



Saint Joseph of Calasanz

Severino Giner Guerri

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Presentation

Among the numerous printed works that, over the course of three centuries, have dealt with the life of St. Joseph Calasanz, there are two that stand out for their critical character and their length. The first, *Vita del Beato Giuseppe Calasanzio della Madre di Dio, Fondatore delle Scuole Pie*, edited in Rome by Fr. Vincent Talenti, after the beatification of the Saint, in 1748. The second one was written by Fr. Calasanz Bau. It was published in Madrid in 1949, when the third centenary of the death and second of the beatification of the founder of the Pious Schools was celebrated. It was called “*Critical Biography of St. Joseph Calasanz*”. In its very title, the author expressed his intention to present a totally new “Life”, returning to documented sources. However, partly dissatisfied with his work, he reworked it again, greatly shortening his previous voluminous work and submitting it to formal corrections of methodological precision. This new version was published in 1963. It was titled “*Revision of the Life of St. Joseph Calasanz*”. These two complementary works by Fr. Bau constitute the last serious work of research on a complete biography of the Saint.

The *Critical Biography* of Fr. Bau awakened in the Piarists an eagerness to research and study the figure of the Founder, with respect to his historical biography and his ideology and personality. Several doctoral theses on theology, spirituality, canon law, history, pedagogy... dealt with these topics. See the works of Frs. A. Sapa, C. Bau, A. García-Durán, C. Vilá, S. Giner, R. Martín... It also started a very important editorial work of documental sources, such as four correlative collections of letters, namely: 1) letters of St. Joseph Calasanz (1950-1956); 2) letters to St. Joseph Calasanz from Central Europe (1969); 3) letters to St. Joseph Calasanz from Spain and Italy

(1972); 4) Mutual correspondence among writers to St. Joseph Calasanz (1977-1982). There are 19 volumes, with a total of approximately eleven thousand pages.

To this we must add the numerous articles of scientific character on biography, ideology and Calasanzian spirituality, published in the magazines of the Order, such as *Revista Calasancia*, *Analecta Calasantiana*, *Ephemerides Calasantianae*, *Archivum Scholarum Piarum*, *Rassegna di storia e bibliografia scolopica*, to mention the most important ones. The articles were written by Frs. L. Picanyol, G. Sántha, J. Poch, C. Vilá, C. Bau, M. A. Asiain, D. Cueva, J. M. Lecea, S. Giner and others. It must be recognized, however, that among all these writers two stand out. Their studies have contributed enormously to clarify many aspects of the life and work of Calasanz: Fr. José Poch in relation to the Spanish period of the Saint (1557-1592) and Fr. George Sántha to the Roman period (1592-1648).

A last very valuable contribution has been done by Fr. Claudio Vilá in his work called "Positio" (1982) of Fr. Pietro Casani. Although Fr. Casani is the central figure around whom the documents revolve, the heroism of Calasanz is evident. Father Pietro Casani was Assistant General, companion and collaborator of the Holy Founder for thirty years.

Although the present work, being part of the BAC Popular collection, has no pretensions of being a work of direct scientific research, with all the requirements of the critical methodology, nevertheless, the works and writings that have appeared until today have been taken into account. They correct or specify the biographical vision on Saint Joseph of Calasanz, presented by Fr. Bau, which continues to be, as a whole, the most documented. Given the abundance amount of textual documentation that we adduce in our work, we have thought it convenient to support them with a minimum of bibliographical references. Most of them are translations of originals in Latin, Italian, and a few in Catalan. We present, then, a work which, with its modest limits, attempts to be a new biography by incorporating the results of the most recent research.

Madrid, ICCE, May 1985

The author

Acronyms and abbreviations

Anal. Cal	Analecta Calasanctiana (Madrid 1959-1976; Salamanca 1977...) (Magazine).
Archivum	Archivum Scholarum Piarum (Roma 1936...) (Magazine)
BAU, BC	C. BAU, Biografía crítica de San José de Calasanz (Madrid 1949).
BAU, RV	C. BAU, Revisión de la vida de San José de Calasanz, en Anal. Cal. 10 (1963).
l	letter in EGC
Const	Constitutions of the Pious Schools, by Saint Joseph Calasanz. 1622.
EC	G. SÁNTHA-C. VILÁ, Epistolarium Coetaneorum S. Josephi Calasanctii (Roma 1977-1982).
EEC	G. SÁNTHA, Epistulae ad S. Josephum Calasantium ex Europa Centrali (Roma 1969).
EGC	L. PICANYOL, Epistolario di San Giuseppe Calasanzi (Roma 1950-1956) 9 vols. Vol X edited by C. Vilá, 1988.
EHI	G. SÁNTHA, Epistulae ad S. Josephum Calasantium ex Hispania et Italia (Roma 1972).
Eph. Cal	Ephemerides Calasanctianae (Roma 1932) (Magazine).
Positio	Petri Casani positio super virtutibus (Roma 1982).
Reg. Cal	General Archives, Roma, Regestum Calasanctianum.
Rev. Cal	Revista Calasancia (Madrid 1888-1969).
SÁNTHA (BAC)	G. SÁNTHA, San José de Calasanz. Obra pedagógica (BAC, Madrid (2)1984)
SÁNTHA. Ensayos	G. SÁNTHA, Ensayos críticos (Salamanca 1976).

A happy childhood

Peralta de la Sal

On August 25, 1646, exactly two years before his death, Calasanz wrote to the vice-queen of Sardinia, Catalina de Moncada y Alagón, consoling her in her sorrows, and ended the letter with this paragraph: “Meanwhile, I will continually pray to the Lord to preserve for many years the health of the whole House of Your Excellency and in particular to your two sons, and to constantly increase divine grace for them. That is what I, as your most affectionate servant and vassal, can wish you, paying my respects.”¹ And it was not merely out of mere courtesy that he declared himself a vassal of the House of Moncada. He was born in the town of Peralta de la Sal, which in those years was one of the many fiefs of the Moncada family. But its annexation was recent. The mother of the vice-queen, Margarita de Castro y Alagón, was the heiress of the Baronies of Castro and Peralta de la Sal, and she married in 1610 with D. Francisco de Moncada y Moncada, lord of the House of Moncada, third Marquis of Aytona, Count of Osona, etc. By this marriage, the Barony of Peralta with that of Castro became part of the already numerous manorial estates of the Moncada family, Marquises of Aytona. All these titles and possessions were in the hands of the brother of the vice-queen of Sardinia, D. Guillén Ramón de Moncada y Alagón, as the vice-queen reminded Calasanz in a letter: “My brother, the Marquis of Aytona, is lord of the House of Castro, because it belonged to my mother, who was the daughter of the Baroness of La Laguna, whom Your Most Reverend Paternity was able to meet in Aragón.”² The

1 EGC, VIII, l. 4397.

2 EHI, p. 1464.

lords of the Barony of Peralta, in these dates of 1646, were the aforementioned D. Guillén Ramón de Moncada y Alagón and his wife, D. Ana de Silva y Portugal. Calasanz and all the people of Peralta were their vassals.

The origin of the Barony of Peralta de la Sal dates back to the beginning of the 13th century and had arisen in the western end of the County of Urgel. They were the last lands conquered from the Moors by the counts. The re-population was made with people coming mainly from the conquering county, of Catalan language and customs, which have remained until today with the modifications due logically to the time and its subsequent incorporation into the Kingdom of Aragón. The origin of the conquest by Urgel was also the reason why the parish of Peralta and those of the towns of the barony were incorporated into the diocese of La Seo de Urgel.

Next to the Barony of Peralta was the Barony of Castro, created by James I the Conqueror for his beloved bastard son Fernán Sánchez, for which reason the barons of Castro would later bear the honorific title of "Royal." Both baronies were united in the middle of the 14th century by marriage bonds of their heirs. When Joseph Calasanz was born, the lords of the Baronies of Castro and Peralta were D. Berenguer Arnau de Cervelló, Baron of La Laguna, and his wife, D. Leonor de Boixadors. The baron died around 1559-60, and his titles and honors were inherited by his son Berenguer Arnau, who married Margarita de Alagón. Little Joseph would hear a lot, during his childhood in Peralta, about Mrs. Leonor de Boixadors and her son Berenguer Arnau because they were "the lords" of the village. Even more: in his own home he would feel in a special way the presence and the name of the barons, because his father, Pedro Calasanz, was "bayle" (mayor) of Peralta in 1559 and 1572. We do not know if he remained in the position uninterruptedly for so many years. The bayle was the direct representative of the barons and procurator of their rights and patrimonial interests.

The Barony of Peralta included the villages of Gavasa, Calasanz, Pelagriñón, Rocafort, Zurita, Cuatrocorz, Alcaná, Momagastre and La Cuba. The village of Peralta was the capital of the barony and its local bayle was also, normally, the general bayle of the whole barony. The capital of the Barony of Castro was Estadilla, where "the lords" had their residence, and therefore also fulfilled

the functions of capital of both baronies together. However, such “capitals” or heads of baronies were still small villages. According to approximate data, in the mid-sixteenth century Peralta must have had around 70 homes, that is, 315 inhabitants, and Estadilla 90 or 95 homes, that is, between 400 and 430 people.

The village of Peralta de la Sal, 523 meters above sea level, sits in an open hollow at the confluence of the Gavasa ravine with the river Sosa or La Sosa, which flows down from Calasanz and empties its waters into the river Cinca near the city of Monzón. Its lands are predominantly dry, with the typical Mediterranean products: wheat, wine and oil. On the banks of the river there is a considerable area of irrigated land and in the high and mountainous sites there are kermes oak trees. In 1798 the historian Ignacio Asso described the town as being surrounded by “extensive kermes oak groves”. About a thousand meters to the east of the village, in the ravines of Manantial, Collenera and Poza Grande, there are three springs, whose salty waters turn that whole corner into a huge square of salt pans, which for centuries, with a simple artisan organization, fed this industry so characteristic, that gave Peralta its own name “de la Sal” (of salt). It was normally exported to Catalonia and France.

Joseph Calasanz’ childhood was spent happily in this town and its surroundings. The not scarce and varied lands, and even salt pans, that his father owned, make us certain that the boy must have known and wandered around his town, in whose olive groves, on the other hand, took place the most famous and remembered scene of his younger years.

In the Kingdom of Aragón

St. Joseph Calasanz spoke and wrote perfectly in Catalan. In his native village a Catalan dialectal form persisted, strongly influenced by Castilian-Aragonese. Peralta and the villages in the barony were the last outpost of the Catalan county of Urgel since the time of the conquest. It was not, then, a border Castilian, influenced and corrupted by the neighboring Catalan, but rather a frontier Catalan, weakened by the Castilian-Aragonese spoken in the neighboring area. During his studies at the University of Lérida and his years of priestly activity in his diocese of Urgel, he had the opportunity

to refine and perfect his mother tongue. He was able to speak and write correctly in Catalan. Moreover, as a son of Peralta de la Sal, he belonged to the Catalan diocese of Seo de Urgel, and as a priest he was part of its clergy. But neither the language, nor the diocesan affiliation properly defines the nationality of a person.

The Barony of Castro and Peralta was located between the rivers Cinca and Noguera Ribagorzana. The many border disputes between the Catalan counties and the Kingdom of Aragón moved King James I to fix the dividing line in the river Cinca in the middle of the 13th century. But his grandson, James II, in 1300, moved it from the Cinca to the Noguera Ribagorzana, not without the logical protest of the Catalan Corts. But, in spite of this, the border remained unaltered until today. Thus, from 1300 onwards, the Baronies of Castro and Peralta were annexed or included in the Kingdom of Aragón, together with all the intermediate territory between the Cinca and the Noguera Ribagorzana. However, in the first half of the seventeenth century maps were published in Flanders in which the border of Catalonia was placed anachronistically in the Cinca, causing confusion.

The Barony of Castro and Peralta, like all the other innumerable baronies, counties, duchies and marquisates, scattered throughout the Peninsula, were nestled within the limits of the historical kingdoms or principalities. The Barony of Castro and Peralta cannot, therefore, be considered fully autonomous and sovereign, as one more state of the State of the Crown of Aragón. It necessarily had to belong to the Kingdom of Aragón or to the Principality of Catalonia. And the inhabitants of Peralta themselves were aware to belong to the Kingdom of Aragón. In a census dated in Peralta de la Sal on August 18, 1566 we read: "Said place of Peralta de la Sal and its territory is located within the present Kingdom of Aragón and it borders with the territories of the following places: Calasanz, San Esteban de Litera, del Campell, Tamarite de Litera, Çorita y Gavasa."³ In the Marriage Declarations of Pedro Calasanz, brother of the Saint, signed on February 20th, 1576 in Peralta de la Sal, it is said "neither the present marriage nor the present chapters are done according to the laws and observances of the present Kingdom of Aragón nor

3 Rev. Cal. 3 (1925) 178.

the customs of Catalonia...”⁴ Miguel Jiménez Barber, canon of Lérida, a great friend of the Saint, affirmed in the informative process of 1651: “I know where is the place of Peralta de la Sal, about which I am asked. My mother was born in a place three miles away from there, and I was born six miles away [Binaced], and this place is in the Kingdom of Aragón.”⁵ The same witness recalls that when he was studying at the University of Lérida “all the youth of our country of Aragón had chosen him [Calasanz] as prior of the nation.”⁶

Joseph Calasanz himself expressly affirms that he was Aragonese in a memorandum about the origins of the Pious Schools. He says: “Joseph of the Mother of God, from the place of Peralta de la Sal, diocese of Urgel, in the Kingdom of Aragón.”⁷ And in a letter of 1632 he says: “As long as I live, because I am Aragonese by nation, but Roman by feelings and customs, since I have been living in Rome for more than forty years, practically forgotten of the homeland...”⁸ But the forgetfulness should not have been so great if many of those who treated him and lived with him knew that he was Aragonese. Even the vice-queen of Sardinia, in the aforementioned letter of 1648, wrote to him: “I learned that Your Most Reverend Paternity was Aragonese and from his name I did not doubt that you knew my parents” (who were the Barons of Castro and Peralta).⁹

In spite of all that has been said, as soon as the Saint died, there were those who said that he was not Aragonese, but Catalan. But the Piarists of San Pantaleo, in whose house the Founder had lived and died, reacted because they knew that the “holy old man”, as he was affectionately called behind his back, had always claimed to be Aragonese. In fact, Fr. John Charles Caputi, one of the first historians of the Order, wrote in his *Memoirs* that, as a result of the beatification process, postulatory letters were requested from the king of France. And “some Catalans offered the requested letters of

4 Reg. Cal. 13, 6-8.

5 Ibid., 30 p. 209.

6 Ibid., pp. 213-14.

7 EGC, II, l.132a.

8 EGC, V, l. 1849.

9 EHI, pp. 1463-1464.

the King of France, claiming that Our Venerable Founder was born in the Kingdom of Catalonia and was a vassal of the King of France (who that time had occupied a part of Catalonia). And I renounced those offers, knowing that the Father was from the Kingdom of Aragón and not Catalan. Because when his death occurred in 1648 there were contrasts between the Aragonese and Catalans, because all pretended to be his compatriot. But there was an Aragonese Doctor who brought histories from the Kingdom of Aragón where it was said that not only the family of Calasanz, but also Peralta de la Sal were under the dominion of the Kingdom of Aragón, as our Father himself claimed to be Aragonese. And in all of the Confraternities where he was registered in Rome he was listed as Dr. Joseph Calasanz, Aragonese.”¹⁰

However, he preferred to be considered “Roman in feelings and customs...”.

The Calasanz-Gastón family

We cannot forget that the Founder of the Pious Schools lived and died in the midst of the Baroque Period, in which, among other things, nobility of origin is exalted as one of the highest values of society. It was not enough to be the founder a religious order, which was highly esteemed in many parts of Europe. Neither was it sufficient to have been canonized a century after his death. The “worldly” honors, much appreciated by contemporary society, were to be added to the “ecclesiastical” honors. And so, from the very beginning, in the first eulogies (panegyrics) that were done at the Saint’s funerals, his virtues came to light, certainly, but also his noble lineage, his noble ancestry, his noble seal. They wrote to Spain asking for reports about his childhood, his activity and his family. And they began to trace genealogical trees, in whose roots there was even the blood of kings. The biographies of almost three centuries continued to repeat and expand details of the nobility, and even wealth, of their parents and progenitors. A saint of the Spanish Golden Age was to shine, if possible, among the old nobility of his time.

10 S. GINER. El proceso de beatificación de San José de Calasanz (Madrid 1973) p. 114, fnt. 98.

All these tinsel shuddered and fell like autumn leaves when in 1921 the canon of Urgel, D. Pedro Pujol i Tubau, published a study entitled “Saint Joseph Calassanç, official of the Chapter of Urgell.” There, in the archival note of the tonsure of Calasanz appeared that his father, Pedro Calasanz, had been a blacksmith (fabri fe.). We dusted off the corresponding document, on parchment, which the Saint had brought with him to Rome, together with the others concerning the other ordinations, and kept in our General Archives. In them, it was seen with astonishment that the words fabri fe. (fabri ferrarii) had been scraped off, but still the features of the two “f” were discernible. Whoever erased the compromising words, wanted to hide the servile and humble quality of the father of the Holy Founder. And the polemic -in 1921- arose among the defenders of the old and traditional noble glories of the Calasanz family and the new impugners, who denied them outright.

Subsequent investigations, more serene, have come to clarify that, indeed, both the father, Pedro Calasanz, and the mother, María Gastón, were from families of “infanzones”, equivalent in Castile to “hidalgos” and in Catalonia to “donzell”, that is to say, the lowest grade in the scale of nobility.

The term “blacksmith” led some to think that he was a “master gunsmith”, as can be seen in other cases of “infanzones”. But we cannot discard the hypothesis that he was a normal blacksmith and that the tinkling of the hammers on the anvil was the background music that filled the days of little Joseph until he left Peralta to begin his higher education.

Another reminiscence of the noble exaltation of the Saint, in Spanish, was the interjection of the “de” between his name and surname. This was required by Spanish custom. And so it remains to this day against the evidence of countless original documents. There are a few that name his father, sometimes adding the office of “general bayle”, but the “de” never appears. In the marriage contracts of his older brother, Peter, and in those of his sister Hope, in which many members of the Calasanz family appear, not once does the “de” precede the surname. See this example, in which almost all the members of the family are mentioned: “Item this contract and conditions among the said parties that Peter Calasanz (son) brings, and the said Peter Calasanz (father) and Mary Gastón his parents

are giving him ... reserving the said donors... to the said Peter Calasanz son who is getting married, to Jusepe Calasanz, Mary Calasanz, Joan Calasanz, Magdalene Calasanz and Elisabeth Calasanz, their children...”¹¹ And if his father and his brothers and sisters never used the “de”, it is logical that neither did Joseph use it. And so it was. In the first letters he wrote from Rome, in which he did not forget to show off his degree of Doctor, he writes simply “Joseph Calasanz.” There is also an abundant collection of documents in the cathedral archives of Seo de Urgel, signed by Calasanz or naming him. The “de” does not appear even once.

Another very rich series of autograph signatures or quotations of his name and surname appear in the account books of the merchant Antoni Janer. Calasanz lived in his house in Urgel, for some time. About thirty times it is signed “Joseph Calasanz” and ten times in Latin, “Josephus Calasanz.” The merchant quotes him about 150 times as “Juseph Calesans”, and only twice he interposes the “de.” So we conclude, without any doubt, that the “noble” particle was a Baroque addition of his panegyrists. However, it would be a sin of excessive historical criticism if we were to radically eliminate today this particle, already consecrated by centuries of use in Spanish language.

The discovery of the “blacksmith’s shop” led some to think that the Calasanz family was rather poor and depended on the manual labor of the father.

But the documents suggest that it was a well-off family without economic hardships. The parents provided for their five daughters, marrying them off to young men of the same social position. They paid for Joseph’s studies from the moment he left the village and moved to Estadilla, and later to the universities of Lérida, Valencia and Alcalá de Henares.

In the Peter’s marriage contracts, the heir, it is shown that the family has abundant assets. They came from the mother’s dowry, from the father’s manual labor, and from his long years as “general bayle” of Peralta, whose job was well remunerated. In old registers of Peralta, it is spoken of the properties of Peter Calasanz and Mary Gastón, and it

11 Reg. Cal., 13, 6-8.

is said that they have houses in the village, vineyards and olive groves, orchards, threshing floor and haystack, a salt pan and flax fields, etc. In addition to being a mayor and blacksmith, he was mostly farmer, all of which was not at odds in Aragón with the condition of nobleman.

The researchers of the genealogy of the Saint do not agree in specifying the direct branch from which his father and progenitors spring. The only certainty is that the surname Calasanz was abundant in these lands. From the Middle Ages up to the times of the Saint it was a frequent surname of noblemen. Also the surname Gastón was the same. Calasanzian genealogists have only been concerned with the paternal tree of the Calasanz, thus supporting the attitude of Reverend Joseph Calasanz Gastón, who took to Rome the family seal with the arms of the Calasanz family and stamped it on his first letters, thus showing his nobility.

The parents of our protagonist were, therefore, Peter Calasanz and Mary Gastón or Gastó, both from Peralta. Some considered that Pedro Calasanz was born in one of the neighboring villages of Peralta. But the fact that as soon as he was married he was already a member of the village Council, and from 1559 to 1572 -with or without interruption- he was named general mayor of the Barony of Peralta, suggests that such titles and offices could not be entrusted to a newcomer.

Eight children were born of this marriage, namely: John, Mary, Peter, Joan, Magdalene, Hope, Elisabeth and Joseph. The firstborn, John, must have died unmarried and in adulthood, and the others all married, except the last, of course. Peter, Hope and Elizabeth died before Joseph left for Rome. About the other sisters and their children, Joseph speaks and worries in his letters from the Eternal City.

Birth of Joseph

It is funny that of some saints, even relatively modern, we do not know the precise date of their birth, whether it be the day, month or year, or all at the same time. This is the case, for example, with John of Ribera, Ignatius of Loyola, John of the Cross, Vincent de Paul, Anthony Mary Claret, etc.

The most appropriate thing would be to imitate St. Bonaventure, who, copying Thomas of Celano, began the Legend of St. Francis

saying: “There was in the city of Assisi a man named Francis, whose memory remains in blessing...”¹² But this hagiographic style, with the charm of its credulity and mystical flavor, has gone out of fashion, and today’s “biographies” demand precision and documents.

The Piarists of Rome were not very sure about the age of their Founder in the days of his death and burial.

On the lead plaque that they placed in the coffin they wrote that he had died at the age of ninety-two, and in the notarial minutes of death, they left a hint of doubt by adding a “circiter” (about 92, more or less). And this was the general opinion of the first chroniclers of the Order, although some of them specified the doubt by saying that he was born in 1556 or 1558. But 1556 prevailed in the “Lives” of the Saint, even in 1956, when there were official celebrations of the four centenary anniversary. As for the day and month, it was believed already in those first years after his death that he was born on December 9 or 11, or September 11. One of the most reliable historians was Fr. Vincent Berro, whose opinion was that he was born on September 3 or 4 and baptized on September 11. However, the multi-secular tradition chose September 11, 1556 as the date of birth.

Before the letters of Calasanz were published, there was somebody who looked to them, and found some in which the Saint tells about his age. Relying on such statements, he proposed the date of 1557 as the most accurate.

The Saint alludes to his age a dozen times, saying, for example, “I am entering seventy-four years of age”; “I am an old man of seventy-six years”; “if I were not eighty years old”, etc. Such statements at first glance, seem obvious, but some have told, without proving it, that the Saint did not count his age by years completed, but by years to be completed, i.e., following the Latin formula “*annum agens*.” According to this interpretation, the year of his birth would be 1558, while if he counted by years completed, it would be 1557. The latter seems to be the most acceptable hypothesis, not only because it is the normal way of counting years, even in that time, but also because in other letters he alludes to the age of others and

12 San Francisco de Asís (BAC, Madrid 1945) p. 526.

there is no doubt that he counts by years completed. For example, when he says that a newly appointed master of novices “is thirty-five years of age”, that was the years already completed required by canon law; or when he asks many times about the Brothers who have made their profession “before the age of twenty-one” in order to apply to them the pontifical Brief that spoke of twenty-one years of age. In any case, according to the Saint’s statements, it is clear that he could not have been born in 1556.

There is no hope of finding his baptismal certificate. The procurator of the clergy of Peralta wrote in 1651, “the said place of Peralta de la Sal, where Doctor Calasanz was born and baptized, from eight years to this part has been invaded, plundered and burned by the French twice, and for this reason the deeds of the said place have been lost, and among them the five parish books in which the baptismal date of the said Doctor Calasanz was written, and for this reason, we cannot write a certificate of his baptism.”¹³

Home Education

It is a cliché in the lives of the saints to say that from an early age they gave proof of their future sanctity, generally due to the good education received from their parents. And there is no reason to deny it, although perhaps many of the things that are said are applicable to other good children who have not been canonized. There are many testimonies among the witnesses of the process of beatification of our Saint and the first chroniclers. Brother Lorenzo Ferrari, who cared for him in his last years, said: “Once he exhorted me and other young men to Christian piety. He told us that when he was a child he attended to devotions and always prayed the Office of Our Lady and other devotions, particularly the Most Holy Rosary.” And: “I heard Fr. Joseph himself say that his father and mother educated him in the fear of God and made him learn the good letters ... his parents educated him by separating him with great care from bad company.” And Fr. Scassellati: “A companion of Fr. General, who was of the same age as him and whose name I do not remember, told me... the childhood of Fr. General was filled

13 BAU, BC, pp. 11-12.

with the fear of God and with signs of not mediocre sanctity. He frequented devotions very much and exhorted the children of his age to the fear of God and to Christian piety.”¹⁴ Surely this fellow disciple was the priest D. Joseph Musquez or Marquet, who, in Rome, in the church of San Pantaleo, during the funeral of Calasanz, told the Piarists anecdotes and memories of the childhood of his countryman. Fr. Scassellati refers to these memories when he adds that the schoolmaster of Peralta used to place the little Calasanz on a chair, and in front of his fellow pupils he would made him recite the Miracles of Our Lady, by Berceo, just as his mother taught him. And this attitude of the little Joseph Calasanz reciting before the children of Peralta the miracles of Our Lady or exhorting them to piety compels one to think about the future teacher and educator and founder of an Order dedicated to education.

Among all the memories evoked by D. Joseph Marquet, there is none so delightful and famous as the one recounted by Fr. Benedict Quarantotto: “Reverend Joseph Musches told me in the sacristy of San Pantaleo, at the time when the servant of God was exposed in the church on 26th of August 1648, a singular event of the servant of God, happened in his tender age of five years approximately, in his homeland of Peralta. Reverend Joseph told me: Father, do not marvel that this servant of God is a saint and died as such. I am his countryman and of about the same age as him. On one occasion he left home and the village with a knife or dagger drawn unsheathed in his hand. I asked him where he was going, and he answered me: I want to go kill the devil, because he is the enemy of God.”¹⁵ The fantasy of the hagiographers completed the story, adding that he saw the shadow of the devil appear between the branches and -as Berro says- “having gone to that olive grove, he climbed a fig tree, breaking the branch on which he had climbed.”¹⁶ And the poor boy went home hurt. Apart from the details, it is an adventure that is entirely plausible, and evokes Teresa of Jesus and her brother Rodrigo running away from home, still children, to go to the land of the Moors to be beheaded for the love of Christ.

14 Ibid., pp. 82-85; BAU, RV, p. 32.

15 BAU, BC, p. 86.

16 V. BERRO, *Memorie* (ms.), General Archives, Roma, Hist.-Bibl., I.f.4.r.

And with piety, the letters. In Peralta there was a small school, where we have seen little Joseph reciting the Miracles of Berceo before his classmates. There he must have learned to read and write and something else. And at home he would also be helped by his father, who knew how to read and write, as his signature appears in some documents. We know that neither his mother, Mary, nor his sister Hope -and probably not the others- could write. Joseph could not study Latin in his town because until 1592 there was no teacher for it. Calasanz recalled it writing from Rome to the parish priest: "It pleases me a lot you hired a teacher for Latin in Peralta. This will help parents to make their children learn letters, which is one of the best inheritances they can leave them."¹⁷

This appreciation for teaching letters is very interesting, since at this time he had not yet begun his task as a teacher and educator in the Roman Trastevere.

Estadilla

Finished his elementary studies in the school of Peralta, his parents had to find him a school where he could study humanities or grammar (Latin), as it was said then. In Estadilla, in 1541, the Trinitarians had founded a convent where they gave grammar classes to locals and strangers, perhaps as a boarding school. The foundation was due to the requests of the Lords of Castro and Peralta, who were interested in having a humanities center in their baronies, to prepare for the University.

There were also similar centers in Benabarre and Monzón; but it was natural that the few children of the Baronies of Castro and Peralta that undertook higher studies, went to Estadilla, head of both baronies. And so did Joseph Calasanz Gastón.

From the statutes and other documents of the universities of the Crown of Aragón with respect to the teaching of grammar, we can assume that in the study of the Trinitarians of Estadilla, the humanities were divided in three courses: junior, medium and senior. The basic text was Nebrija, and they gradually studied grammatical principles, syntax, prosody and rhetoric. The authors studied were usu-

17 EGC, II, l. 4.

ally Terence, Cicero, Caesar, Salustius, Titus Livius, Tacitus, Virgil, Horace, Martial and even the Dialogues of Luis Vives. One of the first biographers (Fr. Catalucci) writes that “after having studied grammar and rhetoric with great profit in verse and prose, he was sent to the University of Lérida...”¹⁸ Father Luis Cavada, who in 1690 was in Peralta and the surrounding area looking for news on the Saint, left us this testimony: “I also remember that the vicar of Benabarre, a very good friend of D. Joseph [Calasanz], had a book, as a Roman Ritual, manuscript, with various and very stylish Spanish poems, composed by the said Ven. Father while he was studying in Lérida, Valencia and Huesca (?). It was something exquisite on the sacrament and mystery of the Holy Trinity and other sacred topics.”¹⁹ Although Fr. Cavada places these poems in the university period of Calasanz, it seems more accurate to say that the poems were composed during his years in Estadilla, given that the main theme of the poems was the Most Holy Trinity, and the boy was studying at the school of the Trinitarians, in addition to the fact that in those years he studied rhetoric and poetry, along with the other humanities.

The “hagiographers” did not give us many details about the humanistic studies, because they were interested in highlighting the sanctity of his life. Dr. Miguel Jiménez Barber, canon of Lérida, declared the following in the processes of his friend regarding this period of Estadilla: “About the education of Fr. Joseph I can say what I heard from the old men and elders of that country, such as the aforementioned Antonio Calasanz and Monsignor Francisco de Ager, a minister of the Holy Office, who was a fellow disciple of Fr. Joseph, with whom he studied as a child in Estadilla. And the fact is that everyone called him the Santet, which means the little saint, adding, moreover, that he never went to school without having prayed first, and he did so every day, even though his classmates made fun of him.”²⁰ These recollections of fellow disciples from Estadilla are coherently linked to what his fellow disciples from Peralta also said about his piety, his exhortations to his friends, his narrations of Berceo’s Miracles and his struggle with the devil in the

18 BAU RV, p. 11.

19 L. PICANYOL, *Rassegna di storia e bibliografia scolastica* 26-27 (1957) 56.

20 BAU. BC, p. 83.

olive groves of Peralta. All this blossomed in a priestly vocation. In this case it is his own father, Peter Calasanz, who testifies it to us. In a testament that he granted on March 8, 1571, he named his son Peter as the universal heir of all his goods, since his first-born son John had died. Among his recommendations he tells him not only to maintain him [Joseph] with the decency that corresponds to his quality, giving him all that he would need, but that “trusting him to be a cleric, he should be given sufficient patrimony to receive Holy Orders, if he does not already have a benefit.”²¹

According to some biographers, among them Fr. Berro, when Joseph finished his grammar studies, that is, before entering the university in Lérida, he had a confrontation with his father, who wanted to direct him towards a military career, against the ecclesiastical vocation that Calasanz already felt. But surely this confrontation must be deferred for a few more years, at the dramatic moment when Peter died, the heir of the house and hope for the continuation of the family name. Then José was already in the middle of his theological studies. In March 1571 Joseph was still thirteen years old, and his father expressly stated in the will signed on that date that he hoped he would become a cleric. The father could give in to the wishes of his son, but, given the times, it is not likely that he would let the child's will prevail over his own.

Probably, the school year 1570-1571 was the third and last one that Joseph spent in Estadilla. He was able to begin these studies in 1568-1569, at the age of eleven and entered the University at the age of fourteen.

In fact, the students of grammar in the General Study of Lérida used to be children of ten to fourteen years of age. Therefore, before embarking on his university career, it was natural for him to have expressed to his parents his desire to become a priest. And his father, in his will of March 1571, could already state that Joseph wanted to be a cleric. But many years and many contradictions would have to pass before the blacksmith and mayor of Peralta saw his son say mass in the parish of the village.

21 Anal. Cal. 15 (1966) 197.

University studies and ordinations

Traditional version and documentary data

Among the early panegyristes there were those who, like Fr. Scasellati, while exalting with pompous paragraphs the nobility of Calasanz and praising with satisfaction his coat of arms, made him travel as a student through “the famous universities of all Spain.” The contemporary chroniclers and biographers were more discreet, starting with Fr. Catalucci. He wrote a “Breve Notizia” that served as biographical outline for the funeral sermon pronounced by the discalced Carmelite Friar Jacinth of St Vincent. There he said that “after having studied grammar and rhetoric with much profit in verse and prose, he was sent to the universities of Lérida, Valencia and Alcalá and obtained a doctorate in sacred theology, civil and canon law.”²² This was the essential nucleus, repeated almost without exception by all the biographers up to the present day. There were some, even among those of the seventeenth century, who on their own expanded the information, also doctoring him in philosophy or adding to the university trio of Lérida-Valencia-Alcalá the names of Salamanca or Perpignan or Huesca.

In recent times there have been researchers who have tried to find the name of Joseph Calasanz in the registration books of the universities of Lérida, Valencia and Alcalá. But to no avail. His name does not appear in any of the three. However, there is not lack of documentary allusion to the student’s undisputed stay in Lérida and Valencia. And given the persistence of the nominal union of the three, supported by the testimonial coincidence of the first biographers and chroniclers,

22 BAU, RV. p. 11.

there is no reason to deny the presence of the Saint in the celebrated University of Alcalá de Henares. The chronology and the facts make this hypothesis possible.

It should be added, however, that the documentary data available to us do not allow us to determine with certainty the chronology of the studies of our protagonist, neither the elementary, nor the grammar, nor the university ones. For this reason, even the most recent authors disagree when it comes to presenting the chronological picture of the long career of the student Joseph Calasanz. But the biographers tell us unanimously that he studied grammar, law and theology, and these last two subjects in university classrooms. Therefore, it is logical to resort to the academic statutes of the time to know the years he had to dedicate to each period of his studies. From this we can conclude that he must have studied grammar for three years, since this was an unavoidable requirement for any university degree and even these studies were usually done in the universities themselves. Similarly, at least two years of arts and philosophy were required, or three to graduate. In Lérida, the law degree lasted at least four years for a bachelor's degree, seven years for a doctorate in civil law and five years for a doctorate in canon law. For the bachelor's degree in theology, four years were required, followed by a certain period of practice in the so-called "catedrillas" to obtain a doctorate, in contrast to the "cátedras", chairs, for those already holding a doctorate.

Of the academic degrees obtained by Calasanz, we only have documentary evidence that he was a doctor in theology, since that is how he signed himself. However, no official document, nor his own signature, alludes to his graduation in law or philosophy. And it would be inexplicable that in all the long process to obtain some canonry in Rome, there was no allusion to his degrees in law or philosophy, if he had them, as there is mention to his doctorate in theology. The omission of his possible bachelor's degree in arts or philosophy could be explained, but not the silence about his doctorate in law, if he obtained it, as his biographers said.

University of Lérida: First period

We suppose that in the autumn of 1571, Joseph Calasanz Gastón went to Lérida. He was fourteen years old and just finished the

studies of grammar in Estadilla. It was the first time he left the area of his native barony of Peralta and Castro and crossed the border of the Kingdom of Aragón. The ancient Estudi General of Lérida had been founded in 1300 by James II, as a university center for the entire Crown of Aragón. Later, other universities would emerge in Huesca, Zaragoza, Valencia, Tarragona, Barcelona, etc., obfuscating the old glories of Lérida. And due to its foundational character as the only university in the entire Crown of Aragón, it maintained through the centuries the grouping of its students in the three “nations” that made up the Crown: Aragonese, Catalans and Valencians. By statute, the rector was a student with full jurisdictional and academic powers over professors and students. Unbelievable for us! And to respect the equality of rights, each year the rector had to be chosen from among the law students of each of the three “nations”, in rigorous rotation. Joseph Calasanz, as a native of Peralta de la Sal, belonged to the Aragonese “nation”.

Due in part to its own functional structure, whereby the power and deliberative authority was in the hands of the students themselves, and in part also to the character of the university students of all times, the Estudi General of Lérida was never exempt from riots and brawls, disorders and disturbances. They were provoked by the students, both in the university premises and in the streets and squares of the city. For this reason, and also due to the desire to update certain outdated methods and customs, a reform had been attempted in the years 1557-1559 by the bishop Miguel Despuig. But the reformer died without having achieved his goal. In July of 1575 Philip II named the new visitator-reformer, also bishop of Lérida, Antony Augustine Albanell. By this time it had been four years that Joseph Calasanz frequented those classrooms, and in those years he had had the opportunity to witness and experience the noisy, tumultuous, and disturbing atmosphere of the students.

An example: on September 3, 1574, Bishop Albanell arrested the student John Baptist Boil, a Valencian, who was the rector of the Estudi General, and, since he was a cleric, he locked him up in the episcopal jail. But the city, rioted by the students, “took out standard and flag”, and many people gathered “with various kinds of weapons”; they came to the bishop’s palace, threatening and forcing the bishop, frightened, to release the prisoner.

Also from Lérida we have testimonies of the exceptional conduct of the student Calasanz, following with coherence what we have already been told of his years in Peralta and Estadilla. The atmosphere of Lérida was certainly much more provocative and dangerous. Here, then, is what the witness and canon of Lérida, Monsignor Michael Jiménez Barber, declared: “Studying at the University of Lérida in his youth, Mateo García, priest and fellow disciple of the Servant of God, told me that ‘being very restless and often having troubles, because of which I found myself in great dangers, I had recourse to young Joseph, who with his advice and help got me out of difficulties’. And he used to say that for him Joseph was his Holy Spirit, having no other counselor than him in his troubles.”²³ This and the other testimonies about the piety of the child, adolescent and young Joseph Calasanz could seem to us as late and common praises, but the guarantee of their credibility lies in the fact that we are given the concrete names of the “fellow disciples” who remembered these anecdotes of his young years: D. Joseph Marquet in Peralta, D. Francis de Ager in Estadilla, D. Mathew García in Lérida. And they are not about generalities, but about concrete things and cases.

As far as Lérida is concerned, it is curious to note that at eighty-two years of age Calasanz still remembered the dangerous times of his youth in the university, and, as he did that time, he continued to give advice to fiery and quarrelsome young men. In April 1639 he wrote to Fr. Fedele: “Your brother Joachim has such a hot temper that he has quarreled again with some students on returning from school, and with a knife that came to his hands, with other companions, he wounded one in the back and they say he is seriously ill.... I have advised him to go to Naples [where Fr. Fedele was] ... and if he does not leave Rome and is caught, it will be difficult to free him because “est solitus delinquere” [he is used to commit offenses].” And in June he wrote again to Fr. Fedele: “As for your brother Joachim, please have him go to confession and receive Holy Communion every Sunday, for by doing so with devotion the juvenile rumors - sic - (humors?) will die down; otherwise he will find someone who will perhaps hurt him without being able to confess. And God usu-

23 Ibid., p. 36.

ally allows such things to those who are brave, as was seen so many times in my days.”²⁴

In the University of Lérida, he must have studied three years of arts or philosophy and at least four years of law. If we assume that in the autumn of 1571 - “trusting that he would be a cleric,” as his father said- he moved to Lérida, he must have finished philosophy in the summer of 1574. And if he then studied law for four years, it must have been from the autumn of 1574 to the summer of 1578. By chance, we have two documents, one from September 1573 and the other from the same month in 1577, in which he signs with another companion “Jusepe Calasanz, student.” It is a pity he does not say of what! With this we can be sure that he used to spend his vacations at home, since in 1577 he signs in Peralta and in 1573 he signed in the neighboring village of Gavasa.

Canon Jiménez Barber says that his fellow student Mathew García, “also told me that all the student youth of his Aragonese nation had chosen him as Prior of their Kingdom and he served as an effective resource to all, and by all he was considered a man of all virtue and goodness. And this, as I say, was in his youth in the Studium of Lérida.”²⁵ The Italian biographers interpreted this appointment of “Prior” as a sort of “Prince of the students”, of an honorary nature. In recent times it was believed that it could mean rector of the University, since in Lérida the rector was a student elected by students, so that Calasanz could have been elected when it was Aragón’s turn. Such a hypothesis cannot be denied, and no documents have yet been found that categorically disprove this possibility. Another hypothesis suggests that instead of being rector, he could have been elected advisor to the rector, given that in fact the rector had advisors from the three nations, elected by the students of each of them. The strange thing about the case is that Jiménez Barber was a canon of Lérida and a student of its University, and knew the exact terminology perfectly well. How did he say, then, prior and not rector or counselor? Another hypothesis has been proposed in modern times: in Lérida there was the College of the Assumption or of Dom-

24 EGC, VII, l.3071 and 3091.

25 BAU, RV, p. 36.

inic Pons for students with scholarships. Did Calasanz reside in this College and was he appointed rector or prior of the same, given that this position was also held by a student?

Among the events of great importance in the university life of Calasanz during this period in Lérida, we must remember that on April 17, 1575 he received the clerical tonsure from the hands of his own bishop of Urgel, D. John Dimas Loris, in the church of Holy Christ of Almatá, in the city of Balaguer. In those days, some students received the tonsure to enjoy some ecclesiastical benefit without the intention of becoming a priest. Joseph Calasanz was tonsured because he had a true priestly vocation, testified in 1571 by his father. And he did not enjoy ecclesiastical benefit until he received the sub-diaconate, having his subsistence assured by his father's express provision, manifested in the will of 1571 and in the marriage contracts of the heir, Pedro, signed in 1576.

The same year in which our student received his first tonsure, another important event took place in Lérida: the first mission preached by the Jesuits. It caused a great spiritual commotion, even among the students. And such missions were repeated in the following years until 1580. Calasanz recalls sometimes in his letters, being already very old, that he had respected the Jesuits "since he was a young man", and even in one of the allusions of 1644 he says that he has known them "for eighty years."²⁶ If the calculation is accurate, he would have met them for the first time in 1564, at the age of seven, when he had not yet left Peralta. But in these references he would undoubtedly remember other occasions during his University youth.

Calasanz left the University of Lérida when he finished his law studies.

In Valencia and Alcalá de Henares

Why did he not continue studying in Lérida? Undoubtedly there were very powerful reasons for leaving Lérida and going to Valencia, very far from Peralta. And it is not easy to find a satisfacto-

26 EGC, VII, l. 3704 and VIII l. 4075, 4232.

ry answer. Of course, the University of Lérida had maintained its prestige in the field of law, but it was not distinguished in theology. The demands for reform in the university were felt both in Lérida as well as in Valencia, and from both we can find complaints about the lamentable state of their studies. In this period immediately after the Council of Trent, the need for an “updating” is noticeable everywhere. Moreover, the student atmosphere was probably much more difficult and unruly in Lérida than in Valencia, given the internal structures of government. But perhaps, what most influenced Calasanz to change his place of study were the Jesuits. In their private conversations they surely advised Calasanz, who was about to begin theology, to move to Valencia, where the Jesuits had the College of Saint Paul, founded in 1544, where they also taught theology with pontifical faculty to give academic degrees, and since 1567 they admitted external students. The patriarch Saint John of Ribera recognized the competence with which theology was taught in religious colleges, at the same time that he lamented the state of decadence in which the university was. And this was the cause of many students abandoning the university classrooms to study theology in those of religious. If this was so, we could explain why the name of Joseph Calasanz does not appear in the University records. And, unfortunately, the expulsion of the Jesuits and other disturbances made the archives of Saint Paul’s College disappear.

All biographies have the account of the temptation suffered by Calasanz when he was studying theology in Valencia, being twenty-one years of age.

Such a scene could only have been described by the protagonist himself and in an atmosphere of great spiritual intimacy. And indeed it was so. D. Ascanio Simón had been a Piarist for a while under the name of Fr. Jerome of St Agnes. In 1659, preparing the process of beatification of Calasanz, he made before notary a declaration, the core of which is the following: “Having gone once to give account of conscience to the Ven. Servant of God, after having discussed many things concerning the spirit, he told me that when he was twenty-one years old in Valencia, and he was studying Sacred Theology, he was invited by a lady to sin and that by the grace of blessed God and of his exalted Mother, he eluded the snare that had been laid for

him by the devil, abandoning the woman who incited him to sin.”²⁷ In 1652, Br Lorenzo Ferrari, in his declaration for the process, says that the Saint told it also to him, without indicating the name of the protagonist, but the brother knew that he was speaking of himself, since he had heard it told to a father to whom he had already made this confidence. This new confidant adds that the young man had “a very advantageous job, of great interest and profit in that place...”; “and he, in order to escape the occasion of sinning, left that place, without paying attention to the profit he was abandoning there.”²⁸ The always trustworthy Fr. Berro summarized what he had heard about Fr. Jerome, saying that, “studying in Valencia, he obtained honest service as secretary of a noble and honorable lady, etc.”²⁹ If the Theology student was twenty-one years old, the affair must have occurred during the academic year 1578-1579, the first and only one that he lived in Valencia. We have already said that, according to our opinion, the last year of Law studies in Lérida was 1577-1578.

According to the unanimous opinion of the biographers, the student Calasanz went from Valencia to Alcalá, and the reason for leaving Valencia was to escape temptation. In the primitive “Brief News” of Fr. Catalucci we read that Calasanz “fled from that house in search of his confessor, and there he determined not to enter the house of that lady from now on, as he did.”³⁰ If he studied at the College of St. Paul, and the Jesuits themselves had already recommended it to him in Lérida, as we have suggested, it is possible to think that “his confessor” was also a Jesuit and advised him to leave the city and continue his studies in Alcalá, where they also had a college. The future bishop of Urgel and protector of Calasanz, Andrew Capilla, did his studies there. In Alcalá there was also a notable contingent of students from Aragón. Calasanz, therefore, moved to Alcalá, where he began the second course of theology in the fall of 1579, according to our chronological hypothesis.

27 BAU, BC, p. 104.

28 Ibid., p. 105.

29 V. BERRO, *Memorie*, f.6r-7v.

30 BAU, RV, p. 11.

Definitive decision to be a priest

To the north of the Barony of Castro and Peralta was located the County of Ribagorza, which in the years 1578- 1581 was in turmoil, because the abuses and tyranny of the count. The vassals raised up in arms. The uprising then spread to the neighboring baronies, among them those of Castro and Peralta. The lords showed solidarity, and the same the rebels. The son of the former bayle general of Peralta, Peter Calasanz Gastón, went to defend the rights of his lord. But in 1579 he was killed by the rebels. And the death of the heir shakes and upsets the plans of the afflicted blacksmith of Peralta. He, worried about the future of his estate and the continuation of his family name, tries to bend the will of his son, who is already in his second year of theology with a determined spirit of reaching the priesthood. Here is how a distant relative of the Saint testifies it in 1651: "When Peter Calasanz, his brother, heir of the house and estate of his parents, died without children, the said parents wanted to make the said Joseph Calasanz heir of their goods and wealth and he did not want to. And this is true."³¹ The bad news of his brother's death reached Joseph together with his father's insinuations of naming him heir, which logically meant founding a family to perpetuate the Calasanz lineage. There were no more sons left in the Calasanz-Gastón household. He was the last one. For the time being, he put it off, following the studies without deciding to return to his village. But soon after, perhaps excessively affected by the death of her son, her mother died as well. Joseph probably waited for the summer to return home, having already finished his second year of theology.

Calasanz spent the entire academic year 1580-1581 in Peralta la Sal. He must have suffered the harassment of his father, asking him by all means to renounce his priestly vocation in order to give heirs and perpetuity to his house and estate. And this battle would be much harder and more painful for the son than the one fought in Valencia against the insinuations of a lady. He did not experience a new temptation. He was not tempted by the prospect of having abundant goods and happy life as a father of a family. He must have

31 Anal Cal 20 (1968) 254.

been hurt by the desperate attitude of his father, who appreciated much more the continuity of his lineage than the decided priestly vocation of his son. Those were also months in which the son had to be close to the father, who in a single year had lost his heir and his wife.

The first biographer of Calasanz, Fr. Catalucci, in his “Brief News”, after saying that he had studied at the universities of Lérida, Valencia and Alcalá, tells us about the temptation of the lady, and then writes: “He returned to the homeland..., before returning to the homeland...”, and erased both sentences, doubting whether it was before or after returning to Peralta, and then continued: “He became seriously ill, and after making a vow to become a priest, he suddenly recovered his health.”³² And the doubts also influenced later biographers, who did not know exactly when or where to place this serious illness. Nothing prevents us from thinking that it occurred precisely in that year 1580-1581, when he returned home after the sad events that had occurred. It was, undoubtedly, a providential illness, and this is how everyone interprets it. The son manifests to his father that, if he manages to save himself from danger, he should be allowed to pursue a priestly career. And he made his vow to the Virgin in that sense. The recovery of his health, with miraculous speed, convinces the father to accept the son’s vocational decision. And the son, once freed from his illness, waited for the new school year to begin so that he could resume his interrupted ecclesiastical career. It was a difficult year, but a decisive one for his future and even for the imperishable glory of his father’s surname.

Back in Lérida: Holy Orders

In the middle of October 1581, Joseph Calasanz left Peralta on his way to Lérida. A road already known and so many times traveled during the seven years that he had frequented the General Study of Lérida. He did not think of going back to Valencia or Alcalá to finish his theology studies. Perhaps the advanced age of his father, aggravated by the unpleasantness of the last year, advised him to

32 BAU, RV, p. 11.

stay closer. And Lérida was a day or so away from Peralta. Many of his classmates would still be there, since barely three years had passed since he left those classrooms. He had only two more theology courses to complete his long ecclesiastical career. For the moment he did not plan to obtain his doctorate.

During these two years he was to receive minor and major orders. It had already been seven years since he had received his first tonsure from the hands of his bishop of Urgel. Now, while he was studying theology at the University in Lérida, it was no longer necessary for his own bishop to give him dimissorial letters or to ordain him. To simplify things, all this could be processed in the episcopal curia of Lérida. But coincidentally, in those years (1581-1583) the see of Lérida was vacant, and the vicar general, D. James Mahull³³ had to intervene for examinations and dimissorial letters. And since there was no bishop in Lérida, they had to be ordained out of the city. This is the reason why José Calasanz, together with other fellow students, had to move to Huesca to receive minor orders and the sub-diaconate. They received on December 17 and 18, 1582, from the hands of the bishop of Huesca, D. Peter de Frago. Both in the dimissorial letters and in the ordination certificates it is expressly stated that the tonsured Joseph Calasanz belonged to the diocese of Urgel.

In the ordination of sub-deacon, as today in that of deacon, the means of subsistence of the ordinandi had to be manifested. If he is a religious, it is said that he is ordained “under the title of poverty”, that is, that by the vow of poverty his sustenance is guaranteed by the Order to which he belongs; if he has his own goods, it is said that he is ordained “under the title of patrimony”; if he enjoys some ecclesiastical benefice, it has to be named specifically what kind of benefice. José Calasanz, at this time, did not yet possess his own patrimony strictly speaking, since his father had not yet constituted him universal heir; he will do in the wills of 1585 and 1586. For this reason, it is said that he possessed a benefice in the church of Saint Stephen in Monzón, diocese of Lérida. Who got it for him? During these years there are many ecclesiastics surnamed Calasanz in the

33 Anal Cal. 15 (1966) 198-200.

diocese of Lérida and neighboring territories. And one of them had reached Rome, and in 1571 he was named as follows: “Antonio Calasanz presbyter and dean of the singers of the chapel of the Most Holy Father the Pope [Pius V],” But in our case it is much more interesting to remember that precisely on November 23, 1582, almost a month before Joseph Calasanz received the sub-diaconate, the Prior of the main church of Santa María del Romeral of that town, Dr. D. Bartholomew Calasanz, had been named “ecclesiastical official” of the town of Monzón³⁴. We cannot be sure that both Calasanz were related. But the coincidence of this appointment of D. Bartholomew and the awarding of an ecclesiastical benefice to the sub-deacon Joseph, in a church of Monzón precisely, suggests to us that both Calasanz were relatives and that the recently appointed “ecclesiastical official in Monzón” must have obtained the mentioned benefice for his young relative Joseph.

