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SPECIAL ISSUE ON THE SYNOD AND THE MARIST PRESENCE IN THE AMAZON

Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon Region
6 to 27 October

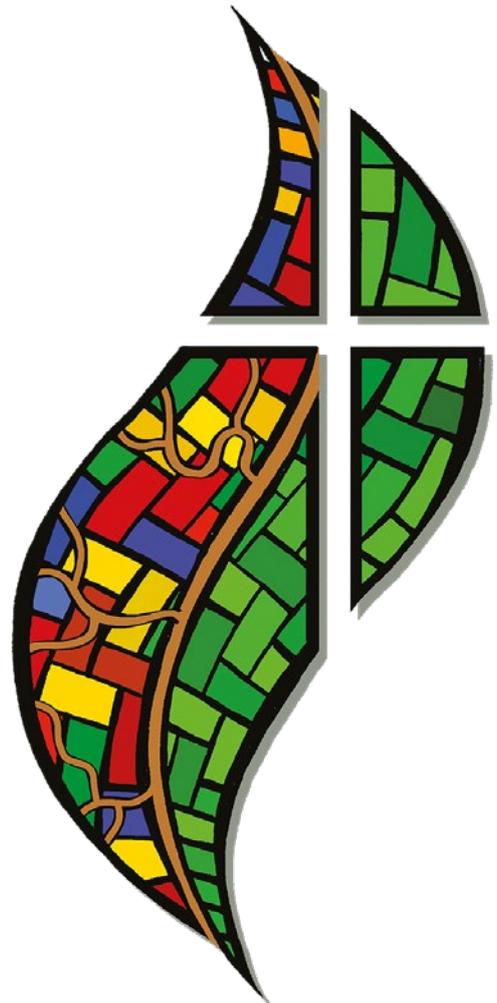
AMAZONIA: NEW PATHS FOR THE CHURCH AND FOR AN INTEGRAL ECOLOGY

The Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazonian Region will take place in the Vatican from 6 to 27 October. The main objective of the assembly, convoked by Pope Francis, is "to find new ways for the evangelization of that portion of the People of God, especially the indigenous, often forgotten and with no prospects for a good future, also for the cause of the crisis of the Amazonian forest".

This lack of perspective also derives from the ecological crisis we are experiencing. It is necessary to assume a new ecclesial, civic and ecological project that seeks to overcome the confines and redefine the pastoral lines, adapting them to contemporary times.

With regard to an ecological project, the General Chapter invites us to "develop an ecological conscience to take care of our common home".

Therefore it is time to ask ourselves if we really take seriously, at an individual and organizational level, the commitment to adopt concrete actions to play our part in the care of creation.



TWO MARISTS AT THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS

On September 21, the Press Office of the Holy See published the list of participants for the Special Assembly for the Pan-Amazonian Region, to be held in the Vatican from October 6 to 27, 2019. Among the nominees are two Marists from Brazil: Brother João Gutemberg from the Province of Sul Amazonia and Joaquim Alberto Andrade Silva from the Province of Brasil Centro-Norte. Brother Gutemberg will take part as a listener. He has been invited because he is the organizer of REPAM's activities and initiatives related to integral ecology. For his part, Joaquim Alberto is one of the 25 specialists invited and he will be present as one of the experts in pastoral and human rights. For Joaquim, "the expectation is to collaborate in a prophetic and coherent way with the voices that emanate from all over the Amazonian territory. To be loyal to the calls and cries of the Amazonian peoples. A profound desire to be a new instrument that encourages the development of new paths in order to take care of our Common Home".

With regard to his expectations for the Synod, Brother João affirms:



"I have the strong conviction that the Synod for the Amazon will achieve greater effectiveness in the evangelisation of the world. He has been invited because he is the organizer of REPAM's activities and initiatives related to integral ecology. For his part, Joaquim Alberto is one of the 25 specialists invited and will be present as one of the experts in pastoral and human rights.

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profound desire to be a new instrument that encourages the development of new paths in order to take care of the Casa Común".

