

WHAT IS ITAKA-ESCOLAPIOS CONTRIBUTING AND WHAT COULD IT CONTRIBUTE TO THE FRATERNITY

A vision from the 10 challenges

When in the summer of 2014, the I Assembly of the General Fraternity, gathered in Peralta de la Sal, approved the “10 Challenges of the Piarist Fraternities” for its maintenance and progress, the tenth proposed participation in Itaka-Escolapios. One possible reading is that it was posed as the last challenge, because it is, in a logical course, the last plausible step, or, in some cases, the most complex to take.

Another possible reading, which we propose today, is that what facilitates the Fraternities, and therefore, the Demarcations where there are Fraternities, to advance in the other nine challenges is precisely their participation in Itaka-Escolapios. This reading of the same document of the 10 challenges, made from the end to the beginning, allows us to better see the contribution that Itaka-Escolapios makes to the Piarist Fraternity, and therefore to the Piarist Life and Mission of each Demarcation.

9. START OF THE CALASANZ MOVEMENT

Where the Calasanz Movement is driven by Itaka-Escolapios, it is configured as the nuclear project of the Piarist presence. Anyone who sees Itaka-Escolapios as a platform for attracting resources or developing social projects should know that its genesis was just the opposite. Social projects and other actions such as attracting resources arise from and as a complement to the educational and pastoral processes that we now call the Calasanz Movement.

Assuming the Calasanz Movement as the axis of Itaka-Escolapios, the connection between their projects and the pastoral groups is guaranteed, facilitating quality Piarist volunteerism, the missionary and Piarist identity of the Calasanz Movement, the social training of their instructors, in short, their effective insertion in the Piarist presence.



8. START OF THE PIARIST PRESENCE MODEL.

Where the Piarist Fraternity exists, the main potentiality of the presence model is to create the appropriate space where Fraternity and Piarist Demarcation meet, dream together, share mission, project and take responsibility for the Piarist mission. Itaka-Escolapios, by definition, is an organization created to carry out the Piarist presence model. Through Itaka-Escolapios, the Order and the Fraternity, share, in fact and in law, the Piarist mission, closely linking all the areas that comprise the Piarist Presence, and, thus, revealing itself as one of its more powerful “zipper elements”.

Within this vocation, Itaka-Escolapios has greater flexibility to take on new projects that respond to realities specific to a particular context or moment, allowing Piarist presence projects to be real instruments for updating the analysis and for a more effective response to the reality in which we find ourselves and more faithful to our own charisma.

In this way, faced with the limitations that sometimes, along with undoubted advantages, have our traditional mission platforms, Itaka-Escolapios is allowing an endless number of more agile and lighter interventions that respond to realities that are presented as clear calls to our Piarist identity: attention and literacy of young immigrants, welcome in homes and boarding schools, presence in exclusion areas, which, in addition, in many cases, are greatly enriching our more traditional presence in schools and high schools.

7. BEGINNING OF PIARIST MINISTRIES IN A SHARED WAY BETWEEN PROVINCE AND FRATERNITY.

The Piarist ministries are another zipper element that strongly unites the Piarist presence where they develop. They are lay people, preferably members of the Fraternity, who assume for a time the ecclesial ministry to promote some area of the Piarist mission.

Where these ministries are jointly promoted by the Demarcation and the Fraternity, which is the ideal situation, Itaka-Escolapios is the natural platform where these ministries can be developed and from which to resolve, in a shared way, the practical, legal and economic aspects of this proposal, facilitating options such as temporary release to carry out studies, possible employment contracts, ...

6. DRIVING VOCATIONAL DIVERSITY.

The Piarist Fraternity was born, essentially, to give channel to the vocational diversity that the Pious Schools receive as a gift of the Holy Spirit. The fact that many lay people wish to share with the religious the Piarist charisma is a sign of the times to which the Order responds with audacity and decision, creating the Piarist Fraternity.

Itaka-Escolapios was born and spread by the same drive of the Spirit, with the intention that this vocational diversity finds an institutional channel to be strengthened and multiplied through the Piarist mission shared in an institutional way amongst lay and religious people. Without institutional elements that allow to give historical continuity to the inspiration of the Spirit of God, it can happen, as Calasanz warned us, that it passes without being heard and bearing fruit.

5. PARTICIPATION IN THE LOCAL, DEMARCATIONAL, GENERAL FRATERNITY.

A small community that does not have a clear insertion in the Local Fraternity and, thus, in the Demarcational and General Fraternity, runs the risk of over-reliance on the encouragement of specific people, of seeing the growth of their Piarist identity limited, or of being exhausted in the natural cycle of human groups.

Itaka-Escolapios, thanks to its commitment to the growth of the Pious Schools throughout the world, is an effective channel for a small community, a Local or Demarcational Fraternity, to participate and link in different ways in the global project of the Pious Schools. In this way, it reinforces its Piarist identity and participates in the projects of the Order and of the Fraternities of other places, even of those who, by distance, would otherwise be inaccessible.

