had already begun, by the grace of the Most High, to have holy and wholesome thoughts, while he was still living in the world, he stopped before a leper. He did violence to himself, approached him and kissed him”.*

Like Francis, Glicerio –who had taken his name at baptism– understood that to be faithful to his commitment to become a knight of Christ he had to venerate him in the raw realism of an infected man, his body riddled with sores; and not only contemplate and meditate on him nailed to the cross on the altar, painted. This is how Glicerio managed to discover Christ and serve him.

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311 Brief statement of Christian doctrine, by Glicerio, ms., BGSP, Rome.

312 Galatians, 2, 20.

313 This is the only known letter of the correspondence between Calasanz and Glicerius. The original is in AGSP, R.C., n. 1, 11.

*“I remember; –says Mr. Cosmas Azzolini in the process of beatification– that one day, going with Father Abbot to the church of Saints Cosmas and Damian, he said to me: ‘Cosmas, do what I do. When we arrived at the church, we saw a poor man with a sore leg stood at the door. A purulent substance was oozing from the wound. Glicerio knelt down, gave him a coin and kissed the sore. Then, getting up, he told me to do the same. And by the kiss I felt much gentleness’<sup>314</sup>.*

Francis Selvaggi recounts an analogous case in the ordinary process:

*“...Glicerio having said to me: –Taste, taste, and you will feel how fragrant and soft the wounds of these poor people are; I kiss them for the love of Christ, and I feel great joy and satisfaction for it. I decided to kiss them myself. The first time I felt nauseous. The abbot said to me: ‘Oh brother, you have no taste. If you kiss with faith and charity, you will feel the taste that is received. Once, by these words, kissing one’s wound with the pus inside, I felt great odor and consolation, so I continued to do this several times as I went in his company’.* “I remember hearing Cosmas, who, having been asked by the Abbot, kissed the sores of a poor man. And having done so, he felt on his lips so much odor and taste that it lasted for some days, as one could know from him himself, for he is alive and dwells next to the palace of Cardinal Varallo”<sup>315</sup>.

In the brothers with sores Glicerio saw the closest image to Christ “suffering servant of God”, “man of sorrows”. The Passion of the Lord became tangible for him to the point of being able to touch it, to share it, to kiss it... Every bitterness now turned into sweetness. Perhaps the prodigy –documented– of the burning coals, sweet to Glicerio’s palate, is related to this.

### *Glicerio swallows burning embers*

Blessed Peter Casani testifies, and Fr. Garcia confirms it to the letter: “Dr. Bayano, a Portuguese, being in our house in Narni, told eyewitnesses that Father Abbot, in obedience to Father Francis of Christ, a Spaniard, then his spiritual father, swallowed four burning embers without suffering any injury; on the contrary, the next day,

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314 Nova Pos., pp. 67-68.

315 Pos. s.v., p. 390.

when asked by him if he had been bothered by these embers, he answered that he had never tasted anything softer in his life"<sup>316</sup>. Other witnesses refer to the same fact, although they differ in some particulars. The censor of the faith in the process objected to the discordance of the witnesses in this regard. One said that the superior was Fr. Francis of Christ, another that Calasanz, another that Casani.

The response of the lawyer, who brought up the Gospel, seems to me to be timely. Even the Gospels do not always agree in all particulars, narrating the facts of Christ<sup>317</sup>. Moreover, the fact demonstrates the independence of each witness and becomes another element of truth. But what value can be attributed to such a prodigy? If I may express an entirely personal opinion, it would be possible to refer to chapter VI of the prophet Isaiah: "Woe is me, for I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among a people of unclean lips... Then flew to me one of the seraphim *with a coal in his hand*. He touched my mouth and said to me, "Behold, this has touched your lips and your guilt has been removed. Then I heard a voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? I said, -Here am I, send me"<sup>318</sup>. Likewise God touched Jeremiah's mouth. Fire is a purifying element in nature, a symbol of the supernatural power of the Spirit of Love. The authenticity of conversion would inflame in Glicerio the fire of the Spirit, which purified him of his sin and made him fit to announce the Word of Truth: "How sweet to the taste are your words, sweeter than honey at my mouth"<sup>319</sup>. The prodigy of the burning embers swallowed by Glicerio could be a prophetic gesture. It meant what the 16<sup>th</sup> century Russian icon "Mother of God of the Incarnation" meant to the prophets. Mary has her palms open with

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316 This is the Portuguese priest Andrew Bayano. He was a very erudite humanist and philologist, professor of grammar and rhetoric in various Roman institutes. From 1630 he taught in the Pious Schools, hosted with veneration by Calasanz in San Pantaleo. For a bibliographical list of his works, see Eph. Cal., III (1934) 25-31. A letter of Calasanz is interesting: "As for Mr. Bayano, I am interested that he does not go out of Rome, so that our students can go ahead in the studies they have begun", EGC, V, n. 1787.

317 Nova Pos, I, p. 50.

318 Isaiah, 6, 4-8.

319 Psalm 119, v. 103.

Christ in front of her breast. The Mother of God appears in the icon as the personification of the hymnographic image of the *mystical springs that support Christ, burning coal that purifies soul and body*. In order to arrive at this iconography, around the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the patristic interpretations of the OT prophecies about the coming of the Messiah were of great importance. In a letter to his relative, Cardinal Frederick, Glicerio recommended him: *“Be a faithful executor and protector of the word of Christ, so much forgotten, because Jesus says: ‘If one loves me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him and We will come to him and make our abode in him’”*<sup>320</sup>.

*“If anyone wants to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me”*

Christ is not a more or less abstract ideal, but a living person. To belong to Christ, to follow him, means to believe in his teachings, to make his program of life one's own. An indispensable condition to follow Christ is to renounce oneself. Glicerio, in search of the new identity of his *raison d'être*, in order to become aware of himself, needed, despite the scorn, to shake off the image that others had formed of him.

Some Milanese found Glicerio near St. Lawrence in Lucina. Having recognized him, they stopped him to greet him and to congratulate him on his fame of sanctity, which had reached Milan. Then he looked at the square, and having seen some beams at a construction site, he asked his companion, Fr. Thomas, to help him put two of them across so that they could make a swing together. And so they did, amidst the whistles and shouts of those present. When the game was over, Father Thomas said to him: “Why this madness? He answered: –Did they not believe me a saint? Now they will go around telling my fellow citizens that I am crazy<sup>321</sup>. It was a decisive step, which brought him closer to Jesus, considered mad by Herod and Pilate.

Father Peter Mussesti, entrusted by St. Joseph Calasanz to collect the memories related to Glicerio, tells us that one day Glicerio went

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320 Letter from Glicerio to Frederick, November 5, 1611.

321 Pos. s.v., II, p. 502.

to the house of Cardinal Ginnasio to ask for alms for the Pious Schools. As soon as the Cardinal saw him, he asked him to enter. As he was crossing the inner courtyard, a servant, who did not know him, grabbed him by the arm and dragged him out with many insults and villainies. Glicerio, very cheerful, was asking him to excuse himself, when the cardinal appeared, who asked Glicerio why he was delaying? –I was entertaining myself a little –he replied– with this friend of mine”. Later, as he was leaving, that servant, who “remained half-dead” for having treated in that way a person so esteemed by his master, confused by Glicerio ‘s great humility, came to ask his pardon. “So great was the fervor and the desire he had –the biographer concludes– to be despised and mistreated by love of God”<sup>322</sup>. He was convinced of what has been said, that no one has ever renounced himself enough, until he could renounce no more.

Kissing the foot of a socially inferior person implies an act of exquisite Christian humility. A gesture closely linked to that is to wash the feet, as Jesus did with his disciples at the last supper.

St. Joseph Calasanz affirms: *“He showed promptness and joy when he was commanded to wash the feet of strangers and the same to those at home”*<sup>323</sup>. Venerable Fr. Dominic of Jesus Mary, his confessor, says of him: *“Because of his humility, he always wanted to wash the feet of others. Many times, after having received communion at Mass, he would thank the priest because he had given him his Lord, and he would kiss his feet”*<sup>324</sup>.

His very dear friend Francis Selvaggi, besides emphasizing that at home he always wanted to wash the dishes, sweep and do other humble services, and that at table he always wanted the last place, affirms that when he went to sleep –and in this he agrees with what Cosmas Contini says about him– Glicerio begged him to allow him to take off his sandals and to let him take off his stockings<sup>325</sup>. In the most diverse

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322 Pos. s.v., p. 521.

323 Pos. s.v., p. 506.

324 Pos. s.v., p. 504.

325 Pos. s.v., p. 507.

historical periods, the gesture of removing the footwear on returning from the journey was reserved for the slave or it was also an act of extreme veneration and respect for the guest. Immediately afterwards, a washing of the feet was offered, which, naturally, were dusty from the long walk along paths dug into the ground. In some Jewish texts, washing the feet of another, after having removed his sandals, is a gesture of absolute love. In the Gospel, Jesus says to Simon the Pharisee: "You have not given me water for my feet... you have not kissed me, nor poured perfumed oil on my head. But this woman washed my feet with her tears, and ever since I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet"<sup>326</sup>. To kiss the feet, as the woman did to Jesus, was a sign of veneration and humble recognition. And it was part of the duty of hospitality. This is what explains the reproach of Jesus to Simon. Blessed Peter Casani recalls the words of Princess Peretti, shortly after the death of Glycerius:

*"If for nothing else, the Abbot deserved to be canonized after his death, at least for what he has done to be held as a madman by all"*<sup>327</sup>.

It seemed that since it was still difficult to overcome his own pride, Glicerio resorted to desperate ways, such as letting himself be dragged with a rope around his neck by a poor man paid by him. The model was still Jesus led to Calvary with a rope around his neck, as Glicerio himself could contemplate, for example, in the painting by Lionello Spada, a contemporary painter. Once, having found him like this, Francis Selvaggi shouted at him and forced him to let go. And Glicerio: "God forgive you, brother, you have made me lose so much good! You must despise yourself for the love of God"<sup>328</sup>. Father Baldi, his novitiate companion, writes:

*"So our common enemy could not put into his fantasy the slightest cloud of vainglory, he applied to such contempt of himself, that he seemed to look nothing else so much, as to find ways and occasions to be mocked and thought mad"*<sup>329</sup>.

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326 Luke, 7, 36-50.

327 Pos. n.v., II, p. 507.

328 Pos. n.v., p. 522.

329 F. Baldi, o.c., p. 9.

Like Jesus, Glicerio emptied himself to the point of becoming a *faceless* servant. His only concern was to relativize the value of this life; to offer it for Christ and his Gospel; to walk with Christ on the way of the cross.

### *The total gift*

The identity card that Jesus offered to his disciples is this: "I have come not to be served, but to serve and to give my life for all". For Glicerio, Jesus' example became a project and a way of life. To learn from Christ, to participate in the fulfillment of his work, to the point of becoming the voice, hands and heart of Christ. This was the only thing he gloried in.

*"He always maintained his joviality and joy in the face of whatever happened to him, considering everything as God's disposition"<sup>330</sup>.  
"When he was insulted, he received the insult with joy, praised God immediately for it and prayed for those who insulted him, who were ashamed and admired him. He endured with joy his sicknesses and never complained, thanking the divine Majesty for it, from the beginning to the end of his life"<sup>331</sup>.*

The radical nature of his choice was concretized in his bare feet, in the coarse clothes he wore, in giving himself up to extreme poverty in order to witness to the love of Christ and the joy that pervaded him, because he felt forgiven by the infinite love of God.

*"Not considering that he came from such a noble family, he had a very low opinion of himself. At home he wanted to do the humblest chores, even in the sink of the kitchen"<sup>332</sup>.*

The Jesus that Paul presents to the Philippians is not the Christ of the Byzantine icons either, who stretches out his arms on the golden cross, showing the rich royal paraments and the precious golden crown on his head. It is the Jesus who, "although he was God, emptied himself, taking the condition of a slave". Glicerio, who has made the gift of himself to Christ, seeks to identify himself with Him in

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330 Pos. s.v., II, 522.

331 Fr. Dominic of Jesus Mary, in Pr. O.R., p. 609.

332 Nova Pos. pp. 129-135.

everything. He allows himself to be fully involved in the work of salvation. He becomes one with Him in the struggle against evil, ready to drink its bitter cup to the full.

