

87th General Congregation. Overview presented by Vatican News



#SinodoAmazonico

8th General Congregation. Overview presented by Vatican News

The first week of the three-week Special Synod for the Pan-Amazon region concluded on Saturday evening, 12 October. Along with the Pope, there were 166 Synod Fathers in the hall, along with others participating in the Synod.

One of the themes put forward in the eighth General Congregation of the Special Synod for the Pan-Amazon region on Saturday afternoon was the centrality of Christ in the Church's mission. "How many know the Gospel?", one of the Synod participants asked. In addition, it was affirmed that the Good News must be announced not only in the Amazon, but in the entire world. Since evangelization is never undertaken alone, the creation of a team was proposed. The hope is that this team would be able to both respond adequately to the multiple pastoral challenges facing the region and witness to the joy of evangelization.

A Reflection on celibacy and the priesthood

Once again, the proposal for *virii probati* returned in more than one intervention. Some contributions highlighted that the lack of vocations is not particular to the Amazon. This led to the question, "Why make an exception exclusively for that region?" Taking up this theme in a future Synod was also suggested. Another observed that it is precisely because of celibacy that priests are welcomed by some indigenous populations. Furthermore, it was also stated that today's world sees celibacy as the last rampart to be demolished using the pressure of a hedonistic and secular culture. It is, therefore, necessary to carry out an attentive reflection on the value of a celibate priesthood.

Others pointed out that a discussion regarding new models of priesthood is both inevitable and desirable. If on the one hand, sending priests to other dioceses and regions is encouraged, then on the other hand, ordaining wise men of proven faith should also be recommended. This hypothesis would not wound communion in the Church, nor would it undermine the value of celibacy. Rather, it might represent a decisive step toward achieving an ordained ministry that does not just visit a territory, but comes from and remains present in it. Another argument is that this response is not being put forward to solve the lack of vocations, but that the Church might have an identity that is truly Amazonian. It was also suggested that the Synod could lay the foundation for this new step forward in faith in the Holy Spirit which must be stronger than the fear of making a mistake.

Involving women: an antidote to clericalism

The theme of women in the Church was also brought up again in the afternoon, with the request that they be given more pastoral responsibility and effective participation, even at decision-making levels. Discerning the institution of women deacons in the region was also requested. Women today have already acquired greater roles in the life of the Christian community, not only as catechists or mothers, but also as persons capable of taking on new ministries. In addition, it was proposed that the inclusion of women, under the sign of reconciliation of the covenant, could lay the foundation for a less clerical Church. Clericalism is still present in the Church today, one Synod participant emphatically stated, and is an obstacle to service, fraternity and solidarity.

Listening to the Holy Spirit

A Synod exists to listen constantly to the Holy Spirit. This attitude of listening was proposed as the attitude that might guide and inspire an ecological conversion necessary to counteract the environmental destruction that threatens our planet. The Synod participants were reminded that the Creator entrusted the Amazon to our care. It is the most beautiful and vital garden on the planet. But unfortunately, we risk transforming this “terrestrial paradise” into a “hell” because of the fires raging which could deprive certain indigenous peoples of their indispensable heritage. Walking together means listening to “the agony of Mother Earth” and becoming aware of the “violence behind extractive ethnocide”. The appeal made by indigenous Amazonian organizations is that of reversing the tide so as not to fall into greater danger.

Everything is connected

We are all connected to each other. “Good living” (“buen vivir”) does not mean living “the good life”. Rather, it means that we are connected to each other and to the earth. The fragmentation of human existence that leads to disparity in terms of social condition needs to be rejected and condemned. Even though globalization has brought undeniable benefits to our lives, it has also opened the door to “wild capitalism” and a materialism that has created an extremely harmful form of consumerism. While the developed world demands cheap products, the indigenous populations who make them often pay the price in blood. From this reality emerged the appeal for a more simple style of life and for an ecological conversion that embraces fairer trade in the name of justice and peace.

Toward a Church with an indigenous face

Once again the request was heard in the Synod hall to be constantly aware of the suffering of the indigenous population who have a sovereign right to exist in the Amazon. Discovering the seeds of the word of God in the cultures and traditions of the region means recognizing that Christ already lives in the peoples who have not yet heard the Gospel. The Gospel, in fact, is not the exclusive patrimony of any one culture. It is this approach that favours the existence of an indigenous and Amazonian Church, one person said. One proposal is that a new regional structure be instituted which would continue the momentum created by the positive experience of the networks created in the pre-Synod process and the inspirations of the Spirit received during the Synod.

Gift of religious life in the Amazon

Those at the Synod also heard a precious example of an indigenous person whose life has been offered to God through the religious life, thus helping the Church assume an indigenous face. Men and women religious struggle together for the rights of the people. They also feel called to pursue in their own ongoing formation the discovery of connections between their own indigenous heritage and Christian spirituality. In this way they hope to contribute to an integral ecology leading to the protection of both humankind and nature.

Source: Vatican News