With regard to his expectations for the Synod, Brother João affirms: "I have the hopeful conviction that the Synod for the Amazon will achieve greater effectiveness in the evangelisation of peoples and the care of life in our Common Home: both in the Amazon and beyond, since we are all connected by the Gospel of Creation".

BR. JOÃO GUTEMBERG

Joaquim is a layman who worked as an adviser in the Area of Consecrated Life and Laity of UMBRASIL, from 2010 to 2014. He currently works as a Pastoral Expert for the UBEC Group - Brazilian Union of Catholic Education an Educational group that has as one of its associates the Marist Province of Brasil Centro-Norte. He is married to Rachel, who is closely involved in the area of Consecrated Life and Laity in the Province. They have two children. In the pre-synodal process, he was one of the collaborators in the task of systematizing and analyzing the listening carried out by the Pan-Amazonian Ecclesial Network (REPAM), throughout the Amazon territory, in the nine countries that make up the biome. Systematization and analysis that served as the content for the preparation of the Instrumentum Laboris of the Synod.

JOAQUIM ALBERTO

Brother João was born in Cruzeiro de Sul, in the state of Acre, in the Amazonian interior at the confluence of Brazil with Peru and Bolivia. He studied there and received vocational and formative accompaniment from the Marist missionaries who arrived in the Region in 1968 and from the Congregations there at the present time. He continued his studies in southern Brazil and Europe. In the apostolic mission, he worked almost always in the Amazonian context: education, pastoral and formation. At present he integrates and helps to articulate the Pan-Amazonian Ecclesial Network - REPAM, in the coordination of the Axis of Formation and methods of pastoral accompaniment in the perspective of Integral Ecology, which connects the 9 Amazonian countries. Likewise, he is part of the Commission of Consecrated Life for the Amazon of the Latin American and Caribbean Confederation of Religious, CLAR.

An Integral ecological conscience

MARISTS IN PANAMAZONIA AND IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SYNOD

The Marist presence in the Amazon is more than 100 years old. Since it was in 1903 that the missionary Brothers - coming from the Province of Aubenas, in France - settled in Belém do Pará, which created the Province of Brasil Norte, which today belongs to the Province of Brasil Centro-Norte. Following the missionary impetus promoted by the Second Vatican Council. Since 1967, several Marist Provinces of Brazil have opened missionary communities in various parts of the Brazilian Amazon, often composed of Brothers and lay men and women. Many of these communities will unite to create the Marist District of Amazonia (2002) which, in 2015, will become part of the Province of Brazil South-Amazon.



Marist Provinces in the Amazon

In the context of today, 4 Marist provinces form the territory of the International Amazon. The Province of **Brasil Sul-Amazônia** maintains communities in Cruzeiro do Sul - Gregório, Labrea, Manaus and Boa Vista. These communities also welcome missionaries from the Provinces of Brasil Centro-Sul and Brasil Centro-Norte. The Province of Brasil Sul-Amazônia is also home to the International Marist Community of the Lavalla200 project in Tabatinga.

The Province of **Brasil Centro-Norte**, in addition to supporting interprovincial projects in the region, promotes communities and/or schools in Belém, Balsas and Palmas.

The Province of **Norandina** serves the indigenous youth of **Ecuador** in the Intercultural and bilingual boarding school, Abya Yala, in Lago Agrio - Sucumbios. The Carmelite Marist Sisters of the Sacred Heart collaborate with the Marists. They are greatly involved in the formation of 140 adolescents and young people from the nations of Cofán, Kichwa, Siona, Secoya and Shuar. They are also present in **Venezuela**, where they have a school in the village of Sabra Catalina, most of whose students are Creole. It is located in the delta of the Orinoco River, a region that is also considered to belong to the Amazon biome.

The Province of **Santa María de los Andes** has a house of welcome and school accompaniment for indigenous adolescents from Peru who study in **Puerto Maldonado**. The Champagnat University of **Lima** is also developing a well organized project for the training of indigenous educators in the Peruvian Amazon.

