

WE CELEBRATE CALASANZ MOVEMENT DAY

ROOTING DOWN, LAYING DOWN





FOR THE REFLECTIONS IN GROUPS

“IN THE LAND OF THE THIRSTY”

In the land of thirst, water is abundant, but it all depends on the roots... The desert is the land of thirst. In the desert, one learns to be thirsty.

It is a common misconception to say that there is no water in the desert. But in the desert, water is not lacking. It is hidden. After the rains, the water seeps in, sinks into the ground, finds unimaginable places, and carves a path to escape the scorching sun and avoid being dried up by the wind.

Even when the stream is dry—as I have seen for hundreds of kilometers along the Saoura, “a skeleton of a river”—water is found underground.

Plants know very well that water is not lacking. In fact, they go looking for it where it is hidden.

The roots of certain thorny shrubs penetrate more than three meters deep.

The most striking example is the Ténéré tree—“the desert of deserts,” the absolute desert—a unique species of acacia that has the distinction of appearing on maps. This tree, which has the courage to live in the most inhospitable region, sends its roots down to a depth of 36 meters in search of water.

Other plants, on the other hand, grow their roots horizontally, forming an incredible tangle—a very dense network covering a fairly large area—so that they occupy the entire terrain and absorb every trace of moisture. It has been estimated that some plants have roots extending some 80 kilometers.

There are also wells. Some reach depths of 60 meters. In Ouargla, there is a traditional well that is 1,250 meters deep. It is no surprise that this oasis is home to nearly 500,000 date palms.

In the area around Beni Abbes, I enjoyed listening to the music of the numerous swing-wells. A long pole with a mallet at one end and a leather bucket (the de/u) at the other.

In the desert, you discover a reality essential to your survival. Water exists—it is even abundant—but it is hidden.

You are dying of thirst, but you must know that water exists somewhere. Never on the surface.

The plants know this. They suggest that your problem, like theirs, is one of roots.

“Let Jesus Take the Lead” is an invitation to “Operation Roots.” Begin to live more from within, from the depths of your being. Turn to the Word of God once again and immerse yourself in it.

SOME QUESTIONS FOR DIALOGUE

- **In what situations have you seen your life as a desert? Is there a desert of life and faith around you?**
- **What has helped you survive in it? What has helped your roots find water?**
- **Has the Calasanz Movement helped you? In what way? What has it given you this year?**

RAÍCES

J.M.Rodríguez Olaizola

So, in those moments
when you lack the strength.
So, on those days
when life weighs you down.
So, when your fears
find no safe haven...

Don't give up on returning
to your roots and your homeland.
Don't think there's no way out.
Don't believe your demons,
whispering lies,
foreshadowing storms
that will strand
your life in stone's grip.

Remember the arms
that cradled your innocence,
the kisses that healed
your wounds, the celebrations
that marked your path,
the one who was always near.
Remember who is your home,
your family, your certainty.

Don't forget the baggage
of tenderness that along your path
has already been sown
and left its mark on your story.

Shake off the ghosts.
Defy the storms,
turn doubt into song,
make love your answer
and become a refuge
for whoever knocks on your door.

SOME QUESTIONS FOR DIALOGUE

- Which line or lines from these poems do you think are helping you at this point in your life?

IDENTITY

I am not just what I show,
nor the voice heard in the square;
I am the silent whisper,
the wordless memory.

An ancient echo dwells within me,
a heartbeat that does not lie,
that root that in the darkness
anchors me and reminds me.

To be is much more than to exist,
it is to understand shadow and light,
it is to accept that deep down
my soul becomes authentic.



OUR CALASANCTIAN ROOTS

Glicerio Landriani was born in Milan in 1588 into a noble and well-to-do family. As a young man, he studied at prestigious institutions and initially led a comfortable life, but during his time in Rome he underwent a profound inner conversion upon encountering the realities of poverty and the educational work of Saint Joseph Calasanz. This transformation led him to embrace the religious life within the Pious Schools.



