



DIOCESE *of*
PARRAMATTA

The Amazonian Synod

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The Synod of Bishops for
the Pan-Amazon region
met in Rome from 6 to 27
October 2019.



Outline for today's presentation



- The Gift of Pope Francis: Context for understanding the Amazonian Synod
- The Consultation Lead up to the Amazonian Synod: Listening to the local churches of the Pan Amazonian region - leading to the 'Working document' for the Synod
- The Amazonian Synod : Testimony, dynamics and controversies and the central themes emerging in the Final document document overwhelmingly approved
- Pope Francis's ongoing synodal discernment process
- The Major themes of 'Beloved Amazon" (*'Querida Amazonia'*)
- 'Reception' of the document so far and relevance to the Church in Australia's Plenary Council



The Gift of Pope Francis: Context for understanding the Amazonian Synod



Francis as the spirit's gift from the Church in Latin America



“I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security. I do not want a Church concerned with being at the centre and which then ends by being caught up in a web of obsessions and procedures.”

Pope Francis

The Church is a 'Field Hospital'



“I see clearly,” the pope continues, “that the thing the church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful; it needs nearness, proximity.

I see the church as a field hospital after battle. It is useless to ask a seriously injured person if he has high cholesterol and about the level of his blood sugars!

You have to heal his wounds. Then we can talk about everything else. Heal the wounds, heal the wounds... And you have to start from the ground up.”



Why is this synod on the Amazon so important?



Very briefly, always remember, Vatican II was a special surprise that few expected or even wanted!



Emergence of a global truly Catholic Church



As first, Karl Rahner SJ and now ecclesialogists like Massimo Faggioli point out, in that great Council, we saw for the first time the emergence of the global Church.

The Council marked the end of the period when Catholicism as a whole could be equated with its expression in the forms of Graeco-Roman, Mediterranean, or European culture.

Instead, we are witnessing the birth of a new multicultural Catholicism in which all the regional Churches may be expected to interact, mutually criticising and enriching one another.

In calling and participating so humbly in the Synod of the Amazon, Francis is showing how each of local Churches, in union with the Universal Church, can continue to implement Vatican II and to preach the Good News of Jesus to all around them.

Hence the importance of our upcoming Australian Plenary Council

A turning point for the universal and local Churches



That is why, it is no exaggeration, to say that Francis' calling of the Synod of the Amazon, is one of the most significant ecclesial moments in the last 50 years.





**"THE EUCHARIST... IS NOT
A PRIZE FOR THE PERFECT
BUT A POWERFUL MEDICINE AND
NOURISHMENT FOR THE WEAK."
- POPE FRANCIS, EVANGELII GAUDIUM**

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The Consultation
Lead up to the Amazonian
Synod: Listening to the local
churches of the Pan Amazonian
region - leading to the
'Working document' for
the Synod



In the vast Amazonian region, we're talking about nine countries, with different cultural backgrounds and state structures.

It covers 33 million people who live in the pan-Amazon region; three million who are in Indigenous communities. In those communities you have 400 different Indigenous nationalities, using 200 different languages, which come from 50 main linguistic origins.



Wide ranging Panamazonian consultation



About 87,000 people participated in the “listening” exercise that was part of the formal consultation process for the synod, facilitated by the Pan-Amazon Church Network (Repam). Of these, 22,000 participated in assemblies, forums and caucuses, and at least another 65,000 in the preparatory processes in the nine countries of the Panamazonía: parts of Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, French Guiana, Guyana, Peru, Venezuela and Surinam. Ninety per cent of the bishops of the region or their vicars attended. And in some cases, the episcopal conferences themselves carried out their own consultation processes.



