



The Holy See

CLOSING OF THE WORKS OF THE SPECIAL ASSEMBLY OF THE
SYNOD OF BISHOPS FOR THE PAN-AMAZON REGION ON THE THEME:
"AMAZONIA: NEW PATHS FOR THE CHURCH AND FOR INTEGRAL ECOLOGY" **WORDS OF**
HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS *Vatican Basilica – New Synod Hall*
Saturday, 26 October 2019 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

Firstly, I would like to thank you all for bearing witness by working, listening, researching, trying to put into practice this synodal spirit on which we are perhaps just learning to focus. And which we are still not able to finalize. But we are on the way; we are on a good path. We are increasingly coming to understand what this walking together is; we are beginning to understand what it means to discern, what it means to listen, what it means to incorporate the Church's rich tradition in cyclical moments. Some think that tradition is a museum of old things. I like to repeat what Gustav Mahler used to say: "Tradition is not the worship of ashes, but the preservation of fire". It is like a root from which comes sap, that makes the tree grow so that it bears fruit. To take this and make it move forward: this is what the first Fathers understood tradition to be. To receive and to walk in the same direction with this very beautiful three-fold dimension that Vincent of Lerins described back in the 5th century: Remaining absolutely intact and unaltered, Christian Dogma is consolidated with the years, more ample in the course of time, more exalted as it advances in age. (cf. Commonitorium, Cap 23 : pl 50, 667-668). Thank you for all this.

One of the themes that were voted on and that obtained a majority — three themes obtained a majority for the next Synod — is that of synodality. I do not know whether it will be chosen; I have not decided yet. I am reflecting and thinking but I can certainly say that we have journeyed a lot and we must still journey more along this path of synodality. Thank you all for your companionship.

The Post-Synodal Exhortation, which is not obligatory for the Pope to issue, probably not; excuse me, the easiest thing to do would be: "well, here is the document, you see to it". In any case, a word from the Pope on what he experienced during the Synod can do some good. I would like to say it before the end of the year so that not too much time goes by. Everything depends on the amount of time that I will have to think about it.

We have spoken about four dimensions. Firstly, the cultural dimension: we worked on it; we spoke about inculturation, about the promotion of culture, and all this very animatedly, and I was pleased with what was said regarding this, that it is within the Church's tradition. Inculturation: the Puebla Conference to name the nearest one, had opened that door. Secondly, the ecological dimension. Here I would like to pay tribute to one of the pioneers of this awareness within the Church, Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople. He was one of the first to pave the way to create this conscience. And many followed him, and with that concern, and always with the exponential acceleration of the Paris team; and then other encounters followed. This is how *Laudato Si'* was conceived; as an inspiration on which many people worked, on which many scientists, theologians and pastoral workers worked. Thus this ecological awareness advances and today denounces a path of compulsive exploitation, destruction, of which the Amazon is one of the most important aspects. I would say that it is a symbol. This ecological dimension on which our future depends, is that not so? In the demonstrations by young people, in Greta's movement and that of others, several people held up a placard that read: "The future is ours", that is, "you do not decide our future". "It is ours!". In this, there is already the awareness of ecological peril, obviously not only in the Amazon but also in other places: the Congo is another one, other sectors; in my country, in the Chaco, there is the "Impenetrable" zone which is small, but in some way, we too know the problem. Alongside the ecological dimension, there is the social dimension which we have addressed, which is no longer just all creation, Creation that is savagely exploited, but also people. And in the Amazon all kinds of injustices appear: the destruction of people, the exploitation of people at every level and the destruction of cultural identity. I remember that arriving in Puerto Maldonado — I think I have already said this, I am not sure — at the airport there was a poster with the image of a very beautiful girl with the words: "Defend yourself and beware of trafficking. That is, this is the warning to the arriving tourist. Trafficking listens and trafficking at the highest level of corruption of people at every level. And this, together with the destruction of cultural identity which is another phenomenon that you have singled out very well in the Document. How is cultural identity destroyed in all this? It is the fourth dimension which includes them all — and I would say the main one — the pastoral dimension, the Announcement of the Gospel is urgent; it is urgent. But that it be heard, that it be assimilated, that it be understood by those cultures. There have already been discussions about the laity, priests, permanent deacons, men and women religious, on whom to rely in this field. And there has been talk of what they do and how to strengthen this. There has been talk of new ministries inspired by Paul VI's *Ministeria Quaedam*, of creativity in this. Creativity in the new ministries and seeing how far one can go. There was talk of indigenous seminarians, and with great intensity. I thank Cardinal O'Malley for the courage he had because he rubbed salt in the wound with regards to something which is a true social injustice, that is in fact, that indigenous people are not permitted to take the path of seminarians and the path of priesthood. Creativity in all that relates to the new ministries. I welcome the request to reconvene the Commission and perhaps expand it with new members in order to continue to study the permanent diaconate that existed in the early Church. You know that they reached an agreement among all of them, which however, was unclear. I delivered this to the women religious, to the Union of [Superiors General] of Women Religious who asked me to

