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ARTICLES

[Part II] “Don’t stand on the sidelines, take part.”



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“Don’t stand on the sidelines, take part”

The Fertility of Conversation in the Spirit for the Apostolic Mission

Testimony of Bro Carlos Alfonso Azpiroz Costa, O.P., Archbishop of Bahía Blanca (Part Two – [Link to part I](#))

Bro Carlos Alfonso Azpiroz Costa, O.P., Archbishop of Bahía Blanca, Argentina, who participated in the work of both sessions of the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission,” presents us with some insights for Dominican and synodal life in an extensive article that we are publishing in two parts. [However, you can read or download the full article here.](#)

Part Two – [Link to part I](#)

How is the bond of unity to be safeguarded in a Church that is synodal and on the way? Let me once again quote St. Paul VI, in his first encyclical *Ecclesiam suam* (n. 38).



GENERAL CHAPTER
Krakow 2025

It was in a way the “programme” of his pontificate, as was the *Redemptor hominis* of St. John Paul II (1979) or the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* of Pope Francis (2013), for each of the two, respectively.

Dialogue, therefore, is a recognized method of the apostolate. It is a way of making spiritual contact. It should however have the following characteristics:

1) **Clarity** before all else; the dialogue demands that what is said should be intelligible. We can think of it as a kind of thought transfusion. It is an invitation to the exercise and development of the highest spiritual and mental powers a man possesses. This fact alone would suffice to make such dialogue rank among the greatest manifestations of human activity and culture. In order to satisfy this first requirement, all of us who feel the spur of the apostolate should examine closely the kind of speech we use. Is it easy to understand? Can it be grasped by ordinary people? Is it current idiom?

2) Our dialogue must be accompanied by that **meeekness** which Christ bade us learn from Himself: “Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart.” (56) It would indeed be a disgrace if our dialogue were marked by arrogance, the use of bared words or offensive bitterness. What gives it its authority is the fact that it affirms the truth, shares with others the gifts of charity, is itself an example of virtue, avoids peremptory language, makes no demands. It is peaceful, has no use for extreme methods, is patient under contradiction and inclines towards generosity.

3) **Confidence** is also necessary; confidence not only in the power of one’s own words, but also in the goodwill of both parties to the dialogue. Hence dialogue promotes intimacy and friendship on both sides. It unites them in a mutual adherence to the Good and thus excludes all self-seeking.

4) Finally, **the prudence of a teacher** who is most careful to make allowances for the psychological and moral circumstances of his hearer, particularly if he is a child, unprepared, suspicious, or hostile. The person who speaks is always at pains to learn the sensitivities of his audience, and if reason demands it, he adapts himself and the manner of his presentation to the susceptibilities and the degree of intelligence of his hearers.

In a dialogue conducted with this kind of foresight, truth is wedded to charity and understanding to love.

The conversation in the Spirit has been, throughout the entire synodal process or journey, the method proposed to guide this “dialogue” more fruitfully. I believe that only dialogue, with these characteristics, is the most suitable way to safeguard the bond of unity in a synodal Church on its journey. Even God has revealed Himself through the “dialogue” of creation and salvation. Today, He calls His People to follow that path. Otherwise, rebellion would arise.

In the same year as the publication of *Gaudete in Domino*, Pope St. Paul VI gave the Church *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, something like the “Evangelizer’s Letter or Guide” (published on December 8th, 1975, the 10th anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Council). Looking at reality as the Order does, that is, from joy or joy in the Lord, evangelization is the clearest and most joyful expression of sharing that gaze. How do we do it? Let us read n.76:

Let us now consider the very persons of the evangelizers. It is often said nowadays that the present century thirsts for authenticity. Especially in regard to young people it is said that they have a horror of the artificial or false and that they are searching above all for truth and honesty.

These “signs of the times” should find us vigilant. Either tacitly or aloud- but always forcefully- we are being asked: Do you really believe what you are proclaiming? Do you live what you believe? Do you really preach what you live? The witness of life has become more than ever an essential condition for real effectiveness in preaching. Precisely because of this we are, to a certain extent, responsible for the progress of the Gospel that we proclaim.

That text, which paraphrases the ritual text of the delivery of the Gospel book during the diaconal ordination, is repeated by Brother Damian Byrne, OP (Master of the Order, 1983-1992), in his letter to the Order on the ministry of preaching. Just as Pope Montini asks all evangelizers, Brother Damian questions the members of the Dominican Family about their primary contribution to the Church (the reason why and for which Saint Dominic embarked on his foundational task). Contemplation and offering others the fruit of our contemplation define us in some way and characterize our life and mission. Our particular way of governance highlights, at the same time and without absurd dialectics, the dignity of the person, their gifts, talents, and charisms, and, without undermining this, a strong communal emphasis. Why? Because, as we read in

the Book of Constitutions and Ordinations of the Friars, and also in the Constitutions of the Nuns of the Order, **“A good which meets with general approval is promoted quickly and easily”** (according to the words of Blessed Humbert of Romans, in *Opera de Vita Regulari*; Ed Berthier I, 72).