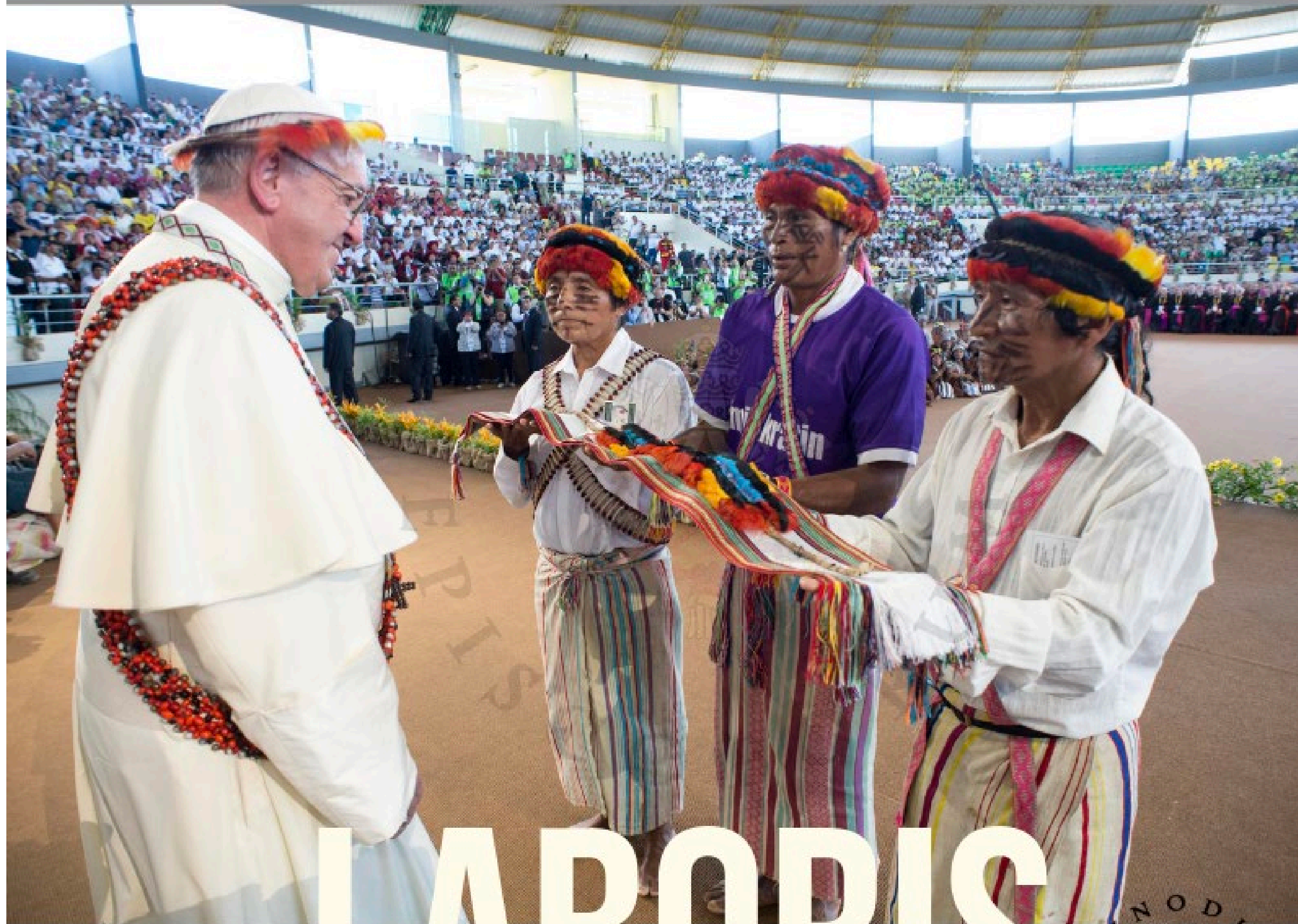
The Church has already been in the Amazon from colonial times, committing its own sins and crimes in terms of invading, controlling and imposing. But at the same time, there has always been the presence of missionaries, who have been very relevant to the indigenous peoples.”

And still are. “I think this is the first time that we have had a pope who has been clear and consistent over the indigenous peoples of the Amazon region by saying that they should be the first and main people in deciding what to do with their territory.” But doesn’t that mean taking on governments? “No,” López replies firmly. “What we are saying to politicians is that we are not the enemy. We have been in the Amazon for centuries, before you were here, and we are not going. We will be there when you have gone. So we need to find ways to collaborate.”

Standing up for the rights of indigenous peoples, he believes, is not just about protecting their interests, but also our own interests, and those of the planet. “We need to acknowledge that the indigenous peoples are the ones who take better care of our environment. We need to realise how much they do for our region, for the rest of the world and for the earth.”

Mauricio Lopez, REPAM

INSTRUMENTUM



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The Amazonian Synod:
Testimony, dynamics and
controversies and the central
themes emerging in the Final
document overwhelmingly
approved.







