

Educating with a great spirit

Volunteering course in the Piarist style

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The Piarist mission in our presences would be unthinkable without the generous collaboration of many people who dedicate part of their time to pastoral work, leisure time, art, sport, and social action, among other activities. In some places, their contribution is decisive in caring for the most vulnerable.

In April, we started an online course on Piarist volunteering, uniting different mission networks of the Pious Schools: Youth Ministry (RPJ), Calasanz Movement, Piarist Parishes, and Itaka Piarists from various demarcations of the Order to reflect together on the identity and reality of Piarist volunteering and to acquire tools for ongoing formation.

Initially, 126 people from the demarcations of Emmaus, Bethany, Mexico, Californias, Nazareth, Chile, Central America, and the Caribbean, and a junior from Poland signed up. A group from Central Africa joined at the beginning, but we decided to make a different plan with them because of the language issue and the difficulty of connections.

The objectives of the course were:

1. To deepen the Piarist identity of the volunteers who collaborate in some mission projects of the Pious Schools.
2. To get to know the projects where the Piarist mission can be exercised.
3. To present a valuable formative model to grow in Piarist identity.

The average age of the students was 37.4 years, 77 women and 44 men. The profile is diverse: young former pupils, parents, parish collaborators, school educators, and some religious. They work as educators in the Calasanz Movement, leisure time groups, social action initiatives, and cultural promotion.

The course consisted of 8 virtual meetings led by a team of facilitators from different platforms: Guillermo Gómez, Fr Juan Carlos de la Riva, Jon Calleja, Nacho Oyanguyen, Mayte Ramírez, and Fr Javier Alonso, who coordinated the course. The course has been held fortnightly, in which a specific theme has been studied in depth, valuable experiences have been shared, and, in small groups, there has been dialogue on the proposed theme.

On Saturday 19th we had a ZOOM meeting where the students presented their final work, a plan to improve volunteering in their own presence. Representatives from Valencia, Algemés, Albacete, Madrid, Oviedo, Vitoria, and Pamplona in Spain arrived at the end of the course. Veracruz, Tlaxcala, Puebla, Tijuana in Mexico. La Romana in Dominican Republic. Valencia, Barquisimeto, Carora and Maracaibo in Venezuela. Bogotá, Medellín in Colombia. Lima in Peru and Santiago de Chile.

This course has been a beautiful experience of communion where we have worked on different networks and Piarist demarcations in the same formative project. Undoubtedly, the tremendous educational richness in the Pious Schools and a sign of charismatic vitality have been a joyful discovery.



Some of the participants share with us their experience of the course:

It has been a joyful experience to meet people from the Piarist family worldwide. The testimonies we heard in each session and the group work helped me put a name and a face to the community we formed and know exciting experiences. The work we have been asked to do is simple but aimed at reflecting on the reality of each presence. It is a highly recommended course to open our eyes to many issues related to our daily activities and to discover more about the Piarist charism. **Roberto Zabalza. Coordinator of the Ikaskide Pamplona project.**

The course has helped me to renew my enthusiasm for my local reality in which we have come a long way, but where we want to strengthen an accompaniment based on care, which allows the volunteer to grow and makes him identify with some Pious Schools that work for the transformation of society. In addition, it has been a tremendous joy to share the course with brothers from all over the world, to see that often the problems and challenges are similar, but that we all feel part of the Piarist family, and we have shared dreams. **Itziar Vañó. Itaka Escolapios-Valencia**

Our experience in this course has been extraordinary. We are grateful to God for the call to be part of the Piarist volunteers and to know more about our founder, "San José de Calasanz." A phrase that caught our attention was: "I have found in Rome the way to serve God, doing good to the little ones and for nothing in the world I will leave it," In this way, we want to serve the Lord. **Yurlay Rincón. San Ignacio de Loyola Parish. Maracaibo.**

This course has been an opportunity to further my formation on the path of giving myself to others through service. I have been strengthened and enriched by all the testimonies we had the joy of hearing. The experience of others in different parts of the world, but with the same missionary sense, broadened my perspective of volunteering. As a Piarist presence, after finishing this course, we can strengthen the promotion of volunteering through the formation of a team in charge of it and which we can support with the tools received during this preparation time. **Mary Flor Leal. Calasanz Movement. Carora.**

The more than 20 testimonies on the theme of volunteering from different realities of the Pious Schools were a great richness; the learning with the presentations of the eight themes; the fraternity and listening in the spaces of sharing in the small forums; the reflection and teamwork when starting to put into practice what we learned from our presences. Continuing with these spaces and working on the theme of volunteering along standard lines is essential. **Maye Martínez. Volunteer Coordinator Itaka Escolapios-Mexico.**

What struck me most about the course were the testimonies and the opportunity to share with so many people who give their lives with joy and generosity. It made me focus on my vocation, discovering that volunteering is a path of conversion and the lifestyle I want to live. The great expectation now is to give an injection of life to our projects, work on the educational Itineraries, and continue finding the roots of Piarist Volunteering in Calasanz. **Sandra González. Suba (Bogotá)**

This volunteering course has brought us much closer to the mission of the Pious Schools, as we have been able to get to know the testimony of many other volunteers. It has been a very enriching experience, so we want to bring it closer and see it reflected in our volunteering **Miguel Ángel Belenguer. Valencia. OREA Camp.**

Undoubtedly, this time of shared reflection based on the reality of our presence has given us light to continue advancing in our Piarist mission, especially with the poorest. Thanks to all who have participated, especially those who have prepared the themes with so much affection. Calasanz Unites Us in the mission!

