Amazonia: New Pathways for the Church and for an Integral Ecology
The Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon Region

“In October 2019, the Extraordinary Missionary Month, we will celebrate the Synod for the Amazon. In response to the concerns expressed by many of the faithful, laity and pastors alike, I wished to convocate this meeting in order to pray and reflect on the challenges faced in the evangelization of these South American lands that are home to important particular Churches. I hope that the conjuncture of these two events may help us fix our gaze on Jesus Christ while addressing problems and issues, resources and needs; may it also help us renew our commitment of service to the Gospel for the salvation of the men and women living in those lands. We pray that the Synod for the Amazon can help provide a more evangelical approach to missionary work in this area of the world that is so troubled, so unjustly exploited and so much in need of the salvation of Jesus Christ.” ~ Pope Francis

The Special Assembly will be held from Sunday, October 6, to Sunday, October 27, 2019 in Rome. Building on recent Church documents such as Laudato si’ and the Aparecida Document, the Assembly will address the urgent teaching that our common home belongs to everyone, and the consequences of its exploitation affect all the peoples of the world, but certain peoples and regions feel those consequences more dramatically.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT AMAZONIA TO PREPARE FOR THE SPECIAL ASSEMBLY

- The Amazonia Region spreads across Brazil, Ecuador, Venezuela, Suriname, Peru, Colombia, Bolivia, Guyana and French Guiana. The area has more than a third of the world’s forests and has been described as the “Lungs of our Planet” because it recycles carbon dioxide into oxygen for the entire earth. Moreover, Amazonia hosts 30 to 50% of the world’s biodiversity of flora and fauna, and 20% of fresh water for our planet.
- Expanding and unchecked economic interests are threatening this richness and our shared survival. Such interests have led to deforestation, as well as the contamination of rivers and lakes due to the use of agro-toxins, oil spills, legal and illegal mining, and byproducts from pharmaceutical production. Human trafficking, especially in women and children, in the area has also increased along with these businesses destroying our common home.
• The region has 34 million inhabitants. Over 3 million are indigenous, representing about 390 different peoples and nationalities. Included in these figures are between 110 and 130 different Indigenous Peoples in Voluntary Isolation or “free peoples.” All live in a vital relationship with the vegetation and the waters of the rivers. They have never been as threatened as they are now.

• The Assembly acknowledges the Church’s presence in the Amazon has its roots in the colonial occupation of the area by Spain and Portugal. This period gave rise to attitudes that negatively affected treatment of indigenous cultures, and in some ways continues to affect the territory and its inhabitants in the form of neocolonialism carried out under the guise of development.

• The Assembly also recognizes that some in industrialized countries may find it difficult to understand the ways of native peoples and, at times, do not respect their differences. The Church, however, recognizes that their worldviews and wisdom have much to teach us.

• The Synod will seek to listen to the voices of those living in the Amazon region and identify new paths of evangelization and advocacy, especially for indigenous people who are often forgotten and denied a peaceful future because of the current crises faces the Amazon rain forest.

Read the full Preparatory document for the Synod.

Find resources for the Extraordinary Missionary Month on the Pontifical Mission Societies (MISSIO) website.