NEWS

The 'pain-lines' of the Amazon



- **Extreme violence done to Indigenous peoples**
- **Ongoing ecological destruction**
- **Shocking violence against women**
- **Pastoral ways forward: Toward an Amazonian Church with an Indigenous face**
- **A ministry of presence not visitation**







The pact of the catacombs



FINAL DOCUMENT



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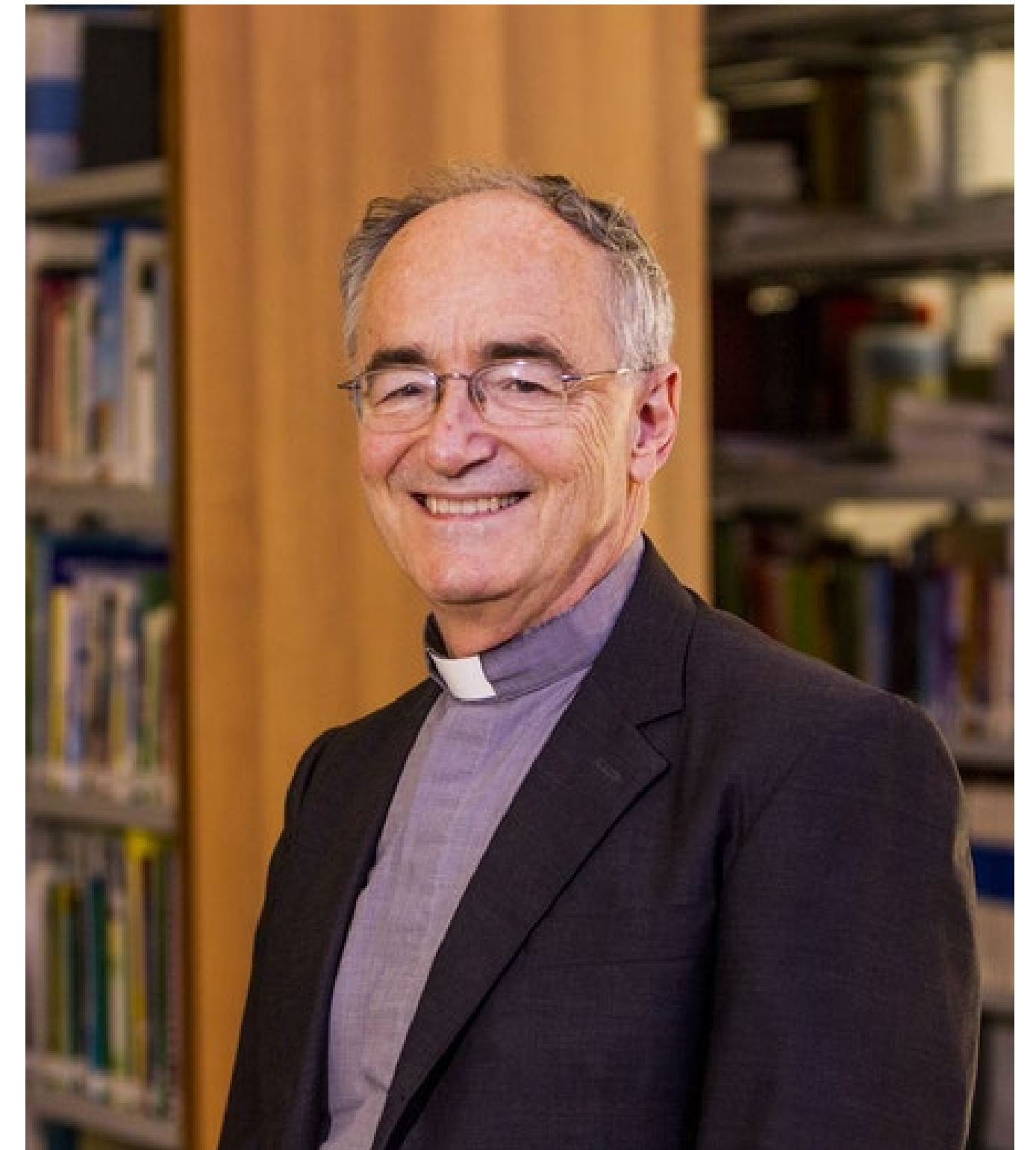
FINAL DOCUMENT

The Amazon: New paths for the Church and for an integral ecology

Cardinal Michael Czerney SJ



“The fires brought the thing home to us in a way that graphs or other visuals didn’t. If we insist on tearing up the trees and digging up the land because we can’t live without the metals and the gold and the wood for our fancy furniture, you can fill out the rest.”





