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THE AMAZON: NEW PATHS FOR THE CHURCH AND

FOR AN INTEGRAL ECOLOGY

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ABBREVIATIONS

- AG Decree *Ad Gentes*, Vatican Council II, 1965.
- CCC *Catechism of the Catholic Church*
- CELAM Latin American Episcopal Council
- CIDH Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
- CLAR Confederation of Latin American and Caribbean Religious
- CV Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit*, Francis, 2019.
- DAp. Concluding Document of the V General Conference of the Latin American Episcopal Council(CELAM), Aparecida, Brazil, 2007.
- EE Encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, John Paul II, 2003.
- EG Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, Francis, 2013.
- EN Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Paul VI, 1975.
- Fr.PM Address to the “Meeting with Indigenous People of Amazonia”, Coliseo Regional Madre de Dios (Puerto Maldonado), Francis, 19 January 2018.
- GS Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, Vatican Council II, 1965.
- ITC International Theological Commission
- LG Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, Vatican Council II, 1964.
- LS Encyclical *Laudato Si'*, Francis, 2015.
- OE Decree *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, Vatican Council II, 1964.
- PDV Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, John Paul II, 1992.
- PIACI *Pueblos Indígenas en Aislamiento y Contacto Inicial* (Indigenous Peoples in Isolation and Initial Contact)
- PIAV *Pueblos Indígenas en Aislamiento Voluntario* (Indigenous Peoples in Voluntary Isolation)
- REPAM Pan-Amazon Church Network
- SC Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Vatican Council II, 1963.
- SC1967 Encyclical *Sacerdotalis caelibatus*, Paul VI, 1967.

[Biblical quotations are from the New American Bible (2002)]

INTRODUCTION

“The one who sat on the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new.’

Then he said, ‘Write these words down, for they are trustworthy and true’” (Rev 21:5)

1. After a long synodal journey of listening to the People of God in the Church of the Amazon, which Pope Francis inaugurated during his visit to the Amazon, 19 January 2018, the Synod took place in Rome in a fraternal gathering of 21 days in October 2019. The climate was one of open, free and respectful exchange between bishops pastors in the Amazon, missionaries, lay people and representatives of the indigenous peoples of the Amazon. We were witnesses participating in an ecclesial event marked by the urgency of the theme that calls for opening new paths for the Church in the territory. We took part in serious work in an environment marked with the conviction of listening to the voice of the Spirit.

The Synod took place in a fraternal and prayerful environment. Sometimes the interventions were met with applause and songs, and there were deep contemplative silences throughout. Outside the Synod Hall, there was a noticeable presence of people from the Amazonian world who organised acts of support in various activities and processions, such as the opening when songs and dances accompanied the Holy Father from Peter's tomb to the Synod Hall. The Way of the Cross of the martyrs of the Amazon had a major impact, as did the presence of a great number of international media.

2. All participants displayed acute awareness of the dramatic state of destruction affecting the Amazon. The territory and its inhabitants are disappearing, especially the indigenous peoples. The Amazon rainforest is a "biological heart" for the increasingly threatened earth. It is a frenzied race to the death. Radical changes are urgently needed, in a new direction which would allow saving the forest. It is scientifically proven that the disappearance of the Amazon biome will have a catastrophic impact on the planet as a whole!

3. In its preparatory stage, the synodal journey of the People of God involved the entire Church in the territory around the consultation document that inspired the *Instrumentum Laboris*: Bishops, missionaries, members of other Christian communities, lay people, and many representatives of indigenous peoples. This highlights the importance of listening to the voice of the Amazon, stirred by the powerful breath of the Holy Spirit in the cry of the wounded land and its inhabitants. The active participation of more than 87,000 people was noted, from cities and from different cultures, along with numerous groups from other ecclesial sectors and the contributions of academics and civil society organizations regarding the specific central themes.

4. The celebration of the Synod succeeded in highlighting the integration of the voice of the Amazon with the voice and feelings of the participating pastors. It was a new experience of listening in order to discern the voice of the Spirit who leads the Church to new paths of presence, evangelization and intercultural dialogue in the Amazon. The request which arose during the preparatory process, that the Church be an ally of the Amazon world, was strongly affirmed. The celebration ended with great joy and the hope of embracing and practicing the new paradigm of integral ecology, care of the common home and defence of the Amazon.

CHAPTER I THE AMAZON: FROM LISTENING TO INTEGRAL CONVERSION

"Then the angel showed me the river of life-giving water, sparkling like crystal,

flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Rev 22:1)

5. "Christ points to the Amazon" (Paul VI, *Message to the Pilgrims of Bethlehem*, 10.10.1971). He frees everyone from sin and bestows on them the dignity of the sons and daughters of God. Listening to the Amazon, in the spirit of a true disciple and in the light of the Word of God and of Tradition, leads us to a profound conversion of our plans and structures to Christ and his Gospel.

The voice and song of the Amazon as a message of life

6. In the Amazon, life is inserted into and linked with and integrated into the territory; this vital and nourishing physical space forms the basis of life, supports it and defines its limits. The Amazon, also called Panamazonia, is a vast territory with an estimated population of 33.6 million inhabitants, of whom between 2 and 2.5 million are indigenous. The area of the Amazon River basin and all its tributaries spreads over 9 countries: Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, Brazil, Guyana, Suriname and French Guiana. The Amazon region is essential for the distribution of rainfall in the South American area and contributes to the great movements of air around the planet; it is currently the world's second most vulnerable area due to climate change directly caused by human activity.

7. The water and land of this region nourish and sustain the natural world, the life and cultures of hundreds of communities, indigenous, peasant, afro-descendant, mestizo, settlers, river-dwellers and urban dwellers. Water, the source of life, has a rich symbolic meaning. In the Amazon region, the water cycle is the great connector. It connects ecosystems, cultures and the development of the territory.

8. The Amazon region is multi-ethnic and multi-cultural. The different peoples know how to adapt to the territory. Within each culture, they have built and rebuilt their worldview, their symbols and meanings, and their vision of the future. In indigenous cultures and peoples, ancient practices and mythical explanations coexist with modern technologies and challenges. The faces that inhabit the Amazon are highly varied. In addition to the native peoples, there is a great mixture born of the encounter and distancing between different peoples.

9. The search of the Amazonian indigenous peoples for life in its abundance takes the form of what they call 'good living', *buen vivir*, which is fully realised in the Beatitudes. It is a matter of living in harmony with oneself, with nature, with human beings and with the Supreme Being, since there is intercommunication throughout the cosmos; here there are neither exclusions nor those who exclude, and here a full life for all can be projected. Such an understanding of life is characterized by the interconnection and harmony of relationships between water, territory and nature, community life and culture, God and various spiritual forces. For them, 'good living' means understanding the centrality of the transcendent relational character of human beings and of creation, and implies 'good acting'. This integral approach is expressed in their own way of organizing that starts from the family and the community, and embraces a responsible use of all the goods of creation. Indigenous peoples aspire to better living conditions, especially in health and education. They want to enjoy sustainable development that they themselves choose and shape and that stays in harmony with their traditional ways of life, in a dialogue between their ancestral wisdom and technology and the new ones acquired.

The cry of the earth and the cry of the poor

10. But the Amazon today is a wounded and deformed beauty, a place of suffering and violence. Attacks on nature have consequences for people's lives. The pre-synodal consultations depicted this single socio-environmental crisis in terms of the following threats to life: appropriation and privatization of natural goods, such as water itself; legal logging concessions and illegal logging; predatory hunting and fishing; unsustainable mega-projects (hydroelectric and forest concessions, massive logging, monocultivation, highways, waterways, railways, and mining and oil projects); pollution caused by extractive industries and city garbage dumps; and, above all, climate change. These are real threats with serious social consequences: pollution-related diseases, drug trafficking, illegal armed groups, alcoholism, violence against women, sexual exploitation, human trafficking and smuggling, organ traffic, sex tourism, the loss of original culture and identity (language, customs and spiritual practices), criminalization and assassination of leaders and defenders of the territory. Behind all this are dominant economic and political interests, with the complicity of some government officials and some indigenous authorities. The victims are the most vulnerable: children, youth, women and our sister mother earth.

11. For its part, the scientific community warns of the risks of deforestation, which to date comprises almost 17% of the whole Amazon forest. This threatens the survival of the entire ecosystem, endangering biodiversity and changing the cycle of water that is vital for the survival of the tropical forest. In addition, the Amazon plays a critical role as a buffer against climate change and provides invaluable and fundamental life support systems related to air, water, soils, forests and biomass. At the same time, experts remind us that by using advanced science and technologies for an innovative bio-economy of standing forests and flowing rivers, it is possible to help save the rainforest, protect the ecosystems of the Amazon and its indigenous and traditional peoples and, at the same time, provide sustainable economic activities.

12. The phenomenon of migration must be addressed. There are three simultaneous migratory flows in the Amazon Region. First, the traditional mobility of indigenous groups in their territories, which are now separated by national and international borders. Secondly, the forced displacement of indigenous peoples, peasants and river dwellers from their territories, whose final destination tends to be the poorest and worst areas of the cities. Thirdly, forced inter-regional migration and the phenomenon of refugees forced to leave their countries (Venezuela, Haiti, Cuba, among others) who need to cross the Amazon as a migratory corridor.

