

ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION AND PLURIFORM CHURCH IN THE LIGHT OF THE AMAZON SYNOD

CONVERSÃO ECOLÓGICA E PLURALISMO ECLESIAL
À LUZ DO SÍNODO DA AMAZÔNIA

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Abstract: Taking into account the documents of the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon region and the post-synodal exhortation “*Querida Amazonia*,” this article studies the issue of ecological conversion and the model of a pluriform and well-enculturated Church. In different ways, we are all responsible for the current socio-environmental crisis and, therefore, we all need conversion. The synod proposes Francis of Assisi as an example of the integral conversion we all need. The second part of the article analyzes the new paths that the Synod indicates for the Church in that region so that she may have an Amazonian and indigenous face.

Keywords: Pan-Amazonian Synod; Ecological sin; Evangelization; Conversion.

Síntese: A partir dos documentos do Sínodo dos bispos para a região pan-amazônica e da Exortação Pós-sinodal *Querida Amazônia*, este artigo estuda a conversão ecológica e o modelo de Igreja pluriforme e bem inculturada que o Sínodo propõe. De diferentes formas, todos somos responsáveis pela crise socioambiental e, portanto, todos precisamos de conversão. O Sínodo propõe Francisco de Assis como exemplo dessa conversão integral. A segunda parte do artigo analisa os novos caminhos que o Sínodo indica, para que a Igreja, presente naquela área

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socioambiental, tenha rosto amazônico e seja um povo sinodal, consequentemente, em que todos participem.

Palavras-chave: Sínodo Pan-amazônico; Pecado ecológico; Evangelização; Conversão.

Introduction

The Synod of Bishops on the Amazon, celebrated in Rome from 6 to 27 October 2019, focused on a very specific geographical area, but had a universal resonance. In many ways, the Amazon region is the biological heart of this planet that we are destroying in the name of the god of money.¹ Our irresponsible behavior has provoked the current socio-environmental crisis and is endangering our survival as a species. In this context, the Synod has discerned about the “new paths for the Church and for integral ecology” and about what “good news” the “prophetic and Samaritan Church” can offer.²

The Amazon is the mirror of our world: “a fifth of the water we drink and of the air we breathe comes from the Amazon. The Amazonian biome is the great regulator of the world’s climate and rain, to which it contributes more than 30%”.³ The energy and carbon dioxide cycles in the universal ecosystem also depend on it (*Querida Amazonia* [QA], n. 48). Its challenges are ours: we cannot ignore them. They appeal to the consciousness of every human being.⁴ We must, therefore, address them with an approach that is not just “green,” but holistic and multicolored.⁵

Analyzing the Synod’s documents and the post-synodal exhortation *Querida Amazonia* (*Beloved Amazon*), this article investigates the theme of ecological conversion and the model of a multiform and well-incul-

1. The god of money is at the center of “the economic and financial policies of the globalized world”. FRANCIS, Address to representatives of the confederation of Italian cooperatives (Feb 28, 2015).

2. SYNOD OF BISHOPS, Amazonia... *Instrumentum Laboris* [SB-il], n. 43.

3. FALASCA S., Dalla *Laudato Si'* alle nostre Amazzonie, p. 11; CAPUZZI L.; FALASCA S., *Frontiera Amazzonia*. The Amazon has an extension of 7.8 million square kilometers (Australia has 7.69), distributed in eight countries: Peru, Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Venezuela, Guyana, French Guiana, and Suriname. There are 33.6 million inhabitants, of whom approximately 2.5 million are indigenous, belonging to 390 ethnic groups with 290 different languages. More than 110 of these indigenous peoples are in voluntary isolation. S19il 57; FRANCIS, *Querida Amazonia* [QA], n. 29.

4. FRANCIS, *Laudato Si'* [LS], n. 3.

5. “We do not need an environmentalism that is concerned for the biome but ignores the Amazonian peoples”. QA, n. 8; S19il, n. 45.

turated Church that the Synod proposes. The first part presents the current socio-environmental crisis in the Amazon region as an expression of our ecological sin. In different ways, we all are responsible for it and, therefore, we all need conversion. The second part analyzes the new paths that the Synod has indicated in order to reach a pluriform, Amazonian, and indigenous Church; i.e., a synodal people that walk together. It also offers some insights on the Synod's proposals about evangelization and about a new relationship with nature.⁶

1. Situation of sin and call to conversion

During the preparation of the Synod, many people from the Amazon⁷ were involved and investigations were carried out, providing precise information on the abuses and exploitation in that region. For example, at religious level, there has been a growing secularization, which goes hand in hand with the idolatry of money⁸ and the increase of “alienating messianisms” (SB-il, n. 32).

Mercantilism and the culture of waste are the fruit of current economic system, which subordinates human beings to capital and reduces each of them “to a piece of the immense productive machine”.⁹ This has led to many abuses, such as human trafficking, narcotics, sexual exploitation (QA, N; 10), violence against women,¹⁰ and alcoholism. Besides, leaders and activists are often victims of illegal and uncontrolled armed groups.

“The original peoples of the Amazon have probably never been so threatened in their territories as they are now”.¹¹ In fact, the aboriginal inhabitants find themselves without ownership rights to the spaces they occupy and see how their new generations are losing not only their an-

6. An Italian version of this article has been published in: CARBAJO NÚÑEZ, *Conversione ecologica e Chiesa pluriforme alla luce del Sinodo sull'Amazzonia*.

7. Some 87,000 people were involved in the consultation process, 65,000 in the preparatory processes and 22,000 participated in Assemblies and discussion groups, as well as 90% of the bishops and vicars of the Amazon.

8. FRANCIS, *Evangelii Gaudium* (Nov. 24, 2013) [EG], n. 54-55.

9. JOHN PAUL II, Address to representatives of the indigenous communities at Izamal, Mexico, p. 427 [my translation].

10. “In some regions of the Amazon, 90% of the indigenous people murdered in isolated settlements have been women”. S19il, n. 60. The number of martyrs in the Amazon is alarming. Between 2003 and 2017, at least 1119 indigenous people were killed in Brazil for defending their territories. S19il, n. 145.

11. FRANCIS, Address at Puerto Maldonado [PM], p. 5.