

Memorial of St. Pier Giorgio Frassati

4 July 2026

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Eli said to Samuel, “go and reply: ‘Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening’ ” (1 Samuel 3:9).

TO ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL DOMINICAN YOUTH MOVEMENT

Dear Young Friends,

Among all the groups linked to the Order, the *International Dominican Youth Movement* occupies a unique place. It is the only one whose defining characteristic is something that naturally passes with time: youth. Unlike the various branches of the Dominican Family, each of which is ordered toward a lifelong commitment, the IDYM is intentionally and properly a time of discernment. It is a privileged season in which you are invited to ask, with honesty and with freedom, whether the Dominican way of life is truly your home and, if it is, in which particular expression of that vocation the Lord is calling you to live it: as a lay Dominican, a member of a secular institute, an apostolic sister, a contemplative nun, or a friar.

Over time, participation in the Dominican Youth Movement may foster in some of you a profound sense of belonging to the Dominican Family and a deep identification with its charism and mission, even without leading you to discern a vocation within any of its particular branches. This, too, is a genuine grace. The Dominican tradition has always radiated far beyond the formal boundaries of the Order, enriching the life of the Church through men and women whose minds and hearts have been formed by its love of truth, contemplation, fraternity, and preaching, inspired by the witness of the countless holy men and women whom God has raised up within the Dominican Family.

First, it is important to recognize that something has drawn you to the Dominican Family. Attend carefully to this attraction, for throughout the Scriptures, we see how God calls people before they fully understand the path that lies before them. Perhaps He is doing the same with you. The Lord, who knows the human heart more intimately than we ever can, is often at work within us long before we recognize His presence.

Perhaps you cannot yet name what you are seeking. You know only that there is a longing within you: to seek the truth with humility, to contemplate God in prayer, and to belong to a family that, for more than eight centuries, has shared with the

Church and the world the fruits of contemplation through the many forms of Dominican preaching. Such a longing is not a conclusion; it is an *invitation*. And I write this letter to encourage you to listen to it more attentively.

In a sense, you are being drawn to Saint Dominic himself and to the extraordinary family that has grown in its mission to preach the Gospel across more than eight centuries. Consider those who have walked this path before you: Thomas Aquinas, whose immense intellect was always at the service of a deeper love of God; Catherine of Siena, who, without formal learning, spoke courageously to popes because she loved Christ and His Church; Martin de Porres, who revealed the dignity of humble service by caring for the sick and forgotten with quiet joy; Beato Angelico, whose art became a form of prayer and whose contemplative gaze transfigured beauty into an eloquent preaching of the Gospel; Pier Giorgio Frassati, whose youthful vitality, love for the poor, and delight in friendship remind us that holiness belongs not only to the old, but to every generous heart. Their lives were remarkably different. They preached in universities and marketplaces, in convents and hospitals, through scholarship, contemplation, works of mercy, and simple friendship. Yet they belonged to one another because they belonged first to Christ. The same Dominican spirit animated them all: the search for truth in community, the love of prayer, compassion for those in need, and the desire to share the light of the Gospel. If something in their lives resonates with your own heart, do not dismiss it lightly. Such recognition may be more than admiration. It may be the beginning of a conversation that God has long desired to have with you, a conversation about the person he created you to become and the place where your gifts may best serve His Kingdom.

It is precisely that conversation which we call *discernment*, and it is worth pausing to understand what discernment truly is and is not. It is not a technique to be mastered, nor a matter of personality profiles or vocational aptitude, useful though such tools may be. At its heart, discernment is the patient art of *learning to listen*: to the voice of God, to the deepest movements of one's own heart, and to the needs of the world that God loves with inexhaustible tenderness. Such attentiveness cannot be hurried. Indeed, uncertainty is often not an obstacle to discernment but one of its indispensable companions. It teaches us humility, disposes us to listen, and gradually frees us from the illusion that our lives are ultimately our own to control.

Many young people fear making the wrong choice, as though God were waiting to expose a mistake or withdraw His call if they took a mistaken path. But this is not the God revealed in Jesus Christ. The Lord whom we meet in the Gospel is the Good Shepherd who seeks the lost, the Father who waits for His children, the risen Christ who walks beside discouraged disciples before they are able to recognise him. On the road to Emmaus, he accompanies them with remarkable patience, opening the Scriptures and rekindling hope long before their eyes are opened. Such is the manner of God's providence. He does not cease accompanying those whom he calls.

The Dominican Family has always sought to become a school of this patient attentiveness. Saint Dominic himself was never a man of restless urgency. Before his preaching mission gradually gave birth to the Order, he spent years in fidelity as a canon in Osma: praying the Divine Office, studying the Sacred Scriptures, sharing fraternity, and learning the discipline of contemplation. Those hidden years were not

a prelude to his vocation; they were its very foundation. Only one who has first learned to listen can truly become a preacher. Only one who has learned to stand before God in silence can speak a word capable of reaching the human heart.

