

## SALUTATIO MARTIO 2006

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### **“Trying to understand what our Lord wants” (Ef5, 17) (In oboedientia guardium)**

When the time arrived to settle down and write this “Salutatio”, various ideas, about what title to give it, came to mind. “Entering one more year in the time of Lent” “Changing mentality”, “Learning from others; teaching each other” “The joy of obedience” . In the end, I have turned to a Biblical expression because always these words have a wider scope and are a more reliable source of wisdom. Nevertheless, the idea that was going around my head as content of the “Salutatio” was to ask ourselves about our degree of satisfaction in being in and wanting to stay in the religious life, and specifically, in the piarist life. So, I am going to refer to our happiness for being piarists. I will keep it within the Lent time scale, an annual invitation from the church to conversion, and I will mix it with the change of attitude and the joyous experience of obedience, when it responds to a resolution of consecration, as is in our case.

Lent invites us to reflect about known things, not so much as to refresh the memory, but to invite us to put them into practice. The idea is perfectly reflected in the antiphony that the Liturgy of the Hours offers us every Tuesday for fifteen minutes in the early morning. “Now that you know this, lucky you are if you put it in practice”. I have always liked this antiphony because it joins fulfillment, with joy and good fortune. I’ll translate; be joyful accomplishing as a piarist. In order to know where the quoted antiphony is leading, it helps us to think what is the heading of the Psalm that comes next, and that is expressed in the following way *“You are righteous, LORD, and your laws are right. The statutes you have laid down are righteous; they are fully trustworthy; My zeal wears me out, for my enemies ignore your words. Your promises have been thoroughly tested, and your servant loves them. Though I am lowly and despised, I do not forget your precepts. Your*

*righteousness is everlasting and your law is true. Trouble and distress have come upon me, but your commands give me delight. Your statutes are always righteous; give me understanding that I may live.* (Psalm 118,137-144)

It is supposed from the text that there is a life project (“*your commands*” that become mine), the humble verification of one’s own fragility (I am “*lowly and despised*”), the pursuits of life that look towards another place (“*trouble and distress have come upon me*”) the joyful satisfaction of keeping on the path I chose as a vocation (*your commands give me delights*), the internal uneasiness that others who share the same destiny become enemies, refusing to continue the path (“*My zeal wears me out.... for my enemies ignore your words*”), and the final plea, because one is also fragile like one’s enemies, to understand that there, on the path taken, is the meaning of my life, (If I am able to understand, “*I may live*”).

If one opts for a way of life and keeps to one’s choice, happiness is a result of obtainment of it. Here, is the key in understanding the correct meaning (because it also could be misunderstood)-of the Latin expression: “*In oboedientia, gaudium!*” Here obedience is taken as a synonym of the project of religious life. Neither would I like to personally manipulate this expression or be misunderstood, because of the fact that these reflections have been signed by the general Father, as if what I were asking is that he be obeyed. That’s not the way things are going, at least not in my thoughts. I would like myself to be the first in applying this phrase to myself and see it as directed to me. The motto that Pope John XXIII adopted for himself became famous, the “good” Pope and now Beato at the time of being nominated bishop “*Oboedientia et pax*”, obedience and peace. If I know of a religious priest that has made his own motto as a religious person; “*In obedientia, gaudium*”, I will always be joyful in obeying. These are examples that stimulate. If a vote was undertaken of obedience according to the priest religious project, that are described in the constitutions, it seems logical to find joy in obeying and I am glad for the occasion where I can put into practice this obedience. I would even say, that it should be an explicit objective, in order not to be disappointed or frustrated. Can we fundamentally say, as the Psalmist does, what a delight to follow

your orders? Practicing obedience is to aim at what I am looking for and what I propose to do. The words of consecration about obedience are serious words, publicly pronounced during a great festival which celebrates a solemn profession, in the middle of the assembly that represents the church, with the mystery of god in the background

*“By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me”.*(Jn 5,30). Jesus, who we as piarists follow, says- feel satisfied and joyful to follow the will of our Father, because this is the reason he came to this world and this is what he understands was his vocation. Calasanz takes us close to Jesus’s experience with that of the piarist experience. “Christ the Lord said, our Savior: *I seek not to please myself....* Well, it would be, foolishness, that one of our religious members intends to do his own will. Everyone embrace the sincere obedience ( constitution, 1621,n.99).

Are we happy being religious Piarists? Happiness goes hand in hand with joy; this is his expression brought to internal and external life. It is said to talk a lot about something shows its absence. It is also said that something that should be broadly and deeply explained in order to be understood and appreciated, surely doesn’t have enough significance or doesn’t even exist. That there are piarists who are joyful and happy is a verified reality. I would like it to be all of us. The joy to be, the joy of being, and the joy of behaving in such a way.

If life in general, and even more of the teacher, is to continue learning, I take the liberty to indicate as a path for Lent to learn from others and to teach each other. Surely from the joy of others we will learn to rejoice. On the other hand, joy tends to spread out and communicate by itself. The words of St. Paul encourage joy, and they also indicate the intended direction “ *The word of Christ lives in us in all its wealth: teach us, one to another, with all wisdom: correct each other, sing to God, give thanks to God with Psalms, hymns and inspired verses”.* (Col 3, 16).

I know that all of this assumes a docile and humble attitude in a person. As with so many things to do with faith, Christ is the guide. He himself demonstrated his way *“learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”*

(Mt11,30). It is the same Matthew who presents the work of Jesus referring to the figure of the “serf”, *He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory (Mt 12, 19-20)*. They are all features of humility and gentleness, those indicated in order to be the “serf of god” by Isaias ( 42, 1-4). Matthew similarly depicts Jesus’ entrance to Jerusalem on the back of an ass (21, 5) quoting, only he among the synoptists, referring to Zac 9,9, that indicates the Messiah - King when entering the holy city and in the temple with his poor, speaking out for the children and rejecting the powerful and self-efficient wise. (21, 14-16). At the moment of providing the Constitution of the Order, Calasanz is aware of this meek Jesus when speaking precisely about obedience, the constitution states “ One has to obey with modesty... and adopt an attitude of gratefulness to god, who allows you to fetch and carry for his Providence through the Superiors, as that donkey that Christ rode the day of Palms, that he let ride around everywhere ( Constitution of 1621, n 108)

Finally, I know that to live the piarist life like this, in a joyful way, implies changing ways of thinking to more evangelical attitudes, for example: (a) overcome the experience of prayer as burden , and give way to an experience of thankfulness to participate in a gift of god and of the community that calls to prayer; to pass from a feeling of obligation and duty to one of happiness and joy of gratitude, from a feeling of imposition to one of remorse when one denies oneself something necessary; if it is not seen like that, personally for me, at least- as Saint Augustus recommends- for the brothers who feel encouraged to pray due to the presence of the other brothers; (b) overcome the community experience as a test to bear and move on to satisfaction of fraternity ( cfr. Sal 132;” *how nice and wonderful that the brothers live in union!*” (c) to change from the attitude of rebelling

against our brothers, even the ones that bother you, or have transgressed, to an attitude of bearing with our brothers' burden. (d) change from an attitude of loneliness to an attitude of paternal spirit.

To conclude, as I began, If we try to understand what the Lord wants and- I confirm that joy will dwell within us. Good Lent behaviour all year round... and more. With the same affection and esteem as ever.