

## 4th General Congregation: Overview presented by Vatican News



### **#SinodoAmazonico**

4th General Congregation: Overview presented by *Vatican News*

The Church confesses 'ecological sins.' That priest may be saints.

*The Fourth General Congregation concludes the second day of work for the Synod on the Amazon. 182 Synod Fathers were present in the Synod Hall. Again for this session the Synod was blessed by the presence of Pope Francis.*

The systematic violation of the human rights of the Amazonian people and the threats against life in the Amazonian region as well as the damage to the environment are the main reflections of this fourth session of the Synod of Bishops.

No to indifference, yes to responsibility.

There is a strong appeal for the Church to raise up her authoritative voice in the area of morality and spirituality in defence of life, thus denouncing the various structures of death that threaten the gift of life. Therefore a no must be raised against indifference that would otherwise render one a simple spectator. Instead, there must be a yes to an ecological conversion based upon responsibility and an integral ecology founded above all upon human dignity, which unfortunately is so often attacked.

That the international community might face seriously the violation of human rights.

The unacceptable situation of the environmental degradation of the Amazonian region is denounced by the Synod, this must be taken seriously by the international community, so often indifferent to the shedding of innocent blood. The indigenous peoples, custodians of the natural reserves, evangelised by the Cross of Christ, are acknowledged as connected to the challenge of climate change, and thus the Synod in friendship 'walks together,' with them. To this end one of the fraternal delegates has proposed the necessity of uniting our strengths in dialogue, since friendship includes "respect, protection and care." From various corners the Church is called upon to enter into an alliance with social movements at the local level, placing herself in a posture of humble listening and welcome to the 'cosmological vision of the Amazon.' In this way one might move forward respecting the different meanings in respect to a traditional western understanding, keeping in mind, in particular, the local cultures and symbolic rituals of the Amazon.

A greater understanding of 'ecological sins.'

Since the future of the Amazon is in our hands, the need for sustainable development was highlighted, a development that takes seriously an awareness of scientific and traditional insights. It is hoped that an ecological conversion might make people aware of the serious nature of sins against the

environment in the same way as the seriousness of sins against God, as these ecological sins effect future generations. From here it is proposed to study and disseminate a theological reading treating these sins, commonly called, 'ecological sins.'

Promoting an indigenous permanent diaconate.

To enrich an understanding of ministry, some Synod Participants called for a strengthening of the formation of Amazonian missionaries, lay and consecrated. Therefore it is necessary to involve in a greater way, the indigenous peoples in this apostolate and to begin to promote an indigenous permanent diaconate, as well as valuing lay ministry. This therefore, is intended to be an authentic manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Connected with this appeal, is a call for a greater participation of women in the Church.

Reflections on the priestly vocation.

The interventions of the Synod returned again to a reflection on the criteria of admission to ordained ministry. There was the appeal from one of the participants for the Church to pray for vocations, calling for a transformation of the Amazon as a great spiritual sanctuary from which is raised a prayer to the 'Father of Harvest' so that there may be new workers of the Gospel. The shortage of priests is not only a problem for the Amazon, but for the entire Catholic world. Arising from this is the request for a serious examination of conscience reflecting upon the way one lives the priestly vocation. The lack of holiness is in fact a real obstacle to evangelical witness. Unfortunately, not all Shepherds carry the perfume of Christ and as a result, distance themselves from the call to guide the sheep.

The odour of sanctity and the youth.

The Synod listened to the shining example of the martyrs of the Amazon, in particular the two servants of God killed in Mato Grosso, Fr Rudolf Lunkenbein S.D.B. and Simão Cristino Koge Kudugodu. Ecological conversion must be considered *in primis* as a conversion to holiness. This has the enormous potential to attract youth, thus here exists the opportunity for a pastoral renewal that is more dynamic and attentive. The call is also made to highlight (also using various forms of media) the many good priestly witnesses whose lives are so often overshadowed in the media by various ecclesial scandals. Thus as Catholic youth are wounded by the ills of violence, drugs, prostitution, unemployment and existential meaninglessness, we must again highlight the many positive examples of young Catholics.

In Memory of Cardinal Serafim Fernandes de Araújo

Today attention focused upon the theme of immigration in the Amazon and its multiple voices, whilst always remembering that the work of the Church is coordinated and founded upon welcome, protection, and the promotion of integration. The fourth General Congregation presided over by the Pope began with a prayer by all gathered for the soul of Cardinal Serafim Fernandes de Araújo who died today in Belo Horizonte.