A few months passed. The see of Lérida was still vacant and the problem of ordinations in the diocese itself had to be solved by taking advantage of opportune occasions. In January 1583, Caspar John de la Figuera, bishop of Jaca, had been proposed for the diocese of Albarracín, and at the end of March the proposal had been accepted by Rome. Bishop Caspar left Jaca to spend a few months in Fraga, his hometown, waiting for the official confirmation and communication of his appointment. Fraga belonged to the diocese of Lérida. Therefore, the Chapter of Lérida granted La Figuera license so that he could perform all kinds of pontifical acts in the diocese of Lérida, including ordinations. And on April 9, 1583, José Calasanz went to Fraga to receive the ordination of deacon.³⁵

Finally, on December 17 of the same year 1583, Calasanz received the priesthood from the hands of his own bishop, Fray Hugo Ambrose de Moncada, in the chapel of the residential palace-castle of Sanahúja, in the present province of Lérida, but in the diocese of Urgel. He was twenty-six years old, but it was not a late vocation, but a very early one, since his father “trusted him to be a cleric” when he was not yet fourteen years old. He was probably one of

34 Ibid., 20 (1968) 306.

35 Ibid., 15 (1966) 201-204; 8 (1962) 368-369.

those children who from early childhood say that they want to be priests. The date of ordination suggests that his first Mass in Peralta de la Sal was on Christmas Day. It was a day of joy, no doubt, but also of sorrow, because among those present at the solemnity were missing his siblings John, Peter and Hope, and above all his mother. Perhaps his father was already resigned and even satisfied to see his son a priest, without thinking that with him the Calasanz surname ended in direct line. The new priest was the end point of an entire dynasty. But what the old blacksmith of Peralta could not even dream of at that time was that his last male son, like the ancient biblical patriarchs, would have an offspring as numerous as the stars, and that the Calasanz surname would become famous in history not because of the deeds of the ancestors, but because his own son had renounced to perpetuate with his marriage the descendants of the Calasanz - Gastón family. And God would make him the father of many children. The full name of the town was "Peralta de la Sal y de la Honor", but the true honor of Peralta was Joseph Calasanz Gastón.

First years of priesthood

Disorientation of biographers and... of Calasanz?

At first glance, the trajectory of Joseph Calasanz from the time he begins his studies, leaving Peralta de la Sal on his way to Estadilla, until he focuses totally on the authentic vocation of his life in the Roman district of Trastevere, gives the impression of restlessness and disorientation. He does not seem to know what he wants. He begins his university career in Lérida, where he could also have studied grammar instead of going to Estadilla; from Lérida he goes to Valencia, from Valencia to Alcala and from Alcala, after an interval of one year, he returns to Lérida. And still the old biographers wanted to take him to Salamanca, Perpignan and Huesca. Although certain interruptions can be explained, this does not totally justify the changes of university. He could have done his entire career in Lérida, where he began and finished it.

As soon as he was ordained a priest, he began another disorienting wandering. The logical and normal thing once he was already a priest would have been for him to join his own diocese. But inexplicably he went to the service of the bishop of Barbastro. When he died, he left Barbastro for Monzón, where the Courts of the Crown of Aragón were to be held. There he joined the retinue of the newly appointed bishop of Lérida, followed him to Montserrat, and when he died in the monastery, he returned to his town. There he spent almost a year and finally he joined his diocese of Urgel. The old and new chroniclers lengthened this journey, because they believed that he was also in Jaca and then in Albarracín before stopping in Monzón. And this because when they found that Bishop La Figuera ordained him as a deacon in Fraga and then he has him as a “familiar” in Monzón and Montserrat, they thought that he had joined La

Figuera's entourage as soon as he finished his theology studies in Alcalá. But documents recently found have shed definitive light on this dark period: the dimissorial letters for the minor orders and the sub-diaconate, nominally granted to Joseph by the vicar general of Lérida "sede vacante", and the permissions also given by the Lérida chapter to Bishop La Figuera to perform pontifical acts during his stay in Fraga, where he ordained Calasanz as deacon, place him in Lérida during the two years prior to his priestly ordination. And the documented presence of Calasanz in Barbastro during a year and a half after his priestly ordination and before presenting himself in Monzón, as we will see, makes us certain that he joined the entourage of La Figuera in Monzón and not before.

The biographers, even the most recent ones, have wondered how Calasanz managed to enter the service of two consecutive bishops -the one of Barbastro and the one of Lérida-, but they have not questioned the reason why he did not join his diocese until after the death of his father. And that is three full years, since he was ordained a priest on December 17, 1583 and appeared in Urgel on February 12, 1587. This permanence outside his diocese and the successive services to two different bishops must have a motivation; otherwise we can only think that Joseph went in search of an honorable and well remunerated employment, even with the due licenses, disregarding his own diocese of Urgel.

Two are the hypotheses that we believe acceptable, and that can be complementary. First, Calasanz finished his four courses of theology, was ordained a priest, but had not yet done the necessary practices to obtain his doctorate. He could have tried to obtain a chancery office in a neighboring diocese or in Lérida itself in order to be close to the University and spend there the necessary months to complete the academic records. He first obtained the position in the curia of Barbastro and then next to La Figuera, who, being bishop-elect of Lérida, was expected to move to his see once the Cortes of Monzón were over. And already in Lérida, Calasanz could easily crown his aspirations of doctor in theology. The calculations failed, because from Monzón he had to go to Montserrat, where La Figuera died.

A second hypothesis seems to us more reasonable, without excluding the other. Joseph wants to stay close to Peralta, because his father, already very old, could die the day he least expected and the

son wants to assist him. For this reason, he looks for a job near Peralta that does not tie him down too much, such as a parish, which would prevent him from being away for months at a time. He first found a placement in Barbastro. After the death of the protector bishop, he went to Monzón to achieve another similar occupation, since the convocation of the Courts was a good occasion for this. He manages to be accepted as a “familiar” (personal secretary) by the bishop-elect of Lérida. Also in this case his plans are complicated, because he has to move far away from Peralta to travel to Montserrat. But it was a consequence of his offer. He could not stop following the bishop, wherever he went, since he was his secretary. Nevertheless, as we shall see, from Monzón he made a trip to Peralta to visit his father before leaving for Montserrat. And as soon as La Figuera died in the monastery, Calasanz returned to his village, and there he remained until the death of his father. Only then, does he immediately join his own diocese of Urgel.

There is, then, in all this wandering from diocese to diocese, no desire to prosper in the shadow of protectors. He does not give up this *modus vivendi* out of disillusionment or human disenchantment or religious scruple for not giving himself to pastoral tasks in his own diocese. They are simple conditions imposed by his filial obligation to take care of his father or to be near him in his old age.

In the episcopal palace of Barbastro

The diocese of Barbastro had been re-erected in 1571, after a long interval of centuries. Its new first bishop was the Dominican Friar Felipe de Urríes y Urríes (1572-1585). On February 10, 1584, Joseph Calasanz appears among the “familiares” of the bishop.³⁶ Two other signatures of his are read in two documents dated May 28 of the same year, and a last allusion in another notarial document dated October 12, 1585, which names him as follows: “Very reverend mosen Jusephe Calasanz, graduate in Sacred Theology”, and says that he is absent from Barbastro.³⁷ And, indeed, at that time Calasanz was in Monzón as a “familiar” of bishop La Figuera.

36 Anal. Cal. 15 (1966) 210.

37 Ibid., p. 211.

To explain the presence of José in the episcopal palace of Barbastro, among the “familiar” of Urríes, one resorts to the relationship of the bishop with the barons of Castro and Peralta, who, as lords of the new presbyter from Peralta and son of the former mayor of the barony, could have influenced to accept him in his entourage. And it is plausible.

The “Brief news” of Catalucci says that he was accepted as “aiutante di studio.” And this Italian office is not easy to interpret. It is known that in the episcopal palace of Barbastro there was a small group of pages at the service of the bishop and the cathedral, who were entrusted to a priest who took care of their instruction in letters and their Christian education.³⁸ This has led us to suppose that “aiutante di studio” in this case means “teacher of the pages.” And it is suggestive to imagine the future founder of the Pious Schools already exercising the office of teacher in Barbastro.

Bishop Urríes was surrounded by some Dominicans. And with them he continued to observe practically the cloistered life. If Calasanz lived in the palace, it is probable that he also followed this observance. With this he came into direct contact with religious life, although he had already several opportunities to deal with religious: with the Trinitarians in Estadilla; with Franciscans, Augustinians and again with Trinitarians in Lérida, since some of them held chairs in the University during Calasanz’s studies; with Jesuits in Lérida, Valencia and Alcalá, and perhaps, even in Peralta when he was a child. Also here, in Barbastro, he had to learn about internal problems of the abbey of Alguaire, of the nuns of St. John of Jerusalem. His first signature in Barbastro is stamped precisely in a document related to a lawsuit of these nuns, in which Urríes acted as judge and ruled in favor of the Prioress. And although he did not sign any paper, he had to know about another lawsuit that occurred in 1584 during his stay in the palace; this time between the bishop himself and the Benedictine monastery of St Victorian about jurisdictions and dominion of certain villages of the diocese³⁹.

We know nothing more about the activities of Calasanz in the service of Urríes. According to the documents, we have seen that he

38 Ibid., p. 192.

39 Anal. Cal. 20 (1968) 302 and 296.

appears in Barbastro on February 10, 1584. He had been ordained as a priest on December 17 of the previous year, so it is probable that he joined the service of Urríes after Christmas. And it is also almost certain that from the beginning of the academic year 1583-84 until he was ordained he continued in Lérida, doing practical work in the so-called “catedrillas”, an obligatory step for the doctorate. Even later, from Barbastro, he went for some time to the University to fulfill these requirements. It is also likely that during his stay in Barbastro he made a trip to Peralta to be with his father.

Bishop Felipe de Urríes y Urríes died on June 19, 1585. And soon after his former “familiar” Joseph Calasanz left Barbastro to Monzón, where the General Courts were going to be celebrated. His permanence in Barbastro was not necessary.

At the service of the Bishop of Lérida in Monzón

On June 28, 1585, the Courts of the Crown of Aragón were opened in the Archpriestal Church of Santa María del Romeral of Monzón, in the presence of Philip II. The Prior of that church and ecclesiastical official of Monzón was Dr. Bartolomew Calasanz. Did he call his protégé and relative, Joseph Calasanz, to introduce him to the bishop-elect of Lérida, who was to arrive at the Courts as a member of the Church? Or was the same Joseph who, seeing himself without office when Urríes died, decided to go to Monzón to request that the new bishop of Lérida accept him as a “familiar”, with or without recommendations from someone? We do not know.

The presence of Calasanz in Monzón was attested by himself in 1637, at the request of the Augustinians, in an affidavit in which he wrote: “The year of 1585, King Philip II returned from Barcelona, where he accompanied his Highness, the Duke of Savoy and the Princess of Spain, wife of the Duke. The King came to Monzón to hold the Courts for the three kingdoms of the Crown of Aragón. Among other bishops there was D. Caspar de La Figuera, a native of Fraga, bishop of Albarracín and elected of Lérida. A priest named Aguilar, of the order of St. Augustine, came to live in his palace. He was a great preacher and small of body, and it seems to me that he was from those parts of Seville. And we were both in company in Monzón in the service of the said bishop. Aguilar began to treat

with the said Bishop of the Reformation of his Religion. The Bishop spoke with the confessor of King Philip II, called Fr. Chaves, of the Order of St. Dominic, about that reformation; and by this means he afterwards communicated with the King. The King nominated a Congregation to adjust this business; and there were in it the said Bishop, the confessor of the King, the Count of Chinchón, the Justice of Aragón and the said Father Aguilar. And having met several times, they finally resolved the manner to be adopted. And I was called as secretary to make the dispatches to be sent to Rome, and this was in the month of August or September of the said year of 1585. And the papers were sent by order of the King to his Ambassador.⁴⁰ This statement certifies not only the presence of Calasanz in Monzón and his being to the service of the bishop-elect of Lérida, D. Caspar John de la Figuera, but also of the only activity that we know of Calasanz in Monzón.

This Augustinian reform is not the one that arose later in the Provincial Chapter of Castille, gathered in Toledo in 1588, to conform the new modality of Augustinians Recollects. Long before the Council of Trent, at the end of the XIV century, it began a current to reform the old religious orders. In Spain it acquired much vigor in the time of Cardinal Cisneros. The reformed were called “observants”, and the others, “cloistered.” This reform also arose among the Augustinians, which began in Castile, and from Castile they tried to implant it in the Crown of Aragón, but encountered great opposition. One of the promoters of the reform was the aforementioned Fr. Aguilar, who in Monzón tried to interest and make the king intervene so that the reform would be imposed in all the Crown of Aragón. According to what Calasanz declared, his role in this matter was simply that of scribe or secretary, but he did not intervene at all in the agreements and conversations of the commission.

On September 21, 1585, Philip II wrote to his ambassador in Rome, Count of Olivares, informing him of the dispatches written by Calasanz.⁴¹ And precisely in those days of September “his father [Pedro Calasanz] became seriously ill, and on September 19, 1585 he

40 BAU, BC, p. 132; Anal. Cal. 8 (1962) 374.

41 Anal. Cal. 20 (1968) 431-433.

ordered another closed will, in which he calls himself Maestre Peter Calasanz and after several orders and legacies, he leaves as heir executor of his will and exonerator of his soul and conscience his beloved son Mossén Joseph Calasanz, priest, living in Peralta.”⁴²

This makes Fr. Jericho suppose that Joseph “seems to have moved to Peralta de la Sal.” And it is logical assumption. Monzón is very close to Peralta, and we cannot suppose that José failed to learn of his father’s serious illness and much less that he failed to go to his bedside to assist him. If on the 21st the king wrote about the dispatches, it does not mean that these had been written exactly the immediately preceding days, so that on the 19th Joseph could not already be at his father’s bedside when he drew up the will. In any case, either before the 21st or after, it must be assumed that Joseph went to Peralta. It is interesting to note that in the will, apparently, it is said that Joseph was “inhabitant of Peralta.” This suggests that during these years of service to Urríes and La Figuera, that is, while his father was alive, he considered his official address to be in Peralta.

Maesse Peter Calasanz left danger, and his son Joseph, already officially constituted heir, returned to Monzón. His protector, D. Caspar Juan de la Figuera, at the end of August had already accepted the pontifical Brief that named him, at the request of Philip II, apostolic visitator of the monastery of Montserrat. On October 22nd he left Monzón with his entourage on his way to the abbey, where he arrived on the 28th of the same month, being solemnly received by the monks. In the official act of that day they signed as “witnesses, Joseph Calasanz, presbyter, and Michael John Castanesa, deacon, “familiar” of the said Bishop, present in the said monastery.”⁴³

The Apostolic Visitation to Montserrat

The companions of the bishop La Figuera were the two “familiar” mentioned above: Joseph Calasanz and John Castanesa, D. Jerome Pérez, secretary of the visit, and D. John or Ibán de Bardaxí, royal delegate. The old biographers, always prone to exaggeration of the

42 Ibid., 40 (1978) 457-458.

43 Ibid., 20 (1968) 189.

endowments, titles and activities, said that Calasanz was the secretary of the visit. However, the official records list Jerome Pérez as secretary and Calasanz as “familiar.” Furthermore, Calasanz himself said in his declaration of 1637: “The said Bishop [La Figuera] was then elected with Apostolic Brief as Visitor of the Convent or Sanctuary of the Most Holy House of Monserrate, and I went with him as his confessor and examiner.”⁴⁴ That the Visitor Bishop chose him as confessor is a clear indication of the spirituality and personal gifts of the young priest. The title of examiner is not easy to understand, unless it refers to the interrogations and examinations that had to be made and were made to all the monks.

What was happening in Montserrat? We have already seen that the Augustinians dealt in Monzón with their reform, that is to say, with the reform promoted during the last century in all the religious orders. In that same reformist awakening, the Spanish Benedictines also undertook their own return to the ancient observance, which crystallized in the so-called Congregation of Valladolid. And from Castille it passed to the Crown of Aragón, not without difficulties, opposition and misgivings. The reformer of the monastery of Montserrat was the famous abbot García de Cisneros, who brought with him a group of Valladolid monks. Logically, the new reformed abby depended on that of Valladolid. And the first fervors were followed by less spiritual times, in which economic interests, ambition for power and the clash between centralism and regionalism wreaked their havoc in the life of the monastery. The monks of the Crown of Aragón, especially the Catalans, complained that the Castilians had monopolized all the offices, marginalizing them; that they were constantly hindering the admission of novices from the Crown of Aragón, maintaining the numerical hegemony of the Castilians; and that the gold and money, fruit of the donations of the faithful, were taken to Valladolid. This last detail was the reason for the intervention of the Government of Catalonia and the Consell de Cent of Barcelona. And the Catalan monks turned to these civil and political authorities for protection, so that the matter did not remain within the monastic sphere, but transcended to the political arena.

44 BAU. BC. p. 132.

Philip II was interested in putting an end to those disorders and obtained by pontifical Bulls that Friar Benedict de Tocco, former abbot of Montserrat and then bishop of Lérida, was appointed Visitor. His visitation lasted from May 9, 1584 until January 13, 1585, when he died, not without suspicion of having been poisoned. After Tocco's death, tempers flared. The papal documents speak of "serious discussions and discord among the religious", "greater scandals", "atrocious and enormous crimes."⁴⁵ On March 16, 1585, a French lay brother, named Friar Guillén, at the head of a band of outlaws, broke into the monks' dormitory at night, in connivance with some of them, and forced 27 Castilians to leave, whom they escorted to the town of Cervera, where they were rescued by the troops of the viceroy of Catalonia. He wanted to return them to the Monserrat, but the monks refused and remained in the monastery of Saint Paul in Barcelona, dependent on Montserrat.

The environment, therefore, was not very conducive to tranquility of spirit and the joy of solitude and liturgical experience. It was necessary to be prudent. The biographer Fr. Alexius Armini, the most critical and documented biographer of the 17th century, wrote in 1686 that "Joseph, perhaps with the light of heaven, came to penetrate the damaged spirit of the administrators and warned the Apostolic Visitor several times, so that he would be cautious of any sinister accident. There were some who tried to tempt Joseph's integrity with various means, all aimed at making him close his eyes, but he... always skillfully defended himself from them.... The repeated warnings of his Secretary or Consultant [Calasanz] were of no use to the Bishop Visitor to protect his person: suddenly assaulted by accident... he suddenly passed away"⁴⁶. Poor La Figuera followed the same path as his predecessor, Friar Benedict de Tocco. He died on February 13, 1586. And that is not all. On May 14 of the same year the royal delegate, D. Ibán de Bardaxí, also died, probably for the same suspicious reasons as the two Visitor bishops. The contemporary abbot Martín Carrillo wrote: "Dr. Caspar John de la Figuera... died in Montserrat after being elected Bishop of Lérida. Along with Dr. Ibán de Bardaxí, Advisor to the Governor of Aragón, they were

45 Anal. Cal. 8 (1962) 433, fnt. 91.

46 Ibid. p.406.

making the Visitation of that house and both died suddenly, not without suspicions...⁴⁷ But surely when Bardaxí died, Joseph Calasanz was no longer in Montserrat. No matter how long he lived, and he lived a lot, he could not forget all this dramatic adventure of the Apostolic Visitation of Montserrat. However, he told nothing of this. The Roman confidants only did record in their memoirs that the Saint accompanied the Visitor bishop to Montserrat, “always wishing to be retired and to dwell in a room from where with great spiritual pleasure he heard the Mass which was sung every day at dawn in a chapel opposite his room.”⁴⁸ Calasanz himself was much more laconic when in 1637, in the declaration requested of him by the Augustinians, he simply said: “The said Bishop [La Figuera] died during the said visitation and I returned to my homeland.”⁴⁹

In Peralta de la Sal: Death of his father

The last words of Calasanz seem to indicate that as soon as his protector La Figuera died, he left Montserrat and went to his village, together with his elderly father. His service to the bishop-elect of Lérida was over. Personally he had nothing to do in the monastery. Both the royal delegate, Bardaxí, and the secretary of the visit, Jerome Pérez, remained there as responsible or intermediaries to report what had been done to the future Visitor.

The old biographers said that Calasanz waited for the arrival of the new Visitor, the bishop of Vich, D. John de Cardona, who took office on June 22. But they also believed that Calasanz had been the secretary of the visit. It is recorded, however, that the secretary Jerome Pérez was the one who delivered the papers to the new Visitor.

From mid-February 1586, when he came down from Montserrat and “returned to his homeland”, until the end of the year or the beginning of February 1587, Calasanz was with his father, until he closed his eyes. And we know that on November 7 he made a new will, without knowing what changes or new dispositions he introduced

47 Ibid. p. 405.

48 BAU, RV, p. 11.

49 BAU, BC, p.132.

with respect to the will of the previous year.⁵⁰ What is certain is that he confirmed his son Joseph as universal heir. This new will suggests that he must have felt near death, but we cannot know when this happened. In the parish archives of Peralta, we found a note according to which Joseph Calasanz instituted an anniversary of the deceased for February 27, without indicating the year in which it began. Some historians thought that this date would be that of the death of his father⁵¹, for whom his son would have founded that anniversary. But there is no reason to admit this hypothesis. It could just as well be supposed that the anniversary was for his mother and brothers or sisters already deceased. Moreover, Fr. Talenti, one of the most documented biographers of the Saint, has already said that the anniversary was perpetual for the souls in purgatory.⁵² Any other hypothesis seems valid to us, but we believe it is inadmissible that it refers to his father, since it is recorded that on February 12, 1587, the priest Joseph Calasanz began to carry out his office as secretary of the Cathedral Chapter of Urgel and master of ceremonies.⁵³ It seems absurd that after being with his father for a whole year, he abandoned him fifteen days before his death to join the diocese of Urgel. It is logical to suppose that he waited for his father to die in order to dispose of himself with complete freedom, because if during the first two years of his priesthood he was absent from his own diocese, it was precisely to be closer to Peralta and to be able to assist his father at the opportune moment.

50 Anal. Cal. 40 (1978) 459-460, 461.

51 Ibid., pp. 467-468.

52 Ibid., p.471.

53 Ibid., p. 468, nt. 27.

Through the lands of Seo de Urgel

Historical environment of Seo de Urgel

The diocese of Urgel was the diocese with the highest ecclesiastical revenues in all of Catalonia. It was divided into “officialdoms” or deaneries, some of which were temporal fiefs with full civil and criminal jurisdiction in the hands of their “officials.” Such fiefs depended directly on the bishop or the cathedral chapter.

The atmosphere of Christian life among the people and the clergy must not have been very different from that of other Spanish regions in this period immediately after the Council of Trent. There were abuses and bad customs to correct. Voices of reformers were heard, and they presented very dark pictures to justify their reforms. At the end of that century the Jesuits wrote a report to their Father General to make him see the need to found a school in the Seo de Urgel, and among other things they say: “It is a land of people in great need of doctrine, very ignorant and little less needy than Indians because for the reasons mentioned; in those lands there are few priests who know and cultivate the souls of their faithful... and the ecclesiastics there live with much freedom. Their pastors are not able to remedy because the priests are defiant and rebellious...”⁵⁴ When Joseph Calasanz arrived in Urgel, both the chapter in “sede vacante” and later Bishop Capilla made an effort to implement the reform through frequent pastoral visits, in which our protagonist took an active part.

Undoubtedly, the most serious problem that worried the Cathedral Chapter and afflicted the diocese of Urgel was banditry. It was not exclusive to this region, but its proximity to the Pyrenees and

54 Urgellia 2 (1979) 384-385.

France complicated it enormously due to the ruggedness of the terrain, easy defense for the bandits, and the infiltration of Huguenots or Lutherans, who were in solidarity with the bandits of the region in their misdeeds. Particularly during the years of "sede vacante", the lack of responsible authority emboldened the outlaws. And Calasanz arrived in those years. As secretary of the chapter, from May 1587 to April 1588, he wrote to the viceroy of Catalonia a series of letters, of which ten⁵⁵ are preserved, asking for immediate intervention; but to no avail. In them, however, the atmosphere of tragedy and dread that prevailed in those lands is evident. Let us see some paragraphs, translated from the original Catalan: "[we feel] afflicted by the tyranny of this land and by so much blood spilled on the roads, and that we have in mind the death of two men beheaded by these criminals two days ago in the jurisdiction of His Majesty, on the royal road leaving this city..."; "Neither have we so far obtained the remedy that is so necessary, for these villains cease to perpetrate enormous cruelties every day, killing and cutting in pieces men on the roads and in the villages; besides the tyranny of the roads through which one cannot pass at all without falling into the hands of thieves who plunder them. We have reached such an extreme because of the security that the outlaws and bad men themselves have of the authorities. The same the French, enemies of the Catholic Faith, desirous of proving this laxity, are already daring to rob churches, as they have done in the town of Andorra, which they have left without the Blessed Sacrament..."; "This city is without a prelate and without someone to administer justice, having so much need of it to expel delinquents who disturb it so much..."; "Your Excellency may know without doubt, that the wickedness of the bandits is much greater than what we have told you in so many letters"; "Consider Your Excellency the dangers that threaten us and what would have happened already if the ports were not loaded with snow, since this is our only defense; and what the roads and towns suffer when they see the bandits very well armed and proud, of the lack of weapons to stop them"; "And since until now we have not obtained the remedy we expected from the hand of Your Excellency

55 P. PUJOL I TUBAU, *Sant Josep de Calassanç Oficial del Capítol d'Urgell (1587-1589)* (Barcelona 1921) pp. 70-79.

with such a just title and with so much need, the insolence of some has reached such an extreme that the past days, some Lutherans came from France in number from 20 to 30 with a certain Plometa, and today, accompanied by other thieves and criminal people, have come to attack this city, so that in defense of the honor of God many ecclesiastics have had to take up arms and in the skirmish that lasted from noon to night, one man from the city died, although the enemy has left one dead in the field and some wounded ...”

The last letter quoted is dated April 1588. But a year before, as soon as Calasanz arrived in Urgel, there was a distribution of arquebuses among the canons, of which Calasanz, as secretary of the Chapter, took note in one of the books, writing: “Testimonial of the arquebuses that were left to the canons on April 13, 1587.” And among them he wrote: “Calasanz one arquebus with flask and powder horn without bag.” And he kept it for two years, since there is another note that says: “On January 27, 1589 Calasanz returned two arquebuses to the Chapter, that is, one for him and the other for Rostoll, with their flasks and powder horns.”⁵⁶ This is how things were, then, when the young priest José Calasanz left his village of Peralta and, crossing two rivers called Nogueras and going up the high course of the river Segre, he arrived, perhaps for the first time, at Seo de Urgel in full winter.

Calasanz and the Cathedral Chapter

The bishop who ordained Joseph Calasanz priest in his episcopal residence or castle during winter in Sanahúja, Friar Hugo Ambrosio de Montcada, died on December 8, 1586, leaving Urgel in “sede vacante.” One or two months later Calasanz arrived. In a note of the rational book it is said that on March 24, 1587 he received the salary for his positions of secretary of the Chapter of canons and master of ceremonies, which had begun to fulfill on February 12th. And another correlative note says that on February 7, 1589 he received the last payment of what was due to him until January 27th “when he said good-by”⁵⁷. For two years, therefore, he was Chapter secretary and master of ceremonies.

56 Ibid., p. 16.

57 Ibid., p. 15.

As secretary, he drafted the Chapter minutes, wrote the letters on behalf of the Chapter and kept the accounts of expenses, along with other similar duties. The pages written by him in the official books present a beautiful calligraphy, which contrasts powerfully with that of those who preceded and succeeded him. In Rome, much later, he will perfect it still when he becomes a master of writing and reading, and he will repeatedly demand that his religious learn to write, as he himself learned. "I have always been busy -he says- in many things and I have learned to write to perfection in order to be able to teach it to ours."⁵⁸

As master of ceremonies, besides directing the liturgical functions, he then had a special task, that is, to accommodate the liturgical traditions and customs to the demands of the Tridentine reform, particularly to those dictated by Pius V. And among other functions that he had to program, it is worth remembering the procession and special prayers, decreed by the Chapter, to impetrate the triumph of the Invincible Armada, as Philip II had requested to all the churches of Spain.

Throughout his life he always maintained a great appreciation and respect for the liturgical ceremonies, and he dedicated an entire chapter of the Constitutions of his Order to the observance of the ceremonies and care of the objects of worship. The chapter in the Constitutions began like this: "It is very convenient for the dignity of the Church that those called to the ministry of the altar know perfectly the sacred rites and ceremonies."⁵⁹ There is another detail of his appreciation for ceremonial and liturgy: when he died, among the few books he had in his room, there was one on the rites of the Catholic Church, by John Stephen Durando.⁶⁰

From June 1587 to April 1589 he stayed at the house of the merchant Antoni Janer. His two account books preserved until today are a treasure of curious data, since Calasanz not only serves him many times as a witness in his commercial operations, but also keeps a sort of transaction account for his personal expenses. Often the

58 EGC, VII, l. 3673.

59 Const., part I, c. VIII, n. 66.

60 *De Ritibus Ecclesiae Catholicae libri tres* (Tip. Vaticana, 1591).

merchant adds details, specifying the alms, the trips, the persons and their relations with Calasanz, etc. From him we know that from the time he stayed in his house until at least the end of 1590, when the manuscript ends, Calasanz had a servant with him, who later became a priest and to whom, probably Calasanz himself, obtained a benefice. His name was James John Coromines. For his travels he bought some saddlebags or rented a mule, etc.

Finally, Friar Andrew Capilla, who had been Jesuit (1553-1569) and then Carthusian (1569-1588), was named Bishop of Urgel. But since Philip II had entrusted him with the Visitation of the Canons Regular of St. Augustine and the Benedictines not subject to the Congregation of Valladolid, he could not go immediately to his diocese. He appointed as his procurator and vicar general of the diocese Msgr. Antony Gallart y Traginer. He was from Valencia, like him, and canon of Tarragona. He took possession in April 1588. The months passed, and in November Calasanz wrote a letter to Capilla on behalf of the Chapter, asking him to join his see as soon as possible, and said: "In this time so calamitous it has been great favor of God to give us a person with so many gifts and so complete. This reason deserves that Your Excellency do us the favor to come and watch over your sheep and answer for so many oppressions as they suffer. This city, region and public roads are tyrannized and oppressed and with all freedom human blood is spilled and the poor are not owners of their farms and women. The French and other bandits have taken so many chaplains captive and mistreat them to obtain greater ransoms, that the city is full of priests forced to abandon their residences to avoid death or prison."⁶¹ A month later Bishop Andrew Capilla made his solemn entry in Urgel.

Before arriving Capilla, exactly on November 12, Calasanz was named parish priest or "plébano" of Claverol and Ortoneda, two villages lost between mountains. In reality it was a non-residential benefice, so Calasanz had to appoint an assistant to take care of the cure of souls. But he took care of the two villages and visited them a few times. Probably the salary he received for his curial offices was not enough, and the vicar general Gallart was the one who gave

61 P. PUJOL I TUBAU, *oc.*, p. 79.

him the benefice and who strongly recommended him to Capilla so that he would call him to the palace, naming him his “familiar.” In fact, Capilla arrived in Urgel on December 24, 1588, and on the following January 27th Calasanz resigned his two offices of secretary of the Chapter and master of ceremonies of the cathedral, and on February 3rd he appears as a “familiar” of the bishop⁶²; although his appointment was perhaps before the resignation of his two jobs.

He still continued to live in Janer’s house, who calls him in his notes “secretary and steward to His Excellency.” And in April he went to live in the episcopal palace. The bishop had three Carthusian monks with whom he tried to continue living as in the Carthusian monastery within the possibilities. And Calasanz also lived with them, as he did in the episcopal palace of Barbastro with Bishop Urríes and his Dominicans companions. It was one more approach to the religious life, and in this case to the most austere life of the Carthusians.

Ecclesiastic Official in Tremp

However, the life of Calasanz with the Carthusians and Capilla in the episcopal palace did not last long, because on June 28th he was appointed, together with D. Peter Gervás de las Eras, Visitor of the officialdom of Tremp. Two days later, Calasanz and his bishop were in that town, and the following day, July 1, 1589, he was appointed Ecclesiastical Official. Tremp was a temporal fief of the bishop, and therefore, Calasanz had ecclesiastical and civil jurisdiction. Since the bishop was present, it is logical that he presided over the ceremony of taking possession of the task, giving the new Official the ecclesiastical and civil powers that corresponded to him. The ceremonies are described, in a document of 1659, which would be not much different from those observed on that occasion. Calasanz, then, would have sworn “to Our Lord and to the holy Gospels that he would have and keep all the privileges, uses and customs... that the town of Tremp and its inhabitants had and had been accustomed to have, use and enjoy.... Then the Magnificent Lord Con-

62 Ibid., p. 15 and 83.

sul Clavero, taking his right hand, made him enter the stage of the Lords Consuls, to the right hand of the Clavero and handed him a pair of gloves as a sign of the possession of the Civil jurisdiction; and in proof of the possession [of the] High and Low Criminal, mere and mixed empire, he handed him a sheathed sword, which he unsheathed and vibrating it in the air in the form of a cross, said three times: Possession that I.... Officer and Vicar General of His Excellency ... bishop of Urgel... I take of the Town of Tremp, of the high and low, civil and criminal jurisdiction, mere and mixed empire and of the other rights and belongings that His Excellency the Bishop of Urgel has in the town of Tremp..."⁶³

This evocation of Calasanz brandishing an unsheathed sword in the air and granting himself powers of civil and criminal justice, is undoubtedly unusual, just as it was also unusual to see him wielding an arquebus against Huguenots and bandits. These are typical and not unique traits of these short years of experience in his Pyrenean diocese.

Tremp had only one hundred houses in 1521, and not many more in the time of Calasanz. Its magnificent collegiate church, in 1595, had seven canons and seven beneficiaries, and sixty-six parishes. There was also a Dominican convent outside the walls, where since 1535 the boys of the region were taught reading, writing and grammar; it was called Schola Christi. And it is not unwise to imagine that Calasanz, in his official capacity, visited those schools and established friendly relations with the Dominicans, evoking his former protector Urriés, also a Dominican.

The dignity of ecclesiastical Official of Tremp, like other archpriests, carried with it that of Vicar General, and this is how Calasanz designates himself in a document dated September 18, 1589, in Talarn.⁶⁴ The old biographers mistakenly believed that he had been Vicar General of the whole diocese.

The Patroness of Tremp is Our Lady of Valldeflors, venerated in the Collegiate Church, in whose confraternity Calasanz was enrolled on

63 Anal. Cal. 4 (1960) 280-281.

64 Ibid., p. 337.

September 25, 1589. Bishop Capilla had the deference of celebrating ordinations in that collegiate church on September 22, 1590, and among the ordinandi there were two from Peralta de la Sal, James Huguet and Caspar Salas, and one from Pont de Claverol, Francis Motes, who much later, being already old, back in 1648, remembered Calasanz this way: "When I was between fourteen and fifteen years old, I met him many times because he was a close friend of my father. As if I were seeing him right now, he was a tall man, of venerable presence, brown beard, long and white face..."⁶⁵ That autumn of 1590 Calasanz was around thirty-three years old.

Visitor and Diocesan Reformer

Let us go back a little. Almost a year had passed since the death of Bishop Moncada (December 8, 1586) and there was still no talk of naming a replacement. The needs of the diocese moved the canons to undertake a pastoral visitation and the deaneries were distributed among them. The Major Archdeacon, Rafael Gomis, received the officialdoms of Tremp, Balaguer, Guissona, Agramunt, Sanahúja, Oliana and Pons. He took José Calasanz, the young secretary of the Chapter, to accompany him. In the officialdom of Balaguer was Peralta de la Sal, where they were on November 23, 1587. There, they signed some documents of reduction of masses for the parish priest of Peralta de la Sal and some others from the surroundings. The apostolic Visitation lasted forty days, without the material possibility of visiting all the parishes. It was probably the first time in his life that Calasanz, although as a simple visitation secretary, came into direct contact with the real life of the parishes, both of the priests and of the faithful, leaving the closed environment of the curia.

The new bishop Capilla continued to think, like the canons, that the best way to promote the Tridentine reform was to visit the diocese. And with this in mind, on June 28, 1589, he named Joseph Calasanz and canon Peter Gervás de las Eras as Visitors of the officialdom of Tremp. Immediately the bishop left for Tremp, accompanied by

65 BAU, BC, p. 174.

Calasanz, whom, as we saw, three days later he constituted as ecclesiastical Official. A year later, on May 5, 1590, and apparently satisfied with the work done, the bishop extended the field of action of the two Visitators, adding to Tremp the officialdoms of Sort, Tirvia and Cardós. It was not necessary for them to go together, but they could divide the parishes between the two to facilitate the work.

And this must have been the occasion in which Calasanz grasped with greater depth the realities of the people and their pastors and acted with absolute personal responsibility, solving problems, advising, understanding, punishing and forgiving. And all this while traveling through all those abrupt places near the Pyrenees, on difficult and dangerous roads, with the fear of facing bandits, climbing mountains and descending valleys, feeling the weight of the days and hours and the satisfaction of using his priesthood that until then seemed destined to the exclusive service of bishops or cathedral Chapters. These years in the officialdom of Tremp were also rich in anecdotes, that Calasanz, already old and with nostalgia of a distant youth, told his Piarist sons in Rome, always curious to know what had been his life in Spain. And once dead, there was a proliferation of witnesses who remembered without accuracy those confidences of the “holy old man” about the times in which he had been an ecclesiastic official in Tremp, in the land of Urgel.

In his “Brief News” Catalucci wrote that Calasanz, being Vicar of Tremp, “behaved egregiously, arranging that the clergy lived with great observance and did not go to gatherings of secular people, but that they honestly recreated themselves among ecclesiastics. And he appeased their discord with the utmost prudence.”⁶⁶ Berro recalled that “having learned once that two priests had arrived at his tribunal very angry with each other over a matter of money, he appeared, made them to submit in writing their respective requests and reasons, and then, judicially, ordered them strictly not to leave home until they had found themselves a formula of compromise and mutual compensation. The next morning, they returned to his court in perfect agreement. Joseph, then, gave them a paternal reprimand and sent them home, without asking the expenditure

66 Ibid., pp. 176-177.

of a single coin for the administration of his justice.”⁶⁷ Catalucci goes on to recall that “making the Visitation through the Pyrenean mountains, he found the clergy very dissipated and out of order, for which he gave and enforced very excellent ordinances and decreed the penalty of excommunication for Archpriests and Foreign Vicars if they did not denounce the non-observant. This measure provoked an uprising of the people and the clergy, even going so far as to try to assassinate him. But seeing that everything was for the greater glory of God, they calmed down. And as a sign of deference, the community gave him a good quantity of cheese, showing their gratitude and confessing that until that moment they had not known his own good and how exalted his priestly dignity was”⁶⁸.

One of the most delightful anecdotes that all the biographers usually repeat is the following: one day, while riding through the Pyrenees, he came across a poor man whose overloaded donkey had gotten into a mud hole and there was no way to get it out, neither by shouting, nor by sticks, nor by blasphemies. Joseph stopped his horse and ordered the servant who accompanied him to help the desperate man. But it was useless. Between the two of them they could not free the beast from the swamp. Calasanz got off the horse, took off his cassock, threw branches on the mud, got under the belly of the animal and lifted it on his back and carried it to solid ground. The villager was stunned, naturally. The priest made him understand, with a certain mockery, that it is not with blasphemies that one gets donkeys out of the mud. And everyone went on their way.

Another anecdote about his extraordinary strength: on a certain occasion he saw some sailors pulling with all their strength a rope to pull a boat to the bank, without success; he approached and without anyone’s help he pulled the rope until the boat was placed on the sand. It probably did not happen at sea, but in the river Noguera Pallaresa, where tree trunks were frequently dragged in rafts. Or perhaps it happened in that same river, whose bridge at the entrance to Tremp was collapsed in 1589, and to replace it there was a boat or raft pulled by a rope from the shore.

67 Ibid., p. 181.

68 Ibid., p. 180.

And another on the same subject: on the outskirts of Tremp Calasanz found one day a group of priests who were entertaining themselves in throwing the bar as far as possible. Calasanz took it and threw it farther than anyone else. The winner imposed them to recite some Our Fathers.

But, undoubtedly, the incident that has caused biographers to ponder the most is that of the “kidnapping of the maiden. Fr. Scasselati writes: “Having been assigned by the Bishop of Urgel to make peace between two families who were in armed conflict because of the abduction of a maiden, a matter in which others had failed, he adjusted it and reduced them to concord with great charity.”⁶⁹ Other witnesses of the processes and first chroniclers add and fill in the story, which ends up happening in Barcelona between families of high lineage; the case reaches the ears of the king, who asks the bishop of Urgel to extinguish “that fire that threatened to burn all of Spain.” The bishop delegates to his vicar general Calasanz, who “in the heart of winter, through snow and mud, undertook the march, arriving when the armed people were in order of battle, on the verge of imminent combat.” Naturally, he arrived, saw and won, and “achieved an immediate suspension of hostilities and later a total pacification.”⁷⁰ If the case occurred in Barcelona and was so noisy that it worried the court of Madrid, it is very strange that the king did not resort to the bishop of Barcelona, but to the bishop of Urgel; and even stranger that the bishop declines such high royal deference in his young officer, totally unknown in Barcelona and about to leave for Rome. Moreover, we know that Bishop Capilla was in Barcelona on those dates. The most plausible thing is to think that the case occurred in one of those mountain villages of the Pyrenees, when Calasanz was on a pastoral visit, and that perhaps the bishop was not even aware of what had happened.

All these anecdotes came from the lips of the old Calasanz when his sons asked him to tell them things about his living in Spain. These were his memoirs. The people of Tremp, for their part, also kept alive the memory and veneration for the one who was an ecclesiastic Official,

69 Ibid., p. 193.

70 Ibid., p. 194.

although for such a short time. In 1666, D. Jaime Galí, a priest of Tremp, declared to the Piarists of Rome that in his city “they have a very great devotion to the said Venerable Father and they kiss with great devotion the signatures that he stamped when he was an Official...”⁷¹

Seeds of his future vocation?

The biographers of Calasanz have tried to find hints of his future pedagogical activity, already in Spain. We saw the case of the school of pages in the episcopal palace of Barbastro and the coinciding denomination of “helper of studies” given to Calasanz in that period of his life. In Urgel two documental allusions were found that could present our young priest as a teacher, but they were disproved by later clarifications. The first was a minute of the Municipal Council of August 25, 1586, which spoke of looking for a teacher “for the study of the present city.” And it was thought that for this reason our Saint was called to Urgel. But other documents gave the name of that teacher and it was not Calasanz. The second suggestion was in the notes of the merchant Janer, one of which spoke of a pupil staying in his house to whom lessons in writing and accounts were given there; and who better suited for a teacher than the guest Calasanz? But the chronology did not fit exactly.

Of greater consistency to set the background of the future teaching and educational vocation of Calasanz is, undoubtedly, the theoretical and practical attitude of two characters, intimately related to him, who were Bishop Andrew Capilla and Canon Peter Gervás de las Eras. Both agreed that in order to achieve the reform of the people of their diocese, one of the most effective means was the foundation of schools entrusted to religious. Already in 1587, before visiting with Calasanz the officialdoms of Tremp, Sort, Tirvia and Cardós, Canon Gervás proposed to the Council of Aragón that “in order to achieve the desired goal, it would be of great importance to found two schools in that land: one in the town of Graus, which is in the middle of the County of Ribagorça, and entrusted to the Society of Jesus. ..., and the other in the town of Areny [his hometown]....

71 Anal. Cal. 4 (1960) 286.

and this school could be given to Carmelite Friars.”⁷² The idea was approved by the Supreme Council of Aragón and then passed to the consideration of Philip II, who also approved the initiative.

The following year, Friar Andrew Capilla was named Bishop of Urgel, but he was not installed until Christmas. And from the beginning of the following year 1589 he began to request the Jesuits to found a school in the capital of the diocese. The procedures were long, in spite of the fact that Capilla had been a Jesuit for sixteen years, leaving great renown in the Society that he loved all his life. And finally, in 1599, he managed to see the inauguration of the school in Urgel, which the Jesuits called “St. Andrew’s”, to honor the name of the benefactor prelate. Before the school, Capilla also founded the Tridentine seminary, inaugurated in 1592 and also entrusted to the Jesuits.

When both educational centers were inaugurated, Calasanz was already in Rome. But it is suggestive to think that he could have been a heartfelt participant in the educational concerns of his two close friends, Bishop Capilla and Canon Gervás de las Eras. And something of all this must have been revealed by Calasanz in his Roman old age if the faithful Fr. Caputi, tireless confidant of the Saint, wrote in his Memoirs this precious paragraph: “To show the origin and basis how the motives for founding the Pious Work [of the Pious Schools] took root, it is worth remembering and knowing the vision he [Calasanz] had when he was Vicar General of the Bishop of Urgel, as he himself often referred it to me, who, curious to know things, was always questioning him and pulling his tongue. One night it seemed to him as if he were in Rome and preaching to a group of children, who seemed to him like angels. He taught them how to live a Christian life, blessed them and then accompanied them to their homes, seeing in the meantime that the angels joined him in the task of accompanying those poor people. Ignoring the vision, he thought it was simply a dream of his fantasy, and the next morning he considered it a nonsense, since he had never had any intention of going to Rome. It was not many weeks later when he began to hear a voice inside him saying: “Joseph, go to Rome; go to Rome, Joseph.”⁷³

72 Ibid., p. 342.

73 BAU, BC, p. 198.

One last detail. Among Janer's notes there is one dated February 6, 1589 in which Calasanz, "as butler of his Excellency" asks him for a loan to buy cloth "to make stockings for the pages." Thus, also in the episcopal palace of Urgel there were pages as in Barbastro. And if Calasanz was the teacher of these children, being a "familiar" of Urríes, could he not also have been the teacher of those of Urgel, being a "familiar" of Capilla?

Towards Rome

We have read Caputi recounting "Joseph's dream" and the inner voice telling him, "Joseph, go to Rome." This was written in 1672. But already in 1652, Fr. Francis Castelli, a close collaborator of Calasanz, had stated the same thing, although with more sobriety. He knew it "for having heard it told either by the Father himself or by others who heard it from him." And he said that "being in Spain, Fr. Joseph, after being a priest, felt in himself an inner voice that told him: Go to Rome. And it happened many times and it was always the same message. Our Father reflected and answered himself: "I have no pretensions, what do I have to do in Rome?"⁷⁴ The hagiographers repeated with emotion these supernatural voices, an indication of a glorious vocational future. It is not that they have to be denied in the strictest sense. But normally divine messages come through more trivial means. And so it actually happened. Francis Motes, had been tonsured in the Collegiate Church of Tremp while Calasanz, was an ecclesiastic official; now in his seventy-third year, recalled that when he left home, before setting out on his journey, "they say that he intended to go to Rome to obtain some dignity worthy (sic) of his offices... and after one or two years I heard that he had sought I do not know what benefice in his country, and that having obtained it, as God had destined him for greater things, a lawsuit was brought against him and not having won his favor, he decided to abandon his pretensions and give himself wholeheartedly to God."⁷⁵ It was an accurate recollection. That was the primary reason why he left for Rome. Once there, God gave him a change of

74 Ibid., p. 196.

75 Ibid., p. 174.

direction. Something like what happened to Saul, who in search of his lost asses came to Samuel and the prophet anointed him king of Israel. Calasanz indeed went to Rome in search of a canonry and God constituted him founder of a religious Order, the first in the Church dedicated exclusively to the teaching and education of children. It has also been insinuated that he would take advantage of the trip to make the 'ad limina' visitation instead of his own bishop, since in those years Philip II had forbidden the Spanish bishops to make it on their own. At the same time, during the first years of his stay in Rome he must have been for some time the procurator or business agent of the diocese of Urgel. His predecessor, Canon Raphael Duran, had been removed from that office.

We do not know precisely when he made the decision to leave for Rome, but it was not a hasty decision, since months before his departure he began to resign from his jobs. The young man of fourteen or fifteen years, Francis Motes, remembers what was said in his house about Calasanz' trip to Rome and the conditions under which he resigned his "plebania" of Claverol, his town: "He left the "plebania" and parish of Claverol to D. James Segur de Valmitjana, with a benefice of seventeen and a half gold coins at the disposal of Calasanz. He gave them to the poor of the parish, without discrimination; and thus in two main feasts of the year, that is at Easter and at Pentecost, alms were given, as it was disposed."⁷⁶ In fact, on September 6, 1591, he signed before a notary a document by which he founded for after his death a pious cause in favor of the poor of Ortoneda and Claverol. By renouncing the "plebania" in favor of James Segur, he reserved for himself 17 pounds and a half while he lived. After his death, that money would be used to buy wheat every year and distribute it among the needy of those towns. In 1618, when he took his vows in the Congregation of the Pious Schools, which he had founded, he had to renounce all his goods, so he wrote to the Motes family de Claverol to make the donation or pious cause effective, as if he had died. In 1620 he reiterated the same dispositions to the "plébano" de Ortoneda y Claverol.⁷⁷ This pious cause lasted until 1833.

76 Ibid., p. 182.

77 EGC, II, l. 16* and 45.

He must also have renounced his office and residential benefice of ecclesiastical official in Tremp. We do not know when he renounced the non-residential benefice he had enjoyed in Monzón since his ordination as sub deacon, but it must have been before going to Rome, because throughout the whole cumbersome lawsuit to obtain a canonry in Barbastro it is not mentioned, while another benefice is named in Fraga, which was granted to him in Rome in February 1593.

The sad duty of farewells would force him to pass through Benabarre, where his sister Joan lived with her family, and then go down to Peralta to see his sisters Mary and Magdalene. The hagiographers almost unanimously repeated that on this occasion, during his stay in his native town, Calasanz distributed his estate among his sisters and nephews, giving a part to the poor and reserving another part for himself.

It is probable that this was the case. In any case, neither the distribution of his patrimonial goods necessarily had to be done now, nor were the farewells dramatic and definitive, since the traveler thought of returning soon, although neither he nor his sisters could suspect that they would never see each other again.

Another of the things he had to do before leaving Spain was to obtain the degree of doctor in theology. There is not a single document that gives him this title while he is in Spain. In May 1590 he is called "Professor of Sacred Theology" and in July of the same year "Bachelor in Sacred Theology." The first time he appears as "Doctor in Sacred Theology" is in a Roman document dated February 27, 1592. From this date we have to go back to that of December 3, 1591, in which for the last time he is named as present in Urgel, and between the two he must have carried out the procedures to obtain his doctorate. Where?

The biographers of all times have shuffled, without proof, many names of universities or colleges. They have spoken of the Roman College of the Jesuits, of the universities of Alcalá de Henares and Lérida, of the Schola Christi College of the Dominicans in Tremp. And of all the hypotheses, the most plausible is the one that supposes that he obtained his doctoral degree in Barcelona. Francis Motes said that Calasanz, after having renounced the "plebania" of

Claverol, “went to Rome and Barcelona to study.” And this suggests that during his stay in Barcelona, before embarking for Italy, Calasanz passed through the University to complete the last requirements that remained for him to obtain his degree. It can also be assumed that he did not receive his degree at the University, but at the College of Belen run by the Jesuits. This is a very suggestive hypothesis if we admit the previous proposals that both in Valencia and in Alcalá, Calasanz studied theology in Jesuit colleges, all of which had the faculty to confer academic degrees. Precisely, Bishop Andrew Capilla, a former Jesuit and cordially related to the said College of Belen, was in Barcelona in the months of January and February 1592. The provincial council begun in Tarragona two months before was concluded in Barcelona. And since we are supposing, it has also been suggested the possibility that the title was given to him in the University of Tarragona, with the recommendation of Capilla, present there for the mentioned council, or with that of D. Antony Gallart, who was still a canon of the cathedral. Whatever the case may be, what is certain and unquestionable is that Calasanz, as soon as he arrived in Rome, was already a doctor in theology, and thus he signed, very satisfied, his first letters.

On February 2, 1592, the new basilica of Montserrat was solemnly consecrated, and the ceremony was attended by many of those gathered at the Tarragona Council that was concluded in Barcelona. It is very probable that Joseph Calasanz went up the mountain again accompanying his bishop Capilla and told him during the trip the pleasant and unpleasant memories of his long stay with the Visitor D. Caspar John de la Figuera. And when he left the monastery he must have embarked in the port of Barcelona, bound for Rome, where it is recorded that he was already on February 27, 1592. He left with the hope of returning very soon, but he did not know that it was a journey of no return.

Rome: years of religious restlessness

Return to Spain?