conduct the research. I delivered it to them and now each of the theologians is seeking, is investigating. I will try to do it again with the [Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith](#) and include new people in this Commission. I welcome the challenge that you have given me, “and that they may be heard”. I accept the challenge [applause]. Some things emerged which should be reformed: the Church must always reform. Priestly formation in the country. In some countries, I heard in a group or here once — I heard it once — that a certain lack of apostolic zeal was noted among the clergy in the non Amazon area with respect to the Amazon area.

When a religious Congregation leaves a vicariate, Cardinal Filoni and I have some difficulty in finding priests from the country who will take its place: “No, I am not suitable for this”. Well this must be reformed. Priestly formation in the country is universal and there is the responsibility to take on all the problems of the geographical countries, let us say, of that Episcopal Conference. In order to reform, it is necessary that there be no lack of zeal. I also recall that two people also said that there may not be such an evident lack of zeal. Excuse me, whether evident or less evident, there is a lack of zeal but ... among young religious, and it is something to take into account. Young religious have a very great vocation and they should be trained in apostolic zeal to go to the frontier territories. It would be good that the formation planning of religious include an experience of one year or longer in neighbouring regions. Moreover, and this is just a suggestion that I received in writing, but which I will now mention: that in the Holy See’s diplomatic service, in the *curriculum* of the diplomatic service, young priests should spend at least one year in mission territory, but not doing an internship at the Nunciature as happens now, which is very useful, but simply at the service of a bishop in a mission area. This point will be examined but it is also a reform to be considered. And the redistribution of the clergy in the same country. In reference to a specific situation, it was said that there is a large amount of priests from that first world country, for example in the United States, in Europe, and that there are not enough of them to send them out to the Amazon region of that same country. This will be evaluated, but there needs to be agreement. The *fidei donums* involved ... it is true that at times — it has happened to me when I was a bishop in another diocese — someone you sent to study arrives and tells you that he has fallen in love with the place and that he remained in the place and, despite everything that the first world offers, he does not want to return to the diocese. Clearly, in order to save the vocation, one concedes. But on this point we must be very careful and not indulge. I thank the true *fidei donum* priests who come to Europe from Africa, Asia and from America but those who are true *fidei donums* repay that *fidei donum* which Europe had given them. But those who come and remain are a danger. A bishop in Italy told me a sad thing; he has three of these priests who stayed and who will not go to celebrate Mass in the small mountain towns unless they have first received an offering. It is a story of here, today. So let us be attentive to this and let us demonstrate courage in making redistribution reforms of the clergy within the same country.

And one issue of the pastoral dimension was women. Obviously women: what the Document says is “not enough”; what is woman, right? In transmitting the faith, in preserving culture. I would just like to underscore this: that we have not yet understood what the woman signifies in the Church

and we limit ourselves only to the functional aspect which is important and must be in the councils ... or in all that was said. But the role of women in the Church goes well beyond functionality. And more work must continue on this. Well beyond.