### 13. THE FOLLY OF THE CROSS, TRUE WISDOM OF LIFE

#### *Glicerio dances before Jesus in the Sacrament*

The cross is the sign of a heroic offering, which has obtained salvation for humanity. Glicerio was in love with the crucified Christ. His love, which knew no measure, invented means and paradoxical forms. Going once in search of bread with Francis Selvaggi, entered St. Lawrence in Damaso, where the Forty Hours were celebrated with great solemnity. They paused to pray for half an hour. Then Glicerio, getting up, began to dance with fervor and great joy in the middle of the church. Selvaggi rebuked him, saying that it was madness. –Long live God! –replied Glycerius. And he quoted David: *“I will humble myself even more<sup>333</sup>. For if the prophet danced before the ark, so much more may I dance before the ark of which that one was the figure”<sup>334</sup>*. For Glicerio, who felt intensely the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, it was natural to express sublime moments and spiritual realities also with dance, in addition to music, song and prayer, in search of a total harmony of the whole person, in order to reach communion with God. Dance may seem to us today to be inconsistent with our way of acting and reacting. But, on the contrary, it is not strange that God can take possession of our whole heart and person, to the point of making us dance. St. Alphonsus rightly warns that dancing is *an act of joy, not of libido*.

*“What was gain to me, I have judged as garbage for Christ’s sake”*

Glicerio was so seduced by the love of Christ that all those things which the world esteems and which he himself had cherished first lost

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333 Samuel, 6, 16-22.

334 Father Juan Garcia affirms it: “And this I know, he says, because I have heard it said by Francis Selvaggi to others. Pos. s.v. II, p.279. In this regard, the Eastern and African peoples have always taught much. In the rites of the Orthodox Church one can see a beautiful dance around the baptismal font.

their value, to the point of seeming a loss to him. It is said that on the day of the beheading of St. John the Baptist, while Glicerio was waiting at the door of St. Sylvester in Campo Marzio begging alms, he was surrounded by some gentlemen who had known him in the past, who said to him:

–Is this the honor you have come to Rome to seek for your family? You slacker! Avaricious! You should be ashamed of yourself, you hypocrite! Glicerio listened and then, “with joy” –says Fr. Mussesti– he went to kiss their feet. They kicked him in the mouth and in the face. He got up “much happier and more joyful than before”.

One afternoon in October 1612, Glicerio called a beggar from the street and exchanged his own clothes for his rags. Then he also gave him his sandals and stockings, remaining barefoot.

*“The fervor of his charity,” states an eyewitness, “reached so far that once Glicerio was found almost naked in front of the door of St. Lawrence in Damaso, because he had exchanged his clothes with a poor man... He walked so slender and cheerful when he was wearing the poor man’s clothes that whoever saw him cried out that he was guilty of being sent to the galleys”<sup>335</sup>. “He gave to everyone, for the love of God, what he had from the income of his abbey... He went about begging to help families who were in great need. At night he took home one or two poor people at a time, served them supper, washed their feet and kissed them. Some of them he let sleep. He did this countless times”<sup>336</sup>. “Often, when he went to the bank to withdraw money from his receipts and took a hundred or two hundred escudos, he would start from the bank, and continue down the street, to tip to whoever asked him for alms. When he arrived home, the money had been almost completely distributed”<sup>337</sup>.*

Francis Selvaggi could have repeated to him as he had done on other occasions: “What madness is this?” Madness to follow the word of Jesus: “Go, come, give all that you have and give it to the poor?” or –as Glicerio writes– “is it madness to be so debased by the mire of the money –God knows how much– that it is enough to say clearly to this

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335 Fr. J. Garcia, in Nova Pos. s.v., II, p. 70.

336 Francis Selvaggi, in Pos. s.v., pp. 382-383.

337 Fr. J. Garcia, in Pos. s.v., p. 399.

stone: –You are my God?”<sup>338</sup> Madness, prodigality, or heroic charity and overabundance of gratuitousness and love?

### *The oddities of Glycerius*

How can we recognize as authentic value that which seems bizarre, strange, contrary to common sense and which provokes perplexity and even reactions of rejection? This is the question that is asked by anyone who wants to interpret Glicerio's gestures. It is not possible to understand such behaviors if they are not inserted in the forms proper to the culture of his time, and if we do not strive to discover the values that such gestures keep.

### *The 17<sup>th</sup> century and the search for new forms*

Renaissance classicism preferred order, restraint, stylistic regularity and composition as the dominant notes of its own style. For the 17<sup>th</sup> century, on the other hand, the decisive element was the ingenuity to find new forms with surprising effects. And we cannot think that this was a sign of superficiality. It was a style. And as such, valid in itself. The only thing is that it could have a good or bad interpreter. And this depended on the spiritual richness or emptiness, on the capacity to innovate authentically or to remain in the most superficial elements. In literature, for example, Marinism revealed more deficiencies than values, because it was difficult to recognize in it an expressive soul. In Bernini, on the other hand, the new original expressions, combined with a vibrant vitality, represent a great phase of history, in no way inferior to those of the Renaissance. Borromini himself, the most brilliant artist of the seventeenth century, seemed oblivious to any rule of proportional logic. The extravagances of San Ivo alla Sapienza in Rome raised the cry of scandal. And yet, critics have had to recognize in him a great artist, endowed with a miraculous stylistic coherence and rationality.

The baroque is a style and, therefore, reflects not only the taste, but the thought of an entire epoch, and its literary and artistic aspects, as well as those of everyday life. A vision of the world. Also the forms of religi-

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338 Letter of Glicerio to Cardinal Frederick, November 6, 1611.

ty, which are based on the Tridentine dogma of free will, are an integral part of it. The tendency to grandiosity, to spectacle, to the exaltation of fantasy, all characteristic of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, can hide a poor reality, empty of spirit, or, on the contrary, exalt the sincere rapture of faith. It is necessary to filter, without putting everything in the same bag. And this is an important element for a valuable judgment on Glicerio's behavior.

What values should be attributed to Glicerio's *exaggerated* gestures? Certainly the sincerity of faith and the genuineness of his purpose. The "devil's advocate" in the Process objected that many of Glicerio's gestures could not be presented today as models for the faithful. He was promptly answered: Could St. Simon Stylite perhaps be presented today as a model to imitate? Would it then be necessary to erase from the album all the ancient saints, not imitable today under some aspects? Or, perhaps, the saints would have had to think about what they could be imitated later, after three or four centuries? Man by his nature is called to measure everything under the human dimension. But in the saints there is always something that goes beyond the simple human measure. The world considers eccentric everything that is not normal according to its mentality, just as Jesus himself appeared strange to his relatives: "He is mad!". Just as St. Francis was an eccentric for his time, so for some he was a heretic, because, living as a mendicant and strictly following the Gospel, he offered a vision of Christian life that was *strange to the norm*.

With the gesture of a mendicant, Glicerio struck a blow at his whole past, dismantling piece by piece the image he had formed of himself, even though he had spent time and fatigue building it up. To the insults he responded with the joy of one who sees, under the old things, how the new ones are germinating, and perceives the perfume of rebirth. Glicerio knew that Jesus is a demanding friend, who proposes high goals and asks to go out of oneself to meet him: "Whoever loses his life for my sake will save it". When Glicerio saw that his companion was ashamed of him, to encourage him he said to him: "*My brother, rather than being ashamed, we should be afraid that the spirit of pride will overcome us; because he who knows us, knows Who we do it for*"<sup>339</sup>. With these words

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339 P. Mussesti, in Pos. s.v., p. 527.

Glicerio offers us the key to discover the value of his exaggerated gestures. They were an effective means, so that, as he himself affirmed, pride and vainglory would not overcome him. It was a bit like the wisdom of ancient Rome, which allowed soldiers to insult their own generals during their triumph; or even of Christian Rome, which prescribed that the clergy remind the newly elected pontiff, before a burning piece of cloth: *Sic transit gloria mundi, thus passes the glory of the world.*

Often insulted by the servants of the Roman courts, where he went to beg for alms, Glicerio would say to his companion: "They are right to say that". Then on his knees he would ask for forgiveness by kissing their feet. All those who in the canonical processes refer to acts of humility and penance "humanly exaggerated", refer to them not only as acts of profound humility, but also as acts carried out by Glicerio to protect his own spiritual life against everything that could lead him to weaken his original impulse in the divine service. They were true "provocations to the provocations" of the world –to enjoy, to possess, to dominate– challenges, determination to go against the current. Conversion cannot be changing things in such a way that nothing changes. Was Glicerio *mad* because he danced in church, because he was led through the streets of Rome with a cord around his neck, or was seen with a crown of thorns on his head, or because he shouted "Penance! But it was precisely this madness that allowed him to live, that guarded and defended the gift of God from internal and external enemies. The light of grace is, yes, an occasion to be welcomed, but it is also a continuous conquest, never a definitive goal. The soul is in eternal conflict with evil. St. Paul spoke of the cross as a scandal for the Greeks, folly for the pagans, even a stumbling block for religious men, who are unable to understand the invitation of God, who dies as if abandoned, as if cursed by God himself. Could a man who is naked, bowed down, unable to save himself, be the principle of universal salvation? In God's plan, presences like that of Glicerio, whose fullness is born not of accumulation but of detachment, are of great value in comparison with so many realities that we have before our eyes today: the continuous exaltation of strength and victory, the restless search for wealth, success and applause.

The friendship with St. Joseph Calasanz in the Pious Schools will mark a new phase for Glicerio, which will be expressed with the same authenticity, but with more mature and calm forms.

*“Those who know us know well why we do it”*

Glicerio, while trying to excuse himself with his companion, who was ashamed of certain forms of behavior, added: *“Because whoever knows us, knows Who we do it for”*. And in fact, the people of that century no longer marveled so much. They accepted the gestures of *original and eccentric people*, as long as they were *sincere*, as they loved the chromatic and luminous contrasts of their artists.

One day, on the feast of St. Peter in Vincoli, St. Philip Neri began to dance in the square in front of a large crowd. Whistles were also heard. Another time he left the house jumping, only half shaved. Once he received at home great personages, with a pair of white shoes, a small cap on his head and a red shirt over his doublet. And he had joke books read to him. Similar things he ordered his penitents to do, including Cardinal Cesar Baronio. And yet, the people were close to him, and Pope Gregory XIV tried several times to impose on him the cardinal's hat. When the election of Clement VIII, according to historians, it seemed that Philip himself was going to ascend to the papal throne. St. Charles and Frederick Borromeo, Hieronymus della Rovere, Archbishop of Turin, and so many other eminent men, chose him as their spiritual director, and found, as Alexander de Medici said of himself, their *paradise* in Philip's cell.

Glicerio, despite his oddities, was also held in high esteem by Pope Paul V and by many cardinals. One day he was invited to the palace of Cardinal Hannibal Ginnasio<sup>340</sup>. The Cardinal Vicar of His Holiness, Cardinal John Garzia Mellizo, “being ill, sent for Father Abbot,” who made continuous prayers for him. The Cardinal was cured and wanted to personally thank the Abbot. “And this I know, says Fr. John Garcia, because I have been his companion”<sup>341</sup>. And these were neither rare nor unique cases. Just as in the art of this century there were, with respect to the previous century, curved lines instead of horizontal ones, domes and facades built with new chords and scenographic effect, but the severe column and the classical eurythmy re-

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340 P. Mussesti, o.c., AGSP, Rg. Serv. 39, p. 24.

341 Pos.s.v., p. 673.

mained, so in Glicerio, as Thomas Campanella would say, “the more the fire was blown, the more it burned in perhaps excessive forms... by the immense desire for eternal things”, but his soul always remained evangelical.

*An unspoken lesson to the princes of the Church*

St. Charles Borromeo had declared that the Reformation had to begin by himself. And so he did. Prayer and penance, extreme poverty and service to all. He erased the symbols of nobility from the coat of arms and left only the word *Humilitas*. If the word illuminates, the example drags. Glicerio often found himself face to face with princes and cardinals in churches and palaces, and saw them in a dilemma in front of him, once a relative and now humble and poor for the love of Christ. Once in the church Glicerio, having exchanged his garment for the rags of a poor man, approached a group of cardinals to beg alms. They invited him to sit among them. At Mondragone, the villa of Cardinal Borghese, Glicerio went there when some cardinals were preparing to hunt. Cardinal Borghese took off a glove, and each one threw something into it. From it came the fabulous sum of forty escudos. Glicerio’s reply, because it was tacit, was stronger, like the contrast between the purple of the cardinals and the patches of his dress. An example that burned like a burning ember. In Glicerio, the princes of the Church were projecting, in a certain sense, models called for by their ideals and the unconscious desire to see them realized, even if outside of them. It was not necessary to remind them of the words of Jesus: “Those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles, tyrannize them as absolute rulers... But it must not be so among you, but whoever wishes to be first shall be slave of all”<sup>342</sup>.