The need for a new economic, social, educational and pastoral attitude

The concern for sustainability and the preservation of the planet is a reality that affects the whole of humanity. The Amazon region, which includes Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname, French Guiana and Brazil, is crying out for a new economic, social, educational and pastoral attitude. The cry that comes from the Amazon refers not only to its self-preservation, but also to the conditions of life on Earth. If the Amazon ecosystems continue to deteriorate, the quality of human life on a global level will be compromised.

It is worth remembering that the Amazon has an area of more than 7 million kilometers and corresponds to 5% of the Earth's surface, 40% of South America and contains 20% of the world's reserve of unfrozen fresh water. It is home to 34% of the world's forest reserves and a gigantic mineral reserve. Its biological diversity of ecosystems, species and germplasm is the most intense and richest on the planet: about 30% of all species of fauna and flora in the world are found in this region. Likewise, its resource potential for medicine is immense.

The greatest richness of the Amazon, however, is its socio-diversity. It is estimated that about 34 million people live in its territory, both in the cities and in the forest. There are many children and young people. It is estimated that the indigenous population in 3 million people belonging to 390 known villages and almost 130 "Indigenous People living in voluntary isolation". Statistical data has indicated that there are approximately 240 spoken languages (49 linguistic families), numerous cultural expressions charged with spirituality, ways of relating to natural resources and cosmos-visions that integrate person-territory-ancestry-divinity: a future from the point of view of good living.

However, the Amazon suffers because of an economic model that encourages profit over people's lives and respect for nature. Large development projects do not benefit human life. Practically all of the governments of the Amazonian countries, aligned with international corporations, have policies that respond to the greed of neo-capitalism that depletes the ecology and endangers the planet. They submit very easily to the power of agribusinesses, logging companies and mining companies. The desire for the Amazon ecology is rampant and the result is the destruction of forests, water and air pollution, global warming and the murder of leaders fighting for the preservation of native cultures and forests.

An urgent call for the care of the Amazon and its inhabitants is therefore needed so that all of humanity can benefit.

The concern of the Church

On the American continent, the Bishops of Latin America, meeting in Aparecida in 2007, asked "to raise awareness in the Americas of the importance of the Amazon for all humanity" (Aparecida Document - Final text of the V General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean, n. 475). Pope Benedict XVI in his speech to the youth in São Paulo denounced the "environmental devastation of the Amazon and the threats to the human dignity of its peoples" (Message to the youth in the Pacaembu Stadium 2, May 10, 2007, cf. Aparecida Document 85).

This concern has been ratified by Pope Francis in his Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*, where he emphasizes the need to cherish the Amazon and the tropical forest of Congo (LS, 38). Pope Francis himself visited the Amazon and dialogued with the indigenous peoples in Puerto Maldonado, Peru, in January 2018. This approach to the Amazonian realities is part of the preparation of the special Synod of Bishops on Amazonia: New

ways for the Church and for an integral ecology (Rome, October 2019). The fact that the Synod for Amazonia is taking place in the Vatican points to the importance of the theme for the whole Church and, why not say it, for all humanity that is called to take care of our "Common House".

Marists of Champagnat

The Marists of Champagnat are strongly committed to Amazonian causes. This commitment is manifested in their long missionary history in the region. In the present context, this mission is enriched, among others, by the determined Marist action in the Pan-Amazonian Ecclesial Network - REPAM, since its foundation in 2015, and in the varied preparatory activity of the Synod for the Amazon. This preparation consisted of hundreds of meetings to listen to the peoples in their territorial contexts.

There are also Marist projects of insertion in the emerging Amazonian realities, such as the formation of Amazonian consciousness in the area and the global context, the care of indigenous children and young people, riverside dwellers, migrants in urban contexts. It also highlights the international interest of the Marist Institute in inserting the Amazon into the plans of the intercultural communities - Lavalla200> - composed of Brothers and lay people from different regions of the Institute.

The invitation to take care of the Amazon biome extends to the care of the whole geographical space, since everything is connected. It asks to treat with respect the identities of each biome and all the life that moves in each one of them. This diversity and connectivity is what gives Planet Earth its beauty and makes it a great and welcoming home for all.