Joseph Calasanz entered Rome in the middle of February 1592. He was thirty-four years old. We know nothing of his aesthetic impressions before the imperial magnificence of the Roman ruins and the basilicas, churches and monumental palaces. Neither then, with the eyes of a newcomer, nor later during his very long fifty-six years as an adopted Roman, in his almost 5,000 preserved letters, he didn't ever give a hint of admiration or appreciation of the immense artistic richness of the Rome of the Caesars and the Renaissance and Baroque Popes. There are, however, allusions to atmospheric phenomena or to prodigies or monsters born in Italy or in other latitudes, with their border of credulity in omens and their marvelous wonder. It was not the wealth, the art, the splendor, the sumptuousness of the Eternal City that subjugated him, but the misery, the poverty and the ignorance of its neighborhoods, of its people that won his heart and kept him there. What he believed to be a trip with a round ticket, became a definitive permanence until death.

He arrived with the air of a winner, of one who has all the cards in order and an ace up his sleeve. It would be a matter of a few months. And ten months after his arrival, he still felt as optimistic as the first day: "I am very confident of being provided for."⁷⁸ Therefore, his hope and desire to return home is explicit: "I desire very much to return to Spain soon."⁷⁹ In the following May he maintains the same desires and hopes: "I will try as soon as possible to return."⁸⁰ In that

78 EGC, II, l. 4.

79 Ibid.

80 Ibid., l. 5.

same year, 1593, he has an emotional note for his beloved Peralta, which he does not forget: he sends a chalice -still preserved- for the parish with this inscription: Pro ferro aurum et argentum. 1593 (Gold and silver instead of iron. 1593). Thus he evoked with nostalgia his father's old smith shop.

In September of the following year he continued to speak of returning, but there was no longer any hurry: "When God wills I shall come back to that land..."⁸¹ A few more years passed, and shortly after the beginning of the new century, his haste not only disappeared, but became a decision to remain there permanently: "I found in Rome the definitive way to serve God by doing good to the little ones. I will not leave it for anything in the world."⁸² Little by little he was becoming romanized and his homeland was farther and farther away. This is how he expressed himself in 1632: "(I am) Aragonese by nation, but Roman by sentiment and customs, since I have been in Rome for forty years now, absolutely forgetting my homeland."⁸³ Basically, he had been right from the beginning when he said in his first letter to Spain in May 1592: "Until today, blessed be God, I have been healthy and I trust with his favor to do well in this land."⁸⁴ More than an omen, it was an unconscious prophecy.

The first document that certifies his presence in Rome is a notarial deed, dated February 27, 1592, in which he lends 200 escudos without any interest to D. Balthasar Compte, canon of Tarragona and procurator of his diocese in Rome, whose wastefulness and trickery forced the Tarragona Chapter to seize his canonical goods and even lock him up in the episcopal jail for a few days when he returned to Tarragona. This adventurous canon resided in the palace of Cardinal Marcantonio Colonna, and there he also took his protégé Calasanz to stay.⁸⁵ It is possible, however, that before moving to the Colonna's palace, Calasanz lived, for a short time, in a house in the Square of the Apostles, hosted by Raphael Durán, canon and

81 Ibid., I, 6.

82 BAU, BC, p. 278.

83 EGC, V, I, 1849.

84 EGC, II, I, 3.

85 Ibid.

former procurator of Urgel, since shortly before Calasanz arrived in Rome, he was deposed from his procuration by the Urgel town council for his mischiefs, and his position must have fallen to the newly arrived Calasanz.

Old Cardinal Marcantonio Colonna very soon appreciated the gifts of his young guest Calasanz, for he appointed him his consulting theologian, entrusting to him also the spiritual direction of his house once he could already express himself in Italian. It consisted mainly in weekly exhortations or talks on Christian life to the whole family gathered together. The biographers also spoke that he put in his hands the education and instruction of two nephews, Marcantonio and Philip. However, it does not seem probable, not only because the first witnesses do not say anything about it, but also because the princes were not children any more. They were, respectively, seventeen and fifteen years old.

The Colonna palace is adjacent to the basilica of the Twelve Apostles, cared then and now by the Conventual Franciscans, with whom Calasanz had much dealings in these years of neighborhood. This led to a profound transformation of his soul after the contact with Franciscan spirituality, especially with poverty, so important in the gestation and development of his own foundation of the Pious Schools: clerics poor at the service of poor children.

Obsession for a canonry

On May 16, 1592, barely two and a half months after his arrival in Rome, Calasanz wrote to the parish priest of Peralta, D. José Texidor: "I tried to get a canonry in Urgel and the secretary of the Ambassador of Spain favored me very much and through a secret steward of the Pope he gave me the grace of the said canonry and I had it without knowing it for more than fifteen days. But the Datario, because I was new in Rome, in no way wanted me to be provided for this time, offering me that on the first occasion he would grant me the grace. The secretary and even the steward were very sorry, and have proposed that when they have notice of any available they will go out with their intent. I trust that if anything is vacant and comes to my notice, that I will not lose it, because in addition to these things the Pope's steward has done me great mercy through a Carthusian Friar who is a friend of mine and a relative of his. I live in the house of

Cardinal Marco Antonio Colonna in the company of a Canon of Tarragona whose name is Balthesar Compte, very dear and favored by the said Cardinal, through whom I have entered his house. I know that if the occasion offers itself he will also do me mercy.”⁸⁶

Of course, there was success right away. Our young pretender was highly recommended: he was favored by the secretary of the ambassador, Pedro Jiménez Murillo, from Zaragoza; a secret chamberlain of the pope, also from Aragón, D. Jaime de Palafox, later Marquis of Ariza; according to others, the future Cardinal Francis Dietrichstein; the Pope’s steward, Hercules Estense Tassone; a Carthusian Friar, a friend of his and probably an acquaintance of the Carthusian Bishop Monsignor Capilla, also from Aragón. And if that were not enough, Cardinal Colonna was also willing to lend him a hand. But against all these protectors who had effectively obtained for him the canonry of Urgel was the intervention of the datario, the future Cardinal Lucio Sasso. And thanks to him there was one less canon and one more founder.

About six months of expectation passed, and Cardinal Colonna, keeping his word, got him another canonry in Urgel. Calasanz gives the news to his parish priest in a letter of November 25, and says: “Cardinal Colonna, in whose house I am, gave me the grace of the canonry that was vacated in Urgel because of the death of Sorribes, and then we found that he had died in the month of the Bishop and so it had no effect. (Note: Certain months “belonged” to the Pope and others to the bishop. It was up to the Pope or Bishop to grant these benefices during their respective months). Now we are trying to obtain another one. I could have him in Albarracín or in Teruel, but because they are so far away I did not want to ask for them. May Our Lord direct everything to his service.”⁸⁷ These are already two canonries obtained in Urgel, and both without effect for different reasons. And it is striking that since this second canonry was provided by the bishop, Fray Andrés Capilla, he did not remember that his beloved Dr. José Calasanz had gone to Rome to look for one. Why did he not reserve it for himself and call him back to Urgel? After the

86 Ibid.

87 Ibid., l. 4.

second failure to obtain canonries in his diocese, Calasanz is willing to accept some in other sees, but he rejects those of Albarracín or Teruel because they are too far away. And he naturally looks for one that is closer, and for it he has already started to make diligences.

In January 1593 he requested and obtained a non-residential benefice in Fraga, which provided him with 24 ducats (gold coins) a year. It seems that this benefice was related to the Agostí family, one of whom married Joan, sister of Joseph Calasanz. She lived in Bena-barre, but was probably a relative of that Fraga family.

In March 1594 a vacancy arose in Barbastro, and it was of pontifical provision. That cathedral reminded him of the times of his new priesthood. He took the necessary steps, and on June 17th he was granted the canonry. But in Barbastro, meanwhile, things were getting complicated. Three candidates showed up for that vacancy: Drs. Castillo, Latorre and Navarro. The bishop voted for the first one; the majority of the Cathedral Chapter for the second and, for the moment, the third remained out of the picture. The conflict reached the ears of Calasanz, who, before sending anyone to take possession of his seat by procuration, obtained a monitory from the Pope, that is to say, a document ordering anyone who had dared to take possession of that canonry to withdraw. It had been signed on September 27, 1594 by the apostolic protonotary Camillo Borghese, the future Paul V. Calasanz appointed procurators to take possession of his benefice, but when they arrived in Barbastro and presented their papers, the chapter considered they were invalid.

While the discussion continues between the Cathedral Chapter and the bishop about their respective candidates, the third of them, the marginalized Dr. Navarro, shows up himself in Rome and asks to be granted the disputed canonry. And in view of the reasons given, it was granted on June 9, 1595. With such papers in order, Dr. Navarro returns triumphant to Barbastro, presents them to the Chapter and receives the same objections with which the pretension of Calasanz had been rejected. In the meantime, the bishop died and the candidate of the Chapter decided to become a Capuchin, so the lawsuit between the Chapter and the bishop was over. But in spite of being left without a protector, the episcopal candidate, Dr. Castillo, travels to Rome and presents his petition, which is granted by the Holy See and the canonry is granted on December 7, 1595. Unbelievable, but

true: the three pretenders have obtained the same canonry! And not everything ends here. Calasanz moves a lawsuit to Castillo and at the same time files a second petition, the reasoning of which convinces the Datario, who, on August 27, 1596, grants it again. Naturally, the other two opponents are willing to continue the lawsuit, which is likely to go on forever, leaving the litigants destitute. So they decide to reach an agreement between them: Dr. Navarro will keep the canonry, reserving 30 annual ducats to Dr. Castillo and 36 to José Blanch, nephew of Calasanz, in addition to giving the latter another 60 ducats for the expenses of the lawsuit. With all the pertinent explanations, they present again request to the Datario to confirm the referred agreement, and so it is made by pontifical Brief of January 1, 1598.

It seems to be, however, that Calasanz never received any money of it, since his nephew and his brother-in-law disregarded these pensions, making him exclaim in a letter of June 27, 1599 to the parish priest of Peralta: “since I have this correspondence in my relatives, blessed God.... I would be glad that the Bulls would come sooner to your hands than to my brother-in-law’s or my nephew’s, because I don’t know what I can think of someone who has not been worth anything to me for so many years.”⁸⁸ This disappointment with regard to his relatives was united to the one produced by all this long lawsuit for the canonry of Barbastro, and it inclined him to renounce forever to residential benefices, but not to those that without obligation to reside could provide him with income to spend on “a pious cause that I intend to do”, as he said in the mentioned letter of 1599. That can only be his Schools, that in 1600 he would take them out of Trastevere to introduce them in the city, being already under his personal responsibility.

Another canonry was offered to him in Saragossa. The biographers said that it was around 1605. But it does not seem plausible, since in the mentioned letter of 1599 Calasanz said: “The Datary, knowing that I do not look for benefices of residence, has offered me to give me simple ones as the occasion offers.” Zaragoza must have been around 1594. In fact, Philip II, already since 1592, began the steps to convert the Chapter of the Seo of Saragossa, which was in the hands of the

88 *Ibid.* I. 7.

Canons Regular of Saint Augustine, into a diocesan Chapter. In 1594 the king wrote to the Duke of Sessa, his ambassador in Rome, that the new canons “are to be considered the best subjects of the Kingdom of Aragón... all considered old Christians, clean, and of good morals”, and among the names given by the king were “eight Aragonese named in the memory that goes with this one, who are understood to be in that Court [Rome]...”⁸⁹ In 1952 a manuscript was found in the Seo of Zaragoza with a list of future canons for those years, and in number 26 we read: “Dr. Josephed de Calasanz, a native of Peralta, next to Monçon, who is in Rome”, and in the margin we read “limpio” (clean), that is, without Moorish or Jewish ancestry. The Saragossa manuscript confirmed an already old news, since in the edited booklet of the first eulogy of Calasanz it was read: “1604. He was named canon of the Holy Church of Saragossa.”⁹⁰ The Bull of making diocesan the Saragossa Chapter dates from 1604 and was not executed until November 1605, so it was believed that the Calasanz candidacy had to be assigned to those years. We cannot be sure that Calasanz’ name was on the list, but everything leads us to believe that it was, taking into account the friendships he enjoyed in the Spanish embassy. Philip II died in 1598, and his successor followed this matter with interest until 1605, when the new canons took office. Among them were not some of those on the first list of 1594, nor Calasanz. By this time in 1605 he was already committed to his Pious Schools and it made no sense for him to think of a canonry in Saragossa.

Fr. Berro, in his Memoirs, wrote that when the parish priest of Santa Dorotea in Trastevere died (1600), Calasanz was proposed to take his place, “but he did not want to accept in any way neither the parish nor a canonry of twelve hundred escudos of income in the city of Seville, alleging that to attend to the parish he would need to neglect the Schools; and he sincerely thanked the Secretary of the Ambassador of the Catholic King the late offer, but he answered decisively: I have already found in Rome the definitive way to serve God by doing good to the little ones. I will not leave it for anything in the world.”⁹¹ It could be that this “memory” of Berro refers to the

89 *Catalaunia* 195 (1977) 38.

90 *Ibid.*, p. 37.

91 BAU, BC, p. 278.

canonry of Saragossa, although it is not excluded that the new offer was for Seville.

Caputi, in his Memoirs, and the witnesses Miguel Jimenez Barber and Fr. Scassellati affirm that around that time, or concretely in 1605, the Spanish ambassador also offered Calasanz, in the name of the king, to be Archbishop of Brindis, but he did not want to accept it and presented instead a great friend of his, Monsignor Juan Falces, native of Azanuy, who was the one who actually occupied it.⁹² Likewise, the witnesses P. Scassellati and Br. Francis Noberasco affirmed that Paul V included the name of Calasanz in the list of promotion to cardinals, but the Saint refused it.⁹³ What had been the main reason for his trip to Rome and had obsessed him for at least seven years (1592-1599), i.e., to obtain a canonry, ceased to concern him, radically changing his attitude when he refused to accept a canonry, an archdiocese and perhaps a cardinal's hat. Something very important and profound had happened in his soul.

Change of direction: Religious and social activities

The failure or renunciation of the canonries is like the “coup de grace” that suggests a turning point. Some of the first witnesses who knew him agree with this idea. The priest Francis Motes said: “He determined to abandon his ambitions and give himself wholeheartedly to God.” Francis Gutiérrez, a poor painter who was welcomed by Calasanz at home, said: “Father Joseph came to Rome to claim some ecclesiastical benefice, but then, touched by God and recognizing that everything of this world is vanity, he left the world and founded a Religion...” And Thomas Simón, a Catalan who served the hosts to the church of St. Pantaleo, said, “He came to Rome... for the ambition of being provided with benefices. But then he resolved to another tenor of life, saying that the life he had begun was not for him, and so he gave himself totally to the spirit.”⁹⁴ With or without exaggeration, the witness Jiménez Barber said that Calasanz, at this time, enjoyed an annual income of some 2,000 escudos. On the

92 EGC, II, p. 186.

93 BAU, RV, p. 71.

94 Ibid., p. 60 and 62.

other hand, both this and other early witnesses are pleased to detail that the young priest was dressed in silk. And then, everything changed radically. In these years a Saint is budding.

We know nothing in particular of what might have occupied his days during the first three years of his stay in Rome, except for his few commitments in the Colonna palace, his curial errands as procurator of his diocese of Urgel, and his preoccupations about canonries. All of which could not fill a satisfactory existence. But since 1595 he opened his eyes to other horizons, and his soul began to grasp other realities much more troubling than his dreamed benefices.

In the basilica of the Twelve Apostles, next to the Colonna palace, there is the Archconfraternity of the Holy Apostles, whose purpose is to care for the poor -even nobles- and the sick. But it is necessary to visit them in their own homes and not to wait for them to come and ask for alms. Frequent contact with the Conventual Franciscans or with the confreres themselves decided Calasanz to enroll in 1595. His presence in the confraternity lasted until August 1601 when he appears for the last time in the books, because the new responsibilities with his work of the Pious Schools prevented him from dedicating his time to other tasks. In 1644 he will recall with precision “having visited for six or seven years all the districts of Rome, being of the Company of the Holy Apostles.”⁹⁵ In fact, it is recorded in the books of the confraternity that during those years he made 157 visits to eleven Roman neighborhoods. This frequent contact with the poverty and misery of the people, in contrast to the sumptuousness and abundance that he could see daily in his own princely residence in the Colonna palace, upset his soul.

The tangible reality of poverty, seen and felt in so many slums of the thirteen or fourteen Roman neighborhoods, brought him closer to the personality of St Francis, ‘il poverello’ par excellence, not without the logical influence of the Conventual Friars, his neighbors. This is reflected in his enrollment in the Venerable Archconfraternity of the Stigmata of St. Francis, which he joined on July 18, 1599. And probably a week later he went on a pilgrimage to Assisi, along

95 EGC, VIII, I. 4185.

with other members of the brotherhood. But we will talk about this later. He remained in this confraternity until his death, since it did not interfere with his dedication to the Pious Schools, but it was rather an experience of Franciscan spirituality.

On July 10th of the Holy Year 1600 he gave his name to another confraternity: that of the Holy Trinity of the Pilgrims and Convalescents, dedicated to works of charity, especially to catechize pilgrims so that they could earn the Jubilee and attend to their needs. This confraternity was very rich in indulgences and to it belonged high personages of the Roman Curia, such as Clement VIII and Paul V before becoming popes, as well as many cardinals and prelates. Undoubtedly, this was a way for Calasanz to come into contact with very influential personalities, who later lend him a hand when he founded his Schools.

Two months later, on September 17, 1600, he enrolled in the Archconfraternity of Our Lady of Suffrage, whose primary purpose was to prepare the dying to die well and to pray to God daily for the dead. This confraternity achieved such growth in a short time that in the Holy Year of 1600, in the official procession to the four basilicas, to win the jubilee, about 300 confreres and about 40,000 faithful attended. Also here Calasanz was able to meet and treat, among others, Cardinals Baronius and Bellarmine, as they were members of the Confraternity.

He was also a member of the Oratory of St. Teresa, of the church of La Scala in Trastevere. There he met Spanish Carmelites who had a powerful influence in his spirituality and in the configuration of the foundation of the Pious Schools, especially Fathers Dominic Ruzola and John of Jesus and Mary. On the other hand, devotion to St. Teresa and admiration for her writings was a characteristic of Calasanz.

It is also said that he belonged to the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, with headquarters in San Eustaquio. And to this it should be added that the Archconfraternity of the Holy Apostles had been associated by Sixtus V to the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament that existed in the Basilica of the Twelve Apostles, being linked to this basilica, and maintained among its pious practices a Eucharistic procession on the last Sundays of the month. The Archconfraternity of the Most Holy Trinity also had every month a special function with solemn exposition of the Blessed Sacrament to the faithful. And that of the Suffrage prescribed the adoration

of the Blessed Sacrament during the Forty Hours. Eucharistic piety was, then, a dominant note in the spirituality of Calasanz in those years, as was also the devotion to Our Lady. Her Roman invocation of 'Madonna dei Monti' was specifically preferred by Calasanz from these early years until his death.

But among all the confraternities, without any doubt, the one that had more influence in the Founder of the Pious Schools was the Confraternity of the Christian Doctrine. He must have enrolled in the autumn of 1597 or at the beginning of 1598. It was at the root of the primitive experience of the school of Santa Dorotea, kernel of the future Order. We will talk about it later.

The devotion that he always maintained for St. Philip Neri makes us suppose that he treated him during his lifetime, since he died in 1595 and was a very popular figure in Rome at the end of the century. To him was due the increase and popular acceptance that acquired the penitential practice of the visit to the seven churches. All the ancient and modern biographers of St. Joseph of Calasanz speak of this pious exercise, based on the affirmations of the first witnesses and chroniclers, but they do not agree altogether. The traditional idea was that Calasanz, in these first years around 1600 and during many others, once his schools were founded, made daily visits to the seven churches. In reality, of all the early witnesses, only one stated that he visited the seven churches every day during the Holy Year (Br. Ferrari); others say "almost every day" (Morelli), "very often" (Berro), "he was very assiduous in visiting them" (Catalucci).⁹⁶ The most plausible is to think that during the Holy Year he made the Jubilee visit very frequently, which was reduced to the four main basilicas, without denying that he could also make many times the complete visit to the seven churches. And before and after the Holy Year, he also visited the seven churches with a certain frequency. Anyone who has ever done it will agree that it is not possible for someone to do it every day, not even for a year, not only because of the physical fatigue involved -it is about 20 kilometers-, but also because of the time it requires, impossible to combine with a fixed, heavy and responsible occupation such as the daily schools.

96 A. GARCÍA-DURÁN, *Itinerario espiritual de San José de Calasanz* (Barcelona 1967) pp. 85-87, nt.463.

It is a tradition, and this is affirmed by a witness⁹⁷, that in the plague of 1596 the young Joseph Calasanz and St. Camillus de Lelis collaborated selflessly to assist the plague victims, and something similar must have happened during the catastrophic flooding of the Tiber on December 24, 1598, in which 1,400 victims perished (4,000 according to others), and which was fatal for the schools of St. Dorothea.

A piece of news, generally preterit by the biographers, is the one preserved by Berro in his Memoirs. He says that soon after Calasanz arrived in Rome, Cardinal Camillo Borghese, vicar of the Pope, appointed him confessor and chaplain of the monastery of nuns of San Silvestro in Campo Marzio, and then Cardinal Lanti also appointed him chaplain of the Discalced Carmelites of 'Capo le Case'.⁹⁸ This would entail a committed priestly occupation and a very premature appreciation of his personal gifts.

Along the paths of mysticism?

At the end of the Holy Year of 1600, Joseph Calasanz enrolled in some seven Roman confraternities. His membership implied social and religious commitments. He was deeply moved by the poverty and misery of the lowly people of all the districts of Rome and he dedicated to their service, won by the ideal of franciscan poverty and immersed in the popular devotions proper of Roman piety. He is already very far from that Dr. Joseph Calasanz who arrived in Rome in 1592 with the air of a conqueror, ready to obtain at any cost a Spanish canonry. All that came to nothing, with failures and resignations. And all these years, from the time of his arrival until he came face to face with the little school of Santa Dorotea, were again years of indecision, of disorientation, of unconscious search for his definitive vocation, the one that would give meaning to his life and his name to history.

And perhaps in this transit, so fast, from his renunciation of dignities to his total dedication to his neighbor and to a life of piety, he reaches sublime moments that are only found in the maturity of life of the saints; that is to say, mystical experiences. He is still in his forties and

97 BAU, RV, p. 78.

98 BERRO, Memorie, f. 16.

still has almost fifty years to go. Therefore, we would be tempted to believe that these experiences occurred much later and not six or seven years after his arrival in Rome. But, on the other hand, according to the testimonies, these were years truly rich in spiritual life and it cannot be denied that they enveloped him in a propitious environment to reach interior experiences of high mystical intensity.

In the letter he wrote to the parish priest of his village in June 1599 he said: "I have wished to see some places of great devotion in Italy such as the Holy House of Loreto, Mount La Verna where St. Francis received the wounds, Monte Cassino and Monte Vergine and others and to return to Rome for the Holy Year and it has not been possible until now, but I still intend to do so with God's favor."⁹⁹ Some say that this long pilgrimage must have taken place in 1614¹⁰⁰, while most biographers, even the most critical¹⁰¹, place it in that same summer of 1599, shortly after having announced it to the parish priest of Peralta.

The reasons of the latter seem more convincing, and even those who propose the first hypothesis recognize that perhaps, due to the advanced age of Calasanz, who in 1614 was already fifty-seven years old, everything was reduced to a visit to Assisi, which is the most interesting, because of the mystical experience he had there, according to witnesses. But it cannot be denied that, in fact, he realized his intention to visit all those sanctuaries and "others" similar in the summer of 1599, as it is suggested in a letter of Calasanz of 1630 in which he says, referring to Nursia, homeland of St. Benedict: "I was there more than 30 years ago."¹⁰² That is to say, before 1600.

On the other hand, according to the books of the Confraternity of the Holy Apostles, from May 1596, when the name of Calasanz appears for the first time, until the end of 1599 his occupations would not have left him free more than three weeks to be absent, and he could only do it from July 24 to September 7, 1599. Neither Assisi nor Nursia are mentioned among the sanctuaries he plans to visit,

99 EGC, II, l. 7.

100 A. GARCÍA-DURÁN. *oc.*, pp. 82 and 131.

101 SÁNTHA. *Ensayos* p. 54.

102 EGC IV, l. 1331.

but he adds that there are “others.” It is logical to think that among them are Nursia and Assisi, where St. Benedict and St. Francis were born, whom he also plans to venerate at Monte Cassino and Monte della Verna. In fact, we know he visited those places.

Precisely related to his visit to Assisi we have an affidavit of Fray Bonaventure Claver, bishop of Potenza. He revealed that “communicating to him one day in S. Pantaleo, in Rome, some sentiments of mine, he [Calasanz] confided to me that having gone to Assisi to gain the plenary indulgence on August 2, in the feast of Santa Maria degli Angeli, the Father St. Francis appeared to him twice. In one of them he betrothed him with three maids, which signified and represented the three vows of obedience, chastity and poverty. In the other apparition he showed him the great difficulty there is to gain plenary indulgence. And he assured me that he did not know how to explain them, although he understood them by interior illumination”¹⁰³. The personality of the witness and the sobriety of what he declared could hardly give rise to doubts about the reality of the event. Notwithstanding all that has been said, nothing forces us to admit that this vision occurred in the summer of 1599, during his long tour of the sanctuaries of Italy. It could be also in 1614, if he returned to Assisi and had this apparition, so intimately related to the religious vocation by the symbol of the three vows. In 1599 he was still far from thinking of becoming a religious, while in 1614 he was already in relationship with the Congregation of the Mother of God in Lucca. He had entrusted his schools to them and he would try to reform it, demanding “extreme poverty.” Let us also say that this vision of Assisi is related to another of poverty, “Madonna Povertà”, remembered by all biographers and supported in the memoirs of the first chroniclers. It is, therefore, more coherent that both visions occurred on close temporal occasions and related to her approach to religious life. It was like an invitation to enter it.

There are also two charismatic events that are situated in these years at the end or beginning of the century, as the fruit of their intense spiritual life. The first is told by Father Castelli, who says: “Going one day to St. John Lateran on a visit to the seven churches,

103 A GARCÍA-DURÁN, o.c., pp. 131-132.

he [Calasanz] met a large group of people who were trying to force a demoniac into the church and they could not get him. Fr. Joseph approached, armed with living and true faith. He took the man by the hand with the fingers of his right hand that raise the Sacred Host at Mass. The energetic man let himself be led like a little lamb and entered the interior of the Basilica. Years later I asked him if the case was true and how it happened. His answer was natural and at the same time evasive: "Do you not know the power of the consecrated fingers of a priest?"¹⁰⁴ According to other witnesses, the scene must have occurred in Santa Prassede, and it was a case of a possessed woman and not of a possessed man. But these are details that do not disprove the substantial narration.

The other fact would be a prophecy. During the years in which she lived in the Colonna palace, many times she used to go to the Franciscan convent, adjacent to the Basilica of the Twelve Apostles. On one occasion he found two young Friars, named James Montanari of Bagnacavallo and John Baptist Berardicelli of Larino, playing and running around in the cloister. Gently he called their attention, telling them that it was better to spend their time in a more dignified way and not playing like children, since both would become General Superiors of their Order, as they did. With both of them he later maintained relations of great esteem and consideration. After the death of the Saint, an attempt was made to have them testify in the process of beatification, but it was not possible. Fr. Montanari had died in 1631. But they remembered, however, this early prophecy.

Joseph Calasanz had advanced a lot in the way of perfection in these last years of the century, and perhaps he already knew a lot about interior "dwellings." And what is more important, at that same time all this religious restlessness and this incessant and unconscious search for his personal priestly vocation had reached a sure goal: the full dedication to the school as a means of social promotion of the poor and Christian reform of society.

104 BAU. RV. P. 80.

Genesis of the Pious Schools

The big idea

Joseph Calasanz started a peculiar pilgrimage by joining the Confraternity of the Holy Apostles in 1595. He began to go through the heart of Rome, with unforeseeable effects. It was something very different from the pious visits to the seven Roman churches or to the most famous sanctuaries of Italy. The alms-giving member of the Confraternity went through all the neighborhoods of Rome, going up and down the seven hills in search of poverty and misery. And he found it in abundance. It was not only material misery and poverty that lacerates the body, but also moral misery plus ignorance of the indispensable minimum of religious knowledge. And he wondered about the causes. In particular, he asked about the ignorance of the children in those environments. They did not even know the simplest Christian prayers: the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Creed... They did not learn how to read, write or count. Nevertheless, in every neighborhood there was a school with a teacher paid by the City Hall. Their meager salaries were rounded off by the obligatory contribution of the pupils. There were also people all over Rome who dedicated themselves to teach catechism to children, especially in Sunday catechesis. Why, then, so many children in ignorance? The answer was repeatedly given by the parents: they were too poor and could not afford to pay the teachers in the school of their neighborhood. On the other hand, for those street mobs of poor children, Sunday catechesis had no incentive to attract them on feast days. The solution, then, was that all poor children should have the possibility of going to school without having to pay anything. And it was a pity that this was not the case, because there were some very intelligent children whose talents were wasted for lack of education.¹⁰⁵

105 BC, pp. 265-266, 268-272, 276-278; A. GARCÍA-DURÁN, o.c., pp. 68-70, nt. 409 and 412.

This was indeed the great new idea: to open free schools for all poor children, where they would be taught to read, write, count and even Latin, along with Christian doctrine. Then, he undertook another kind of pilgrimage with this solution, obviously revolutionary. He began to look for somebody who could carry out his new idea. And he started at the bottom, with the paid teachers of the neighborhood schools. He asked to admit poor children who could not pay. They answered him, as Fr. Berro writes, that "they did not have more than six or eight each for free, excusing themselves on the grounds that the Senate and the Roman people (S.P.Q.R.) did not pay to have a greater number."¹⁰⁶ He asked Cardinal Colonna for recommendations and very confidently he went up the Capitoline Hill to meet the Senators and Conservators of Rome and asked them to increase the salaries of teachers so that they could admit the poorest of the poor to their schools free of charge. But he got nothing. And without being disheartened, he went to talk to the Jesuits of the Collegio Romano, but they told him that they could not admit children, rich or poor, who did not already know the first elements, even the impersonal verbs of Latin, very well. Another round refusal. A few steps from the Collegio Romano were the Dominicans of the Minerva. Surely he remembered the school they had in Tremp, the Schola Christi, in the hope that they would attend to his request here in Rome. But they also refused. Their school of the Minerva was not for that.

All these comings and goings without any success distressed his soul. And he thought about it while he continued his work as a visitor of the poor in the slums of all the districts of Rome.

The school of Santa Dorotea in Trastevere

On April 9, 1597, Easter Wednesday, Calasanz crossed the Ponte Sisto, for the first time as Visitor of the Confraternity of the Holy Apostles. He entered Trastevere accompanied by another Spanish confrere. Here is what Fr. Caputi tells: "In the morning he was called by Mr. Santiago de Avila, a gentleman of great piety, confrere of the Company of the Holy Apostles and of the Christian Doctrine,

106 GARCÍA-DURÁN, o.c., p. 70, nt. 412.

to go to the district of Trastevere to visit the shameful and sick poor. On their way Calasanz began to tell him that he had made many efforts to find someone to teach the poor children the things of the faith; and he had not found anyone who wanted to embrace this pious work and he intended to do what he could himself. Santiago de Avila approved his thoughts, and they went to Trastevere to speak to the parish priest so that he would give them the list of the sick in the parish of Santa Dorotea."¹⁰⁷ Calasanz must have explained to his companion the whole idea, of which Caputi has already spoken before, because if he had only been concerned with the teaching of catechism, his own companion would have informed that the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine was already interested in it. On the other hand, whether it is because of what his friend Santiago told him or because of other reports and experiences, the fact is that Calasanz enrolled in this confraternity precisely in the autumn of that same year 1597 or at the beginning of 1598, after this and other later visits to the parish of Santa Dorotea.

The parish priest D. Antonio Brandini had opened a little school for the children of his parish, in which besides catechism they were taught to read, write and perhaps also to count. The moral environment and the religious instruction in the neighborhood schools left a lot to be desired. To obviate these deficiencies the good parish priest had founded this school, identical to the neighborhood schools, but with these moral guarantees. The children had to pay, as teachers were salaried; but there were some who attended free of charge, thus compensating for the services they rendered to the parish. In addition to the parish priest, some members of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine attended this school on their own and not as an official task. In fact, among the 22 schools for boys and girls that the Confraternity had in Rome, there is no mention of Santa Dorotea's school in a document of 1597.¹⁰⁸

The school could not fully satisfy Calasanz, since the problem remained unsolved: poor children could not attend because here too they had to pay. And it is very significant to note that after the first

107 Ibid., p. 71, nt. 420.

108 Ibid., p. 87, nt. 465.

visit to Trastevere on April 9 of that year 1597, he does not return there until May 29. Then seven long months pass until January 1598 when he reappears, and during that month he makes seven visits, always as a member of the Confraternity of the Holy Apostles.¹⁰⁹ This change of attitude suggests that the Trastevere neighborhood began to interest him greatly at the beginning of 1598. The reason for such interest was nothing else than the school of Santa Dorotea.

If he was not convinced in the beginning, when he enrolled in the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, he began to frequent the little school accompanied by other confreres, and conceived the idea to transform it. What he had not achieved at the Capitol, the Collegio Romano, or the Minerva, he could achieve here at Santa Dorotea. He spoke with D. Brandini and convinced him to accept only the poor children free of charge, and not only those of the Trastevere, but all those who wanted to come. The parish priest agreed. The great step had been taken. In 1622 Calasanz wrote a Memorandum in which he recalled the origins of the Pious Schools with these words: "The Institute of the Pious Schools had its beginning in the Church of Santa Dorotea in Trastevere, near the Septimiana Gate..., and since there it was commonly taught to rich and poor, the said Joseph [Calasanz] succeeded in having it taught only to the poor who could not find anyone to teach them the fundamentals."¹¹⁰

The news of the existence of a free school for poor children must have spread quickly throughout Rome. Such a large number of children began to flock to Santa Dorotea that it was necessary to rent premises adjoining the parish. The two small rooms provided by the parish priest were no longer enough. This massive influx of children is clear proof of the absolute novelty of school in Santa Dorotea.

Rightly it should be considered as the first free popular school in Europe, as L. von Pastor recalled in his monumental "History of the Popes".

It was not, however, a mere "social work", but fundamentally a "work of the Church", for which a special divine vocation was required. And

109 SÁNTHA, Ensayos p. 55.

110 EGC, II, l. 132a.

this is how Fr. Berro presented it: “Seeing that in Rome, among so many works of charity, there was no way to do anything in favor of the little poor, he [Calasanz] thought that God had left such a task to him. And trusting in His Divine Majesty, he submitted to His divine will with such affection that he believed it would be the most acceptable to God and the most profitable for the children to train them in Christian piety with the bait of letters. And for the same reason he resolved to open the schools, as he effectively did.”¹¹¹ However, there were those who wanted to see this vocational moment wrapped in a mystical halo, and let the mysterious voice be heard again, as he had already heard in Spain: “Joseph, go to Rome.” This time it is Fr. Castelli who painted this evocative scene: “To obey the divine impulse he came to Rome, and after a few days, passing through a square, which I do not remember what it was, he saw a crowd of lost boys who were doing a thousand devilish things, even throwing stones at passers-by, and he heard as if a voice was saying to him: Look, look. And echoing more and more in his conscience, as he looked, searching for the meaning of the mysterious voice, the following thought came to his mind, which his lips had been secretly ruminating on: Perhaps the Lord wants me to take charge of these boys. And from that moment on, he thought of nothing but helping those poorly educated children. And that concern grew day by day, until he expressed it in his Institute.”¹¹²

On Christmas Eve 1598, the Tiber burst its banks, causing one of the most catastrophic floods in the history of Rome. The death toll was 1,400 according to some and 4,000 according to others. The damage was estimated at two million gold escudos. And those who suffered the most bitter consequences were undoubtedly the poor, many of whose houses were swept away by the raging waters. One of the most affected neighborhoods was Trastevere. Santa Dorotea is a stone’s throw from the river and its school also felt the effects of the flood. Once the classrooms were restored after the storm, the schools continued as usual.

The number of students, the expenses involved, the need for greater regularity and attendance of teachers, already exceeded the forecasts of Calasanz, who felt great concern for the continuity and stability of

111 BAU, BC, pp. 277-278.

112 *Ibid.*, p. 268.

the work. One of his most unconditional collaborators was Marco Antonio Arcangeli, a member of the Confraternity of the Christian Doctrine, as was Calasanz. Since he could not participate in the congregations or assemblies, he commissioned his friend Arcangeli to propose that the Confraternity take under its protection, as its own, the school of Santa Dorotea. On June 10, 1599, the Secret Congregation welcomed the idea favorably, but referred the final decision to the Public Congregation, which, in its meeting of August 1st, promised to help as much as possible that “work of so much charity”, but did not want to accept it as its own because of the reduced number of members.¹¹³

Antonio Brandini, the parish priest of Santa Dorotea, died on February 26th of the Holy Year 1600, and before the appointment of a new one, Calasanz made the decision to transfer the schools to the interior of Rome. The most powerful reason for this transfer was expressed in a letter of 1644 with these words: “I decided, when the parish priest who lent us a small room and a room [on the first floor] died, to put them in Rome, knowing the great poverty that existed because I, as a member of the Confraternity of the Holy Apostles, had visited all the neighborhoods of Rome for six or seven years.”¹¹⁴ For the comfort of the children it was better to install the schools towards the center of the city and not to remain in the suburbs, since poor were all over Rome.

The new schools were installed in a house “next to the inn called Paradise”, near the popular square of Campo dei Fiori. And of all the collaborators he had had in Santa Dorotea, only one followed him: Marco Antonio Arcangeli. Neither the parish of Santa Dorotea as such nor the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine intervene in this transfer. Calasanz carried it out feeling the full responsibility and paternity of that new school, which did not yet have its own name.

The “Pious Schools”

Calasanz wrote the following about the permanence of the schools in what is still today called Piazza del Paradiso: “At the beginning of

113 SÁNTHA, Ensayos, p. 42.

114 EGC, VIII, l. 4185.

the Holy Year 1600, from Santa Dorotea the schools were moved to the center of Rome to a small house next to the “inn of Paradiso”, for which 56 escudos a year were paid as rent, and as the number of students grew, it was necessary to take another house nearby for 100 escudos a year as rent, in which about 500 students attended, and in these two houses the schools remained for almost two years.”¹¹⁵

The children certainly did not pay anything, but Calasanz had to worry about paying not only the rent, but also the materials for the classes and also the salary of some of the teachers, since not all of them collaborated gratuitously in this task. The funds had to be increased, because those that came from his own pocket money and patrimony were not enough and could not last forever. These difficulties encouraged him to try for the second time to get the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine to accept the schools as its own work. And again he had recourse to his friend and faithful collaborator Marco Antonio Arcangeli, who in the Secret Congregation of March 27, 1601 proposed that if the Confraternity took the schools under its protection, providing them with everything necessary, the school “would be called the Work of Christian Doctrine, and not otherwise; to which the said congregation replied that they did not want to take on the matter because they have not the means to do so, but that it would help it in everything that were possible.”¹¹⁶

It was already the second attempt and it had failed again. Since the first refusal, Calasanz had intensified his activity in the archconfraternity in order to gain the confidence and gratitude of all and, at the same time, to deserve to be elected to high office. In fact, since the beginning of 1600, he was part of the Secret Congregation and held the positions of visitor of the secular sick; he was entrusted with the care of catechizing the gypsies; he was appointed ordinary visitor of the schools for boys and girls that the confraternity had, etc. And three months after the second refusal, he presented his candidacy for president of the Archconfraternity, with the intention of having his schools accepted as his own work, if elected. The vote was held on July 1, 1601, but he came in third place.

115 EGC, II, I. 132^a.

116 A. GARCÍA-DURÁN, *oc.*, p. 91, nt. 476.

Everything seemed to have been useless, but it was really providential, because if he had succeeded in his attempt, “the Pious Schools” would never have arisen. Those schools in Paradiso square would have been simply a pious work of the Archconfraternity of Christian Doctrine, following its historical vicissitudes. However, when his third attempt to entrust those schools to the Confraternity failed for the third time, he realized that the only way to preserve them was to take charge of them personally. And so he did. As a result of this third refusal, he thought of giving a name to the work whose paternity he felt in his soul, and he called them “Pious Schools.”

The first time this name appears, as far as we know, is on April 4, 1602, when a collaborator of Calasanz, the Florentine priest Giovanni Francesco Fiammelli, editing his work “Il Principe Cristiano Guerriero”, calls himself “Brother of the Congregation of the Pious Schools.” The beginning is not at that date, but before. Probably the creation of this “Congregation” took place in the second half of the previous year, that is, after the failure of Calasanz’ candidacy for president of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. In a decree of the Capitoline Secret Council of August 26-27, 1602, there is also mention of the “Pious Schools”, to which 25 escudos are granted as alms. The official minutes of the aforementioned Archconfraternity of Christian Doctrine, in 1603, speak of “the Fathers of the Pious Schools.”¹¹⁷ Something new had already arisen in the Church of God, with nuances different from the free school of Santa Dorotea.

Benefactors and difficulties

The continuous increase in the number of students again made the premises insufficient and another transfer of the schools was necessary. For 200 escudos a year they rented the house of Monsignor Vestri, adjacent to the church of St. Andrea della Valle. This monsignor was secretary of Briefs and immediately informed Pope Clement VIII of the marvelous work of the Pious Schools that he had installed in his own house. Interested by the news, the Pope commissioned two cardinals to visit the schools and to inform him

117 Eph. Cal. 6 (1958) 159, nt. 18.

extensively. The Visitators were Cardinal Baronio, one of the most learned men of his time and a faithful disciple of St. Philip Neri, and Cardinal Silvio Antoniano. His printed work “Three Books on the Christian Education of Children” (1584) credited him as one of the most exalted pedagogues of his time. The report of the visit must have been very praiseworthy, because the Pope ordered his alms giver to pay the 200 escudos of rent every year.

The first great benefactor was thus Clement VIII, whose example was followed by others. Berro writes: “The main benefactors were Cardinal Aldobrandini, who gave substantial alms, and particularly Cardinal de San Cesario and Cardinal Montalvo, nephew of Sixtus V, who gave twelve escudos monthly, that of St. George and many other Cardinals... and the Nobility, Romans and foreigners.¹¹⁸ The benevolence and protection of Clement VIII went beyond simple alms, for he wanted to receive Calasanz in a private audience, and at least “viva voce” he approved what was already begun to be called “Congregation of the Pious Schools.” An attempt was also made to obtain an Apostolic Brief of official approval, but it seems that it was not obtained. Nevertheless, later documentation considered that the Pious Schools, as a congregation, had come into being and had been approved by Clement VIII. During this period of residence in the house of Monsignor Vestri, the group of collaborators of Calasanz began to organize themselves as members of a religious congregation, although without vows. In a Memorial of 1622 he wrote: “And so that the said schools would be guided with order and for the benefit of the poor pupils, as soon as they were introduced into the interior of Rome, the said Joseph [Calasanz] of the Mother of God was elected superior by all the collaborators.”¹¹⁹

In 1602, perhaps taking advantage of the departure of Cardinal Ascanio Colonna to Spain when he was appointed viceroy of Aragón, Fr. Joseph Calasanz left his palace and moved to live in the newly acquired house of Msgr. Vestri. This way he linked his life definitively to the fate of his schools. From this period are also a kind of “Common Rules”, called “Orders to be observed by the Workers”, in

118 A. GARCÍA-DURÁN, o.c., p. 98, nt. 497.

119 EGC, II, l. 132^a.

which the general lines of coexistence are outlined, recognizing as superior the “Prefect”, whose permission must be requested to go out in the street, to visit a student in his own house, to receive gifts, etc.. Mental prayer and other exercises in common are mentioned, as well as daily Mass and Sunday Communion for non-priests.

These very brief “Rules” form part of an extensive report describing the practices, methods and teachings that were used in the schools, and they show the maturity of the organization achieved in so few years and the embodiment of the educational ideals of the new institution. The success of the enterprise is attested to by the 700 children who were attending the schools as early as July 1602, as told by one of the collaborators.¹²⁰ From him we also know that in that year a bell was blessed and placed to regulate the schedule of classes. And one day in 1603, Fr. Joseph Calasanz went up to fix it and, stumbling, he suffered a very serious fall, breaking his leg. He felt this fracture for the rest of his life. According to Fr. Berro, the fall must have been deadly “and, as the neighbors affirmed, he was visibly caught by a shadow and thrown plumb into the courtyard of the schools.”¹²¹ Once again the evil shadow of the devil, who wanted to end his life in the olive grove of Peralta, appears over this Roman belfry. And in both cases he was defeated, as a symbol of the other spiritual defeat that the evil one would suffer with the institution of the Pious Schools. They are two hagiographic brushstrokes that complement each other. The consequences of the fall, however, were tangible, since Calasanz had to rest for a few months and appointed Andrea Basso as provisional prefect.

New transfer of the schools: “From the said house -Calasanz writes in 1622- which today the said Fathers of St Andrea della Valle have, the Pious Schools moved to Piazza San Pantaleo, to the house of Mr. Octavio Mannini, on November 1, 1605, for which they paid 350 escudos of rent, where they lived almost seven years, and His Holiness Paul V, of happy memory, always helped in the said rent.”¹²² In this new residence, the number of students reached 800.

120 EC, p. 1552 (Gellio Ghellini).

121 GARCÍA-DURÁN, o.c., p. 110. nt. 559.

122 EGC, II, l. 132a.

The increase in the number of students also multiplied the expenses, and the funds seemed to diminish notably, to the point that in 1606 they had to ask the Pope for permission to beg for alms for the Pious Schools. Apparently, the munificence of the former benefactors had waned and new times of scarcity and poverty were beginning, which would last practically forever. And far from feeling this poverty as a misfortune, it will be considered later, when the Order is founded, as a distinctive and venerable element. After all, the poor were the reason for its existence and it was necessary to share in their poverty.

The massive influx of boys into the Pious Schools and the fame they had achieved in the eyes of the Roman Curia aroused the envy and the interests of the local teachers, who saw their schools emptying and their monthly income dwindling. On the other hand, the perfect didactic organization of the Pious Schools left the methods and possibilities of the neighborhood schools in the shadows. For all these reasons, the teachers, resentful, together with “other schools”, unleashed a campaign of denigration against the Pious Schools, and their slanderous memoranda reached the highest Vatican spheres. Paul V was moved, fearing that so many accusations might be well founded, and appointed Cardinals Peretti Montalto and Aldobrandini to visit the Pious Schools and to report back to him. The two cardinals had been friends and benefactors for years. The inspection visit dispelled the Pope’s doubts. So did the good words by Fr. John of Jesus and Mary, a Discalced Carmelite, a great friend of Calasanz and admirer of his educational work. He also wrote a pedagogical work, inspired by Calasanz and his schools, and entitled “*Liber de pia educatione sive cultura pueritiae*”. It must have had a great influence in favor of the slandered schools. The storm, then, had passed; but very serious became the danger if still in 1625 Calasanz mentioned it as the main event happened to the Pious Schools since his entry into Rome. He said: “The Institute of the Pious Schools, introduced in Rome at the beginning of the Holy Year of 1600, had its origin in the church of Santa Dorotea, next to the Septimiana Gate, and notwithstanding the persecutions and impediments that the teachers of the neighborhoods and other schools procured for it, it has always been growing and advancing in the service and for the

erudition of the poor boys.”¹²³ For this and other reasons, Pope Paul V was asked to appoint a cardinal protector of the Pious Schools. With a Brief of March 24, 1607, Cardinal Ludovico Torres was appointed, but he died two years later.

First-time collaborators

The years in which Calasanz acted as a confrere of Christian Doctrine (1597-1605) served him as valuable experience to learn catechetical methods and practices, which he later applied both in the teaching of catechism and in other didactic subjects in his schools for the poor. But these were also fruitful years for his nascent institution due to the collaboration and help of many confreres. Some of them gave their name to the new Congregation, such the already remembered Florentine priest Francis Fiammelli, who will appear again in connection with the foundation of the Pious Schools in Florence. Another priest from Vicenza, Fr. Gellio Ghellini, whose sanctity of life Calasanz admired during the short time Ghellini was with him (1602-1605).

One of the most serious problems that deeply worried Calasanz until the elevation of his Institute to a religious Order was the instability of his collaborators. For some, the atmosphere of poverty and almost misery that was breathed in that nascent congregation became unbearable. For others, it was unbearable the ministry of teaching itself, aggravated by the special quality of the students, all of them poor. For some time, even a certificate from their parish priests was demanded in which the authentic poverty of the parents was stated. Others abandoned the work, because, as Calasanz lamented years later, “many, after having learned well the way of teaching, went to do school for interest elsewhere, given that in these Pious Schools they were not given more than food and room.”¹²⁴ For these and other reasons, during the years 1604-1612 there were 73 collaborators, of whom eight or nine died, faithful to their vocation, and some 54 left the Pious Schools.¹²⁵ Of this primi-

123 Ibid., I. 380a.

124 Ibid., I. 132a.

125 SÁNTHA, Ensayos, pp. 136-137.

tive period, prior to the arrival at San Pantaleo, only three remained with Calasanz until his death, when the Institute was already a Religious Congregation, canonically approved. They were: Lawrence Santilli, Caspar Dragonetti and Glicerio Landriani. Let us say something about the last two.

About Caspar Dragonetti, Calasanz said in 1622: "Since the year 1603, an old venerable man of great spirit came to help the said work, who had had a school of grammar and humanities in Rome perhaps for more than forty years. Now he is 110 years old and has always persevered and perseveres having school with the same strength as a young man with great profit for his students. His name is Caspar Dragonetti, and he is from Leontino, in Sicily."¹²⁶ He never entered the congregation, neither the Order of the Pious Schools, nor going beyond the category of simple cleric, but he was considered as one more religious, highly appreciated by all, especially by Calasanz. He distinguished himself, among other things, by his sincere devotion to Our Lady and his childlike veneration for the mystery of Christmas. Regarding the former, a precious image of Mary, acquired by him, is still preserved today next to the internal oratory in San Pantaleo. With regard to the latter, he was the creator of an artistic nativity scene installed in the church, next to which he wanted to be buried.

Among the most delightful anecdotes of his life it is told that one day, Pope Urban VIII, passing by the church of San Pantaleo, he was struck by the venerable figure of an old man mixed in with a group of children and asked who it was. They answered that he was Fr. Caspar Dragonetti, who taught Latin in the Pious Schools. The Pope sent for him and was interested in testing his humanistic knowledge, asking him to come to his palace to expound some passage from Virgil. The old man appeared at the Vatican and in the presence of the Pope and other curious people he began, as if he were in front of his pupils, "Attention, children!"

He never agreed with the extreme poverty in which they lived, and perhaps for this reason he resisted taking religious vows. During the heroic times when they began to ask for public alms for the Pi-

126 EGC, II, I. 132^a.

ous Schools, the poor old man one day expressed his protests by sending all his students home. Calasanz asked what had happened and Fr. Caspar replied that it could not go on like that; everything was in debt; he could not bear so much poverty. Calasanz had somebody to put a collection box in public with this inscription: "Alms for the Pious Schools." At the end of the day, Calasanz called the old man Dragonetti and they excitedly opened the box: they found 40 gold escudos and a policy of 200 to be cashed at the Banco Bonanni. They could not find out the name of the donor, but they were moved to admire the hand of the Divine Providence.

Full of merits and mourned by all, the venerable old man died at the incredible age 115 years old in 1628.

In open contrast with this old man there was another famous personage, very young in age but who surpassed in holiness all those who were the first companions of Calasanz: he was Glicerio Landriani, whom they used to call "Father Abbot", because he was in fact the commendatory abbot of St. Anthony of Piacenza. He was from Milan, of a noble family related to St. Charles Borromeo. When he arrived in Rome, he entered the pious circle of the extravagant Portuguese priest Francis Mendez. When Mendez returned to Spain, he entrusted all his followers to Fr. Dominic Ruzola, a Spanish Discalced Carmelite, confessor and admirer of Calasanz. And by that means Landriani arrived with five companions to know and enter the Pious Schools. He was an extraordinary catechist, whose activity was not limited to the Pious Schools, but was extended to many parishes in Rome. He was an angelic soul, extremely in love with poverty. Calasanz placed his hope in his merits and excellent gifts, but he died during his novitiate in 1618 like a saint. His cause of beatification was already officially introduced by the Founder himself.