*“Brother, why do you do such follies?”*

St. Alphonsus speaks of Blessed Jacopone, who from a man of letters had become a Franciscan friar. It seemed, he says, that he had gone mad because of the love he showed for Jesus Christ. One day Jesus appeared to him and said: “Jacopone, why do you do these crazy

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342 Mark, 10, 42-44.

things? –Why do I do it?–. He answered. –Because you have taught me. If I am mad, you have been madder than I am, because you wanted to die for me.

Glicerio could also have answered:

- If I am mad, who spend all my energies for others, much more are you mad, Lord, who gave your life for me: “Greater love has no one than this, that to lay down his life for his friends”<sup>343</sup>.
- If I, a sinner, am mad, who patiently endure great adversities, how much more are you mad, Lord, who, innocent, have suffered adversities that you could perfectly well have avoided.
- If I am mad, Lord, who have preferred extreme poverty to the comforts and pleasures of life, how much more so are You, Lord, who, “in exchange for the joy that was proposed to you, endured the cross without fear of ignominy”<sup>344</sup>.
- If I am mad, Lord, because, heir of a noble and rich family, I have preferred to be despised and insulted, to lead an obscure and penitent life, how are you, King of kings, Lord of lords, “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”<sup>345</sup>, naked on the cross, spat upon, beaten, crowned with thorns, quenching your thirst with gall and vinegar?
- Why do they call me mad when I exchange my garments and my new sandals for the smelly rags of your poor, while I hear, Lord, that you say: –They have divided my garments among them?
- Am I mad, because I have renounced the purple of the Borromeo? And you, Lord, to whom they plaited a crown of thorns as a royal diadem, and put it on your head; and as a scepter they put a reed in your hand and, bending the knee, in recognition of the divine dignity, they spat on you?

You are my only inheritance, O Lord.

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343 John, 15:13.

344 Hebrews, 12:2.

345 Colossians, 2:3.

#### 14. SPECIAL CHARISMS OF THE SPIRIT: PROPHECIES AND HEALINGS.

They are signs of the perennial action of the Spirit in the world. They are also precious historical material that helps us to enter into living contact with the person and to complete in us his image.

##### *Prophecy*

There are particular charisms in the Church, channeled at the service of the entire community: "In some saints the Spirit works miracles, in others he proclaims the truth, in some saints this, in others that. It is a conviction of many witnesses in the process of beatification that the Lord intended to reward Glicerio with the gift of prophecy for his heroic virtues, and they are very worthy of faith:

- The Venerable Dominic of the Scale says: "*By his distinguished virtues he had obtained from God the gift of prophecy*"<sup>346</sup>.
- Doctor Cosmas Contini, his companion on the pilgrimage to Loreto: "*By his distinguished purity he had obtained from God the gift of prophecy. He predicted to many who were seriously ill that they would soon recover their health, and also to me*"<sup>347</sup>.
- St. Joseph Calasanz: "*He obtained from God by his great virtues the gift of prophecy, as, especially, the concession that the Pope would make of the supreme poverty to our congregation*"<sup>348</sup>. And he adds: "*He predicted not only the certainty but also the brevity of his life*".

Among the prophecies of Glicerio, some of the best documented:

- A Spanish priest, Julius Jimenez, a religious of the Order of Mercy, often went to Saint Hadrian to help Glicerio in Sunday catechesis. Seeing how much diligently and patiently he was confessing the young boys, Glicerio said and repeated several

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346 Pr. O.R., fol. 8.

347 Pr. O.R., fol. 24.

348 Pr. Somm. p. 649.

times that God would exalt his humility. And soon after, Father Julius was named bishop of Agrigento in Sicily<sup>349</sup>.

- Dr. John Peter Cananea, a native of Montalvo in Calabria, had gone to Rome to obtain the archdeaconate in his city. Through the mediation of Dr. Cosmas Contini he met Glicerio, who without hesitation told him: "Soon you will be one of us". Peter laughed, for he had never thought about it. Then they met again in San Pietro. Glicerio, embracing him, confirmed that he would wear the Piarist habit, and he did so, precisely on November 30, 1617! His name was Fr. John Peter of Our Lady of the Angels, and he was superior of the Pious Schools of Frascati<sup>350</sup>.
- Father John Garcia had his parents in Spain. They were poor and needy. He turned to Glicerio for help. Glicerio tried to find him an ecclesiastical benefice. Failing to do so, he told Father Garcia: "God will provide for his parents. And so he repeated every time Father Garcia reminded him. One day they went together to St. Cecilia in Trastevere. After they had prayed, Glicerio said to Father Garcia: "God has provided, and you no longer have to worry. The Father did not understand then, but later a letter arrived from Spain, in which they gave him the news of the death of his parents, which had happened precisely when Glicerio had told him at St. Cecilia<sup>351</sup>.

### *Healings*

The marvelous works performed by the saints are a sign of the presence of God in our midst, and we accept them as expressions of the love of God, the merciful Father, who desires the fullness of good for his children. They presuppose the faith of the one who performs them and of the one who receives the divine favor. We relate some facts, according to the position made in the processes of beatification.

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349 F. Baldi, o.c., p. 48. - A. Armini, o.c., p. 160.

350 C. Cintini, Pr. O.R., p. 646; F. Baldi, o.c., p. 48; A. Armini, o.c., p. 162.

351 F. Baldi, o.c., p. 48; A. Armini, o.c., p. 157.

## St. Joseph Calasanz:

*“While we were carrying out the ministry of the school together, I ordered Father Abbot to visit and bless the little girl of a citizen named John Baptist Sciadone, our procurator. The child had been bedridden for almost two years with a serious illness. Father Abbot went there, said a little prayer, gave her a blessing and returned home. The same day the child got out of bed, and from then until now she has always been well, as her father will be able to tell in more detail, who is the one who told it to me.” “Another lady, also from Frascati, abandoned by her husband for a long and repugnant illness of three or four years, finding herself very afflicted and in need, wished to speak to Father Abbot because of the great veneration she had for him, being considered in Frascati by all as a saint. Not knowing what to do, the mother said to her one day: “That holy man is coming, and he is going to pass in front of our door. The sick woman got up as best she could, went out of the house and, following Father Abbot, like the woman in the Gospel, touched his cloak from behind and kissed it. She returned home with so much joy that she suddenly felt much better, and soon she was completely healed, without using any other medicine”. Calasanz concludes: “Many other things similar to these he did in Frascati, and so many people were asking him to visit their sick, that it was convenient to send him back to Rome, so that he would not be impeded in the exercise of the schools”<sup>352</sup>.*

St. Joseph Calasanz also narrates the following fact:

*“To Rome came, after the vespers of a feast day, Father Abbot and the shoemaker, Mr. Santi, worker of Christian doctrine of St. Hadrian. They asked me for permission to stay for a while in the oratory praying alone without being disturbed. On the way, Mr. Santi had entrusted himself to Father Abbot, showing him an injured arm, because of which he could not sew nor raise his hand. Having entered the oratory and closed the door from the inside, the Abbot knelt down, holding Santi’s sick hand with his hand. After an hour of prayer, he got up and told him to go home happy. But even before leaving, Santi felt so well that he took the cap off his head with his sick arm, which he had not been able to do for*

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352 Pr. O.R., n. XXIII, pp. 650-652. Calasanz wrote to Glicerio himself from Frascati to Rome on November 23, 1616: “Here not only the students, but also those of the city frequently ask for your return, which everyone wishes to be as soon as possible”. Original in AGSP, Reg. Cal., n.1.

*a long time. After that, he carried on his work as before". Also this time Calasanz concludes: "Many similar things are heard publicly, graces requested from God for the devotion they had for Father Abbot".*

### ***Blessed Pedro Casani***

He relates what Glicerio himself confided to him:

*"During the pilgrimage to Loreto he had walked for many days bare-foot without the slightest pain in his feet; moreover, it seemed to him that he did not touch the stones, as if he were carried through the air. Once, entering a hospital, where there were many sick people, those who touched him got out of bed healthy". And he adds: "I heard from the archpriest of Campagnano that, while the Abbot was at table with him, the servant told him that his brother's horse, because of excessive fatigue, was lying dead in the stable. It seemed to the Abbot that he was partly to blame<sup>353</sup>. He got up at once from the table, went into a nearby room and, locking himself inside, stayed there a little while; then, having gone out and seated himself at the table, he said, -The horse is healthy and strong, and eats cheerfully. The servant confirmed that what Glicerio had said was true". Blessed Casani continues: "The archpriest himself told me that, going one evening to Formello towards evening, to administer the anointing to a dying woman, the abbot wanted to go with him. The archpriest, having finished his mission, certain that the woman would die that very night, told those at home to take the body to where he was to bury it the next morning. The abbot wanted to stay a little while with the sick woman; he prayed, and then left. The next morning the lady went to Campagnano healthy, leaving the archpriest amazed when he saw her".*

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353 The reason for this guilt can be deduced from the detail narrated by Fr. Armini, o.c., p. 176: "In those days, Glicerio entertained himself at Formello. Dr. Contini was with him. They were waiting for Father Peter (Casani), rector of the Pious Schools, from Rome. Contini wanted to meet him at the inn of Storta, about four miles from Formello. He asked to borrow the horse of Mr. Basilio Lucarelli, brother of the archpriest. Basilio replied that the horse was badly saddled, badly shod and without hooves. In spite of everything, he added, if it is only four miles, then take it. But Contini, not finding Father Pedro at the inn, continued on to Rome. He returned home late and left the horse in the stable. While they were all at supper, Basilio's servant came in panting to say that the horse was lying there as if dead". At this point Glicerio intervened, as stated above.

### ***Brother Alfonso Rainerio***

A religious of the Order of the Holy Spirit, he is the 27<sup>th</sup> witness in the ordinary Roman process. He declares:

*“When I was seriously ill in February 1616, my sister forced me to stay in Montecavallo because the air was better. The doctor forbade me to get up. One morning, however, I went down to the Capuchins with fever on my body. I met Father Abbot who, with a cheerful face, asked me how I was. –I want you to come to the seven churches with the Christian Doctrine,” he said. And I said to him:*

*–How do you want me to go if I can hardly stand up? –He answered, “Don’t hesitate, have faith in the Lord. He will have floats in case you get tired. And don’t worry, you won’t die. Come tomorrow morning to San Pedro, we’ll meet there. I promised him. My brother did not want to, thinking it was a mockery of Glicerio. In the end he said to me:*

*–Do what you want, and may the Lord inspire you. In the morning I got up without fever. At St. Peter’s I met Father Abbot, who was leading the students of the Pious Schools in rows. He embraced me and I felt my strength increase. We walked joyfully through the seven churches, without ever feeling fatigued. I returned home without fatigue, and it seemed to me that I had walked nothing, being cured by the grace of the Lord”<sup>354</sup>.*

### ***Mr. John Cavazzoni***

He was a witness in the ordinary Roman process, and recounts:

*“Once I fell ill with such a strange fever that the doctor Bernardino Messorio left me hopeless. I sent for Father Abbot, who came at once. He put his hand on my head, said a few prayers and made the sign of the cross on my forehead. I felt at once that the sickness ceased. In the morning, when the doctor came to visit me, he found me without fever. Having spoken to him about the Abbot, he answered me: “The Abbot is another type of doctor than I am”<sup>355</sup>.*

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354 Pos. s.v., pp. 654-655.