Top 5 takeaways from the Amazon Synod



1. The synod was prophetic in placing Amazonian and indigenous communities at the centre of the synod process and for making a clear option for these communities over foreign economic interests.
2. At the heart of the synod process and the final document is conversion at the pastoral, cultural, ecological and synodal levels.
3. This special synod—the first Synod of Bishops to be organized around a distinct ecological territory—sought to practice what it preached regarding “integral ecology” and care for our common home.
4. All 120 paragraphs of the synod’s final document were approved with the necessary two-thirds majority vote, including proposals related to married priests and women deacons.
5. Since his election as pope in March 2013, Pope Francis has transformed the Synod of Bishops into a privileged place of discernment and conversion.

Opposition from Opponents of the Vision of Pope Francis



On the other hand, there are some here in Rome who are determined to repeat the old mantra: “No new steps!” And not all of these are old people!

They are almost exclusively represented by a tiny group of well-funded, largely USA reactionary Catholic media people (with the help of a few neo-fascist Italian intellectual journalists).

They are determined to do anything and everything they can to burn the house of the Church down, in order to maintain their campaign against Pope Francis.

With little or no sensitivity to the Indigenous peoples of the Amazon, they rush in to condemn before even trying to understand. Remarkably, these critics are trashing the legacy of Pope St John Paul II and his profound understanding of inculturation



The Major themes of ‘Beloved Amazon’ (*Querida Amazonia*)





POPE FRANCIS
BELOVED AMAZON
Querida Amazonia



*Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation of the Holy Father, Francis
to the people of God and to all persons of good will*

*in the English language translation of the Latin text
published in the Apostolic Letter of the Holy See*

Querida Amazonia - Beloved Amazon



CHAPTER ONE - A SOCIAL DREAM

"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". We do not need an environmentalism "that is concerned for the biome but ignores the Amazonian peoples".[8]

If we wish to dialogue, we should do this in the first place with the poor. They are not just another party to be won over, or merely another individual seated at a table of equals. They are our principal dialogue partners, those from whom we have the most to learn, to whom we need to listen out of a duty of justice, and from whom we must ask permission before presenting our proposals. [26]



CHAPTER TWO - A CULTURAL DREAM

That is in fact what education is meant to do: to cultivate without uprooting, to foster growth without weakening identity, to be supportive without being invasive. [28]

Human groupings, their lifestyles and their worldviews, are as varied as the land itself, since they have had to adapt themselves to geography and its possibilities. Each distinct group, then, in a vital synthesis with its surroundings, develops its own form of wisdom. [32]

"a consumerist vision of human beings, encouraged by the mechanisms of today's globalized economy, has a levelling effect on cultures, diminishing the immense variety which is the heritage of all humanity". [33]

let us sit around the common table, a place of conversation and of shared hopes. In this way our differences, which could seem like a banner or a wall, can become a bridge. [37]

CHAPTER THREE- AN ECOLOGICAL DREAM



In a cultural reality like the Amazon region, where there is such a close relationship between human beings and nature, daily existence is always cosmic. The Lord, who is the first to care for us, teaches us to care for our brothers and sisters and the environment which he daily gives us. This is the first ecology we need. [41]

To abuse nature is to abuse our ancestors, our brothers and sisters, creation and the Creator, and to mortgage the future". [42]

poets, contemplatives and prophets, help free us from the technocratic and consumerist paradigm that destroys nature and robs us of a truly dignified existence [46]

it is good to combine ancestral wisdom with contemporary technical knowledge, always working for a sustainable management of the land while also preserving the lifestyle and value systems of those who live there [51]

we can learn to *contemplate* the Amazon region and not simply analyse it, and thus appreciate this precious mystery that transcends us. We can love it, not simply use it, with the result that love can awaken a deep and sincere interest. Even more, we can *feel intimately a part of it* and not only defend it; then the Amazon region will once more become like a mother to us [55]



For Christians, Jesus himself cries out to us from their midst, "because the risen One is mysteriously holding them to himself and directing them towards fullness as their end. The very flowers of the field and the birds which his human eyes contemplated and admired are now imbued with his radiant presence". For all these reasons we believers encounter in the Amazon region a theological locus, a space where God himself reveals himself and summons his sons and daughters. [57]



