

6th General Congregation: Overview presented by Vatican News



#SinodoAmazonico

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The sixth General Congregation of the Special Synod of Bishops for the Amazon region took place in the afternoon of the 9th of October in the presence of Pope Francis. The Synod for the Amazon is taking place in the Vatican #until October the 27th.# 180 Synod Fathers were present in the Synod Hall.

The tragedy of drug trafficking and its consequences: this was one of the interventions discussed on Wednesday afternoon in the Synod Hall. In some areas of the Amazon region, the cultivation of coca has increased from 12 thousand to 23 thousand hectares. This has had a devastating effect on the rise in crime and on the upheaval of the natural equilibrium of a territory facing increased desertification.

At the same time, millions of hectares of land are being destroyed by authorised fires and the construction of hydroelectric dams. This has had a very strong impact on the environment of some regions, altering ecosystems.

For this reason, a call to ecological conversion is necessary. It was said in the Synod Hall that the Church must speak with a prophetic voice in order for the issue of integral ecology to enter the agenda of international bodies.

Inculturation and evangelisation

Other interventions by the Synod Fathers reflected on the balance between inculturation and evangelisation, inviting us to look at the example of Jesus.

The Incarnation itself, is the greatest sign of inculturation, because it is the Word of God taking on human form in order to make itself visible in His love.

The Church is called to incarnate herself in peoples' everyday lives, just as the missionaries did in the Amazon.

Missionary synodality

One intervention, in particular, expressed the idea that the Amazon should become a laboratory of permanent missionary synodality, for the good of both the peoples who live in the region and for the good of the Church. Stress was also placed on the importance of interculturality and on the enhancement of cultures and of Indigenous populations, so as to help care for our common home.

The challenge of vocations and the possibility of viri probati

Still on the topic of evangelisation, there was discussion regarding the challenges of priestly and religious vocations. The Synod Fathers reflected on the possibility of "viri probati". One intervention suggested this possibility would weaken the incentive for priests to go from one continent for another, or from one diocese for another. The priest, in fact, is not "of the community", but "of the Church" and, as such, can be "for any community".

Another intervention suggested it is not so much priests who who are needed, as lay deacons.

It was reiterated that there is a need for a better formation for priests, and there was a call to give value to the responsibilities of the laity.

Popular piety

A further intervention focused on the theme of popular piety, an aspect of evangelisation that cannot be ignored, it was said.

This was described as one of the fundamental characteristics of the peoples of the Amazon, and it being necessary to care for it as a treasure reflecting Jesus Christ. From this stemmed the idea that manifestations of popular piety be increasingly accompanied, promoted and enhanced by the Church.

Theology of Creation

The focus of the Synod Hall then turned to the theology of Creation, where God's Word to humankind resides. Based on this, the Synod Fathers reflected on the importance of a major dialogue between this theology and positive sciences – as if to forget creation would mean forgetting the Creator.

The importance of defending the rights of the Indigenous peoples of the Amazon was also stressed. Dialogue with them is important, helping us to value them as worthy interlocutors, endowed with the ability to be self-determined.

The role of women in the Church and society

Auditors, fraternal delegates and special guests were also given the floor during the 6th Congregation. A particular point stressed the importance of promoting the role of women, of giving value to their leadership within the family, society and the Church. Women were described as being guardians of life, evangelisers, artisans of hope, the sweet breeze of God and the maternal face of the Church. Interventions stressed the importance of recognising the style with which women of the Amazon proclaim the Gospel, as they are often silent yet very heavily involved in society. It was suggested that a synodality of gender be strengthened in the Church.

Interreligious and ecumenical dialogue

The importance of interreligious dialogue was also discussed in the Synod Hall. The kind which aims at trust and on seeing differences as opportunities. One that is far from religious colonisation and close to listening and awareness of difference.

The focus then turned to ecumenical dialogue, highlighting the importance of a common path dedicated also to the protection of the rights of indigenous peoples -so often victims of violence - and of the Amazonian land destroyed by predatory mining methods or by poisonous cultivations. A common proclamation of the Gospel can be a way to combat these crimes. It was also noted that Christians cannot be silent when faced with the violence and injustices that the Amazon and its people are facing. Announcing God's love in the most remote corners of the region means denouncing all forms of oppression on the beauty of Creation.

Amazonia, an authentic place concerning everyone

It was added that the Amazon is an authentic place in which many of the global challenges of our time are manifested, challenges that affect us all. The sufferings of the Amazonian peoples, in fact, derive from an "imperial" lifestyle, in which life is considered a simple commodity and inequalities end up being strengthened more and more. Instead, Indigenous peoples can help us in the understanding of the interconnectedness of things: global cooperation is possible and urgent.

The example of the Pope

Pope Francis spoke at the beginning of the open interventions by pointing out what had struck him most so far. The Pope, who had opened the works of the day by praying for our "Jewish brothers" on the day of Yom Kippur, ended the day by praying for the victims of the attack on the synagogue in Halle, Germany.

Source: Vatican News