13. The displacement of indigenous groups expelled from their territories or attracted by the false allure of urban culture represents a specific feature of migratory movements in the Amazon. Where these groups move within territories of traditional indigenous mobility that are now crossed by national and international borders, cross-border pastoral care is needed that is capable of understanding these people's right to free movement. Human mobility in the Amazon reveals the face of Jesus Christ poor and hungry (cf. *Mt 25:35*), expelled and homeless (cf. *Mt 2:13-14*) Also of paramount concern is the feminization of migration; it makes thousands of women vulnerable to human trafficking, one of the worst forms of violence against women and one of the most perverse violations of human rights. Human trafficking linked to migration requires a permanent network of pastoral work.

14. The life of the Amazonian communities not yet under the influence of Western civilization is reflected in their beliefs and their rites regarding the spirits of the divinity, named in innumerable ways, active with and in the territory, with and in relation to nature (*LS 16, 91, 117, 138, 240*). Let us recognize that they have taken care of their land, their waters and their forests for thousands of years, and have managed to preserve them until today so that humanity might enjoy and benefit from the free gifts of God's creation. The new paths of evangelization must be developed in dialogue with these fundamental wisdoms making themselves manifest as seeds of the Word.

The Church in the Amazon Region

15. In her process of listening to the cry of the territory and the cry of the peoples, the Church does well to remember the steps taken. Evangelization in Latin America was a gift of Providence that calls everyone to salvation in Christ. Despite military, political and cultural colonization, and beyond the greed and ambition of the colonizers, there were many missionaries who gave their lives to transmit the Gospel. Their missionary zeal inspired not only the formation of Christian communities, but also legislation, such as the Laws of the Indies, which protected the dignity of indigenous people against the abuses of their peoples and territories. Such abuses wounded the communities and overshadowed the message of the Good News. The proclamation of Christ often took place in collusion with the powers that exploited the resources and oppressed the local populations. At the present time, the Church has the historic opportunity to distance itself from the new colonizing powers by listening to the Amazonian peoples and acting in a transparent and prophetic manner. In addition, the socio-environmental crisis opens up new opportunities to present Christ with all his power to liberate and humanise.

16. One of the most glorious pages of the Amazon has been written by the martyrs. The participation of the followers of Jesus in his passion, death and glorious resurrection has accompanied the life of the Church to this day, especially in the moments and places in which, for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus, Christians live in the midst of acute contradictions, such as those who struggle courageously in favour of integral ecology in the Amazon. This Synod admires and recognizes those who struggle, at great risk to their own lives, to defend the existence of this territory.

Called to integral conversion

17. Listening to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor and of the peoples of the Amazon with whom we walk, calls us to a true integral conversion, to a simple and modest style of life, all nourished by a mystical spirituality in the style of St Francis of Assisi, a model of integral conversion lived with Christian happiness and joy (cf. LS 12). A prayerful reading of God's Word will help us to deepen and discover the groaning of the Spirit and encourage us in our commitment to care for our common home.

18. As a Church of missionary disciples, we pray for the grace of that conversion "whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them" (LS 217); a personal and communal conversion which commits us to relate harmoniously with God's work of creation, which is our common home; a conversion which promotes new structures in harmony with the care of creation; a pastoral conversion based on synodality, which recognizes the interaction of all that is created. Such conversion will lead us to be a Church that reaches out and enters the hearts of all the Amazonian peoples.

19. Thus, the conversion to the living Gospel, which is Jesus Christ, can only unfold in interconnected dimensions to prompt our reaching out to the existential, social and geographical peripheries of the Amazon. These dimensions are pastoral, cultural, ecological and synodal, and are developed in the next four chapters.

CHAPTER II NEW PATHS OF PASTORAL CONVERSION

"No one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit" (Jn 3:5)

20. We need to undergo a pastoral conversion in order to be a missionary Church reaching-out. In the Amazon this path also means "navigating" our rivers and our lakes, among our people. For in the Amazon, water unites us, it does not separate us. Our pastoral conversion will be samaritan, in dialogue, accompanying people with the real faces of indigenous people, peasants, afro-descendants and migrants, young people, city dwellers. All of this requires a spirituality of listening and proclamation. This is how we will walk and navigate in this chapter.

The missionary Church reaching out

21. By nature the Church is missionary and has its origin in the "fount" of God's love (cf. AG 2). The missionary dynamism that springs from God's love radiates, expands, overflows and spreads throughout the universe. By baptism we are inserted into the dynamic of love through the encounter with Jesus which gives a new horizon to life (cf. DAp 12). This overflow impels the Church to pastoral conversion and transforms us into living communities working in teams and networks in the service of evangelization. Mission, thus understood, is not something optional, one Church activity among others, but its very nature. The Church is mission! "Missionary outreach is *paradigmatic for all the Church's activity*" (EG 15). Being a missionary disciple is more than just carrying out tasks or doing things. It is in the order of being. "In this way Jesus pointed out to us, his disciples, that our mission in the world cannot be static, but is itinerant. The Christian is itinerant" (Pope Francis, *Angelus*, 30/6/2019).

a. A Church that is samaritan, merciful and solidary

22. We want our Church in the Amazon to be samaritan, incarnated in the way in which the Son of God became incarnate: "He took away our infirmities and bore our diseases" (*Mt 8:17b*). He made himself poor in order to enrich us with his poverty (cf. *2 Co 8:9*). Through the Spirit, he exhorts the missionary disciples of today to reach out to meet everyone, especially the indigenous peoples, the poor, those excluded from society and those who are different. We also desire a Church like Mary Magdalen who feels loved and reconciled and who with joyful conviction announces Christ crucified and risen. A Marian Church that brings forth sons and daughters of faith and brings them up with affection and patience, who also learns from the riches of the peoples. We want to be a servant, kerygmatic, educating, inculturated Church in the midst of the peoples we serve.

b. A Church in ecumenical, inter-religious and cultural dialogue

23. The multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious reality of the Amazon demands an open attitude of dialogue, fully recognizing the multiplicity of interlocutors: the indigenous peoples, the river dwellers, peasants and afro-descendants, the other Christian Churches and religious denominations, organizations of civil society, popular social movements, the State, finally all people of good will who try to defend life, the integrity of creation, peace and the common good.

24. In the Amazon, "relations between Catholics and Pentecostals, charismatics and evangelicals are not easy. The sudden appearance of new communities, linked to the personality of some preachers, strongly contrasts with the ecclesiological principles and experience of the historical Churches and can conceal the danger of being carried away by the emotional waves of the moment or of enclosing the experience of faith in protected and reassuring environments. The fact that more than a few Catholic faithful are attracted to these communities is a source of friction, but can become, for our part, a matter of personal examination and pastoral renewal." (Pope Francis, *Address to the Plenary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity*, 28.9.2018). Ecumenical, inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue must be taken as indispensable to evangelization in the Amazon (cf. DAp 227). The Amazon is a mixture of faiths, mostly Christian. This reality opens real paths of communion for us: "Good intentions do not suffice for this. Concrete gestures that enter hearts and

stir consciences are essential, inspiring in everyone that inner conversion that is the prerequisite for all ecumenical progress" (Benedict XVI, *Message at the end of the Eucharistic Concelebration with Members of the College of Cardinals in the Sistine Chapel*, 20.4.2005) The centrality of the Word of God in the life of our communities is vital for union and dialogue. Around the Word there can be so many collaborative actions: translations of the Bible into the local languages, joint publications, dissemination and distribution of the Bible, theological encounters, and meetings between Catholic theologians and those of various other denominations and confessions.

25. In the Amazon, inter-religious dialogue takes place especially with indigenous religions and afro-descendant cults. These traditions deserve to be known, understood in their own expressions and in their relationship with the forest and mother earth. Together with them, Christians, secure in their faith in the Word of God, can enter into dialogue, sharing their lives, their concerns, their struggles, their experiences of God, to deepen each other's faith and to act together in defence of our common home. For this to happen, the churches of the Amazon need to develop initiatives of encounter, study and dialogue with the followers of these religions. Sincere and respectful dialogue is a bridge towards building up 'good living'. In the exchange of gifts, the Spirit leads more and more towards truth and the good (cf. *EG* 250).

A Missionary Church that serves and accompanies the peoples of the Amazon

26. This Synod seeks to be a powerful call to all the baptized of the Amazon to be missionary disciples. To be sent on mission is inherent in baptism and is for all the baptized. In this way we all receive the same dignity as sons and daughters of God, and no one can be excluded from the mission that Jesus gave to his disciples: "Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature" (*Mk* 16:15). That is why we believe it is necessary to generate a greater missionary impulse among native vocations; the Amazon should also be evangelized by its own people.

a. A Church with an indigenous, peasant and afro-descendant face

27. It is a matter of urgency to give indigenous pastoral ministry its specific place in the Church. Our points of departure are multiple realities and diverse cultures in order to define, develop and adopt pastoral actions that allow us to develop a proposal for evangelization among the indigenous communities, situating ourselves within a pastoral framework for indigenous people and their territory. The pastoral care of indigenous peoples has its own specificity. The episodes of colonisation throughout history, motivated by extractivism and bringing about different migratory currents, forced them into situations of great vulnerability. In this context, as a Church, it remains necessary to create or maintain a preferential option for indigenous peoples, and this means that diocesan indigenous pastoral organizations must be established and consolidated with renewed missionary activity, listening in dialogue, incarnate and permanently present. The preferential option for indigenous peoples, with their cultures, identities and histories, requires us to aspire to an indigenous Church with its own priests and ministers always united and in full communion with the Catholic Church.