355 Pos. s.v., p. 662.

### ***Father John Garcia***

He refers:

*“Mr. Cosmas Contini became seriously ill with continuous fever and was urinating blood. He received viaticum because he was thinking of dying, and he sent for Father Abbot, who was a close friend of his. I also went with him and we found him in bed quite seriously ill. Father Glicerio sprinkled him and ordered him to make an act of contrition. Then, having said a prayer, he touched his head and he got better immediately”. “Once in Frascati, Father Joseph heard a peasant lamenting. A donkey, which was his entire wealth, had died. He immediately told Father Abbot: “Go,” he ordered him, “make the sign of the cross over the animal. Glicerio went, blessed the animal and immediately recovered its life”<sup>356</sup>.*

In this last case, besides not knowing to whom to attribute the prodigious event, it is not a question of the healing of a person. But does it matter? Even the resurrection of an animal is a sign of God's goodness toward his creatures.

### ***Dr. Cosmas Contini***

He states:

*“When we left the house of the sick, I always asked Glicerio what he thought of the sick person. If he said: –This one will not have any disease, or –It will be nothing, almost all of them were cured. If he said, “I have recommended him,” and did not add anything more, all of them died”<sup>357</sup>.*

But also for these, the word of Glicerio was a message of confidence, which transmitted to the sick person the conviction of the tangible divine presence and the certainty of not being abandoned to his own destiny of pain.

In the processes we read about a clamorous case, told by all the biographers of Glicerio and remembered also by St. Joseph Calasanz and by the Venerable Fr. Dominic of Jesus Mary. It refers to a certain

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356 Pr. O.R., p. 666. Cf. Mistrangelo, o.c., p. 208.

357 Pr. O.R., p. 647.

lady, her name Armenian. It was the month of May 1615. A certain Francis was in prison for having killed Peter Nardo, son of Armenia. Many tried to obtain Armenia's pardon. Every attempt proved futile. The father of the assassin thought to turn to Mr. Contini, who immediately informed Calasanz. With Father Glicerio, Calasanz also sent Father Paulino, of the Lucchesi, and also Cosmas Contini. They found Armenia on the Tiber Island. They all went together into the church of St. Bartholomew. Glicerio prayed before the Blessed Sacrament. Then with kind words he urged the lady to grant pardon to the prisoner. The lady replied that she was addressing the judge, and that she would never make peace. Glicerio insisted that she should not make the blood of Jesus useless for our salvation. Finally, seeing her obstinate, he said to her, "Madam, you will soon fall ill and soon die. And if you do not make peace, you will go to hell. Two or three days later it was known that Armenia was ill. In the afternoon Glicerio himself with his companions went to her house. They found her in a serious condition. Glicerio said to her, "See, the Lord has come to visit you. Will you, for His sake, give peace and forgive? Then she said, "It is too soon. And Glicerio added: -Madam, do you want the Lord to forgive your sins? To which she replied: -Yes, Father. Glicerio knelt down, instructing us to do the same. Then he exhorted the lady to kneel down and repeat: "My Lord, Jesus Christ, I beg you to forgive my sins, as I forgive for your sake". The next morning, Glicerio also took her to the doctor, who did not conceal the seriousness of her illness. The confessor was called. The lady offered her peace in writing, and John Mary Scalo, notary of the Savella court, attended the ceremony, dated May 10, 1615. Glicerio later returned to visit her. Three or four days later she died with good feelings, thanks to Father Glicerio<sup>358</sup>.

### *Father Francis Baldi*

He narrates that the Abbot once went to visit a poor sick woman, a worker of Christian doctrine at St. Mary in Via. He had been invited some day before, and had prayed for her. He went with Fr. Garcia, to whom he said on the way: "God wants that lady in paradise. Having

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358 A. Armini, o.c., p. 169 ff.

arrived at the sick woman's house, he prayed again and exhorted her to conform to God's will. Going down the stairs, he said to Fr. Garcia: "This lady is a good servant of the Lord, and He wants her close to Himself. The next day Fr. Garcia met the sick woman's mother. She told him that, as soon as they left the house, her little daughter had told her that she had seen a great splendor around the Abbot's face, and on looking at him she had felt an extraordinary inner joy. She died a few days later. To Fr. Garcia, who gave the news, Glicerio said: "In paradise there has been a great feast for the entrance of this soul"<sup>359</sup>.

Many of the facts referred to, and even others, Calasanz gathered from the mouths of the fortunate ones who had been witnesses, and who had signed them under oath. For this reason, the saint did not hesitate to ask the pontiff Paul V to introduce the cause of beatification of the servant of God.

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359 359 F. Baldi, o.c., p. 47.

## AFTER DEATH

### 15. IMPORTANT FACTS

St. Joseph Calasanz had welcomed the young Glicerio Landriani as an absolutely free gift from heaven. His hopes were immense. He saw them suddenly extinguished in that “closed carriage” that he sent to carry, still at night, the lifeless body of Glicerio from the novitiate to San Pantaleon. But Father Joseph had learned the radical nature of the Gospel and the hope that in the end all things are made right in God. He was able to verify with joy, like the psalmist, through remarkable events, that God does not abandon the just in the tomb:

#### *Testimonies of popular faith during the funeral*

On the morning of February 15, 1618, the body of Glicerio was exposed in the oratory of San Pantaleo, the same of the Continuous Prayer and of the long vigils, before the picture of the Blessed Virgin and blessing Child.

*“Although in life he was pale and exhausted by excessive mortifications, he became white and graceful as in the years of his most florid age. His limbs remained supple and docile as those of a living man. A fragrance of roses and violets spread throughout the chapel”<sup>360</sup>.*

*“Even if no warning was given, there was such a crowd of people going to see him that neither the priests nor the guard of the Cardinal Vicar could keep them away”<sup>361</sup>.*

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360 Fr. J. Jericho, o.c., p. 47; F. Baldi, o.c., p. 59; Fr. Benedict, o.c., p. 100: “As in life he was a good odor of Christ, so in death he diffused a wonderful odor to the astonishment of all”. Father Peter Casani speaks of “a sweet smell of lilies and violets, such as I did not deserve to smell, and which seemed impossible to all the others”.

361 Mussesti, o.c., p. 59.

A tide of people who wanted to pay homage to the extraordinary figure of the young saint, who in the Pious Schools had begun a tenacious work of *human reconstruction*, for which he had expended all the energy of his genial and indefatigable charity. A multitude of poor people were close to him, who had been for them almost the symbol of hope. Dr. Contini states in the proceedings:

*“I found myself very early in the morning in the oratory of the Pious Schools, without being called, and I do not know how I arrived, of so many as could not approach because of the multitude of the people, and being close to the body of the Abbot, they asked me to touch him with rosaries and little crosses that they held out to me, and that I placed on the hands of Father Abbot. Many of them cut off pieces of his dress with scissors, others cut off his hair and shoelaces. Three times they took off his biretta. A confessor at St. Lawrence asked me to tell him where the Father’s hatmaker was. He went to buy a new biretta, like the Abbot’s, put it on his head and, touching it, the biretta that the Abbot wore fell to the ground and, picking it up with skill, he replaced it. And I saw it”<sup>362</sup>.*

And here is the sworn testimony of the same hatmaker, Lucas Antonio Vespino:

*“I agreed to work all night... I went to Father Joseph, Superior General, and begged him to deign to give me the cap that the deceased Glicerio had on his head. The Father General having refused me, I went myself in the morning at dawn and took it, putting on a new one made by me”<sup>363</sup>.*

St. Joseph of Calasanz testifies that Glycerius:

*“After his death, having been in the oratory for two days, he was taken around one o’clock at night –about 19:00 p.m. hours– to the church of San Pantaleo, where the concourse of ordinary people, who had not been able to enter the oratory, was so great that it was necessary to call the guards of the cardinal vicar, who were not even enough etiam –even– with drawn swords”.*

Father Baldi writes:

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362 A. Armini, o.c., p. 150.

363 Pos. s.v., *De concursu ad funus*, pp. 387-388.

*“It was not possible to resist the people who acclaimed him loudly as a saint, and asked for favors, health and protection. However, at an opportune moment, having forced the people to leave, the doctors decided to proceed with the autopsy, in the presence of some Fathers and friends. Father Joseph asked for the heart of his beloved disciple, put it in a crystal urn and guarded it jealously in his room. “At a certain hour of the night, the doors being forcibly closed in the presence of Mgr. Visconti and Mgr. Archinti, fellow countrymen of Glicerio, some prelates and the entire community, the sacred corpse was placed in the coffin and, at the request of the secretary of the Cardinal Vicar, it was closed and placed in the tomb of the church of San Pantaleo”<sup>364</sup>.*

### *Vision of the virgins of Cantiano*

As soon as he died, Glicerio was seen in the monastery of Cantiano by some nuns “of great perfection and holiness” going up to heaven, between St. Philip Neri and the venerable Franciscan Bartholomew Salutio, of the Reformed Minors<sup>365</sup>. Although they had never seen him, the pious women gave a perfect account of him. All the older contemporary biographers of Glicerio, Baldi, Armini, Musses-ti...speak about this.

Father Pedro Casani recounts in the process of beatification:

*“The Most Rev. Don Francesco Najolo, at present archpriest of Cantiano, state of Urbino, showed me letters from his predecessor, a learned man, spiritual and practical in the direction of souls, in which he informed him that some of his penitents, virgins of great perfection and holiness, had seen our Father Abbot glorious in the midst of St. Philip Neri and Fr. Salutino and that they had spoken to him. And they described the effigy of his face without ever having seen him in life, nor any portrait of him”<sup>366</sup>.*

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364 Pos. s.v., p. 789.

365 A relic found among Glicerio’s dearest things is interesting: a vase, and inside it some pieces tarnished in the blood of Father Bartholomew Salutio, a close friend of Glicerio, who died with fame of sanctity at St. Francis in Ripa, Rome 1615. Certainly Glicerio owed to him the knowledge of the Monteluco wilderness. Through Friar Bartholomew, the nuns of Cantiano came to know the holiness of Glicerio.

366 Pos. s.v., p. 747.

*Our Lady of Monti, with Glicerio, appears to St. Joseph Calasanz  
The sanctuary and his pious pilgrimage*

St. Joseph Calasanz from the beginning of his stay in Rome used to visit the church of the Madonna dei Monti<sup>367</sup>. In the Middle Ages it was a convent of Poor Clares. On its ruins a rural building was erected with a fodder deposit for the animals. In 1579 a fresco depicting the Madonna and Child and some saints was found intact in the hayloft.

On April 26, 1580, a fifty-year-old blind woman, praying before the sacred image, was completely cured. It was the first of many prodigies. That place soon became a fervent center of popular worship of Our Lady. Pope Gregory XIII decided to build a sanctuary there, and entrusted its construction to the famous architect James della Porta. When Calasanz arrived in Rome in 1592, this had already been the main place of worship of the Our Lady in Rome for ten years. In 1623 the Vatican Capitol granted the painting of the Madonna dei Monti the golden crown, reserved for the most important images of the Blessed Virgin. Calasanz made it the favorite destination of his little pilgrimages: every Saturday, and time to time, the celebration of the mass. After the Pious Schools were up and running, he no longer had so much time on his hands. He went there from time to time, and was content to venerate her in his own little cell, where he kept a humble reproduction, which has remained in the same place to this day.

A witness in the process of beatification of Calasanz affirms that he conceived the thought of founding the school for poor children precisely in one of the visits to the Madonna dei Monti<sup>368</sup>. And the

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367 The name comes from the place it occupies, at the confluence of three of the seven hills on which Rome was founded: Esquiline, Quirinal and Capitoline.

368 The Piarist Fathers wanted to remember the event by placing in the sanctuary a marble slab, which reads: "O glorious son of Catholic Spain, Joseph of Calasanz, you who, visiting frequently since 1592 this miraculous image of the Mother of God were inspired to dedicate your whole life to the education of poor youth; you who before dying, in August 1648 received her apparition with the promise that the Pious Schools would be reborn, pray to the Madonna dei Monti, your heavenly protectress, for us, your children, who on the IV centenary of this shrine consecrate ourselves to you, our Mother and Queen. Rome, March 25, 1981.

Madonna dei Monti, who appeared to St. Joseph of Calasanz on his deathbed, assured him that the Pious Schools would not disappear, because they were “Her work”.

### *The apparition*

Father Juan Carlos Caputi, contemporary and biographer of Calasanz, narrates in his manuscript the declarations of Father Joseph to various religious and to himself about the apparition of the Madonna dei Monti:

*“He told us how last night the Madonna dei Monti, who had always been his advocate, had appeared to him and had promised to help his little children.” And he adds another particular: “All my religious have come to visit me”.*

Father Caputi then relates, almost verbatim, what Father Vincent Berro wrote in chapter 22 of his *“Life of the holy founder of the Pious Schools”*<sup>369</sup>.