In this time so favourable to our ecological conversion, as Marists, we want to update the Marian intuition of Pope Paul VI when he sends a message to the bishops gathered in Santarém

(Brazil) in 1972: "Paul VI gathered from the lips of Mary the happy precept of the wedding at Cana: "Do what he tells you" and asked "What is it that he tells us now? He points to the Amazon" (Disciples in the Mission in the Amazon, p. 46).

May Saint Marcellin Champagnat, in the dynamics of the Synod for the Amazon, help us to "Create an integral ecological conscience in all our communities and the different areas of the mission and develop policies at all levels of the Institute that strengthen our commitment to the care of our common home" (Message of the XII General Chapter). And to be more connected with the God of Creation and all his creatures.



PERU: PROJECT OF THE MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT UNIVERSITY IN FAVOUR OF THE PEOPLES OF AMAZONIA

The Project A Teacher for Datem is the result of a daring commitment by Marcellin Champagnat University (Lima) on behalf of the native inhabitants of the Peruvian Amazon.

In fact, at the end of 2011, the University acceded to the request of the original peoples who, through their "apus" or charismatic leaders, asked us to commit ourselves to the formation of the present and future teachers of their schools. The scene of Marcellin with the young Montagne was intense, valid and challenging.

This providential request opened up the possibility for us to be at the side of these secularly neglected and marginalized populations of society and to take their side: to share, as friends and companions, what we are; to learn from them and to communicate our knowledge; to unite our present and our future with theirs.

We feel a powerful invitation, from evangelical generosity and compassion, to move towards joining our lives with the weak, those who move on the peripheries of life and culture. Our proposal is a commitment to solidarity and transformation. Not only to give fish, but also to teach how to fish: to make the original peoples the lucid protagonists of their own history.

Datem del Marañón

The Province of Datem del Marañón, located in the northern Peruvian Amazon, is one of the poorest and most vulnerable areas of the country. More than 75% of its population is native. The province faces a series of difficulties and problems: poverty, isolation (communications are by river), isolation caused by difficult access to the media, procrastination of politicians and the central government, contamination of its rivers by oil extraction?

The lack of suitable teachers is another of the great challenges of this region of the Amazon. Most teachers - including school



principals - lack pedagogical training and qualifications. Native communities demand teachers who speak their own mother tongue (especially in the case of initial and primary education), but there are no competent professionals available. Universities are reluctant to work in this area because of the geographical, climatic and social difficulties involved.

The project

At the beginning of 2012 there begins this beautiful adventure of the Project "a teacher for the Datem". Since then, more than five hundred young people and adults from the eight original peoples living in the Datem have come together: Achuar, Awajún, Chapra, Kandozi, Amazonian Kichwa, Shawi, Shiwilo and Wampis. A small group of mestizos living in the area completes the cadre of students.

The students meet twice a year (taking advantage of official school holidays) to attend the face-to-face stage of their training.

To attend the classes, the students travel along the rivers in small canoes, on trips lasting one to seven days, to reach the town of San Lorenzo del Datem de Marañón, the capital of the Province, whose population reaches about 5000 inhabitants. Students usually travel with the whole family.

Year after year, a large group of Marist volunteers goes there on a journey which includes a plane, bus and boat. It is a two-day trip from Lima.

Volunteering

Although the University guarantees the rigorous development of academic programmes with the required teaching personnel, the development of the processes of the accompaniment of learning falls to a Marist volunteer, duly appointed and prepared.

The diversity of the origin of those who take part in the project is a challenge, but at the same time, an immense richness. In the years that the Project has been operating, more than 200 volunteers have participated (several of them more than once). They come from Peru, Chile, Bolivia and Spain, among them there are brothers and laypeople, teachers, graduates and young students of UMCH, as well as teachers from Marist works in Peru. The ages range from 18 to 70 years of age.