The dialogue with God and the dialogue between brothers characterize and express this way of relating and connecting with one another. In these expressions, we could embrace the entire content of the Final Document of the Synodal Assembly! This is the key theme behind which many others have been unfolded, discussed, and discerned: **the conversion of relationships, of processes, of bonds...**

Is this not what we have learned from the joy of St. Dominic and the trust—shared joy—he had in his brothers to live with them and send them out to preach the Gospel?

We clearly learn this on the road (walking together) in the itinerancy that characterises us.

Bro Paul of Venice, one of the witnesses in the process of canonization of St. Dominic (Process of Bologna, Witness VIII), tells that “Master Dominic” used to say to him and to others who were with him: **“Walk, let us think of our Savior.”** He also testifies that “wherever Dominic was, he always spoke of God or with God;” he declares that “he never saw him angry, agitated or troubled, neither because of the fatigue of the journey, nor for any other reason, but **always cheerful in tribulations and patient in adversities.**”

What I experienced at the Synod allowed me to breathe in and breathe out the way of being of the Order *in medio Ecclesiae*. Breathing in and breathing out are the two moments of breathing. Similarly, I could also say: it is necessary to be nourished by the Church and, at the same time, in the Church, and to offer her that breath of St. Dominic, the foundation and meaning of all that is Dominican!

In the last session, long and tedious if you will, voting one by one on all the paragraphs (numbers) of the Final Document, with the qualified majority required for each paragraph to “pass” (273 of the votes), having concluded this most important formality, Pope Francis announced that he would adopt as his own all that was expressed and approved. That is to say that he would not write a “post-

synodal Apostolic Exhortation” of his own authorship (cf. Final Document, 17th General Congregation, Pope’s final greeting, Saturday, October 26th, 2024).

The sustained applause, I would fearlessly say unanimous, expressed not only the deep satisfaction of the duty completed, concluded..., but also, before the eyes of the world, at war and creating divisions, cracks and absurd confrontations, that the Pope was the first to take very seriously (seriousness comes from “serio” and not from “series”) what was elaborated over the course of four years at the local (diocesan), national, continental, and universal levels. I will never forget that moment. We were leaving with the satisfaction of having fulfilled our duty, yes, but with the immense joy of having been taken very seriously in what was discerned and approved, made our own by the Successor of Peter. Perhaps there we understood the deeper, synodal meaning of **all, some, one.**

Now, we have to implement it in the conversion of our particular Churches, involving all God’s holy and faithful people.

The Synod has given me a deeper understanding of the **conversion** to which we have been called. I would like to summarize it in a clear and simple way. But it is not a game, it is an exhortation to live “ecclesiality” seriously, as St. Dominic, St. Catherine and all the saints of the Order lived and preached it! Otherwise, we will be nothing but sad snipers. This is why my final exhortation to each reader of this witness will be:

“Don’t stand on the sidelines; take part”

Fraternally in Christ, Mary and St. Dominic, let us walk together, pilgrims of Hope!

Bahía Blanca, 11 February, Holy Year 2025

+ Bro Carlos Alfonso Azpiroz Costa OP

Archbishop of Bahía Blanca

Fr. Carlos Azpiroz Costa, OP (Buenos Aires, 1956), a member of the current Province of San Agustín in Argentina and Chile, studied for a doctorate in Canon Law at the Angelicum. He served as Master of the Order from 2001 to 2010 and is currently the Archbishop of Bahía Blanca, Argentina.

Pier Giorgio, Dominican Lay Brother



Pier Giorgio first encountered the Dominican Order in 1918, and over the course of the following years, he decided to join as a lay member in 1922. This was not an impulsive decision but a carefully considered choice, as professing as a lay member of the Order is not like joining any ordinary association. It requires a profound Christian commitment to prayer, life, and relationships, which is both specific and consistent.

Pier Giorgio received the Order's habit from Fr. A. Arrighini, in the presbytery of the Church of St. Dominic in Turin. That year marked the seventh centenary of the death of St. Dominic. Among those present at the ceremony were Fr. Martin Gillet, future Master of the Order, Fr. Reginaldo Giuliani, Fr. Enrico Ibertis, and Fathers Filippo and Francesco Robotti.