In 1612, he officially joined the Piarist order, becoming one of Calasanz's first companions. He distinguished himself particularly as a catechist and educator of poor children, in addition to his life of intense prayer and his commitment to Christian formation. His simple and devoted lifestyle made him an early model of the Piarist ideal.

Calasanz entrusted Glicerio with the two keys to the souls of children and adolescents: Continuous Prayer and Catechesis.

And he did such a fine job that his reputation as a catechist soon spread throughout Rome, and the Pope entrusted Glicerio with the city's entire catechetical movement, which he organized and transformed into an association, earning the Pope's favor by having him grant minor Jubilees to all his parish associations.

All week long, Glicerio worked at the school, and on Sundays and holidays in various parishes in Rome and its surroundings. In numerous parishes, he organized pastoral initiatives and trained people to lead them (San Lorenzo, Santa Maria in Grottapinta, San Adriano, Campagnano, Formello, Frascati...

His catechetical methodology was diverse and dynamic: dramatization, storytelling with drawings, flashcards, or wall posters.

It brought special vitality and intensity to the school's perpetual prayer. In groups of nine students at first, and of twelve or more as the schools grew, a priest would lead perpetual prayer in half-hour shifts, while the rest of the school continued with its regular studies. This served to strengthen friendship with Jesus through prayer, preparation for confession, and reception of the Eucharist, while all the needs of the schools, the Church, and society were entrusted to these children's prayers.

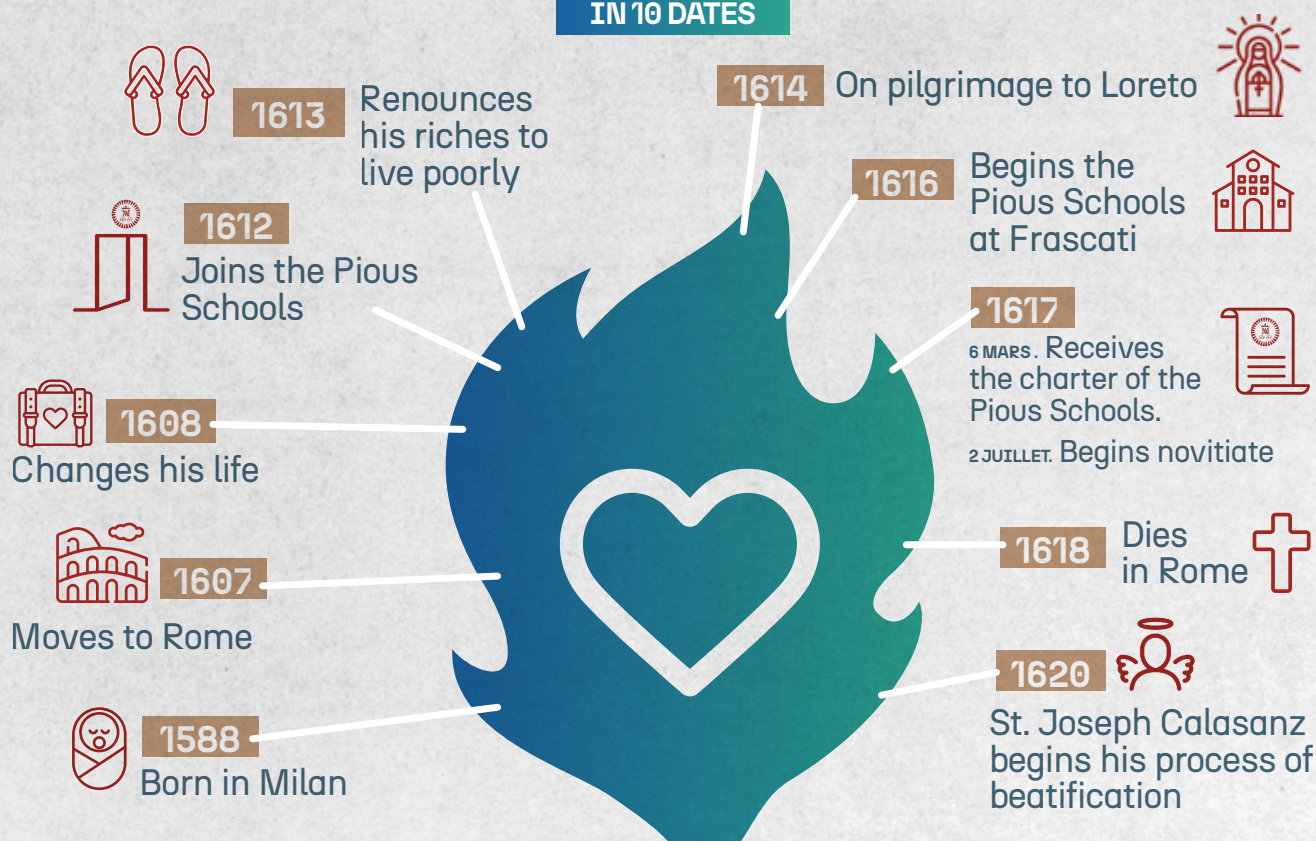
He also encouraged pilgrimages among children and young people to the seven basilicas of Rome, which he saw as pleasant places rich in historical and spiritual messages. Architecture, painting, and music served as tools to bring the Good News to the children. For Glicerio, visiting the churches became one of the key moments of his school catechesis.

