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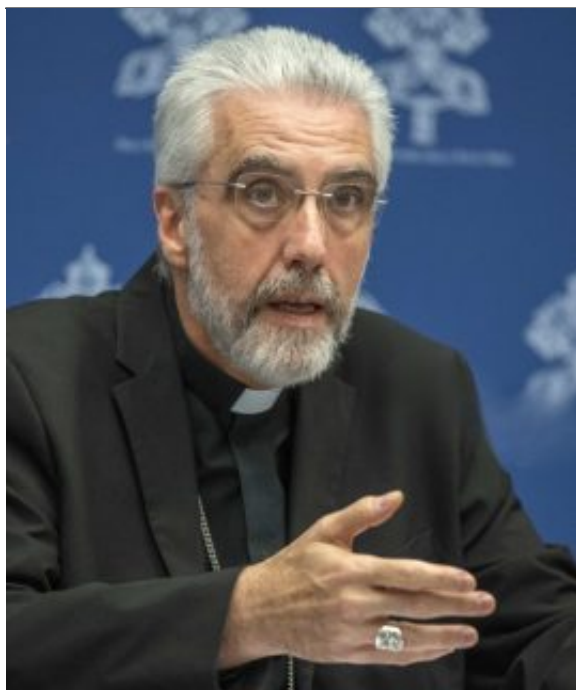
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Leo XIV's 43rd sacerdotal anniversary. Bishop Marín de San Martín: “To him, synodality is the Church's everyday life”

19 Giugno 2025



“He is a man of God, profoundly devoted to prayer, for whom his sacerdotal vocation is lived as service to the Church and to the people.” The undersecretary of the Synod, Monsignor Marín de San Martín, highlights the momentous occasion of the 43rd anniversary of Pope Leo XIV's priestly ordination. An Augustinian himself, he shared the Pope's spiritual and ecclesial journey. He describes the Pope's vision for the Church, his missionary vocation, and his commitment to synodality, whose profound faith shines through his simplicity, compassion, and charity.



Your Excellency, could you describe the priest that Leo XIV has been over the years? He is a man of God. He bears witness to the Risen Christ with fortitude and authenticity. He is a deeply prayerful man. He celebrates the Holy Eucharist fervently and places it at the centre of his life. His priesthood is inextricably linked to Christ's, and he lives it through service, selflessness, and love for the Church. He embodies the Augustinian concept of the “total Christ”: the Church as the body of Christ, inseparable from its head. There is no Christ without the Church, nor Church without Christ. **To what extent is the Augustinian spirituality present in his style of priesthood?** From the outset, Pope Leo described himself as “a son of Saint Augustine, an Augustinian”. His priestly ministry draws on the Augustinian charism. This is particularly evident in his communion with Christ, and through Christ, with all his brothers and sisters.

His spirituality is incarnate, expressed as love for the community and humble, dedicated service.

Community is at the heart of Augustinian religious life, expressed as one heart and one soul, in devotion to God. Therefore, discernment is conducted collectively, responsibility is shared, and fraternity is lived out concretely. This is all reflected in his deeply ecclesial and community-centred pastoral style. **About: Monsignor Luis Marín de San Martín.** Born in Madrid in 1961, he has been an Augustinian priest since 1988. He earned a **doctorate in theology** from the

Pontifical University of Comillas, subsequent to which he served in various **formation** and **governance** roles within the Order. In 2008, Robert Prevost asked him to serve in the General Curia in Rome. In 2021, he was appointed undersecretary of the Synod of Bishops and titular bishop of Suliana. He is known for his **expertise in Augustinian spirituality**, acting as a link between tradition and synodality, as well as for his **extensive publications**. **Pope Leo XIV captivates us with his simplicity. What is the source of this sensitivity?** He is a simple man, but by no means naive; kind, but not insecure; patient, but not weak. His character is nurtured by prayer and by his pastoral ministry. This profound sensitivity stems from his experience of Christ the Good Shepherd. His strong concern for social issues draws him close to the suffering and marginalised. His love of justice, his willingness to walk with the people and his ability to listen are all hallmarks of his character. His priesthood embodies the true meaning of being with, serving, sharing and accompanying. **Throughout his inaugural acts as Pontiff, Pope Leo XVI highlighted synodality on several occasions. What makes this theme so significant to him?** Synodality is an essential dimension of the Church and an integral part of the Augustinian Order.

For him, walking together in a spirit of mutual listening and shared responsibility is a daily reality, not an empty formula.