CHAPTER FOUR - AN ECCLESIAL DREAM

An authentic option for the poor and the abandoned, while motivating us to liberate them from material poverty and to defend their rights, also involves inviting them to a friendship with the Lord that can elevate and dignify them [63]

the principal proclamation, the one which we must hear again and again in different ways, proclaims a God who infinitely loves every man and woman and has revealed this love fully in Jesus Christ, crucified for us and risen in our lives. Without that impassioned proclamation, every ecclesial structure would become just another NGO [64]

the authentic Tradition of the Church, which is not a static deposit or a museum piece, but the root of a constantly growing tree. This millennial Tradition bears witness to God's work in the midst of his people and is called to keep the flame alive rather than to guard its ashes [66]

But let us be fearless; let us not clip the wings of the Holy Spirit. [69]



Pope Francis's ongoing synodal discernment process





Here is how Francis describes our challenge:

I don't have all the answers; I don't even have all the questions.

I always think of new questions, and there are always new questions coming forward. But the answers have to be thought out according to the different situations, and you also have to wait for them. I confess that, because of my disposition, the first answer that comes to me is usually wrong. When I'm facing a situation, the first solution I think of is what not to do.

Because of this I have learned not to trust my first reaction. When I'm calmer, after passing through the crucible of solitude, I come closer to understanding what has to be done... You can do a great deal of harm with the decisions you make. One can be very unfair.





This is a new kind of exhortation, one that doesn't subsume the synod's final report in a papal document but responds respectfully to the local Church's discernment with a discernment of his own. This was the first ever "territorial" synod, in which the bishops of nine countries were brought together to ponder the conclusions of a two-year consultation of more than 60,000 people across the region – one of the most extensive, and remarkable, soundings of the people of God ever undertaken. Despite differences over the ordination question, it wasn't hard to hear the Spirit speaking through the gathering: in the appalling testimonies of suffering, in the urgency of the economic and ecological crisis, and in the hope that the native peoples were placing in the Church.

Austen Ivereigh



What is clear from Beloved Amazonia is that for the Church to be better present in this uniquely challenging environment it must look to and recognise what the Spirit is currently doing in the region. Almost all of the region's Catholic communities are run by lay people, 60 per cent of them women; only a tiny proportion have resident clergy. In paragraph 94 Francis notes that "wherever there is a particular need, he has already poured out the charisms that can meet it." Where are those charisms being poured out? A Church with Amazonian features requires "the stable presence of mature and lay leaders endowed with authority", he says, adding that such people are "familiar with the languages, cultures, spiritual experience and communal way of life" of the region. A Church "open to the Spirit's boldness" will allow "the growth of a specific ecclesial culture that is distinctively lay."

Austen Ivereigh



This paragraph follows on from a call for greater access by people to the sacraments, and for the Church to foster vocations and send more missionaries to the region. But he is quick to add that facilitating a greater presence of ordained ministers would be a “very narrow aim were we not also to strive to awaken new life in communities.” In other words, sacraments alone are not sufficient to evangelise. The objective is to “promote an encounter with God’s word and growth in holiness” for which “various kinds of lay service” are necessary. This is in many respects the heart of Francis’s response to the question of ministries: rather than obsess about access to the Eucharist, important though that is, the Church needs to enable and empower the work the Spirit is already undertaking through lay people inculturating the Gospel in the region.

Austen Ivereigh



‘Reception’ of the Papal document so far and relevance to the Church in Australia’s Plenary Council



For the Pope, the key challenge was to open up to new thinking in order to implement the vision of *Laudato Si'*.

While the world was waiting with bated breath for a historic decision on whether to ordain married men in Amazonia, Pope Francis was busy going in a very different direction. Some will see “Beloved Amazonia” as ducking an historic challenge, leaving the Church in limbo in order to avoid a contentious decision that would have deepened divisions. But right at the end of the document, Francis offers a revealing window onto his discernment: “Beloved Amazonia” is less about avoiding conflict than about seeing another path where the Holy Spirit is calling the Church.

In paragraph 104 the Pope observes that when pastoral workers propose “opposed forms of ecclesial organisation” in response to challenges, it is likely that the true answer lies in “transcending the two approaches and finding other, better ways, perhaps not yet even imagined.” In the following paragraph he says solutions often come in the form of a “greater gift” that God is offering from which “there will pour forth as from an overflowing fountain the answers that contraposition did not allow us to see.”