Every meeting was planned and structured around three elements: prayer,



The life of Glicerio Landriani

IN 10 DATES



proclamation, and a commitment to charity. The volunteer nurses available at the catechetical centers assisted the poor and needy, even among the families in the neighborhood. If a young person went to jail, Glicerio would often intercede and have them work in these charitable endeavors.

Glicerio also cared about the boys' free time, so to keep the young people from falling into vice, he would often take them to a country estate—not only during Carnival, but also at other times and on vacation days. There, in his presence and under his watchful eye, he entertained them with wholesome activities, occasionally interrupting their play to sing spiritual songs. Calasanz took it upon himself to extend to the other houses the practice introduced by Glicerio of providing the children with opportunities for recreation on holidays and days off: Calasanz prescribes “that this recreation always take place in open spaces, with the parents always present, ensuring that the children engage in various games, and from time to time also in spiritual songs. To this end, Calasanz purchased a villa near Velletri in 1637.

He died very young in Rome in 1618, at the age of only 29, during his novitiate. Despite his short life, he left a profound mark on the Order through his total dedication to education and evangelization. He was recognized as having a reputation for holiness and declared Venerable; since then, his figure has continued to be remembered within the Piarist tradition as an example of vocation and service.

A man passionate about Jesus and the Gospel, who cannot help but share his joy with others.

SOME QUESTIONS FOR DIALOGUE

- **What can we learn from this figure today?**
- **Do we share Jesus with others? How do we do it?**
- **Have we had similar experiences as catechists? What has sharing the Gospel brought us?**

FOR A QUIET MOMENT OF PERSONAL RECOLLECTION

We can all recall moments in our lives when we have felt “at home,” when we have breathed in the deep peace of being true to the best of ourselves, of aligning with God’s dream for our lives, with that which is most authentic, most fundamental, and most original within us—that which makes us unique and irreplaceable beings.

And we also have the experience of meeting people of whom we can say they are happy—which is another way of saying they are settled, well-rooted and grounded, vitally supported by a solid rock; that they have found the right direction in life; that they are at peace with themselves and radiate reconciliation, harmony, and meaning... And this state is called “blessing” (shalom) in the Bible, which is much more than what we call “peace.”

A man and a woman from the Gospel of Luke—the Samaritan in the parable (Lk 10:25–37) and Mary of Bethany (Lk 10:38–42)—appear as icons of indifference, that is, as examples of that vital situation which, in Ignatian language (EE 23), expresses the polarization into a single passion that leads one to desire and choose only that which coincides with “God’s tastes” and to align with his will. Jesus takes their side and holds them up as a model: “Mary has chosen the better part” ... “Go and do likewise” ...

His attitude stands in contrast to the other characters who accompany him in the narrative: in the first instance, the skeptical scribe, who asks, “What must I do?” but without committing his life to it, and the priest and the Levite, so preoccupied with attending worship that they have neither the time nor the attention for the wounded man by the roadside; in the second instance, Martha, so agitated and solicitous...