*“Being in Father Joseph’s cell, he, that is, Father Berro, with Father Castelli and Father Constantine Palamolla<sup>370</sup>, Father Joseph told that all the Piarists who had died up to that time, precisely 254 religious, had come to visit him. Some were standing, others were seated. Father Joseph asked Fr. Constantine what could be the reason for such a difference. The Barnabite asked, in turn, which group Father Glicerio was in. The saint answered: –With those seated. From this they deduced, therefore, that those seated were already in glory, the others in purgatory. Father Joseph added that only one was missing. Father Berro says that he asked him afterwards who the missing religious was, but that Calasanz did not want to answer, excusing himself that it was not the time for such things”<sup>371</sup>.*

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369 The original manuscript of the Life written by Berro has not come down to us, but only a transcription made by Father Juan Carlos Caputi himself in *Notizie storiche*, P. IX, f. 22 - Reg. Hist. Bibl., n. 6 (12).

370 Father Constantine was a Barnabite religious, confessor of Calasanz. Being a confessor of St. Charles ai Catinari (Rome), he brought the cincture of St. Charles to the saintly founder during his last illness.

371 J. C. Caputi, *Fragments of Historical News*, p. 69, Reg. Cal. 82.

Glicerio, seated at the right hand of the Queen of the Pious Schools, with the whole multitude of the blessed Brothers, went out to meet his beloved Father, as if to invite him to the great feast prepared for him in heaven.

## 16. GRACES RECEIVED THROUGH GLICERIO'S INTERCESSION

### *The heart of Glycerius*

Jesus accompanied his word with numerous miracles, wonders and signs, which showed that the Kingdom of God was present in him. He also gave his disciples power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases. At the Last Supper he promised to those who believed in him that they would do the same works, indeed, he swore that they would “do greater works”.

In the Pious Schools, while Glicerio lived, Calasanz sent him to visit the sick. Glicerio would say a little prayer –this is how Calasanz expresses himself– he would bless them, and the sick would be cured. Now that the Lord had taken him to heaven, Father Joseph would go himself, but he would take him to the sick.

He carried with him the urn with the heart of his beloved disciple. And the miraculous episodes were repeated. The first is described by all the biographers of that time. We will hear it from the protagonist himself, none other than the secretary of Calasanz, Father Vincent Berro.

### *Ancient testimonies*

#### *Father Vicente Berro*

*“In the year 1628, on the eve of All Saints’ Day, I, a witness, fell ill with a high fever. From what I later heard our Fathers say, the doctors thought I was bad, because besides the fever I did not retain food and I had shrunk so much that I was not fit to be seen. One day the Most Reverend Father Joseph, my General, came to visit me and brought me the heart of Father Abbot, saying to me: “Father Vincent, rejoice! I have brought you the heart of Glycerius. He asked me if I had met him. I told him no, and he added: –He*

*has been a good religious. I will leave it with you, commending you to him, and I hope that the Lord will give you grace through the intercession and merits of his servant. When I heard this, I took the heart with great devotion and put it on myself, telling Father General that, although I had not known him, nevertheless, being well informed of his life, I hoped that the Lord would give me the grace of health through his intercession. With great devotion I commended myself to him, and not two hours later, the fever was gone, the vomiting ceased and I was healthy and free*<sup>372</sup>.

### *Joseph Filippini*

Canon of the cathedral of Frascati, after having narrated under oath the cure of a “painful inflammation on the left side of the face”, as a consequence of a fervent prayer before the image of the servant of God, he concluded that he heard the elderly religious say that the founder, Father Joseph Calasanz, had obtained graces, bringing to the sick *the heart of Glicerio*, a relic that they said had been stolen from them<sup>373</sup>.

Some years after the death of Glicerio, in fact, God allowed serious trials and sufferings for the Pious Schools and for the Founder, St. Joseph Calasanz. The envy and resentment of the enemies reached absurd things. It was also cruel to the most intimate and delicate feelings of the old saint. And they took away Glicerio ‘s heart. From that moment on, all memory of the distinguished relic was lost. It was found only on September 22, 1885, when the Piarist Fathers had just taken up the cause for the beatification of Glicerio<sup>374</sup>. Among the favors that followed such an event, we relate the one that seems to us to be the most singular and interesting:

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372 V. Berro, 21 witness in Pr. O.R.: Pr. Somm. p. 851. Cf. F. Baldi, o.c., p. 61.

373 Pr. inf. pp. 858-859.

374 The prelate in charge of the review of the process, Cardinal Augustine Caprara, found in his hands, we can say by chance, a letter indicating the place where Glicerio’s heart was kept. The cardinal, in possession of the memorial, immediately went to San Pantaleon to the saint’s cell. In the cabinets that preserved the objects used by Calasanz he found a box that was believed to be empty, and in it he found an octagonal brass box, described in the document, and which contained the crystal urn in the shape of a chalice, closed with a seal, with the heart of Glycerius.

*Healing of Sister Clara Siniscalchi of the Mother of God,  
superior of the Calasanzian Third Order*

*“From the year 1882-83 I began to suffer from internal ailments, which I kept hidden until the year 1892-93, when I was reduced to the extreme of not being able to stand, with very high fevers. The tumors, which until then were not visible, were now visible even from the outside because of their increase. They were declared fibroids by Dr. Petacci, the doctor who took care of me. In November 1894 the doctor advised me to undergo an operation, declaring that there would not be time if I delayed it for a month. I did not want to do with it. In the meantime, the disease increased from day to day, so much so that, as some tumors manifested themselves also in the stomach, and increased in thickness, they prevented me from even eating liquids. To this illness was added the so-called Bajedow’s disease. I was obliged to remain always in bed, without freedom of movement as I wished. Dr. Petacci said that there was no more time to operate. On March 25, 1895, I was in such an aggravated condition that the doctor informed the sisters of my condition. The sisters realized that I could not live more than two hours. The priest, Father Rolletta<sup>375</sup>, was called, and my bed was surrounded by sisters who, weeping, were praying and waiting for the last moment. I note that my community of sisters and students were very devoted to the venerable Glycerius; I, on the other hand, felt no devotion to him. I am almost ashamed to show this coldness. But, finding myself in this state, I remembered that Venerable Glicerio was Calasanz’s favorite. Turning to a holy card of Calasanz, which I had beside my bed, I prayed thus, mentally: –If you want to do me a favor through the heart of your son, make my confessor get up and come to me and tell me: –Do you want the heart of the Venerable? It was the first time that I had found this confidence in me. As soon as that supplication was finished, Father Rolletta, who was on his knees praying with the sisters, got up and, sad, came to me and said, “Sister Clare, do you want the heart of the Venerable Glycerius? With my head I nodded yes. The Father immediately ran to San Pantaleo to fetch it. In the meantime, I went to Venerable Glicerio and said to him: “If it is you who are giving me this sign, make*

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375 Fr. Philip Rolletta (Alatri 1842-Rome 1915), Piarist. He was General Postulator and rector of San Pantaleo. With Sister Clara Siniscalchi he founded the Calasanzian Sisters in 1887. The institute had only one house. It was dissolved in 1906.

*me feel something strong when they bring your heart close to me; otherwise, how will I swear when I tell that it was because the Venerable Glycerius? Father Rolletta arrived and brought me the heart of the Venerable, which I embraced with all confidence, and I put it on my illness. Suddenly I felt an inner activity, by which the most cancerous internal tumors disappeared. I, undaunted, still doubted that it was the Venerable, and I moved the heart away to see if that internal activity would continue. Pushing it away, it ceased; applying it to the sickness, it began again. I can swear that I had a symptom, that is to say, like an internal murmur, when the tumor had disappeared. And while at first I was not allowed to retain any liquid in my stomach, nor could I move my left arm, nor lie down on that side, from that moment I recovered the free exercise of my arm, my stomach suddenly recovered its strength, so much so that that same day I was able to eat the food of the community and get out of bed... Describing the joy, consolation and enthusiasm of the community would be impossible for me... If in the community there has always been devotion to the heart of the Venerable, since that day it has grown in an inordinate way... And both the opinion of the community and that of other acquaintances, priests and laymen, is that my healing was a miracle. Even the doctor who was taking care of me was happy about it, telling me that I had passed from death to life<sup>376</sup>.*

### ***Recent testimonies***

There are no lack in our century of cases of extraordinary graces obtained through the intercession of the Venerable Glicerio Landriani. Of these, I will select two that seem to me particularly worthy of mention:

In Havana (Cuba), Mr. Alberto Hernandez, in a coma for three days due to irreversible brain damage, was kept alive only by artificial respiration. Thanks to the invocation of Glicerio, by means of a relic of his, the patient improved suddenly. Today, Mr. Alberto, 60 years old, enjoys the full use of his faculties. He lives in Barcroft View, Virginia 22041, USA.

Piarist Father Modesto Roca tells how in 1937, at the Pious Schools in Cardenas (Havana), the young Ramon Iglesias, bedridden for a

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376 Pr. Ap. Rom. 37. fol. 174.

month with a high fever and without the doctors being able to cure him, was presented with a picture of the venerable Glicerio Landriani. –It is the Glicerio of my Fathers! –he exclaimed; and he bowed his head over the image, praying. The fever disappeared immediately<sup>377</sup>.

There is no need to marvel, then, at what happened to Father Francis Baldi, as he himself narrates in the processes. While he was speaking one evening with the novices about the virtues and merits of Father Glicerio, whom he had known and of whom he had been a companion, he suddenly saw a great radiance appear and flood the room where they were gathered, as if to confirm the truth of what was said about him<sup>378</sup>.

## 17. TOWARDS THE ALTARS

### *Calasanz introduces the cause for his beatification*

St. Joseph Calasanz had attentively observed every gesture and scrutinized every thought of his beloved disciple Glicerio, whose soul was for him like an open book. He saw that face, ordinarily pale, light up in prayer as his soul was lifted upwards, until it became “greatly reddened”. With the intuition of a saint, he attributed to this ardor of Glicerio his “visceral love for his neighbor. On feast days the trepidation of the young man did not escape him, who, *“to go quickly to teach Christian doctrine to the poor children, to the peasants and to the rest of the people, did not worry about eating badly and quickly, without worrying about the scorching sun of summer, or the rains and the mud of winter”*<sup>379</sup>. Along with the sick, in the heart of Glicerio, Father Joseph had experienced the power of her intercession. He had collected in a volume numerous prodigies, which the faithful attested to under oath. During Glicerio’s funeral, he had heard the sermon of Fr. Dominic of Jesus Mary: “He had all the virtues in the highest degree”, therefore he was “canonizable in the present”. Later, comforted by the words of the Vicar of Christ, Paul V, who had said to Glicerio’s brother, Thomas Landriani: “We rejoice with you that you

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377 *El Mensajero Católico*, September 1937, n. 320, p. 10.

378 Reg. Serv., AGSP, A2/45, p. 864.

379 Pos. s.v., p. 325.

have had a brother saint<sup>380</sup>”, he decided to ask the same pontiff to introduce the cause of beatification.

### *A long and difficult road*

It was June 23, 1620. On the initiative of Calasanz<sup>381</sup> and by the authority of the pontiff Paul V, through his vicar Cardinal Garzia Milini, the ordinary process on the sanctity of Glicerio 's life was instructed. The collection of testimonies and documents that highlight the virtues and holiness of the servant of God is called “Positio super virtutibus”, various documents on the virtues.

January 2, 1631. Cardinal Sabelli, to whom the Sacred Congregation of Rites had entrusted the office of relator, was unable to participate in the session for health reasons. The cardinals did not want to act without him.

January 30, 1632. The substitute cardinal being present, the sacred order of the Consultors Fathers decided that it should wait: Expectandum. Shortly thereafter, a decree of Pope Urban VIII forbade the Sacred Congregation to proceed in causes of beatification and canonization unless 50 years had passed since the death of the person concerned. Fifty years passed, but the Piarists seemed to sleep. At the resumption of the process they had to justify themselves against the accusation of “negligence” brought against them by the promoter of the faith, Cardinal Angel Mariani.