28. While recognizing the importance of the attention that the Church is called to give in the Amazon to the phenomenon of urbanization and to the problems and perspectives related to it, it is also necessary to address the rural world as a whole and rural pastoral ministry in particular. From the pastoral point of view, the Church must respond to the countryside being depopulated, with all the attendant consequences (loss of identity, prevailing secularism, exploitation of rural work, family disintegration, etc.).

b. A Church with a migrant face

29. Given its growth and volume, the phenomenon of migration has now become an unprecedented political, social and ecclesial challenge (cf. *DAP* 517, a). Faced with this, many ecclesial communities have received migrants with great generosity, remembering that "I was ... a stranger and you welcomed me" (*Mt* 25:35). The forced displacement of indigenous, peasant, afro-descendant and riverside families, pressured to leave or suffocated by the lack of opportunities, demands a joint pastoral response in the urban slums. Accordingly missionary teams will be needed to accompany them, coordinating parishes and other institutions in the Church and beyond, to offer welcome and celebrate inculturated liturgies in the languages of migrants; promoting opportunities for cultural exchanges; enhancing integration in the community and in the city; and encouraging them to take the initiative in this work.

c. A Church with the face of youth

30. Among the different faces of the Amazonian realities, those of young people throughout the whole territory stand out. They are young people with indigenous faces and identities, afro-descendants, river dwellers, gatherers and cultivators, migrants, refugees, and others. Young rural and urban dwellers, who daily dream of and look for better living conditions, with the deep desire to have a full life. Young students and workers making their presence felt and participating in various social and Church pursuits. Sad realities are also found among Amazonian youth, such as poverty, violence, disease, child prostitution, sexual exploitation, drug use and trafficking, early pregnancy, unemployment, depression, human trafficking, new forms of slavery, organ trafficking, and difficulties in accessing education, health and social assistance. Unfortunately, in recent years, there has been a significant increase in suicide among young people, as well as a growing juvenile prison population and increasing crime among and against young people, especially afro-descendants and slum dwellers. Living in the great territory of the Amazon, they have the same dreams and desires as other young people in this world: to be considered and respected, to have opportunities for study, work, and a future of hope. But they are living through an intense crisis of values, or a period of flux in ethical values and how reality is understood, even for indigenous youth. The task of the Church is to accompany them and help them to face every situation that destroys their identity or damages their self-esteem.

31. Young people are also a large part of the migratory situation in the territory. Their presence in urban centres warrants special attention. All the ethnic groups, peoples and problems of the Amazon are moving into more and more cities. The rural Amazon is depopulating; cities face enormous problems of juvenile delinquency, lack of work, ethnic struggles and social injustices. Here, in particular, the Church is called to be a prophetic presence among young people, offering them adequate accompaniment and appropriate education.

32. Joining the youth of the Amazon in their reality, the Church proclaims the Good News of Jesus to young people, discernment and vocational accompaniment, a place where local culture and identity are appreciated, youth leadership, promotion of their rights, and strengthening of creative, innovative and differentiated spaces of evangelization driven by a renewed and courageous youth ministry. A pastoral ministry always in process, centred on Jesus Christ and his project, integral and in dialogue, committed to all the situations of young people in the territory today. Indigenous youth have enormous potential and actively participate in their communities and organizations by contributing as leaders and animators, in defence of rights, especially with respect to territory, health and education. On the other hand, they are the main victims of insecurity over indigenous lands and the absence of specific and reliable public policies. Alcohol and drugs often spread into indigenous communities, seriously harming young people and preventing them from living freely to build their dreams and participate actively in their community.

33. The protagonism of the young appears clearly in the final document of the XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on Young People (cf. 46, 160), in the post-synodal

Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit* (cf. 170) and in the Encyclical *Laudato Si'* (cf. 209). Young people want to be protagonists, and the Amazon Church wants to offer them room and accompany them in listening, recognizing youth as a theological topic, as "prophets of hope," committed to dialogue, ecologically sensitive and attentive to our common home. A Church that welcomes young people and walks with them, especially in the peripheries. With all this, three urgencies arise: to promote new forms of evangelization through social media (CV86); to help young indigenous people achieve a healthy interculturality; and to help them face the crisis of negative values that destroy their self-esteem and make them lose their identity.

d. A Church that travels new paths in urban pastoral ministry

34. Humanity's strong tendency to concentrate in cities and to migrate from smaller to larger ones also prevails in the Amazon. The accelerated growth of the Amazon metropolises means the spread of huge slums on the outskirts. At the same time, lifestyles, forms of living together, languages and values shaped by the metropolises are increasingly being transmitted to and implanted in the indigenous communities as in the rest of the rural world. The family in the city is a place where traditional and modern cultures meet and blend. However, families often suffer from poverty, poor housing, lack of work, increased use of drugs and alcohol, discrimination and youth suicide. Furthermore, when there is a lack of intergenerational dialogue in family life, traditions and language are lost. Families also face new health problems, which require adequate maternal education. Today's rapid changes affect the Amazon family. Thus, we find new family formats: single-parent households headed by women, an increase in separated families, civil unions and reunited families, a decrease in institutional marriages. The city sees an explosion of life, because "God lives in the city" (*DAP* 514). In it there are anxieties and searches for the meaning of life, conflicts, but also solidarity, fraternity, the desire for goodness, truth and justice (cf. *EG* 71-75). To evangelize the city or urban culture is also a question "of affecting and as it were upsetting, through the power of the Gospel, mankind's criteria of judgment, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life, which are in contrast with the Word of God and the plan of salvation." (*EN* 19).

35. Everyone's right to the city should be defended. This claim of a right to the city is defined as the equitable enjoyment of cities within the principles of sustainability, democracy and social justice. However, it will also be necessary to influence public policies and promote initiatives that improve the quality of life in rural areas, thus preventing uncontrolled displacement to the cities.

36. Basic Christian communities have been and are a gift of God to the local Churches of the Amazon. It is true that, over time, some of them have stagnated, weakened or even disappeared. However the great majority remain and persevere and are the pastoral foundation of many parishes. Today the great dangers to base communities come mainly from secularism, individualism, the lack of a social dimension and the absence of missionary activity. Therefore, pastors should encourage each and every one of the faithful to missionary discipleship. Church communities should participate in shaping public policies that aim to revitalize culture, coexistence, leisure and celebration. We must struggle so that the slums, the "favelas" and "villas miseria" have their fundamental rights to water, energy and housing guaranteed, and promote good citizenship of integral ecology. The communities in Amazon cities should establish a ministry of welcome, extending fraternal solidarity to migrants, refugees, homeless people and those who have arrived from the rural areas.

37. The reality of indigenous people in urban centres deserves special attention, as they are the most exposed to the enormous problems of juvenile delinquency, lack of work, ethnic struggles and social injustices. It is one of the biggest challenges today: cities are more and more the destination of all the ethnic groups and peoples of the Amazon. It is necessary to develop indigenous urban pastoral ministry that addresses this specific reality.

e. A spirituality of listening and proclamation

38. Pastoral action is based on a spirituality founded on listening to the word of God and the cry of his people, in order then to be able to announce the Good News with a prophetic spirit. We recognize that the Church which hears the voice of the Spirit in the cry of the Amazon can take to heart the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of everyone, but especially of the poorest (cf. GS 1), who are God's beloved sons and daughters. We discover that the mighty waters of the Spirit, similar to those of the Amazon River, which periodically overflow, bring us to this superabundant life that God offers us to proclaim and to share.

New paths for pastoral conversion

39. Itinerant missionary teams in the Amazon, weaving and building community in their travels, help to strengthen the Church's synodality. They bring together various charisms, institutions and congregations, lay people, men and women religious, and priests. Together they accomplish what cannot be done alone. The missionaries who leave their base and spend their time visiting community after community and celebrating sacraments give rise to what is called the "ministry of visits". It is a pastoral method that responds to the current conditions and possibilities of our churches. Thanks to these methods, and by the action of the Holy Spirit, these communities have also developed rich forms of ministry, and this is a reason to give thanks.

40. We propose a network of itinerant ministries that brings together the various efforts of teams that accompany and energize the life and faith of the communities in the Amazon. Next, lay people and pastors together need to discern paths for public advocacy that aim at social transformation. Finally, with a view to moving from pastoral visits to a more permanent presence, those religious congregations and/or their provinces in the rest of the world that are not yet involved in such missions, are invited to establish at least one missionary initiative in one of the countries of the Amazon.

CHAPTER III NEW PATHS OF CULTURAL CONVERSION

"And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (Jn 1:14)

41. The biodiversity of Latin America is immense and so is its cultural diversity. The Amazon portion is a land of forest and water, of plateaus and wetlands, of savannahs and mountain ranges, but above all a land of innumerable peoples, many of them inhabiting their territories for thousands of years, people whose ancient fragrance continues to scent the continent against all despair. Our conversion must also be cultural in order to adapt to the other, to learn from the other. To be present, to respect and recognize their values, to live and practice inculturation and inter-culturality in our proclamation of the Good News. Expressing and living our faith in the Amazon is a constantly evolving challenge. Our faith is incarnated not only in pastoral work but also in concrete actions for others, in health care, in education, in solidarity with and support for the most vulnerable. All this is what we would like to share in this section.