All of them, distracted and scattered in their own projects, plans, occupations, or reflections, represent that in which we seek effi-

ciency, fulfillment, and occupation for our hyperactivity... “Having everything very clear,” prioritizing, specifying, “doing things,” being busy... makes us feel important and gives us prestige in our own eyes.

We sense them filled with “parasitic desires” (to reach the temple, to be pure, to prepare a good meal...) that do not allow them to live centered on the essential, which at that moment consisted, respectively, in attending to the man in the ditch and in listening to Jesus.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PRAYER

1. Read Luke 10:29–42, trying to identify with each of the characters: the Samaritan and his simple, selfless actions, entirely focused on providing attentive and effective care to the stranger he meets on his way; Martha, agitated and distracted; Mary, silent and silenced, focused on the one thing necessary...

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Let Jesus look upon you in each of these situations.

2. Read Psalm 1, paying attention to its characters: they belong to two distinct groups, clearly defined. On one hand, the righteous man, who is identified solely by that title; on the other, the group of the wicked, sinners, cynics...

Underline the times the righteous and the wicked appear. Regarding the former, it is first stated what he does not do: “he does not fol-

low...,” “he does not enter...,” “he does not sit...,” he does not seem interested in what is said or done at those gatherings...

Then, as if to uncover the reason for this solitary attitude, so different from what is customary, his secret is revealed to us: he is a man whose joy lies elsewhere, who is constantly connected to the Lord and his will.

The image of the sturdy, leafy tree, lush with greenery, laden with fruit, and with well-watered roots... contrasts with the lightness of straw, which is at the mercy of the wind.

In the end, the Lord takes the side of the righteous and their way of life, their “path.” The path of the wicked does not need to be condemned by God: it ends badly on its own, plunging into a precipice, simply because it had no destination.

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1) Imagine yourself as a tree: feel your roots, your branches and leaves, the flow of sap... What kind of tree are you? What are your characteristics: lush, somewhat dry, tall, weak...? Where are you planted? Do you have water nearby? ...

2) Write a prayer, as if that tree that is you—young or old, well-watered or in need of water, in winter or in spring—were speaking to God.

3) Reread the psalm, allowing the desire to have your roots near the water and to be happy in the manner of that believer who whispers the Word of his God day and night to grow within you...

3. In Matthew 7:24–27, we read some words of Jesus that express in another way the experience of being well-founded, in this case with the image of a house well-founded on a rock:

“Whoever hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the winds blew, and the storm beat against that house; yet it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.”

Recall moments in your life when the Lord has been the rock that has given you stability and the

strength to weather storms and tempests. Give thanks to him...

4. Mary, in the Magnificat (Lk 1:46–55), reveals to us her “inner disposition” of joy and praise:

“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior...”

It is an attitude born of the experience of being looked upon by a God who bends toward her, enveloping her in his tenderness and flooding her with grace. And Mary, knowing she is looked upon in this way, rejoices to the deepest roots of her being; and from that joy springs, like a spring, the living water of her praise: “My soul magnifies the Lord...”

1) Stand beside her and open your heart to that love that bends toward you and toward the world; let yourself be loved and looked upon; let go of the oars and let the sails of your boat fill with wind; surrender yourself trustingly to the wind and the current that carry you...



ATTITUDES THAT GROW WITHIN YOU

We can revisit the figures of the Good Samaritan and Mary of Bethany, seeking to discover the secret of their “success” in contrast to the “failure” of the other characters, and what price they had to pay to achieve it.