There was another early collaborator, a married layman, whose name was Ventura Sarafellini. He was a brilliant calligrapher, who wrote the monumental letters of the inscription on the inner ring of the dome of St. Peter's, which says: "Tu es Petrus, etc." In 1618 Calasanz signed a working contract, binding him "to serve, teaching calligraphy classes for the whole time of his life in the schools of our Congregation ... without demanding anything from the students who come to our schools" and fixing the salary and the benefits, even spiritual, that Calasanz granted him, given that "he has

served in place from the beginning that began this blessed work of the Pious Schools with great perseverance and love."¹²⁷ He was, in fact, teacher of the students and of the religious, probably also of the Founder, whose calligraphy, already excellent since Spain, he must have perfected. Mr. Sarafellini remained faithful to his commitments to the Piarists until his death in 1664. His case is one of the most eloquent examples of the broad and provident spirit of Calasanz, who sought for his schools and his religious the best teachers he could find. He would later do the same with two controversial figures, Galileo, as teacher of mathematics, and Thomas Campanella, as professor of philosophy. In his own field, Ventura Sarafellini was as great as them.

Definitive transfer: San Pantaleo

It was not very plausible that the Pious Schools should change their headquarters so frequently and always in rented premises. That gave the work a sense of being instable and temporary. It was necessary to buy a fixed, comfortable place of their own. Fr. Ruzola, always concerned for the good of the Institute, persuaded Calasanz of this idea and took it upon himself to look for a new house, which he found very close, on the other side of the square, next to the church of San Pantaleo. The seller was Mrs. Vittoria Cenci, Marquise de Torres, and the buyers were "the Rector, the Fathers and Brothers of the venerable Congregation of the Pious Schools of Rome", that is: "Fr.. Joseph Calasanz, priest of the diocese of Urgel, Rector; Fr. Lawrence Santilli, priest of the diocese of Spoleto; Fr. Virgil Marcelli, presbyter of the diocese of Firmio; Fr. Caspar Dragonetti, cleric of the diocese of Leontino; Rev. D. Glicerio Landriani, Abbot of San Antony of Piacenza; and Brothers John Garcia del Castillo, cleric of the diocese of Segovia; Thomas de Victoria, cleric of the diocese of Seville; Diego Lopez, cleric of Paris; Francis Franchi, cleric of the diocese of Spoleto and John Martin or Martini, a foriense."¹²⁸ They were, then, four priests, six clerics and another unqualified, and these eleven formed "the whole Congregation", as it is express-

127 SANTHA (BAC) p. 144, nt. 17.

128 SÁNTHA, Ensayos p. 257.

ly said.¹²⁹ Besides Calasanz, Santilli, Landriani, García del Castillo (who would be the second General of the Order and successor of Calasanz), Victoria and, to a certain extent, Dragonetti, all of them would form part of the future Pauline Congregation of the Pious Schools, canonically erected.

The house of San Pantaleo, as it began to be called, cost 10,000 gold escudos, which were paid thanks to the generosity of Cardinals Gius-tiniani and Lancellotti and other aids, among them the patrimonial contribution of Glicerio Landriani, which if not directly used to extinguish those debts, was destined to fix the house, since the building was old and in great need of repairs and adaptations for its new purposes.

The adjoining church was a parish church when the house was acquired, but in 1614 the Pious Schools were granted perpetual use of it, preserving the parish dedication. In 1615 a door was opened so that the students and religious, without having to go out, could pass into the church directly from the courtyard of the schools. Finally, in 1623, Gregory XV suppressed the care of souls in the church and granted it to the Pious Schools in perpetual use.

In the ground floor of the house Calasanz kept the rent of two stores, which already existed when the Marquises of Torres acquired the building. The other premises were dedicated to schools. However, it is difficult to admit that, knowing today the capacity of the building and not having as many floors as now, it could accommodate 1,200 students in its classrooms in 1614 and 1,500 in 1619.¹³⁰

This venerable historical complex of the house and church of San Pantaleo would be the stage for many happy and unhappy events, of glory and of calvary, not only for the Founder but also for his Order. For all these reasons, it would become in time the symbol and spiritual center of the whole Institute and an intimate sanctuary of the memories and the heartfelt presence of Calasanz through the centuries.

129 A. GARCÍA-DURÁN, *oc.*, p. 118, nt. 587.

130 SÁNTHA. *Ensayos* p. 263; EGC, VIII, p. 451.

From secular congregation to religious order

Union with the Congregation from Lucca

During these crucial years, “the venerable Congregation of the Pious Schools in Rome” is deepening its roots in Roman soil and slowly passing from its state of simple secular congregation or pious association without vows to that of religious Order of solemn vows. Father Dominic Ruzola, prior of the convent of La Scala in Trastevere, had a decisive influence. We have already seen him guiding the steps of Glicerio Landriani and his companions towards the Pious Schools and also intervening in the acquisition of the house of San Pantaleo for a definitive headquarters of the schools. At the end of 1612 he succeeded in getting Card. Benedict Giustiniani, whose confessor and spiritual director he was, accepted to be the protector of the Pious Schools, succeeding Card. Torres, who had died in 1609. Paul V signed the appointment on January 12, 1613. Cardinal Giustiniani protection left a deep mark and an everlasting memory in the Pious Schools.

As soon as he was named protector, he asked the fathers of the church of Santa Maria in Portico to appoint someone as confessor of the children of the Pious Schools, adding: “These schools will one day fall on your shoulders, because the Prefect is old and indisposed and if he were to die before this work was provided for, there would be danger of dissolution.”¹³¹ The priests belonged to the Lucca Congregation, called like this because founded in that Tuscan

131 A. BERNARDINI, *Delle cronache della Congregazione dei chierici regolari della Madre di Dio*, in *Positio* (pp. 257-284) p. 261.

city. Its founder, St. John Leonardi, had been very much appreciated by Giustiniani and also by Calasanz. He would intervene as a witness in his process of beatification in 1639 saying: "I have known him in the time of Clement VIII and had dealt with him intimately while he was in Rome until his death"; and adding, "I remember that [Clement VIII] chose him to appease certain differences and claims that had arisen between certain gentlemen and the teachers of the Pious Schools. His intervention was very useful on that occasion for the work of the Pious Schools."¹³² This background served as a basis for mutual understanding between the two congregations.

Calasanz felt old at fifty-six years of age and the perpetuity of his schools was once again of serious concern to him. For the second time in his life he looked for a well-established corporation to entrust his work to. The first time, barely started, he tried to give it to the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, and failed. Since then, about twelve years had gone and about 80 collaborators had passed through its classrooms. The majority had abandoned the work for various reasons. In that summer of 1613 there were eleven members of the Congregation of the Pious Schools. But neither Calasanz nor Father Ruzola, nor Card. Giustiniani had many hopes for the continuity and stability of that group. The advanced age of Calasanz made the future even more uncertain. After much consideration, they came to the conclusion that they should deal with the Lucca Fathers in order to entrust the Pious Schools to them. And so Giustiniani personally communicated this to the Fathers in Santa Maria in Portico.

The General of the Congregation, Fr. Alessandro Bernardini, was in Lucca, and when he heard of the Cardinal's proposal, he communicated it to his companions. "They -he says- were very pleased and in common agreement judged that they should not lose this occasion, as it seemed to have been sent by God to pull the Congregation out of the morass and servitude."¹³³ In more realistic terms, Calasanz expressed himself like this: "In the year 1614, the Fathers of the Congregation from Lucca, seeing that for the space of 40 years their congregation had grown only to 40 or 50 people, thought that to be-

132 Archivum 4 (1978) 280 and 277.

133 A. BERNARDINI, l.c.

come Religion [Order of solemn vows] their congregation there had no more opportune means than to unite with the Institute of the Pious Schools, judging it the most useful and necessary of all the others..."¹³⁴ The fame and universal esteem that the Pious Schools already enjoyed would be a springboard to raise the rank of the Lucca Congregation.

At the beginning of October Fr. Bernardini set out for Rome to deal with the matter personally. In his interviews with Giustiniani and Ruzola he clearly stated his motives for accepting the union, as he recalls in his memoirs: "We spoke... with Card. Giustiniani and with Fr. Dominic and we explained to them our desire to bring the congregation to the state of formed Religion. They all encouraged us very much and we were given great hopes of achieving this attempt at Religion because they considered how useful this institute [of the Pious Schools] was in the holy Church... they said that this care would be an optimal means to obtain this state..." "The same advice was taken from other prelates and religious of quality and intelligence and knowing that the work [of the Pious Schools] was esteemed by the Supreme Pontiff, by various cardinals and Lords of the court and that it was desired by the principal cities of Italy and outside Italy, it was judged that by this means the Congregation could be raised from the dust of the earth in which it had been shrouded for so long to a good and perfect state for the greater service of God."¹³⁵

In the winter of 1613, Fr. Ruzola, the representatives of the Congregation from Lucca together with Fr. General Bernardini met those of the Pious Schools, namely Calasanz, Landriani and Dragonetti, "in whom rested - says Bernardini - all the authority of the Congregation of the Pious Schools."¹³⁶ They reached an agreement, and decided to address to the Pope a plea to unite the two congregations. It is curious that as the motivation for this union, emphasis is placed on the "old age" of Calasanz, which would endanger the perpetuity of his work, and nothing is said about the inconstancy of his collaborators or the desire for promotion by those from Lucca.

134 EGC, II, I, 7b.

135 A. BERNARDINI. o.c., p. 264.

136 Ibid., p. 263.

It is also admirable to note the “youthful” enthusiasm of Calasanz, who hopes that his work “will spread all over the world”, in spite of the fact that at this moment he has only one house in Rome. Let us read: “The Prefect of the Pious Schools and the General of Santa Maria in Portico, most humble servants of Your Holiness, state that having seen from the experience of many years the great usefulness and fruit of the said schools, desirous of perpetuating and increasing them not only in the city of Rome, but also in the whole world, and seeing himself already old, after having raised many prayers to God Our Lord, and having dealt many times with Fr. Prior of La Scala, it was finally agreed, with the will and consent of the Most Reverend Cardinal Giustiniani, Protector of the said Pious Schools, with the said General and Fathers of the said Congregation, to entrust them with this exercise and to unite the Pious Schools to them...”¹³⁷

This union was stipulated with these conditions: 1) Calasanz would remain until his death the prefect of the schools; he and his companions would live according to their own Rules; but those who would be admitted from now on would follow the Constitutions of those of Lucca. 2) the Pious Schools of Rome would continue to require from the children the certificate of poverty given by their parish priests; outside of Rome this certificate would not be required; 3) that everywhere children should be taught in the schools out of charity and love of God, without any reward or donation; 4) henceforth the Congregation would be called “Congregation of the Mother of God”, in which the proper Constitutions would continue to be in force, except for what was contrary to this agreement. And it was expressly requested that an article of the said Constitutions, which prohibited the teaching of grammar and humanities to the children, be repealed.¹³⁸

Paul V issued the desired Brief on January 14, 1614, granting everything requested, but avoiding alluding to future foundations outside of Rome, hinted at in the petition. On the 17th of the same month the Fathers from Lucca officially accepted the Brief and on the 21st, Fr. Peter Casani was appointed rector of the Pious Schools of San Pantaleo. Fr. Bernardini took possession of the schools on

137 Eph. Cal. 6 (1960) 199, nt. 18.

138 Ibid., p. 189, nt. 18 and 23.

February 1st, 1614, before Cardinal Giustiniani. It was undoubtedly a happy and historic day for everyone. The new rector wrote to his father on January 25th and, among other signs of enthusiasm, told him that Card. Mellini, the Pope's vicar, had said that the Pious Schools "if it is not the number one good work in Rome, it is certainly the second"; and that Card. Giustiniani said that "From this work will come the reform of the Church"; and Casani concluded by saying that "men of stature are needed for this loftiest and above all most useful work not only for Rome, but for the whole world."¹³⁹

Between illusions and disappointments

Everyone was satisfied and optimistic; some in the hope that their dejected congregation would gain universal fame with those Pious Schools, so appreciated in the high Vatican spheres, and thus would soon attain the rank of religious Order; others on seeing the number of teachers committed to that task increase, so much in need of new arms, and trusting in the perpetuity of the Pious Schools, assured by that young congregation.

The new rector, accompanied by a group of clerics and brothers, moved into San Pantaleo probably at the beginning of February, after the official inauguration. In the middle of the month, a small house between the church and the schools was acquired. These new premises, and especially the group of newcomers, gave rise to the hope that many more children could be admitted. Fr. Bernardini said with satisfaction: "When we took over the schools there were about 800 children, but as the reputation for good order spread through Rome, the number soon increased to 1,200, so that the classrooms were too small and the teachers could not cope with so much work."¹⁴⁰ Nevertheless, not all the recently arrived were teachers. Their collaboration must have been particularly noticeable in activities of a pastoral nature, as Bernardini notes: "Several congregations of students were formed according to their age, in which they exercised themselves on feast days in various devotions with much profit."¹⁴¹

139 EGC, VI, pp. 2716-2717.

140 A BERNARDINI, *oc.*, p. 265.

141 *Ibid.*

That summer of 1614 there was for the first time a procession to St. Mary Major, around the feast of Our Lady of the Snows, in which some 800 children participated, singing the litanies and other Marian songs through the streets. It must have been an event.

And no less so was the spectacle that was repeated every day, morning and afternoon. At the end of classes, the children were accompanied home in rows under the tutelage of one of their teachers to protect them from the dangers of the street, and not just the traffic. The chroniclers say crudely that “vicious men, of whom the world is full, had the audacity to try to lead them to ugly and nefarious things.”¹⁴² All those 800 to 1,200 children, poor and poorly dressed, crowded together in the small squares adjacent to the Pious Schools and from there they left in five long and orderly lines to their homes. The five itineraries tell us that the children came from all over Rome: one went through the Pantheon to the Trinitá dei Monti, or Spanish Square; another through Campo dei Fiori to Trastevere; another through the Gesú to Santa Maria Maggiore; another through the Banchi street to Saint Peter, and the last one along via della Scrofa to the square del Popolo.

The initiative for this practice came from Glicerio Landriani and began to be carried out in June 1615. The Prefect Calasanz strongly recommended it to everyone, asking them to “gladly accept this act of charity of accompanying those poor people, doing the office of guardian angels and practicing the humility of Christ, since it would have great merit before God.”¹⁴³ Glicerio Landriani guided the group to Trastevere and Calasanz the one that went to Piazza di Spagna. Perhaps he exaggerated, as at other times, but the chronicler Caputi says that Calasanz “always accompanied the children until the year 1642”¹⁴⁴, that is, until he was eighty-fifth years old. Both Caputi and Berro recall in their Memoirs that one day, Pope Paul V, passing by the Pantheon or Rotunda in a litter, came across the line of children that Calasanz was leading, and stopping his entourage, he called him and engaged him in a long conversation.

142 Ibid., p. 276.

143 SANTHA (BAC), p. 364, nt. 5.

144 Ibid.

This pedagogical practice was highly esteemed by our Saint, who included it in the Constitutions of the Order.¹⁴⁵ In some Spanish cities, not many years ago, the Piarists still followed this custom, until the complicated modern traffic put an end to it.

On March 13, 1614, the Marquis of Ariza wrote a letter to Calasanz asking him to bring “the Pious Schools of Rome to his land.” And answering him in May, the Saint told him: “Pray to His Divine Majesty to direct things in such a way that soon in your land this holy work will be founded and in the meantime I will not fail to make all these children that already exceed the number of one thousand and two hundred, pray to the Lord.”¹⁴⁶ It was the first request for foundation that Calasanz received, and precisely for his land of Aragón. Much later he would receive new requests to found in his diocese of Urgel, and he would try to do so, but he died without seeing his dream come true. Still in those months of 1614, news arrived of requests for Pious Schools in Milan and Pescia, and it was said that “when God wants to give us men, there will be no lack of a way or place to employ them.”¹⁴⁷ The fame, then, was a fact, and the hopes were enormous.

In June 1614 the perpetual use of the church of San Pantaleo was obtained for the service of the children, although it was still used for parish functions. A year later, two other small houses were purchased in the block with the schools and the church. In the summer of 1616 they also obtained the installation of a fountain in the courtyard for the use of the children, as a free gift forever, kept until 1979.

But... things, frankly, were not going well. In October 1614 there was a General Assembly in Santa Maria in Portico, and one of the obligatory topics was the situation of the Pious Schools. Since they did not have enough data, they appointed a commission to visit them and give a report. Calasanz, as prefect, took them from class to class and explained the most urgent needs.

First of all, they noted that the number of students had dropped to 1,015 whereas in May were 1,200. This sharp drop was probably

145 Const. II, c. 3 n. 116

146 EGC, VIII, p. 451.

147 EC, VI, p. 2866.

due to the fact that the few priests from Lucca Congregation who had been designated as teachers had not lasted until the end of the school year, and it was necessary to dismiss their students or incorporate them into other groups. However, out the eleven classrooms or classes, there were four with more than one hundred students, while Calasanz' ideal was that there should be no more than fifty. In short, 25 teachers and three assistants were lacking. There were only eleven at work, and none of them were from Lucca.

During that school year "complaints were frequently heard from many teachers [not from Lucca] and sometimes even from those of the congregation, against the state of poverty and against the school institute."¹⁴⁸ In fact, the increase in the number of students had not only multiplied the fatigue, but also required the occupation of new premises, relegating the inhabitants to very cramped and uncomfortable cubicles, especially in the insufferable heat of the summer. Food was also scarce. And all this undoubtedly caused many to fall ill. Add the tragic note that two novices died and that one of the clerics who had given lessons had to retire sick to Lucca, where he died at the beginning of 1615. From Lucca, someone wrote to Fr. Bernardini that "one felt horror and fear just remembering Rome for the illnesses that had occurred, for the deaths and other pains and fatigues suffered there."¹⁴⁹

To make matters worse, alms became scarce and the house of San Pantaleo was overburdened with debts and expenses. In addition to the annual census that it had been carrying since its acquisition, it had to buy paper, pens, ink, books, prizes and other school supplies given free of charge to the students. It also had to pay the salary of the only salaried teacher it had, Sarafellini. It had to feed and clothe not only those who resided at San Pantaleo, but also those of the novitiate, recently opened by the Lucca Fathers in the district of Trevi, etc. All of which amounted to a huge sum for that poor economy, with no fixed income or rents.

What have worried Calasanz the most towards the end of that school year was the noticeable drop in the number of students and the

148 A. BERNARDINI *oc.*, p. 269.

149 *Ibid.*, p. 270.

scarce or null contribution of those of Lucca in the strictly scholastic tasks. He informed Card. Giustiniani, who, at the end of September, notified all the Lucca Congregation, in view of the next Chapter or General Diet of October, to “take to heart the needs of the Pious Schools.”¹⁵⁰ The report given by the Visitators moved the Diet to increase the number of those assigned to the house of San Pantaleo, who were three priests, five clerics and five brothers, confirming Fr. Casani as rector of the house. It was a very considerable effort, although probably not all of them were dedicated to the schools.

If there was disenchantment for Calasanz in seeing how little effective help was for his schools, there was no less for Lucca Fathers in their hope of attaining the rank of Religion. During that year 1614, Father Bernardini succeeded in getting all the religious to accept certain demands of poverty, since it was not possible to claim to be a religious Order without the vow of poverty, which they had not yet taken. The General Diet of October, through Card. Giustiniani, addressed a memorandum to the Pope requesting the elevation to Order, but the Pope refused, alleging conciliar canons that prohibited the creation of new religious orders. Nevertheless, he entrusted the matter to a commission of cardinals. But it also ruled against it. Bernardini appealed with new allegations, but faced with the prospect of a new refusal, he changed tactics, asking that they be allowed to take the simple vow of poverty and be able to be ordained all “by title of poverty.” The commission of cardinals approved this new petition, but Paul V granted only the vow and reduced the second part to only four individuals. Something had been achieved, but new reflections made them realize the inconvenience of having some priests ordained under the title of poverty and others under the title of patrimony. This would bring about malevolent differences in the Congregation. Moreover, these distinctions seemed to invalidate the Brief. They appealed to one of the cardinals of the commission to settle the matter personally with the pope, but no one wanted to. They delegated Joseph Calasanz to go to Frascati, where the Pontiff was vacationing, as a man dear to the Pope, and to inform him properly. Calasanz accepted the commission.

150 Positio p. 156.

A daring attempt to reform

Paul V received Calasanz in private audience in the villa or summer palace of Mondragone, located on the splendid hills of Frascati. It was the month of September 1615. In reality, the person who met with the Pope was rather the prefect of the Pious Schools than the commissioner of the Congregation of Lucca. Undoubtedly he must have spoken about the recently issued Brief on poverty. But that was a detail of the overall problem, much more serious and grave. The consistency of the Pious Schools was in danger. The Lucca Fathers did not give due importance to the school work, and Calasanz knew the Pope's sincere interest in his schools. And he seized the moment: he took out a memorandum he had written and placed it in the hands of the Pontiff. And the Pope read: "... see if it would not be convenient for the greater perfection of the work of the Pious Schools that the Fathers of the said Congregation [of Lucca] have only one institute, that is, that of the schools, or in what way they can exercise their old institute without the danger of weakening the work of the Pious Schools..."¹⁵¹ The proposal was undoubtedly audacious, all the more so if one thinks that he made it without counting on Fr. Bernardini, who in his Memoirs described it as "neither convenient nor reasonable", realizing, however, that "the opinion of the prefect proceeded from immoderate zeal for the work of the Pious Schools, having the most ardent desire that it spread with all sorts of perfection."¹⁵² The Pope was also surprised and asked him why the Lucca Fathers could not attend to both things, as the Jesuits do. But Calasanz must have insisted, reasoning his point of view, so Paul V appointed a commission with Cardinals Giustiniani, Lancellotti and Soana and gave them the memorandum to study and decide.

Without wasting time, a few days later Calasanz presented another memorandum to the commission of cardinals, whose two substantial points were the following: 1) "that the main institute of the Congregation of the Mother of God be the Institute of the Pious Schools, in such a way that the Congregation be denominated by it and be distinguished from all the others; and being this the main institute,

151 Ibid., p. 205.

152 A. BERNARDINI, *oc.*, pp. 278-279.

it is desirable that the principal priests of this Congregation should attend, if not to the literary exercise, at least to the spiritual exercise. ...”; 2) “regarding perfection, in order that this institute of the schools may be easily admitted not only among Catholics, but also among unbelievers, it is fitting that all the priests of the said Congregation should profess the greatest poverty, contenting themselves with the necessary things, without wishing to possess stable and superfluous goods.”¹⁵³ These two points were very serious, since they radically changed the character of the congregation, not only because the ministry of the cure of souls disappeared, replacing it with that of the schools in its double literary and spiritual aspect, but also because a kind of poverty was imposed, not common to all religious, but proper to the most severe orders. Also their founder, John Leonardi, had expressly forbidden them to teach children and imposed the vows of chastity, obedience and perseverance, excluding that of poverty.

Calasanz reported the steps taken to Father Bernardini, who in turn communicated it to his counsellors. And when word spread, there were protests throughout the Congregation, increasing the opposition already felt towards the Pious Schools. They wanted to remain faithful to the mentality of their Founder and also to free themselves from the toil and sweat of the schools. Only Frs. Bernardini and Casani remained convinced of the desirability of remaining united with the Pious Schools. And they did their best to defend the union.

Fr. Bernardini met Card. Giustiniani and Fr. Ruzola several times. Card. Giustiniani and Fr. Ruzola were fully determined to maintain the point of view of Calasanz. Bernardini tells that in one of these visits the Cardinal told them: “Fathers, it is necessary that you decide if the Pious Schools suit you or not; if they do not suit you, leave them, because we will give them to others. But if you want to have them, you must accept them as the principal institute, and all the houses that you will found from now on will accept the weight of the Pious Schools, and in a state of poverty, without stable goods or fixed income.”¹⁵⁴ The commission of cardinals, of which Giustiniani was a member, had been reached the same conclusion: “that the

153 *Positio* pp. 206-207.

154 A BERNARDINI, *oc.*, p. 281.

principal institute of the said congregation be the exercise of the Pious Schools, maintaining, however, freely the institute of preaching and confessing in their churches.”¹⁵⁵ The seriousness of these statements forced Bernardini to convene a General Diet or Assembly at the beginning of 1616.

Since the main business of the Diet was to find a formula of concord that would respect the interests of the priests of Lucca and the wishes of Giustiniani and Calasanz, “it was necessary, -Bernardini writes- that many times we met with Fr. Prefect to see if we could find a way to draw up a deed that would satisfy him and the Cardinal and not to break our first institute, nor subordinate it to the other.”¹⁵⁶ And after long and cumbersome negotiations they reached a formula that was presented and approved by the Diet. But neither Calasanz nor Giustiniani liked it, although in reality it was coincident with the one proposed by the commission of Cardinals. But they feared that the dedication to their former ministry would excuse them from attending to the schools properly. The Diet concluded in mid-April, and when the contents of the formula of conciliation were divulged among the Lucca Fathers, there were riots and tumults in the house of Lucca and in those of Rome as well, protesting that they did not want schools or to submit to the demands of the proposed poverty.

The official approval, given by the General Diet to the formula of concord, gave Calasanz the confidence that, in short, the Congregation would be committed to maintain the Pious Schools and to consider his institute as the principal one. The worries would calm down little by little. Moreover, in the above-mentioned formula, there was talk of “writing new constitutions according to the said formula, while maintaining in force the old ones, as long as they did not go against anything said above.”¹⁵⁷ Fr. Peter Casani must have been in charge of writing them, carrying out his task in the document he entitled ‘Pussilli gregis idea’. Calasanz was aware that a new congregation was emerging, distinct from that of Lucca, and that Father Bernardini was practically the founder. Here is what he wrote

155 EGC, II, p. 50.

156 A. BERNARDINI, *oc.*, p. 281.

157 *Positio*, p. 241.

to him, when he had gone to calm the spirits: "Since blessed God has called you, Reverend Father, to be the head of the Congregation of the Mother of God which is to establish in his Church the new institute of the Pious Schools, extremely necessary, I would like that, in imitation of old founders of new institutes, you would have a broad heart. In fact, they did great things in God's service with few men, trusting more in the help of heaven than in human counsels."¹⁵⁸ If things had continued along this path, Joseph Calasanz would undoubtedly not have been the founder of any congregation, but no one would deny him the merit of having transformed the Congregation founded by John Leonardi into that of the Pious Schools. To this extreme, he was driven by his excessive eagerness to ensure the perpetuity of his Pious Schools at the expense of the identity of the Lucca Congregation. But everything was a utopia. The priests of Lucca reacted with full right, wanting to remain what they were.

Acceptance of his own destiny: Founder

Things went from bad to worse. To the complaints, protests, murmurings and tumults in Lucca and in Rome were added other distressing facts: The priests in Lucca accepted the direction of the diocesan seminary and those in Rome the office of confessors of certain nuns. This was to deliberately commit themselves to tasks that would prevent them from dedication to the schools. Some of the Lucca Fathers in San Pantaleo did not attend to their scholastic obligations, in solidarity with those who refused the ministry of the Pious Schools. It was necessary to resort to paid laymen to replace those absent. Even the exercise of continuous prayer, to which Calasanz had always assigned an exemplary priest to indoctrinate the children in the practice of prayer and the sacraments, had been left in the hands of a lay novice who barely knew how to read.

But this was not the end of the problems. Cardinal Giustiniani was very displeased by what was happening and threatened to deny his protection and his financial subsidies to the Pious Schools. Even Glycerio Landriani also spoke of withdrawing his personal con-

158 EGC, II, I. 8.

tributions and of refusing to seek alms from now on. All this was enough to give it up. Fr. Bernardini had done his best to calm the waters, sincerely desirous of continuing to maintain the Pious Schools, but the situation was becoming untenable. Calasanz, at the end of 1616, presented a memorandum to Paul V exposing the serious situation and concluding: "Things are such that in a short time it is expected that this holy work of the Pious Schools in Rome, in the hands of these fathers, with such disagreements, will be either relaxed or abandoned. For which reason we beg your Holiness to deign to command that the new professed who are to be ordained under the title of poverty observe the formula of the Cardinals. Or have the said fathers accept this ministry as they ought to, or leave it. There will always be suitable persons to run these schools with all diligence and perfection."¹⁵⁹ Shortly after, towards the end of January 1617, Father Bernardini, already convinced of the futility of his efforts to maintain the Pious Schools, spoke clearly with Calasanz to ask the Pope for their definitive separation.

Calasanz exposed the situation to Giustiniani and Ruzola. The Cardinal had hinted more than once that there were other religious to whom the work of the Pious Schools could be entrusted. But in these last moments he must have changed his mind. The rector of San Pantaleo, Fr. Peter Casani, had expressed his intention to continue in the Pious Schools in the event of the withdrawal of Lucca priests, and he knew that with him would remain a small group of clerics and brothers. This attitude leads us to think that in these critical moments his opinion also weighed with that of Father Ruzola and that of the Cardinal Protector. They propose with simplicity and decision the most obvious solution to the problem: to form a new congregation and put at its head its undisputed head, Fr. Joseph Calasanz.

Calasanz was easily convinced of both things: to found a congregation and to designate him as Father General. At the end of January Fr. Bernardini still spoke with him to propose the definitive separation and on February 15th, the minutes of the Brief for the creation of the new Congregation of the Pious Schools had already been submitted to Paul V. All done in less than fifteen days. Twice

159 Ibid. p. 50.

he had tried to give up the paternity of his work by entrusting it to the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine and to the Congregation of Lucca. But he had not succeeded. He felt he was already old and he was right, because in a few months he would be sixty years old. But he did not know that he still had about thirty more years to live. And who better prepared than him to take care of his own work, changed in a religious congregation?

He was a man with a solid university education, with complete studies in law and a doctorate in theology. He had ample experience in dealing with the ecclesiastical hierarchies, to whose direct service he had dedicated his first priestly years in Spain. Since his arrival in Rome he had not ceased to relate with the highest offices and dignities of the Curia, beginning with Cardinal Colonna and continuing with all the prelates who moved around the Archconfraternities like himself. Since he began with his work of the Pious Schools, his fame and esteem had captivated many cardinals and even Popes Clement VIII and Paul V. He was, in fact, a famous person. And his personal experience with religious environments and people was no less important. He was in contact with religious, such as the Trinitarians in Estadilla, the Jesuits in Lérida, Valencia and Alcalá; he lived with Dominicans in the episcopal palace of Barbastro and with Carthusians in Seo de Urgel; he intervened in the reform of the Augustinians in Monzón and of the Benedictines in Montserrat; he maintained a familiar relationship with the conventual Franciscans of the Basilica of the Twelve Apostles, whose spirit was also deeply captured in the Confraternity of the Wounds of St. Francis; decisive influence exerted on his soul the Discalced Carmelites, his friends, protectors, advisors and confessors; he was related to two founders, which were St. John Leonardi and St. Camillus of Lellis, and probably with a third, whom he esteemed and sincerely admired, St. Philip Neri; he had already been living for three years with the Fathers of Lucca, for about sixteen years with his companions of the secular Congregation of the Pious Schools, with a regime of life similar to that of the religious life. And above all, he was the father of the child: his Pious Schools.

His desire for extreme poverty, typical of congregations of extreme austerity and observance, went far beyond the poverty that his dedication to poor children might demand. And his determination to impose it on the people of Lucca, together with the change of his own

institute for that of the Pious Schools, present him as a reformer before being a founder. In this atmosphere of demands for extreme poverty fits coherently a vision spoken of by the first chroniclers and witnesses of the process, without being in full agreement. According to some, the vision occurred in a dream; according to others, in an alley in Rome; others still place it in the Church of the Stigmata of St. Francis, without indicating the time. Here is the version given by Fr. Sylvester Bellei under oath: "While he was in the Church of the Stigmata in Rome, a maiden appeared to him, half dressed in rags and weeping, to whom the Servant of God said: 'Who are you?' She answered: 'I am Poverty. They all shun me.' Then the Servant of God said to her: 'Come here, for I want to cover you'. And when he wanted to put his mantle on her, she disappeared. I know this from the mouth of Father Joseph himself."¹⁶⁰ There are many witnesses who confuse this apparition with that of the three maidens he saw in Assisi, representing the three vows. Even more: there are those who believe that the trip and the vision of Assisi also occurred during these years, specifically in the summer of 1614. Perhaps there was a second trip to Assisi with the vision of The Three Maidens, in addition to that of 1599, already mentioned. What is certain is that both the vision of the three maidens and this last one of Poverty alone fit better in these moments in which the foundation of the Congregation of the Pious Schools is imminent as well as his personal decision to embrace the religious state.

The Pauline Congregation of the Pious Schools

In the memorandum of 1616, Calasanz asked the Pope that the priests of Lucca accept as their principal institute the Pious Schools or leave them. But when, at the end of January 1617, Fr. Bernardini let Calasanz know that the best thing was to obtain from the Pope the separation, another memorandum was shown to the Pope in which were the result of the conversations held between Calasanz, Giustiniani, Ruzola and perhaps Casani. They had projected the creation of the new Congregation of the Pious Schools. In fact, it is said that the Lucca Fathers totally refuse to dedicate themselves to the work of the schools as the main institute and do not want to renounce the possession of

160 Eph. Cal. 9-10 (1959) 337, nt. 11.

stable goods, etc. Therefore, “foreseeing that this pious institute will diminish day by day and in a short time will be reduced to nothing,” they beg the Pope to annul the Brief of union and “to restore the Pious Schools, free and unencumbered, to Fr. Joseph and his associates and to erect and found anew a Congregation to be called the Pauline Congregation of the Poor of the Mother of God of the Pious Schools. Its Institute (or primary purpose) will be the Pious Schools.¹⁶¹

The memorandum is in reality a preliminary draft of the founding Brief and, therefore, it contains the main features of the new Congregation. For its drafting, the famous formula, agreed upon by Calasanz and Bernardini, was kept in mind, by which they wanted to transform the Congregation of Lucca, logically changing what no longer made sense. Thus, for example, there was no allusion at all to the ministry of the care of souls in which the ministry of the schools was to be incrustrated. In giving faculties to write new constitutions, there was no mention to the old constitutions of Lucca, since the new congregation would have nothing to do with that one. The vow of perseverance was not mentioned, and when speaking of poverty, it was said that it had to be “supreme.”

The procedures were very fast, because on February 15, 1617 the Pope approved the minutes or project of the Brief, that was signed and dated March 6th, beginning with the words “Ad ea per quae”. It was the official birth certificate of the Pauline Congregation of the Pious Schools.

Already in the first paragraph, the Pope affirmed that with this Brief he wanted “that the pious and praiseworthy work of teaching and educating the poor be promoted more and more each day for the glory of God”, and then he insisted again on the same idea: “We desire that this work, so pious and so profitable for the Christian education and instruction, especially of poor children, should not suffer any decline”... Determining more concretely the purpose of the new congregation, he says: “Those who enter it will work, strive, and commit themselves, to teach the children the first rudiments, grammar, calculus and, above all, the principles of the Catholic faith, to

161 Eph. Cal. 6 (1960) 203, nt. 40.

endow them with good and pious customs and to educate them in a Christian manner, free of charge, without salary, pay, wages or fees.¹⁶² Neither in the memorandum nor in the Brief itself does reappear the restriction that only poor children be taught. Also has disappeared the clause that would have to prove their poverty with a certificate from their parish priest, as still appeared in the previous Brief of union with the Lucca congregation. But in the context of the founding Brief, it is expressly stated that the work of the Pious Schools was born for poor children, and it is mainly to them that its educational ministry is directed. Thus, the doors of the Pious Schools were open, from this first moment of their official foundation, to all kinds of children, rich and poor, but preferably the poor.

The Brief also spoke of the three simple vows, and of “supreme” poverty, both personal and collective; of two years of novitiate; in all the houses to be founded there should be schools except in the novitiates, etc. Joseph Calasanz was expressly named Superior General of the new congregation with the approval of the Pontiff, with full faculties to promulgate constitutions, rules and statutes and all kinds of necessary laws and decrees.

It was not included in the founding Brief, but it was also granted, that in the space of twenty days all the religious of the Lucca Congregation who wished to move to the Pious Schools, could do so. We do not know exactly how many took this step, since among the contemporary Piarist chroniclers there are those who say that there were half a dozen (Castelli) and those who say that there were eleven or twelve (Caputi). Among the Lucca chroniclers there are also those who speak of ten or twelve (Erra) and others say that there were only two lay brothers (Fiorentini and Marracci), in addition to Father Peter Casani. On the other hand, the companions of Calasanz who remained faithful forming a separate group were, still in September 1618, eleven or perhaps a few more.¹⁶³

The historic day arrived for the first reception of the habit by the new religious. Calasanz, in 1622, remembered it briefly as follows: “On March 25th of the same year [1617], Card. Giustiniani made at

162 EC, VI, pp. 3044-3047.

163 Eph. Cal. 11 (1959) 377.

his own expense the habits that today are used for 15 persons and dressed by his hand in his chapel the said Father Joseph [Calasanz] and then the said Father gave it to another 14 on the same day in the oratory of the Pious Schools”, and the names of the fourteen follow, of whom only the first was a priest: Father Peter Casani.¹⁶⁴ There were still other companions of Calasanz who did not take the habit on that day, but after months and even years. Such were: Glicerio Landriani, on July 2nd of the same year; Lawrence Santilli and Scipion Taccioni, on August 10th and 15th, respectively, of 1618; Fr. John Garcia, in December 1631. Gaspar Dragonetti never officially entered the congregation, but he lived and died in it.

The habit honored the “supreme poverty” prescribed by the pontifical Brief. The chronicler Berro describes it with these crude words: “A black cassock, long to the feet, with a single opening in the chest, closed with wooden buttons, and a cloak up to the knees of the same black cloth and so coarse that it was frightening, for it was of that kind of which blankets are made for horses; with bare feet and closed sandals, although after a few days they wore them open, that is, apostolic sandals; shirtless at first, but then on the advice of the doctors they wore a shirt of very thick and coarse canvas, and finally, after a while, they put on woolen shirts.”¹⁶⁵ Father Domingo Ruzola influenced the choice of this clothing, particularly the apostolic sandals, as worn by the Discalced Carmelites. It was also his idea that they should change their surname for a religious name. From then on, Calasanz was called “Joseph of the Mother of God.” It was another sign of his deep Marian devotion, whose invocation of “Mother of God” he had imposed on the Congregation of Lucca and later on the Congregation of the Pious Schools, besides taking it himself as his surname.

The Founder’s first steps

The first appointment Calasanz made was that of master of novices. The most suited person was Fr. Peter Casani, because his long experience of religious life during twenty-three years in the Congregation of Lucca, for being the only priest besides Calasanz, and for his

164 EGC, II, pp. 171-172.

165 A. GARCÍA-DURÁN, o.c., p. 158.

undeniable spirit of piety and asceticism, even exaggerated. And the choice fell on him. All of those who had donned the Piarist habit on March 25th were novices, but they continued in their school work and completed their novitiate at San Pantaleo. When the number of novices increased, a house was rented for them on the slope of San Onofrio, on Gianicolo Hill. The following year, 1618, the novitiate was transferred to the center of Rome, near Santa Maria in Via. There Glicerio Landriani died saintly, vanishing the hopes that the old Founder had placed in him as a possible successor. In 1619 the novitiate returned to the slope of San Onofrio, from where, in 1624, it was moved to the Quirinale, near the Quattro Fontane.

Vocations were abundant. During the four years of the Pauline Congregation, before becoming a religious Order, 153 individuals entered the novitiate, of whom 18 were priests, 72 clerics and 63 brothers. Of these, 66 left or were dismissed, and 22 died. Those times, mortality rate was very high. There were many foreigners but most of them did not persevere. In addition to the two Spaniards mentioned above (Thomas Victoria and John García del Castillo) there were three others, as well as a Frenchman, two from Lorraine, a Burgundian, another from Valtellina, a Bavarian, three Germans, a Portuguese and a Prussian-German. The large contingent of Lucca novices who passed the novitiate tests leads us to suspect that Father Casani preferred his countrymen.

The first foundation that took place outside of Rome was that of Frascati, in the summer of 1616, and Calasanz personally carried out the formalities, while Fr. Bernardini was in Lucca trying to make his religious accept the formula of concord. From Lucca he wrote to Calasanz, regretting this initiative and asking him to abandon the project. But Calasanz defended himself, arguing that it was the express will of Paul V, since Frascati, being the summer residence of the Pontiff, was like a “little Rome.”

In the founding Brief, the Pope had forbidden the foundation, for the time being, of new houses beyond 20 miles from Rome. But soon this rule had to be abolished, for as early as 1618 the foundation of Narni was accepted, which was the feudal fief of Card. Giustiniani. In the same year a foundation was made in Mentana, but this foundation was very short-lived. In 1619 the house in Borgo was opened in Rome, next to St. Peter's, where the novitiate was to be estab-

lished definitively in 1639. The foundation of Moricone and the care of the seminary of Magliano were also accepted in 1619, the latter being abandoned the following year. In 1621 the house of Norcia or Nursia, homeland of St. Benedict, was opened. And for the first time foundations outside the Papal State were accepted, one in Carcare, a small town near Savona (Liguria) and another in Fanano (Tuscany).

These first foundations forced him to leave Rome to inspect, orient, consolidate or simply spend a few days or weeks with his religious, particularly Frascati, which, because of its proximity and perhaps because it was the first-born foundation of the motherhouse in Rome, won his predilection. He travels on the back of donkeys, now in his sixties. The affection she shows for them adds a touch of Franciscan delicacy to the austerity of poverty. In 1619 he wrote to those of Frascati: "I am sending you the black donkey so that you can keep it there for ten or twelve days and treat it well so that it can recover a little, since here we do not treat it well; the white one I want to send to the novitiate, since it will be better off there than here in the schools."¹⁶⁶ He says in 1629: "That the little donkey died is no wonder, for not everyone knows how to care for animals as they should be cared for; and ordinarily they die for lack of care and because they are mistreated without giving them the proper food and rest."¹⁶⁷ And that he knew how to treat them well is recalled by Father Scassellati. He declared in the processes that once Calasanz was caught by Cardinal Torres while he was brushing or pillowing a donkey, and when the Cardinal asked him what he was doing, he answered that he was teaching the Brother in charge how to do it. In his long walks through all those villages in the Roman countryside, the little donkeys he was carrying made him think of the Providence of God and pages of the Gospel, as this paragraph of his Constitutions suggests, speaking of obedience: good religious "adopt an attitude most pleasing to God, allowing themselves to be led and guided by his Providence through their Superiors, like the little donkey that Christ rode on Palm Sunday, who allowed himself to be led and guided everywhere."¹⁶⁸

166 EGC, II. I. 32.

167 EGC, IV. I. 1233.

168 Const. II, c. 2, n.108.

Father Joseph, although in his sixties, traveled on the back of donkeys, but he must have felt young when compared to the more than centenarian and venerable Father Caspar Dragonetti, for whom the donkeys could be uncomfortable. For this reason, with exquisite delicacy, he wrote to those of Frascati, on the occasion of the transfer of the old man to Rome: "For Fr. Caspar I will send a four-horse carriage if he wants it, or the litter, whichever he prefers."¹⁶⁹

In the autumn of 1620, by mandate of Cardinal Giustiniani, Calasanz retired to the house of Narni to compose the Constitutions of the Pauline Congregation, and there he remained until mid-February of the following year, when he finished them. It was four months of intense work. Ancient and modern hagiographers have affirmed that the Founder of the Pious Schools wrote his Constitutions under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the Blessed Virgin Mary. But, once again, we must recognize that things in the lives of the saints are much simpler in one aspect and much more laborious and complicated in another. Simpler, because there is no need to have recourse to inspirations or immediate dictates of the Holy Spirit when simple human causes suffice. More complicated, because it costs much more human effort and work than to receive things already done in a supernatural way. A careful examination of the Constitutions written by Calasanz shows us that the Saint carried in his saddlebags, on his way to Narni, a series of constitutions of other religious orders and other writings, from all of which he extracted, combined, mixed and arranged ideas and literal paragraphs, thus forming his own Constitutions. The main sources were the Constitutions of the Jesuits, those of the Clerics Regular Minor or Caracciolini, those of the Theatines and the Capuchins, and also those of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine and those of the Doctrinarian Fathers, on a smaller scale. Naturally, all those writings, such as memoranda, reports, summaries, formulas and Briefs, which had been shaping the life and work of the Congregation up to that time, also served as inspiration and sources. That is to say, Calasanz proceeded in the same way as all the founders before him had normally proceeded, who were inspired by the Constitutions

169 EGC, II. I. 32.

and Rules of their predecessors and by the ascetic writings in which the spirit and practices of religious life were condensed.

On February 17, 1621, Calasanz wrote to Rome: "I, by the grace of God, have finished the Constitutions and if the white donkey is here on the first or second day of Lent with the good pack and the good saddlebags, I will leave in two or three days with the help of the Lord, if the weather is good."¹⁷⁰

The Order of the Pious Schools

Paul V, the great benefactor of the Pious Schools, died on January 28, 1621, and after a short Conclave, Cardinal Alexander Ludovisi, was elected Pope and was called Gregory XV. Both events took place while Calasanz was still in Narni, who, if he mourned the death of his great protector Pope Borghese, he had to rejoice later for the election of Card. Ludovisi, whom he had personally met right there in Narni at the end of October 1619. At that time Card. Giustiniani returned from Loreto and went to stay at the house of the Pious Schools in Narni, being received and treated as he deserved by Calasanz himself. When he left for Rome, he met Card. Ludovisi, who had just received the red hat, and advised him to stay at the house of the Piarists of Narni. He did so, and was very pleased with the treatment he received.

The Cardinal must have known the name and the work of Calasanz, for the Florentine priest Rev. John Francis Fiamelli. At the beginning of the century he had been a companion and collaborator of Calasanz and boasted of calling himself "Brother of the Congregation of the Pious Schools". He founded in Bologna a corporation similar to the one in Rome in 1616, calling it "Congregation of the Pious Schools of Bologna." The Rules were approved precisely by the Bolognese Archbishop Ludovisi, "most benign Protector of the same."¹⁷¹ And it is logical to suppose that in this meeting of Narni, Ludovisi was interested in the Pious Schools of Rome and Calasanz remembered the old times in which Fiamelli had been his faithful collaborator.

170 Ibid., l. 72.

171 L. PICANYOL, *Le Scuole Pie e Galileo Galilei* (Roma 1942) p. 60, nt. 2.

Calasanz arrived in Rome at the end of February 1621, mounted on his white donkey, carrying his manuscript of the Constitutions in the bottom of his good saddlebags. And he immediately asked for an audience with the Pope to pay his first homage to him, receiving from the Pontiff signs of benevolence and the conviction that he would be, also for the Pious Schools of Rome, the most benevolent protector as he was for those of Bologna. In mid-March, through Giustiniani, he presented a memorandum to the Pontiff, requesting the approval of the Constitutions. At the same time, with an ingenious play of names related to each other, he also asked in a veiled way for the elevation of the congregation to a religious Order. He said that, just as Paul III, a Roman, had brought the Society of Jesus into being, and Gregory XIII, a Bolognese, confirmed it and brought it to the perfection in which it is today, so God wanted Paul V, a Roman, to establish the Congregation of the Pious Schools, and it is to be hoped that he chose Gregory XV, a Bolognese, “to give to this work the solidity and perfection necessary to satisfy the world, since almost all the world desires and requires it.”¹⁷²

The memorandum went to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, of which Cardinal Michelangelo Tonti was prefect. He was called “the Nazareno Cardinal” because of his primitive title of Archbishop of Nazareth. This prelate was a staunch opponent of the creation of new religious orders, based on the ancient prohibition of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215. Therefore, he asked for the Constitutions to examine them, but made it known that he did not want to hear about the elevation to Order. Then Joseph Calasanz took up his pen and personally addressed to Card. Tonti a very long, vigorous, solidly reasoned memorandum, in defense of the lawfulness and almost necessity of elevating the Pious Schools to an Order of solemn vows. It turned out to be a masterpiece, an original, splendid hymn to the educational work of the school, which he presented as a novelty in the field of evangelization and reform of the Church.

The interpretation that the Popes have given to the canon of the Lateran Council through the centuries -Calasanz said- has been to prohibit superfluous and similar orders, but not “many others, mainly

172 A. GARCÍA-DURÁN. *oc.* pp. 169-170, nt. 750.

of different, specific and necessary ministry in the Church of God. And among the latter is the Work of the Poor of the Mother of God of the Pious Schools, with a ministry irreplaceable in the common opinion of all, ecclesiastics and laymen, princes and citizens, and perhaps the first for the reform of the corrupt customs of the world; a ministry that consists in the good education of children, insofar as the rest of the good or bad life of future man depends on it.... Therefore, it cannot be doubted that it will be favored and graced with the name of religious Order, a title which has received up to this moment so many others, perhaps not so useful and necessary, perhaps not so applauded by all, perhaps not so much desired, and perhaps less requested for a long time in comparison with the insistence with which our ministry has been requested in this brief period; a ministry truly most worthy, most noble, most meritorious, most beneficial, most useful, most necessary, most natural, most reasonable, most worthy of gratitude, most pleasing and most glorious.”¹⁷³ The superlatives, as they appear in the original Italian, are wonderful because their rhythmic sonority, like an immense cataract of praise, and give us the measure of the admiration and enthusiasm, of the esteem and love, that Calasanz felt for the ministry of teaching. And then he goes on to dissect one by one those superlatives, filling them with content and reasons. He also examines all the objections that could be opposed and adds: “Having demonstrated, then, the usefulness and necessity of this work, which includes all persons and conditions and places, all the basic instruction and all the means to live, it follows with rigorous consequence the need to establish it stably as a religious Order...; it also follows the need to expand and spread it according to the needs, desires and requests of many...”

Cardinal Tonti must have been astonished when he read that very long and splendid memorandum, and from being an adversary he became an enthusiastic sponsor of the cause of Calasanz. His unconditional support came at an opportune moment, because at the end of March of that year 1621 the meritorious Cardinal Protector of the Pious Schools, Benedict Giustiniani, had died. It was probably due to this that the proceedings were so slow.

173 Ibid., pp. 170-172.

By the end of August, Cardinal Nazareno had already obtained the approval of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, over which he presided, for the elevation of the Pious Schools to an Order of solemn vows. The Pope accepted the decision of the Congregation and on November 18, 1621, he signed the Brief “In supremo Apostolatus”, by which was instituted in the Church of God the last religious Order of solemn vows of all those existing today: that of the Pious Schools. And on January 31st of the following year, with another Apostolic Brief, the Constitutions were approved.

Three months later, Cardinal Tonti fell seriously ill. In his will he left his goods to the Pious Schools so that a school for poor and select scholars, or gifted as we would say today, could be opened in Rome as a foundational nucleus, to which other poor, rich, noble and commoner children would later be added. The school was called from its institution, in honor of its founder, Collegio Nazareno, and was rightly considered for centuries as one of the best in Rome and undoubtedly the most famous of the whole Piarist Order.

On April 20th, the day after he made his will, Card. Tonti called Calasanz and his four general assistants, Frs. Peter Casani, Viviano Viviani, Francis Castelli and Paul Ottonelli, to his deathbed so that in his dying hands they could pronounce their solemn vows. All five did so. That same day, Father Casani wrote to his father: “This morning we made our solemn vows in the hands of the dying Cardinal Tonti, and leaving his house we went to Santa Maria Maggiore and renewed them after the Mass of our Father, said at the altar of the Blessed Virgin.”¹⁷⁴ It was a sign of filial delicacy towards the Mother of God, which, as a finishing touch, closed the long process of the transformation of that Secular Congregation into the Order of Clerics Regular Poor of the Mother of God of the Pious Schools.

174 EC.II. p. 504.

Expansion

Liguria

Among the eleven houses founded before the Pious Schools were elevated to a religious Order, the furthest from Rome was Carcare, a few kilometers from Savona, in Liguria. It was followed in distance by Fanano, in Tuscany. At the beginning of May 1622, Fr. Peter Casani was appointed to visit these two houses and that of Narni and to introduce in them the observance of the Constitutions, recently approved by the Pope. When he finished his mission and returned to Rome, he found Calasanz perplexed because he was asked for a foundation in Savona and he had no prepared personnel. But he gave in at the end and sent none other than the first Assistants to the General, Frs. Peter Casani and Francis Castelli, with Br. Francis Michelini, who would later become a famous mathematician and friend of Galileo. The foundation took place in September of 1622.