Taking part in the project as a volunteer brings a rich experience of shared life and mission. The experience of living in community is probably even more enriching than the development of academic activity itself. We strive to build a family where everyone collaborates in the care of people and things, participating in moments of friendship, prayer and reflection, sharing dreams and concerns. Housing and food are simple, but there is nothing lacking. The scarcity of means is compensated by the passion and enthusiasm of the participants.

Teacher training

Every year a group of about 50 volunteers moves to San Lorenzo Datem del Marañón. Together with them, a group of teachers from the indigenous peoples develops the subjects of the different native languages, some of them still in the process of normalization, and even at risk of extinction.

The studies are carried out in a semi-attendance way. The large group receives, during intense daily working hours from Monday to Saturday, the subjects specific to the study plans

corresponding to each professional career.

In the group period, the subjects are taught, the most significant learning experiences are offered and work is directed which must be carried out privately. The process is then complemented by the learning that takes place in their own workplaces. In spite of difficulties of all kinds, student dropout is almost nil.

Together with the subjects and experiences of the formation of the early education and primary education teachers, we offer pastoral and human care to all students taking part, with a high proportion of non-Catholics. Likewise, the young children of the students are cared for by UMCH students in the affectionately called "escuelita" or "little" school.

The fundamental objective of the experience is to give recognition - after 8 years of study - to about 500 bilingual native teachers. The official professional degrees they receive are the Licentiate in Initial Education (or Primary Education) and the Licentiate in Primary Education.

This year, 2019, and after 8 years of training, the first 30 qualified teachers have graduated. Those following on promotions are much more numerous.

Looking to the future

The Marist presence on the Datem is a common dream, a collective project, where we give and receive, teach and learn, share present and future with our Amazonian peoples so far from almost everything, but so close to the heart of God and Mary.

The Marist Volunteers carry out an enriching triple experience: service, learning and fraternal living together. Each year we build a bridge of solidarity and brotherhood that goes from the heart of Marcellin to the heart of the Datem.



Ecuador: abya Yala Fisco-Misional Abya Yala Multilingual School

THE MARIST-CARMELITE COMMUNITY OF SUCUMBÍOS PROMOTES INDIGENOUS INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION IN THE AMAZON REGION

The first Marist community of Sucumbíos was founded by Brothers Laurentino Albalá (Superior), Arcadio Calvo and Wilson Torres in September of 1997 promoted indigenous intercultural education in the Amazon Region and was the fruit of the provincial discernment of the former Marist Province of Ecuador, seeking to be close to the poorest and most needy of that country: the indigenous peoples of the Amazon.

Initially, the brothers lived for eight years in a house owned by the Apostolic Vicariate of Sucumbíos, some 20 kms. off the road from Quito to Lago Agrio, which at that time was almost entirely uncultivated land. Lago Agrio is the capital of the Ecuadorian province of Sucumbíos. The Missionary Team was called "EPI Aguarico" (Indigenous Pastoral Team of the Aguarico river), because it passed the Amazon

tributary about two kilometres from the property, belonging to ISAMIS, acronym for "Church of San Miguel de Sucumbíos". The Aguarico river, navigable by canoe from Sucumbíos, becomes the plentiful Napo river on entering Peru and then the Amazon, crossing the entire north of Brazil and flowing into the Atlantic Ocean, after

7,062 km.

As was very normal at that time, the missionary communities in ISAMIS were mixed: made up of religious from different congregations, including lay men and women related by the same charisms and ministries. EPI Aguarico was made up of missionaries from two religious congregations: the Marist Brothers and the Carmelite Sisters of the Sacred Heart, a congregation of Mexican origin founded in Guadalajara (Mexico). We lived in two houses, one

At that time, there were five pastorals in the Apostolic Vicariate of Sucumbíos: Indigenous Pastoral, with five ethnic groups (Kichwas, Shuars, Cofanes, Sionas, and Secoyas), Campesina, Negra and Urbana, the latter exclusively destined for the small urban nucleus of Lago Agrio, the capital of Sucumbíos, an Ecuadorian province adjacent to Peru and Colombia. The EPIS were in charge of the Indigenous Pastoral of a very large area, almost 20,000 square kilometres. There were

three teams of Indigenous Pastoral: EPI Aguarico, EPI San Miguel and EPI Lago Agrio, with a total of twelve-fifteen missionaries: priests, brothers and laypeople; in addition to other people who came to take part in short experiences in one of the teams.

