



SECRETARIA GENERALIS
SYNODI

Presentation
Proceedings of the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops
for the Pan-Amazon Region

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OPENING ADDRESS
Card. Mario Grech
Secretary General of the Synod

Dear General Director,
Your Eminences,
Ladies and Gentlemen Ambassadors,
Dear guests,

From the outset, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to the Director General of the FAO, **Dr. Qu Dongyu**, for having so generously accepted the request of the General Secretariat of the Synod to organise a moment reflection on the situation of the communities in the Amazon region, on the occasion of the publication of the Acts of the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for the Panamazonic Region.

This initiative, dear Director, is all the more significant today when the Catholic Church is celebrating a Synod on Synodality, that is, it is experiencing an important moment of reflection on its way of being Church, putting back at the centre of its being and acting, the equal dignity of its faithful, who called to be co-responsible in the mission of the Church, and this also in dialogue with other civil institutions and religious realities.

A glimpse of this mission can be clearly discerned in the Special Assembly for the Panamazonian Region that Pope Francis wished to celebrate in October 2019 and which brought together in Rome bishops and representatives and experts from the local communities of that region.

The process, which began in 2017, is still ongoing, particularly in the implementation of the multiple calls of the territory discerned in that meeting in Rome in 2019, as we will hear in this meeting. Then, as today, the Church did not want to impose pre-packaged solutions, but stepped down from its authoritative chair and listened to a situation, a reality, a cry and a call for help from the people of that region.

Before the CEAMA, the Ecclesial Conference for Amazonia, - and here let me greet His Eminence Cardinal Pedro Ricardo Barreto - before the CEAMA, which is a fruit of that Synodal Assembly, among the many other initiatives that are gradually being woven together as part of the Church's mission in the biome, the General Secretariat of the Synod, together with the Pan-

Amazonian Ecclesial Network (REPAM) invested a great deal in listening to the people and local communities, thus carrying out a systematic work that became generative because it restored dignity to the people, making them protagonists of their own destiny.

Rather than providing answers to the environmental crisis and the suffering of the local populations, the Church, through the Pan-Amazonian Synod, offered a method - which is in itself contentful - a way of doing things, made up of listening, dialogue and ecclesial discernment which starts by recognising the human being as an active subject, a protagonist of his or her own future. A method that from the periphery of the Amazon has challenged the centre of the Church and global society for that synodal listening phase has reached some 87,000 people from the eight countries and one overseas territory that make up this biome (Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Venezuela, Suriname and French Guyana). This is what is really important: not to take the place of the people and communities experiencing a particular problem because it is they who have the real knowledge of what they are experiencing. Rather, it is about offering them a place, an occasion and a time for their voices to be truly heard. This was the Synod Assembly! Listening to the people, especially to the holy people of God, the bishops and the Pope tried to capture what the Holy Spirit is inspiring the local Churches in this region in their unwavering commitment of upholding the centrality of the person, the common good, solidarity and the responsible stewardship of creation in their mission

Dear brothers and sisters, I am deeply convinced that even in international politics, a true listening, which takes seriously the fears, anxieties, desires and hopes of individuals and communities, can become generative of creative and healthy solutions for the common good of the entire international community.

A second element which I would like to draw from the experience of the Pan-Amazonian Synod concerns the 'integral perspective'. Recently, addressing the participants of Katholikentag - a major Church event in Germany - Pope Francis reminded them that "the many moral, social, economic and political crises that we are experiencing are all interconnected. Care for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, protection of life and the family, defence of the dignity of every human life, and outer and inner peace all belong to a single reality" (Message, 29.05.2024). Even for the various crises affecting the environment and the peoples of the Amazon region, it is necessary for interventions to have an integral perspective because the issues are interconnected and intersect with each other. At the same time, the problems of the Amazonian people and the environmental crisis which they are experiencing affect all of us here. Only by coming together can we truly address the situation, by articulating the different points of view: the local, the national and the international; but also the environmental, social, cultic and spiritual dimensions. Only when acting together, can a fair and dignified solution be found.

Finally, my third point originates from a word much used (and loved) by Pope Francis. It is 'desborde'. On several occasions, including during the Special Assembly for the Amazon, he used this word to indicate the need for an overflow, a going beyond the norms, rules, and interests of each in favour of a superabundance of commitment on the part of each. I believe that in addressing the challenges facing creation and local communities today, it is necessary to use this 'desborde'. Our *Querida Amazonia* really needs a superabundance of commitment, especially given the superabundance of violence that the region is still experiencing today. It is up to us, as an international community, to take up the challenge. Thank you.