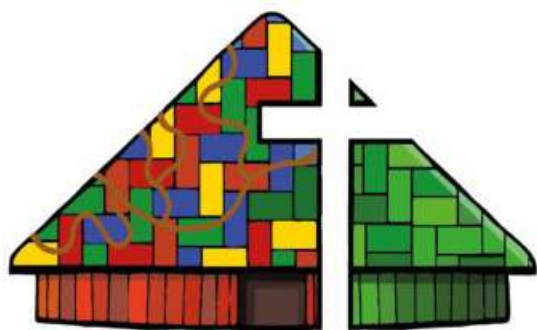


Amazonia: New Paths for the Church
And for an Integral Ecology
Day 22 ~ 27 October 2019



TIENDA GLOBAL DE LA AMAZONIA CASA COMÚN
GLOBAL TENT OF AMAZONIA COMMON HOME

The Synod on Amazonia has now ended. The formal text has been approved by the 184 voting members with more than the two-thirds required. Pope Francis has accepted the report for consideration and says that he will write an apostolic exhortation before the end of the year, deciding which recommendations will be implemented.

The text which holds the same title as the Synod contains an introduction and five chapters. It defines ecological sin as “an action or omission against God, against others, the community and the environment, sin against future generations which manifests itself in acts and habits of pollution and destruction of environmental harmony, transgressions against principles of interdependence and the breaking of solidarity networks among creatures and against the virtue of justice.” Each of the chapters invites the Church and all of us to conversion: integral, pastoral, cultural, ecological and synodal.

Closing Eucharist

Pope Francis, in the closing Mass today, used the readings to describe the essence of the Synod. Sirach says that the prayer of the poor will reach to the clouds. **“The cry of the poor, together with that of Earth, came to us from the Amazon, and we cannot pretend we have not heard it.”** In the second reading, Paul expressed his last wish: not something for himself but for the Gospel, “so that it may be proclaimed to all nations.” The Gospel calls us to go beyond ourselves; so, too, the Synod ventured out into the deep, leaving safe harbours for the open sea where the Spirit invited us to cast our nets.

Integral Ecology

Integral conversion is needed to respond to the many sorrows and the great violence that today wound and deform Amazonia, threatening its life: the privatization of natural goods; predatory models of production; deforestation which has affected 17% of the whole region; pollution from the extractive industries; climate change; drug trafficking; alcoholism; trafficking; the criminalization of leaders and defenders of the territory; and illegal armed groups. Ways of response include permanent pastoral care for migrants who become victims of trafficking and the creation of missionary teams offering inculturated liturgies and favouring the integration of these migrants in the cities.

Pastoral Conversion

Pastoral conversion invites interreligious dialogue and greater knowledge of indigenous religions and cults; moments of encounter, study, and dialogue among the Amazonian churches and the followers of indigenous religions; indigenous pastoral ministry so that the Amazon might be evangelised by Amazonians, and space for Amazonian youth with their lights and their shadows: divided between tradition and innovation; immersed in an intense crisis of values; victims of sad realities such as poverty, violence, new forms of slavery, and difficulty in accessing education.

Cultural Conversion

Cultural conversion believes that the Amazonian people offer teachings of life and an integrated vision of reality capable of understanding that all of creation is connected; and guaranteeing, therefore, a sustainable management. “We must respect the rights of self-determination, the delimitation of their territories, and of prior consultation of indigenous peoples regarding the use of their land. The Church must undertake two types of action, one pastoral and another that of applying pressure so that national governments might protect the rights and the inviolability of the territories of these people.” Centres of research in the Church should study and collect the traditions, languages, beliefs and aspirations of the indigenous peoples, encouraging an education based on their own identity and culture.

Ecological Conversion

Ecological conversion brings an attitude that links pastoral care of nature to justice for the poorest and most disadvantaged people of the world. ***Integral ecology should not be understood as one more***

path that the Church can choose for the future, but as the only path possible to save the region from predatory extractivism, from the spilling of innocent blood, and from the criminalization of defenders of the Amazon.

Synodal Conversion

Overcoming clericalism and arbitrary impositions; reinforcing a culture of dialogue, of listening, and of spiritual discernment; responding to pastoral challenges – these are the characteristics on which a synodal conversion must be based. This translates into co-responsibility and the ministry of all; with attention to the participation of the laity, both men and women. Lay participation, both in consultation and in decision making in the life and mission of the Church, must be strengthened and expanded, promoting and conferring ministries “for men and women in an equitable way.”

Presence of Women

As the wisdom of the ancestral peoples reminds us, Mother Earth has a feminine face; and in the indigenous world, women are “a living and responsible presence in human promotion.” The Synod asks that the voice of women be heard, that they be consulted, that they participate in a more decisive way in decision-making, that they contribute to ecclesial synodality and more forcefully to leadership within the Church, in pastoral councils and in areas of government. Protagonists and guardians of creation and of the common home, women are often “victims of physical, moral, and religious violence, including feminicide.” The text reaffirms the Church’s commitment to defending women’s rights, especially migrant women. It recognizes the ministries entrusted by Jesus to women, and it asks that adequately formed and prepared women might receive the ministries of acolyte and lector, among the others they are already able to carry out. In Catholic communities guided by women, it asks for the creation of a ministry recognizing women who are leaders of the community.

Permanent Diaconate for Women

The text notes that many consultations on the Amazon sought the permanent diaconate for women. Synod participants requested that their experiences and reflections be merged with the outcomes of the “Study Commission on the Diaconate of Women” (2016) and that a final decision be made.

Formation of Priests and Ordination of Married Priests

The formation of priests should be inculturated with preparation of pastors who live the Gospel, know canon law, are compassionate, close to people, capable of listening, of healing and consoling, without seeking to impose themselves, and manifesting the tenderness of the Father. Formation for the priesthood must include disciplines such as integral ecology, eco-theology, theology of creation, indigenous theologies, ecological spirituality, the history of the Church in the Amazon, and Amazonian cultural anthropology. Given the vast expanse of the Amazonian territory and the scarcity of ordained ministers, the text proposes “to establish criteria and dispositions to ordain to the priesthood suitable men who have already legitimately constituted a stable family (married), are held in esteem by the community, and live their permanent diaconate fruitfully.”

Restructuring the Church in the Region

The Synod proposes a restructuring of the local Churches from a Pan-Amazonian point of view, resizing the vast geographical areas of many dioceses; grouping together particular Churches present in the same region; and creating an Amazonian Fund for evangelization. A regional ecclesial structure, organized with REPAM and CELAM, was suggested to take up many of the proposals that emerged from the Synod. There is a proposal to establish an Amazonian Catholic University, based on interdisciplinary research, inculturation and intercultural dialogue, and Sacred Scripture, respecting the customs and traditions of the indigenous peoples. The text recommends a competent commission to study the development of an Amazonian rite that “expresses the liturgical, theological, disciplinary, and spiritual heritage of the Amazon.”



~~ Mary, Queen of the Amazon, pray for us ~~