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BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS

BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 190617e

Monday 17.06.2019

Presentation of the *Instrumentum Laboris* of the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon Region (6 to 27 October 2019)

This morning, at a press conference held in the Holy See Press Office, Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri, general secretary of the Synod of Bishops, H.E. Msgr. Fabio Fabene, under-secretary of the same Synod, and the Rev. Fr. Humberto Miguel Yáñez, S.J., titular professor of moral theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University of Rome presented the *Instrumentum laboris* of the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon Region, to be held from 6 to 27 October 2019 and entitled *Amazonia, new paths for the Church and for an integral ecology*.

The cardinal explained the preparatory phase of the Assembly, which began in January last year with the meeting of the REPAM (Pan-Amazon Ecclesial Network) with the general secretary of the Synod of Bishops, followed by the constitution of the pre-Synodal Council of the Secretariat.

“With the publication of the preparatory Document”, he observed, “there began the broad consultation with the people of God in the Amazon on the theme of the Synod. The questionnaire attached to the Document offered the opportunity for a rich debate within the seven Episcopal Conferences involved in the Amazon region, which sent their answers to the General Secretariat. ... The material resulting from this extensive consultation was the object of careful study and classification by the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops which, with the help of qualified experts, proceeded to draw up a draft working Document”.

He went on to explain the key features of the text of the *Instrumentum Laboris*, which is divided into three sections, following the following three general themes:

The voice of Amazonia, intended as listening to the territory to achieve pastoral conversion following *Evangelii gaudium*. This part treats themes of great importance in understanding the reality of the Pan-Amazon region.

“The first theme is that of life, given that the Amazon is a source of life, of life in abundance, which is expressed in the desire of the Amazonian peoples to ‘live well’, even though that life is often threatened and it is necessary to defend it against exploitation in its various forms. The second theme refers to the territory, source of life and of God’s revelation, where everything is connected, in which there co-exist situations of extraordinary beauty with

many forces that threaten to destroy the territory, though there is no lack of an encouraging openness to hope. The third theme is time, understood as *kairos*, time of grace, of inculturation and interculturality, time of challenges and urgency, but also a time of hope. The fourth theme is that of dialogue with the Amazonian peoples, conceived in a missionary sense”.

Integral ecology, the theme of the second Part, underlines the reality of the Amazon territory for an ecological conversion in accordance with the encyclical *Laudato si'*.

“In this sense”, the cardinal noted, “highly significant issues of the Pan-Amazon reality are taken into consideration, such as, for example: extractive destruction; threats to and protection of indigenous peoples in voluntary isolation; the complex problem of migration, with its causes and consequences; the ever-present and growing phenomenon of urbanization; the social changes that affect the family and make it vulnerable; the devastating problem of corruption, a true structural moral scourge; and the question of integral health and integral education, conceived as encounter and conversion towards an integral ecology”.

The third theme is “**The challenges and hopes of the prophetic Church in Amazonia, with an Amazonian and missionary face**”.

The Church is thus “involved in processes of inculturation and interculturality, a church that lives its faith through an inculturated liturgy, a church that carries out its life in the indigenous worldview, whether within local communities or in openness to urban evangelization, a church open to interreligious dialogue, a church that intends to use the media at the service of integral human promotion and wants to assume more and more a prophetic role in society ”.

“Therefore”, concluded the cardinal, “the Special Assembly for the Pan-Amazonian Region promises to be a pastoral reflection open to the recognition of diversity, listening to the Amazonian reality with all its cultural and ecclesial aspects. The image of a Church with an Amazonian face, courageous in its prophetic proclamation of the Gospel in defence of Creation and of indigenous peoples, is the horizon towards which we walk under Pope Francis’ guidance, to share an experience of fraternal communion, collegiality and synodality”.

Fr. Humberto Miguel Yáñez S.J. focused on the topic of integral ecology and ecological conversion, which requires “an integral conversion of the whole human being in his or her networks of interpersonal relationships and with creation; a pastoral conversion of the Church, called to take care of the common home as part of its evangelizing mission, to teach its faithful after learning from the native peoples. In this way, he will be able to fulfil his prophetic mission even with regard to the powerful of this world, many of whom are not interested in respecting nature and the peoples that inhabit it, especially the poor, but only in extracting as much wealth as possible, which usually ends up in the hands of a few”.

Bishop Fabio Febene dedicated his intervention to the new ecclesial paths referred to in the third part of the *Instrumentum Laboris*. “Paths that, without forgetting the great work of the first evangelization and the pastoral work carried out so far”, he said, “must be travelled in order to build a Church with an Amazonian and missionary countenance. A Church that is an expression of the plurality of peoples, cultures and ecosystems that meet in this territory. It is precisely the human and environmental of the Amazon, where there live indigenous peoples, *ribeirinhos*, Afrodescendants and migrants who ask for the uniqueness of the region to be highlighted in the unity of the Church.

“The new pathways are implemented through a process of inculturation, that is, the incarnation of the Gospel in the plurality of human cultures, promoting dialogue among them with a view to mutual enrichment. In this way, inculturation opens the way to interculturality”.
