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



**The Chapter Experience of the Order and the Synod**

*Testimony of Bro Carlos Alfonso Azpiroz Costa, OP,  
Archbishop of Bahía Blanca (Part One of Two)*

Bro Carlos Alfonso Azpiroz Costa, OP, Archbishop of Bahía Blanca, Argentina, who participated in the work of both sessions of the 16<sup>th</sup> 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 One**

Months after the conclusion of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Session of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission,” all that was experienced has been digested and, above all, the most important images remain, what remains beyond the anecdotal or what is forgotten.

The perspective of time and space then allows us to

give thanks to God, to the Church, and to all those who, in one way or another, allowed me to participate in this Synod on synodality (to express it in simple terms): the trust of my brother bishops from the Argentine Episcopal Conference, which was entrusted with choosing some of the “Synodal Fathers,” and of Pope Francis, who confirmed this choice.

The possibility of contemplating the work of the Holy Spirit, defined in some way by Saint Basil the Great as harmony itself, calms the soul, leaving behind the nervousness typical of each personal intervention and listening to other members of the Synod, which could have been more cautious at the beginning and became much more contemplative afterward. Thanks be to God!

If the 2023 Assembly focused on what we usually call the *status quaestionis*, the second session provided greater confidence, openness of mind and heart, offering us a “resolute path” with very concrete indications that can serve as a guide for the mission of the Churches, on the different continents, in different contexts.

The experts, whether participants in the two Sessions or not, have given, and continue to offer, very profound analyses of the Final Document. Because this – in a sense – is just beginning!

In some ways, it has unfolded similarly to the General Chapters in the life of the friars of the Order of Preachers, which meet every three years (though the frequency has changed over the more than 800 years since the confirmation of the Order). When each session begins, and as we listen to the first interventions (in committees or plenary meetings), we all wonder: where will the reflection lead? What conclusions will be drawn from so many varied topics? Sometimes, there are even friars who whisper, “Where are we headed?” Some certainly question whether anything meaningful will emerge from the apparent disorder of proposals, discussions, and differing viewpoints, etc.!

It cannot be otherwise. *Everything* that concerns the life of the Order around the whole world is subject to *total* reflection, *total* discernment, and ultimately total definition, legislation in the broadest and most analogous sense of our way of being and speaking: constitutions, ordinations, recommendations, admonitions, suggestions, invitations, etc.

In each Chapter, especially the “General” ones (which

certainly demands and expresses this “walking together” typical of synodality), we are many, all very different, coming from very diverse parts of the world! What can we say that is new without breaking the unity or “unanimity” itself of the Order in its tradition and perpetual novelty? (the unanimity of the Word: **having one heart and one soul toward God**).

Little by little, in the patient dialogue, in the presentation of the conclusions, the necessary pruning, correction or amendment of texts, the final approval, we discover again that, indeed, the **Holy Spirit is harmony!** We also reconfirm the necessary consolation, St. Dominic’s promise to his friars who were mourning his imminent departure: he would be more useful to them after his death than he was in life... and so it is!

Let me use the example we are all familiar with from our local, provincial, and general or universal way of life to contemplate, try to understand and ruminate on what we experience in the Paul VI Hall, although from the year 2021 onwards we have already been able to experience it in various ways at the level of the whole Church.

I have not left the Order, but I think the first “postcard from the soul” that I would like to highlight—following the way of being and governing the Order—is the experience of listening to one of our brothers and his contribution to the “Synod of Synodality.” It is not mere chance, nor the result of a lottery, nor do I think it is the fruit of compromises or parlor pacts, to witness that presence and preaching (he was a “Spiritual Assistant” or something like that and not a “Synodal Father,” technically speaking). I am referring to our beloved Bro Timothy Radcliffe, OP.

His presence and preaching, I repeat, can manifest all the deepest rhythms of our life and mission: contemplating (listening to God and the brothers; seeing them and presenting them to God; speaking to Him about the men and women of our time) and giving to others the fruit of what we contemplate (preaching, speaking to the brothers about God; speaking to them about what God is working in them).

Months after the conclusion of the second session (Saturday 26 October 2024), I believe that both in the retreats prior to both sessions (2023 and 2024) and in his

reflections during the sessions, without participating directly in some of the 37 working tables, his words have indicated the main keys to understanding what we have in our hands and hearts today: the Conclusions of 2023 and the Final Document of 2024.

I believe that the titles of each “chapter” of the Final Document and the references to the apparitions of the Risen Jesus (the weaving of his words), save the essence of that preaching. The document—let us say—has been inspired in some way by the rhythm of that preaching, it has received in an incisive way the intuitions that our brother has been unpacking, like a seed in a soil that I believe, thanks to the work of the first session (2023), appeared more fertile in the second (2024).