As an example of the conditions demanded and commitments made by the Piarists when accepting foundations, let us read this paragraph of the founding minutes of Savona: “The Most Illustrious Community [Municipality] of Savona is humbly requested to bind itself for the love of God to pay 400 lire each year, or else to provide a house, paying at least the rent for the Fathers of the Pious Schools according to their needs, if they should decide to stay in Savona to begin immediately to teach reading, writing, counting, grammar, humanities and rhetoric and other things, according to their institute, to all kinds of children and school children of the said city and its environs, without any salary. And this for as long as they are carrying out this exercise, or until they are otherwise provided for the said things. That since it is a useful thing for the public good to instruct the boys, especially the poor, not only teaching them the said sciences, but also how to live with the fear of God. It is

trusted that they will be of much spiritual help, celebrating masses, confessing, preaching and doing other exercises.”¹⁷⁵

At the request of the sponsors and founders of those two distant houses in Liguria, Calasanz decided to visit them. He arrived by land to Livorno, in whose port he embarked, and by sail and oar he arrived to Savona. It had already been thirty-one years since he had crossed that sea from west to east, suppressing any hope of crossing it again in the opposite direction. And in this second, shorter crossing, perhaps with emotion, he looked to west at the line of the horizon where his homeland was hidden. He landed in Savona on April 7, 1623. Three days later he left for Carcare, whose people knew and venerated him, without having seen him until then, because of the fame spread by the Piarists. The whole town went out to receive him in procession. The chronicles say that his gift of prophecy shone when he predicted to a boy that he would be a good religious of the Pious Schools, and also his power over the possessed by freeing a mute demon, known throughout the region. And not only the chronicles, but he himself left written in a letter of April 19th, from Carcare, the following: “In these days with the help of the Lord we have managed to make peace the first dignitaries of this town, that were with so much hatred and danger of coming to the hands at times, that the Governor D. Pedro de Toledo, that is in Finale, as soon as he knew it, ran -they say- to his oratory to pray on his knees the Te Deum. After the peace I have invited them all to eat with us on two of these feast days to keep them in union with great joy and common satisfaction. You have sent so many prayers in advance that everything has been well prepared. May the Lord maintain this peace and union.”¹⁷⁶ And he probably evoked other “peace” achieved in some town of the Pyrenees in those years of his apostolic wanderings, as Visitor of the deaneries in his diocese of Urgel.

From Carcare he went down to Savona, where on April 22nd he gave the habit to three illustrious young men: one was the heir of the Marquis of Monesiglio; another was the son of the Marquis of Gorzegno, and the third belonged to the noble family of the Baroni in Savona. They were the first fruits of an abundant harvest of vo-

175 Positio p. 432.

176 EGC, II, l. 148.

cations, carefully tended by Father Casani. In its first year of existence, the house of Savona had 18 novices. It was necessary to open another house for them.

With these two houses of Savona and that of Carcare, Calasanz created the Province of Liguria, appointing Fr. Casani as Provincial Superior on July 10, 1623. He was the first Provincial in the history of the Order. The following year the novitiate was transferred to Oregina, a suburb of Genoa, and a year later another house was founded in the interior of the city. Still during the lifetime of Calasanz, the Province of Liguria founded a house in Carmagnola in 1638, but due to the wars it was closed the following year.

Naples

Around the central figure of the Founder of the Pious Schools move other characters - his closest collaborators - each one with his talents and defects. They make up a long gallery of pictures that it is impossible to examine. But it is necessary to outline some traits of some of them, to understand better the environment in which Calasanz acts, the living forces at his disposal and his rare ability to make the most of the qualities of each individual. And all this is said in order to present one of the most singular protagonists on the scene: Father Melchior Alacchi.

He was a restless, willful, determined, indomitable, eccentric, enterprising Sicilian... and a wanderer. He was the first to try to found in Naples, in Sicily, in Sardinia, in Venice, in Spain. He went on a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela and another to the Holy Land, but the plague stopped him in Venice. Calasanz knew him well, appreciated and admired him deeply and knew or tried to take advantage of his undeniable positive gifts, entrusting him with the missions of founder, master of novices, superior of various houses, visitator and general commissioner, president of local and provincial chapters, and provincial of his beloved Sicily.

One day in October 1625, Calasanz signed a strange permission: Fr. Alacchi could wander throughout Italy, especially in Naples and Sicily. He was commissioned to found houses wherever he thought fit; to admit as novices as many as he deemed fit. To organize, in short, the Piarist life without specifying places or conditions, with

only the obligation to communicate it later to Father General. This decision may seem far-fetched, or else a proof of the extreme confidence in the aptitudes of Father Alacchi. He does not go alone. A priest, two professed and nine novices are assigned to him as companions. And the adventure began.

In Naples they were received by D. Carlos Tapia, Marquis of Belmonte, regent of the Viceroy's Chancery, who had asked Calasanz for a foundation. But the Archbishop of Naples, Card. Caraffa, did not want new foundations nor did he yield to the requests. After many days of vain hopes, the transhumant Piarist community left Naples and continued their journey south, by land and sea. They passed the strait and stopped in Messina at the beginning of December 1625, because the plague prevented them from reaching Palermo, which was their final destination.

In Messina, Father Alacchi managed to obtain a house and legal permissions from the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, but the religious communities of the city, especially the Jesuits, were opposed to the foundation. And it was necessary for any new foundation the consent of all the convents and religious houses already installed in the town. When Calasanz learned of the situation, he ordered the withdrawal. Fr. Alacchi, however, suspecting that Fr. General had been misinformed, decided to leave half of the group in Messina and to leave for Rome with the other half. He stops in Naples and learns that Card. Caraffa has died and that the new archbishop, Card. Buoncompagni, is not opposed to the foundation.

When Alacchi arrives in Rome, Calasanz is seriously ill, and so close to death, that he receives viaticum and the anointing. But unexpectedly he recovers. His confidants claimed to have heard him say that the Virgin and St. Teresa had cured him. This happened in the spring of 1626.

Already in March, Fr. Casani had been sent to Messina as rector of the community that had remained there. The favorable situation in Naples made it possible to successfully complete the procedures for the foundation. Father General still had the courage to undertake, at the age of sixty-nine, the long journey by litter, in short stages, in the second half of October 1626, accompanied by two or three Fathers. With a large group of professed and novices, Fr. Alacchi also arrived

in Naples by sea on the same days. The reception was most cordial on the part of the Marquis of Belmonte and the Vicar General. The letters written by Calasanz in those days reflect an extraordinary enthusiasm for everything that is happening to them. Here is a handful of news. On October 25th, he writes: "We arrived here last Thursday all in good health, thanks be to God, and until today, Sunday, they have come to offer us three sites, all of them optimal, to open schools and two for the novitiate, without any expense on our part. Here where we dismounted we have found a house with 20 beds in our style and all the necessary utensils.... They are so kind and desirous of our work that if there were many of us, we could open the Pious Schools in three or four places."¹⁷⁷ A week later he wrote: "Here we are asked every day to take place in this or that part of the city, providing us with a house and a church. We are amazed at the competition that exists between the neighborhoods and the displeasure that some show because we have taken the neighborhood of La Duchesca. It is at one end of the city and belongs to poor or very ordinary people. But that is the will of Mr. Regent Tapia, Marquis of Belmonte, and also of the Vicar General who wants the first site to be that of La Duchesca."¹⁷⁸ On November 13th, he says: "If we had one hundred subjects, we could take four sites in the best of Naples, because they have offered us more and also for the novitiate. And in less than eight days, more than 400 students have already come from the nearest places."¹⁷⁹ On the 21st he writes: "In such a short time there will already be 500 students and if there were room there would be more than 700."¹⁸⁰

Where did they end up? He has already told us: to one of the poorest and most popular districts of the city. But there was something else. We read: "Here we have opened the schools in the neighborhood of La Duchesca. So we could enter, they have expelled more than 600 prostitutes who lived here. They have given us a building for a church that was used to put on comedies. So now where God was offended so much he is now praised by more than 600 children."¹⁸¹

177 EGC, III, l. 547.

178 Ibid., l. 550.

179 Ibid., l. 554.

180 Ibid., l. 556.

181 Ibid., l. 560.

The airs of Naples must have rejuvenated him. And not because of the marvel of its splendid landscape of land, sky, sea and Mount Vesuvius, which once seen, one can die. What moved the “holy old man” was the great number of children that filled all the high and low districts of that immense metropolis. They all needed schools and more schools. “In Naples, -he said- I think there are three or four times as many children as in Rome. Three or four of ours places would not suffice to satisfy the city.... In the neighborhood of Ciaia they also offer us another place where the number of poor children of those fishermen are very great.”¹⁸²

As in Liguria, also in Naples he left traces of his gifts as a thaumaturge by curing the sores of one of his sponsors. But his greatest prodigies were of a different nature: He changed the life of a nephew of that sponsor and also converted three persons who had come to him complaining for having occupied the theater of La Duchesca and forced the expropriation of the premises. They were the owner of the premises and two comedians, the three affected by the eviction.

The foundation of Messina had to be closed because of the irreducible opposition of the new archbishop, and Calasanz called to Naples Father Casani and his expelled community. Hoping for the unstoppable progress of the Neapolitan foundation and for the future abundance of vocations, he appointed Fr. Casani Provincial and Superior of Naples. He left Naples for Rome at the end of April of 1627. His stay in Naples had lasted six and a half months.

A few months later another house was opened in Naples, in the neighborhood of Caravaggio, next to the Royal Gate, and the novitiate was established there. Before the end of 1627 another house was founded in Bisignano; in 1628, in Campi Salentina; in 1630, another in the small village of Somma, but an eruption of Mount Vesuvius forced to abandon it the following year. In 1631 it was founded in Cosenza and left after the earthquake of 1638. In 1633 a third house was opened in Naples for the residence of the sick in Posilipo. In 1636 it was founded in Chieti, and this was the last house of the Neapolitan Province created during the lifetime of the Holy Founder.

182 *Ibid.*, I. 563.

The trip to Naples was the last long journey of his life. From now on he would only ride his donkeys to go once in a while to the small towns near Rome, such as Poli, Moricone and Frascati. The latter always enjoyed his preferences. He used to spend a few days there during the autumn vacations, but rarely, as in 1628, 1634 and 1636. His advanced age prevented him from traveling to found or visit the houses that were springing up all over Italy and Europe. But from his tiny room in Rome he directed one by one all the new foundations and held the reins of government of the Order with a firm hand and exaggerated meticulousness. He used an epistolary correspondence, intervening in all the problems of provincial, local and personal character almost to the limit of the unbelievable. He must have written 10,000 to 12,000 letters, judging by those that have been preserved and by his references or his correspondents to others that have disappeared. Up to now they have been published almost 5,000. There are not many historical personages of whom so copious epistolary is preserved.

Central Italy

John Francis Fiammelli, his collaborator in the beginning of the century, was with Calasanz for only a few years, but he remained faithful to his idea all his life. Towards 1617 he founded in his native Florence, on his own, some charitable schools, similar to those of Rome, after having made an identical foundation in Bologna in 1616. It was run by priests and laymen. But when he reached the age of seventy-six, feeling unable to continue his work and wishing to perpetuate it, he contacted the Piarists to entrust his schools to them. Here is the act of cession: "I, John Francis Fiammelli, Prefect of the Pious Schools of the city of Florence, considering the fragility of life, and desiring in my advanced age, which has already reached seventy-six years, to see perpetuated after my death the work of my Pious Schools, I recognize that to no one can I entrust them better than to the religious of the new Institute of the Poor of the Mother of God of the Pious Schools, since their proper purpose, according to their Constitutions, is to live on spontaneous or requested alms, without possessing anything in particular, and to instruct the youth, especially the poor, in the fear of God and in the first letters, that is, in reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar and rhetoric, gratuitously,

without retribution, by charity alone and zeal for the welfare of their neighbors. Therefore... I gladly hand over to them the house and rights of my Pious Schools in Florence, on April 30, 1630.”¹⁸³

Calasanz entrusted the matter to Fr. Francis Castelli, until then provincial of Liguria, and once things were formalized, he appointed him first superior of the Florentine house and first provincial of Tuscany. To the newly founded house he added that of Fanano, existing since 1621 in the Duchy of Modena. Among the members of the first Florentine community was Br Francis Michelini, an illustrious mathematician, whom Castelli managed to bring with him from Genoa. And from those first foundational years a group of Piarists was formed around Michelini, who cultivated mathematics with growing success, even opening a public school of algebra for adults, unique at that time in Florence, not to say in Europe.

These same mathematical Piarists were admirers and followers of Galileo Galilei, and some maintained personal relationships with him as disciples and friends, particularly Michelini, since his arrival in Florence in 1629. Also Fr. Clement Settini, who served as his secretary in his residence in Arcetri, when he was already blind and could not fend for himself. Calasanz always approved these relations of his sons with the great scientist, even aware of the results this friendship could provoke after the famous trial and condemnation of Galileo by the Holy Office. Calasanz’ understanding is admirable when he wrote to the superior of the Florentine house on April 16, 1639: ...”and if perhaps Mr. Galileo should ask that Fr. Clement spend the night with him, please, allow him to do so and may God grant that he knows how to make the due benefits.”¹⁸⁴

In 1638, the “School for the Nobility” was created in the Florentine house. It was dedicated expressly to the students of high society. Castelli, as Provincial, and Francis Apa, as director and responsible for the idea, were the ones who convinced Calasanz to gain access to the Florentine nobility, with the promises that these families would make possible the subsistence of the novitiate and would guarantee the subsidy of the clerics who were dedicated to the studies. In

183 BAU RV, p. 181.

184 EGC, VII, l. 3074.

the end, this initiative did not go against the purpose of the Order, which admitted all kinds of boys, rich and poor, nobles and commoners, even if it always maintained its preference for the poor.

For these and other reasons, such as the admirable spirit of heroic charity that they manifested during the plague of 1630, the Piarists soon enjoyed the esteem of all the social classes of Florence, from the high culture and the nobility to the lowest strata of society, without forgetting the appreciation and protection that the court of the Grand Duke of Tuscany always gave them.

During Calasanz' lifetime, to the aforementioned houses of Florence and Fanano, a second one was added in the capital, called Del Pellegrino, in 1638. Another one in Pieve di Cento, in 1641. One in Guja or Guglia, also in 1641, which was abandoned in 1646. And a last one in Pisa, of the same year 1641, suppressed in 1656.

When the Tuscan Province was constituted and the houses just mentioned were assigned to it, all the others, practically belonging to the Papal States, formed the Roman Province, whose first titular provincial was Fr. James Graziani, appointed in 1626. But in reality the effective superior was the Founder himself during his lifetime. It was, by right, the first Province of the Order. Until the death of Calasanz, besides the houses already mentioned of San Pantaleo, the novitiate and that of the Borgo in Rome, those of Frascati, Narni, Mentana, Moricone, Magliano and Nursia, the following were founded: Poli and San Salvatore Maggiore, in 1628; Collegio Nazareno in Rome, in 1630; and Ancona in 1632.

Sicily and Sardinia

In December of the year 1625 Father Alacchi had arrived in Messina with his group of novices. In April 1627 those left abandoned the city, with their superior, Fr. Casani. The archbishop had remained unshaken in his refusal to give the necessary permissions for the foundation.

Six years passed. And in September 1633, Father General sent Fr. Melchior Alacchi to Sicily to deal with some matters of importance for the Order, among which, the following: "If John Baptist Mas-simi, from Roma, is found dressed in our habit, impersonating as

Procurator General of our Religion with false letters and who, under a false name, deceives many, you must take away from him all those letters, since they are forged; for which, if it seems to you, you can invoke the ecclesiastical or secular arm if necessary, so that he does not continue to fraudulently extort money from many.”¹⁸⁵

The case was already old. It dated back to 1625, when the priest Mathew Millini, who called himself John Baptist Massimi, arrived in Rome. Pretending to have a Piarist vocation, he visited frequently the novitiate in the Quirinale. He managed to falsify the handwriting and signature of Calasanz and the official seal of the Order. After, he embarked on a tour throughout Europe, introducing himself as a representative or envoy of the General with forged credentials, to found Pious Schools. With them he obtained money even from the most astute, such as Card. Richelieu himself. In many of his letters Calasanz speaks of this trickster, “who has traveled through Germany, Flanders, France and twice Spain and Lombardy and Piedmont, taking money from everyone with promises of sending Piarist Fathers.”¹⁸⁶ “I intend to write to Spain to the Regent of the Supreme Council of Aragón, called Navarro, a fellow countryman of mine, -Calasanz writes in 1627- so he may prevent such attempts.”¹⁸⁷

On October 12th, Fr. Melchior Alacchi disembarked in Messina with a companion, and on October 20th he arrived in Palermo, and one of his first courtesy visits was to the viceroy of Sicily, D. Fernando de Ribera, Duke of Alcala, formerly viceroy of Naples, great protector of the Pious Schools, admirer and friend of Calasanz. The viceroy immediately proposed the possible foundation of the Pious Schools, which greatly flattered Fr. Alacchi, who had full confidence in achieving it after the first failure. And he communicated the viceroy’s wishes to Father General. But the prudent General, already at the beginning of December, wrote to him wanting to dissuade him from such intentions for these reasons: “We have orders from Our Lord and from the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide, intimating to us by His Excellency Cardinal Ginetti... not to

185 Eph. Cal. 3 (1943) 71.

186 G L. MONCALLERO, *II codice calasanziano palermitano* (Rome 1965) p. 197.

187 EGC, III, I. 573.

extend ourselves any further until we are here..... firmly built as far as the novitiate and house of studies is concerned. And you only think about opening houses in big cities like Palermo. Even if we were called at the same time by His Excellency Cardinal D'Oria (Archbishop of Palermo) and by His Excellency Cardinal Viceroy, we could not give them satisfaction, since we have not been able to give it to His Lordship the Duke of Savoy, nor to his brother Cardinal, in spite of the many letters and requests of his ambassador, nor to Cardinal Dietrichstein, nor to Cardinal Colonna, Archbishop of Bologna. So, thank these gentlemen and return to Naples."¹⁸⁸

Fr. Alacchi not only found excuses not to leave Palermo, but he succeeded in getting the viceroy to take all the necessary steps, convincing even the Cardinal Archbishop to install the Pious Schools in Palermo. Due licenses were obtained from the Roman Curia. So at the end of December, the Founder's letters reflect that the Sicilian project was already a fact, as in this one addressed to Fr. Graziani: "The Viceroy of Sicily has not only admitted our work, but he even has chosen a site in the best part of the city and has paid for it three thousand escudos out of his own pocket and has offered to do more. He wants two or three individuals to begin the work and I intend to send them next March."¹⁸⁹ But he is worried because he recalls the great opposition of the Jesuits to the first attempt of foundation in Messina, and fearing another failure in Palermo, he recommends to Fr. Alacchi, "You must make them understand that our institute will not be a disturbance to that of the Jesuits, because the greater part of our students are learning how to read, count and write and only a few Latin, who are initiated among us and then go to their college."¹⁹⁰

The restless Fr. Alacchi, before the arrival of the expedition sent by Fr. General, opened the schools with lay collaborators, soon welcoming about 1,200 children. He also laid the foundation stone of the new church, and during Holy Week he already celebrated the liturgical services there. Not content with the foundation of Palermo, he obtained through the viceroy that at the end of December of that same

188 G. L. MONCALLERO, *oc.*, p. 190.

189 EGC, V, l. 2164.

190 G. L. MONCALLERO, *o.c.*, p. 194.

year, 1633, the Archbishop of Messina, who nine years earlier had practically expelled them, gave his authorization to open the Pious Schools in the city. Fr. Alacchi took advantage of this license, because before the following summer the house in Messina was already open.

Fr. Alacchi could be satisfied, since the only two foundations brought to a successful conclusion in his Sicilian homeland during the Founder's lifetime were Palermo and Messina, both the fruit of his efforts.

Before these two foundations, Fr. Melchior Alacchi, returning from his penitential pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, embarked in Barcelona, and at the end of 1628 or the beginning of 1629 he stopped in Cáller (today Cagliari), the capital of the island of Sardinia. He took advantage of the occasion to meet with the viceroy, D. Jerome Pimentel y Zúñiga, Marquis of Bayonne, and with the "Consellers" of the city and to praise the Pious Schools. All were pleased to accept the idea of an immediate foundation. The councilors wrote to Calasanz a polite letter in Spanish, in which they said: "With the coming that Father Melchior of All Saints made to this City we have had the news of the great benefit, that as well in what concerns virtues, as well as human letters makes the saint Religion of Your Paternity in the City of Rome and others Christian lands, where you have a Convent, with great service to God Our Lord. And desirous this City to participate in so great a treasure for the good of those who live in it, has begged His Excellency the Lord Viceroy of this Kingdom... to intercede so that you may honor this City, with making it worthy of such a Holy Religion.... From this city of Cáller on January 31, 1629. The councilors of Cáller."¹⁹¹ The viceroy also wrote to Calasanz, recommending the petition of the city, saying: "I do it with all my heart and with them I beg your Rev. Paternity assuring you that it will be a particular mercy, since I will be very happy that in my time something so much for the service of both Majesties will be achieved. May the Divine God keep you as I wish."¹⁹²

For the time being, this request could not be granted because of the restrictions imposed by the Holy See. But eleven years later, in

191 EHI, p. 461.

192 Ibid., p. 1693.

the middle of 1640, the councilors of Cáller again insisted on their wishes for the foundation and it was granted. In November of that year, Fr. Peter Francis Salazar Maldonado, a Neapolitan of Spanish origin, who spoke perfect Spanish, arrived in the port of Cáller, accompanied by four other Piarists. Those of Cáller asked him to send them “Spanish subjects, as many as you could... since the Castilian [language] is the one that is used in the schools.”¹⁹³ We must not forget that, those times, the Kingdom of Naples, Sicily and Sardinia were an integral part of the Spanish monarchy.

When the first Piarists arrived in Cáller, the “Consellers” wrote once again to the Holy Founder thanking him for the foundation, and began their letter with these words: “This city of Cáller remains perpetually grateful to Your Paternity and to all this Holy Religion for having shown so generous with the mercy which it was asked and with the education and teaching of its children.”¹⁹⁴

In 1645 another novitiate house was opened near Cáller, in what had been a Franciscan convent. The novitiate, however, had already been functioning since 1642 in the house of Cáller. When the Holy Founder died, there were only these two houses in Sardinia, and it was not declared a Province until 1661, while that of Sicily was already in 1637.

Beyond the Alps

In August 1630, Father General received a letter that began as follows: “You will remember that about five years ago I wrote to you informing that with the knowledge and approval, it seemed, of Father Provincial and Rector of the Jesuits of Vienna, I tried with the Viennese municipal authorities to introduce the Fathers of your Order in the school of St. Stephen in that city. But whereas I was thinking that I had reached a happy ending having obtained the municipal consent, the Jesuit Fathers spoiled everything with the intervention of the imperial authority. And about three years ago, a certain religious, claiming to be of your Order (although it was later learned

193 Ibid., p. 463.

194 Ibid., p. 464.

that he was not), came to see Prince Cardinal Dietrichstein, Bishop and Governor of this Province, and tried with him to introduce your Fathers into the city of Nikolsburg (his ordinary residence), assigning them a suitable place; but the said religious, having received a considerable amount of money, disappeared.”¹⁹⁵

The letter was written by Msgr. John Baptist Gramay. He, in fact, in 1625, had dealt with the foundation of Pious Schools in Vienna, according to the wishes of Cardinal Archbishop Melchior Klesl. From 1629 he was in the service of Card. Francis Dietrichstein, bishop of Olmütz, counsellor to the Emperor and captain general of the marquisate of Moravia. The Cardinal was born in Madrid, while his father was imperial ambassador. His mother was Spanish, Margarita Cardona, daughter of the viceroy of Sardinia. This bishop-prince was the founder or introducer of the Pious Schools in Central Europe, and one more of the cardinals who were benefactors and deeply attached to the work of Calasanz, such as Montalto, Torres, Lancellotti, Giustiniani, Tonti, Ginetti, Cesarini, etc.

In his residential town of Nikolsburg, today called Mikulov, he had erected a Gymnasium or school together with an Academy of Nobles or Seminary-Boarding School which he called Lauretán. In 1629 he had placed Msgr. Gramay as the head of these schools. In 1627 the swindler and globetrotter Mathew Millini, falsely called John B. Massimi, appeared there, reminding the cardinal of Calasanz and his schools in Rome. But it was not until 1630 that Msgr. Gramay contacted the Piarists to ask them for a foundation. And this happened in June of that year, when on a return trip to Nikolsburg he met in Genoa with Fr. John Stephen Spinola, provincial of Liguria. Msgr. Gramay wrote to Calasanz the letter of offer with which we have begun this section, alluding also to the requests of the Jesuits: “Although the Fathers of the Society wished very much to have a school here -he said-, nevertheless, both the Prince and I, for reasons of no small importance, would prefer the Fathers of your Order.”¹⁹⁶

After many vicissitudes, and with the express permission of Card. Marcio Ginetti, vicar of the Pope, the first seven Piarists arrived in

195 EEC, p. 481.

196 Ibid.

Nikolsburg at the beginning of June 1631. This expedition was followed by others. In 1632 it was decided to build a new building for the Pious Schools and the care and administration of the Lauretan Seminary was entrusted to the Piarists. Two years later the Cardinal founded a new house in Leipnik for the novitiate. But he was never satisfied and insistently asked Calasanz for new religious. Calasanz, at first lamented that he could not fully satisfy him because of the lack of trained personnel. Then there were other more serious impediments, because since 1633 the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide forbade Fr. General to send more religious to Central Europe, “warning that the Religion confirmed by Gregory XV did not yet abound in suitable subjects with which to extend and propagate itself to the Provinces, to which it was daily called.”¹⁹⁷ Card. Ginetti, as Vicar and member of the said Congregation, was in a certain sense responsible for the application of these restrictions. But he was generous in his interpretation and thanks to him the expansion of the Pious Schools in Central Europe was able to continue prudently.

Card. Dietrichstein not only favored foundations in his own Moravian territories, but he was the intermediary for other high personages in Germania to obtain or attempt to obtain foundations. Thus, Prince Gundaker of Lichtenstein, as early as 1631, had already requested a foundation for Kromau, but he could not be granted it until 1644, although that house was closed in 1646 due to the reduction of Pope Innocent X. In 1633 the most famous general duke of Vallenstein also asked for one, because he wanted to introduce the Pious Schools in his states of Bohemia and Silesia and in other places of Germania; but his requests were not accepted. The petitions of the bishop of Gurg in 1634 were turned down, in spite of the Dietrichstein’s requests. The pleas of Count Franz Magni, however, were heard. In his letter of recommendation, the Cardinal wrote to Calasanz: “I effectively recommend it to Y. P. over the others. I have absolutely no doubt that you, as supreme head and Founder and Spaniard, will correspond in this to my requests, since I am also a Spaniard.”¹⁹⁸ At the beginning of February 1633, Father General sent a group of seven Piarists to open a house in Straznitz, the capital of

197 SÁNTHA, *Ensayos*, p. 162.

198 EEC, p. 362.

the county. And in 1641 the foundation stone was laid for another foundation in Litomyšl, at the request of Baroness Febronia of Pernstein. It was the first Piarist house in Bohemia.

In these years, the demands for foundations must have been incessant, as reflected in Calasanz' letters. In one of April 29, 1633, he wrote: "If I had at this moment ten thousand religious, I could distribute them all in one month in those places where they ask me for them with great requests, so that our religion is not like many others that with diverse means try to introduce themselves in the cities, since ours is sought and procured by many Cardinals, Bishops, Prelates, great Lords and important cities as I can show with many letters... and as soon as I have suitable subjects, they have offered me Church and Convent in Prague and in more than ten places."¹⁹⁹

The Thirty Years War was on. In June 1642, after the defeat of the imperial forces of Schweidnitz, the Swedes entered Moravia. The Piarists had to leave their homes and went to Vienna with the intention of continuing on their way to Italy. But the nuncio Caspar Mattei welcomed them cordially and persuaded Fr. Provincial, Onofrio Conti, to direct their steps towards Warsaw. The Polish court had been asking Father General for years to establish a foundation of Pious Schools. In fact, as early as 1639, Duke George Ossolinski and Canon Matthew John Judicki began the founding process. King Ladislaus IV personally pleaded by letter to Calasanz, in June 1640, with promises of protection and expansion throughout the kingdom. But due to the usual circumstances, i.e. lack of personnel and the prohibition of the Holy See, the royal requests could not be fulfilled immediately.

Father Conti listened to Nuncio Mattei and changed his course to the capital of Poland. And he was right. In Warsaw this first group of Piarists was received with great satisfaction, and that same year 1642 the first Piarist house in Poland was founded. There were only six religious. When Calasanz informed the king of their arrival, he apologized for the fact that they were so few, and ended his letter by saying: "But even small seeds produce abundant harvest."²⁰⁰ And so it was, because the Pious Schools influenced the cultural

199 EGC. V, I. 2027.

200 EGC, VIII, I. 3996*.

and especially the pedagogical history of Poland more than in any other nation. For his part, King Ladislaus, responding to the Founder's letter, said: "We express to you the best disposition we have towards you and your Religion, as you will be able to see signs of your pleasure if you give us the opportunity to do so."²⁰¹ And so it was. The King of Poland was one of the most persistent protectors of the Founder and his Order in the dark years that were to come.

Besides the house of Warsaw, the house of Podolinec was founded for the novitiate, also in 1642, due to the munificence of Count Stanislaus Lubomirski. There were no more foundations during Calasanz' lifetime because that same year things had already become dramatically complicated in Rome.

Two failed attempts: Venice and Spain

Melchior Alacchi had returned from his pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela. In response to his request, Calasanz signed on November 29, 1629 a permission so that he could go on pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and "if the occasion offered, to the East Indies." And he ended the document with these words: "And if some Lords or Communities should ask for our Institute, you will inform us immediately by letter, so that we may send you companions of our Brothers."²⁰² And with these licenses in his pocket and two traveling companions, he undertook this new adventure. He had to go to the port of Ancona to sail from there to Venice, where he could find a ship that would leave for the East. But his stay in Ancona lasted a few weeks, which he took advantage of to contact the municipal authorities and propose to them the foundation of the Pious Schools. His proposal was accepted, but the formalities were complicated until 1633, when the schools were opened.

In March 1630, finally, he left the port of Ancona with his companions and arrived in Venice. But, due to the plague and other difficulties that arose, he was unable to continue the projected trip. And a month after his arrival, he was already trying the foundation of a Piarist

201 EEC, p. 1219.

202 Eph. Cal. 2 (1941) 38.

house in the city of the lagoons. But, the permission for the trip notwithstanding, Calasanz wrote to him on April 19: "I tell you that as far as introducing our Institute there, it is not possible because we have no people to give satisfaction to such a city. We must walk with great consideration and not to undertake anything that we cannot fulfill with honor."²⁰³ But Alacchi remained there, taking his time and trying to obtain the foundation and to convince Father General to accept it.

He spent more than three years in Venice. Calasanz was already excited about this possible foundation. But the imprudence and eccentricities of Alacchi and other more serious causes prevented the successful crowning of the enterprise. One of the most powerful reasons was the political aversion that the Most Serene Republic felt for Spain and for anything Spanish. And the Founder of the Order was Spanish. And in Venice they believed that most of the Piarists would be Spanish. To dispel these misgivings, Calasanz wrote to Alacchi: "Except for me, that I am reaching 74 years of age, 40 of which I have spent in Rome, there is only one other Spaniard who is in Moravia, called Fr. Antony of the Blessed Sacrament. All the others are Italians, French and Germans. There is another one who is going to Spain, so that, after my death, there is no more memory of Spaniards in our Religion."²⁰⁴ And a year later, in August 1632, he insisted again on the same fears: "I wrote you to be informed there about the way to obtain postal exemption, although I still doubt that we can obtain it especially while I am alive, being Aragonese by nation, although of Roman feelings and customs, given that I have been living in Rome for more than 40 years, practically forgotten of the Homeland."²⁰⁵

And there was nothing to do. At the beginning of May 1633 Fr. Alacchi left Venice with his companions.

In November 1637 Fr. Melchior received another permission, this time for Sardinia and Spain "to deal with some matters of great importance." He left immediately, accompanied by a cleric, and after three months in Sassari, he arrived in Barcelona on March 10, 1638. It seemed that this time the foundation in Spain was serious. It had been requested

203 EGC, IV, l. 1365.

204 *Ibid.*, l. 1662.

205 EGC, V, l. 1849.

for his diocese by the Bishop of Urgel, D. Paul Durán, who had known and treated Calasanz very well during his long stay in Rome as auditor of the Rota from 1626 to 1634, when he was appointed bishop.

The foundation was made in Guissona, which was fief of the bishop, and the first stone was laid by the bishop himself on May 2, 1638. For three years Fr. Alacchi worked on the school and asked for reinforcements from Calasanz, who never sent them for the usual reasons. To this was added the war of the “Segadors”, in which the bishop was a supporter of the central power, against the insurrectionists. The confiscation of the episcopal goods brought with it the agony of that incipient school, which was sustained by them. To make matters worse, Fr. Alacchi fell seriously ill and moved to Barcelona in August 1641, from where he wrote to Calasanz informing him of the situation and his own illness. Fr. General ordered him to return to Rome immediately. Alacchi locked the doors of the house in Guissona and brought the keys to Calasanz, who kept them as a relic (and they can still be seen today among his personal belongings preserved in Rome), waiting for the occasion to send someone to reopen that house. But the “holy old man” died without realizing his dream of seeing the Pious Schools established in his own country. A few months after his arrival he told Fr. Alacchi: “If I were not 80 years old as I am, I would gladly go to that foundation.”²⁰⁶

In 1614 the Marquis of Ariza had already asked him for a foundation, at the time when the Congregation of Lucca took charge of the Pious Schools. It was still too early to think of such expansionism. The last request he received was from the Supreme Council of Aragón in the first months of 1648. And then it was too late, because of the dramatic situation in which the Order found itself, since it was no longer an Order. And in the summer of that same year the founder died. The time for Spain would come much later.

In 1646, two years before the death of Calasanz, the Order had six Provinces, 37 houses and about 500 religious.

206 EGC. VI. c. 2902.

Piety and letters

Let us interrupt the chronological rhythm of our narrative and stop to examine the educational system used by Calasanz in the Pious Schools. Since he was a pedagogue, his figure would be incomplete if we do not speak expressly about his educational ideas and methods.

A New Order for a New Ministry

Calasanz from the very beginning had a clear idea that his Order of the Pious Schools was totally new in the Church of God, because its purpose or specific ministry was absolutely new. All religious orders throughout the time had the same purpose: to pursue Christian perfection through the practice of the evangelical counsels, substantially summarized in the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. But each family or congregation has traced a different path to achieve this evangelical perfection. Among those dedicated to the direct apostolate, many of them had no other ministry than the care of souls, that is, the work carried out in parishes. Others were more specific in their action, dedicating themselves to the sick, to orphans, to preaching, to the redemption of captives, etc. None of them had so far considered teaching as their own specific ministry, although some also dedicated themselves to it as one of their activities, like the Jesuits or the Dominicans.

The long plea to Card. Tonti was nothing more than an unquestionable proof of the novelty of the specific ministry of the Pious Schools in the whole history of the Church. And the Cardinal was convinced of it. Calasanz had already written it more concisely in the first two points of his Constitutions, which say: "In the Church of God and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, all religious Orders tend to the fullness of charity as their genuine goal by means

of the exercise of their specific ministry. And this is what our Congregation intends to achieve by carrying out the ministry entrusted to it by His Holiness Paul V of happy memory, Vicar of Christ on earth. Ecumenical Councils, Holy Fathers, philosophers of right judgment unanimously affirm that the reform of Christian society lies in the diligent practice of such a mission. For if from infancy the child is diligently imbued with Piety and Letters, one can rightly expect a happy course of his whole life.”²⁰⁷

It should not be forgotten that Calasanz lived in the environment of Tridentine reform. That is why he thinks that the ministry of his Order contributes or should contribute like no other to achieve the reform of Christian society. That ministry was clearly specified in the founding Brief of Paul V, in which it is said that the Pious Schools had been instituted in Rome “for the instruction and education of the poor.” Therefore, “We, to the best of our ability before the Lord, desire to see to it that such a pious and profitable work, especially for the instruction and education of poor children, may not suffer any detriment.” And he went on to say that those who enter this Congregation “must work, strive and commit themselves to teach the children the first rudiments, grammar, accounts and above all the principles of the Catholic faith and to imbue them with good and holy customs and to educate them in a Christian way, free of charge, without salary, wages or fees.”²⁰⁸

The personal writings of Calasanz, especially his innumerable letters, reiterate this double aspect of the educational function of the Pious School: to instruct and to educate, to teach and to form in a Christian way, piety and letters. Even more, the saint is very explicit in specifying that the most important task of the Pious Schools is the Christian formation of the children. In the first years of the foundation of the Pauline Congregation, the Saint wrote in Spanish a description of the Congregation, which began as follows: “The Pauline Congregation of the Poor of the Mother of God of the Pious Schools... has as its institute the pious education and diligent erudition of children teaching them by charity alone, with order and division of classes, to read, write,

207 Const. n. 1-2.

208 EC, VI, pp. 3044-3047.

count and the whole Latin language and in particular the Christian doctrine and the Holy fear of God.”²⁰⁹ He also makes very clear the specific ministry of the Order, in the Constitutions, saying: “It will be proper to our Institute to teach children from the first rudiments to read, write and count correctly, the Latin language and above all, Christian piety and doctrine, and to do all this with the greatest possible skill”; “the goal that our Congregation intends with the practice of the Pious Schools is the education of children in Christian piety and in human letters so that thus instructed they may attain eternal life.”²¹⁰ And in his letters he repeats the concept endlessly. See the following list of expressions: “See to it with all diligence that the schools are well run in letters and piety, since this is our ministry”; “attend with all diligence to the schools, which is our principal ministry, not only in letters, but also in the fear of God”; “I marvel that you have become, not to say negligent, so avaricious of your talent, which does not consist in celebrating Mass, but in teaching the pupils the letters and the holy fear of God”; “I recommend to you and to all those at home that the schools be well run in letters and piety, since this is our ministry.” “I recommend to you and to all those of the house that you attend with all your heart to the exercise of the schools and especially to piety and the holy fear of God in the pupils, which is our Institute”; “I desire very much that all the priests in particular and even all of the house attend with much concord and diligence to the exercise of the teaching of letters and especially in the frequency of the holy sacraments, since this is our ministry”; “try to bring out good students in letters and in piety”; “our ministry is not only the schools of letters, but the holy fear of God, which is more important”; “let all diligence be done to make the students learn to read and write, but also the holy fear of God, which is more important”; “let every care be taken to ensure that the students learn the holy fear of God through letters, which is the purpose of our Institute.”²¹¹

Calasanz wanted his religious, in addition to the three common vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, to add the vow of teaching,

209 EGC II pp. 55-56.

210 Const. n.5 and 203.

211 D. CUEVA, Calasanz. Spiritual and pedagogical message (Madrid 1973) n. 1210. 1213. 1231. 1235. 1237. 1254. 1390. 1394.

conditioned to that of obedience, so that the exercise of the schools, in its double aspect of instruction and Christian formation, was dignified and in a certain way hallowed. The Holy Founder referred many times to this fourth vow, when he reminded the Piarists that they were bound to teach because of the special vow: "All must be sure to keep the Constitutions and pay attention to teaching according to the vow they took"; "I have read your opinion on the vow to teach the children which, well considered, is not absolute, like the other three, but consistent with the vow of obedience, so that if the superior wants one to teach, he must teach, and if the superior does not want another to teach, he is not bound by the vow to teach."²¹²

The teaching ministry not only becomes a sacred obligation because it constitutes the fourth vow, but it is an authentic way of salvation. "In all my letters -Calasanz writes- I cannot fail to remind you to attend with all care of teaching, even if at times other exercises must be left aside, because the ministry of the schools is our specific ministry and when it does not go well, we deviate from the true path of our salvation"; "I hope that the Lord will give everyone, here and there, a true sense of the profession of the Institute in which our salvation consists"; "may you encourage all those in the house to save their souls by exercising our ministry which is the true path by which we must reach heaven..."²¹³ He is also aware that this ministry is a true mission entrusted by the Church, and he expresses like this: "It would be no small thing to humble ourselves to the ability of the students, to whose instruction the holy Church has sent us."²¹⁴

But the greatest exaltation of this ministry which demands so much humility is undoubtedly found in these words of the "holy old man": "if those of our people who have gone to these regions were to consider that what is done to a poor child is received by Jesus Christ in his own person, I am sure they would be more diligent in doing it."²¹⁵

212 Ibid. n. 679. 676.

213 Ibid. n. 1207. 1234; EGC, VIII, I. 4318.

214 Ibid. n. 1236.

215 EGC, VI. I. 2441.

Formation of religious teachers

The Piarist vocation was complex from the beginning, because it was composed of three substantially necessary elements, according to the mentality of the Founder: one must be at the same time a religious, a priest and a teacher. As an Order of Clerics Regular, it admitted two classes of religious, something already common among monks and friars: priests and lay brothers. The latter were normally dedicated to household chores, while the priests attended to the specific apostolate of each order. In our case, Calasanz assigned from the beginning some of the more capable brothers to the schools and the General Chapter of 1637 proposed that from now on only priests and clerics would teach, but the Prelates who presided over the Chapter did not accept this proposal and, in fact, there were always brothers teaching, until today

Calasanz is fully aware that his congregation is not a simple cultural association of teachers, but primarily a religious Order, with all that this implies. Therefore, he legislates and demands all that is characteristic of religious life, starting with the vows, and then encompassing all those practices of prayer, mortification and common life, which define the religious state. His vast collection of letters is full of constant exhortations to holiness, to religious perfection, to the observance of the Constitutions, to the practice of prayer, of mortification, of each of the religious vows, etc. Even more: with crystalline clarity he affirms that for the religious the first and principal thing is his own salvation: “the first purpose of the religious, after the glory of God, -he says- is his own salvation and the second purpose is the salvation of his neighbor”; “may you know how to guide the little ship of your soul by the path of religious perfection to the port of eternal happiness, for this is the first and principal business that each one of us must deal with”; “let everyone attend first to the profit of his own soul and then to serve Religion and the poor students”.²¹⁶ And all these ideas of perfection must be inculcated from the novitiate, whose importance in the life of the individuals and of the corporation he is pleased to emphasize: “The foundation of Religion consists in the good progress of the novitiate”; “in educating the novices con-

216 EGC, VIII, I. 4120. 3858; EGC, VII, I. 3198.

sists the whole of the Religion”; “take particular care to educate the novices well, which is the foundation of our Religion.”²¹⁷

That time, the profession of elementary school teachers was not as honorable as it is now. And Calasanz knew it. And even less so if the students were not only small, but also poor, very poor; as poor as it is shown in this paragraph of the Saint: “the prefect must receive the poor with all charity, even if they are barefoot or with torn clothes and without a hood.”²¹⁸ It was a despicable and humiliating profession. It was one thing to write brilliant pages of pedagogy and quite another to spend one’s life among children. The great humanist and pedagogue Louis Vives once wrote to Erasmus: “I feel such disgust for schools that I would do anything rather than return to those filthy places and deal with children.”²¹⁹

Cardinal Silvio Antoniano, another great pedagogue of the 16th century, said that the teachers of the Roman neighborhood schools were very often “vagabonds and unstable persons..., having turned out teaching children a vile and despicable exercise.”²²⁰

Calasanz also recognizes this, and for this reason he demands from his religious much humility, necessary to bear this burden: “that they learn to humble themselves interiorly as much as possible so that they may be fit for such a high task as that of teaching children (and which to the world, our enemy, seems so low and vile)”...; “I hope that in our Religion there will be someone who considers it a great honor to humble himself, not only to teach calligraphy and arithmetic, but also to teach the little ones to read”; “we are bound to give a better example than the other religious, either because we are the last to be approved, or because we have the lowest ministry of all and therefore of greater humility than the others.”²²¹

Not only humility was a precious condition for such educators, but also simplicity, patience, real poverty, chastity, spirit of sacri-

217 EGC, VI, l. 2947. 2616; EGC, VII, l. 3087.

218 D. CUEVA, *oc.*, n. 1426.

219 ALLEN. *Opus epistolarum Des. Erasmi*, V, 113.

220 SÁNTA, (BAC) p. 41.

221 EGC, IV, l. 1160; VIII, l. 4276; III, l. 678.

face, which could only be justified by love of God and effective love of neighbor. All these were qualities and virtues that the novitiate sought to inculcate in future educators.

These future educators also had to be, for the most part, priests. And this was already more problematic, since it demanded a special preparation. In reality, the Council of Trent had not demanded too much study for future priests. It prescribed: "they shall study grammar, song, ecclesiastical computation and other arts; they shall learn Holy Scripture, ecclesiastical literature, homiletics, administration of Sacraments -mainly what seems appropriate for hearing confessions- and rites and ceremonies."²²² And in spite of so few requirements, they were never completely fulfilled. In Rome, the examinations for the priesthood used to demand that they knew how to recite and understand the Divine Office and the Missal, to know the Roman Catechism, edited by Pius V, and what was indispensable for the use, rite, and administration of the sacraments. In the case of religious who were not dedicated to the care of souls, they were examined only on their ability to read and understand the Breviary and the Missal, at least grammatically, and to know the rites and rubrics. And something more if they wanted to obtain license to hear confessions.

Calasanz did not demand much more from his own, but it was urgent that they should know all those moral cases in which children are in the habit of incurring. On the other hand, advised by Card. Giustiniani and by Fr. John of Jesus and Mary, Carmelite, at the beginning he was not in favor of his religious studying philosophies and theologies of high rank, for fear that they would later refuse the humble task of teaching rudiments to the little ones and would want to dedicate themselves to higher teachings. There are, however, many testimonies that he did not oppose such studies and that he even desired and encouraged them, particularly among the young clerics of Germany.

The mission of teachers demanded greater preparation, not only to learn the sciences they were to teach, but also with respect to

222 Conc. Trid. session XXIII, canon 18.

didactic methods and exercises. And in this field Calasanz went to the limit of audacity, always wishing that his children would have recourse to the best specialists of his time. Suffice it to recall his interest that the young students and Fathers of Florence attended Galileo, banned by the Holy Office, and would take advantage of his teachings. He did the same in Genoa with Antonio Santini, in Naples with Camillo Gloriosi and in Rome with Benedetto Castelli, the three famous mathematicians and disciples of Galileo. As for Latin, he sent some to Milan to learn the new methodology proposed by the famous humanist Caspar Scioppio, and in San Pantaleo he hosted until his death another famous Portuguese grammarian, named Andrew Baiano. As a teacher of calligraphy, both for children and for young clerics and other religious, he made use of the incomparable Ventura Sarafellini. To train his young men in philosophy, he did not hesitate to send them one summer to Frascati, where he had as a guest the controversial and long-time prisoner of the Holy Office, the famous Dominican Thomas Campanella.

The few catalogs that remain of the books preserved in the libraries of the Piarist houses of the time are an eloquent testimony of the concern that was felt everywhere for contemporary culture, since there are works on mathematics, classics and humanities, theology, philosophy, catechetic, pedagogy, music, etc. And some of these works came from abroad. The variety and abundance of such books are all the more admirable when one considers the scarce economic resources and even the misery in which religious lived. Even the books that were published during the Founder's lifetime, or shortly after, by Piarists, also denote the high scientific level that they achieved. Undoubtedly, it was the fruit of the common interest to dignify the ministry itself and the commitment that the Founder himself put into it.

It must be recognized, however, that the rush to fill positions in the classrooms and in the houses hindered the solid and systematic formation of the young. The same, the incessant requests for foundations were also the reason why the Founder's dreams to establish centers of studies for the young religious could not be carried out. We do not know, on the other hand, to what extent Calasanz was a victim of the selfishness of cardinals, bishops, princes and lords, who forced him to meet their indiscreet requests for new foundations.

Intellectual formation of children (letters)

Calasanz was the founder of the first free popular school of Europe. Indispensable elements were the instruction or intellectual formation, the human, moral and religious formation, the absolute gratuity of the education and the opening to all kinds of children, but especially the poor ones. In doing so, he affirmed a basic principle of our present society: that all children, especially the poor and marginalized, have a right to education and culture. This would not be possible if basic education were not completely free. And it took centuries for nations to understand that the State has the duty to offer free schooling to all children.

It is also to Calasanz' credit that he understood that instruction would not be effective without the compulsory attendance of children. He demanded it, even by appealing to local civil authorities to force children to go to school instead of playing or loitering in the streets. In case of unjustified and repeated absences, they were expelled from school. This assiduous attendance was necessary for the methodical and systematic teaching of all the subjects to be effective.

When we speak about free popular school, perhaps one thinks only about elementary cycle. But it must be recognized that Calasanz was the founder of the first free elementary school and also of the first free popular middle school. The last cycle of higher education in the humanities was that of the Jesuits, and Calasanz made an effort on certain occasions to show that the Piarists were not in competition with the Jesuits, since they welcomed in their schools the children who could not yet enter the Jesuit schools. From the beginning, however, he did not want to give up the freedom to give his students the whole cycle of humanities, required for university entrance. It was a real struggle for the freedom of education against the monopoly that the Jesuits wanted to maintain at that time and in later centuries with respect to the higher schools.

The small number of students who attended the neighborhood schools and the fact that a single teacher had to give them all the few topics, made unnecessary an organized system of classes, subjects, number of students, coordination of individual teaching with the simultaneous one, etc.

However, Calasanz had to find solutions to the new pedagogical problems. He had to divide into homogeneous groups that group

of children that was growing to 1,200 and 1,500. He had to divide the teaching into stages, cycles and different classes, identifying the subjects to be taught in each of the classrooms. He had to establish a basis for the progressive promotion of the students from class to class until the last one. He had to find texts for each of the subjects, etc. For all this, he made use, logically, of what was done in the neighborhood schools in Rome as well as of the organization and pedagogical and didactic methods used by the Jesuits in the famous Collegio Romano, having to adapt everything to the new field of elementary and middle school, overwhelmed by the enormous mass of students.

In all his pedagogical and didactic work, it is necessary to emphasize his appreciation for mathematics as convenient for the work possibilities of the poor and as a science of the future, as opposed to the humanistic formation, typical of the Jesuits. He also knew how to value the teaching of the vulgar language, in contrast to the exclusivity of Latin in the classrooms of the Society of Jesus. It is not less admirable his attitude in his zealous search for teaching the essential, in an era in which the baroque is breathed and lived. Social concern permeated the pedagogical mentality of Calasanz. He thought that his students were poor and that they had to leave the classroom soon, most of them to earn a living and help their parents. They could not waste time in school. They must know what was indispensable, but with adequate solidity and breadth. Hence the need for an intuitive method in all schools, in which brevity, simplicity and clarity, three totally anti-baroque qualities, predominate. All this did not prevent him from having his eyes open to grasp with breadth and sensitivity the progress of science, didactics and pedagogy in order to apply them to his schools, refusing to confine himself to fixed methods. In his Constitutions he lays down the following principle: "In the teaching of grammar, as well as in any other subject, it is of great benefit to the pupil if the teacher follows a simple, effective and, as far as possible, brief method. For this reason, every effort will be made to choose the best among those recommended by the most learned and expert in the field."²²³

223 Const. n.216.

The complete cycle of studies was divided by Calasanz into nine classes, numbered in reverse order, that is, the ninth was the lowest and the first was the highest or last. The cycle began, then, with the ninth school or "of the Holy Cross" because in it the children, who were small but not less than six years old, were taught to make the sign of the cross. They learned the letters and syllables. It was, undoubtedly, the heaviest school and less desired by all, except for Calasanz, who felt a "maternal" predilection for it. It is admirable that Calasanz came to express so eloquently his love for his institute, his personal vocation and the charism of the Order by preferring this school of the little ones. He had founded the Pious Schools for children and especially for the poor, and until the end of his life he felt a predilection for the little ones and the poorest, as his contemporaries recognize: "I have seen that with great charity he taught the poor, and in particular the poorest and smallest"; "even being General, he hardly let a day pass without visiting all the schools and particularly the most inferior ones and in them he chose the most miserable children and instructed them with great affection both in letters and in the spiritual life."²²⁴

The other eight classes could be divided into two cycles of four each, so that the first four constituted the primary school and the second four the secondary school.

The primary cycle was common to all; so that when they finished it, many could leave school and start working, while those who continued went on to the secondary cycle. The four classes of the primary cycle were: the eighth or "of the Psalter", in which they learned to read mechanically distinguishing the syllables. They used for it the Latin Psalter or Breviary, which they did not have to understand. The seventh was of continuous reading in the vernacular language, and the sixth was another section of the previous one, but of a higher grade, so that they ended up reading and understanding what they had read perfectly. The fifth was divided into three sections: a) for beginners in writing; b) of "abacus" or counting or arithmetic; c) of nominatives. Everyone had to go through section a) and then they were divided, so that those who had to leave school to start working went to the abacus, to learn the four fundamental arithme-

224 Anal. Cal. 39 (1978) 209.

tic operations, with fractions and proportions, and the rule of three; they also perfected in reading and in the afternoons they were given calligraphy, as a means to employment. Those who had to continue studying went to the nominative section, where they learned Latin declensions and the first notions of grammar, and in the afternoons they were given calligraphy. Years later, the music class was created, as a complement to the fifth grade, thus expanding the employment possibilities for children, particularly in Rome, where musical “chapels” abounded. It was also very popular in Central Europe.