The face of the Church among the Amazon's Peoples

42. In the territories of the Amazon there is a pluri-cultural reality that requires an inclusive attitude and uses appropriate language – language that allows all the groups to be identified and linked, that reflects identities that are recognized, respected and promoted in the Church as well as in society, and that confirms the Amazonian peoples as valid interlocutors for dialogue and encounter. Speaking of the faces that inhabit Latin America, *Puebla* notes an intermingling that has grown

among the original peoples, and continues to grow in the encounter and distancing between the different cultures that inhabit the continent. This face is also the Church's in the Amazon: a face which becomes flesh in its territory, which evangelizes and opens paths so that the peoples feel accompanied in different processes of evangelical life. There is also a renewed sense of mission in the same inhabitants and peoples, carrying out the prophetic and samaritan mission of the Church, a sense which should be strengthened by openness to dialogue with other cultures. Only an inserted and inculturated missionary Church will promote the emergence of particular autochthonous churches, with an Amazonian face and heart, rooted in the people's own cultures and traditions, united in the same faith in Christ and diverse in their way of living, expressing and celebrating it.

a. The cultural values of the Amazon's peoples

43. The people of the Amazon possess teachings for life. The original peoples and those who arrived later and forged their identity in coexistence with them, bear cultural values in which we discover the seeds of the Word. In the jungle, not only is the vegetation intertwined between one species and another, but the peoples also interrelate among themselves in a network of alliances that enriches all. The jungle thrives from interrelations and interdependencies, and this happens in all areas of life. Thanks to this, the Amazon's fragile equilibrium has endured for centuries.

44. The pattern of thinking of indigenous peoples offers an integrated vision of reality, capable of understanding the multiple connections existing throughout creation. This contrasts with the dominant current of Western thought that tends to fragment reality in order to understand it but then fails to articulate the relationships between the various fields of knowledge. The traditional management of what nature offers is expressed in what we now call sustainable management. We also find other values in native peoples such as reciprocity, solidarity, the sense of community, equality, the family, their social organization and their sense of service.

b. A Church present, ally of the peoples in their territories

45. The greed for land is at the root of the conflicts that lead to ethnocide, as well as the criminalization of social movements and the murder of their leaders. The demarcation and protection of land are obligations of national States and their respective governments. However, significant portions of the indigenous territories lack protection; and those already demarcated are being invaded by extractive interests such as mining and forestry, large infrastructure projects, illicit crops, and large estates that promote monoculture and extensive cattle ranching.

46. Accordingly, the Church commits itself to be an ally of the Amazonian peoples in denouncing attacks on the life of the indigenous communities, the projects that affect the environment, the lack of demarcation of their territories, as well as the economic model of predatory and ecocidal development. The presence of the Church among the indigenous and traditional communities necessarily entails awareness that the defence of the land has no other purpose than the defence of life.

47. The life of indigenous, mestizo, riverside, peasant, quilombola and/or afro-descendant peoples and traditional communities is threatened by destruction, environmental exploitation and the systematic violation of their territorial rights. The rights to self-determination, demarcation of territories and prior, free and informed consultation must be upheld. The social, cultural and economic conditions of these peoples distinguish them from other sectors of the national community, and they are governed wholly or partly by their own customs or traditions or by special legislation (cf. International Labour Organization [ILO], *Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention*, 1989 (No. 169), art. 1, 1a). For the Church, the defence of life, community, land and indigenous people's rights is an evangelical principle, in defence of human dignity: "I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly" (*Jn* 10:10b).

48. The Church promotes the integral salvation of the human person, respecting the culture of the indigenous peoples, highlighting their vital needs, accompanying their organizations in their struggles for their rights. Our pastoral service constitutes a service for the full life of indigenous peoples, which moves us to announce the Good News of the Kingdom of God and to denounce situations of sin and structures of death, violence and injustice, promoting inter-cultural, inter-religious and ecumenical dialogue (cf. *DAp* 95).

49. Specific mention must be made of Indigenous Peoples in Voluntary Isolation (PIAV) or Indigenous Peoples in Isolation and Initial Contact (PIACI). In the Amazon there are about 130 distinct groups or sub-groups that do not maintain systematic or permanent contacts with the surrounding society. Systematic abuses and violations of the past led them to migrate to more inaccessible areas, seeking security, trying to preserve their autonomy and choosing to limit or avoid relations with outsiders. Today their lives continue to be threatened by invasion of their territories from different directions and by their declining numbers, leave them exposed to ethnic cleansing and disappearance. In his January 2018 meeting with Indigenous Peoples in Puerto Maldonado, Pope Francis reminds us: "We know that they are the most vulnerable of the vulnerable (...) Continue to defend these most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters. Their presence reminds us that we cannot use goods meant for all as consumerist greed dictates" (FrPM). An option for the defence of the PIAV/PIACI does not exempt the local Churches from pastoral responsibility for them.

50. This responsibility must be actioned in specific ways to defend their rights, concretely in advocating that States assume the responsibility to defend their rights through the legal and inviolable guarantees over the territories they traditionally occupy. It means adopting precautionary measures in regions where there are only signs but no official confirmation of their presence. It means establishing bilateral cooperation mechanisms between States when these groups occupy cross-border areas. Respect for their self-determination and for their free choice about the type of relationships they want to establish with other groups must be guaranteed at all times. This will require that all the people of God, and especially the populations who border the territories of the PIAV/PIACI, be made aware of respect for these peoples and the importance of the inviolability of their territories. As Saint John Paul II said in Cuiabá, in 1991: «The Church, dear Indian brothers and sisters, has been and will always be at your side to defend the dignity of human beings, your right to have a peaceful life, respecting the positive values of your traditions, customs and cultures».

Paths to an Inculturated Church

51. In the incarnation Christ did not grasp his prerogative as God and became man in a particular culture in order to identify himself with all humanity. Inculturation is both the incarnation of the Gospel in indigenous cultures ("what is not assumed is not redeemed", Saint Irenaeus, cf. Puebla 400) and the introduction of these cultures into the life of the Church. In this process, the indigenous peoples are protagonists, accompanied by their pastors and pastoral agents.

a. Living the faith as expressed in popular piety and inculturated catechesis

52. Popular piety is an important means for linking many peoples of the Amazon with their spiritual experiences, their cultural roots and their community integration. Such manifestations allow the people to express their faith through images, symbols, traditions, rites and other sacramentals. Pilgrimages, processions and celebrations of the patron saint must be appreciated, accompanied, promoted and sometimes purified, since they are privileged moments of evangelization which should lead to an encounter with Christ. Marian devotions are deeply rooted in the Amazon and throughout Latin America.

53. Generally speaking, the confraternities and other groups linked to popular piety have not been clericalised. Lay people assume a leading role here that is difficult to attain in other areas of Church life, with the participation of brothers and sisters who conduct services and direct prayers, blessings, and traditional sacred songs; animate novenas, organize processions and promote festivities to honour the patron saint, etc. "An appropriate catechesis must be given to accompany the faith already present in popular religiosity. One concrete possibility is to offer a process of Christian initiation" (DAP 300) which leads us to resemble Jesus Christ more and more and increasingly assimilate his attitudes (cf. *idem*).

b. The mystery of faith reflected in an inculturated theology

54. So-called Indian theology, theology with an Amazonian face, and popular piety are already riches of the indigenous world, its culture and spirituality. When the missionary and pastoral agent brings the word of the Gospel of Jesus, there is a personal identification with the culture, and an encounter takes place from which are born witnessing, service, proclamation and the learning of languages. The indigenous world enriches the intercultural encounter with its myths, narrative, rites, songs, dance and spiritual expressions. *Puebla* already recognizes that "cultures are not empty ground, devoid of authentic values. The evangelization of the Church is not a process of destruction, but of consolidation and strengthening of these values; a contribution to the growth of the 'seeds of the Word'" (DP 401, cf. GS 57) present in various cultures.

Paths for an Intercultural Church

a. Respect for the cultures and rights of peoples

55. We are all invited to approach the Amazon peoples on an equal footing, respecting their history, their cultures, their style of 'good living' (cf. Pope Francis, *Opening of the Works of the Special Assembly*, 7.10.2019). Colonialism is the imposition of some people's ways of life on others, whether economically, culturally or religiously. We reject a colonial style of evangelization. Proclaiming the Good News of Jesus implies recognizing the seeds of the Word already present in cultures. The evangelization that we propose today for the Amazon is the inculturated proclamation that generates intercultural processes, processes that promote the life of the Church with an Amazonian face and identity.

b. Promoting intercultural dialogue in a global world

56. In the evangelizing task of the Church, which must not be confused with proselytism, we should include clear processes of inculturation of our missionary methods and plans. Specifically, the Church's research and pastoral centres, in alliance with the indigenous peoples, should study, compile and systematize the traditions of the Amazon's ethnic groups in order to favour an educational effort that starts from their identity and culture, helps in the promotion and defence of their rights, preserves and disseminates their value in the Latin American cultural context.

57. Educational efforts are challenged today by the need for inculturation. It is a challenge to look for appropriate materials and methodologies for the peoples among whom we hope to exercise our ministry of teaching. For this, it is important to know their languages, their beliefs and aspirations, their needs and hopes. Furthermore, we need to collaborate with them in developing educational processes that, in both their form and their content, have the cultural identity of Amazon communities, and that insist on a crosscutting formation in integral ecology.

c. Challenges to health, education and communication

58. The Church commits, as an important task, to promote preventive health education and to offer health care in places which state assistance does not reach. It is necessary to develop new integrative approaches that benefit the health of the Amazon peoples. It is also important to promote the sharing of ancestral knowledge in the field of traditional medicine specific to each culture.

59. Among the complexities of the Amazon territory, we highlight the fragile state of education, especially among indigenous peoples. Although education is a human right, the quality of education is deficient and dropout rates are very high, especially among girls. Education evangelizes, promotes social transformation, and empowers people with a healthy critical sense. "Good education plants seeds when we are young, and these continue to bear fruit throughout life" (LS 213). It is our task to promote an education for solidarity that springs from the awareness of a common origin and a future shared by all (cf. LS 202). Governments should be required to implement public, intercultural and bilingual education.