The Ecuadorian province of Sucumbíos is famous for having passed - in only 60 years - from being inhabited by only the



for the brothers and the other for the sisters, a few metres away, within a property of about four hectares of land, enough for a small pig farm, domestic fowl and plantations of cocoa and bananas, to support us economically. Austerity of life was the norm for all the missionary teams of the Vicariate.

five indigenous ethnic groups, having almost no contact with mestizos and whites from the rest of the country and less from the neighbouring countries, to an unparalleled invasion of another "mishu" civilization (white-mestizo), anxious to exploit the oil that the planes of the Texaco Oil Company (USA) had detected in this area in the

early 1960s. Soon, Texaco and other associated companies took over the entire area with the permission of the Ecuadorian government: they drilled oil wells, built dirt and later asphalt roads crossing the high peaks of the Andes, building the 485 km long Heavy Crude Oil Pipeline (OCP), with a total transport capacity of 450.000 barrels each day. The oil was transported to the refineries of Esmeraldas, on the Pacific coast, without respecting the sacred lands which, for hundreds of years, belonged only to the indigenous people. Very soon thousands and thousands of poor Ecuadorians from the coast and the Andes mountain range moved to Sucumbíos and the surrounding area to enrol as workers in Texaco or to look for their own cultivated lands, because both on the coast and in the Ecuadorian mountain range the best lands belonged to the great landowners of the times of the conquest and to their descendants. With the process of drilling oil wells belching out their fumes, the oil spills, the arrival of large and heavy trucks, etc., the waters and the lands were soon contaminated, the fish disappeared from the rivers and, with the poachers, the hunting of animals... and the "civilization" of alcohol, brothels, fights, murders and the destruction of the Amazon also arrived.

The ancestral indigenous civilizations did not know how to adapt to this "new world" that invaded them, where the elders and the shamans (wise men) no longer counted for anything, the children no longer obeyed their parents. All sorts of sexual abuse took place, theft and expropriation of land, alcohol addiction, murder... by the new settlers. Yes, the schools arrived, but always from a western, colonizing perspective... with teachers without a vocation, who entered the indigenous communities on Tuesday to leave on Thursday afternoon and who did not



take into account the knowledge and values of the indigenous ancestral cultures.

The Catholic Church arrived early, enveloped in the new atmosphere of the Second Vatican Council: a Church of the People of God, committed to the poorest and most abandoned, dialoguing, denouncing injustices. The Barefoot Carmelites were assigned as missionaries responsible for the area, with the help of other religious congregations such as the Marist Brothers and the Carmelite Sisters of the Sacred Heart. Monsignor Gonzalo López Marañón, a barefoot Carmelite, was appointed bishop, imbued with a very joyful, fraternal disposition and committed to the preferential option for the poorest: a Church that is alive, festive, courageous, denouncing injustices... Indigenous leaders in the area asked the Indigenous Pastoral Ministry of San Miguel de Sucumbíos to help them obtain a quality of "intercultural indigenous education" so that their sons and daughters could face a dignified future without losing their traditional values. And the Bishop assigned this responsibility to the Marist Brothers. As the school had to be mixed - adolescents and young people of both

sexes - and with boarding school - since most of the indigenous communities lived scattered in the jungle and the distances were very large - the need for a boarding school was evident.

The Marist Brothers and the Carmelite Sisters of the Sacred Heart, in agreement with their Superiors, accepted the challenge and began to design the project "Colegio Fisco-misional Plurilingüe Abya Yala", a name that comes from the "Kuna" indigenous language of Central America and means "mature, living, flowered land" and is synonymous with the American continent.