The second cycle or secondary schools was also designed to broaden the employment possibilities of the children, leaving the door open to move on to university classes immediately. And it consisted of the following four classes: the 4th was inferior grammar (Latin), in which the declensions were completed and the conjugations and concordances were added. The third was middle grammar: passive verbs, sentence formation, and Latin conversation; they learned by heart the Dialogues of Louis Vives. The second was of superior grammar, in which they learned the rest of the grammar and read Cicero’s letters. Once they finished this school, they could enter directly into the Roman College of the Jesuits. But so that they could finish their pre-university studies in the Pious Schools, Calasanz added a last class, called “the first”, in which rhetoric was taught. It was the higher class of Latin.

This was the schedule of classes for San Pantaleo and for other big schools. In others with fewer students, there were only seven, five, or even two classes.

In the beginning exams were given every four-month, with pass to the higher class; so that a normal boy, in less than two years, could finish the five years of elementary school and in a year and a half the four years of secondary school. Later on, the system was changed to semesters.

The daily class hours were six. This was a common rule. In winter they started at eight o’clock and finished at eleven o’clock, and in the afternoon they were from two to five. In summer they usually started earlier in the morning and later in the afternoon, in order to avoid the hot hours of the day.

The school year began on November 2nd and ended at the beginning of October for the older children, with the vacation days pro-

gressively decreasing for each class until the little ones finished the course on October 15th. For this reason, the vacations between two courses were rightly called “autumn” and not “summer” vacation. During the school year there were more or less 194 full school days, about 55 with only morning classes and 116 full vacation days, counting Sundays, feast days and vacations.

There were not many textbooks. For reading they used the Psalter; for Latin the grammar of the Spanish Jesuit Manuel Álvarez was common then, although Father Dragonetti always used that of Nebrija. There was also another famous one that in a certain way revolutionized all the existing ones, also due to another Spaniard, Francis Sánchez, called “el Brocense”, who was followed by another famous grammarian, Caspar Scioppio. Calasanz was very interested for years and years in the composition of a short, simple and clear Latin grammar for the students and entrusted the task to some Piarists, until it was finally put and edited by Fr. John Francis Apa. The absolute novelty was that the text was in Italian and not in Latin.

It must be recognized that being the Pious Schools an Order dedicated exclusively to teaching, especially in elementary and middle schools, its influence on public curricula in the nations in which generously was exercised its ministry was undeniable, and in some of them fundamental. And the pedagogical principles and ideas were substantially based on the experiences and decisions of the Founder himself, who was undoubtedly one of the most important pedagogues in the history of the western world.

Moral and Christian formation (piety)

In the educational system of Calasanz three aspects should be distinguished: the methodic and regular catechetical instruction; the practices of piety or Christian life; the moral, civic and social education. As for catechetical instruction, the body of doctrine that the children should know by heart was: the Our Father, Hail Mary, Creed, Ten Commandments, Angelus and the mysteries of the Holy Trinity, incarnation, passion of Christ, final judgment, paradise, hell, original and actual sin, how to pray and how to be well disposed to receive the sacraments. All this was done by means of the usual method of question and answer found in all catechisms.

Every day they had to recite by heart seven or eight lines of the booklet. It was usually the Catechism of Bellarmine in Italy and that of Peter Canisius in Central Europe. For the younger children, Calasanz had composed an appropriate one entitled *Some Mysteries of the Life and Passion of Christ our Lord to be taught to the students of the lower classes of the Pious Schools*. One day a week the teacher explained the catechism, and then the children had to memorize. Every day, the last quarter of an hour in the morning and in the afternoon was dedicated to catechesis in the same classrooms. In addition, every day there was another kind of exhortation in the so-called “continuous prayer”, and on Sundays and feast days there used to be in the church the so-called “oratories”, in which exhortations, public recitation of the catechism, songs and prayers in common were combined.

The practices of piety were daily, weekly and monthly. The daily ones were as follows: In the beginning, before starting the morning classes, the holy mass and the litanies to the Virgin were held. Later on, the mass was moved to the end of the morning, and it should not exceed half an hour. At the end of the afternoon classes, the litanies were usually sung. When changes were made, the morning began with certain prayers of offering of the works of the day and special prayers to the Holy Spirit, to the Virgin, all in common and in the classrooms.

During the class time, morning and afternoon, there was the so-called “continuous prayer.” It consisted of gathering the children, in groups of nine, in the oratory. They took turns without interruption. Later on, the number of children in each shift was increased to ten or twelve. For half an hour or a quarter, a priest would teach them to pray and to prepare themselves to receive the sacraments, and in addition to other pious exhortations, they would all pray together. Probably for these moments of prayer of the children or to vary with the recitation or singing of the Laurentan litanies, Calasanz composed the Crown of the twelve stars in honor of the Virgin Mary. He wrote: “This devotion to the Blessed Virgin I wish that it be said every day by our students...”²²⁵. Among the precious details of this Marian prayer, it is worth remembering the spirit of ecclesial

225 EGC. III. p. 206.

universality reflected in the last point. There, Calasanz invites the children to pray “for the Holy Catholic Church, the... propagation of the faith, peace among Christian Princes, the extirpation of heresies”; and the auspicious remembrance of the Virgin Mother, in whose hands God placed “the education of Jesus in his infancy.”

In addition to these daily prayers in common, other prayers were also recommended; particularly at waking up and going to bed, the daily examination of conscience, and other acts of faith, hope, charity, humility and contrition for various occasions, composed by Calasanz.

The weekly practices consisted of the Sunday Mass. All the students had to attend it in the same Pious Schools. They were divided into two groups: the older ones received a kind of preliminary exhortation and prayed the Little Office of Our Lady; the younger ones, in another classroom or oratory, also received a suitable preliminary exhortation and prayed the rosary. Then, all together would gather in the church for Mass. At first there was also a half hour of spiritual talk in the oratory on Tuesday and Saturday afternoons, in two groups, young and old. Then it was reduced to half an hour only on Saturdays.

Every month they had confessions and those already initiated received communion. Calasanz’ intention was to increase the frequency of the sacraments. He allowed communion every fifteen days and even every week, according to the devotion and dispositions of the children.

With special solicitude Calasanz looked at the teachers of mathematics of the fifth class and those of “the first” or rhetoric, since they were decisive moments or courses for the children, given that both classes were the last ones that the children attended before going to work. For this reason, the Saint wanted these teachers to be the elite, so that they could instill in the boys, in the same classes, the fear of God, piety, in addition to all the practices and exhortations that they had together with the others in the school.

The moral education of the children was based on what was became known the “preventive system.” Calasanz always insisted on the importance of the sacraments and prayer in the formation of the boys, as an effective means to avoid sin. In his writings, we even read fre-

quently the idea that children who have committed faults and deserve punishment should be sent to a confessor, since confession is more beneficial than punishment. Let us read: "You will order that no teacher may give any punishment other than two strokes or five lashes on the clothes. If anyone deserves greater punishment, send him to you and then you will decide the punishment. At first, it should be light. If he relapses, increase his punishment. But, above all, use the remedy of frequent confession, which produces a much better effect"; "as for the punishment of the students, try that whenever the confessor asks that one be forgiven for confession, he is forgiven, because the sacrament produces a greater effect than whipping"; "it is better to make children to frequent the sacraments, even when they should be punished, than to give them a whipping"²²⁶.

No less important for the prevention of faults and the formation of the spirit of the boys was to offer them models of imitation. It should begin, of course, with the example of Christ which permeated the daily piety of the Pious Schools. But in a special way, the lives of holy children, worthy of being admired and imitated, were proposed. Among them, the two martyrs of Alcalá de Henares, Saints Just and Pastor, were particularly venerated. Also the three children, martyrs, Saints Alfio, Filadelfio and Cirino, Sicilians, from Leontino, the homeland of the venerated elder Father Caspar Dragonetti. For this purpose, Fr. John Francis Apa composed a book with this title: "*One hundred of notable examples of some children and young men divided into ten characteristics according to the ten commandments of the divine law.*"

From the various books of Rules and Norms to be kept by the students of the Pious Schools, we deduce that the boys were formed and trained to respect their parents, teachers and elders, and to appreciate discipline, punctuality, work, order, good manners, and cleanliness. It was forbidden to attend public shows, comedies, street charlatans, games of cards and dice. They were forbidden to go swimming in rivers, unless accompanied by their parents or teachers. They had to be at home after the evening Hail Mary. All this implies that education was not confined within the walls of the

226 D. CUEVA, oc. n. 1340. 1342. 1343.

school, but went beyond, embracing all the times and places in the life of boys. The accompaniment in rows to their homes was also a measure of control and protection.

At first Calasanz restricted his schools to the poor with absolute exclusivity. But when the Pauline Congregation of the Pious Schools was officially established, this exclusivity was no longer demanded and the poor and the rich, nobles and commoners began to be admitted. Nevertheless, a preference for the poor was always maintained. This intermingling in the classrooms, in the church and oratory, in the street rows and in all the moments of the school life, created in all the children an atmosphere of equality and fraternity, whose consequences in the social life must have been lasting. And Calasanz insisted in his Rules on the idea that above riches and nobility, other values deserved to be respected. Let us see: "In our schools, let no one claim any preeminence or supremacy over others except for integrity of morals or greater diligence and profit in study"; "in the school, let no one claim preeminence or primacy over others for any other title than for the value of wit and integrity of morals."²²⁷

It was a totally different order of values from the one that prevailed in that baroque and ceremonious Rome. That time, more than once there were very serious tumults, not only between rich and poor or between nobles and plebeians, but even between ambassadors of the great powers of the time for the simple reason of defending the order of precedence. While raising the cultural level of the poor children of the people and defending their right to culture, Calasanz reminded the rich and the nobility that neither wealth nor lineage could be considered superior values to intelligence, integrity of manners and culture. And that is what education was all about.

227 SÁNTHA (BAC) p. 403, nt. 27.

The apostolic visitation of 1625

Background and Consequences

At the end of March 1624 Pope Urban VIII decreed a general visitation of all the churches, convents, monasteries and pious places of Rome. It began in the Basilica of St. John Lateran in the middle of 1624 and ended in May 1632. Three hundred and thirty-three places were visited, including churches, monasteries, convents and other pious institutions. Among all of them, on October 27, 1625, it was the turn of the church of San Pantaleo and the house and community of the Pious Schools. The community was composed of 28 religious and in the novitiate of the Quirinale there were 28 novices. The schools of San Pantaleo had 900 students and those in Borgo, next to the Vatican, another 200, according to the minutes of the Visitation.

It would probably have been a visitation unmarked, without importance, more concerned with the state of the church than of the community, and even less with the entire Order and its problems. They could be properly the concern of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. But it was not so. Father Paul Ottonelli, Assistant General, was responsible for things taking a slightly different course. Fr. Ottonelli, in the middle of 1625, felt a certain resentment for the little attention paid to him by Calasanz and a lot to Fr. Melchior Alacchi. He wrote to the Pope asking that a secret visitation to be made to the community of San Pantaleo and to the novitiate, where Alacchi was novice master. He also asked that there be only two Visitors, Msgr. Seneca and Father Ferretti, a Capuchin. Neither of the two was an official visitor, since their appointment was made in April 1626. The Pope entrusted the matter, in effect, to Msgr. Antonio Seneca. Fr. Ottonelli went to inform him personally about the situation of the house and of the Order with the good intention of remedying what he judged to be abuses and inobservances. Msgr. Seneca asked

him to give him his complaints in writing, and there, in his palace, Ottonelli drafted a memorial, which bears the date of August 5, 1625. The whole thing is an accusation against Father General and a denigration of Father Alacchi. And these were the accusations:

1. The extreme poverty binds one to live exclusively on alms, but Fr. General is thinking of founding a school with the inheritance of Card. Tonti; he collects rent from some shops; a small house with a field has been accepted; it has been sown, and its fruits have been sold; silk and gold ornaments are used in the Church, against the Constitutions; he wants to buy a house in Frascati, half in ruins, and he has been obliged to pay it in installments, by means of a Brief, with penalties of excommunication to the Fathers if it is not paid on time.
2. The Assistants General should be in Rome to help and advice Fr. General, but he keeps them away; One of them (Fr. Ottonelli) has come to Rome with his permission to win the indulgence of the Holy Year, and he is not consulted either in serious or minor matters; he wants to do all things by himself, as absolute Prince, as if the subjects and the very Companions or Assistants were his slaves.
3. Fr. General lets Fr. Alacchi, a Sicilian, to do whatever he wants; it is said that he was expelled from the Capuchin novitiate as a possessed man, and when he was our novice, he never obeyed the Superiors and he has done many extravagances.²²⁸

The accusations were not totally false, but exposed in this way, without further explanations and justifications of the General's conduct and way of proceeding, they amounted to an unworthy accusation, especially coming from an Assistant to the General. And, apparently, Fr. Ottonelli must have repented of it, because on September 17 Calasanz wrote to Frascati: "Father Paul [Ottonelli] last night knelt down to ask for forgiveness, recognizing his pride and past error." And in another letter of the 20th he said laconically: "Father Paul has gone to make a retreat in the convent of La Scala."²²⁹

228 EC, IV, p. 1977, n. 2.

229 EGC, II, l. 318, 319.

A month later the visitators arrived. They were Msgr. Seneca and two companions. On the afternoon of October 27 Calasanz wrote: "This morning we had the visitation of the Prelates... and they examined all the members of the house very briefly."²³⁰ Indeed, the personal interrogation of each one must have been very brief if we consider that there were 28 religious and in only one morning they interviewed all, besides visiting the church and the schools in detail. And given the abundance of details and problems written in the minutes and decrees of the visit, one can only suspect that in addition to the written denunciation of Ottonelli, there were other made verbally, previous and later. They left the General and the Order in a bad place because they were biased and inaccurate. However, the impression of Calasanz must have been satisfactory judging by what he wrote four days later: "I have spoken with Msgr. Seneca after the visit. He and his companions were very satisfied, since they found neither division nor any disturbance in the examination of all... nor is there anything in the Order that needs remedy.... The said Msgr. Seneca told me that our Institute cannot be better than it is, and that it is necessary that great poverty be observed and that clothing be properly; and to care to the little ones and in no way to sermons and confessions as other Orders do. He also wants we two can speak again to see the inconveniences that could disturb the work in the future, so the Institute may be confirmed with an Apostolic Bull on the occasion of this visitation."²³¹

Certainly new conversations were held, because at the end of the year Calasanz wrote to Alacchi: "Among the causes that he [Seneca] believes that can relax it [our Institute], one is to accept too many foundations, because to attend to them we would have to use subjects not yet prepared to be teachers. Then he told me that without their permission we should not accept more foundations. Rather, we should try to form good subjects.... He also warned me of other things that could be a cause for relaxation. He asked me to tell him others things, so that they could be included in the Bull; and I gave him five that pleased him very much."²³²

230 Ibid., I. 346.

231 Ibid., I. 349.

232 Ibid., I. 380.

Three complementary documents of the Visitation

In both letters Calasanz affirms that it was Msgr. Seneca who proposed to him those concrete points of observance or dangers of relaxation, and that he gave him five “which he liked very much.” Naturally, the one who knew the Order well was Calasanz and not Seneca. In the conversations held between the two, it had to be Calasanz who specified those points and not Monsignor, who must have approved them as very correct. He also asked Calasanz to present them in writing, as a memorandum, as indeed Calasanz did. The identity of the five points of Calasanz and those that, perhaps out of humility, he attributes to Monsignor in the two mentioned letters, corroborate our explanation. In his memorandum Calasanz asks: “Said Institute will be of great utility in Christian society if it is administered by apostolic persons, and so we humbly beg Your Excellency to help it at present by preventing and remedying the inconveniences that with time could relax said Institute. This way it may always be preserved in its primitive fervor and exercise. The main points that in time could cause relaxation are the following:

1. Not to observe poverty with exactitude;
2. To want to wear shoes and be well dressed, since the Institute demands a lot of mortification;
3. To accept more foundations, not having suitable personnel to staff them;
4. Not to accept the little ones of the ‘Holy Cross;
5. To want the religious to dedicate to teaching other major sciences and to want to be professors, confessors or preachers, as other Religions do.”²³³

The five points, except for the second one that is part of the first, are fixed ideas of the Founder, repeated constantly in his letters. Therefore, what he wanted was that with a new Pontifical Bull the institute be ratified insisting concretely in these five fundamental ideas. Even more: regarding point 3rd, although Calasanz ardently desired to propagate his Institute throughout the world and he was flattered by the con-

233 Ibid., I. 380a.

stant requests for foundations, he understood that he could not attend to all of them due to lack of prepared personnel. But it was difficult for him to refuse systematically every request. For this reason, in May 1627, he presented this request to the Pope: "For the benefit of the Institute of the Pious Schools, which is being requested with great urgency in many cities and places that need it, it would be very important that Your Holiness deign to order the Father General of the said Pious Schools not to accept any foundation for a period of two years, so that during this time skilled and professed subjects would be prepared to exercise the said work with the perfection that is due...." And the Congregation of Religious issued a decree on May 21, 1627 granting the request.²³⁴

Msgr. Seneca and Calasanz talked about a Pontifical Bull of confirmation of the Order including these fundamental points for the preservation of the Institute. And the idea must have spread among the Piarists. Fr. Peter Casani, Assistant General, addressed a memorandum to the Visitators proposing some ideas to be included in the Bull. Possibly he proceeded on his own initiative and without the knowledge of Calasanz. In some points he tries to correct the Constitutions of the Founder. He brought back some ideas that the same Fr. Casani included in that project of Constitutions, called "Pussilli gregis idea", which was put aside when the members of the Lucca Congregation refused to change substantially their institute. There is, however, no hint of criticism or accusation against anyone in this clean memorandum of Casani. Just the exposition of his personal ideas. In short, he asks for a better philosophical-theological formation, but forbidding that such subjects be taught outside our houses of formation. The Order should have the power to expel those accused of heresy and of other very serious special sins. The care of souls should be restricted to children, or declared to be a secondary purpose of the Institute, always subordinated to the needs of the students. The Order should not have the power to possess real estates in general, but neither the houses, churches nor other premises in which it lived. He went down to minute details about poverty, which should shine in ornaments and utensils of worship. The books published should simply indicate that the author was a Piarist. All should always be called and signed "poor." All the members of the Order should be clerics, and therefore wear tonsure and use

234 Eph. Cal. 4 (1959) 199, nt.38.

biretta. It should be forbidden even to touch money physically, under pain of excommunication.²³⁵ None of these points was taken seriously by the Visitators. Later, Casani got Calasanz to accept the last two and they were imposed on the whole Order. As for the one before the penultimate one, Casani signed himself all his life like this: "Peter, Poor."

There was still another document, drawn up by Calasanz and given to Msgr. Seneca, in which the Piarist way of life was succinctly described, and in summary it was this: In addition to the work and the hours that the schools and the children demanded, and the limitations derived from the extreme poverty that they professed with respect to the inability to own real estates, it is noted that they live on alms begged or offered. They used to go begging during the time of the harvests to store provisions for the whole year and not to hinder the exercise of the schools, begging every day. They wear a cassock like the priests, but of vile cloth. They wear woolen shirts and bare feet with sandals. They sleep on straw mattresses with enough blankets, but without sheets. They can stay in bed seven hours. At the table they use napkins without tablecloths and eat enough, "but only what the poor of that place usually eat." On Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays they may eat meat, but on Wednesdays and Fridays they fast. On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays they have disciplines, and on Fridays a chapter of faults. On Sundays they program mortifications for the next week. Every day in the morning they have an hour of mental prayer in common; before lunch, the examination of conscience; after lunch, the litanies of Our Lady and the "crown of five psalms"; before dinner, another half an hour of meditation; before going to bed, they have the litanies of the Saints and examination of conscience.²³⁶ Indeed, it was an extremely austere and demanding life, that only time would relax.

Minutes and decrees of the Visitation

The conversations with Msgr. Seneca gave Calasanz confidence that things would go well. But what was actually recorded in the official minutes would not have pleased him at all. He never read them, because he only received the Decrees, and very late. And it is regretta-

235 EC, VI, p. 2744-2749.

236 Eph. Cal., l.c., p. 194-195. nt. 32.

ble that among the 335 places visited in Rome, only in the minutes and decrees corresponding to the church of San Pantaleo and the Pious Schools did the visitators meddle in so many details of people, things, and problems, especially those related to the internal life of the Order. They dealt with them with disproportionate rancor. It is guessed, in addition, that it has been given ears to informers, who have distorted the facts and the situations. Letting aside what refers to the church, let us see what they say about the Order:

1. Most of the teachers are unfit to teach, and among them are inexperienced novices, scorned by the children.
2. These inexperienced teachers do not have even a tutor to prepare them.
3. There is a lot of lay brothers and persons unfit for government.
4. Since the foundation, no General or Particular Congregation has been celebrated, but everything is determined by Father General at his pleasure.
5. The sick are lacking the necessary things; this year 15 fathers have died, and in eight years more than 40.
6. The excessive urge of Fr. General to extend the Order has put it in danger of dissolution because there is not adequate personnel to govern and take care of the houses.
7. The General has a lay brother for secretary, when he could have some priest or cleric.
8. Some Fathers try to study philosophy, theology and other sciences and how to preach. They would like to have popular churches, or to open new houses and to increase the Religion with inept and unnecessary personnel.
9. The little ones are not easily accepted to teach them the first letters.²³⁷

Of all these complaints and accusations, only number 4 had already been presented by Ottonelli. All the others have another origin; and only numbers 6, 8 and 9 were expressly considered in the colloquies between Msgr. Seneca and Calasanz.

237 Ibid., pp. 166-169, nt. 24.

The long months passed and the decrees of the Visitation did not arrive. Fr. Ottonelli died on February 18, 1626, and in August of the same year, Msgr. Seneca also died. It is certain that in June, after many delays, the decrees concerning San Pantaleo and the Pious Schools were already drawn up, but we do not know if Msgr. Seneca was involved in them, since he was already ill from the beginning of the year. There was also a serious error. The decrees were sent to the church of San Pantaleo ai Monti, where the Basilian monks resided. Something else must have happened, for it was only on September 10, 1628 that they finally reached Calasanz. Almost three years had passed since the visitation was made, and in that time several things had already changed.

The decree contained 17 points, of which the first 10 refer to the Church, with no particular importance. The remaining seven were taxing dispositions referred exclusively to the nine points of the minutes that we have summarized above. This means that the conversations between Seneca and Calasanz were of no use. In any case, these problems were properly the concern of the Congregation of Regulars and not of the Visitation. Moreover, there are threats of excommunication, suspension and other penalties against Father General if he did not comply with what was prescribed. One of the most bitter dispositions was referring to point 4 of the minutes. It referred to the denunciation of Fr. Ottonelli, and ordered that within fifteen days Fr. General should explain to the Congregation of the Visitation the reasons why during the first eight years of his government he had not convoked any General or particular Congregation. He should also submit a list of the most suitable persons for the government of the Order. Of particular importance was also the disposition referring to number 6 of the minutes, commanding that neither Father General nor the other superiors should open new houses "outside of Rome" without the license from the Pope or the Congregation.²³⁸

Calasanz' answer

The Decree of the Visitation was read in the oratory of San Pantaleo before the whole community. Fr. Berro recounts that when Cala-

238 Ibid., pp. 200-201, nt. 41.

sanz commented it afterwards he said: “If the Pope, with this Visitation, knowing my faults, were to send me to the galleys in penance, I would accept it as a particular grace of the Lord and I would be happy to suffer in this life what I should suffer in the next.”²³⁹ He was very sincere knowing that there was some truth in all those accusations. But as General of the Order he had the duty to defend himself and the obligation to answer what he was being asked. Therefore, with utmost brevity, he replied to each of the points as follows:

- “To 11: No teachers will teach humanities and rhetoric without first learning them.
- To 12: A priest has already been assigned to tutor those who must be teachers.
- To 13: The habit will not be given to anyone unless it is in conformity with the Constitutions.
- To 14: The Fathers of the Pious Schools do not teach major sciences, because it would be against their institute.
- To 15: The General begged the Pope to make him a Decree forbidding the opening of Pious Schools anywhere for two years; and he did so, so that during this time he could prepare suitable subjects.
- To 16: The children of the poor are received at six or seven years of age for the first letters, and not younger, for they are incapable of learning and hinder the others. As for the sick, they lack nothing of what the doctor prescribes, as well as the necessary service and assistance.
- To 17: As for the General Congregation, it was held in the sixth year of the Order, which was in 1627, according to the Constitutions approved in 1622. Three years after the first one, another General Congregation was convoked, which will be in 1630. Thus it can be seen that the Sacred Congregation of the Reform has not been well informed on this matter.

The General has never had a lay brother as secretary...”²⁴⁰

239 Ibid., p. 202.

240 Ibid., pp. 201-202.

To this somewhat harsh answer he added the requested list of people suitable for government, who were: Frs. Casani, Castelli, Graziani, Tencani, Pizzardo, Baldi, Busdraghi, Bianchi, Vitali and Galletti. And at the end of this list he said: ...”the Superior General replies that they are more apt and suitable to govern than he is.”²⁴¹

In addition to sending the reply to the Congregation, he went personally to speak to the Vicegerent in Rome, who had been the judge and secretary of the Visitation, explaining the difficulties for the strict application of the decree. The Vicegerent told him “that the decrees were not precepts but only recommendations.” But, in reality, whether they were precepts or simply warnings, this was the first time Calasanz was called to see a series of problems that needed attention and remedy, and that would remain alive more or less during his life, surfacing again in other visits and in later General Chapters. We can regret the excessive interference of this Visitation in internal matters of the Order, the hardness of expression in the decrees, the accusations and exaggerated declarations, etc., but all this contributed to give an accurate diagnosis of the situation of the Order and of certain problems that would become almost endemic. That is why we have emphasized this famous Apostolic Visitation of 1625.

These endemic problems would be: the need for a center of studies where future educators would be systematically prepared with sufficient time; the selection of vocations; the exclusive dedication to the schools; the insistent request for new foundations; the attitude of Calasanz to govern the Order by himself, dispensing with his official collaborators and imposing his authority on provincials and rectors. However, it is not always necessary to consider him as responsible, since he acted forced by the circumstances, unavoidable in many cases, and he lamented with impotence the abuses committed by others, even superiors. It is undeniable, on the other hand, that he had an authoritarian character; that he was accustomed to command and dispose; and since from the school of Santa Dorotea until he was deposed as General, he would keep in his hand the government of “his work.” He was not able to free himself from command and responsibility. He lived in a time when absolutism

241 *Ibid.*, p. 192.

prevailed in civil and ecclesiastical authorities. That time, the idea of government in the religious orders had more monarchical than democratic nuances. Finally, it must be recognized that he was surrounded by mediocre characters and the few who stood out for their gifts of initiative and command, he moved them from province to province and from house to house, appointing them at the same time General Assistants, Provincials, Visitators, and local Rectors. He entrusted them new foundations, since his advanced age hardly allowed him to move. And these, in whom he trusted and overloaded with responsibilities, could not logically remain quiet in Rome next to the General, who by force had to act alone. But they accused him of being a despot, an absolute prince, a slave lord, a tyrant, and so on.

And he endured undaunted the recriminations of those from within and the decisions and decrees from the outside, from the Holy See. And in moments of tribulation, on grey days, he would go around to those little ones, his favorites, to teach them to make the sign of the cross and perhaps to spell a name: M-A-R-I-A.

General Congregations and Chapters

General Congregation of 1627

According to the Constitutions, the Chapters or General Congregations should be held every six years and, also, to elect a new Superior General. In November 1621, the Pious Schools had been declared a religious order. Six years later, therefore, the first Chapter or General Congregation had to be held. And so Calasanz arranged it, con- voking it for October 1627. It was attended by the representatives of the whole Order, namely: Fr. Joseph Calasanz, Superior General; Fr. Peter Casani, Provincial of Naples; Fr. Francis Castelli, Provincial of Genoa; Fr. Jacob Graziani, Provincial of Rome; Fr. Peregrino Tencani, a professed priest. Fr. Glicerio Ceruti, Rector of San Pantaleo and Master of Novices, was appointed Secretary of the Chapter or General Congregation. Father Dominic Ruzola was the honorary president, in recognition of the many merits acquired in the Pious School.

There were four sessions: October 11th, 12th and 27th and November 4th. They discussed the following questions: To clarify some points on poverty such as the use of money, the mutual help among the houses, the renunciation of legacies and inheritances; the inability to resort to tribunals to defend one's rights; the power of Father General to dismiss certain delinquents or incorrigible persons without going to the Holy See; problems of enclosure and separation between the schools and the residence of the religious. The special and problematic situation of certain persons was examined and provisions were done. It was proposed to ask the Pope for a Bull of confirmation of the Order and its Constitutions, as had already been discussed with the Visitators of 1625. The need for special licenses for the religious to travel to Rome was stressed. And a very important decree was issued by which a third class of religious was created in the Order, called "Cleric Brothers". We will speak about

them expressly in another chapter. This was the most transcendental matter of this General Congregation.

On the last day, after having exhausted the topics, the Minutes say that “the Father General having asked all the Fathers if they had anything else to discuss and having answered that they had not... this first General Congregation ended on St. Charles’ Day, November 4, 1627.”²⁴² They were still waiting for the results of the Visitation of 1625 whose decrees would arrive the following year. And it is very interesting that on this occasion, and at the express request of Calasanz, none of those present, representatives of all the Provinces of the Order, alleged any complaint about the way of governing of the “holy old man.” None of the Assistants who were also Provincials, complained that the General had kept them away from Rome or that he dominated them “like slaves.” Even more, none of those present, nor the General himself, thought to refer to any of the “grievous” questions brought about by the documents of the apostolic Visitation. This leads us to suppose that none of the supreme leaders of the Order, including Calasanz, gave to such problems the almost scandalous gravity that the Visitors or the editors of the Decrees gave them. They considered them as normal questions of the life of the Order, which did not even deserve to be treated in this first General Congregation.

General Chapter of 1631

On April 28, 1622, Pope Gregory XV had appointed Father Joseph Calasanz as Superior General of the Pious Schools for nine years, instead of for life, as prescribed by the Constitutions. For the election of a successor, therefore, the General Chapter had to meet at the expiration of the term of office, in April 1631. And Calasanz ardently desired this. In mid-April 1630 he wrote: “I hope, when I have the opportunity, to leave the government of this house, so close to the Pope and of to many cardinals, to a suitable person, and if the Lord gives me health, I have great desire to retire to Naples”; “God knows the desire that I have had and still I have to return to Naples, but this should be when the house of Rome is left with the suitable

242 Positio, p. 562-565.

government. Perhaps the Lord will grant it to us”²⁴³. Undoubtedly, Naples had won his heart. And it is no less certain that he was already tired of commanding and wanted to be free from the worries and problems of the office. In November of the same year he wrote: “I have often wished to be a porter or infirmarian in any house rather than to have the office I have, and God is my witness that it is so, who in his mercy deigns not to look upon my faults.”²⁴⁴

In the year 1630 a dreadful plague, wonderfully described by Manzoni in his immortal novel “*I promessi sposi*”, had been declared in a great part of Italy. In the first months of 1631 it still had not disappeared and therefore the prohibitions of transfers and trips to avoid the contagion continued. Therefore, it was not possible to hold the elective Chapter in April. An extension of six months was requested and obtained from the Holy See for the Generalate of Calasanz. The Chapter was reconvened for October.

In due time the provincials of Naples and Genoa arrived in Rome, with the representatives from the Provinces. Also Fr. Stephen Cherubini came as General Visitor. But the Provincial and representatives of Tuscany did not arrive because they were blocked by the plague. On October 31st, the extension of Fr. General’s government expired, and until the last moment they wanted to avoid the recourse to the Pope again, asking for another extension. They trusted that they would not be able to get it. But the 31st passed and the juridical situation was embarrassing, because the Order had remained without legitimate head. They approached Cardinal Vicar, Marcio Ginetti, and discussed with him the appointment of the General and his four assistants. Fr. Casani was delegated to write a petition to the Pope asking that Calasanz be confirmed General for life, according to the Constitutions.

Fr. Casani in his memorandum also requested that Father General “choose four of the best Fathers... for his Assistants and that each one of them have under his care one of the four Provinces that the Order has at present. That the General is bounded to have them always at his side, residing in Rome, except when it is necessary to visit the said Provinces personally. Fr. General has to take counsel

243 EGC, IV, l. 1359. 1361.

244 *Ibid.*, l. 1516.

in all matters pertaining to his office with these Provincials. To declare as invalid, null and void and of no weight and value any act which he may attempt to do without the counsel of the said Assistants or at least of the greater part of them. And to choose for his Monitor one of these four.”²⁴⁵ The paragraph, in its crudely worded form, seems to be a manifestation of disagreement and even implicit criticism of Calasanz’ independent way of governing. If, on the one hand, it imposes strict control over all the acts of Fr. General government, at the same time it maintains the tactic used by him of appointing the General Assistants as Provincials. According to the memorandum, the presence of the assistants in Rome is required in order to control the Superior General, while according to Calasanz’ point of view, what was done was to require the presence of the Provincials in Rome in order to be controlled by the General. In fact, Calasanz says: “As for the Government, in order to remove the authority of the Provincials, it has been ordered before the Vicar of the Pope that the three Provincials who were outside come to Rome with the title of Assistants, and together with the General, attend to the common Government and some of them, at an opportune time, visit the most necessary places.”²⁴⁶

By the pontifical Brief of January 12, 1632, Fr. Joseph Calasanz was named General for life, “who on the other hand,” the Pope expressly recognized, “has laudably carried out his office as Minister General. Peter Casani, Francis Castelli, James Graziani and John García were also named as Assistants or counsellors, without the slightest allusion to their quality of Provincials or to any of the other requests of the memorandum. It is not even said that the appointment of Assistants is for life.”²⁴⁷

In the conversations that took place between Card. Ginetti and the capitulars present, were discussed topics that they probably wanted to deal with at the General Chapter. They had in view the problems presented by the Apostolic Visitation of 1625, whose minutes had been received in September 1628 and, therefore, had not been con-

245 *Positio*, p. 841.

246 *EGC*, V., p. 24.

247 *EC*. VI, p. 3054.

sidered at the General Congregation of 1627. Here is how Calasanz summarizes all that was discussed with Card. Ginetti: "In the past month of October, a meeting of some Fathers was held to make a General Chapter, but since some of the principal ones could not come because of the plague, it was discussed in the presence of the Most Rev. Vicar of the election of the General and Assistants, which was done and confirmed with an Apostolic Brief. It was also discussed and resolved that henceforth no new foundations would be accepted without the Pope's license. It was also decided that there would be only one Novitiate in Rome where the novices would be formed according to the Constitutions and this has been and is being fulfilled, having the novices come to Rome from different parts.... It was also concluded that studies be opened for the young men of the Religion and this has been put into effect..."²⁴⁸ Let us add to this what has already been recalled with regard to the government of the Order.

It was not useless, therefore, the concentration of chapter members, although the chapter was not celebrated. Nevertheless, the prudent Founder took advantage of the occasion to treat and decide in common and in the presence of Cardinal Ginetti the most burning questions of the moment.

Disappointments and whistleblowers

Berro tells in his Memoirs that when the papal decision to confirm Calasanz as General for life was made known, "there was no difficulty among the Fathers in receiving him as such, as we had always done in the past, since we had always considered him as Superior and Founder. But it displeased some to have heard that one of us, on his own account and against the feeling of the others, said to the Emo. Cardinal Vicar, that if there had been a canonical election, our Ven. Fr. Founder would not have been confirmed, but another would have been elected."²⁴⁹ There were more than one in the Order who thought the same thing. And not content with thinking it and wishing it, they tried to achieve it with unworthy memoranda addressed to the Holy See and to its Congregations and hierarchies. In

248 EGC. V, p. 23.

249 Positio, p. 810.

them they mixed truths or half-truths with gossip, exaggerations, distortions and even calumnies, discrediting the poor General and the entire Order.

One of these memoranda must have been written around the middle of 1631, looking forward to the General Chapter. The Saint called it Memorandum of Inconveniences. He probably knew who the author was. In it there were complaints about the excessive number of foundations and the fact that most of them were in insignificant little villages far from each other, and from the mountains of Genoa to the extreme south of Otranto and Calabria. That low and inept people were admitted to increase the number, and novices and unprepared clerics were used for the schools, neglecting their own formation. Also the government of the Order proceeded without common criteria and the superiors were chosen at whim. That excessive authority was given to lay brothers, who surpassed or at least equaled the fathers and clerics together. To all these problems the informer proposed adequate solutions, prohibiting new foundations, suppressing all the houses except for Rome, Naples and Genoa. Even in these cities the classes should be reduced and all the religious should be concentrated to attend to their formation and preparation for a time. The General should govern with the support of his Assistants and the Provincials should take more care in the selection of candidates. The memorandum ended by asking the Pope for an Apostolic Commissary to apply these remedies and to govern the Order for some years until it was straighten out, as had been done with other Religions.²⁵⁰

The Holy See sent the anonymous memorandum to Calasanz so he could answer, as he did. And in his answer he pointed out the questions that had already been dealt in the meetings with Cardinal Ginetti: foundations, formation of novices and clerics, and the government of the Order. He crossed out some of the accusations as falsehoods and gave his explanation to others, pointing out, for example, the absurdity of closing houses and suppressing classes and concentrating so many religious in so few places. As for the appointment of an Apostolic Commissary, he said that the Order was not so relaxed that it deserved this remedy, and concluded: "It is true that

250 *Ibid.* pp. 763-765.

he who has made the memorandum needs great remedy for being one of the ancients of the Religion, but his arrogance and obstinacy make him unworthy of being entrusted with the office of Superior.”²⁵¹

Much more serious than the previous memorandum was the campaign of denigration and slander against all the superiors and against the Order, unleashed from the beginning of 1633 by the cleric John Francis Castiglia. He began to send memoranda to various cardinals, monsignors and even the Pope himself, lamenting the excessive dispersion of the Order, showing the dirty linen, real or supposed, of the superiors and asking for an Apostolic Visit of the Order. The irresponsible informer confessed that “because of a wrong done to me, I decided, on the advice of a prudent person, to give the said memorandum”, and that his personal honor was worth “more than life itself.”²⁵²

Calasanz judged the matter of great importance, not only calling it slanderous and infamous, but also fearing the reaction of the Roman Curia, which had welcomed the memoranda and was ready to verify the truth of the facts. On January 26, 1633, Calasanz wrote that the cleric Castiglia “had brought our Religion into disrepute before Cardinals San Onofrio [Antonio Barberini], Ginetti and even the Pope. The Vicegerent has been commissioned to inform himself of the things contained in the said memorandum, and now this miserable is looking for witnesses at home to prove his calumnies.”²⁵³ In another letter of January 29th, he added: “This unfortunate cleric does not desist from his accusations, wanting to give proof with various testimonies..., and these Superiors [of the Roman Curia] give him credit and say that the defects of the Religions are never known except by the malcontents. So it is necessary to make the Superiors see that the calumny against the Religion is not true.... We will see what happens and we will try to defend the honor of Religion.”²⁵⁴ On February 19th, he wrote: “These lax persons never cease to give memoranda.... With the help of the Lord we will

251 EGC. V. pp. 23-24.

252 EC. pp. 666-667.

253 EGC, V, l. 1957.

254 Ibid., l. 1959.

defend the Religion which these wretches want to destroy in order to be able to return to the world. In the meantime, I make pray for this matter that contains in itself the most serious infamy that our Religion has ever suffered.”²⁵⁵

A few days later, the cleric Castiglia began to backtrack, repentant of his accusations and calumnies, as Calasanz recalled: “This wretch, repentant of his error... has recanted in the presence of Monsignor Vicegerent and I hope it will end immediately, without proving anything.”²⁵⁶ But it was not so, because those of the curia demanded proof that everything had been a slander, as Calasanz manifested: “It will be necessary for me to satisfy the Superiors about the truth and to prove to be slander everything that this unhappy individual wrote, although he, recognizing the error with a public memorandum signed by his hand, has retracted what he wrote, so that I think not to leave in the mind of the Superiors any bad impression of our work.”²⁵⁷

As a result of this whole scabrous affair, Berro recounts the following scene: “His Eminence [Cardinal Antonio Barberini] sent for our Ven. Fr. Founder and as soon as he arrived in his presence, even though there were a good number of people in the hall and ante-chamber, both gentlemen of his court and strangers, without regard to the age or the dignity of General and Founder of a Religion, he turned towards the old man like a basilisk and said words to him that were no longer religious mortification, but rather true insults. When our venerable and most patient Father heard this, he knelt down on his knees in the place where he was and with the most humble posture and the face of an angel, without uttering a single word, he listened to what His Eminence was throwing in his face. The Cardinal’s behavior towards the Venerable Father was displeasing to all present.... When His Eminence had finished reprimanding him, Fr. Joseph asked him if he wanted to hear him in particular. Then the Barberini took him up and led him to another room. With all submission, the venerable father corrected the Cardinal there.... His Eminence was not only disappointed and satisfied, but

255 Ibid., I. 1974.

256 Ibid., I. 1977.

257 Ibid., I. 1984.

also edified by the patience and humility, as well as admired by the prudence of our venerable Founder.”²⁵⁸

The slanderer recanted and the Cardinal was disillusioned, but the consequences were negative, because in the end the slanderers were listened. They prohibited not only new foundations, but also to send religious to the houses already founded, particularly to those in Moravia, in a moment when Cardinal Dietrichstein was asking for more religious. Regarding the foundation already begun in Ancona, Calasanz said: “Having done all I can to obtain the pontifical permission to send to Ancona the promised Fathers, who have long been ready to leave, I would not know what to do, this difficulty arising from the memorial made by that Brother. He affirmed among other things, that so many new Pious Schools were being accepted and opened, that the old ones could not be provided with enough subjects and of good quality as would be convenient, nor could the new ones be properly directed. And the Superiors have been extraordinarily persuaded of this”²⁵⁹. To Card. Dietrichstein he said more bluntly: “The letter that Your Eminence has written to the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide, seems to me to be the work of the Holy Spirit, since in the minds of some Superiors a certain aversion against our Institute has arisen; and it has been heard that sending our people to foreign countries is not approved by all, being so few in number and not having subjects on purpose and like other Religions.... I live more than ever ready to continue the work begun and I am sure that the furious impetus of hell, which fears to suffer great loss through our poor family in those and other countries, will not prevail in overthrowing us.”²⁶⁰

In spite of these restrictions, at the beginning of July of the same year 1633, it seemed that the storm provoked by the memoranda had already subsided, as Calasanz says: “The Lord has delivered us from the evil concept in which the malice and cunning of the devil had placed us before the Major Superiors.”²⁶¹

258 BAU. BC. p. 726.

259 EGC. V. I. 2011.

260 Ibid., I. 2049.

261 Ibid., I. 2071.

But it was only for a short time. Think that this man, attacker and slanderer of the Order, had to be expelled from two schools for his scandals with women and that in 1640 he left the Pious Schools...!

General Chapter of 1637

Six years after the convocation of the previous General Chapter of 1631, which could not be celebrated because of the plague, Calasanz intimated the following one for October 15, 1637, keeping faithfully the six-year period required by the Constitutions. The Decree of convocation said that whoever had any matter that was of interest for the good of the Order, Province, house or individual “should notify it to the Provincial or to the delegates of the Province in writing with his signature, assuring them that his proposal would be presented to the Chapter.”²⁶² Total freedom was given to all to express their desires and ideas on the adequate reform of any aspect of the Order.

The Chapter was presided by three prelates from the Congregation of the Apostolic Visit. Among them was Msgr. Giulio Rospigliosi, a young man still thirty-seven years old, who would eventually become Pope Clement IX, special protector of the Pious Schools. They were accompanied in the presidency by a Capuchin. Twenty chapter members were present at the opening of the first session and at the last there were twenty-four. Such an assembly had not yet been seen in the history of the Pious Schools. It was, in fact, the first effective General Chapter, with all the legal requirements and with full representation. It was also very long, since it began on October 15th and ended on November 24th.

In the year 1637 the Order already had six provinces, 27 houses, 362 religious and 70 novices.

Some recent historians have presented this Chapter and the immediate one of 1641 as a kind of frontal attack against the old General Calasanz and his personal way of governing and conceiving the Order. But reading with serenity the official minutes, the impression that they cause is not exactly that. It was the first important meeting of all the representatives of the Order, which carried with them the proposals of the provinces, houses and individuals. It is

262 Archivum 13 (1954) 36.

not surprising that many problems were dealt, and some of them were resolved against the opinion of Calasanz and his assistants, such as the thorny question of the cleric brothers, of which we will speak. But there are few times in which such opposition is evident. Perhaps the direct debate was more lively and even hurtful.

The minutes of the General Congregation of 1627 and that of 1631, which in a certain sense had been intended to be General Chapters, were revised. And the main questions of the time and of always were dealt with again: problems related to extreme poverty; prohibition or limitation of new foundations; preparation of personnel from the novitiate; residence of the Assistants with the General and the obligation of the latter to consult them, but, at the same time, the obligation of the Provincials to reside in their provinces; and the postscript that they must not depend on the Assistants but on the Superior General.

They requested again the confirmation of the Order with an Apostolic Brief, and the same is requested of the Constitutions. It is desired that they be confirmed in all their points, which should be a solemn recognition of the wisdom of the legislative code, owed exclusively to the Founder. It is demanded that all clerics and priests should be dedicated to the school, giving special preference to the teaching of Christian doctrine. Among the very numerous decrees, more than thirty times the decisions about the problems under consideration, the penalties to be imposed, and the necessary licenses, are left in the hands of the General or of him and his Assistants. Thus the centralist character of the government is accentuated, instead of reproaching it.

Nevertheless, the abundance of legislated details and the positions of the Chapter contrary to the opinion of Calasanz or to the persons esteemed and favored by him, must have made him suffer a lot, as Berro recalls in his Memoirs: "In this Chapter our Ven. Fr. Founder and General gave such signs of perfection, patience and charity in every contrariety that was made to him, which were many, that the presidents of the Chapter and Msgr. Rospigliosi, now Cardinal, said: I do not know when you will have another Father of such perfection and sanctity as this one."²⁶³ And no doubt it must have hurt him,

263 *Positio* p. 931.

among other things, that the Declarations to the Constitutions, which he had presented to the Chapter, were not duly examined.²⁶⁴

General Chapter of 1641

The General Chapter of 1637 had prescribed that for this time the next one would be celebrated in 1641 and not after six years. In August of 1640, thinking about its celebration, Calasanz expressly manifests his intention to resign the office and to appoint a substitute. He thinks about Father Casani, who was then visiting Moravia. He tells Fr. Conti, Provincial of Germania: "If Fr. Peter [Casani] is pleased to come, I intend to appoint him Vicar General and retire to a solitary place to prepare myself to appear before the tribunal of God."²⁶⁵ A month later, Fr. Conti replied: "As for accepting the office of Vicar General that you told me, [Father Casani] is very reluctant, and if it were not for illness, it would have been difficult to convince him to leave this Province."²⁶⁶ In fact, Fr. Casani had decided to return to Italy, since in German lands he found no remedy for his physical ailments. But he was totally determined not to accept the appointment, as he wrote to Calasanz in mid-October 1640: "I thank you with all my heart, with the greatest possible affection, for the great confidence you declare to have in me in a letter to Fr. Onofrio [Conti]... [but] Your Paternity should remove from your mind absolutely these thoughts. I will not be able to carry them out in any way.... [and] bound by obedience to you, I will not hesitate to appeal to the Cardinal Protector and from him to the Pope. But I am sure that it will not be necessary to arrive at these odious measures, for Y. P. will meet with insurmountable opposition from many other places."²⁶⁷ The "holy old man" was already eighty-three years old and the worst years of his life were yet to come. Casani was only 68.

On April 15th, the General Chapter opened under the presidency of Card. Alexander Cesarini. Since July 1639 he was the protector of the Order. The capitulars were 24, as in the previous Chapter. Be-

264 Anal. Cal. 50 (1983) 570-631.

265 EGC, VII, l. 3491.

266 EEC, p. 158.

267 Ibid., p. 143.

sides the new special questions, the minutes of the Chapter of 1637 were revised, confirming, approving or abolishing the dispositions of the Chapter of 1637, in a meticulous examination of everything. The *Observations on the Constitutions*, which by mandate of the Cardinal Protector had been made by the Father General of the Conventuals, John Baptist Berardicelli de Larino, were also examined. This revision was approved by the Chapter members, but it did not recommend any change of interest, and such corrections never became part of the Constitutions. The minutes of the Provincial Chapters and the requests of the individuals were also read and revised. These request were left in the hands of the General and his Assistants to provide for what was convenient. The General and his Assistants were also entrusted with the drafting of the Rules and common rites and the penitential canons. And on April 30, 1641, the Chapter was concluded. The last session was presided again by Cardinal Cesarini. The working sessions were presided over by Msgr. Sebastian Gentili, who was the vice-president.

The two General Chapters of 1637 and 1641 were the only authentic Chapters celebrated during the lifetime of the Founder.

Beginning of the great tribulation

The Cleric Brothers

The General Congregation of 1627, of which we have already spoken, in its session of October 27, decreed the following: "It is granted to wear the clerical biretta to all those brothers who are fit to receive the first tonsure, and they will henceforth be called Cleric Brothers, and they cannot claim with this concession to dedicate themselves to other classes than those of reading, writing, and counting, and only those who are judged to be apt by the Provincials. And if any of these Cleric Brothers should openly or scandalously refuse to do all the manual tasks that obedience imposes on him, he will be deprived of this concession at once."²⁶⁸ With this decree, a third class of religious was created in the Pious Schools, intermediate between the priests and the brothers: they would be clerics because they received the tonsure and wore the biretta, but they could not aspire to receive other higher orders like the normal clerics, but they would remain in the class of the brothers and, therefore, could not refuse to carry out the offices proper to them.

They would devote themselves to the elementary schools, which were really the most abundant and characteristic of the Order, and could study neither Latin nor grammar, which, being subjects of the higher schools, would be reserved for priests and clerics aspiring to the priesthood.

The growing abundance of children, classes and foundations and the relative scarcity of personnel to attend to so many needs were the reason why, from the beginning, the most capable Brothers were

268 Positio p. 564.

called upon to run the primary classrooms. And they required little preparation since they were limited to teaching reading, writing and counting. But next to the simple Brothers were the clerics, generally younger, who, because they wore tonsure and biretta, were more respected by the boys, while the brothers were less respected. And these trifles created uneasiness, envy and lamentations in the ranks of the brothers. Therefore, in the Provinces of Genoa and Naples, governed respectively by Fathers Castelli and Casani, they began to grant to the brothers who taught classes the use of the biretta and the tonsure. This is how Calasanz expressed himself in a letter dated January 7, 1628: "As for the brothers wearing a biretta, it seems to me convenient that all those who are fit to receive the first tonsure, receive it and wear a biretta and be called minor Clerics, that is, that they can only be ordained first tonsure, nor study grammar, and thus the name of Clerics will be convenient to that of Poor Clerics of the Mother of God, and so it has been introduced in Genoa and in Naples."²⁶⁹ And three months before the General Congregation, in July 1627, it is already seen that the Provincial of Genoa had already introduced this novelty, as Calasanz says writing to a brother of Savona: "As for allowing for greater union that the brothers wear a biretta, I do not want however that they go beyond the first tonsure"...²⁷⁰ The initiative seems to be attributed to Fr. Casani, since already in 1616, when he wrote the Constitutions, which he called "Pussilli gregis idea", for the projected reform of the Congregation of Lucca, he had distinguished three classes of religious:

- a) Priests and clerics aspiring to the priesthood;
- b) "Scholastic Brothers, whose office will be to teach in the schools how to read, write, count, sing, paint, sculpt...";
- c) Lay Brothers²⁷¹

It is true that at that time he did not call them clerics, nor did he grant them the tonsure and the biretta. But then, following the apostolic visitation of 1625, in the memorandum that he addresses to

269 EGC, III, I. 762.

270 Ibid., I. 649.

271 Positio p. 540.

the Visitators, he asks that “all of ours, even those who are not to receive major orders, given that it is necessary to choose masters from them, should be ascribed to the clergy by the first tonsure and to honor them with the clerical tonsure and biretta.”²⁷² And both Provincials and at the same time Assistants General moved Calasanz and the other participants of the General Congregation of October 1627 to promulgate this “revolutionary” decree.