To take part in global campaigns, to support Piarist projects with economic contributions in other places, to meet brothers and sisters of Piarist presences from other continents, with all that this entails of growth in Piarist identity, it is possible today, thanks, also, to the Network and the Itaka-Escolapios projects.

4. FLOW OF NEW ADDITIONS.

A fundamental key to growth and continuity of the Piarist Fraternity, as in any organization, is its capacity to convene more people, preferably young people, to join it.

In this sense, the connection of the Fraternity with the processes of the Calasanz Movement and its presentation as the natural outlet of the same, together with the Piarist religious life, is essential. The assumption of the animation of the Calasanz Movement by Itaka-Escolapios, and its enrichment with all its projects and projection, makes this an invaluable support to ensure the addition of young people into the Fraternity. Also, Itaka-Escolapios is a space specially designed to give channel and space to new projects proposals, ideas and dreams that young people, both religious and lay, always bring with them, and that, sometimes, our traditional mission platforms have a hard time taking on.

4. ADEQUATE PARTICIPATION OF RELIGIOUS PEOPLE.

The participation of religious people in the Fraternity is one of the most appreciated features of our model. In addition to his essential ministerial role as priests, the Piarist religious person is within the fraternity a brother who brings all the richness of his religious vocation and his testimony of community life, of poverty, of exclusive dedication to the mission.

Sometimes, for many members of the Fraternity that do not participate in the school platforms, where the religious person normally develops his mission, the visibility of this testimony is limited to the presidency of the Eucharist or other sacraments. Finding the presence of the religious people as companions of the Calasanz Movement, or as volunteers where Itaka-Escolapios develops projects of social presence among those who most need it, is an encouraging sign, and makes this double vocational dimension of the religious person, who is also a priest, more visible and close. In the case of older religious people, already freed from their school tasks, the projects of Itaka-Escolapios can be the natural place where they can continue their involvement in the Piarist mission and their connection with the world of the youngest, which helps for a positive experience of that life cycle.

2. REAL PLACE IN THE DEMARCATION WHERE TO SHARE SPIRITUALITY, LIFE AND MISSION.

The Piarist Fraternity needs to have a real space in which to insert itself in the organization of the Demarcation and to contribute all its significance. The Piarist Fraternity cannot be considered another group together with the rest of existing groups. The Piarist Fraternity is the set of communities of people who are recognized as sharing the Piarist charisma with the Piarist religious people. It is a new Piarist subject who assumes Piarist spirituality, life and mission.

This new reality completely modifies the map of the organization of the demarcation and needs to have channels to become a shared life and, in this way, to be a carrier of new Piarist life. The model of Piarist Presence, with its teams, persons in charge and presence projects, is the natural map to accommodate this new reality and Itaka-Escolapios is the entity that best embodies this model. In it, the Fraternity finds a channel to develop its mission, to share it with the religious people and to guarantee its future sustainability, both from the point of view of the people and of the material resources.

It is very interesting to note that Itaka-Escolapios provides a platform where people, who, because of their dedication or vocation, can hardly be linked to the traditional Piarist mission platforms, can find their place in it. On the other hand, the dedication of the economic contributions of each member of the Fraternity, of the so-called tithes in some fraternities, to the projects of Itaka-Escolapios, is a concrete, specific, assessable and undeniable Piarist commitment that in all cases is an opportunity for growth, contrast and deepening commitment to the Piarist mission.

1. CLARITY IN THE IDENTITY, COMMON VOCATION AND FUNCTIONING OF THE FRATERNITY, THE COMMUNITIES AND THEIR MEMBERS.

But logically, all this new way of understanding the Pious Schools is only possible with people, both religious and lay, clearly identified with the Piarist charisma. For this, it is essential that the Piarist Fraternity be very clear about the fundamental elements of its common vocation and be able to bring commitment and loyalty. A proposal for a legal relationship such as Itaka-Escolapios is, without doubt, one of the best proofs of commitment and loyalty that can be given. The fact that a Piarist Fraternity is in fact, and also in law, legally co-owner, together with its Demarcation, of its projects guarantees a present and future commitment that goes beyond the goodwill of some specific people at a specific moment. Itaka-Escolapios is, at the same time, testimony and prophecy of the viability of this new way of understanding the Pious Schools as a

joint path among those who have chosen to follow Jesus of Nazareth along the path of Calasanz.

In that summer of 2014 we said: “No Province or Fraternity should stop considering its possible participation in Itaka – Escolapios.” The truth is that since that date several Demarcations and Fraternities have considered it and some have given an affirmative answer. It is an effective sign that we continue to be attentive to the voice of God that touches the heart and passes.