60. Our increasingly globalized and complex world has developed an unprecedented network of information. However, the instantaneous flow of information does not lead to better communication or connection between peoples. In the Amazon, we want to promote a communicative culture that favours dialogue, the culture of encounter, and the care of our common home. Motivated by integral ecology, we wish to strengthen the already existing sources of communication in the region with a view to encouraging and promoting integral ecological conversion. To this end, we must collaborate in the training of local communicators, especially indigenous ones. They are not only privileged interlocutors for evangelization and human promotion in the territory, but they also help us to spread the culture of 'good living' and care for creation.

61. In order to develop the various connections with the whole Amazon and improve its communication, the Church wants to create an All-Amazon Church communication network, to include the various media used by particular churches and other church bodies. Their contribution can resonate with and help in the ecological conversion of the Church and the planet. REPAM can collaborate in advising and supporting training programs and in monitoring and strengthening communication throughout the Amazon.

New paths for cultural conversion

62. Accordingly, we propose the creation of a bilingual education network (similar to *Fe y Alegría*) for schools in the Amazon that develops educational proposals in response to the needs of the communities while respecting, appreciating, and integrating cultural and linguistic identity.

63. We want to favour, sustain and support the educational experiences of bilingual intercultural education that already exist in the ecclesiastical jurisdictions of the Amazon; and to involve Catholic universities in the work and as participants in the network.

64. We will look for new forms of conventional and unconventional education, such as distance learning, to meet the requirements in terms of persons, times and places.

CHAPTER IV NEW PATHS OF ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION

"I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly" (Jn 10:10)

65. Our planet is a gift from God, but we also know how urgently we must act on the unprecedented socio-environmental crisis we are facing. We need an ecological conversion to respond properly. Therefore, confronting the ever greater aggression against our biome threatened with disappearance, with the tremendous consequences this would have for our planet, the Church in the Amazon sets out inspired by the proposal of integral ecology. We recognize the damage caused by humans in our territory; we want to learn from our brothers and sisters of the original peoples, in a dialogue of wisdom to meet the challenge of giving new answers and looking for models of just and solidary development. We want to take care of our common home in the Amazon and here we propose new ways to do so.

Towards an integral ecology based on the encyclical *Laudato si'*

a. Threats against the Amazon biome and its peoples

66. God has given us the earth as a gift and as a task, to care for it and to answer for it; we do not own it. *Integral ecology* has its foundation in the fact that "everything in the world is connected" (LS 16). For this reason ecology and social justice are intrinsically united (cf. LS 137). With integral ecology a new paradigm of justice emerges, since "*a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach*"; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear *both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor*" (LS 49). Integral ecology thus connects the exercise of care for nature with the exercise of justice for the most impoverished and disadvantaged on earth, who are God's preferred choice in revealed history.

67. It is urgent to face the unlimited exploitation of our common home and its inhabitants. One of the main causes of destruction in the Amazon is predatory extractivism that responds to the logic of greed, typical of the dominant technocratic paradigm (cf. LS 101). Faced with the pressing situation of the planet and the Amazon, integral ecology is not one path among many that the Church can choose for the future in this territory, it is the only possible path, because there is no other viable route for saving the region. The shedding of innocent blood and the criminalization of the defenders of the Amazon accompany the depredation of the territory.

68. The Church participates in international solidarity that must recognize and support the central role of the Amazon biome for the equilibrium of the planet's climate. The Church encourages the international community to provide new economic resources for its protection and for the promotion of a model of just and solidary development, with the protagonism and direct participation of local communities and native peoples in all phases from planning to implementation, thereby also strengthening the tools already developed by the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*, Rio de Janeiro, 1992.

69. It is scandalous that leaders and even whole communities are being criminalized merely for claiming their own rights. The laws of all Amazon countries recognize human rights, specifically those of indigenous peoples. In recent years, the region has undergone complex transformations, and it is reported that the human rights of communities have been impacted by norms, public policies and practices favouring the expansion of areas of natural resource extraction and infrastructural mega-project developments, which exert pressure on ancestral indigenous territories. This is accompanied, according to the same report, by grave and widespread impunity in the region regarding human rights violations and obstacles to obtaining justice (cf. *Report of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights [IACHR/OAS], Situation of Human Rights of the indigenous and tribal peoples of Panamazonía*, 29.9.2019, 5 and 188).

70. For Christians, interest and concern for the promotion and respect of human rights, both individual and collective, is not optional. Human beings are created in the image and likeness

of God the Creator, and their dignity is inviolable. That is why the defence and promotion of human rights is not merely a political duty or a social task, but also and above all a requirement of faith. We may not be able to modify the destructive model of extractivist development immediately, but we do need to know and make clear where we stand, whose side we are on, what perspective we assume, how the political and ethical dimension of our word of faith and life are transmitted. For this reason: a) we denounce the violation of human rights and extractive destruction; b) we embrace and support campaigns of divestment from extractive companies responsible for the socio-ecological damage of the Amazon, starting with our own Church institutions and also in alliance with other churches; c) we call for a radical energy transition and the search for alternatives: "Civilization requires energy, but the use of energy must not destroy civilization!" (Francis, *Address to the Participants in the Conference "Energy Transition and Care of the Common Home"*, 9.6.2018). We propose to design and develop training programs on the care of our common home, for pastoral agents and other faithful, open to the whole community, in an effort to make the population aware (cf. LS 214).

b. The challenge of new models of fair, solidary and sustainable development

71. We note that human intervention has lost its "friendly" character and assumed a voracious and predatory attitude that tends to squeeze reality until all available natural resources are exhausted. "The technocratic paradigm also tends to dominate economic and political life" (LS 109). This seriously damages life, and to counteract it we must seek alternative economic models, more sustainable, friendly to nature, and with solid spiritual support. For this reason, together with the Amazon peoples, we ask States to stop considering the Amazon as an inexhaustible warehouse (cf. *Fr.PM*). We would like them to develop investment policies that feature compliance with high social and environmental standards and the fundamental principle of the preservation of the Amazon as a condition for any intervention. This requires the participation of organized indigenous peoples and other Amazon communities as well as the different scientific institutions that are already proposing models that show the benefits of keeping the forest standing. The new paradigm of sustainable development must be socially inclusive, combining scientific and traditional knowledge to empower traditional and indigenous communities, women in their majority, and make these technologies serve the well-being and protection of the forests.

72. It is then a question of discussing the real value that any economic or extractive activity offers, that is to say, the value that it contributes and returns to the land and to society, considering the wealth that it extracts from them and the socio-ecological consequences. Many extractive activities, such as large-scale mining, particularly illegal mining, substantially diminish the value of life in the Amazon. Indeed, they uproot the lives of peoples and the common goods of the earth, concentrating economic and political power in the hands of a few. Worse still, many of these destructive projects are carried out in the name of progress, and are supported - or permitted - by local, national and foreign governments.

73. Together with the Amazon's peoples (cf. LS 183) and their horizon of 'good living', we are called to an individual and communal ecological conversion that upholds an integral ecology and a model of development in which commercial criteria are not above environmental and human rights criteria. We want to support a culture of peace and respect - not violence and violation - and a person-centred economy that also cares for nature. Therefore, beginning with the cosmovisions that are built with the communities and restoring the ancestral wisdom, we propose to generate alternatives focused on integral ecological development. We support projects that propose a solidary and sustainable economy, circular and ecological, both locally and internationally, at the level of research and on the ground, in the formal and informal sectors. Along these lines, it would be useful to support and promote cooperative initiatives in bio-production, forest reserves and sustainable consumption. The future of the Amazon is in the hands of us all, but it depends mainly on our immediately abandoning the current model that is destroying the forest rather than bringing well-being and is endangering this immense natural treasure and its guardians.

A Church that cares for our common home in the Amazon

a. The socio-environmental dimension of evangelization

74. It is incumbent upon all of us to be custodians of God's work. The protagonists of the care, protection and defence of the rights of peoples and the rights of nature in this region are the Amazon communities themselves. They are the agents of their own destiny, of their own mission. In this scenario, the role of the Church is to be an ally. They have clearly stated that they want the Church to accompany them, to walk with them, and not to impose on them a particular way of being, a specific form of development that has little to do with their cultures, traditions and spiritualities. They know how to take care of the Amazon, how to love and protect it; what they need is for the Church to support them.

75. The role of the Church is to strengthen this capacity of support and participation. Therefore we advocate a formation that takes the ethical and spiritual quality of people's life into account within an integral vision. The Church must give priority attention to communities affected by socio-environmental damage. Continuing with the Latin American Church tradition: figures such as San José de Anchieta, Bartolomé de las Casas, the Paraguayan martyrs Roque González, San Alfonso Rodríguez and San Juan del Castillo who died in Rio Grande do Sul (Brazil), among others, taught us that the defence of the first peoples of this continent is intrinsically linked to faith in Jesus Christ and his Good News. Today we must form pastoral agents and ordained ministers who show socio-environmental care. We want a Church that navigates upriver and makes her way through the Amazon, promoting a lifestyle in harmony with the territory and, at the same time, with the 'good living' of those who live there.