Seeking to finance such work, with its costs, was not an easy task. The school would belong to the Apostolic Vicariate (ISAMIS), but it did not have the finances to build and support it for free. Then it occurred to the Bishop that perhaps "OCP Ecuador" (Oleoducto de Crudos Pesados), the company that built and maintained the pipeline, which transported the oil from the Amazon jungle to the port of Esmeraldas in the Pacific, could help us. The negotiations were not easy, since the building of the boarding school was

expensive, since, according to the proposed plan, each indigenous ethnic group wanted to have its own dormitory building and living room to preserve its culture. After many discussions, an economic agreement was reached. The project would cost two million dollars and OCP accepted it: it became their flagship project.

Fighting against the clock, on September 1, 2005, he was able to start with the first group of 60 students from the five indigenous ethnic groups of Sucumbíos. Since then, about 1,000 indigenous students have passed

through Abya Yala College. The vast majority of the students are boarders and live in their own cultural home, according to their ethnicity. Today (2019), of the 165 students enrolled, 110 live in student residences, surrounded by nature, and the others are external and move every day from Lago Agrio, capital of the province, 10 km away.

The Abya Yala community of Sucumbíos is a privileged place where there are always national and international volunteers to help for one month to several months or entire years, our

young indigenous people of the five ethnic groups or Ecuadorian Amazonian nationalities, as they are called in Ecuador the Kichwas, Shuars, Cofanes, Sionas and Secoyas.

Formed by the Marist Brothers and the Carmelite Sisters of the Sacred Heart, the community continues to be in charge of the College, through which more than a thousand indigenous students have already passed, valuing and enriching themselves with their cultures, while preparing to face a more promising future for their families and indigenous nationalities.

BR. JOÃO GUTEMBERG – BRASIL SUL-AMAZÔNIA

The invitation to participate in the Synod for the Amazon was based on my ministry as "organizer of activities and initiatives linked to Integral Ecology for the Ecclesiastical Network of Pan-Amazonia (REPAM)". Being chosen gives me a feeling of joy and affirms the mission we have taken up in recent years.

"This mission began when, at the creation of the Marist Province Brazil Sul-Amazonia in 2015, the Brother Provincial and his Council appointed me to collaborate in the coordination of the Formation and Methods of Pastoral Accompaniment bureau of REPAM.

"So that this mission might be effective, we have involved and connected with young people, formation institutions, religious congregations, roving teams, schools, local churches, and related organizations attuned to their surrounding societies.

"Faithful to this idea of working as one among many, I will participate in the Synod for the Amazon as a representative of the many people who have identified with and committed to this good work: Marists, youth, religious, laity, itinerants, indigenous, riversiders, pastoral leaders in urban contexts, priests and bishops: good shepherds from the Amazonian people who will come and engage with a special Synod convened by Brother Pope Francis on our much loved and coveted Amazon.

"I strongly hope that the Synod for the Amazon, by its meticulous preparation, operation and subsequent process of discernment supported by a constant spirit of goodwill, leads to greater effectiveness in the evangelization of peoples and in the care of life in our Common Home; and this, in the Amazon and beyond it. We are all connected to the gospel of creation.



VENEZUELA: THE SANTA CATALINA SCHOOL

The Santa Catalina school bears the name of the village where it is located. The village of Santa Catalina is in the Orinoco Delta, in Caño Mánamo, accessible only by river, in canoes. Its population of 1,130 support themselves by fishing, and by working at livestock and government jobs.

Presently, four Marist Brothers, two Sisters of Parish Action and a group of lay teachers provide an integral education and promote evangelization in the area.



The school is owned by the Ministry of Education. In September 1989 it was given in trust to the Marist Brothers. They began to update the run-down installations—beds, doors, windows, desks. They purchased generators, pumps, water coolers, kitchen utensils and plates, etc.

The indigenous Waraos (women and men) live in separate boarding school. The Waraos are the native inhabitants of the delta. They did not have schools in most of their small communities, so going to the boarding school provided them with food and an integral education.