He put it into practice it during his time as a priest and bishop, and he continues to do so today as Pope. He firmly believes that a synodal Church is truer to the Gospel. **Has synodality also become a style of governance?** In fact, it has never been otherwise. When he was Prior General, he adopted a team-based approach in line with the principle of subsidiarity. Co-responsibility was a hallmark of his ministry in Chiclayo, where he involved everyone in drafting the pastoral programme. As Prefect, he played an active role in the synodal process by making targeted, practical contributions to two of the synodal working groups. He never adopts an individualistic or isolated approach. On the contrary, he listens, avoids playing a leading role and only makes decisions after careful reflection, with responsibility and determination. **His special attention to the 'signs of the times' appears to be a central aspect of his ministry.** The Word becomes flesh; the Gospel is incarnate in history. We need to understand these signs

if we are to respond to the challenges of our times, for the purpose of evangelisation.

Pope Leo is not a man of abstractions or theory; he is immersed in the world around him.

In his speeches, he touched on artificial intelligence, peace, war and people's lives. His ability to interpret reality enables him to serve others more effectively and bring the Gospel where its



To what degree has his missionary experience proved influential? It has to a significant extent. He has a missionary vocation and a deep calling to evangelise. A few years after his ordination as a priest, he joined the mission in Peru. He came into contact with very different realities: Chicago, Chiclayo, Rome. When he was Superior General, he visited Augustinian communities around the world. He has a big heart and an open mind; he speaks many languages and is familiar with different cultures and peoples. He is a unifying figure who builds bridges. **How would you describe him in his role as shepherd?** He is serene, thoughtful and tireless. He works hard, methodically and precisely. He is also a theologian, canonist and mathematician. Above all, though, he is a man who listens.

Pope Leo is not one for abstractions or

theories; he is immersed in the world.

He is a guide who accompanies, not a leader who prevails. He also has great leadership skills.

What is his perspective on the role of the laity? The point of departure is baptism, as opposed to a clerical perspective. It is the responsibility of all the baptised to fulfil the mission of the Church. This is not a 'gift' or a 'concession' granted to the lay faithful; it is their vocation. It can be described as differentiated co-responsibility, but not assemblyism. Everyone participates with their own contribution, while respecting different roles and recognising everyone's value.

This is synodality in action. **Ordination and Formation of Pope Leo XIV** Pope Leo XIV gave he gave his **solemn vows on 29 August 1981**. He studied at the Catholic Theological Union of Chicago, receiving a diploma **in theology**. He was then sent by his superiors to Rome to study **Canon Law** at the Pontifical University of St Thomas Aquinas (the Angelicum). He was **ordained a priest on June 19, 1982**, at the Augustinian College of Saint Monica by Archbishop Jean Jadot. He obtained his **licentiate** in **1984** and, the following year, while preparing his **doctoral dissertation**, he joined the Augustinian mission in Chulucanas, Peru. In **1987**, he defended his doctoral thesis on "**The Role of the Local Prior in the Order of Saint Augustine**." He was appointed Director of Vocations and Missions for the Augustinian Province of "Mother of Good Counsel" in Illinois. **The need for a Pope capable of fostering unity has been frequently voiced. Does Pope Leo XIV reflect this figure?** Pope Leo does not fuel polarisation. The Church is a community of brothers and sisters, not an arena for confrontation. We all work together for the greater good of the Church. Pope Leo is a pontiff in the noblest sense of the word: a builder of bridges. He seeks unity and communion while also valuing diversity. Christian love lies at the heart of everything. Where there is Christian love, diversity becomes a source of enrichment. Its absence causes division. **Which image of the Church best encapsulates the Pope's vision?** The Church as the family of God. In the Church, as in a family, everyone has a role, but everyone does their part with love. The father, the mother, the children — each person is unique, and no one is excluded.

This is the image of a living, inclusive, loving and co-responsible Church. It is a body wherein every member is

important.

In a time scarred by war, Leo XIV brings a message of peace. We Christians thrive on hope. Peace is not an unattainable dream; it is the risen Christ. The Pope's deep faith is the source of this hope. War and death do not have the final say. The final chapter is resurrection. It is this peace that we must bear witness to, first and foremost in our daily lives. **Ultimately, what kind of Pontiff will he be?** A believer. A man of faith, with a deep love for the Church and a clear understanding of our world. He believes that Christian love is the key to human coexistence. His character is poised and thoughtful, yet dynamic and courageous. Leo XIV will give continuity to a history of service and communion with serenity and wisdom. I am certain of this: he will be a great Pope.

Riccardo Benotti