With this sort of prologue, I can try to draw some answers to the questions proposed, without claiming to be exhaustive! On the contrary, the capitular experience of the Order and that of this Synod allow me to stammer out something that may be useful to whoever has the patience to read or listen to me.

I still recall (at the time I was still living in Rome, in Santa Sabina) the speech of Pope Benedict XVI—the Christmas greeting to the Roman Curia—on 22 December 2005. The date is not difficult to remember: the 789<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the confirmation of the Order of Preachers by pope Honorius III. Among the themes that the Pope addressed to his Curia, he underlined that of the “hermeneutics of the Second Vatican Council on the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its solemn closure (8 December 1965).”

I refer specifically to what he defined as “the hermeneutics of reform in continuity and not in rupture.” It is about renewal within the continuity of the single subject—the Church—which the Lord has given us; a subject that grows in time and develops, but always remains the same, the single subject of the People of God journeying on the way.

For many, in fact, the Council meant a “break” with what had gone before. Because it was a break from the previous tradition. Of course, some rejoiced precisely because of this, because everything was new everywhere and this total break was long awaited, promising, and necessary; others, on the contrary, wept for the times gone by and condemned the Council for having caused this break.

Meanwhile, the post-conciliar magisterium continued with patience and hope, helping the reflection and real assumption of the profound conciliar, i.e., synodal, reflection.

I believe that these lamentations, very briefly evoked above, still persist. To better express myself, let me quote the Exhortation *Gaudete in Domino* of Saint Paul VI (9 May 1975, Holy Year!). I am thinking, as an example, of n. 74: *Let the agitated members of various groups therefore reject the excesses of systematic and destructive criticism! Without departing from a realistic viewpoint, let Christian communities become centers of optimism where all the members resolutely endeavor to perceive the positive aspect of people and events. “Love does not rejoice in what is wrong but rejoices with the truth. There is no limit to love’s forbearance, to its trust, its hope, its power to endure.” (1 Cor 13:6-7)*

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**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.

## A Reflection Presented on Common Life According to the LCO

For suggestions, please contact Bro Germán at the address provided in [the document](#).



Brother Germán Correa, OP

“From the Fundamental Constitution to the Common Life”. Bro Germán Correa, OP, has presented proposals for the Book of Constitutions and Ordinations.

In the Order of Preachers’ journey together, we friars have the opportunity to present our proposals to the General Chapter. The next General Chapter will be held in Cracow (Poland) in July of this year. The following proposal has been presented as a reflection on our common life.

Germán Correa, OP, a son of the Province of San Luis Bertrán in Colombia, has prepared a document, entitled “From the Fundamental Constitution to the Common Life,” in which he argues that, after having carefully studied the first two numbers of the Book of the Constitutions and Ordinations of the Friars of the Order of Preachers (LCO), it would be necessary to “polish some of its expressions, and even some lines.” The document requires careful reading. It is therefore [published in PDF](#) for those who wish to contribute to this reflection.

In the document, Bro Germán presents four propositions, under the following titles:

1. “Conventual Life, the Basis of Preaching;”
2. “In Our Order, Life, Like the Mission, Is a Participation in That of the Apostles;”
3. “Apostolic Life: Giving to Others What Has Been Contemplated;”
4. “What the Rule of St. Augustine Embraces.”



## LIFE OF THE ORDER

### The XXI Assembly of CIDALC Was Held in Brazil



The collaboration agreements between entities and the coordination of joint activities will shape the next three years of the plan.

The provincial priors, vice-provincials, and provincial vicars of the region, organized through the Interprovincial Conference of the Dominicans of Latin America and the Caribbean (CIDALC), met from February 9<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The assembly was held at the Emmaus House of St. Benedict's Monastery. The region is composed of six provinces: St. Augustine in Argentina and Chile, Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas in Brazil, St. John the Baptist in Peru, St. Louis Bertrán in Colombia, St. Vincent Ferrer in Central America, and St. James in Mexico; two vice-provinces: St. Catherine of Siena in Ecuador and Bolivia; and three provincial vicariates: Fray Antón Montesino in Uruguay and Paraguay, Venezuela, and Fray Pedro de Córdoba in the Dominican Republic and Cuba.

This was a week of common life centered on prayer, liturgical celebration, study, and attentive listening. Each superior presented the situation of his entity within the current socio-political context, the life of the brothers in their various fields of preaching, and both the opportunities and challenges they face.

Online messages from the Master of the Order and the Socius for Intellectual Life were listened to. Bro. Gerard

Francisco Timoner III, OP, Master of the Order, addressed the participants with reflections based on his experience from canonical visitations to the entities of the region. Bro. Pablo Sícouly, OP, Socius for Intellectual Life, spoke about his area of responsibility. Also joining online, Bro. Ignace Berthot, OP, from Haiti, presented the situation of the country and the friars who preach there. Among the invited guests were Bro. Juan Manuel Hernández, OP, Socius for Fraternal Life and Formation, and Bro. James Spahn, OP, from the Province of St. Albert the Great, representing the Provinces of the United States.