76. The Church recognizes the wisdom of the Amazon peoples about biodiversity, a traditional wisdom that is a living process always underway. The theft of this knowledge is biopiracy, a form of violence against these populations. The Church should help them to preserve and maintain this knowledge and the innovations and practices of the local populations, respecting the sovereignty of countries and their laws regulating access to genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge. As far as possible, it should help these populations to ensure that the benefits of using this knowledge, these innovations and practices are shared in a model of sustainable and inclusive development.

77. There is an urgent need to develop energy policies that drastically reduce the emission of carbon dioxide (CO₂) and other gases related to climate change. New clean energies will help to promote health. All companies should establish ways of monitoring their supply chains to ensure that the products they buy, create or sell are produced in a socially and environmentally sustainable manner. Furthermore, *"access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right, since it is essential to human survival and, as such, is a condition for the exercise of other human rights"* (LS 30). This right is recognized by the United Nations (2010). We need to work together so that the fundamental right of access to clean water is respected throughout the territory.

78. The Church chooses to defend life, the land and the native Amazon cultures. This includes accompanying the Amazon peoples in the registration, processing and dissemination of data and information about their territories and their legal status. We want to prioritize advocacy and accompaniment to achieve land demarcation, especially that of the PIACI or PIAV. We encourage States to comply with their constitutional obligations on these issues, including the right of access to water.

79. Catholic Social Teaching, which for a long time has dealt with the ecological issue, is today enriched with a more comprehensive view of the relationship between the Amazon peoples and their

territories, always in dialogue with their ancestral knowledge and wisdom. For example, recognizing the way in which indigenous peoples relate to and protect their territories is an indispensable measure for our conversion to an integral ecology. In this light we want to create ministries for the care of our common home in the Amazon, whose function is to take care of the territory and its waters together with the indigenous communities, and a ministry of welcome for those who are displaced from their territories towards the cities.

b. A poor Church with and for the poor of the vulnerable peripheries

80. We reaffirm our commitment to defend life fully and seamlessly, from conception to natural death, and the dignity of each and every person. The Church has been and is at the side of the indigenous communities to safeguard the right to have their own tranquil life, respecting the values of their traditions, customs and cultures, and the preservation of rivers and forests which are sacred spaces, sources of life and wisdom. We support the efforts of so many who courageously defend life in all its forms and stages. Our pastoral service constitutes a service to the full life of indigenous peoples and this obliges us to proclaim Jesus Christ and the Good News of the Kingdom of God, in order to curb situations of sin, structures of death, violence and internal and external injustice, and to promote inter-cultural, inter-religious and ecumenical dialogue.

New paths for promoting integral ecology

a. Prophetic questioning and a message of hope for the whole Church and the whole world

81. The defence of the Amazon's and its people's life requires a profound personal, social and structural conversion. The Church is included in this call to unlearn, learn and relearn, in order to overcome any tendency toward colonizing models that have caused harm in the past. In this vein, it is important for us to be aware of the power of neo-colonialism which is present in our daily decisions and the predominant model of development that is expressed in the increasing use of monocrop agriculture, our forms of transportation and the illusions of well-being based on the pervasive consumerism that our society enjoys and that has direct and indirect implications in the Amazon. Faced with this and taking a global point of view, and also listening to the voices of our sister churches, we want to embrace a spirituality of integral ecology, in order to promote the care of creation. To achieve this, we must be a much more participatory and inclusive community of missionary disciples.

82. We propose to define ecological sin as an action or omission against God, against one's neighbour, the community and the environment. It is sin against future generations, and it is committed in acts and habits of pollution and destruction of the harmony of the environment. These are transgressions against the principles of interdependence, and they destroy networks of solidarity among creatures (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 340-344) and violate the virtue of justice. We also propose to create special ministries for the care of our common home and the promotion of integral ecology at the parish level and in each Church jurisdiction. Their functions include, among others, the care of the territory and of the waters, as well as the promotion of the encyclical *Laudato si'*, taking up the pastoral, educational and advocacy program in its Chapters V and VI at all levels and structures of the Church.

83. As a way of repaying the ecological debt that countries owe to the Amazon, we propose the creation of a world fund to cover part of the budgets of the communities present in the Amazon to promote their integral and self-sustaining development and so also to protect them from the predatory compulsion to extract their natural resources at the behest of national and multinational companies.

84. We intend to adopt responsible habits that respect and value the peoples of the Amazon, their traditions and wisdom, protecting the earth and changing our culture of excessive consumption with its production of solid waste, and instead encouraging reuse and recycling. We should reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and the use of plastics, changing our eating habits (excess consumption of meat and fish/seafood) and adopting a more modest lifestyle. We must engage actively in planting trees and seek sustainable alternatives in agriculture, energy and transportation that respect the rights of nature and of people. We must promote education in integral ecology at all levels, promote new economic models and initiatives towards a sustainable quality of life.

b. An Amazon Socio-Pastoral Office

85. We urge the creation of a pastoral socio-environmental office to strengthen the struggle in the defence of life. It would diagnose the territory and its socio-environmental conflicts in each local and regional Church, in support of taking positions, making decisions and defending the rights of the most vulnerable. The Office would work in alliance with CELAM, CLAR, Caritas, REPAM, national Bishops' Conferences, local Churches, Catholic Universities, CIDH, other non-ecclesial actors on the continent and representatives of indigenous peoples. We also ask that an Amazon office be established in the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development to relate with this Office and other local Amazon institutions.

CHAPTER V NEW PATHS OF SYNODAL CONVERSION

"I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one" (Jn 17:23)

86. To walk together the Church requires a synodal conversion, synodality of the People of God under the guidance of the Spirit in the Amazon. With this horizon of communion and participation we seek new ecclesial paths, especially in the area of ministry and sacramental life of the Church with an Amazonian face. Religious life, the laity and especially women, are the always and ever new protagonists who call us to this conversion.

Missionary Synodality in the Amazon Church

a. The missionary synodality of the entire People of God under the guidance of the Spirit

87. "Synod" is an ancient word venerated by Tradition; it indicates the path or way that the members of God's people pursue together; it refers to the Lord Jesus, who presents himself as "the way and the truth and the life" (*Jn 14:6*), and to the fact that Christians were called "the followers of the way of the Lord" (*Acts 9:2*); to be synodal is together to follow "the way of the Lord" (*Acts 18:25*). Synodality is the way of being of the early Church (cf. *Acts 15*) and it must be ours. "As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ" (*1 Co 12:12*). Synodality also characterizes the Church of the Second Vatican Council, understood as the People of God in their equality and common dignity with regard to the diversity of ministries, charisms and services. "Synodality is the specific *modus vivendi et operandi* of the Church, the People of God, which reveals and gives substance to her being as communion when all her members journey together, gather in assembly and take an active part in her evangelising mission" that is to say, in "the involvement and participation of the whole People of God in the life and mission of the Church" (ITC, *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*, 2018, 6-7).

88. In order to walk together, the Church today needs a conversion to the synodal experience. It needs to strengthen a culture of dialogue, reciprocal listening, spiritual discernment, consensus and communion in order to find areas and ways of joint decision-making and to respond to pastoral challenges. In this way, co-responsibility in the life of the Church will be fostered in a spirit of service. It is urgent to go forward to make proposals and take on responsibilities to overcome clericalism and arbitrary impositions. Synodality is a constitutive dimension of the Church. We cannot be Church without recognizing a real practice of the *sensus fidei* of all the People of God.

b. A Spirituality of synodal communion under the guidance of the Spirit

89. The Church lives in communion with the Body of Christ through the gift of the Holy Spirit. The so-called *Apostolic Council of Jerusalem* (cf. *Acts 15*; *Gal 2:1-10*) is a synodal event in which the Apostolic Church, at a decisive moment on its journey, lives out its vocation in the light of the presence of the Risen Lord with a view to the mission. This event became the paradigmatic figure of the Synods of the Church and its synodal vocation. The decision taken by the Apostles, joined by the whole community of Jerusalem, was the work of the Holy Spirit who guides the Church on its path, ensuring its fidelity to the Gospel of Jesus: "It is the decision of the holy Spirit and of us" (*Acts 15:28*). The whole assembly received the decision and made it its own (*Acts 15:22*); then the community of Antioch did the same (*Acts 15:30-31*). To be truly "synodal" is to go forward in harmony under the impulse of the life-giving Spirit.

90. The Church in the Amazon is called to walk in the practice of discernment, which is at the centre of synodal processes and events. It is a question of the Church, through the lived theological interpretation of the signs of the times and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, determining and following the path to be taken in the service of God's plan. Community discernment makes it possible to discover a call that God makes clear in each particular historical situation. This Assembly is a time of grace for reciprocal listening, sincere dialogue and community discernment for the common good of the People of God in the Amazon Region, and then, when implementing decisions, to continue walking under the impulse of the Holy Spirit in small communities, parishes, dioceses, vicariates, prelatures and in the whole region.

c. Towards a synodal style of living and working in the Amazon region

91. With evangelical courage, we wish to implement new paths for the life of the Church and its service to an integral ecology in the Amazon. Synodality marks a style of living communion and participation in local churches that is characterized by respect for the dignity and equality of all the baptized; by the array of charisms and ministries; and by the joy of gathering and assembling to discern together the voice of the Spirit. This Synod gives us the opportunity to reflect on how to structure the local churches in each region and country, and to move forward in a synodal conversion that points to common paths in evangelization. The logic of the incarnation teaches that God, in Christ, is linked to human beings who belong to "cultures peculiar to various peoples" (AG 9), and the Church, the People of God present among the peoples, has the beauty of a pluriform face rooted in many different cultures (cf. EG 116). This happens in the life and mission of the local churches located in each "major socio-cultural territory" (AG 22).