Then in the final part of the Document, there was talk of reorganization, and I noticed in the voting that some were not convinced. Service bodies, imitating repam, to make a type of ... that repam may have more substance, a kind of Amazon face. I do not know, making progress in the organization, progressing in the semi-Episcopal Conferences, that is, there is an Episcopal Conference in a country but there is also a semi-Episcopal Conference that is part of an area and this occurs everywhere. Here in Italy, there is the Lombardy Episcopal Conference; that is, there are countries that have sector-based Episcopal Conferences, so why can't the countries in the Amazon region create small Amazon Episcopal Conferences that belong to the general one but that carry out their work. By organizing this structure like repam, like an Amazon celam ...opening.

There was talk of a ritual reform, to be open to rites. This is the responsibility of the Congregation for Divine Worship and it can do so by following the criteria and I know that it can do it very well and make the necessary proposals required by inculturation. But one must always aim at going beyond, going beyond. Not only ritual organization but also other types of organization: that which inspires the Lord. Of the 23 Churches with their own rites that are mentioned in the Document and which were mentioned at least in the pre-document, I believe that 18 if not 19 of them are *sui iuris* Churches and have started out with little, creating traditions that will lead them where the Lord will take them. We must not fear organizations which safeguard a special life. Always with the help of the Holy Mother Church, Mother of all, who guides us on this journey so that we do not separate. Do not be afraid of them.

And a contribution also with respect to the Roman Curia. I believe it must be made and I will speak about how to do so with Cardinal Turkson. To open an Amazon sector within the [Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development](#). So that since he has no work, I will give him more ...!

I would also like to thank you as I have already done, to thank all those who worked outside, mostly outside this Hall. The secretaries who helped, the hidden secretariat, the media, the dissemination team, those who organized the meetings and the information. The great hidden ones who permit something [like this] to move forward. The famous direction that helped us so much. My gratitude goes also to them.

I include the presidency of the Secretariat General in my general gratitude and thanks to the means of communication — whom I thought would be here to listen to the voting since it is public —, for what they have done. Thank you for the favour they show us in disseminating the Synod. I would ask them a favour: that in their dissemination of the Final Document, they will focus above all on the diagnosis which is the more significant part, the part in which the Synod truly expressed itself best: cultural diagnosis, social diagnosis, pastoral diagnosis and ecological diagnosis.

Because society must take this on. The danger can be that at times they may linger — it is a danger; I am not saying that they will do it but society demands it — on seeing what was decided on the disciplinary issue, what they decided on another, which party won and which one lost. That is, in other words on small disciplinary things which have their importance but that would not do the good that this Synod must do. May society take on the diagnosis that we have made in the four dimensions. I would ask the media to do all this.

There is always an “elite” group of Christians which likes to interfere in this type of diagnosis, as if it were universal; in the smaller ones or in that type of resolution that is more intra-ecclesiastic discipline, I am not saying inter-ecclesial, intra-ecclesiastic, and to say that this section has won over that section. No, we have all won with the diagnoses that we have made and how far we have come in the pastoral and intra-ecclesiastic issues. But one does not close oneself in on this. Thinking today about these Catholics and at times Christian “elites”, but above all Catholics who want to go to “the small” [picture] and forget the “big” [picture], a verse from Péguy came to mind and I went to look for it. I will try to translate it well. I think it can help us, when it describes these groups who want the “small thing” and forget the “thing”: Because they do not belong to someone else, they think they belong to God. Because they love no one else, they think that they love God. I am very pleased that we did not fall prey to these selective groups that, concerning the Synod, just want to see what was decided on this or that intra-ecclesiastic point and they deny the *corpus* of the Synod which consists in the diagnoses that we have carried out in the four dimensions.

My heartfelt thanks. Forgive me for being fastidious and please pray for me. Thank you. The document will be published with the results of the voting, that, the voting results on each number.