This is vintage Bergoglio: in a context of polarisation in the Church the mistake is to try to resolve it by allowing one side to defeat the other. Rather, by patiently and attentively holding together the polarity – positions that pull in a different direction – the leader allows for the possibility of a “third way” that the Holy Spirit offers.

Austen Ivereigh



‘Francis has decided nothing: Beloved Amazonia has no new laws, or doctrines, statutes or structures. The synod final report remains in place, and the Amazonian bishops can continue to advance its proposals, most of which depend more on their own actions and decisions than on Rome’s say-so. Two of the structural proposals that would require the Pope to agree – an Amazonian bishops’ body, and an Amazonian liturgical rite – are noted favourably in the exhortation as suggestions of how to deepen collaboration and inculturation, but it is over to the Amazonian bishops to ask the Pope for these when they are ready to.’

Austen Ivereigh



On one extreme, the conservatives accepting no change at all and placing themselves as the protectors of the so-called orthodoxy of the church, when in fact it seems to be their intent to protect the status quo approach to how the church is to be governed. It is a Western, Eurocentric view that by no means represents the whole of the beautiful diversity of our church. We need to know that this diversity is part of our own history and identity, meant to express the true catholicity of our church.

And on the other side, I see some people defending a position that is more ideological than pastoral, arguing that the changes need to happen in a time frame of their choosing and with the features they consider essential. Any outcome not in line with their wishes is considered soft or lacking courage.

Mauricio Lopez REPAM



For centuries, we in the West have 'owned' the church and the Gospel. We have dictated the terms in which people in the Global South have understood doctrine, lived Christian morals and celebrated the liturgy. Those days are ending.

By 2050, there will be three billion Christians in the world and only one in six of these will be non-Hispanic whites. By 2050, 80% of Catholics will live in or trace their origins to the Global South. The typical Christian will soon be a poor coloured woman from a shantytown in Kinshasa, Buenos Aires, Manila or some other large city in the majority world. These cities will be important Christian centres and Pope Francis has already appointed many of their bishops as Cardinals.

Australia is an island and we tend to become isolated, superior and preoccupied with 'western issues'. However, if we are not to be left behind, we need to build bridges to this wider Church. Increasingly the important Church decisions will be made in the 'South'. They are more conservative both in belief and in moral teaching, and strongly supernatural or charismatic in orientation. We can already see this in Australia with the overseas priests and religious and with our ethnic brothers and sisters.

So, ironically, we have lots to gain by coming to grips with being a 'Southern' church. As missionaries, we went to margins and now the margins have come to us. Forty-nine percent of all Australians are born overseas or have a parent born overseas. We are a multicultural and multi-faith society. We need to learn how to be more open and humble, to live in a healthy intercultural way, to appreciate difference and to learn how to dialogue.

Noel Connolly, Columban, *The Swag* Autumn issue 2020





As one of the few USA Bishops appointed by Pope Francis to the Synod, Bob Mc Elroy's words resonated in my heart as an Australian Catholic.

Such good living also “rejects grave disparities of wealth and social inequality,” he said. “It breathes with the spirit of God.”

Bishop Bob acknowledged that “the specific form of good living that exists for the Indigenous peoples of the Amazon will not be transferable to most other cultures in the world.”

But he does believe that, “its underlying themes of connectedness, moderation, balance and sharing must become the norm for all peoples in re-evaluating our lifestyles if we are to escape the lures of materialism and build a sustainable society for our world”.



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations







**“There is Good news
and there is the Better News.**

The Good News is that there is a Messiah.
The Better News is that it’s not you!”





At the end, we will find ourselves face to face with the infinite beauty of God (cf. 1 Cor 13:12), and be able to read with admiration and happiness the mystery of the universe, which with us will share in unending plenitude. Even now we are journeying towards the sabbath of eternity, the new Jerusalem, towards our common home in heaven. Jesus says: “I make all things new” (Rev 21:5). Eternal life will be a shared experience of awe, in which each creature, resplendently transfigured, will take its rightful place and have something to give those poor men and women who will have been liberated once and for all.

Pope Francis
LAUDATO SI'





LINKS TO VIDEO CLIPS USED

A church with an Amazonian face

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R15RfWP4ZUM>

End of Synod Pope Francis speaks

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8JJCQ_GQ3Sg4

Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Querida Amazonia.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hvqEpz6L_G4

James Martin <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D7ILJ5zSMLs>

Ode to Joy <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kbJcQYVtZMo>

LINKS TO VIDEO CLIPS
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