



MARYKNOLL OFFICE FOR GLOBAL CONCERNS

Peace, Social Justice and Integrity of Creation

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Statement in Support of the Synod on the Amazon

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns welcomes the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon Region: New Paths for the Church and an Integral Ecology (Rome, October 6-27, 2019) as an important step for taking action on the teachings put forward in *Laudato Si'* just four years ago.

“We are grateful to Pope Francis for this unprecedented meeting on the care for the peoples and environment of the Amazon, the world’s largest tropical rainforest, unmatched in its biodiversity and influence on the health of the entire planet,” said Susan Gunn, Director of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns. “The Synod is an opportunity for the Church to engage, through encounter and dialogue, in a deeper level of ecological conversion, a spirituality of communion, and a commitment to living in peace with each other and with nature.”

The Synod’s working document, *Instrumentum Laboris*, gives us hope for our Church to gain theological insight from the wisdom of indigenous communities and their spirituality of the interconnection of all creation. Maryknoll missionaries who live and work with indigenous communities in the Amazon region witness the beauty of *buen vivir* (“good living”), that is, living in communion with other people, with the world, with the environment, and with our Creator.

“We can learn, and in some cases, relearn, from indigenous peoples how to minimize our impacts on Mother Earth,” said Tania Ávila Meneses, indigenous theologian with Amerindia in Bolivia. She also works at the Maryknoll Mission Center in Latin America, located in Cochabamba, Bolivia. Ms. Avila received an invitation to attend the Synod on the Amazon as an auditor representing Amerindia, a network of Catholic theologians in Latin America.

Maryknoll missionaries also witness the trauma inflicted on Amazonian communities by extractive industries that over-exploit natural resources and cause human rights violations, conflict, displacement, pollution and death. With them, we express deep concern for the peoples and environment in the Amazon, especially in light of recent fires and continued exploitation of the land. We honor and value the important work of indigenous land defenders, many of whom face persecution and death for defending the land and their way of life.

Just as the Amazonian ecosystem matters to us all, the cultures and spirituality of the Amazonian peoples matter to our Church as sources of encounter, dialogue, and God’s revelation. The Synod on the Amazon offers an opportunity for the Church to listen to “the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth” in hearing the experiences of the Amazonian peoples and observing their close relationship to Mother Earth (*Laudato Si'*). We pray for the Synod participants, that together they reflect on the signs of the times and courageously promote the integral wellbeing of the Amazonian peoples, the forest ecosystem, and the general care for our common home (*Gaudium et Spes*).

The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns (MOGC) represents Maryknoll missionaries, who are Catholic men and women serving in impoverished communities around the world. The MOGC provides analysis and advocacy on issues of justice, peace and the integrity of creation that affect the countries and communities where Maryknoll missionaries serve.

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