Year 1881. The cause for the beatification of Glicerio was resumed with the ordinary Tusculan process. It became evident that the texts, through an uninterrupted tradition, amply demonstrated the continuity of Glicerio's reputation for holiness.

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380 The praises of Pope Paul V were referred by Mr. Thomas himself to Fr. Peter Casani, who attested to them in the processes: Pr. Summ., p. 832. Cfr. Armini, o.c., pp. 203-204.

381 The cause of beatification was entrusted by Calasanz to Fathers Benedict of the Angels and Octavian of the Conception. In three months they collected the sworn testimonies of 27 eyewitnesses, among them Calasanz, Ruzola and Casani. Cfr. J. Jericho, o.c., p. 49.

On April 16, 1885. Leo XIII appointed the commission for the beatification cause.

On September 22, 1885. The discovery of Glicerio's heart and the renewed prodigies stirred the spirits and aroused new enthusiasm in the Piarist milieu. Already in 1878 the life of Glicerio edited by Father Mauro Ricci was read in an elegant and modern form.

In the year 1888. Alphonsus Maria Mistrangelo published his great and pleasant Life of Glicerio, so well received that in a few years four editions were published.

Between 1899-1903. The Roman apostolic process was undertaken, in which the hearsay witnesses had to agree with those of the ordinary process.

December 21, 1915. Interpreparatory session on the virtues, convoked by Cardinal Antonio Vico, pro-prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, substitute for Cardinal Jerome Gotti, ponente or relator of the cause.

February 24, 1931. Preparatory session at the Vatican.

May 19, 1931. General Congregation in the presence of Pope Pius XI. Cardinal Alessandro Verde, substitute for Cardinal Scapinelli, relator of the cause, proposed for discussion the doubt "An constet de virtutibus Servi Dei Glycerii Landriani a Christo in gradu heroico", is it possible to prove the heroicity of the virtues of the Servant of God Glicerio Landriani of Christ? It was a kind of general analysis of the virtues of the Servant of God. Cardinals, prelates, consultants and chosen theologians expressed each one a judgment protected with the anonymity. The examination was concluded with a positive opinion.

May 31, 1931. Sunday of the Most Holy Trinity and Feast of Our Lady of the Pious Schools. After the celebration of the Eucharist, Pope Pius XI, having seen the opinions of the members of the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of Saints, declared the heroic virtues of Glicerio, conferring on him the title of "Venerable".

### *Coincidences not by chance*

March 19, 1934. Canonization of Blessed Pompilio Maria Pirrotti.

The enthusiasm that accompanied the recognition of the heroic virtues of Venerable Glicerio and then the canonization of Blessed Pompilius, awakened interest also in the cause of Father Pietro Casani, which, however, got bogged down because the documentation was lost. It was later found in the archives of the Sacred Congregation of Rites in 1964. Published by Father Claudio Vilá in 1982, it was submitted to the judgment of the Congress of Theologians and Cardinals. Finally, on January 22, 1991, Father Casani was declared “Venerable”, and on October 1, 1995, “Blessed”.

Now it is the turn of Venerable Glicerio to take a decisive step forward. We have not yet managed to see him on the altars. “Some believed that he wanted it that way in heaven, out of respect for his Father, obtaining not to be glorified before him”<sup>382</sup>. Let it be, if so willed. But the Father has passed, his master, Casani, has passed, Pompilio M. Pirrotti, the thirteen modern Spanish martyrs –October 1, 1995– and finally, Faustino Miguez –October 25, 1998. Who does he still have to wait for? Once proclaimed venerable, in order to proceed to beatification, another chapter has been opened for Glicerio, that of the examination of a miracle attributable to his intercession. It should be remembered that for an event, such as a cure, to be defined as a miracle, it must be immediate and not scientifically explainable by medical care. This judgment corresponds to a special medical-scientific commission.

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382 J. Jericho, o.c., p. 49.



## APPENDIX

### EPISTOLARY

**I**n the different chapters of the biography we have had the opportunity to quote fragments of the letters written by Glicerio, and the only one that remains to us, addressed to him by Calasanz, or the one that Vaquedano wrote to Father Dominic after the death of Glicerio, but which is very interesting because it is rich in news related to the venerable. Here we have considered it opportune to transcribe in its entirety the entire collection of letters that has come down to us. Of the two letters addressed to Cardinal Frederick Borromeo we have read and transcribed details. Of both, which certainly reached the Cardinal, although we do not possess the reply, the *beautiful copy* is preserved in the Ambrosian library of Milan: Cat. 306, inf. N. I, 31. The criterion that guided us in the transcription of the six documents was to act with a slight modernization of the text, without altering it; on the contrary, seeking to respect as much as possible even the linguistic profile.

#### 1. LETTER OF GLICERIO TO CARDINAL FREDERICK BORROMEO<sup>383</sup>

Deus super omnia. Xrus.

To the Most Illustrious and Most Rev. in Christ, Pastor and Father, Cardinal Borromeo, Archbishop of Milan:

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<sup>383</sup> This letter and the following three are published in EC III, pp. 1634-1640. The originals are in the General Archives of St. Pantaleon, Reg. Serv.38, 2.

May God Our Lord with his grace, in which alone we trust, make you far surpass our most dear St. Charles, who was before, for his glory and that of the holy Church, so much fought against on all sides.

I have recourse to you, on the advice of a great Servant of God, to whom I communicated the thought I had concerning my relatives, so that, as our pastor, Vicar of Jesus Christ our Lord and our God, you may seek the glory of Our Lord and the salvation of his sheep. This is what it is all about:

In my beginnings, when Our Lord called me to his service, I was all aflame with my Lord and sought to enter as a Discalced Carmelite; those Fathers prevented me from doing so because of my health. I renounced what was mine in favor of my relatives and, if I remember correctly, I was asked by them every time I wanted to become a friar. Thinking that to leave riches was to leave a great burden, as it is, I renounced what was mine, I believe, whether or not I entered as a friar, reserving four thousand escudos for myself. God our Lord wanted that that renunciation was not valid; and so they wrote to me that it was not made in the manner of Milan, and that it was necessary to make another one, because that one was not valid. I did it, on condition that at the end of three months they would give me the three thousand escudos, or something like that, that were left. Years have passed and the money has not been paid. And Mgr. Landriano died of old age, with much money, silver and furniture, and he left me nothing. Moreover, he had enjoyed for two years the Abbey that I have, and the fruits have not been returned to me. Our brother Thomas, perhaps inadvertently, is enjoying the income. In conscience, according to what I have been told, he cannot enjoy them, there being the express condition of paying me the said thousand escudos, which has not been fulfilled, and also the rents of my Abbey.

Besides, I am growing doubtful whether I shall be obliged to give an account of what our Lord has given me, and I see the extreme need of my neighbor; and on the other hand, I see the evident occasion of pride, ambition and condemnation of my House, and perhaps my own. That is why I have not written this to my brothers, but now I am writing to them, and at the same time to Your Excellency, that as long as I live, even if it is a trusteeship, I can be usufructuary of what is

mine, until it pleases the Lord, or that, in fact, I die, or at least (I am) with a vow of poverty.

So, to you, as to a Saint Charles zealous for the cause of God, I beseech you to lend me a hand in this matter, so that the word of your Lord could be fulfilled, since he has put Your Most Ill. Lordship as defender in that See: “Pusillus grex... vendite quae possidetis et date eleemosynam...” and elsewhere: “Si vis venire post me, vende omnia et da pauperibus”<sup>384</sup>. From this example, today when we are poor, miserable, so degraded in this mire of money, God knows how much we need it, for there is nothing else left but to say openly to this stone: “Deus meus es tu”<sup>385</sup>.

My soul is not willingly reassured by anything else, for I want to be a dispenser of the faculties that my Lord has given me, and it will be up to me to give an account. Your Excellency, be on Christ’s side in this matter, for “qui non est mecum contra me est”<sup>386</sup>; the rest is flesh and blood. Please be a faithful executor and protector of the word of Christ, so forgotten; moreover, against which the world has raised a flag because it places itself in your hands; for “si quis diligit me, sermones meos servabit; et pater meus diligit eum, et ad eum veniemus et mansionem apud eum faciemus; et si manebit in nobis, faciemus fructum multum”<sup>387</sup>.

How much it goes against all reason that the poor man has nothing with which to be able to live and cover his nakedness with a cloth or a piece of bread, and the rich man has so much vanity and diabolical snares. They do not see what a clear offense is done to divine equity and justice. For the rest, the human reason and conscience demands it. Nor can I do it without offense to Our Lord. I know that you will treat it as your own cause, and all the more so because it is the cause of Christ.

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384 Little flock... sell what you possess and give alms... If you will come after me, sell all your possessions and give to the poor (Lk 12:33).

385 You are my God (Ex 17:6).

386 Whoever is not with me is against me (Lk 11:14).

387 If anyone loves me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and we will make our abode in him, and if he abides in us, we will bring forth abundant fruit (Jn 14:23).

As far as I can, I do you my most humble reverence and kiss your feet; and may Our Lord preserve all in his name. From Rome, on the fifth day after St. Charles, 1616.

Little Worm, and your Servant,  
Glicerio Landriani of Christ.

## 2. LETTER OF GLICERIO TO CARDINAL FREDERICK BORROMEIO

Deus super omnia Xp.us

Most Ill. and most Rev. Father in Christ:

I am in the Pious Schools in Rome, where up to 800 children and young people attend, and up to now I have taught nothing but grammar. And I have come here without seeking it, only out of pure obedience to my superiors. It is true that my heart desired it enough, but I did not show it, not showing any affection for anything, but being resigned in everything to the will of God our Lord and of the superiors. Now I am sure that it is the will of God our Lord, and I hope that the Lord will want to make use of me for this work of his, which is so important that it astonishes me, because these children of the poor, who usually go around the squares without any restraint of fear of God our Lord, being prey to all dishonesty in words and ugly acts, are here withdrawn from idleness and evil, and with the divine help are occupied in exercises, not only of the spirit but also of the knowledge of Christian doctrine. Here they are given paper, pens, rosaries, Christian Doctrines, spiritual books, for the love of God; and Small Offices of Our Lady, that they may leave vanities and educate themselves in the service of God. Truly, one cannot tell how much it matters for these children, who have not picked up a bad habit, to catch them at the right time. Oh what ease, what sweetness is found! –Gloria Patri et Filio...

Now, since Father Bono is a very dear Father to me, we have spoken a few times together, and we have talked about preparing some young people to help the infidels. Seeing that this is a most opportune occasion, since these schools are so numerous and are an ever-living source of new individuals, the Prefect of our schools (Calasanz) –on

the occasion of having now bought a house for 10,000 escudos for the service of these schools, and that, with the grace of the Lord, things will go on with greater perfection— has judged it convenient to request from your benignity and charity a companion of Father Bono, a theologian, to begin a course in Philosophy and Theology, in the short form of three years, since the brevity of doing these courses seems to us an initiative inspired by the Holy Spirit, for those who wish to know what is necessary, only for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

I tell you from my heart —prostrate with particular affection at your feet— that I am grateful to you for the initiative; for it has been a great encouragement for those who wish to serve God; and I confess to you on behalf of Christ —our Lord and all our Good— that if the Lord gives you the grace to have a part in this work, you will have a part in the work of God, in which at present the Lord has his particular thought; and happy for you. Father Bono tells me that all that is needed is your authorization for us to receive his companion in our house; and that he would still need another one to come from Milan to help him.

It was Mgr. Seneca who suggested me to write to your Charity, but first he said he wanted to speak to Father Bono about who among the Oblate Fathers would be suitable to come to Rome. We humbly ask for your authorization in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, for a thing of so much glory for him and for the benefit of so many souls. And with God's help we promise you tenfold of workers for Christian Doctrine; and furthermore for whatever they may be educated in, for the service of your Fathers; for our desire is none other than the glory of Jesus Christ, "dummodo Christus praedicetur"<sup>388</sup>. May it now seem good to you to intercede, and likewise to St. Charles, so that the House of St. Charles may be filled with holy Oblates, preachers of the glory of God, who will set all Rome and the whole world ablaze with the fire and flame of the true Good, which is divine love. As soon as possible —soon, soon— we hope that he will deign to give us an answer and a good solution.

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388 The important thing is that Christ be preached (Phil 1:18).

Prostrating ourselves at your feet, in humble reverence, we commend ourselves to your prayers.

