



## SYNODUS EPISCOPORUM

Vatican City, 5<sup>th</sup> February 2022

### Statement of Cardinal Mario Grech Secretary General

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#### **The Spirit continues to overflow from the Amazon two years after *Querida Amazonia***

It has been two years since the publication of Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation, *Querida Amazonia* (*QA*) on February 2, 2020. Today, after the many responses to which this document has given rise in both ecclesial and civil spheres, the following observation can be made with certainty: the two most essential elements within this Exhortation are the lives of the peoples that are embodied therein and the promise made as a Church to respect and honor their voices in search of a genuine conversion.

Taking steps in this direction takes time. We have seen that seeds planted throughout this Synodal process reached a turning point with the presentation of *Querida Amazonia*. Some seeds are still in the process of germination, others have not borne fruit, but many have grown, are flourishing, and will continue to give life for generations to come. In all of this, *Querida Amazonia* remains as relevant now as it was then. It continues to be a love letter written for and with the People of God who are on pilgrimage in this beautiful and threatened territory; it abides as a letter emanating from Pope Francis' gratitude for the power with which the Holy Spirit burst forth from this theological place (*locus*) to illuminate and awaken the heart of the world and that of the Church.

This letter includes the four dreams of Pope Francis and the Church that cannot be put off. These dreams (social, cultural, ecological and ecclesial) embody a revival of Vatican Council II's most profound invitations, making *QA* a means by which the Church might be led to an integral synodal conversion to which Synod 2021-2023 invites us. Since its publication, God continues to manifest Himself amidst this territory's sacred mystery in the lives of its peoples and in the testimony of an incarnate Church, at once holy and sinful. God is manifesting Himself here regardless of the fear of some to change, or the desire of others to impose an ideological view.

During the preparation for Synod on the Amazon, Pope Francis said: "the periphery is the center". This statement can be understood to reflect a fundamental Gospel element which might shed light on the two years that have passed since the presentation of *Querida Amazonia*. That which used to be discarded or secondary in this territory has become a cornerstone, healing a broken world and creating new possibilities for the Church. This "way", where the marginalized become a source of life, is proper to the very way of Jesus. Voices from the Amazon territory (their direct participation) are changing pastoral model for the Amazonian Church, becoming a source of renewed life for the Church and the world.

The exercise of listening to this territory and of effectively incorporating these voices in determining ecclesial projects has strengthened the Church so that the disciples of Christ might increasingly grow

into being true subjects of their own history. Today, we cannot speak of Synodality without the effective participation of the holy faithful People of God. This awareness is a source of life and inspiration for Synod 2021-2023, For a Synodal Church: communion, participation and mission.

That the Holy Father would canonically establish (*ad experimentum*) the Ecclesial Conference of the Amazon (CEAMA) is but one fruit of the Synod on the Amazon and *Querida Amazonia*, opening a new path for the Amazonian Church's pilgrim and missionary discipleship. CEAMA articulates the regional structures of the Church including the Latin American and Caribbean Episcopal Council (CELAM), the Latin American and Caribbean Confederation of Religious men and women (CLAR), CARITAS of Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Pan-Amazon Ecclesial Network (REPAM).

At the moment, commissions and working groups are taking on some of the most urgent tasks that *Querida Amazonia* proposed for the Church's mission. These commissions and working groups include the direct participation of diverse voices within the Church. In this way these commissions are a means by important Synodal proposals are guided and developed in an organic synodal way,

The breath of the Spirit of God coming forth from the Christ's presence in the Amazonian Church continues to inspire and challenge us through the overflow of many fruits and gifts. On this 2nd Anniversary of *Querida Amazonia*, this breath of God's Spirit continues to generate new life for the good of the Church.