Since 2016, the Brothers have not been able to support the boarding school, so it was forced to close. However, the integral education of the boys and girls of the village has contin-

ued. Until 2008 it provided education at the primary level and the first three years of high school. The students who wanted to continue their high school had to go to nearby cities, which was an economic obstacle and kept them far from their parents. For this reason, in 2011 they were offered another year of high school and so completed their baccalaureate. The families appreciate the educational process that has been developed.

Goals for the future

Currently, new challenges have arisen. We hope to be able to re-open the boarding school as soon as possible, and to provide the indigenous people with food and economic aid from the Ministry of Education, to develop agrarian and livestock training, and to ensure that electricity as well as drinking water is provided.



Another field we hope to develop within the school's Integral Educational Project is training in integral ecology. It is also a priority to promote teacher training. Likewise, medical assistance is another important project that, together with the neighboring community, we need to achieve, since those who become ill must be transferred in canoes for three and a half hours or more to the nearest city. We are all responsible for helping the local people have a dignified life.

BROTHER MARK O'CONNOR, OF THE PROVINCE OF AUSTRALIA, IS IN ROME FOLLOWING THE SYNOD ON AMAZONIA. HE IS WRITING "LETTERS", WHICH ARE POSTED ON THE WEBSITE OF THE DIOCESE OF PARRAMATTA:

There are new steps (<https://catholicoutlook.org/letters-from-the-synod-there-are-new-steps/>)

Leave the Curia Peter! (<https://catholicoutlook.org/letters-from-the-synod-leave-the-curia-peter/>)

Ear to the Ground (<https://catholicoutlook.org/letters-from-the-synod-ear-to-the-ground/>)

Follow the pain-lines! The Amazonian Synod listens and learns: (<https://catholicoutlook.org/letters-from-the-synod-follow-the-pain-lines-the-amazonian-synod-listens-and-learns/>)

Joaquim Alberto Andrade Silva recounts his experience at the Synod
SIGNS OF RESISTANCE, HOPE AND PROPHECY

"Blessed are those who dream, they will feed the hope of many and run the sweet risk of one day seeing their dreams come true" (Don Helder Câmara).

After more than a week of the synodal assembly it is possible to affirm that there are many signs of resistance, hope and prophecy, and the presence of many dreams, and the possibility of seeing the lives of the countless Pan-Amazonian peoples transformed, with more vitality, justice and dignity, with their rights preserved and guaranteed.

RESISTANCE is present in the discourse of many men and women committed to the territory, to the cause of the weak, to the peoples who survive their struggles, pains and cries. Resistance with the commitment that new paths will be opened and travelled by the Church in Panamazonia. Resistance from the thousands of voices of the peoples who participated in the synodal hearings throughout the Pan-Amazonian territory.

HOPE that emanates from the welcoming, simple, humble and joyful presence of Pope Francis. A man committed to the life of the original peoples, to all of those who suffer. A time of hope, as Paulo Freire inspires us, also by the presence and speeches of indigenous leaders, women, researchers and members of other institutions.



PROPHECY that denounces and combats so many signs of death. Prophecy for the faces of women in the synodal spaces of the Vatican. A prophecy that does not hesitate and is presented in the voices that resound in the spaces of the Synod. A prophecy that makes courage, so much requested by the Pope, incarnate in the different agencies that made the

Synod possible. A prophecy that gives nuance to the looks so full of attention and commitment.

Since the Synod was convened - in the course of its preparation and now its realization - it has been a profound time for synodality, practices in dialogue, listening, walking together, knowing

what is different, "advancing towards deeper waters" (Lk 5:4), denouncing and caring for the life that emanates from the Amazonian people. And the vehement desire for a stronger pastoral action which is more and more in communion with the realities of the Amazonian peoples.

May the dreams of new paths for a

true care of the Common Home, through an integral ecology, continue to be pursued and made concrete, with the certainty that "everything is interconnected" (LS 91), in the constant utopia inspired by Jesus Christ, with hope, resistance and prophecy. May Mary of Nazareth continue to accompany us throughout this important kairological time for the Church and all humanity.



Institute of the Marist Brothers General House

Piazzale Marcellino Champagnat, 2 - Rome, Italy - comunica@fms.it

Website

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