92. A Church with an Amazonian face needs its communities to be infused with a synodal spirit, supported by organizational structures in harmony with this dynamic, as authentic organisms of "communion". The forms for exercising synodality are varied; they should be decentralized at the various levels (diocesan, regional, national, universal); they should be respectful and attentive to local processes, without weakening the bond with the other sister Churches and with the universal Church. They establish harmony between communion and participation, between co-responsibility and the ministries of all, paying special attention to the effective participation of the laity in discernment and decision making, favouring the participation of women.

New paths for Church ministries

a. A ministering Church and new ministries

93. The renewal of the Second Vatican Council places the laity in the heart of the People of God, in a totally ministerial Church, which bases the identity and mission of every Christian in the sacrament of baptism. The lay people are faithful who by baptism were incorporated into Christ, constituted among the People of God and, in their own way, made participants and sharers in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly functions of Christ; and they carry out for their own part the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world (cf. *LG 31*). From this threefold relationship, with Christ, the Church and the world, is born the vocation and mission of the laity. The Church in the Amazon, yearning for a society of justice and solidarity in the care of our common home, wants to make the laity privileged actors. Their action has been and is vital in the coordination of Church communities, in the exercise of ministries, as well as in prophetic commitment to a world that includes everyone, and whose martyrs give witness and challenge us.

94. The establishment of assemblies and pastoral councils in all Church areas, as well as of coordination teams of the different pastoral services and the ministries entrusted to the laity, manifest the co-responsibility of all the baptized in the Church and the exercise of the *sensus fidei* of the whole People of God. We recognize the need to strengthen and broaden the opportunities for the participation of the laity, whether in consultation or decision-making, in the life and mission of the Church.

95. Although mission in the world is the task of every baptized person, the Second Vatican Council emphasized the mission of the laity: "the expectation of a new earth must not weaken but rather stimulate our concern for cultivating this one" (*GS 39*). It is urgent for the Church in the Amazon to promote and confer ministries for men and women in an equitable manner. The fabric of the local Church, in the Amazon as elsewhere, is guaranteed by small missionary Church communities that cultivate faith, listen to the Word and celebrate together close to the people's life. It is the Church of baptized men and women that we must consolidate by promoting ministries and, above all, an awareness of baptismal dignity.

96. In addition, in the absence of priests, the Bishop may, for a specific period of time, mandate and entrust the exercise of pastoral care of the communities to a person not invested with the priestly character, who is a member of the community. Prolonged individual incumbency should be avoided and so it will be a rotating position. The Bishop may constitute this ministry on behalf of the Christian community with an official mandate through a ritual act so that the person responsible for the community is also recognized at the civil and local levels. The priest, with the power and faculties of pastor, always remains responsible for the community.

b. Religious life

97. The Gospel text - "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor" (*Lk 4:18*) - expresses a conviction that animates the mission of religious life in the Amazon, sent to proclaim the Good News and closely accompany the indigenous peoples, the most vulnerable and the most remote, based on a dialogue and proclamation that enable a profound knowledge of spirituality. Inter-congregational and inter-institutional relationships can help those in religious life to stay in communities where no one wants to be and with whom no one wants to be, learning indigenous languages and respecting their culture in order to reach the heart of the peoples.

98. The mission not only contributes to building and consolidating the Church; it also strengthens and renews religious life, reminding it to recover the best and most powerful of its original inspiration. This will lead the witness of consecrated men and women to be prophetic and a source of new religious vocations. We propose and opt for a religious life with an Amazonian identity, strengthening indigenous vocations. We support the insertion and itinerancy of consecrated persons amongst the most impoverished and excluded. The formation processes should include inculturation, an inter-cultural approach, and dialogues between spiritualities and Amazonian worldviews.

c. The time for women's presence

99. The Church in the Amazon wants to "create still broader opportunities for a more incisive female presence in the Church" (*EG* 103). "Let us not reduce the involvement of women in the Church, but instead promote their active role in the ecclesial community. If the Church, in her complete and real dimension, loses women, she risks becoming sterile" (Francis, *Meeting with the Brazilian Episcopate*, Rio de Janeiro, 27.7.2013).

100. The Magisterium of the Church since the Second Vatican Council has highlighted the central place that women occupy within the Church: "The hour is coming, in fact has come, when the vocation of women is being achieved in its fullness, the hour in which woman acquires in the world an influence, an effect and a power never reached until now. That is why, at this moment when the human race is under-going so deep a mutation, women impregnated with the spirit of the Gospel can do so much to aid mankind in not falling" (*Closing of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council: Address of Pope Paul VI to Women*, 8.12.1965; *AAS* 58, 1966, 13-14).

101. The ancestral wisdom of the aboriginal peoples affirms that mother earth has a feminine face. The work of women in both the indigenous and western worlds is multifaceted: they instruct children and transmit faith and the Gospel, they inspire and support human development. The voice of women should therefore be heard, they should be consulted and participate in decision-making and, in this way, contribute with their sensitivity to Church synodality. We value the role of women, recognizing their fundamental role in the formation and continuity of cultures, in spirituality, in communities and families. Their leadership must be more fully assumed in the heart of the Church, recognized and promoted by strengthening their participation in the pastoral councils of parishes and dioceses, and also in positions of governance.

102. Seeing the concrete suffering of women who are victims of physical, moral and religious violence, including femicide, the Church commits to defend their rights and recognises them as protagonists and guardians of creation and of our common home. We recognize the ministry that Jesus reserved for women. It is necessary to promote the formation of women in biblical theology, systematic theology and canon law, valuing their presence in organizations and leadership within the Church environment and beyond. We want to strengthen family ties, especially for migrant women. We assure women's place in leadership and formation. We ask that the *Motu Proprio* of St. Paul VI, *Ministeria quaedam* (1972) be revised, so that women who have been properly trained and prepared can receive the ministries of Lector and Acolyte, among others to be developed. In the new contexts of evangelization and pastoral ministry in the Amazon, where the majority of Catholic communities are led by women, we ask that an instituted ministry of "women community leadership" be created and recognized as part of meeting the changing demands of evangelization and care for communities.

103. In the many consultations carried out in the Amazon, the fundamental role of religious and lay women in the Church of the Amazon and its communities was recognized and emphasized, given the wealth of services they provide. In a large number of these consultations, the permanent diaconate for women was requested. This made it an important theme during the Synod. The *Study Commission on the Diaconate of Women* which Pope Francis created in 2016 has already arrived as a Commission at partial findings regarding the reality of the diaconate of women in the early centuries

of the Church and its implications for today. We would therefore like to share our experiences and reflections with the Commission and we await its results.

d. The Permanent Diaconate

104. For the Amazon Church, the promotion, formation and support of permanent deacons is an urgent matter because of the importance of this ministry for the community; and particularly because of the needs for Church service in many communities, especially indigenous ones. The specific pastoral needs of the Amazon Christian communities lead us to a broader understanding of the diaconate, a service that has existed since the beginning of the Church and been restored as an autonomous and permanent rank by the Second Vatican Council (cf. *LG 29, AG 16, OE 17*). Today's diaconate should also promote integral ecology, human development, social pastoral work, and service to those in situations of vulnerability and poverty; modelled on Christ the Servant and becoming a merciful, samaritan, solidary and diaconal Church.

105. Priests are to keep in mind that the deacon is at the service of the community by appointment and under the authority of the bishop, and that they have an obligation to support permanent deacons and to act in communion with them. The maintenance of the permanent deacons must be kept in view. This includes the vocational process according to the criteria of admission. The candidate's motivations should relate to the service and mission of the permanent diaconate in the Church and in today's world. The formation program must combine academic study and pastoral practice, and be accompanied by a formation team and the parish community; the contents and sequence of activities must be adapted to each local reality. It is desirable that the wife and children participate in the formation process.

106. The program of studies or curriculum for the formation of permanent deacons, in addition to the mandatory subjects, should include topics that foster ecumenical, interreligious, and intercultural dialogue, the history of the Church in the Amazon, affectivity and sexuality, indigenous worldviews, integral ecology, and other cross-cutting themes that are relevant to the diaconal ministry. The team of formators shall consist of competent ordained ministers and laypersons who follow the approved guidelines for the permanent diaconate in each country. We want to encourage, support and personally accompany the vocational process and formation of future permanent deacons in the riverside and indigenous communities, with the participation of pastors and religious men and women. Finally, a follow-up program should offer ongoing formation (spirituality, theological training, pastoral matters, updates on Church documents, etc.), under the guidance of the bishop.

e. Paths of inculturated formation

107. "I will appoint over you shepherds after my own heart" (*Jer 3:15*). This promise, which is divine, is valid for all times and contexts, and so it is also valid for the Amazon. Intended to model the priest on Christ, formation for ordained ministry should be a communal schooling that is fraternal, experiential, spiritual, pastoral and doctrinal; in contact with the real lives of people; in harmony with the local culture and religiosity; and close to the poor. We need to prepare good pastors who live the Good News of the Kingdom; know canon law; are compassionate and as much like Jesus as possible; whose practice is to do the will of the Father, nourished by the Eucharist and Holy Scripture. That is to say, a more biblical formation in the sense of becoming like Jesus as he reveals himself in the Gospels: close to people, able to listen, to heal, to console; patient, and not seeking to demand but to manifest the tenderness of his Father's heart.