Pier Giorgio made his profession in the hands of Fr. Francesco Robotti, in the Chapel of Our Lady of Grace, also at St. Dominic in Turin. This marked the beginning of a new path for Pier Giorgio, one shaped by his imitation of the Holy Father Dominic and two other Dominican figures who deeply inspired him: St. Catherine of Siena, whose *Dialogue of Divine Providence* and *Life* he read frequently, and St. Thomas Aquinas, whose *Summa Theologica* he began to study systematically. He was also inspired by Brother Jerome Savonarola.

Pier Giorgio admired Savonarola's fervor, radical commitment, and his refusal to settle for anything less than the fullness of Christian life. The readings of *De Ruina Mundi* and *Miserere* particularly stirred him during a time

of moral decay and political corruption, which was also the rise of fascism, against which Pier Giorgio spoke out from the beginning.

From the friar from Ferrara, he also took the religious name 'Brother Jerome,' which he often used when signing his letters.



In a letter to his friend Antonio Villani, dated August 31, 1923, and now in the Blessed's Office in the Liturgy of the Hours, Pier Giorgio wrote:

"I would really like you to take the name of Brother Jerome, not because it is the name I have as a son of St. Dominic, but because it reminds me of a figure dear to me and certainly to



1922. Per un ecletticismo più intrinseco, per una più attiva volontà di apostolato, si iscrisse al terzo ordine domenicano e si chiamò Fra Gerolamo, in onore del severo predicatore di San Marco. Presente anche padre Reginaldo Giuliani, fece la sua professione di fede nel bel San Domenico, tutto illuminato per la solennità sette volte centenaria del Patriarca guelfo.



Picture from the book: "Mio fratello Pier Giorgio" (Luciana Frassati, 1959)

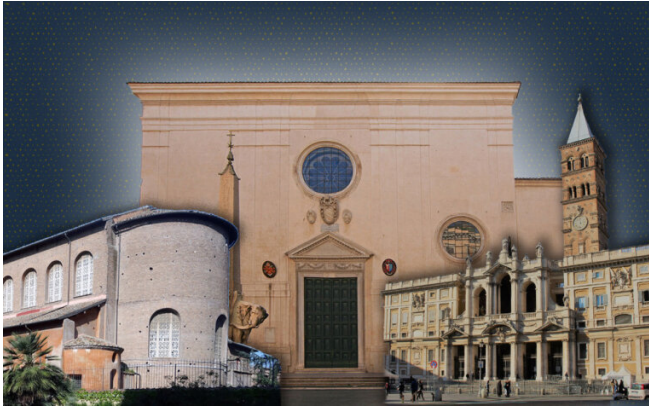
you, who, like me, shares the same sentiments against corrupt customs: the figure of Jerome Savonarola, whose name I unworthily bear."

Pier Giorgio perfectly embodied the Dominican motto *contemplata aliis tradere* ("to hand on to others the fruits of contemplation"), uniting in his daily life the Rosary, the Divine Office, and service to the poor. His presence gave Christian witness in every environment—whether social, familial, academic, or even political.

Like St. Dominic, a contemplative in action and a preacher of the Gospel in every situation, Pier Giorgio glorified his Order with all the passion and dedication of being a member, with all his faith and energy.

From the book "Sulla via dell'amore. Studio su un carteggio di Pier Giorgio Frassati con un amico" by Nicola Gori (Quaderni di Famiglia Domenicana)

The presence of the Order of Preachers in the churches along the Jubilee roads



Santa Sabina, Santa Maria sopra Minerva, Santa Maria Maggiore.

Among the basilicas and churches included in the Jubilee 2025 Jubilee routes, three are closely linked to the historical presence of the Order of Preachers: the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, on the “Papal Basilicas” route; the Basilica of Santa Sabina, on the route of the Churches of the European Union, “Europe in Rome”; and the Basilica of Santa Maria sopra Minerva, on the route “Women Patrons of Europe and Doctors of the Church”.

In the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, the friars of the Order are responsible for administering the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The Apostolic College of Penitentiaries of Santa Maria Maggiore was created by St. Pius V with the Bull “*Pro nostri muneris officio*” of 1st September 1568, entrusting it to the friars of the Order of Preachers. There are 12 ordinary friars and 2 extraordinary confessors, belonging to different Provinces of the Order, and to different nations and languages, to reflect the apostolic and universal character of the Church. “The Liberian Penitentiaries, imitating the spirit of St. Dominic who, as Father, Judge, Master and Friend, reconciled his penitents with God, exercise the ministry of reconciliation in the Papal Basilica of St. Mary Major, fulfilling the Lord’s command: ‘Whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven, and whose sins you do not forgive, they remain unforgiven’ (John 20:23)”, the [Basilica’s website](#) highlights.