In the context of coordinating and organizing joint activities, collaboration agreements between certain entities were discussed, along with activities in different zones (Southern Cone, Mesoamerica and the Caribbean, Bolivarian), cooperation with the Dominican Family, task organization for the next three years, and, especially, formation.

A key commitment of the assembly was to continue supporting the Dominican School of Formators in collaboration with the Confederation of Dominican Sisters of Latin America and the Caribbean (CODALC).

*Bro. Fernando Delgado, OP  
Socius for Latin America and the Caribbean*

## IDYM meets in Rome



The International Commission of the Dominican Youth Movement (IDYM) gathered for its annual meeting in Rome, held at Santa Sabina on February 21-23. Among those present were: Carlos Beltrán, International Coordinator of IDYM; Cristina Expósito, IDYM's Promotor of Formation; Humberto Rico, Promotor of Communications; and fr. Cristóbal Torres, OP, General Promoter of the Dominican Laity, who serves and accompanies IDYM and the International Commission. In attendance virtually were: Isioma Chukwuka-Nwodo, IDYM Promoter of Finance; Wilson Amado, IDYM Promoter of Mission.

The meeting offered members of the International Commission, who reside all over the world in Colombia, Mozambique, Spain, Venezuela and Nigeria and meet monthly via teleconference, the opportunity to meet face to face and strengthen fraternal bonds, as well as address strategic planning for the coming year. Topics discussed included: Building a communications infrastructure that better connects national IDYM bodies; the new International Directory of local IDYM groups; collaborating on formation across branches of the Dominican Family; the upcoming Jubilee of Youth in July and August; and the next IDYM International Assembly.

The International Commission enjoyed this special opportunity to strengthen fraternal bonds, even as they continue working collaboratively to build up the participation of young adults in the life and mission of the worldwide Dominican Order.

## New book published: Du saint dominicain au docteur commun : Thomas d'Aquin et ses représentations



The Historical Institute of the Order of Preachers is pleased to announce the recent publication of the volume *Du saint dominicain au docteur commun : Thomas d'Aquin et ses représentations*, published in the *Dissertationes Historicae* series.

The volume, edited by the art historians Émilie Roffidal and Claire Rousseau, is dedicated to the iconography of St. Thomas Aquinas –an important figure in the history of the Order, the Church and intellectual history– on the occasion of his triple jubilee: 700 years since his canonisation, 750 years since his death and 800 years since his birth, celebrated from 28 January 2023 to 28 January 2025. Nine contributions by various authors deal with the beginnings and spread of the iconography of St. Thomas and the historical-spiritual context in which such representations were disseminated.

Quoting the author of the introduction, Christian Heck, the book represents “a profoundly new contribution to our knowledge of the iconography of Thomas Aquinas, in a geographical area extending as far as the New World and in a completely open chronological framework, from the years immediately following the saint’s death to the middle of the 20th century. Art history here brilliantly confirms how much the analysis of figurative representations enriches cultural history and history in general.”

In his preface, the Master of the Order, Brother Gerard

Francisco Timoner III, OP, recalling the significant message of St. Thomas, writes:

“St. Thomas, who brilliantly championed the harmony between faith and reason, is recognized as an authority throughout the centuries. ... Interestingly, St. Thomas admitted that he knew the divine mysteries more by prayer than by study. deductive reason can only go so far in grasping the divine, it has to give way to contemplative prayer and poetry: *Adoro te devote, latens Deitas, quae sub his figuris vere latitas: tibi se cor meum totum subiicit, quia te contemplans totum deficit.*”

In an analogous manner, when so many words seem inadequate to describe a reality or a person, we turn to symbolic and artistic representation. Over the centuries, countless authors have written about St. Thomas. In the following pages we hope to learn more about how he and his work were perceived and appreciated through the “poetry”

of images, symbols and art. The intense interest of earlier generations in the *Doctor Angelicus* indicates that they saw something in him that merits profound reflection. May this interest never wane and may those who devote themselves to the study of St. Thomas’ thoughts and teaching in our time gain fresh and further insights which can become the source and inspiration for a living Thomism.”

[The volume was published by Viella and can be ordered from the publisher.](#)

With this volume, the Historical Institute of the Order of Preachers and the Viella publishing house inaugurate their collaboration and can already announce the forthcoming publication of the volume *Domenico di Caleruega, his Order and his memory from Bologna to the West*, edited by Viliam Štefan Dóci OP and Riccardo Parmeggiani (vol. 43 of the *Dissertationes Historicae*).



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