108. In order to offer future priests of the Amazon's churches a formation with an Amazonian face, inserted in and adapted to the reality, contextualized and able to respond to the many pastoral and missionary challenges, we propose a formation plan in line with the challenges of the local churches and the reality of the Amazon. Its academic content should include disciplines such as integral

ecology, ecotheology, theology of creation, Indian theologies, ecological spirituality, the history of the Church in the Amazon, Amazonian cultural anthropology, and so on. The formation centres for priestly and religious life should preferably be inserted in the Amazonian reality, with a view to keeping the young Amazonian in formation in contact with his or her own territory while preparing for the future mission, thus guaranteeing that the process of formation not distance itself from the people's lived reality and their culture, as well as offering other young non-Amazonians the opportunity to take part of their formation in the Amazon, thus fostering missionary vocations.

f. The Eucharist, source and summit of synodal communion

109. According to the Second Vatican Council, participation in the Eucharist is the source and summit of all Christian life; it symbolizes the unity of the Mystical Body; it is the centre and culmination of the whole life of the Christian community. The Eucharist contains all the spiritual good of the Church; it is the source and culmination of all evangelization. Let us echo the phrase of St. John Paul II: "The Church draws her life from the Eucharist" (*EE* 1). The Instruction of the Congregation for Divine Worship *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (2004) insists that the faithful enjoy the right to have Eucharistic celebrations as established in the liturgical books and norms. But it seems strange to speak of the right to celebrate a Eucharist according to what is prescribed without mentioning the most fundamental right of access to the Eucharist for all: "In the Eucharist, fullness is already achieved; it is the living centre of the universe, the overflowing core of love and of inexhaustible life. Joined to the incarnate Son, present in the Eucharist, the whole cosmos gives thanks to God. Indeed the Eucharist is itself an act of cosmic love" (*LS* 236).

110. The community has a right to the celebration of the Eucharist, which derives from its essence and its place in the economy of salvation. Sacramental life is the integration of the various dimensions of human life into the Paschal Mystery, which strengthens us. That is why flourishing communities truly cry out for the celebration of the Eucharist. It is, without a doubt, the point of arrival (culmination and consummation) of the community; but it is, at the same time, the point of departure for encounter, reconciliation, learning and catechesis, community growth.

111. Many of the Church communities in the Amazonian territory have enormous difficulties in attending the Eucharist. Sometimes it takes not just months but even several years before a priest can return to a community to celebrate the Eucharist, offer the sacrament of reconciliation or anoint the sick in the community. We appreciate celibacy as a gift of God (*SC*1967 1) to the extent that this gift enables the missionary disciple, ordained to the priesthood, to dedicate himself fully to the service of the Holy People of God. It stimulates pastoral charity, and we pray that there will be many vocations living the celibate priesthood. We know that this discipline "is not demanded by the very nature of the priesthood" (*PO* 16) although there are many practical reasons for it. In his encyclical on priestly celibacy, St. Paul VI maintained this law and set out theological, spiritual and pastoral motivations that support it. In 1992, the post-synodal exhortation of St. John Paul II on priestly formation confirmed this tradition in the Latin Church (cf. *PDV* 29). Considering that legitimate diversity does not harm the communion and unity of the Church, but rather expresses and serves it (cf. *LG* 13; *OE* 6), witness the plurality of existing rites and disciplines, we propose that criteria and dispositions be established by the competent authority, within the framework of *Lumen Gentium* 26, to ordain as priests suitable and respected men of the community with a legitimately constituted and stable family, who have had a fruitful permanent diaconate and receive an adequate formation for the priesthood, in order to sustain the life of the Christian community through the preaching of the Word and the celebration of the Sacraments in the most remote areas of the Amazon region. In this regard, some were in favour of a more universal approach to the subject.

New paths for ecclesial synodality

a. Regional Synodal Structures in the Amazon Church

112. Most of the dioceses, prelatures and vicariates of the Amazon have extensive territories, few ordained ministers and scarce financial resources, which make it difficult to sustain their mission. The "Amazon cost" has serious repercussions for evangelization. In the face of all this, it is necessary to rethink the way in which local churches are organized, to review the structures of communion at the provincial, regional and national levels, and also from a Pan-Amazon point of view. Therefore, it is necessary to articulate synodal spaces and generate networks of solidarity and support. It is urgent to overcome the barriers that geography imposes and to build bridges that unite. The Aparecida document already insisted that local Churches generate forms of interdiocesan association in each nation or between countries in a region and that they foster greater cooperation among sister churches (cf. *DAP* 182). With a view to a truly present, solidary and samaritan Church, we propose: to reconfigure the vast geographical areas of the dioceses, vicariates and prelatures; to create an Amazon fund for the support of evangelization; to sensitize and encourage international Catholic cooperation agencies, in addition to their socially oriented projects, to support activities of evangelization.

113. In 2015, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops by St. Paul VI, Pope Francis invited us to renew synodal communion at the various levels of the life of the Church: local, regional and universal. The Church is developing a renewed understanding of synodality on a regional scale. Supported by tradition, the International Theological Commission states: "The regional level in the exercise of synodality is the one experienced in groupings of local Churches present in the same region: a Province - as happened above all in the Church of the first centuries - or a country, a continent or part of one" (*Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*, 2018, 85). The exercise of synodality at this level strengthens spiritual and institutional bonds, fosters the exchange of gifts and helps to establish common pastoral criteria. The joint social pastoral work of dioceses along international borders should be strengthened in order to face common problems that go beyond the local level, such as the exploitation of persons and of the territory, drug trafficking, corruption, human trafficking, etc. The migration problem needs to be addressed in a coordinated way by the border churches.

b. Universities and new Amazonian synodal structures

114. We propose that an Amazon Catholic University be established based on interdisciplinary research (including field studies), inculturation and inter-cultural dialogue; and that inculturated theology include joint formation for lay ministries and priestly formation, based primarily on Sacred Scripture. Research, education and extension activities should include environmental study programmes (environmental theory along with the wisdom of the peoples living in the Amazon region) and ethnic studies (description of the different languages, etc.). Teacher training, teaching and educational materials should respect the customs and traditions of indigenous peoples, with inculturated teaching materials being developed and outreach activities being held in different countries and regions. We ask the Catholic universities of Latin America to help in the creation of the Amazon Catholic University and to accompany its development.

c. A post-synodal Regional Church Organism for the Amazon Region

115. We propose the creation of a Bishops' organism that promotes synodality among the churches of the region, helps to express the Amazonian face of this Church and continues the task of finding new paths for the evangelizing mission, especially incorporating the proposal of integral ecology, thus strengthening the physiognomy of the Church in the Amazon. It would be a permanent and representative Bishops' organism that promotes synodality in the Amazon region, connected with CELAM, with its own structure, in a simple organization and also connected with REPAM. So constituted, it can be the effective instrument in the territory of the Latin American and Caribbean Church for taking up many of the proposals that emerged in this Synod. It would be the

nexus for developing Church and socio-environmental networks and initiatives at the continental and international levels.

d. A Rite for the indigenous peoples

116. The Second Vatican Council created possibilities for liturgical pluralism "for legitimate variations and adaptations for different groups, regions, and peoples" (SC 38). In this sense, the liturgy should respond to culture so that it may be the source and summit of Christian life (cf. SC 10) and be really linked to the people's sufferings and joys. We should give an authentically catholic response to the request of the Amazonian communities to adapt the liturgy by valuing the original worldview, traditions, symbols and rites that include transcendent, community and ecological dimensions.

117. There are 23 different Rites in the Catholic Church, a clear sign of a tradition that from the first centuries has tried to inculturate the contents of the faith and its celebration through language that coheres as much as possible with the mystery it seeks to be express. All these traditions have their origin in function of the Church's mission: "The Churches of the same geographical and cultural area came to celebrate the mystery of Christ through particular expressions characterized by the culture: in the tradition of the 'deposit of faith' (2 *Tim* 1:14), in liturgical symbolism, in the organization of fraternal communion, in the theological understanding of the mysteries, and in various forms of holiness" (CCC 1202; cf. also 1200-1206).

118. It is necessary that the Church, in her tireless labour of evangelization, work so that the process of inculturation of the faith may be expressed with the utmost coherence, in order that it may also be celebrated and lived in the languages proper to the Amazon's peoples. It is urgent to form committees for the translation of biblical and the preparation of liturgical texts in the different local languages, with the necessary resources, preserving the substance of the sacraments and adapting their form, without losing sight of what is essential. So too, it is necessary to encourage music and songs, all of which is included in and encouraged by the liturgy.

119. The new organism of the Church in the Amazon should establish a competent commission to study and discuss, according to the habits and customs of the ancestral peoples, the elaboration of an Amazonian rite that expresses the liturgical, theological, disciplinary and spiritual patrimony of the Amazon, with special reference to what *Lumen Gentium* affirms for the Oriental Churches (cf. LG 23). This would add to the rites already present in the Church, enriching the work of evangelization, the capacity to express the faith in their own culture, and the sense of decentralization and collegiality that can express the catholicity of the Church. The commission could also study and propose how to enrich Church rites with the way in which these peoples care for their territory and relate to its waters.

CONCLUSION

120. We conclude under the protection of Mary, Mother of the Amazon, venerated with various titles throughout the region. Through her intercession, we ask that this Synod be a concrete expression of synodality, so that the abundant life that Jesus came to bring into the world (cf. *Jn* 10:10) may reach everyone, especially the poor, and contribute to the care of our common home. May Mary, Mother of the Amazon, accompany our journey; to St. Joseph, faithful custodian of Mary and her son Jesus, we consecrate our Church presence in the Amazon, a Church with an Amazonian face and reaching out in mission.

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