The Basilica of Santa Sabina on the Aventine Hill, entrusted to the Order of Preachers, is one of the 28 churches and basilicas that are part of the Jubilee Route of

the Churches of the European Union, “Europe in Rome”, all of them historically linked to European countries for cultural and artistic reasons or because of a tradition of welcoming pilgrims from a particular European Union state. In the case of the Basilica of Santa Sabina, it is Estonia. “In 1219, Pope Honorius III granted the church and part of the building to St. Dominic of Guzman, founder of the Dominican Order, and since then it has become its seat and an important place of reference for the Estonian community, given the historical presence of the Dominican family near Tallinn, the capital of the Estonian country”, as explained on the [official website of the Jubilee 2025](#).

At Santa Sabina the presence of figures of the Order is evident from the time when the Basilica was entrusted to St. Dominic. St. Dominic himself lived for a time in this place, where his cell, now a chapel, is located. To the right of the entrance facing Piazza Pietro d’Illiria, there is a statue of St. Dominic and, to the left, a fresco depicting the scene of the saint who had returned late to the community and was accompanied by angels so as not to disturb the sleep of his brothers. To the left of this entrance is the portico through which one reaches the famous 5th-century door, which is the oldest piece of wood in Christian art and on which Jesus Crucified was depicted for the first time. To the left of the door is the statue of St. Rose of Lima, who was the first saint of the Americas. Entering the Basilica, and looking towards the main altar, on the right side is the chapel of Saint Hyacinth of Poland and on the left side, the chapel of Saint Catherine of Siena, where the tabernacle of the Blessed Sacrament is also located. The apse is decorated with a fresco depicting Jesus among the Apostles and Saints. The remains of Saint Sabina are preserved under the high altar. In the choir, the friars celebrate the daily liturgical offices, as Santa Sabina is the seat of the General Curia of the Order.

The Basilica of Santa Maria sopra Minerva is one of the basilicas that are part of the Jubilee Route “Women Patrons of Europe and Doctors of the Church”. The Dominican friars have been in charge of the church since 1256 and, “probably for more than 10 years the convent of Santa Maria sopra Minerva remained under the care of the Dominican convent of Santa Sabina, the first one established in Rome, which from the year 1300 became the most important reality present in the Urbe”, reads the [official website of the Jubilee 2025](#). In the Basilica are kept the remains of

Blessed Angelico, proclaimed patron saint of artists by St. John Paul II in 1984, and those of St. Catherine of Siena, named Doctor of the Church in 1970, and patron saint of Rome, Italy and Europe.

The friars continue to preach in these basilicas, and with even greater enthusiasm in the Jubilee year, when “pilgrims of hope” from all over the world visit them.

LIFE OF THE ORDER

‘Meditations on Truth’ by Fray Felicísimo Martínez, OP, is published



‘Meditations on Truth’ is the title of the latest book by Fray Felicísimo Martínez Díez, OP, published on 12 March 2025. In this work, Brother Felicísimo offers a series of meditations on truth and addresses his search for it in specific areas of life, proposing the figure of St Thomas Aquinas as a reference point for the defence of truth and as an example that serves as inspiration to believers and non-believers alike.

‘In an age dominated by ‘post-truth’, relativism and political correctness, the search for truth has become an

aspiration that arouses contempt and even mistrust. With the intention of inviting us to fight for the truth, Felicísimo Martínez offers us in this work a series of meditations that start from both a theoretical and a practical point of view. Firstly, he reflects on truth, its levels, the assumptions needed to approach it and its relationship with lies. He then addresses the search for truth in specific areas such as personal relationships, society, politics and education. Finally, as a reference for this defence of truth, the author proposes the figure of Thomas Aquinas, a saint who devoted his life to the search for truth, and whose example serves as inspiration to believers and non-believers,' reads the presentation of the book by the publisher San Pablo.



Fray Felicísimo Martínez Díez, OP, was born in Prioro (León – Spain) in 1943. He took his vows in the Order of Preachers on 5 August 1960 and was ordained a priest on 7 July 1968. He has a degree in Philosophy and Arts from the Complutense University of Madrid and a doctorate in Theology from the Angelicum University in Rome. Dedicated to the teaching of theology in numerous centres and to the ministry of evangelisation in several countries in Latin America, Europe and Asia, he has given courses and conferences in numerous countries. In his writings he has particularly cultivated Christology, morality, religious life and other frontier subjects.



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