This is the life to which we invite you, a way of following Christ. It is sustained by the conviction that truth is worthy of our lifelong pursuit, that the beauty of God deserves our contemplation, and that what is received in prayer cannot remain a private possession but must become a gift for others. As Saint Thomas Aquinas expresses it so profoundly: “Just as it is better to enlighten than merely to shine, so is it better to give to others the fruits of one’s contemplation than merely to contemplate”¹. Our study, our contemplation, and our preaching are never ends in themselves. They are expressions of the compassion of Christ, who desires that every person may come to know the truth that sets us free.

This vision takes flesh in ways that are ordinary yet transformative. It is present in study that gradually becomes prayer, and in prayer that gradually illuminates everything else. It is alive in conversations that go on longer than planned because the question being discussed turns out to matter more than anyone realised. It is felt in friendships rooted not merely in shared interest but in a shared love of Christ and of the truth he embodies. And it finds its fullest expression in preaching, which in the Dominican tradition arises not from possessing every answer but from faithfully and joyfully seeking the One who is Truth itself. Again and again, those who enter the Dominican tradition discover that the writings of Thomas Aquinas, Catherine of Siena, Meister Eckhart, or countless other Dominican teachers illuminate questions they once believed belonged to them alone. The communion of saints reminds us that the search for truth is never a solitary undertaking. As Saint Albert the Great reminds us: the search for truth is not meant to be a solitary journey for we ought *to seek the truth in the sweetness of fellowship and fraternity (in dulcedine societatis quaerere veritatem)*².

As you discern your own path, the richness and diversity of the Dominican Family may at first seem overwhelming. **The friars, the contemplative nuns, the apostolic sisters, and the lay Dominicans all share the one Dominican charism, each according to a distinct form of life. These are not competing vocations but complementary expressions of a single grace.** The nun who keeps vigil in the contemplative silence of the monastery, the friar who proclaims the Gospel, the sister who serves Christ in apostolic ministry, and the lay Dominican who bears witness to the Gospel in family life, professional work, and civic engagement all participate in the one mission entrusted to Saint Dominic: *to speak the truth in love* (Eph 4:15) and thus to lead others to the saving truth of Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Tim 2:4).

Perhaps, then, your first question is not yet which form of life God is calling you to embrace. The deeper question is whether this Dominican way of following Christ resonates with the deepest desires of your heart. Does the love of truth awaken something within you? Does a life shaped by prayer, study, fraternity, and preaching seem strangely familiar, as though it were answering a longing you have carried for many years without knowing its name?

¹ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, Q. 188, A. 6.

² St. Albert the Great, *In Politicorum*, lib. VIII, tract. 1, c. 6 (ed. Borgnet, VIII, 803–804).

The answer unfolds gradually. Pray faithfully, and allow your prayer to be honest before God. Seek the guidance of a wise spiritual director or confessor who is willing to challenge as well as encourage you. Remain close to the Dominican community. Observe not whether its members are flawless, for we are not, but whether, amid the demands and sacrifices of our vocation, we possess the profound joy that comes from belonging wholly to Christ. Such joy is one of the surest signs of an authentic vocation. In the end, vocation is not the acceptance of a mission or the pursuit of a career. It is the discovery of the place where God's call and the deepest truth of your own life meet. It is there that a person gradually becomes fully alive, fully free, and fully at home in Christ.

The familiar adaptation of Saint Catherine's words: "*Be who God meant you to be, and you will set the world on fire*"³ are not an invitation to self-assertion, but to holiness. Catherine understood that the renewal of our world does not begin with grand strategies, but with men and women who allow themselves to be transformed by grace.

Dear friends, the fire that God kindled in the heart of Saint Dominic more than eight centuries ago has never ceased to burn. It continues to illuminate minds, to enkindle hearts, and to send preachers into the world. If you have begun to feel even a spark of that fire, do not be afraid. It may be that the Lord is inviting you to draw nearer, to listen more deeply, and to discover the joy of walking with him in the company of Saint Dominic and the whole Dominican Family.

May Mary, Queen of Preachers, accompany you with her maternal care, strengthen you in your discernment, and lead you always to the joy of following her Son.

Your brother in Saint Dominic,


Fr. Gerard Francisco Timoner III, OFM
Master of the Order

P.S. This letter is being sent also to all the members of the Dominican Family, as a reminder that accompanying young people in their discernment is a responsibility we all share. I encourage each of them to welcome you with fraternal warmth, to pray for you faithfully, and to help you discern the particular path by which the Lord is calling you to share in the mission and the joy of Saint Dominic.

³ St. Catherine of Siena, *Letter to Stefano Maconi* (Letter 368): "If you are what you should be, you will set all Italy on fire." The widely circulated version, "*Be who God meant you to be, and you will set the world ablaze*," is a modern adaptation, echoed by Pope John Paul II in his Homily at the Closing Mass of World Youth Day, *Tor Vergata*, Rome, 20 August 2000.