From Rome, September 29, 1612.

Little Worm, Your Servant,  
Glicerio Landriani of Christ.

### 3. LETTER OF GLICERIO TO FATHER JOHN GARCÍA

To the Most Dear in the Lord

John García del Castillo in the Pious Schools

Dearest brother in Christ Jesus:

We, by the grace of the Lord, are joyful; and I seem to be much more consoled than in Rome, especially today when we have met five Barefoot Fathers who came from St. Sylvester, like five true Angels, and we have given them all to drink. You can send word to Father Antonino that I have received the Doctrines and the Esca, and that, by order of the Father Prefect, he should give a escudo to Mr. Octavian Landriani, from Milan, who is at home; and that because of the bulletins it was not necessary to go to Father Artemio for any favor; but that the Father Prefect said, rather, that Father Antoninus should be content to disburse five escudos, to recover them again, when he returns the same things, for which no favor is necessary.

You would do me a favor if you would send me 15 or 16 small Doctrines, like the ones I gave to our dearest brother Simon; plus some small writing utensils, and our Breviary, which is in the Oratory. If Father Rector would like, he will send me a pair of stockings without socks, which Father Prefect wants me to wear that way. For the rest, here is hope. Make my warm recommendations to the gentleman from Milan and to all; in particular to the Father Rector, to whom I do most humble reverence.

From Frascati, April 6, 1617.

Unworthy servant of yours,  
Glicerio [Landriani] of Christ.

#### 4. LETTER FROM GLICERIO TO FATHER JUAN GARCIA

...send it to me at once. I will wait for the Saints and the cardboard to bind 25 small and four large Doctrines. Our dear Dominic, from Foligno, I don't know if he got the cardboard from that deaf bookseller; if he didn't get it, it can be bought. And to our dear brother of Brescia, please send immediately the copy of the Commandments. Here we are happy, with the help of the Lord. To our dearest Father Peter, Ottonelli and all, reverence, and at your orders. I would be very glad if the brethren of the Christian Doctrine could be notified by Bishop Bartholomew; and that one another notified themselves for the Communion on next Sunday, because I do not know if it was remembered yesterday.

From Frascati, May 29, 1617.

Unworthy servant of yours,

Glicerio [Landriani] of Christ.

#### 5. LETTER OF SAINT JOSEPH OF CALASANZ TO GLYCERIUS<sup>389</sup>

To the most dear in Xto. the Abbot Glicerio of Christ in the Pious Schools in Rome.

May Jesus and Mary always occupy the whole heart of our dearest in the Lord, Abbot Glicerio.

The zeal for the salvation of souls, which our Father Caspar (Dragonetti) has so deeply rooted in his heart, as you well know, deserves that everyone do him every service. For this reason, since he lacks a little butter for the moment, let him make arrangements with Father Lawrence, if necessary, to have at least a large container sent to him as soon as possible, and let it be fresh.

Here, not only the students, but also those of the city, frequently ask for your return, which they all wish to see as soon as possible. I remind you to speak with Bishop Monaldeschi, so that he may be in-

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389 EGC, II, n. 10.

formed of the way in which today the Fathers of Lucca run the schools, with their eyes fixed on their former Institute. It is impossible for them to last and to make any profit. I hope that the Cardinal, as commissioner of this Council to be held, will resolve it, because it is much better that these Fathers do not undertake the work, than to make it an appendix of their Congregation, in which they have obtained a beautiful success, as has been published, against the Father General of Lucca. May Our Lord place his hand in it, so that the schools may proceed with that perfection and profit which is necessary for the reform of youth.

From Frascati, November 23, 1616.

\*Please speak to Mr. Laertius, and see to it, if God inspires you, that he gives charity for a little piece of land near the gate, for a church of St. Charles.

Servant in the Lord,  
Joseph Calasanz

## 6. LETTER OF FATHER JAMES VAQUEDANO TO FATHER DOMINIC OF JESUS MARY<sup>390</sup>

...Glicerio was ardent in the study of the Sacred Scriptures and in the reading of the Holy Fathers, fleeing from any other profane reading. I recognized in him a special gift from God to understand the meaning of the Scriptures and of the holy Doctors, with whom he took great delight. He wrote in a book of his own hand the sentences of those, so that he could make use of them in every need. Among others, he was greatly fond of the doctrine of Saint Thomas Aquinas and Saint Gregory, Pope. So much so that during his last illness, which lasted five months, he finished reading all the books of the

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390 In *Rass. St. Bibl. Ec.*, III, pp. 16-17. It is a document that, in the form of a letter, Father James Vaquedano wrote immediately after the death of Glicerio. Vaquedano, a close friend of Glicerio, communicates to Father Dominic of La Escala quite detailed news, requested by him for the beatification process, about his young friend, who had died just two months before. It is only a fragment, but it contains interesting news and it reveals the secrets of a deep friendship.

Morals of St. Gregory. Then he wanted to know from me what else he should read. I had the intention of making him fit, as the holy Fathers teach, for what is desired for the priesthood, even though he, considering himself very unworthy, refused it (which I know to be very certain). So, I told him to read the books of Cure of Souls of St. Gregory; the same thing that, with the same purpose, I had made him read, before he became ill, the book of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy of the Divine Dionysius; and that afterwards he should read the books On the Priesthood, by St. John Chrysostom. He obeyed, and read completely the pastoral books of St. Gregory; and he wrote down in a book many things in his own hand. I was astonished that, being so ill, this sacred study did not harm his health; on the contrary, it made him better, as he himself attested many times; and I also bear witness to this, for I observed it, being at that time almost every day with him. The doctor, too, had given him license for it.

But while I was waiting for him to recover his health, I told His Paternity to impose on him to begin little by little to take ecclesiastical and holy orders, exercising himself in each of them for the time established in the sacred canons; and that in the meantime he should wait for the study of sacred theology. God had something else in mind for him; to take him from our midst.

Two months before he left this life, he wanted me to transcribe for him all the most useful sentences of the Holy Fathers, which deal with the poenitentia, which I did. I reduced them to three or four pages, which he read every day with great feeling. And many times he fell on his knees at my feet with tears, thanking me for that benefit, saying that from those sentences of the Fathers he had learned the way to do penance; and that for this he thanked God, because before he died He had allowed him to know this; and he asked Him to restore him to health and give him life to mourn his sins more. I still recited to him some sentences of the Holy Fathers, about the worthy disposition to receive communion spiritually and the sacrament with much fruit. This doctrine remained impressed in his heart, making him much more fervent in receiving communion, as I was able to see for myself. He wanted me to say Mass and give him communion in the chapel of the Pious Schools, or in the chapel of the house of Mgr. Vives, where he went, even though he was ill.

Finally, a month before his death, on the advice of his doctor, he went to live near Santa Maria in Via, in a house of the novitiate of the Pious Schools, where his death occurred this year of 1618, on February 15, Thursday, at 7:00 p.m., after being anointed, and having received communion on Wednesday in that chapel, being out of bed.

He had been ill since September 20, the feast of St. Eustachius, on which day in Milan is celebrated the feast of St. Glicerio, bishop of Milan, who was of the house of the Landriani, of which our Brother –also he of this name– Glicerio Landriani, was also a member. Therefore, one can believe that this saint desired him and called him to his company, because on that day he fell ill. And since I too, a sinner, was born this day into this world, I hope that with all the more reason he will remember me, his unworthy Brother, to ask divine mercy for me; so that, when the course of my life is over, he will make me worthy to go and enjoy our Love, Christ Jesus, in his company.

All this is written in obedience to Your Paternity, and I bear God as witness that I have tried as hard as I should to say only those things that I know to be true.

May the grace of our Lord keep your Most Reverend Paternity, and I humbly ask your blessing.

From home, April 17, 1618.

From your most reverend paternity,

humble servant in Christ and unworthy son,

James Vaquedano.

## CONCLUSION

**A**s on the screen of a dark room, on these pages we have seen rapid images, happy moments and disturbing pages. Many times events seem to turn back on themselves, or to rush forward, to conclude later in the marvelous, though mysterious, design of God.

Glicerio in Milan, with his family. His consecration to Mary. In Bologna he studied philosophy, and in Rome the theological university for a promising ecclesiastical career. The empty splendor of the Roman courts. The new man in the community of Fr. Francis of Christ, in Via Giulia, involved headlong in works of charity. Disillusionment and loss. The encounter with Father Joseph Calasanz. Piarist, educator of street children, catechist, pilgrim, sower of hope. His decisive contribution focusing the utopian objectives of Calasanz. Finally, the novitiate and... almost at the same time the arrival in the light of God.

Nothing clamorous, in the end. Everything seems to happen simply and naturally. It is impressive only the fact that a noble and rich man, spontaneously, for love of Christ, becomes poor and a servant of all. And perhaps even more impressive is the letter that Glicerio writes from Rome to Cardinal Frederick, where he emphasizes the freedom of his choice and the joy of having found his way. He renounced every privilege, wore a coarse sackcloth, made himself small with the little ones, as his brother and guide. A new man, who hardly slept or ate, and from whom flowed torrents of tenderness for the children, so that the little ones would not lack the joy at the table of life, nor the workers the longing for the free gift. The love of Christ had seduced the heart of Glicerio and had associated him to Himself, so that, like Him, he might bow down over the sufferings of the world, to welcome its breath and sow hope in it.

But Glicerio's journey, his total response, was brief. It was exhausted before Calasanz could foresee. A breath of eternity in the flow of time. "*Brevi vivens tempore, explevit tempora multa*". That is why, thanks to his memory and his testimony, his presence still shines today in the Pious Schools and in the Church:

His message is current, because it is rooted in the Gospel: "He who leaves all finds all", a claim to our fragility, to the inevitable consumption of things, and to the suggestion of Jesus, "do not store up treasures on earth":

- Primacy of prayer: even when he was immersed in the assiduous and exhausting care of children at school, he spent hours and nights in prayer, knowing that only in this way could his sacrifice and charity be fruitful.
- Consecration to Mary, who will always shine as a star on his path.
- Total detachment from himself, which opens the horizons of the soul to love of neighbor. In the hardness of the theology of the cross he discovered, in freedom of spirit, the joy of life, the perfect joy.
- He devoted himself to the education of children and itinerant catechesis.
- Tireless Piarist. With Calasanz, ferryman of the Pious Schools in the most delicate moment of the "transition"<sup>391</sup>.

The energies expended with enormous generosity ended up exhausting and burning his physique, which was not made of bronze. She entrusted his dreams of renewal to his notes, and the projects of Calasanz to God. At the invitation of Our Lady of Montecavallo, he quickly concluded his existence, with the nostalgia of having frustrated in part the expectations of our dear Father Joseph.

The graces that Glicerio obtained from God for his faithful, we have described them, not as *votive offerings* for curious eyes, nor as simple *historical memories*, but as a stimulus to know how to relate the figure

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391 By transition we understand the passage of the Pious Schools from a simple association of volunteers (1597) to a religious Congregation with vows recognized by the Church (1617).

of Glicerio to our particular problems. The saints are not only examples to imitate, but also elder brothers and sisters to ask for help.

We are entitled to invoke their protection before God with prayers and gestures of veneration and atonement. The validity of our expressions is authentic, from the interior sentiment of the soul. To kiss an image or a relic is to establish a spiritual contact in accordance with feelings and ideals. The external gestures find their justification and strength in the spirit that animates them.

Diana<sup>392</sup>, the sick woman of Frascati, ran after Glicerio and, without his seeing her, touched him and kissed his mantle. She was cured. We think of the marvelous story of the Gospel, in which the healing of the bleeding woman is narrated, who, afflicted by a disease that the doctors had not been able to cure, in hiding from Jesus, touched his garment with the certainty of being cured. And indeed she was healed. Jesus did not reproach her, he did not accuse her of superstition, but said to her: "Your faith has healed you". Glicerio, like Jesus, made present the love of God for the afflicted of every condition, sick in body or spirit.

Today too, if we wish, he can become a *sign* of God for us and for the whole Church. By invoking him and having him invoked, he can repeat his gestures of consolation, healing and salvation.

Now that the work of the Cardinals who took part in the Ordinary Congregation for the Causes of Saints has been completed, and their favorable opinion has been expressed in almost five volumes of the *Positio super virtutibus* de Glicerio, Pope Pius XI, on May 31, 1931, proclaimed Father Glicerio Landriani Venerable. Now, in order for the Pope to declare him Blessed, and to authorize the honor of the altars, a well-documented miracle is needed, and to propose it to the analysis of a Pontifical Medical-Scientific Commission.