Here are some attitudes we can discover in them through the Gospel narratives:

- Openness of the senses: an alert attention of their gaze, their ears, their “sense of smell,” to realize that, by the roadside, someone needed help, or that Jesus was arriving in need of a listening ear more than anything else.
- Flexibility, a willingness to set aside one’s own plans (reaching Jerusalem, entertaining the guest...); being able to let them go and shift one’s focus, to move aside, in order to place the wounded man or the guest at the center.
- Asceticism of the present: the priest, the Levite, and Martha are focused on a “later” (reaching the Temple, preparing a good meal...), while both the Samaritan and Mary are fully present in the “now” of the people who unexpectedly enter their lives and demand attention in the present, not later.
- The option of alternative behavior: under the law in force at the time, touching a corpse was considered to result in ritual impurity; and the injured man in the ditch might have been dead. That is why those who “take a detour” are acting correctly, in strict accordance with the law. On the other hand, a rabbinic precept prevented women from becoming disciples of a teacher (“sitting at the feet...” is equivalent to becoming a disciple, as Paul says of himself in relation to Gamaliel). But both the Samaritan and Mary opt for a “countercultural” attitude: they dare to break with the “mainstream” and adopt alternative stances that, however, turn out to be the right ones.
- Capacity for gratuitousness: nothing could have foreshadowed to the Samaritan that he would gain anything from treating the wounded man in this way, which, it seems, brought him more losses than gains; there is not even a word of thanks from the man that might compensate him. As for Mary, she had to give up offering Jesus something as concrete and tangible as a good meal. Both have entered another realm: that of selflessness, beyond all calculation and measure. And they were right, because that is the realm of Jesus.

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Are these attitudes growing within you?

LOSING TO WIN

In the New Testament, the Father's "will" (that is, his love, his pleasure, his joy) rests upon Jesus (Matt. 3:17; 17:5; 1 Macc 11; Luke 3:32; 2 Pet 1:17), and Paul tells us in many ways what his one plan is (his will, his dream, his desire...):

"To make us live together with Christ" (Eph 2:5); "in fellowship with him" (1 Cor 1:9); "conformed to his image" (Rom 8:29) ...

This is not a pre-established rule to conform to, nor a program to fulfill: what exists is the desire of a God "on our side" (Rom 8:31) who wants his children to live; a God who stakes his will on the impatience of that waiting and on the anticipation of a desire that knows nothing of impositions or threats, but only of attraction, seduction, and contagion.

"The will of God," Jesus might have said, "is like a treasure hidden in a field, which, when a man found it, out of joy, went and sold everything he had to buy that field." Not out of voluntarism, nor out of conviction, nor out of sacrifice, but "out of joy," out of the very secret joy of knowing oneself to be in possession of something supremely valuable that made Jesus say:

That is why Jesus' words, which express the most intense moments of his life and coincide with his most unconditional obedience, are always preceded by a confident invocation to the Father, revealing not the submission of a servant who yields, but the communion, the affinity, the profound adherence of a son who trusts.

There is a verb that appears frequently in Deuteronomic language, **dabaq** (to cling to, to stick to, to hold fast to, to join, to draw near), which expresses the attitude that Yahweh expects of his people:

"Choose life, so that you and your descendants may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying his commands, and clinging to him, for he is your life" (Deut. 30:19; cf. Deut. 4:4; 13:5).

Jeremiah also uses it:

"Just as a belt clings to a man's waist, so I had made the whole house of Israel cling to me, to be my people, my renown, my honor, and my glory..." (Jer 13:11).

There is a strong emotional component in each of these examples, an effect of irresistible attraction that compels the one who clings not to let go or separate from that which is the very source of their life. This is how a tree takes root by streams of water (Ps 1:3), and the branch to the vine to share in its sap (Jn 15:4-7). As if they knew that they can only be what they are if they cling to, take root in, and remain in that which gives them their name and the possibility of existence. No one dictates this to them from the outside; it is their own desire to be and to live that is driving them from within, that makes them cling blindly to that which gives them substance and meaning.

We too can know this if we decide to enter into the game of losing and winning that Jesus took a risk on before us: "not my name, but yours"; "not my glory, but yours..."; "not my will, but yours..."; "not my life, but theirs"

But for that, we must trust deeply; we must dare to go beyond our resistance and fears and desire to "do God's will" with the same eagerness with which the psalmist pleaded:

"May your mercy reach me, and I shall live!" (Ps 119:77).

And perhaps God's will (his pleasure, his aspiration, his love, his joy...), his deepest desire for us, is that we trust completely that, in that will of his that reaches us, everything is grace