Turbulence by the Cleric Brothers

The intention was good, but the result was absolutely unforeseen. What seemed to be a means of concord, of peace, of respect and mutual rapprochement turned out to be a seedbed of discord, of worries, of hatreds that certainly contributed to provoke the great final storm in which the Pious School almost sank forever. With an extreme confidence in the goodness of all, Calasanz had written: “It was never my idea to give the habit in our Religion to laymen but only to religious brothers; some to be coadjutors in the administration of temporal and domestic things, others for the exercise of the schools, according to the talent and ability of each one. But everybody thought to receive them as brothers and companions, not as servants and slaves. For this reason they tried as much as possible to make them as similar as possible to the priests and clerics, knowing very well that with this uniformity, concord, union and fraternal charity are preserved and increased.”²⁷³

In the decree of 1627, it was stated that among all the brothers, only those who were judged suitable by the Provincials would be admitted to the tonsure and the biretta. Those who had begun this tactic and would continue to be its promoters were the Provincials of Genoa and Naples, Fathers Castelli and Casani, who opened their hands without excessive demands. Father General had to bitterly complain about them, as Berro tells us: “Having gone to his room one night... the Founder burst out in these words with bitter feeling: Fr. N... in Genoa and Fr. N... in Naples are destroying my Religion (I suppress the names out of respect - Berro says - but he named them

272 Ibid., p.516.

273 Ibid., p. 541.

both). And I replied: In what way, Father? He answered: By giving the biretta to the Brothers.²⁷⁴ The same liberality is observed, at least in Cassani in admitting not very select novices, of which Calasanz often complained: “Warn, -he says- Father Provincial to be very cautious in giving the habit to novices, specially to older ones”; “Father Provincial should not have so easily dressed such subjects so soon; he would certainly have known them better if he had waited a little longer”; “I have already written to be very cautious in giving the habit, since of those who came last year I had to send away some who did not have the due humility.”²⁷⁵ The problem, however, was not only in the selection that depended on the Provincials. The biretta and the tonsure were a promotion and dignification of the Brothers, who in practice would exchange the pots, pans, brooms and saddlebags of begging for alms in the streets for books and waxed sheets. And with this ambition, the desire to fill the ranks of clerical brothers was unleashed in many of them. In reality, the canonical requirements for the reception of the tonsure were minimal. Therefore, the widespread attitude of the brothers who aspired to it made them open their hands with liberality, as can be seen in these words of the Founder in a letter of May 27, 1632: “As for wearing a biretta, either I agree that all the Brothers who are fit to receive the first tonsure should wear it, but that they should not think of going beyond the first tonsure, and this so that it cannot be said that there are more Brothers than clerics, since there will be very few who are not fit to receive the first tonsure.”²⁷⁶ But the turbulence did not end here. Those who had already received the tonsure began to aspire to the priesthood. It did not seem just to them that a limit should be placed on their aspirations, for they were clerics like the others; they taught classes like them; they had made their religious profession like them, for the formula was the same for all, both brothers and clerics, and it expressly included the fourth vow of teaching children. Such was the clamor in all the provinces that Father General and his assistants carefully examined the question, and with a decree of April 30, 1636, they granted “faculty and li-

274 BAU, BC, p. 717.

275 EGC, IV, l. 1315; III, l. 797; IV, l. 1160.

276 EGC, V, l. 1793.

cense to all the Cleric Brothers of our Religion so that they may be promoted to holy orders, even to the priesthood, provided they are approved and admitted with previous examination by the Examiners of Rome alone.”²⁷⁷ For greater guarantee, they got from Pope Urban VIII to sanction this concession with a Brief of August 19 of the same year. But in this Brief, the Pope added a caveat: ...”provided that the said Cleric Brothers were not Lay Brothers, nor had they performed as such the tasks proper to Lay Brothers.”²⁷⁸

This complicated the matter enormously, since most of them came from the Lay Brothers class, and in the decree of 1627, which created them, it was stated that they could not refuse to perform the domestic duties of the brothers.

Although Father General’s intention was to grant promotion to the priesthood to very few, there was an eagerness among them to study in order to achieve their aspirations. The simple lay brothers were scrambling to be counted among the cleric brothers; the latter did not rest either, studying Latin grammars as much as was necessary to obtain their promotion to the priesthood. Apparently, in many houses, domestic chores were left undone, not only because they did not have time for them, but above all because they despised them as belonging to the “lay brothers.” That is why Fr General complained and at the same time manifested his profound humility: “As for washing dishes, not only have I done it, I do not work less than those who do school, but I have gone out begging for bread with a saddlebag on my shoulder through the streets of Rome and I go out to accompany the children and I am always ready to do it.”²⁷⁹ And the Provincial of Genoa: “Here, since the departure of a novice, Brother Francis, a priest has been in charge of the kitchen and another one of the refectory, and I do not decide to give the charge to any of the Brothers because they would immediately say that I am doing it so as not to let them study.”²⁸⁰ The turbulence, therefore, must have been profound if we take into account that,

277 EGC, IX, p. 108.

278 Ibid., p. 109.

279 EGC, VI. I. 2757.

280 BAU. BC. p. 713.

according to the statistics presented at the General Chapter of 1637, the Order then had 124 priests, 159 brothers between simple brothers and cleric brothers, plus 79 clerics and 70 novices.

Yet another cause of disturbance must be pointed out: the priests and clerics looked with disfavor on all this extensive promotion of the brothers, for they had to cede precedence as they became equal to the newly promoted. The situation of disorder reached such extremes that the General Chapter of 1637 proposed to abolish this third class of Cleric Brothers and to legislate that henceforth only the clerics and priests would be the only ones to teach. The prelates who presided over the Chapter rejected these proposals, but suspended the approval of the papal Brief that granted priestly ordination to the Cleric Brothers. And against this last decision the interested parties “complained”, insisting that they were true clerics and could not be denied access to the priesthood. Moreover, those who had made their profession before the age of twenty-one were to be recognized as clerics or have their profession declared null and void, since that was the age required for professing brothers. A pontifical commission was created to resolve these complaints from the “claimants”, which decided in 1638 that all professions were valid and that those who had made profession before the age of twenty-one were clerics, but not the others.

Tempers were not yet calmed, for those who had professed after the age of twenty-one claimed to be true clerics and had also taken the fourth vow of teaching. Another pontifical commission, presided over by Card. Cesarini, proposed a new formula of Profession for the brothers, in which they expressly promised to renounce the tonsure and the biretta, and said nothing of the vow of teaching and declared that all those who had received the tonsure were clerics, even if they had professed after the age of twenty-one. And under the so much reiterated supplication made by the Founder, his Assistants and General Chapters that the General have the faculty to expel from the Order the delinquents and troublemakers as declared in the Constitutions, Urban VIII finally granted that such individuals could be forced to leave the Order and to pass to another one, although it was more lax.

In spite of such last-minute measures, the “claimants” continued to disturb and disrupt the atmosphere, even during the apostolic visitation that was to begin in 1643, with its deadly consequences.

A new player: Fr. Mario Sozzi

Mario Sozzi is in the life of St. Joseph Calasanz like “the bad guy in the movies.” Unfortunately, in the lives of the saints there is never a lack of those who help them to become saints, giving them a tough time, but then bearing the hatred and condemnation of posterity. And this happened, at least, with four characters who will enter the stage in these last chapters of our history: the Piarists Sozzi and Cherubini, the Jesuit Pietrasanta and Msgr. Albizzi. But Sozzi stands out, and perhaps for this reason, his whole life was presented by historians in a sinister light. Nevertheless, until his second arrival in Florence in November 1639, he does not appear to have been a reprehensible religious.

At the age of twenty-two he was admitted to the novitiate in Naples, having been ordained priest before donning the Piarist cassock. He worked in various schools in Naples, Rome, Palermo, Poli, and Frascati, always engaged in pastoral work in our churches, without ever teaching.

He was especially appreciated by the Founder at that time because in preparation for the General Chapter of 1637, he was appointed secretary of Visitation and of the Provincial Chapters held in Genoa, Narni, Messina and Naples without provoking any complaints from anyone.

Arriving in Florence in November 1639, he continued his usual duties of worship and confessional in the church of the Piarists. And for his fortune or misfortune he learned in confession of a lurid affair that he himself would later define as “the wickedness of Faustina.” The case was the following: the rich Florentine widow Faustina Mainardi had gathered in her house a small group of girls to educate them and keep them at her expense. The spiritual director and confessor of the house was the canon of the cathedral, Dr. Pandolfo Ricassoli. But what began as an admirable work of charity had become a dirty prostitution business, whose main beneficiaries were Faustina and Pandolfo. Fr. Mario forced the penitent to tell him again about the affair outside the confessional and with witnesses who would listen without being seen. With such testimonies, he denounced the fact to the inquisitor of Florence, Fr. John Muzzarelli, a conventual friar, who in turn brought the scandal to the attention of Msgr. Francis Albizzi, assessor of the Holy Office in Rome. A full-fledged process was instituted against the accused.

Fr. Mario became overnight a kind of hero, a defender of public morality and orthodoxy before the Holy Inquisition in Florence and Rome. In his own Piarist community he began to boast of his rapid rise to prominence, provoking among the religious a certain reaction of annoyance at his threatening attitude, for he seemed to see everywhere cases that could be denounced to the Holy Office. He accused, in fact, his own rector, and Muzzarelli appeared one day unexpectedly in the church of the Piarists and without any consideration made Father Rector leave the confessional and reprimanded him in front of the people, forbidding him to confess from now on. The reason was that the Rector suspected Mario had turned his room into a storeroom. So, he had it searched and distributed among all the people in the house the sweets and pastries he found. And Mario went with his complaints to the Inquisitor.

The most notorious prank occurred at the carnival of 1640. The young fathers made an elderly and naive priest believe that through the mediation of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, Father General had appointed him provincial and before the official communication arrived, they were to celebrate the appointment. The old man got some money for the celebration and the pranksters drew up a solemn proclamation with Latin formulas with which "all were invited to appear with great hunger in the dining room under penalty of excommunication." Mario, after having participated in the feast, had no time to denounce the event to the Inquisitor as an intentional mockery of the Holy Office for the allusions to excommunications and appearances. And the incredible thing is that the inquisitor took things so seriously that he opened a canonical process against the alleged irreverent suspects with the consequent embarrassment of the whole community, which was seen as suspected of heresy before the Holy Office.

The air was becoming unbreathable in that house and the complaints reached Father General, who urged Father Mario to leave Florence and move to Narni. But instead of going there, he went to Rome, taking with him letters of recommendation from Muzzarelli to Albizzi, defending him from all the attacks he had received and urging that his presence was necessary in Florence because of the Faustina process that had been initiated. Albizzi swallowed the bait, ordering Mario to return as a protégé of the Holy Office; he informed Father General of this decision and demanded that Father Mario not be disturbed.

The insolence and threats with which the wrathful Sozzi presented himself again in Florence made him more unbearable. And another storm broke out. It also happened during Carnival. The Rector being absent one day at lunchtime, another priest recited the prayers of blessing and thanksgiving. The novelty of the voice and tone or some other insignificance caused someone to chuckle as the prayers were being recited. When one of the Fathers asked the reason for the hilarity, another one answered: "So what! Is laughing in the dining room already a case of the Holy Office? Strong words were exchanged. Fr. Settimi intervened, trying to calm Fr. Mario down, but the latter gave him a loud slap. The offended one, with dignity, crossed his arms and said: "You are witnesses: Father Mario is excommunicated" (such was the penalty imposed by canon law on anyone who hit a priest). Mario intended to give him a second blow, but a confrere intervened and gave the insolent man a severe beating and, as Mario himself tells it, "to save his life he had to flee alone at midday and take refuge in the house of the Inquisitor of Florence, and his face was so badly damaged that he was unable to leave the house for eight days because of the deformities."²⁸¹ Inquisitor Muzzarelli instituted a process against the culprits and sent them to Rome, where they were summoned by Card. Barberini, who wrote to the Florentine Inquisitor on March 2, 1641, demanding nothing less than that "a new family be sent there, so that Fr. Mario can return home and not be disturbed."²⁸² But three weeks later he writes again to the Inquisitor instructing him: "Tell Fr. Mario to behave and control his bad temper, so that this Sacred Congregation [of the Holy Office] does not have to complain about him."²⁸³

One of those called to Rome was Father Clement Settimi. The General Chapter was held during that month and Calasanz appointed without any fear Fr. Settimi "Provincial of Tuscany for the Chapter", thus honoring him, in spite of having been summoned before the Holy Office. On May 11, Fr. Settimi wrote to Prince Leopold de' Medici: "Our cause has ended with great satisfaction and the Lords of the Sacred Congregation have become aware of the fact that our cause was a mere monkish persecution and not the zeal

281 Eph. Cal. 12 (1963) 401.

282 L. PICANYOL, *Le Scuole Pie...*, p. 135.

283 *Ibid.*, p. 136.

of the Holy Office”.²⁸⁴ It was already the second process initiated in Rome against the adversaries of the protected Fr. Mario. But they had been acquitted for the second time. Mario must have been outraged by this second failure and, eager for revenge, he devised a last denunciation, a truly serious one.

The members of that Florentine community were among the most select of the Pious School, since there were many of Galileo’s disciples, such as Michelini, Settimi, Ambrosi, Morelli, Conti, etc. And with all malice Mario wrote a memorial accusing them all, but especially Michelini and Settimi, of holding, among other theses, that “all things are composed of atoms, and not of matter and form, as Aristotle and all the others say..., and that the earth moves and the sun is still, having in such a firm way this doctrine and others of Mr. Galileo, that they consider that all the others are false...” And of Michelini he said that in defending that doctrine “holding it to be true, although it has been condemned as false, it escaped from his mouth that His Holiness had committed an injustice against Mr. Galileo condemning it”...²⁸⁵ The allegation could not have been more malevolent. Card. Barberini, Secretary of State, ordered the Florentine Inquisitor to demand the Galileians to present themselves in Rome. But only Fr. Septimi showed up. Fr. Michelini was residing at the Court, defended by the Grand Duke, who was opposed to the transfer; Fr. Ambrosi was in Naples and the others had tried to escape from Florence. Cardinal Barberini also asked Muzzarelli to find out the truth of Mario’s accusations against the Galileians.

It has never known what the Florentine inquisitor did and thought about this matter, nor what the Holy Office thought in Rome. We do know the interest that both the Grand Duke of Tuscany and his brother Prince Leopold took in the fate of the accused Fr. Settimi, seeking influence to get him out of trouble.

Father Mario, provincial of Tuscany

On October 20, 1641 the newly appointed provincial of Tuscany, Fr. Jacobo Tocco, had taken office, but a few days later he had to re-

284 Ibid., p. 137.

285 Ibid., pp. 141-143.

sign and leave Florence because of illness. He retired to Carcare and died in June of the following year. The office was therefore vacant. On November 28, 1641 the process against Faustina and her accomplices had concluded with the public abjuration and condemnation to life imprisonment of the accused.

It was time to reward Mario for the good services rendered to the Holy Office. Therefore, in late November or early December, Msgr. Albizzi demanded that Calasanz should appoint Father Mario as Provincial of Tuscany. The objections of the Founder and those of the Cardinal Protector Cesarini, who was also a member of the Holy Tribunal, were not valid. Albizzi's will prevailed. On the other hand, it seemed useless to keep Fr. Settimi in Rome for a longer period of time. He was the only one of the accused Galileians, and his alleged faults must have seemed non-existent or irrelevant, since he was declared free.

Fr. Settimi wrote from Rome to Prince Leopold on December 14: "I have already notified Your Excellency that the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office gave Fr. Mario of St. Francis the Provincialate of Tuscany as a reward for having denounced Faustina... wanting the honors given to such men who reveal to the Tribunal the unworthiness of men to be seen there. And they had no consideration for our Lord Cardinal [Protector] who made great efforts to prevent the said Father from such a dignity, alleging such reasons that should not only prevent him from the Provincialate, but were justly sufficient to imprison him. To these proposals the said Lords replied (as they have repeated to me several times) that they knew the said Father and his qualities very well, but that for the time being nothing else could be done, since it was very important to the S. Congregation that this man be recognized and remunerated... Msgr. Assessor tells me that I have nothing to do with the Holy Office, in faith of which he will give me a patent in which he says that I have not been questioned and this will protect me from anyone who has suspected me".²⁸⁶

With the same date of the previous letter, Calasanz wrote to Fr. Apa, who was in Naples, communicating the news and adding other in-

286 Ibid., pp. 147-148.

teresting details: “You should know that the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office that usually does not give orders without the knowledge of the Pope has charged that Fr. Mario to return to Florence as Provincial... and that he can choose the subjects according to his taste. I have willingly obeyed and have given orders to all those whom the said Father has on the list, that they go to Florence as soon as possible, and to all of them I will command rigorous obedience, so that the mandate of the Sacred Congregation may be fulfilled.”²⁸⁷ The new Provincial was then thirty-three years old. This appointment was received with great astonishment throughout the Pious School. Even today, this interference of the Holy Office, demanding this appointment from the Founder, which was fatal for the Order and for the General, does not seem justifiable. But once the first step was taken, the rest was a necessary consequence to save the honor of the Sacred Congregation....

Mario, backed by the Holy Office, began to act wildly in his province, asking Father General with inexplicable eagerness to send him all the subjects he thought convenient for his plans of renewal, without any consideration for the damage he was causing to the other houses and provinces. And the poor Founder has to constantly excuse himself before his religious when he asks them to go to Florence and obey Father Mario. Thus, as an example, read what he wrote to a priest in Ancona: “Since the authority of Fr. Mario before the Holy Office is so great, it does not seem to me that I should contradict him in anything, especially with regard to the Province of Tuscany.... I have been asked to make no objection whatsoever with regard to the subjects called by the said Father Mario, and you know very well how much I have to punctiliously must obey that Sacred Tribunal...”²⁸⁸ And to Fr. Mario he writes: “I will try to comply with all that Y. R. desires, since it is so ordered by the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office..., since in obeying such a high Tribunal I will not err, but on the contrary, I think I deserve it. I leave the outcome of things in the hands of divine goodness.”²⁸⁹ “I beg you very much to consider the harm that may be caused to some houses by taking away

287 EGC, VIII, I. 3824.

288 *Ibid.*, I. 3966.

289 *Ibid.*, I. 3969.

the necessary subjects in that community, but I am ready to comply with all that the Most Reverend Msgr. wants.”²⁹⁰ And this letter with touching details: “Regarding Fr. Dominic Anthony, although here the school of the poor children is lost, who with a little music that they learned they earned their bread, nevertheless, I send it to you, although he manifested great desire to go to Naples to see his mother, poor old woman, but I did not want to grant it to him, but I ordered him to leave as soon as possible for Florence, where according to the decree of the General Chapter, one cannot have a school of music in another house of the Religion, except for that of Rome.”²⁹¹

In spite of so many changes in personnel, the opposition of the Province to Fr. Mario was general. And the atmosphere of displeasure and insubordination increased. The house of Pisa had been founded in 1641 by the Grand Duke, with direct dealings with Father General, and for this reason both the religious who lived there and the Court of the Grand Duke refused to admit the jurisdiction of Father Mario, claiming to depend directly on Father General. The houses of Fanano, Pieve di Cento and Guglia received with displeasure the visit of Mario, and in an act of rebellion they declared themselves “Province of Lombardy”, naming a provincial of their own and appointing three procurators to defend their cause; one of them had to go to Rome to deal with the General and the Cardinal Protector. The Holy Founder tried to oppose all this atmosphere of revolt. He wrote to everyone instilling obedience, submission and conformity to Father Mario and the Holy Office. And the Cardinal Protector also intervened with the Tuscan Court so that it would reduce the rebels to obedience, as the ambassador of Rome reminded the secretary of the Grand Duke: “His Eminence returns to beg with the greatest entreaty to our Most Serene Lord, that with his usual pity for these poor barefoot [the Piarists] he deigns to procure their good by ordering them to obey”...²⁹²

The attitude of the holy Founder in instilling obedience to Father Mario and to the Holy Office must have been heroic, but there were supporters of the hated and controversial provincial who mali-

290 Ibid., I. 3980.

291 Ibid., I. 3999.

292 L. PICANYOL, *oc.*, p. 158.

ciously began to spread the slander that the whole rebellion in Tuscany was fomented by Father General, and no doubt Father Mario himself proclaimed the same thing. The Founder insisted against this campaign of defamation, as this paragraph reveals in one of the harshest page of his entire collection of letters to Florence: “Regarding the very false and unworthy opinion of my office, which some lousy tongue has invented, that I wish that our people were restless to prove that Fr. Mario is not good for the Provincial, I answer that I wish that all have one heart and one soul in the service of God and that Fr. Mario be a Minister who responds to his office, because from this I will be useful and honorable and otherwise I will be reproached. And to think also that I have these religious of ours as amputated members of the body of Religion and as if they did not exist and that whoever does not rebel against Fr. Mario will be reproached by me, this seems to me unworthy that Your Reverence not only believes it, but even writes it, since neither Your Reverence nor anyone else has ever seen similar things in me, but quite the contrary.”²⁹³ Fr. Mario’s experience in his province must have been bitter in the few months that he visited it. The rebelliousness of Pisa and of the three schools “of Lombardy” surely exasperated him and not trusting to achieve much if he stayed in Tuscany, he returned to Rome to settle things there in his own way.

Via Dolorosa

The chronicler Fr. Caputi tells us that Card. Cesarini, protector of the Order, “had ordered Fr. Joseph [Calasanz] to remove Fr. Mario of Saint Francis out of Rome because of complaints against him, for being unobservant and because he had said I do not know what things against the Cardinal himself”.²⁹⁴ And this refers to 1639, the year in which Mario joined the community of Florentine Galileans. Shortly thereafter he would make the discovery of the case of Faustina. Fr. Settimi told us that Card. Cesarini opposed the appointment of Fr. Mario as provincial, with very powerful reasons. Now, when he arrived in Rome in mid-July 1642, in order to stop the rebellion

293 EGC, VIII. l. 4028.

294 Positio p. 1136.

of his subjects, he tried to meet with the Cardinal Protector so that he could intervene, but -another chronicler, Fr. Bianchi, writes-, "Fr. Mario's impostures gave a great annoyance, among others, to the Cardinal Protector of the Religion, and for this reason he did not want to give him an audience, even though he often begged for it."²⁹⁵

In this situation of rejection and impatience, Mario let slip certain threatening phrases against the cardinal, assuring that he had some documents that could compromise him. These boastings reached the ears of the cardinal, who decided to have the room occupied by Father Mario in San Pantaleo searched. Calasanz trembled, foreseeing the consequences of the search, and wanted to dissuade the Cardinal, but the latter remained firm and on August 7, 1642 sent Count Corona to carry it out. In the sacristy of San Pantaleo, in front of seven religious, the Count demanded that Father Mario, in the name of Cesarini, hand over all the documents he had on him. He then went up to his room and searched it thoroughly. He found nothing of interest, and the only document related to the Holy Office was a statement of accounts of the rebel house in Pisa, signed by the local Inquisitor. In all this, Card. Cesarini was also a member of the Holy Office. Count Corona warned Fr. Mario not to leave the house on pain of excommunication.

It was in the afternoon when these things happened. Two of Fr. Mario's friends, Frs. Stephen Cherubini and Glicerio Ceruti, advised him to inform Msgr. Albizzi as soon as possible. Mario wrote a bill to the Assessor that on the orders of Father General and his Assistants a search had been carried out in his room and documents of the Holy Office had been taken from him. The slander was very serious. But Albizzi believed it without doubting Mario's veracity. The next morning he communicated the fact to Cardinal Nepote, Francesco Barberini, who, outraged by such contempt for the Holy Office, informed Urban VIII. The Pope's wrath naturally fell on the alleged culprits. And with rash shouts he ordered Mons. Albizzi to take them prisoner, putting them in jail, and punish them exemplarily because it was an unpardonable and daring insult against the fearful Tribunal of the Roman Inquisition.

295 Ibid.

Bishop Albizzi sent a picket of henchmen to cordon off the house and church of St. Pantaleo, then he arrived in a carriage, alighted at the door of the church and went to the sacristy. With an authoritative voice he asked where Fr. General was. The “holy old man” was there, sitting on a chair. Hearing that they were asking for him, he stood up and reverently presented himself to the Monsignor, who without extenuation pronounced the ritual formula: “You are a prisoner of the Holy Office.” He then asked about the other members of the General Curia, and was told that there were three Assistants General in the house, one of whom was ill in bed; the fourth was in the novitiate. The secretary was saying Mass, having just finished reading the first reading. He was made to go into the sacristy and take off his vestments. The assistants came down. They all had to go to the palace of the Holy Office and they were: Father General, Joseph Calasanz; the two Assistants, Frs. Peter Casani and John Garcia, and the secretary, Father Jacob Bandoni. All were prisoners. None of the chroniclers - neither Berro, nor Caputi, nor Bianchi, nor the witnesses of the beatification process - insinuates that Msgr. Albizzi gave any reason for that imprisonment, nor that any of the three prisoners asked for explanations.

That August 8th was precisely Friday, the most dramatic Friday of all the long life of Calasanz, who was then in his eighty-fifth year. A Friday, like the one on which Christ walked with the cross on his back along the Via Dolorosa. And the “holy old man” was thinking about it when he went out with his companions through the door of the church, as he expressly revealed to Father Jerome of St. Agnes: “The Servant of God told him that in that trance he had meditated on the path of bitterness that Christ our Lord walked to Calvary, at the time of his sacrosanct Passion.”²⁹⁶ No care was taken to soften the humiliating embarrassment of that venerable old man, known throughout Rome as the Founder of a religious Order, and who filled its streets every day with the endless lines of children coming from his schools. He could have waited until nightfall, or made the ignominious transfer through less frequented lanes, or put them in a poor carriage to avoid the eyes of the curious. Nothing of the

296 BAU, BC, p. 921.

sort. The infamous parade went through Piazza del Pasquino, Via del Governo Vecchio, Via dei Banchi, Ponte Sant'Angelo and Borgo up to the palace of the Holy Office, adjacent to St. Peter's Square. It was then one of the most frequented itineraries, the so-called "Papal Way" that connected the Vatican with St. John Lateran. And time, around noon, under the relentless sun of the Roman August. The prisoners were on foot, bareheaded, surrounded by henchmen, and they were followed in a carriage by Monsignor Assessor with his companions.

The retinue arrived at the Holy Office. The monsignor retired to eat and then to rest, while they were left in a room, still waiting for the reason for their arrest to be explained to them. The chronicles say that the "holy old man", seated on a bench, fell asleep, as if he had a clear conscience. And Berro also tells that from one of the windows of a palace in the "via dolorosa" Mario Sozzi watched the parade with uncontained satisfaction. Berro himself wrote this phrase, referring to the transfer: "This Triumph of the Holy Humility walked among the admiration and astonishment of those present."²⁹⁷

Late in the afternoon, Bishop Albizzi reappeared and rebuked the prisoners with these words: "You will not leave here until the deeds that were taken from Father Mario yesterday afternoon are returned. But their words were not enough. They had to write a bill to Card. Cesarini in which they said, "The General and Assistants of the Pious Schools, forced to go to the Holy Office and detained there for many hours because of the false assumption of Fr. Mario that he had vehemently urged the seizure of the writings, having no other way of proving to the Sacred Congregation the falsity of such a false assumption, except the testimony of your Eminence, we are humbly asking that you declare it true". And in the same paper the Cardinal wrote: "The petitioners have never made any request to me, either by themselves or through others, for the said seizure. Card. Cesarini."²⁹⁸

Albizzi read Cesarini's attestation and must have been dismayed. The whole thing had been an imposing blunder, both his own and that of Card. Barberini and the Pope himself. And one would expect

297 *Ibid.*, p. 915.

298 S. GINER, *El proceso...*, p. 211. nt. 88.

that out of justice and out of humility and evangelical charity the omnipotent Monsignor would apologize to the innocent and humiliated and infamous defendants and that he would vent his anger against the slanderous and malicious Mario Sozzi. Vain hope. No not a hair was touched. On the contrary, he was even given a push upwards. Unbelievable! The one who reacted like a gentleman was Card. Cesarini: he sent his personal carriage to the Holy Office so that in it the poor convicts could be returned home through the same streets they had traveled hours before, imprisoned and among henchmen. The chroniclers add that the Saint begged for the itinerary to be changed and for the curtains to be lowered, but he was not listened to. It was necessary to undo the mess for the sake of justice.

Albizzi's reaction was immediate. This man felt on his shoulders all the imposing weight of the Holy Office, whose honor had to be defended, although in reality what he was defending was his own personal honor, humiliated this time by his own mistake and offended by the magnanimous gesture of Card. Cesarini. And he still had the meanness to condemn his victims to remain for fifteen days locked up in San Pantaleo, without leaving the house at all.

The great tribulacion

Suspension of Superior General

As soon as he arrived home, Father General took up his pen and wrote to Cardinal Nepote, Francis Barberini: “The General of the Pious Schools with all humility and truth exposes to Your Eminence that in the matter of the deeds taken from Father Mario of St. Francis, neither the said General nor his Assistants nor any other have had any fault, everything having been of the initiative of his Eminence Protector. However, all are ready to execute with punctuality whatever will be ordered by Your Eminence or by any Minister of the Sacred Tribunal of the Holy Office...”²⁹⁹ But neither this declaration, nor the immediately preceding one, made by the same Cardinal Protector, succeeded in placating the spirits of Albizzi, of Barberini, nor of the Pope. The word of the slanderous malign Sozzi or the offended pride of Albizzi carried more weight. In fact, on Thursday, August 14, there was a Congregation of the Holy Office in the Quirinal, presided over by Urban VIII, in which the matter of the theft of documents from Father Mario and the consequent arrest of the General and his Assistants was discussed. And notwithstanding the clarifications of Cesarini and Calasanz, the following was decreed:

“1º [The Pope] approves everything done by the Assessor [Albizzi] with the persons of the General and Assistants.

2º He orders to inform the said Father General and Assistants and others that Fr. Mario of St. Francis, Provincial of the Province of Tuscany, is under the protection and jurisdiction of the Sacred Congregation and that neither the said General nor

299 Positio p. 1170.

the said Assistants or ministers of the said Religion have any jurisdiction over his person until His Holiness or the Sacred Congregation provides otherwise, and, as far as necessary, H. H. again totally exempts him from jurisdiction of the said Father General.

3° If, up to now, some processes have been made against Father Mario by Father General, His Holiness commands that they be handed over to the Sacred Congregation or to the Most Reverend Assessor.

4° His Holiness also commands Father General and his Assistants, in virtue of holy obedience and under pain of the indignation of His Holiness and the Sacred Congregation, to see to it absolutely that the superiors and religious of the houses of the province Tuscany will come and obey Fr. Mario's mandates, otherwise the Sacred Congregation will proceed against those who disobey them.

5° His Holiness orders that henceforth no houses be received or opened or founded in any part of Christendom, except with the permission of His Holiness and the Sacred Congregation.

6° His Holiness exempts Father General and his Assistants from the precept of not leaving the house of St. Pantaleo".³⁰⁰

This is the text known until now by all historians, who could not explain why Card. Cesarini did anything, neither in this session nor in all the long Calvary that awaited Calasanz and his Order. His last intervention was to lend his carriage and to demand that the General and his companions be transferred to his house from the Holy Office. After this hasty gesture - with which he publicly and ostentatiously acknowledged the error committed by Albizzi, the Cardinal Secretary of State and the Pope himself - Cesarini disappeared from the scene, shutting himself up in a mysterious silence. The explanation can be found in the original document, recently published. Four times the name of Card. Cesarini appears crossed out. Father Mario was expressly disassociated from his jurisdiction, and from that of Fr. General.³⁰¹ Cesarini was not present at this session, since the first crossing out says that "it is communicated to the Most Reverend Card. Card. Cesarini Protector..." that he no longer

300 Ibid. pp. 1188-1189.

301 Ibid., nts. 278-281; EC, VI, p. 3070-3071.

had any jurisdiction over Fr... The erasures must have been made with a view to the document that was given to Calasanz.

But the Cardinal was personally informed that in this whole matter his jurisdiction ceased. And the cardinal obeyed with resignation. The Order was left, therefore, without an official protector in these very serious events, in which it needed him more than ever.

This decree is still extremely strange, to say the least, and shameful, because without taking into account the truth of the facts, it ratifies the injustice committed by Msgr. Assessor against the victims. Their innocence is silenced and it exalts the person of the calumniator Sozzi, detaching him from the jurisdiction of the Order and from his cardinal protector. Fr. General was forced to impose the authority of Mario in the province of Tuscany.

With a heroic spirit of obedience, the General and his Assistants signed a decree for the Province of Tuscany on August 30 in which they said: "The Most Rev. Commissary of the Holy Office has conveyed the enclosed Decree, made by the Sacred Congregation. We in execution and prompt obedience to the same, hereby order and command you in virtue of holy obedience to recognize Fr. Mario of St. Francis as the true Provincial of that Province of Tuscany and to obey his orders without any reply, notwithstanding any pretext to the contrary..."³⁰² And Calasanz continued inculcating the same in his personal letters. But the Grand Duke of Tuscany demanded the opposite, as the Ducal Commissioner of Pisa wrote to the Florentine court: "I have communicated to these Fathers of the Pious Schools what Your Excellency commands me by order of His Most Serene Highness not to comply with the orders coming from Rome and that they should not receive the Superiors who arrive without first notifying His Most Serene Highness through me... and they have answered that they are willing to obey."³⁰³ In all this cumbersome affair, the royalist attitude of the Court appears clearly. It commands and orders in ecclesiastical matters and is obeyed by all, even by the Florentine Inquisition, although the trial of Faustina was carried out behind the Grand Duke's back.

302 Positio p. 1171.

303 L. Picanyol, *oc.*, p. 163.

The situation of the Piarists of Pisa was critical in the face of the contrary orders of the Grand Duke on the one hand and of the General and the Holy Office of Rome on the other. But in mid-September, the Grand Duke “leaves them free to accept or reject the orders received, provided that on the same day they give notice of what is happening.”³⁰⁴ What he was not willing to consent to was the presence of Father Mario in Tuscany. But at the beginning of November of that year of 1642, trusting in the protection of Albizzi and the Holy Office, the arrogant Provincial presented himself in Florence.

And immediately the Grand Duke intimidated him to banish him from his States. Mario himself will later say that “this was done to him under the pretext that he was an unfaithful vassal, cunning, false spy and rebellious to his Prince, alleging that H. M. S. H. wants to be master and lord in his State of his religious...” He will add the slanderous accusation: “Father Mario was forced to obey, being mocked, shamed, reviled and infamous, being all done with the consent of His Eminence Protector, Father General and Assistants...”³⁰⁵.

Monsignor Albizzi had done everything possible so that Father Mario would be received and obeyed in Tuscany. On November 8, the Duke’s ambassador in Rome wrote to the Florentine court that Msgr. Albizzi had requested that His Highness order the Fathers of the house of Pisa to receive Father Mario, and he asked him to do so not only because the said Father bore orders from the Holy Office, “but also because, being his particular friend, he very much wishes to give him this satisfaction.”³⁰⁶ But he could not give it. The Grand Duke did not back down and Father Mario was banished. Albizzi still tried to get the banishment of “his friend” lifted, and made the first sinister threat, as the Florentine ambassador communicated on November 17: “Msgr. Albizzi, Assessor of the Holy Office, communicates to me once again that the banishment of Father Mario from the Pious Schools already foresees the total ruin of his Religion. Because the Congregation of the Holy Office, having been good enough to remove him from the envy of his persecutors

304 Ibid., p. 164.

305 Ibid., p. 162.

306 Ibid., p. 166.

who were bothering him for having revealed the abominable sect of Faustina, is now determined to support him for its own dignity and reputation. If He cannot achieve this with the return of grace of Your Highness and with his return to his most happy states, he will achieve it with the destruction of the Order.”³⁰⁷ This fateful threat would become a reality for the omnipotent Monsignor.

Mario returned to Rome and appealed to Msgr. Albizzi to obtain his return to Florence, but in spite of the threats of the aggrieved Monsignor, nothing came of it. Fr. Mario, disillusioned and vengeful, sought an honorary compensation by directly attacking Calasanz, accusing him of frequent diplomatic epistolary correspondence with the Barberini’s adversaries, that is, the Medici of Florence, engaged precisely in those years in the so-called “Castro War”. He also propagated that the old general’s advanced age made him unfit to continue governing the Order. And Msgr. Albizzi, deceived again, obtained from Urban VIII a Brief by which, dated December 30, 1642, Mario was named Vicar General of the Order, but the appointment was to be kept secret for a time. Nevertheless, the news soon leaked out, and echoing it, Calasanz communicated it in a letter to Florence on January 10, 1643 with these simple words: “I suppose that others with more details will write about the Brief that Father Mario has obtained as Vicar General of the Religion, which, when it is communicated to us, we will receive and obey it immediately.”³⁰⁸

The appointment, although secret, was interpreted by many as a simple honorific title, and letters with the titles “Most Reverend” and “Vicar General” reached Mario’s hands before the Brief was published, all of which he considered as a mockery against his person and against the Holy Office, accusing Father General of this campaign of dishonor and as the ring leader of this campaign. He expressly said: “And this has happened because Fr. General has written and published throughout the whole Religion that Fr. Mario has been named Vicar General by the Pope, to irritate tempers even more.”³⁰⁹ Embittered by this new humiliation, he wrote the so-

307 Ibid., p. 167.

308 EGC, VIII, I. 4082.

309 Positio p. 1165.

called Slanderous Memorandum. He presented himself as an innocent victim, unjustly persecuted and slandered since he discovered the Faustina affair, and he shamelessly and openly accused Fr. General, Cardinal Cesarini and all his adversaries, making common cause of his own honor with that of Msgr. Albizzi and that of the Holy Office.³¹⁰ This monstrosity was presented to the Congregation of the Holy Office and read and discussed in the session of January 15, 1643, in the presence of Urban VIII. The unfortunate thing was that it was accepted as unquestionable truth. As a result, a very serious decree was issued. The following are the essential points:

1. To appoint a general Apostolic Visitor as soon as possible for the whole Order.
2. To give Fr. Mario the supreme government of the Order as first Assistant, together with the other three that would be named and with the Apostolic Visitor.
3. That from now on no new houses were to be founded and no more novices were to be admitted without the license of the Supreme Pontiff and the Holy Office.
4. That Calasanz was suspended from his office of General, as well as his four Assistants.³¹¹

With this decree, Fr. Mario achieved much more than with the previous appointment of Vicar General, and he reached the apex of power and the height of his ambitions thanks to the support and intrigues of his friend, the advisor of the Holy Office, Msgr. Albizzi. And once again the innocent Fr. General was condemned, without giving him the opportunity to defend himself.

The Apostolic Visitation

On March 4, 1643, Msgr. Emil Altieri, Vicegerent of Rome, went to San Pantaleo to officially communicate the General Curia the dispositions of the Decree of the Holy Office of January 15, 1643. He also gave the name of the Apostolic Visitor, Fr. Augustine Ubald-

310 Ibid., pp. 1157-1166.

311 Ibid., pp. 1189-1190.

ini, a Somaschan, whose Brief of appointment was signed on the 7th of the same month. The early chroniclers point out the serenity of spirit with which the old Founder received this news, the kindness with which he treated the Vicegerent and the immediate dispositions given to the Assistants and the General Procurator to abstain from any interference in the government.

The new assistants, except for Fr. Mario, were residing outside of Rome, so the Apostolic Visitor waited for them to arrive before taking official possession of his office, as he did on March 22nd. Summarizing the Memoirs of Berro and Caputi, Fr. Bau writes that the Visitor, “having completed the usual formalities, unexpectedly asked for the keys of Fr. Mario’s room and with his own secretary, Fr. Caracciolo, entered and examined all that was kept in it by Fr. Mario. He was shocked by the amount of money, pastries, jams, sweets and drinks found, as well as gloves, pins, combs, braids, embroidery, lace, elegant rosaries, expensive objects of devotion, etc. He made an inventory of all this and condole with Father General and Father Casani, and communicated everything to the Monsignor Assessor. The personal visitation was begun by the Holy Founder and his audience lasted more than four hours. The Visitor was impressed by the lucidity, memory and logic of his discourse, far superior to what could be expected from such an advanced eighty years old. I was even more impressed by the prudence and holiness that all his answers transpired.”³¹²

The unexpected visit and search of Fr. Mario’s room was a daring blow. The detailed account of the whole Vanity Fair must not have sat very well with Msgr. Albizzi. It was like to unmask once again the true face of his favored soul-Friend. There was, however, no recrimination or adequate penalties against the already recidivist and capricious favorite of the Holy Office. The reprisals against the reckless Visitor would soon follow.

Everybody knew that there were serious problems to be solved in the Order, and that since the rise of Marius the situation had worsened a lot. Calasanz considered that the work of the Visitor should consist above all in fixing the disorders provoked by Mario. In fact he said in

312 BAU, BC, p. 964.

his letters: "... to calm some disturbances born in these parts of our Religion, His Holiness has deigned to give us an Apostolic Visitor of the Somascan Religion; a religious of many qualities, who I hope will calm everything..."; "perhaps you have heard that the Pope has given us an Apostolic Visitor to calm the disturbances caused by Fr. Mario..."³¹³. But Fr. Mario thought nothing less than to become a kind of reformer of the Order, as he expressed himself in a letter to Fr. Berro: "For a long time I have desired that our Religion be freed from so many requests that hindered it in the service of God, of Religion itself and of our neighbor, and what broke my heart the most was to see how little Spirit reigned in common and in particular, oppressing the spirits in such a way that it was concluded that it was necessary to remove it from the world, because it was of no use to the Holy Church. Although the Institute was and is holy and good, it was not well governed. Now, with many fatigues I hope that my desires will be fulfilled, which are to give form to Religion, since it has never been given, and even to obtain what has not been possible to obtain in twenty years of Pontificates, which is the establishment of our Religion. And on the occasion of this Visit, arrangements will be made and everything will be accommodated through the Mercy of God."³¹⁴

Fr. Ubaldini carried out the visitation of the house of St. Pantaleo with great attention to detail, signing on April 13th two decrees of prescriptions for that community. He probably also made a detailed report to the Holy Office on his impressions as Visitor. He was then to continue the visitation of the other houses of Rome and of the Order, but neither Mario nor Albizzi must have been satisfied with his attitudes of declared respect and consideration for the suspended General and his former Assistants, nor with the preliminary search of Mario's room, nor with his way of conceiving and approaching the Visitation, nor with other irritating details. Traditional biographers said that the Somascan Visitor understood that he had not been called to be an impartial judge, but rather to serve as a toy in the hands of Albizzi and Sozzi, as an executioner of innocents. And after writing his report, he presented his resignation, which was accepted on the spot. But the documentation forces us to admit the more seri-

313 EGC. VIII. l. 4096 and 4103.

314 EC. p. 2539.

ous version that Mario and Albizzi succeeded in having Fr. Ubaldini removed from his position as Visitor and in his place was appointed the Jesuit Father Silvester Pietrasanta.³¹⁵ Ubaldini's work was over.

On May 9, 1643, the Pope signed the Brief appointing the new Visitor, and that same day, with unusual speed, he presented himself at San Pantaleo to take office, together with the four previous assistants. Thus, another of the protagonists of this drama entered the scene, who, although a very worthy member of the Society of Jesus and endowed with undeniable qualities and merits, did not have enough foresight to discover the intrigues and malevolence of Sozzi and Albizzi, and became a flexible and complacent instrument in their hands, without diminishing his responsibility and conscious collaboration in the final disaster.

Pietrasanta's task was twofold: to visit the Order and to govern it together with the four assistants. The first general impressions in the whole Order before the appointment of the Jesuit were favorable and hopeful, although there were those who spoke from the beginning that the new Visitor had intentions of destroying the Religion.

The houses in Rome were personally visited by Fr. Pietrasanta, although probably only about thirty religious out of the hundred or so were questioned. Most of the religious were repulsed by having to make their sworn declarations in the presence of Fr. Mario and the secretary of the visitation, Fr. Ridolfi. He was a close friend and protégé of Sozzi, a shady, devious individual whose evil influence on the entire apostolic visitation and on the very serious events of the time made him one of the main culprits. Fr. Gavotti and the Provincial of Naples were appointed to visit the other houses in Italy. They had been chosen expressly by Sozzi, because they were faithful friends, but they became odious, also because of their personal extravagances. The houses of Central Europe were not officially visited.

By mid-September, Pietrasanta had enough information to present his first official report of the Visitation to the "Special Congregation" of Cardinals, appointed in mid-August expressly to deal with the affairs of the Pious Schools, and whose brain director was Msgr. Albizzi.

315 Archivum 3 (1978) 61-66.

As for the work of government, during the first month it was normal, with periodic meetings for appointments and the solution of problems that arose. Mario's despotic way of proceeding aroused the protests of the other three assistants, who tried to resign. Pietrasanta was able to contain the situation.

But a month later, new intemperance on the part of the first assistant provoked another angry reaction.

He had appointed two of his friends as provincial of Rome and rector of San Pantaleo before discussing the matter with the other assistants. Pietrasanta rebuked them as "rebels and disobedient to the Holy Office" for contradicting Father Mario. The three of them presented their resignation, which was also accepted verbally, leaving the supreme government of the Order in the hands of Mario and Pietrasanta.

Government under Mario and Cherubini

It would be enough what has been said so far - forcibly summarized for the exigencies of this publication - to execrate the memory of this man, Mario, unworthy of so many favors received from the Holy Office and from his scheming advisor. But there is more. After having eliminated the participation of the other Assistants in the government of the Order, and leaving the reins of power to him and to his co-conspirator Fr. Pietrasanta, Mario revealed the measure of his lowliness of soul with his despotic attitude towards the elderly and venerable Founder. He was pleased to see the "holy old man" ask for his blessing on his knees every time he left the house. He intercepted, opened, removed and delayed the letters he wrote and those that came to him from outside, telling him so in mockery. He took away his secretary, indispensable for his frequent correspondence. He took away the public and private books of the Order, tearing even one in which were written down all the professions made since the time of the foundation. He snatched from him the reliquary in which was kept the heart of the Venerable Glycerio Landriani, whose cause of beatification was introduced. He forbade the religious to go to his room and mortified and even drove away from Rome the disobedient ones...

Let us add two more scenes, the first written by Fr. Berro and the second due to Br. Laurence Ferrari, very faithful servant of the old

Founder and witness of the facts who testified under oath in the process of beatification. Fr. Berro wrote: "A Prince sent him about one hundred escudos so that he could attend to his defense, generously offering him as many more as he needed. Our Venerable Founder and General thanked His Excellency for the donation and his offer. He then brought all the money to Fr. Mario, who took it all with cheerful avarice and did not offer him a single penny. The old saint, humiliating himself, went so far as to say to him: 'Some of our people from outside Rome have asked me for holy cards; would you like to give me something to buy them some?... And Fr. Mario answered generously: 'Take some.' And one by one he dropped a few coins into his hand, counting them aloud: one, two, three, four, and so on. When he reached 25, the sublime beggar said: 'Enough'. And without offering him even one more, Father Mario dismissed him..."³¹⁶

And this is the scene described by Br. Laurence: "I remember that once letters had come from the Rectors of the houses outside Rome and Fr. Mario was worried with the Assistants. He went to look for the General and spoke to him with disrespectful words. 'Old fool,' he said to him, 'old fool; they do not want to obey me and you do not dominate them. I have brought the Order to ruin and I will not rest until I have torn it up by the roots'. And he said still more words of anger. Then Father General, with all meekness answered him: 'Those superiors are men that you have chosen. I did not give them to you. Beware of God's punishment for the harm you do to Religion. Fear that his wrath will overtake you too soon'. And Father Mario left. This conversation took place in the oratory, next to Father General's room. They were walking around outside. I was inside and heard everything. And I could hear it very well because they spoke loudly. And this was two months before Father Mario died. And Fr. General came back to the room very sad and said: 'God forgive him. He alone will save us'. And fifteen days later, the famous leprosy began to affect Fr. Mario".³¹⁷

On April 7 of that year of 1643, Mario had turned thirty-five years old. Who would have thought that two months after that conversation with the Holy Founder, a terrible death awaited him! And so it

316 BAU, BC, p. 979.

317 Ibid., pp. 981-982.

was. At the end of that summer he fell ill. And the shame of that humiliating illness, more than the pain itself, forced him into absolute seclusion. He asked to be transferred to Collegio Nazareno. It was said that he had the “fire of St. Antony” or leprosy, with all the biblical meaning of God’s punishment. Others called it “french maldy”, that is, syphilis.... The remedies that were applied to him were all useless, but in their crudeness they give us one more nuance of that unforeseen tragedy. He was given viperato wine, that is, spiced with viper’s flesh and even fried round slices of the same repugnant ophidian. He was subjected to vapors of burning sulfur, enclosing him in a sort of portable sauna from which only the head was out. They put the whole body at the mercy of the caustic effects of the sulfur to dry his pustules and tumors. His body was introduced into the abdominal cavity of a cow that had just been cut open, which was rapidly stitched up until the cold of death killed its vital heat. .. All to no avail. Father Mario was dying.

Twice Calasanz tried to see the sick man, but they did not allow. And concerned more for his soul than for his body, he sent Fr. Casani to assist him, as he did, although it is not known what this assistance consisted of. It was said that the dying man asked Father Casani to take this message to the Founder: “Tell Father General that if I have offended him, please excuse me.” Those who stood guard in those fateful days were Cherubini and Ridolfi, his faithful friends until the last moment. They were in charge of informing Msgr. Albizzi and Fr. Pietrasanta, with whom Fr. Mario was very interested in speaking. He begged them both to appoint Fr. Cherubini as his successor in the government of the Order. And they promised him. On November 10, 1643, he died. His body was transferred to the church of St. Pantaleo, where it was buried almost secretly, without being exposed to the public, as he himself had ordered. Pietrasanta had a letter read at San Pantaleo written the same day by Msgr. Albizzi, officially communicating that the cardinals of the Special Commission for the affairs of the Pious Schools had appointed “for the government of the aforementioned Religion” Fr. Stephen Cherubini, clarifying that “until another provision is made by Their Eminences it was given to Fr. Stephen full authority and power to govern the said Religion..., together with Y. P. and absolutely without any intervention of Fr. General whose power is still in suspense at the pleasure of His Holiness and without intervention of the old or new

Assistants.”³¹⁸ The pontifical Brief for this appointment, with which the decision of the cardinals was confirmed, did not come out until April 1644, and was dated November 11, 1643. It led to the suspicion that the whole thing had been an imbroglio concocted by Albizzi and Pietrasanta.

The Visitor did not waste time to communicate the news to all the houses. On the same day, November 11th, he wrote a circular letter notifying both the death of Mario and the appointment of Cherubini. The indignation over the latter was general. It was a shameful affront for the whole Order to impose the person of Fr. Cherubini as superior general. His unworthiness was known to all. Being rector of the Neapolitan school in La Duchesca, in 1630, he gave in more than once to his morbid inclinations as a pederast, with the danger of serious scandal and disrepute of the school. When Calasanz was warned of the affair, he took him out of Naples and called him to Rome, giving him an honorary position to conceal his possible discredit “out of respect for the honor of his family”, as Calasanz would expressly say, given the esteem and high regard that his own father, Laertius, and his brother Flavio enjoyed in the Roman curia. But he ordered Fr. Provincial to secretly gather official information of the fact and send it to him. Unfortunately, the report ended up in the hands of Cherubini, who showed it to his brother Flavio. “Seeing the case discovered,” says Calasanz, “and to avoid greater inconveniences if such a matter were divulged, I wrote a deed out of respect for his house, in which I declared that the said process should not bother in any way the said Father Stephen, or I put something similar; but in no way did I affirm that the content of the aforementioned process was false.”³¹⁹

That, then, was Albizzi’s last affronting move! And to prevent that hasty and dishonorable appointment from being confirmed by pontifical Brief, memoranda began to rain down on the heads of the cardinals of the Special Congregation, all protesting against the manifest unworthiness of Fr. Cherubini. They were collective memoranda, signed by entire communities, including that of St. Pantaleo, with 43 signatures headed by that of the Founder himself, requesting

318 SÁNTHA, *Ensayos* p. 226.

319 BAU, BC, pp. 998-999.

“not allow Father Stephen of the Angels to be elected or confirmed... if reports of his life and customs are not first taken... as they assure that they will swear that the above-mentioned Father is unworthy of such office.”³²⁰ The Founder made an affidavit in this regard, which we have quoted in part above, declaring the whole scabrous affair. But, incredibly, it was all to no avail. Albizzi, Pietrasanta and the Special Congregation allowed the election to be confirmed by Pontifical Brief. The official protection for Fr. Mario was deplorable during his lifetime. But what sense did this new protection of the newcomer Cherubini against the almost unanimous opinion of the whole Order and knowing his personal unworthiness?

A year later, at the carnival of 1645, despite the express prohibitions against religious attending the parades, Fr. Cherubini, together with five other cronies, among them Frs. Ridolfi and Gavotti, rented a carriage. In masked costume they took part in the revelry. But misfortune intervened. They clash with other carriages and the axle of their own vehicle broke, and amidst the shouting and uproar of the onlookers, their masks were removed, leaving them ashamed. When Calasanz found out, did what he could so that this new embarrassing adventure did not reach the ears of the Cardinal’s Commission to save the honor of the Order. There were also serious suspicions of squandering thousands of escudos on account of the prodigality and entanglements of Cherubini during his mandate as Superior General. Worse still, having joined the Collegio Nazareno after being superior, he had to be forcibly transferred to Frascati for having relapsed into his old sin of pederasty.