If by going through these pages and getting to know Father Glicerio better, a flower of sympathy for the young Piarist has sprung up in us; if we sincerely love St. Joseph Calasanz, who loved him more than any other, let us do something so that he may be known and invoked. And let us beseech the Lord for his glorification.

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392 Cf. Chapter 21: Healing attested to by St. Joseph Calasanz.

## HYMN TO LANDRIANI

I conclude these humble pages by transcribing the brief hymn which, in Latin hexameters, and in a moment of particular enthusiasm, I composed, to express as I was able, my admiration and the fraternal affection I feel for you, dear Glicerio:

*“Gliceri, tu Joseph volucer divina fuisti:  
 afflavit coelum debilisque senis cor ovavit,  
 dilucet mare motum exiliuntque sodales,  
 plenius os celebrat puerorum carmine festos,  
 spiritus edulcat, vigore novo grave floret  
 Gasparis album aevum, paupertas gaudium gegnit.  
 Terra ferax per te schola fit velut hortus apricus.  
 Josepho docti multique fuere magistri  
 Invenit tamen unum in te pietate poetam,  
 cuius summa manus pueris divina scatebat  
 Affectus flectens in parva negotia magnos,  
 Ut manus artificis reverenter cymbalum ad altas  
 provocat expediens notas hinc dextera dulces  
 quas imis fulcit firmatque sonantia laeva.  
 Ut signum in coelo Piarum radiusque Scholarum  
 adventus tuus est breve sidus lumina praestans  
 Joseph corda tamen laeta illuxit dies illa  
 et nobis stellat melioraque tempora spondet”.*

## ENGLISH TRANSLATION

*“Glicerio, you were for Joseph the sacred bird<sup>393</sup>,  
 With whose appearance heaven smiled,  
 The old heart leapt for joy;  
 The sea was calm,  
 The children exulted for joy.  
 Spirits were sweetened<sup>394</sup>*

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393 Alcmane, The Cerilo, v. 4. The sacred bird, the alcyon, recalls the legend according to which, in the middle of winter, when the alcyons lay their eggs, the winds, as a gift of Zeus, stop, the climate is serene, the sea is calm and the temperature is sweetened.

394 Glyceros in Greek means sweet.

*And Caspar's many years  
Blossomed with new vigor.  
The song of utmost poverty  
Generated joy in souls,  
And a garden of flowers and fruits  
Was for you the first school.  
Many teachers Joseph had,  
Eminent in letters,  
Brilliant in mathematics,  
But of Piety you were the great poet,  
With whose touch you awakened in the children  
The sense of the divine.  
Thou didst transform sentiments  
Into little virtues  
With the respectful art of the pianist,  
Who with the dexterous hand evokes  
In high notes sweet melodies  
And sustains them with the left,  
Giving rhythm and security to the harmony.  
A ray of light was your appearance  
In the sky of the Pious School,  
But it was joy forever  
In Joseph's heart,  
And shone for us,  
Bright sign of hope.*



# BIBLIOGRAPHY

## I. ANCIENT AND MODERN BIOGRAPHIES OF GLICERIO

With the footnotes we have tried to provide data and information on the biographers of Glicerio who have seemed to us the most reputable for their antiquity, originality or undisputed authority. The reader will thus be able to better evaluate the statements and testimonies.

### A. *Unpublished biographies:*

*In the General Archives of the Pious Schools: Reg. Serv. 38a, 9a:*

1. ANONYMOUS, *Vita del venerabile Servo di Dio Glicerio Landriani*, n. 51
2. ANONYMOUS, *Vita del P. Abate Landriano*, n. 53.
3. ANONIMOUS, *Vita del ven. P. Glicerio di Christo*, n. 54.
4. BERNARD OF ST. THERESA, *Compendio della Vita del Servo di Dio Glicerio di Cristo*, n. 50.
5. BALDI, Francis, *Vita del P. Abate Glicerio Landriani*, 1645, AGSP, Reg. Serv. n. 39<sup>395</sup>.

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395 Fr. Francis Baldi of the Annunciation, (Rome 1673?), was a student of the Pious Schools in San Pantaleo, and one of the first fourteen who received the habit on March 25, 1617, from the hands of the Founder. In 1618 he accompanied Fr. Casani in the foundation of the house of Narni. It is famous the speech that, as a young man, he pronounced there in Latin and that won him the admiration of all. For this reason he was one of the first professors of Collegio Nazareno in Rome. Always faithful to Calasanz, he courageously defended him during the turbulent events of the 40s. In 1649, the year after the death of Calasanz, he was appointed rector of the house of San Pantaleo, and finally published that Latin grammar that in vain Calasanz had continually asked him to publish while he resided in Moricone. Calasanz reproached him for his laziness, but in reality during that period Fr. Francis was totally dedicated to the art of music. His manuscript is very important, because he, companion of Glicerio and novice with him, was fully informed of the things narrated. The booklet, not used by previous biographers because it was not found until 1927, has been my main source.

6. MUSSESTI, Pietro, *Vita del venerabile P. Glicerio Landriani*, Rome 1643. AGSP, Reg. Serv. n. 39<sup>396</sup>.

**B. Published biographies:**

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3. ARMINI, Alexius, *Vita del Venerabile Servo di Dio P. Glicerio di Cristo*. Roma, Ercole, 1694<sup>397</sup>.
4. BERRO, Vincent, *Vita del Servo di Dio Glicerio de Christo*, in Arch. Sch. P. (1982), n. 11, pp. 1-52<sup>398</sup>

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396 Fr. Peter Mussesti of the Annunciation (1612-1668), cultivated classical letters, being at the same time a Latin poet (cf. Epithalamium Jupiter heroicus). He was also an expert man of government: Assistant General, superior in Florence, several times rector of San Pantaleo, in whose archives he was able to draw from direct sources and consult original documents. Mussesti's biography, written at the suggestion of Calasanz, offers us living material, precious memories and a guarantee of veracity.

397 Fr. Alexius Armini of the Conception (Ancona 1624-Rome 1695), entered the Pious Schools in 1639. He was a professor at Collegio Nazareno, Provincial of the Pious Schools in Rome, Procurator General, four times Assistant General and General himself, the sixth after St. Joseph Calasanz. He gave great impetus to the process of beatification of Calasanz, of which he also wrote a life in 1693. Father Mauro Ricci, who in 1878 brought to light the biography of Glicerio of Father Armini, affirms that he does not claim "any better credit than that deserved by a sincere and honest historian", that is, Father Alexius. And he adds: "As poor as his writings are in literary merits, so great is his authority, based on the processes formed according to the rites to procure the beatification of Landriani".

398 Fr. Vincent Berro of the Conception (Savona 1624-Rome 1695), received the habit in 1623. He was superior of Collegio Nazareno in Rome, and in 1635 he passed to Naples. He was superior of the house of Duchesca, in Campi Salentina, in Palermo and in Messina. Provincial of Tuscany and then master of novices in Naples (1642). We find him in San Pantaleo in 1647, as personal secretary of St. Joseph Calasanz. Goya presents him to us in his famous painting of *The*

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12. DE MARCO, Leonardo, *Un catechista modello: il Ven. Glicerio Landriani*, in Ricerche, n. 23 (1988).
13. GINER GUERRI, Severino, *La antigua tumba del Ven. Glicerio Landriani*, Eph. Cal. LXV (1966), Rome, pp. 47-49.
14. GRANDE, Serafino, *Il Ven. Glicerio Landriani*, in La Voce del Calasanzio, 1930, n. 3.

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*Last Communion of St. Joseph Calasanz.* Other writings of his on Calasanz and his Work are also important, which have come down to us thanks to the transcription made by Fr. John Charles Caputi. His vocation as a writer is revealed not in the synthesis, in the order or interpretation of the facts, but rather in the anecdotal news. He gathers, sometimes with colorful descriptions, all that was possible to know about the persons and the facts as a whole.

- 399 Fr. John Benedict of St. Mary Magdalene: He wants to highlight on the frontispiece, omnia fideliter deprompta et in Epitomen redacta –all the news taken from the process of canonization and summarized. The booklet is very neat, written in noble Latin, with numerous quotations from Sacred Scripture and the holy Fathers of the Church. It is pleasant to read. Picanyol affirms that Talenti – by homonymy– attributes the book to Father John Felber of St. Mary Magdalene. He proves it especially with a letter written by Benedict to the Founder (EEC, p. 109), in which he informs him of the work and asks for information.

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19. MISTRANGELO, Alfonso Maria, *Il Ven. Glicerio Landriani delle S. P.*, Genova 1888<sup>400</sup>.
20. NIERNECZEK, Joseph, *Dereherwudige Diener Gottes Glycerius Landriani aus dem Piaristenorden*, Wien 1932.
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23. PICANYOL, Leodegario, *Il Ven. Glicerio Landriani delle S.P., Apostolo della Dottrina Cristiana in Roma, Profilo*

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400 Alfonso Maria Mistrangelo of the P.S., (Savona 1852-Florence 1930), elected bishop of Pontremoli, toured the most famous pulpits of Italy. In 1897 he preached Advent in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. In 1899 he was appointed Archbishop of Florence by Leo XIII. In 1900 he was elected General of the Pious Schools, but he did not leave the archdiocese of Florence. In 1915 Pope Benedict XVI honored him with the sacred purple and the King of Italy decorated him with the Order of Saints Maurice and Lazarus. His writings are many. In the prologue of the Life of Glicerio he states: "In our days reading has become a necessity. Everyone and everything is read. And more than anyone else, young people... I have wanted to offer them a good book, and I have taken care to make the story pleasant for them (...) The events of his life and the prodigies are taken from men distinguished for their virtue and doctrine, very close to Glicerio, such as Ven. Dominic Ruzola, St. Joseph Calasanz, Ven. Fr. Peter Casani, Ven. Fr. John García, Dr Cosmas Contini, Mr. Francis Selvaggi and many others".

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  31. WENZEL, Simon, *Glycerius Landriani a Christo*, German translation of Fr.Armini, Wien, 1902.

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401 Fr. Leodegario Picanyol, (Moyá 1896-Sabadell 1968), General Archivist of the Order. An indefatigable researcher, he wrote extensively on all historical topics related to the Order. Among other things, the *Inventario Generale del Archivio Generalizio S. P.*, and nine of the ten volumes of the *Epistolario de San José de Calasanz*.

402 Fr. Mauro Ricci (Florence 1826-Rome 1900). He chose among the biographers of Glicerio Father Alexius for his "great authority". Father Mauro received the Piarist habit in Florence in 1843. A professor of Latin at the University of Urbino, he taught Latin and Greek. He was famous as a poet. Elected general of the Order in 1886, he was reelected three times.

403 Fr. Claudio Vilá Palá, (Caldes 1918-Barcelona 1999), He was General Archivist of the Order for several years. In the appendix of *Glicerio Landriani Catequista*, Father Claudio transcribes all the remaining writings of Glicerio, including the "*Breve Dichiarazione della Doctrina Cristiana*", which was thought to be lost and which he found in the General Postulation. His is also the voluminous work *Positio Casani*, of 2150 pages, published in Rome, 1982.

## II. OLD SOURCES

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Fr. Joseph Jericó of the Conception (Alcañiz 1707-Rome 1786), was a great teacher, preacher and prolific writer. Two characteristics stand out in him: love for the Pious Schools and his vocation as a historian. He was provincial of Aragon, provincial of Castile and Valencia and Assistant General in Rome. Philip V appointed him theologian of the Court of his son, the Infante D. Felipe, Duke of Parma. His language is always appropriate and measured. He was delighted with Fr. John Baptist Cereseto (1816-1858), who translated him into Italian, *Memorie storiche intorno ai venerabili delle Scuole Pie scritte dal P. Jericho, d.C.*, Genova 1846.

Aegidius Madeyski (¿Kolbuszowa 1746), entered the Pious Schools of Podoliniec (Poland) on September 8, 1705. He taught philosophy and theology in Krakow and was a preacher at Wawel Cathedral. The Life of Glicerio is written in easy and fluent Latin, but at the same time elegant and sober. He was a careful researcher.