And Albizzi and Pietrasanta placed the supreme authority of the Order in the hands of this man, worthy successor of Mario.

The Commission of Cardinals: The first two sessions

In mid-August or early September 1643, Urban VIII appointed a Special Commission to solve the problems of the Pious Schools, taking into account the results of the Apostolic Visitation in progress. It was formed by Cardinals Julius Roma, Bernardino Spada,

320 EGC, IX, p. 160.

Lelio Falconieri, Marcio Ginetti and John Baptist Pamfili, and Monsignors Francesco Albizzi and Francesco Paolucci. Cardinals Roma and Spada were opposed to the instruction of the poor, convinced that culture would make the popular class disappear. In those hands were the trades and servitudes of that society. Moreover, Card. Roma was also a declared adversary of the religious orders, whose existence he believed detrimental to the Church. Cardinals Ginetti, Falconieri and Paolucci were staunch defenders of the Pious Schools in all the sessions. Card. Pamfili, for reasons unknown to us, never attended the meetings, and when he was later elected Pope (Innocent X) he drastically decided on the fatal solution, imposing his will on the Commission. Albizzi was appointed secretary of the Commission, and not Paolucci, as was believed until recently. It was probably due to Albizzi the creation of this Commission. With it the matter was detached from the Holy Office, but not from the direct influence and intrigues of the Assessor. The threads of the bundle remained in his hands.

Before the pontifical commission had its first official session, it came to Calasanz' knowledge that it would deal with nothing less than the extinction of the Order or opportune remedies to save it. And he composed a long memorandum trying to stop the blow. Regarding the extinction, he said that not being aware, by God's mercy, that there were such faults that deserved such a grave resolution. He asked that they listen to the old and new assistants and to the provincials, "and not finding anything relevant, to exempt it from the indictment for which it would deserve this punishment."³²¹ As for the remedies, the Founder wrote down twelve adequate provisions.³²² This memorandum of Calasanz was accompanied by another one composed by his former assistants. But along with them came another deplorable memorandum, composed by Cherubini. He was then General Procurator, and with malicious denunciations of disorders and discredit of the corporation, made him conclude that "things have reached such a state that it is necessary to give it adequate remedies or else to extinguish it so that it does not harm the Church."³²³

321 *Positio*, pp. 1235-1236.

322 *EC*, pp. 2110-2113.

323 *Positio*, p. 1234.

The most important document, however, was the official report of the Visitor, Father Pietrasanta. He loyally acknowledged that there were “many members who were entirely healthy. The General, like other religious, were of very notable virtue and of no ordinary goodness”. But there were others who continued to disturb the Order with their endless claims of nullity of vows or rights of being cleric and priest. These disturbances came from the lack of selection and adequate formation of novices. Added to this was the extreme austerity of life, which was in conflict with the extreme fatigue demanded by the ministry itself. For this reason, “I see no better remedy, -he said- than to open the doors and let the putrid and infectious blood out, that is to say, to give freedom to those who do not like it to leave, leaving the good and voluntary ones”. And this would be easily done taking into account that the Order, according to the opinion of some theologians, is not a true canonical religion and, therefore, all the professions are null and void, because the Brief of Gregory XV confirming the Institute and approving the Constitutions was null and void.³²⁴

On October 1, 1643, the Commission of Cardinals met and, after reading the memoranda, a single point was put to a vote: whether the Order should be extinguished. Cardinals Falconieri and Gineti and Monsignors Albizzi and Paolucci voted no, while Cardinals Roma and Spada voted yes. Albizzi made it clear that he was in favor of the reduction to a Congregation. The disparity of votes caused them to continue discussing afterwards. They arrived at the practical conclusion that the Briefs of Gregory XV and other similar ones should be examined to ascertain the legitimacy of the existence of the Order of the Pious Schools³²⁵.

The appointment of Fr. Cherubini as superior general of the whole Order, following the death of Fr. Mario Sozzi, unleashed a storm of criticism and memoranda to the Roman Curia. Not only revealing the indignities of the new elected, but also expressly accusing Fr. Pietrasanta of seeking the destruction of the Order, preventing the reintegration of the old Father General and seeking a pontifical Brief to confirm Cherubini as vicar general. The closed atmosphere

324 EGC, IX, pp. 125-134.

325 Ibid., pp. 134-135.

of repudiation and protests exacerbated the Visitor, who with a circular letter to the whole Order, signed on February 7, 1644, tried to defend himself and also Fr. Cherubini. In this circular, between accusations and threats, he left the person of Fr. General untouched. "He is a very good religious with the best intentions and the most upstanding habits."³²⁶ This circular was widely refuted, especially by two famous "answers", one coming from the house of St. Pantaleo and the other from the house of Nikolsburg. It is not amazing then that Fr. Pietrasanta profoundly excited by so many attacks wrote his second report for the second session of the Pontifical Commission, which met on March 10 of that same year 1644. This second report has been described as a "sinister document" by some biographers of Calasanz, and it deserves the qualification. Forgetting what he had said in his first report, he unscrupulously charged the inks against the whole Order and against the Holy General, accusing them all particularly of being disobedient and refractory to the Holy See and to its Tribunals and Congregations. He said about the Order that Cardinal Barberini was right in affirming that "this Religion has grown and expanded always disobeying, and defying the Apostolic See..." And of Father General he says that "although he is an excellent religious and of good intention, he does not know how to abstain during the suspension of his office from exercising it, even in things forbidden by the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office..."³²⁷

It is regrettable that precisely this "sinister document", in which calumny is mixed with malicious insinuation, half-truths and sarcasm, proposes solutions that will be definitively adopted, such as reducing the Order to a Congregation similar to the Oratory of St. Philip Neri. No solemn vows, no Superior General, nor Provincials, nor Assistants, no visitators, with independent houses under the authority of the local ordinary.

In the session of March 10, having clarified the question of the validity of the Pontifical Briefs, which had been suspended in the session of October 1, Falconieri, Ginetti and Paolucci voted for the continua-

326 *Ibid.*, p. 168.

327 *Ibid.*, pp. 178-179. We have serious doubts that this "sinister document" is from Pietrasanta, as has been said until today, and we believe that its author was Albizzi.

tion of the Pious Schools as a religion, duly moderating the extreme austerity. Spada, Roma and Albizzi advocated the reduction to a Congregation of simple vows, submitted to the bishops. The strange thing is that, at the end of the minutes Fr. Pietrasanta advocated for the continuity of the Pious Schools as a Religion. Probably his relationship was discussed and controversial until he was convinced that his insinuations or advices were not conclusive. And in view of the discrepancy of opinions or tie of votes, the Pope was asked to decide himself or to add another member to the Commission.

The third session: Ephemeral joys

Things were hopelessly slow, due in part to the fact that the members of this Commission were also members of other Commissions, in addition to the ordinary problems of the Congregations or Dicasteria to which they belonged. To complicate matters further, on July 29, 1644, Pope Urban VIII died, and on September 15, Innocent X was elected. In November Calasanz tried a radical tactic. He asked the Pope to entrust the affair of the Pious Schools to Cardinal Ginetti and some other friendly Monsignor, or at least that it should pass to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars (which would have been the logical thing to do). Card. Ginetti was the Prefect of this Congregation. But Pietrasanta and Cherubini, for their part, also asked the Pope to keep the same Commission. The Pope handed the pleas to Albizzi, who naturally granted the request of Frs. Pietrasanta and Cherubini, rejecting that of Calasanz. Cardinals Falconieri and Pamfili, now Innocent X, were replaced by Colonna and Alfonso de la Cueva, although the former never attended the sessions. The rest remained the same.

Since the middle of 1643 the Piarists of Poland had managed to interest in the fate of the Order both King Ladislaus IV and Duke George Ossolinski, chancellor of the kingdom, who made particular use of their representatives at the Roman Court to send their pleas and their letters to the Pope and to various influential cardinals. The same was obtained from the Court of the Grand Duke of Tuscany. These diplomatic interventions became urgent after the election of the new Pope. To these were added the memoranda coming from San Pantaleo, particularly valuable and rich in contents. The three were addressed respectively to Cardinals Roma, Spada and another anonymous one, who was probably Panziroli, Secretary of State and very adverse to the

Pious Schools, as Fr. Berro says: “This man of so much politics and of such a prominent position before the Pope had been a student of the Jesuits and had an extraordinary grudge against our Institute, considering it useless in the Church, since the Jesuits were already teaching, and also harmful because it taught the poor.”³²⁸ In the last memorial, Calasanz wrote: “The poor must not be abandoned ... since they too have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ and so dear to His Lordship that he said he was sent to the world by his eternal Father to teach them, “Evangelizare pauperibus misit me”. From which we can deduce how far from Christian piety and the sentiment of Christ is the policy that teaches that it is harmful to society to teach the poor because, it is said, it diverts them from the mechanical arts...”³²⁹ From this paragraph and from the many letters written by Calasanz during these anxieties, it is clear that the struggle for the survival of the Pious Schools was also a struggle for the right of the poor to education and even for the freedom of teaching against the monopoly of the Jesuits.

On December 28, 1644, Calasanz managed to be received by the Pope, and he described this audience as “most pleasant”, adding that the Pontiff told him: “There is nothing against you.”³³⁰

On July 17, 1645, the third session of the Commission of Cardinals was held. In the long year that separated it from the second, held on March 10, 1644, the diplomatic offensive of Poland and Tuscany and other valuable interventions (such as that of the former collaborator of Calasanz and man of the curia, Bernardino Panicola, bishop of Ravello) radically changed the situation. The most spectacular change was that of Fr. Pietrasanta, who in his official report appears as a lawyer defending the Order and its Founder. There is not a single accusation or complaint in all of it. He considers resolved juridically the problems of the complainants and pretenders; “by the singular mercy of God, Our Lord, in the Religion there has not occurred any serious case of inobservance or public disorder..., nor has any notable excess reached my ears, either in grave harm to charity or in detriment to the three essen-

328 BAU, BC, p. 1099.

329 Positio, pp. 1312-1313.

330 EGC, VIII, l. 4250 and 4400.

tial vows of the Religion”.³³¹ He believes that to reduce the Order to a Congregation of simple vows would be to destroy it; they have the right to teach humanities and rhetoric and not limit themselves to reading, writing and arithmetic; to teach the poor is to render a great service to society.... He also asks that they may found new houses wherever necessary and admit novices, leaving aside the prohibitions of the Holy Office; that the General be reinstated in his functions, giving him a vicar in view of “his eighty-eight years of age”; that the rigor of the Constitutions be moderated and then confirmed by the Holy See....

In spite of the fact that this splendid report of the Jesuit Visitor was read in public session, Cardinals Roma and Spada continued stubbornly asking for the total extinction of the Order, while Ginetti and Cueva opposed it. Bishop Paolucci, relying on the report of Pietrasanta, made a magnificent peroration against extinction, defending the reinstatement of the General, with reforms of the government and moderation of the Constitutions, and other similar details. These proposals “were approved by the Most Rev. Albizzi and then by all the others and so it was requested.”³³² This unanimity of votes was an absolute triumph, a solemn declaration of the total innocence of Calasanz and his Order.

The great news spread quickly. The next day Bishop Panicola communicated it to Fr. Berro, who resided in Naples, and so did Calasanz in his letters of those days, written to various places. And what was bound to happen happened: everywhere the news was celebrated with great demonstrations of joy, with *Te Deum*, with the ringing of bells, even with the firing of mortars....

The last two sessions: Destruction

The old biographers tell us that when Calasanz was about to leave the house, on his way to the palace of Card. Rome, to receive officially the news of his reinstatement in the office of General together with the supplementary instructions, a messenger of the said cardinal arrived at San Pantaleo telling him not to go to the agreed audience until further notice. But that notice never arrived. What had happened?

331 EGC, IX, p. 207.

332 *ibid.*, p. 211.

The noisy expressions of satisfaction and legitimate joy overflowed also in the community of San Pantaleo. It was quite normal. It occurred to someone to take the news to the *Notices of Rome*, a kind of daily gazette, and among the comments to these Notices, read in public during the community's recreation, there was no lack of imprudent words attacking or hurting all those involved in this long tribulation suffered by the Order and its Founder. Fr. Berro recalls this comment, put in the mouth of the imprudent Bro. Philip Loggi: "God be praised. Now it will be seen who has persecuted Father General. He will be asked for an account of all the outrages done to him and to the Assistants. I do not know if Monsignor Assessor will be able to do so much."³³³ And Judas Iscariot left the cenacle... In no time Fr. John Antony Ridolfi went to incriminate his brothers before Msgr. Albizzi for the understandable imprudence they had committed. And time was also lacking for the impulsive and touchy Monsignor to denounce to the Pope with words that we ignore the unforgivable insult of having been offended by those who had just escaped annihilation. It seemed that the whole of the Holy Roman Catholic Church was the victim of the vituperations of an imprudent lay brother of the Pious Schools.... And with no sense of equity, of justice and much less of mercy, instead of incriminating the imprudent one or ones, ignoring with incredible obfuscation the definitive verdict that the Commission of Cardinals had given in its third session, the blow of vengeance was unloaded on the whole Order and its innocent Founder.

Innocent X consulted the matter with Bishop Albizzi, with Card. Roma, president of the special commission, and probably with Card. Panziroli, Secretary of State. The ultimate decision, however, was the exclusive and personal one of the pope, who thus imposed his own resolution on the Special Congregation, which held its fourth session on September 8, 1645, in the palace of Card. Roma, according to custom. Cardinals Roma, Cueva, Spada, Ginetti, and Msgr. Paolucci and Albizzi were present. There was no report from Pietrasanta, who did not even attend. Card. Roma said that, by express mandate of the Pope, the Order of the Pious Schools had to be reduced to a Congregation and that there was no more to think about than the way to carry out this reduc-

333 V. BERRO, *Memorie* (ms), f.350.

tion. Another last session was convoked to decide the peculiarities of this reduction, of which certain general ideas were already given.

Neither Calasanz nor anyone else had the slightest idea about this fourth session. Perhaps they waited with infinite impatience for the publication of the sentence of the reinstatement of the old general in his functions. But weeks and months passed under the weight of the impenetrable silence of the members of the Pontifical Commission. Waiting became hopelessness and nerves were tensed. People started to suspect and more than one began to fear the worst. In San Pantaleo things remained the same, under the heavy authority of Cherubini and Pietrasanta. But on the first day of the year 1646 both superiors gave certain dispositions in virtue of holy obedience and under pain of excommunication on the matter of alms and possession of money. The widespread protest caused Cherubini to repeal the mandate. But he appealed to Albizzi so that the Pontifical Commission would confirm his dispositions, as indeed it did, adding the penalties of imprisonment and galleys to the transgressors.

Exacerbated by these disproportionate threats and by the constant tension in which they lived, they resolved to appeal personally to the Pope. They composed two memoranda. The first was signed by 25 religious and the second by 32. In the first, the last case was exposed and in the second they lamented that “in three years of Apostolic Visitation nothing useful has been done and for this reason they asked for justice and solutions, accusing also as suspects Monsignor and the two Fathers referred to above” (Pietrasanta and Cherubini).³³⁴ And on the eve of Epiphany, a group of 25 religious, including Fathers and Brothers, led by Cherubini’s declared adversary, Br. Luke Anfosso, presented themselves at St. Peter’s in the Vatican, and as the Pope was leaving the Vespers function, they all managed to gather in one of the rooms along the way. Against all ceremonial norms and palatine etiquette, they accosted the Pope, asking him to listen to them. The cardinals, monsignors and others of the entourage were astonished. The master of ceremonies objected to this impromptu audience, but the Pope had four of the daring men go into an adjoining room, where Br. Luke, without euphemism or ex-

334 EGC, IX, p. 213.

tenuation, said to him among other things: "For three years now we have been so distressed by the Superiors that we can no longer bear it; therefore, we beg for justice and a solution [to our affairs]". The Pope replied: "Go, and you will be attended to as soon as possible."³³⁵ Naturally, the impression the Pontiff received must have been terrible. And the solution he was going to give them would be no less.

To make matters worse, in those first days of the year, Fr. Cherubini was accused of having incurred canonical censures for never having published the Brief of his appointment, for having illegally alienated real estate of the Order and for other reasons. The Cardinal Vicar announced that the Pope demanded the facts be clarified. And in this time of waiting, accusers and adversaries of Fr. Cherubini denied obedience to the superior of St. Pantaleo appointed by him, and chose another one of their own. This situation provoked the wrath of Pietrasanta, who wrote a fiery circular to the said community, in which he again recalled the old phrase "that this Religion had grown in disobedience to the Apostolic See."³³⁶ Someone also told that the "holy old man" was inciting rebellion. And what would be the atmosphere like if the Saint himself, though denying the accusations, was justifying them in a way with these words: "As for what is said that the Fathers of Rome were incited by me in their mutinies, do not believe it; for they were and are all fed up to the gills, as they themselves have told you, by a government of three years without fruit and with much damage."³³⁷

In the meantime, since the fourth session of September, the complicated problems involved in the reduction of the Order to a Congregation or its absolute extinction were being studied. And after long and subtle discussions, Albizzi distributed to the members of the pontifical commission, long before its last session and cutting back on possibilities, the minutes of the future Brief, in which the Order would be reduced to a Congregation of simple vows submitted to the ordinary, but keeping valid the solemn vows, already taken. It was a very benign and positive solution compared to the one that was finally imposed.

335 Ibid.

336 Ibid., p. 215.

337 EGC, VIII, l. 4333.

On February 3, 1646, the fifth and last session of the commission was held in the palace of Card. Roma. Cardinals Roma, Cueva, Ginetti and Spada, Msgrs. Paolucci and Albizzi and Fr. Pietrasanta attended. Shortly before the meeting, a personal communication came from Innocent X. In it, already for the second time, he limited the freedom of decision of the Commission, imposing his will “to reduce the Religion to a Congregation in the manner of the Institute of the Congregation of Santa Maria in Valicella of Rome, called of St. Philip Neri, without taking vows in the future and with total subjection to the Ordinaries.”³³⁸ After the secretary Albizzi had read the Pope’s communiqué, Fr. Pietrasanta spoke, but we do not know what he said. And on this basis the discussion began until unanimously arriving at the following conclusions:

1. The faculty will be given to all the religious so that they can pass to any other Order, if they are benevolently accepted.
2. The decree of not admitting anyone to the novitiate or to profession of vows without a license from the Holy See will be renewed.
3. Religious, houses and schools will be totally subject to the local ordinaries. Father Joseph Calasanz “at another time Superior General”, as well as all other superiors and apostolic Visitors will be removed from all authority and jurisdiction. The authority will remain in the hands of the ordinaries of the place, who could delegate it. There would be neither General nor Provincial superiors, but only Local superiors.
4. The Religion will be reduced to a Congregation without vows, as that of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri.
5. New Constitutions will be written. The drafting of which will be entrusted to Msgrs. Albizzi, Paolucci, Fagnano, Fr. Pietrasanta and one priest from the Oratory of St Philip Neri.
6. The government of the Collegio Nazareno will be entrusted to Pietrasanta and Cherubini.³³⁹

These conclusions were presented to the Pope, who approved them all, except the sixth. He ordered that the Auditors of the Rota should

338 Eph. Cal. 1 (1961) 28.

339 Ibid., p. 29.

be responsible for the Nazareno. This was according to the probable advice of Ginetti, since the cardinal sometimes boasted of this. However, there was still a touch of extreme gravity in the definitive Brief, and we do not know if it was due to the personal initiative of Innocent X or to that of Albizzi, in whose hands was the responsibility for the drafting of the Brief, or it was at the insinuation of Card. Roma or Panziroli. It was like the final blow. In point 2 the possibility was excluded that “with the permission of the Holy See” novices could be admitted or those already admitted could be professed. The prohibition in both cases was absolute. This closed the last loophole of new life for the Institute. All the doors were opened to let people out and all the doors were hermetically closed to let people in. This was not simply a “reduction” of the Order to a Congregation without vows, but rather a disguised suppression, a slow but inexorable death sentence.

On March 16, 1646, Innocent X signed the Brief. The following afternoon the secretary of the Cardinal Vicar read it in the domestic oratory of St. Pantaleo, before the entire congregated community. At the end of the reading, in the embarrassed and dramatic silence of the moment, the voice of the now definitively dismissed General, Father Joseph Calasanz, was heard repeating the words of Job: “The Lord gave it to us; the Lord took it from us. As it pleased the Lord, so it was done. Blessed be his name”. It was the end. The destruction.

And this man, who with superhuman fortitude endures like another Job the collapse of his life’s work, alluded at least twice to the mysterious source that gave him so much energy. His confidant, Father Berro, left written this paragraph. We do not know exactly the date of that authentic mystical experience, which Calasanz reveals with sibylline words that mimic those of St. Paul speaking of his ecstasies in the third heaven. Fr. Berro writes that Calasanz said: “I know of a person that with a single word that the Lord said in his heart, he endured with great patience and joy ten continuous years of works and great persecutions. And after many years he said again: I know of a person who, with a single word that God said to him in his heart, endured with immense joy fifteen years of great labors which came upon him.”³⁴⁰

340 A. GARCÍA -DURÁN, *oc.*, p. 109, nt. 556.

Death and glorification

Heroic hope

On April 1, 1646, his friend and faithful admirer Miguel Jiménez Barber wrote to Calasanz from Venice: “The bad news runs fast, since all Benetia is full of the bad determination that has been taken about the things of the holy institute of Your Reverence, since all the gazettes speak of it. How the Pope has ordered that you no longer give the habit and remain subject to the Ordinary. Also the public notices say that everything has been at the request of the good fathers of the Society of Jesus. Here there is a lot of talk about their ambition.”³⁴¹

In Venice there were no Piarists, but the news arrived just the same, confirming the accusations against the Jesuits expressly echoed in Rome by the Holy Founder himself repeatedly in his letters: “This beautiful result was brought forth after three years by the visitation of the Most Reverend Father Pietrasanta. The desire of so many Jesuit Fathers will have been fulfilled who published there in Germania and in Poland that our Religion should be destroyed in a short time. Your Reverence give encouragement to all the professed, assuring them that as long as there are professed religious as there have been up to now, the Religion will not be destroyed and I hope that in a short time it will rise to a better state than before. And there will be no lack of those who will take to heart this matter of restoring it to its perfection. In the meantime Your Reverence tell those priests to pray together to God for the Jesuits who have caused us this calamity and bad reputation.”³⁴² How great is the greatness of this man who, together with the complaint and accusation of the evils received,

341 EGC, IX, p.220.

342 EGC, VIII, l. 4337.

knows how to add the evangelical plea of “praying for those who persecute you” (Mt 5:44)! “Here in Rome, -from where Calasanz writes this other letter- it is publicly said that it has all been the operation of the Jesuit Fathers, since for some time now some of them in various provinces have been telling ours that the Religion of the Pious Schools would soon be destroyed. May the Lord give them all his holy grace and may he give us patience and conformity to his most holy will.”³⁴³

The Holy See, however, tried to dispel these accusations, which were unanimous, especially in places where there were Piarists, as can be seen in this letter of the Secretary of State to the Nuncio of Poland: “It is very great folly to believe that in the business of the Pious Schools, attention has been paid to the relations of Msgr. Albizzi or to the sinister information of the Jesuit Fathers.... And it is also certain that the Jesuit Fathers have not done or even thought of doing anything against the said Fathers...”³⁴⁴

The poor Founder expressly lamented that this fateful measure was ultimately against the poor and against the people, and he could not understand why a work so dear to the whole of Europe should be destroyed: “Pray to the Lord that he may be pleased to help the cause of the poor”; “by keeping the Institute standing, the Lord will place suitable order at the service of the people”; “let us pray that everything may be for the greater glory of God and for the greater good of our neighbor, especially the poor”; “I cannot understand how an Institute so useful and sought after by all Europe and praised even by heretics can be so easily destroyed by human malice; and as long as I live I will hope to see it restored to its original state”; “Meanwhile, we pray here to the Lord that His Divine Majesty will make up for what is lacking in men and we have firm hope that blessed God will not permit the loss of an Institute so required in all Europe”; “although the adversaries are great and powerful, we must nevertheless hope that the divine goodness will not permit the total destruction of an Institute like ours, approved by three Supreme Pontiffs and applauded and required by all Europe and by

343 *Ibid.*, I. 4347.

344 *Eph. Cal.* I (1959) 11.

heretics. God knows what they will say when they see the publication of the Brief. Here in Rome everyone has compassion for us, but no one wants to be the first to deal with the Pope.”³⁴⁵

If Calasanz’s hope was unshakable that the Order would not be destroyed before the Brief came out, after reading it, it became truly heroic in trusting against all human hope that the Institute would rise again, reaching a greater splendor. During the long years of anguish about what the Pontifical Commission would decide, he blindly trusted that in the end the Order would remain standing. And this up to the very moment in which the Brief was publicly read. In January 1646 he wrote: “Some say that with a Brief the Order will be reduced to a Congregation of simple vows or subject to the Ordinary or that it will not teach Latin. This is being propagated by some who would like to destroy it, but what is certain is that our Religion has very great and very powerful adversaries, but we do not lose hope that it will remain standing.”³⁴⁶ In February he insisted: “We are sure that our Religion will not be destroyed, as the adversaries would like and have been trying to do”; “although some are writing bad forecasts, I nevertheless hope in blessed God that our Religion will remain standing and that it will grow even more for the benefit of our neighbor.”³⁴⁷ On March 3rd, he says: “I hope that all that our adversaries have done and will do, all will be undone with the help of God, and truth will be more powerful than envy; but Your Reverence be of good cheer as all the others who love the Institute, because without a doubt it will return to be perhaps more glorious than before.”³⁴⁸ On March 18th, he communicated the fatal news with these very hopeful words: “Finally the Brief has come out which clearly shows the ruin of our Religion, but I hope that the more men mortify it, God will exalt it the more.”³⁴⁹

Not all were words of consolation and hope. Nor can it be said that there was passive resignation in the face of the pontifical decision.

345 EGC, VIII, l. 4354, 4347, 4324, 4341, 4348, 4366.

346 Ibid., l. 4327.

347 Ibid., l. 4333, 4335.

348 Ibid., l. 4336.

349 Ibid., l. 4345.

It was accepted with heroic obedience, but with the intimate conviction that it had been an injustice and that everything humanly possible had to be done to change the Pope's mind and decision. And they resorted to all diplomatic means in order to achieve this. Letters and more letters poured in from the courts of Poland, Tuscany, from the Spanish viceroys of Naples, Sicily and Sardinia, from the Empress Eleonora, from the magnates of the Empire related to the Piarist foundations of Bohemia and Moravia. They all asked for the same thing: that the Pious Schools be restored to their pristine state. Particularly notable was the insistence of the king of Poland in person, in addition to his nobles, his chancellor George Ossolinski, the full Diet of the Kingdom with the signatures of all the bishops of Poland and the representatives of the nobility. But the attitude of Innocent X was irreducible. On August 7, 1647, in the face of the stubborn requests of the Polish king, the Pope sent him a Brief in which he said: ...“therefore, having justly dealt with and concluded the matter, there is no room for further deliberation.”³⁵⁰ Nevertheless, the king's delegate in Rome, Bishop Roncalli, continued to insist on the matter, and even annoyed the Pope, so that Cardinal Panziroli, Secretary of State, once again reminded the Nuncio in Warsaw, in July 1648, that “that matter being finished, there is no reason to speak of it any more.”³⁵¹ During the pontificate of Innocent X, then, hopes of restoration were vain.

There were, however, two very serious problems that found a solution, almost apart from the diplomatic campaign that asked for the reestablishment of the Order. The first was to block the new Constitutions. Apparently, Msgr. Albizzi entrusted their drafting to none other than Fr. Cherubini, and Calasanz complained about this as early as June 1646: “Fr. Stephen brags about having been told by His Holiness to write the Constitutions of our Institute. We suppose that it was Msgr. Albizzi who told him to do it. Imagine what kind of Constitutions can come from such a source! It is said that they will come out with a Brief maybe before the end of July.”³⁵² On September 8th they were already finished, but not signed

350 Rev. Cal. 12 (1957) 345.

351 Eph. Cal. 5-6 (1958) 113.

352 EGC, VIII, I. 4386.

by the Commission, as Calasanz writes: “The new Constitutions are awaited with many absurdities, all contrary to the good of our Institute. Some Prelates have revised them, but no one has wanted to approve or sign them yet, except Fr. Pietrasanta.”³⁵³ However, Fr. Caputi, in his Memoirs, says that they were signed by all the members of the commission, except Card. Ginetti who refused to do so. And Caputi goes on to say that the said Cardinal retained in his office the signed copy of the Constitutions, promising at the request of Calasanz that they would not leave, nor would they be published, nor seen by anyone.³⁵⁴

The second serious problem was that of the admission of novices. Already at the beginning of January 1648, Msgr. Albizzi had given a benign interpretation of the Brief of reduction, allowing new admissions, as Calasanz announced in a letter of the 10th: “I have delayed writing two previous mails waiting to know the will of Msgr. Assessor. The day before yesterday he said to two of our Fathers that we are not forbidden to give the habit and that we can dress as we are today, but not to make profession without a new order from His Holiness.”³⁵⁵ The fortunes of the Pious Schools were still in the hands of the omnipotent Adviser of the Holy Office. And this concession or sign of benevolence was the last ray of sunshine that could light up the heroic hope of the old Founder.

In the meantime the adversaries of the afflicted Saint had died. The drama that surrounded them in the last days stand in contrast with the beatific peace in which the Saint died. One cannot help but think spontaneously about Lactancius’ *Death of the persecutors* dealing with the death of Roman emperors and martyrs of the early Church. Mario Sozzi passed away in November of 1643 covered with leprosy and burning inside and out by the concoctions that gave him to cure him. A few months earlier the Florentine inquisitor, Muzzarelli, died of cancer. In May 1647 Fr. Pietrasanta was operated on gall stones. The surgery was a success but he could not sleep because of the pain. They gave him opium and he never woke up. They found him dead

353 Ibid., I. 4401.

354 Eph. Cal. 4-5 (1972) 155-156; edited in Anal. Cal. 50 (1983) 644-681.

355 EGC VIII. I. 4522.

on bed. Finally, Fr. Cherubini, at the end of 1647, became ill with leprosy, like Fr. Mario and died in Collegio Nazareno on January 9th. He was forty eight. He begged forgiveness. Calasanz forgave him deeply moved. He received the viaticum and the last anointing afterwards.

Between the death of Pietrasanta and Cherubini there was a precious interlude before God and men, the death of Fr. Casani. It happened on October 17, 1647. Communicating devoutly the news Calasanz wrote: "Since during this life he lived very devoutly so it pleased God... that he died like a saint. Once his body was brought to the church, there was an unending procession of people who came to see the body. I won't say anything now about the favors received by some except that it was necessary to bring the body into the house to stop the flow of people."³⁵⁶ It was the dress rehearsal for the funeral of the Founder.

Death of a just man

In mid-July 1648, the elderly saint went out to gain plenary indulgence by visiting the now non-existing little church of San Salvatore, near Saint Louis of France. On his way home he stumbled on a stone, hurting his bare foot. Supported by his two companions, he arrived home. He never went out again. On August 1st, he celebrated his last Mass, after which he felt unwell and went to bed. The next day, Sunday, he did not dare to celebrate and waited for the children's mass, and among them he received communion from the hands of Father Vincent Berro. It was his last public act, immortalized by Goya in his famous painting.

That Sunday he had a very bad time. Three doctors were called at different times. They said it was old age. The sick man insisted that the doctors did not know his illness, which was in his liver, from which he had always suffered. To soothe his burning he used a marble stone dipped in fresh water which he applied to the painful part. "The doctors, -he said- do not know my ailment. When the Lord wants to take one to heaven, He takes away from the doctors the knowledge of the disease, so that they do not apply the appropriate remedies. I have fever, I am burning with thirst and I deprive myself

356 EGC, VIII, 1.4497-4500.

of water as much as I can for the love of God. Pray for me so that I may know how to conform to his divine will.”³⁵⁷

The seriousness of the sick man’s condition was increasing. The doctors made him a bloodletting on the 11th, but the chills he felt afterwards foreshadowed the worst. In the early morning of the following day he asked for communion. Fr. John García del Castillo, Superior of the house, gave it to him, and Frs. Berro, Caputi and Morelli, among others, accompanied him. When the Lord arrived - Caputi tells us - she could not contain herself and exclaimed: “This is the tribunal of truth...” Two years before, an incriminating and slanderous writing had run against him, composed of ten points, the first of which began as follows: “That he [Calasanz] has been the total cause of our destruction...” And to the one who sent him the document he said: “To all I answer with a word, that soon we will all see each other before the tribunal of Christ, where the pure truth will be seen and known and each one will be judged according to his works.”³⁵⁸ Now, on his deathbed, he recalled with hope the tribunal that was to judge him.... And, Caputi continues, “asking pardon of all those he had offended, he went into a most moving exhortation, full of memories and advice, speaking to us of holy humility, of patience in our labors, of fraternal charity, blessing and calling his dearest sons those present and those absent, those in Rome and in other houses, and forgiving with all his heart those who had offended him, repeating to them also the title of most beloved sons. And if we were moved to tears by the tenderness and love that we had for him, his were no less, for he burst into tears, as if all the affections of his soul were escaping through his eyes and through those expressions of *most beloved sons*.”³⁵⁹

On the 15th, the Solemnity of the Assumption of Mary, he wanted to receive communion again, and since they brought him the Eucharist after having called to morning prayer, the whole community attended and he “with lowered eyes and great humility made another very beautiful discourse, very different from the previous one, also recommending the virtues, but exhorting in a singular way to the teaching

357 BAU, BC, p. 1166.

358 EGC, VIII, l. 4400.

359 BAU, BC, p. 1167.

and love of the Institute. That we should be united as true brothers, and that being so, even if hell should move, we need have no fear.”³⁶⁰

Among the many scenes and anecdotes recounted by his very faithful biographers Berro and Caputi, there are two touching ones that show the unwavering adherence of the dying old man to the Catholic faith. Many were the friends who visited him in those days, one of them was the Englishman Thomas Cocchetti, very favored by Calasanz; one of his sons died as a Piarist. The Englishman had been a steward of James I at the court of London and advised the sick man an effective remedy against the mucus that hindered breathing. But when Cocchetti told him that the recipe had been invented by James I, king of England, the Saint rejected it with energy, protesting that he did not want to receive relief from the invention of a heretic. The other anecdote is more human, but of greater symbolic depth. It must have occurred two or three days before he died. He called two religious (Berro and Fedele) and begged them: “Do me this charity for the love I have for you. Go to the Vatican, gain the indulgence for me and kiss the foot of the statue of St. Peter; ask for his blessing on my behalf, so that the Lord may impart to me the forgiveness of my sins, and add the devotions that seem to you. Then go to the Datario Cardinal Cecchini and beg him to obtain for me from the Pope the Plenary Indulgence and the Blessing in articulo mortis.”³⁶¹ Despite the tribulations and humiliations he had received from the Holy See, there was no grudge in his soul and he wanted to die as a faithful son of the Holy Roman Church and consoled with the apostolic blessing of the Pope.

He was always very devoted to St. Charles Borromeo and St. Philip Neri, and for this reason he asked that a sash of the former and a berretta of the latter be brought to him before his death so that he could wear them for a moment, and he was also pleased. On Sunday morning, the 23rd, he asked to receive communion by viaticum and in the evening he asked to receive the last rites. Fr. García, as superior of the house, administered both sacraments before the whole community.

Undoubtedly, the greatest thing that happened within those four bare walls of the poor room of the saint during the last nights of his

360 *Ibid.*, p. 1168.

361 *Ibid.*, p. 1171.

life were two supernatural visions. The first was testified under oath by Frs. Francis Castelli and Camillo Scassellati, as heard personally from the Saint's lips, and was corroborated by Frs. Berro and Caputi, who were also his confidants. Castelli said: "I believe that can be referred to the virtue of hope in the Blessed Virgin what I heard from his own mouth in the last days of his life. He was seriously ill in bed a few days before his death. I went to visit him and said to him: 'Father, I am afraid that you want to play a trick on us; you want to leave us. I am very afraid of it'. He answered me: 'I am in God's hands; may His Divine Majesty do as he pleases. And when I replied: 'In any case, you cannot fall but land on your feet', he answered me quietly, confidentially: 'Yes, Our Lady has told me so; to be happy and not doubt anything'. I was left in suspense before that statement, and so that he would repeat it, I said to him: 'How, Father; how is it?' And he repeated slowly: 'Madonna dei Monti has told me to be happy, not to doubt anything'. And I did it so that the other Father who was there (Fr. Scassellati) would hear it. And then I learned that the Servant of God had a very great devotion to Madonna dei Monti."³⁶² (This Madonna has a church dedicated to her behind the Forum of Augustus, in the Roman district called ai Monti).

The second vision, as Berro tells it, consisted in the fact that all the Piarists, until then deceased, went to visit him. Some were standing and others sitting. Fr. Constantine Palamolla, a Barnabite, a close friend, went to see him, and the sick man told him about the vision, asking him what the difference between sitting and standing meant. Palamolla asked him with whom Abbate Glicerio Landriani was, and the saint replied that he was with the seated; from which they deduced that the latter were already definitively in glory. Frs. García and Berro were also in the room. And the latter added: "I went out then and heard no more. He still told Fr. Constantino that only one was missing, but when I asked him later who the absent one was, he did not want to answer."³⁶³

And the end came. The night between August 24 and 25, 1648, Frs. Vincent Berro and Angel Morelli were keeping vigil over the sick

362 Ibid., p. 1179.

363 Ibid., p. 1190.

man. After midnight they noticed that the father was dying. While Fr. Berro - who is the one who told the story - began to recommend the soul, Fr. Morelli rang the bell and the whole community came.... "I gave the stole and the ritual to Fr. Castilla as superior of the house. The commendation continued, with everyone accompanying him and listening to how the Venerable Father answered everything. He raised his right arm as if to bless and at that moment, without movement or rattle, without choking or twisting of the lips, he flew to heaven, pronouncing Jesus, Jesus, Jesus three times. It was half past five. His body remained as beautiful and good-looking as if he were alive, with color in his face and a soft smile on his lips.... A singular and intense joy took hold of all of us, which had us as if we were out of our senses and so consoled that we seemed to be celebrating instead of mourning, and instead of being depressed by the pain proper to the case, we experienced a common and universal joy. And so we were, when the clock of the Sapienza struck three quarters to six [a quarter to two in the morning by today's reckoning]."³⁶⁴

Within a few days he would have been ninety-one years old.

First glorification: Funerals

August 25th was a school vacation day because it was the feast of St. Bartholomew. The children did not attend the Pious Schools. In the early hours of the morning, the corpse was duly prepared and was exposed in the domestic oratory, where the Office of the Dead was recited and the funeral Mass was sung behind closed doors. Once the rites were over, the mortuary mask was taken, which has contributed so much to maintain the uniformity of the Calasanzian iconography through the years. In the early afternoon, three doctors and a practitioner, acquaintances and friends were called to proceed with the autopsy or emptying of the corpse, in a kind of rudimentary embalming. The tongue, liver and spleen were placed in earthenware jars and the heart was placed in a glass cup. All this was then placed inside a walnut chest that was locked with three keys and deposited in what had been the saint's room and would

364 Ibid. p. 1190.

no longer be occupied by anyone else. A century later, on August 2, 1748, the chest was opened and had to be unlocked, because the keys had been lost. And all those viscera remained uncorrupted. In 1752 they were enclosed in a precious reliquary, which can still be admired and venerated today.

Once that butchery was over, the corpse was dressed again and remained exposed in the private oratory. The news was not published until the following day, except for the notices sent to the schools of the towns near Rome and to the Cardinal Vicar, Ginetti, hierarchical superior of the houses of Rome. At eight o'clock in the morning of the 26th, the corpse was transferred from the domestic oratory to the church. In impressive silence the funeral procession left the square of Massimi, and going around the little square dei Massimi, went to enter the temple through the door facing the square. A five-year-old boy began to shout spontaneously when he saw the corpse: "The Saint, the Saint, the Saint." It was like a morning trumpet that began to awaken the popular enthusiasm. The bells were not rung, because someone said that the Duke of Bracciano was seriously ill and could be disturbed by the mourning. The coffin was placed on a humble catafalque in the middle of the church and the funeral began. The church was almost empty.

The children knew nothing of what had happened, and when they arrived at San Pantaleo they were told that there was no school because Father Joseph had died. And probably it was they -and there were more than a thousand of them- who, on returning home that morning, spread the news of the death of the holy Founder of the Pious Schools throughout the Roman neighborhoods. There was also early in the morning a simple woman crippled in one arm who, trusting in the holiness of Father Joseph and helping herself with her healthy arm, managed to touch the feet of the corpse with her sick one and felt the movement returned and she was able to open and close her hand. And he began to cry out "Miracle! Miracle!" There was an uproar in the church, in the square, in the adjacent streets, in all of Rome. And as the day wore on, the mass parade grew. The church was unable to contain so many people. Bishops and curial Monsignors, ambassadors and princes of the Roman nobility with their wives, religious, and above all the simple people of Rome. The two small squares adjacent to the church were full of

people who waited for hours to enter the temple to see and touch the venerable corpse. The abundance of carriages of the nobility and court increased the tumult and confusion. In the interior of the enclosure the avalanche of the multitude ran over the benches that defended the tumulus. To bring a little order to that uproar of sacred enthusiasm, some Corsican soldiers of the papal guard came and managed to move the catafalque inside the presbytery, better defended, but it was useless, because the walnut railing gave way to the onslaught of the crowd, which even penetrated into the enclosure. A picket of Swiss guards was also called to defend the corpse.

During the whole day there were about eight cases of prodigious healings, some very remarkable, so that the fervor grew and the eagerness to obtain relics was contagious. The biretta, the manipule, pieces of the chasuble, the alb, the cassock, and even hair and toenails disappeared. At noon the doors of the church were laboriously closed and the corpse was transferred to the oratory to be redressed. In the afternoon the body was brought down again at the insistent request of the people, who continued to parade in an incense-filled procession until late in the evening. At dusk, Fr. Caravita, a famous and popular Jesuit, improvised the first eulogy before the crowd, impressed by the fervor that had become an authentic apotheosis.

So much spontaneous glorification, apparently sealed with miraculous healings, must have sown fears in the community, because given the state of prostration of the Pious School and the official discredit in which the poor Founder had been relegated during his lifetime, all this posthumous apotheosis could seem imprudent to the Roman Curia.

That is why the fathers opted to bury the body as soon as possible when the doors of the church were closed, as indeed they did in the early morning of the 27th, before the pious procession of the faithful could resume. But the procession continued before the sepulchre.

Second glorification: Restoration of the Order

Every attempt to re-establish the Order was useless during the pontificate of Innocent X. Some hope was reborn when Msgr. Fabio Chigi was appointed Secretary of State in 1651 and later Cardinal, since

he had been a close friend of Fr. Carlo Mazzei, a distinguished Piarist Latinist of St. Pantaleo, for many years. He made vague promises, but neither he nor other cardinals, who were being urged with pressing pleas by the Court of Poland, thought it opportune to insist before the Pope. After all, it was asking for a formal retraction, and it was foolhardy to expect it from Pope Pamfili.

In 1655 Innocent X died and Cardinal Chigi was elected as Alexander VII. The joy of the Piarists was immense. They trusted that he would do as pope what he could not do as secretary of state. And so he did. Nevertheless, at first, along with his promises and good will, he maintained his fears of tarnishing the prestige of the Holy See with that sort of recantation. The Piarists again pulled the springs of diplomacy to decide the Pope. And the courts of Poland, Tuscany and Spain wrote to friendly and influential cardinals and monsignors, and even to the Pope himself, to achieve what was proposed.

Finally Alexander VII decided to entrust the matter to Msgr. Fagnano. But when it was known that he had no intention of contradicting the essence of the Innocentian Brief, every effort was made to pass the matter into the hands of Bishop Farnese or Bishop Rospigliosi (future Clement IX). The entire diplomatic campaign was channeled in this direction and the attempt was successful: the Pope entrusted the matter to Farnese. His elaborate project was presented to a commission of cardinals, specially appointed for this purpose. And what would be the shock of the Piarists when they read the name of Albizzi, already named cardinal, among those who composed the Commission. To ingratiate with him, a large representation of Piarists went to visit him. The meeting was very cordial. The Cardinal recalled the whole unfortunate process that ended with the reduction of the Order and expressed his esteem for the Institute and its Founder, adding this eloquent confession: "If the importunity of some had not put my reputation to the test, the Brief of Innocent X would never have been published."³⁶⁵ It was an excuse, but at the same time an implicit self-accusation that his personal honor prevailed over the survival of an entire religious Order and the prestige of its innocent Founder.

365 Anal.Cal. 40 (1978) 553, nt 12.

The pontifical Commission had only one session, on October 1st, 1655, and the Pope had the delicacy to prevent Albizzi from attending, giving him an urgent task at the time of the meeting. Farnese's project was approved by the commission and then presented by courtesy to Albizzi, who also approved it, as did Msgr. Rospigliosi, who was already Secretary of State.

New complications delayed the drafting and publication of the Brief, signed by the Pope on January 26, 1656. And on March 12th, in the same oratory where the Brief of reduction had been read ten years earlier, Card. Ginetti appeared and before the community he read the new one, by which the Pious Schools were reborn as a Congregation of simple vows, with major superiors, although subject to the ordinaries in many aspects, with all the privileges of mendicants that it had enjoyed before and with a cardinal protector, who was precisely Ginetti. The last one had been Cesarini, who died in January 1644, but since August 1642, when the Holy Office removed the Pious Schools from his jurisdiction, it was left without a cardinal protector in all those long, fateful years when it needed him most. It was Ginetti who, during all this time, acted as protector without being one and as best he could.

Immense was the grace granted to officially return to existence, as a Congregation of simple vows, but the Brief imposed many limitations that hindered the normal rhythm of life. Partial solutions were still achieved, but Pope Chigi did not want to grant the total reestablishment because he considered too hasty the full abolition of the Brief of Innocent X.

When Alexander VII died in May 1667, Card. Rospigliosi succeeded him as Clement IX, to the great satisfaction of the Piarists. In 1637 he had presided over the General Chapter and deeply admired the holiness of the Founder, remaining since then a friend and benefactor. Moreover, during the previous pontificate he had manifested his will and his support for the reestablishment of the Order.

The first petitions to the new Pope tended to attenuate the limitations of the Brief of Alexander VII. Fr. General Cosimo Chiara presented a formal request for the full reintegration of the Order. The Pope accepted the idea and entrusted the matter to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. But months passed, and among so

many papers and problems the cause of the Pious Schools seemed to have been forgotten. To get out of the situation, the strings of diplomacy were pulled again. In this case, it was the Court of Tuscany that pulled the strings and, in agreement with the initiatives of the Piarists, got Clement IX to appoint a Special Commission, formed by three prelates of the curia, all three Tuscans. This commission, with typical curial subtlety, succeeded in proving that the fateful Brief of Innocent X was invalid for lack of juridical formalities. The later one of Alexander VII, with which the Pious Schools were recognized as a Congregation of simple vows, was equally null because it was a correction of the previous one. Consequently, to find a valid papal document, in which the existence of the Institute could be juridically supported, it was necessary to go back to the Brief of November 18, 1621, by which Gregory XV elevated it to an Order of solemn vows. And since the reasons for which Gregory XV approved the Order still persist today, that Brief could and should be confirmed and those of Innocent X and Alexander VII expressly annulled.

The proposal of this particular commission was presented to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars by express will of the Pope and duly approved on October 4, 1669. The corresponding Brief was drawn up and signed by the Pope on October 21, and on the following Saturday, the 26th, the notary of the Cardinal Vicar read it publicly in the historic private oratory of St. Pantaleo. Clement IX was very satisfied “for having resurrected an Order already dead in his pontificate” as Fr. Caputi wrote.

And the sacred bones of Calasanz must have been moved with joy in his tomb, because that was another glorification of his memory and his innocence.

Third glorification: Beatification and canonization

It was almost daring to initiate the process of beatification and canonization of a man who only two years ago had died in disgrace of the Holy See, deposed from his position as General of a religious Order that had been practically annihilated. A man who had been fighting and facing untold difficulties for fifty years to defend “his work” and who seemed to want to continue to face adversity after his death. But the apotheosis of his funeral and the numerous mira-

cles attributed to him moved the community of St. Pantaleo to promote his cause of beatification, beginning with the first of countless processes: that of *Non cultu*. Card. Ginetti was pleased to give his consent, as was Pope Innocent X. The process lasted a month, at the beginning of the Holy Year of 1650. The first step was happily taken.

Then followed the ordinary informative process on the virtues and miracles, which collected the sworn statements of those who had known Fr. Joseph Calasanz personally. The examination of 34 witnesses lasted from May 1651 to October 1653. With this, the ordinary processes, still in the pontificate of Innocent X, ended.

Once the regulatory procedures were completed, the cause was introduced in the Congregation of Rites in 1667, thus beginning the apostolic processes. Of these, the first two on the virtues in general and in particular, carried out from 1669 to 1692, completed the information given in the ordinary processes, on which the analysis and discussion of the heroic virtues would be based, which could not begin before the fiftieth anniversary of the death of the Servant of God. And so it was accomplished.

In this long discussion Msgr. Prospero Lambertini intervened, first as extraordinary defense attorney, then as vice-promoter of the faith, then as promoter or “devil’s advocate”. Later he gave his vote as a cardinal member of the Congregation of Rites and, finally, elected Pope with the name Benedict XIV, he declared the Servant of God Blessed. From the beginning he understood that the most serious question revolved around the tribulations suffered by the Founder and his Order. In fact, the dispositions given against him and his Institute by the Holy See were of such gravity that they implied in him notable guilt. And since there was no official document that the Holy See had absolved him or reinstated him in his functions as General, recognizing him as innocent, it was not possible to pretend to beatify him. Faced with such proposed difficulties, said Lambertini, “the postulators of the cause often thought of abandoning it.”³⁶⁶

Neither the letters of Calasanz, nor the testimonies of contemporaries who affirmed that in the third session of the Pontifical Com-

366 S. Giner, oc., p.248.

mission the old General had been reinstated in his functions were valid, because in fact he was never reinstated. It was indispensable to find the Minutes of such Commission. It was known by the chroniclers Berro and Caputi that Mons. Albizzi, once convinced of the innocence of Calasanz, had delivered all the papers related to those facts to the Fathers of San Pantaleo, and among them were the Minutes of that Commission of which he had been secretary. But a few years after the death of the Founder, all that valuable documentation was fraudulently burned.

In spite of such proven setbacks, Lambertini himself went to great lengths to search for the precious Minutes in private and public archives until finally, in 1717, a copy was found among the personal papers in the archives of Cardinal Francis Paolucci, who had been a member of that Commission. The main question was thus resolved. However, there were still other difficulties and setbacks until 1728, when Benedict XIII gave his approval to the heroic virtues.

Then followed another twenty years in which the examination of the miracles was carried out with desperate slowness, the required miracles being approved in May 1748. The first centenary of the Servant of God's death was only a few months away, and it was desired to celebrate it with the Beatification. And having completed the last formalities, on August 18th, in the Vatican Basilica, Pope Benedict XIV celebrated the very solemn ceremony. Then, by special concession of the said pope, the statue of the Founder of the Pious Schools was placed in St. Peter's in 1755, while he was still Blessed, while those of all the other Founders, before and after him, were placed in their niches only after being canonized.

The process of miracles for his canonization, which was celebrated by Clement XIII on July 16, 1767, continued at its own pace. For the second time the figure of Calasanz appeared in Bernini's lavish glory. And, according to the chronicles, that night the dome, façade and colonnade of the Vatican Basilica were illuminated with the typical torches of the Vatican Basilica. It was the final apotheosis, the definitive glorification.

A final crown of glory was offered to him by Pius XII on the solemn commemoration in 1948 of the third centenary of his death and the second of his beatification, proclaiming him Heavenly Patron be-

fore God of all the popular Christian schools of the world. Today, after four centuries of existence, with glories and miseries as any history, more protected and esteemed than persecuted, with undeniable influences in the cultural life of the world, always restless and eager to continue the work of their Founder, the Pious Schools are still present in four continents and in 42 nations, with 213 houses and 1,360 religious.

And besides the Piarist Order, ten other religious Congregations, living his spirit and inspiration, recognize and invoke St. Joseph Calasanz as their special Protector and Patron.

And -most importantly- all the nations of the civilized world consider a duty of the State to provide free popular schools to all children without any distinction whatsoever. And at the same time, the UN General Assembly, in its United Nations Charter on the Rights of the Child, approved on November 20, 1959, “considering that Humanity owes to the Child the best that it can give to him”, proclaimed that “the child has the right to receive education, which shall be free and compulsory at least in the elementary stages...”

To this idea - adding Christian to the word education, for the children of the Church - St. Joseph Calasanz dedicated his life and work.

