



## **The face of a « franciscan » Church after the Amazon Synod**

Card. Michael Czerny S.J.

### **1) Introduction: a Synod for the Amazon, Synodality for the Church**

The Amazon, immense and majestic in its expanse of land and water, is home to about 30 million inhabitants, 2.5 million of whom are indigenous people. It has the greatest wealth in biodiversity and fresh water in the world. Many years in the preparing, the Special Synod on the Amazon region took place in Rome in October 2019 and addressed many issues, as I will explain. Further, I will relate how the process did not end with the closing ceremony or even the final documents. It continues – not only making the Amazon region new but, with God’s grace, renewing the whole Church.

The name *synod* comes from Greek roots that convey ‘a road walked with others, a shared way’. It is “a path followed by the Church in the light of the action of the Spirit in her history, at the service of the people of God. More specifically, it is the result of the insights and seeds that emerged as guidelines for the whole Church in the Second Vatican Council, especially in the constitutions *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes* and in the decree *Ad Gentes* which, among other documents, particularly illuminate this decisive event for the Church, which took place more than 50 years ago, and that explain how we arrived at this moment.”<sup>1</sup>

Before plunging in, though, let me ask: why was I invited to speak this evening? And why did you come? Outside of Amazonia, it is very important for us to hear the story of God’s great providence, his mighty hand and outstretched arm, and His love that endures forever (cf. Psalm 136:12) in order to learn how in our own time God leads his people in salvation history. I believe that for you, such a review is not only a motive for thanksgiving; it is also a “re-collection”, because remembering also means discovering how God continually and repeatedly calls us. So, within the panoramic perspective you have asked of me, it is very important to remember the

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<sup>1</sup> Mauricio López Oropeza and Antonio Spadaro, "Four Criteria to Interpret the Amazon Synod" *La Civiltà Cattolica*, 15.10.2019 <https://www.laciviltacattolica.com/four-criteria-to-interpret-the-amazon-synod/>

many steps already taken along these paths, to give thanks to God for his great providence, and to listen to his call.

The Amazon Synod is a beautiful path -- better, a network of waterways -- that we want to experience, analogically and *mutatis mutandis*, in other parts of the Church and the world. And we have begun to prepare for a deeper appreciation of synodality thanks to the world-wide synod process that Pope Francis formally launched last Sunday, 10 October.

From the perspective of the Amazon Synod, what can we learn for the October 2023 assembly on “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission”? Let me propose one key point. It may be that sensitivity to the land and its people, with their organic-spiritual relationship to Mother Earth, is a more significant factor than other functional, instrumental, or institutional features of the Church. But this has just been an Introduction; I hope that the next forty-five minutes will help to shed light on experiences you yourselves have lived, challenges you now face, and hopes that the Spirit is nourishing in you, that you will collect and inject into the upcoming Synod. For the Église « franciscaine » of our title is your Église!

## **2) The Journey Begins: Aparecida in 2007**

The Amazon Synod of 2019 can trace its origins to Vatican II and the 1968 CELAM Conference; to repeated expressions of alarm about the deteriorating state of the biome; and in a particular way, to the 2007 meeting of the bishops of Latin America in Aparecida. I will recount the relevant contents of the final *Aparecida* document. It follows the well-known pattern of first *seeing* and then *judging*, which culminate in guidance for *acting*. After describing (“seeing”) the exceptional “biodiversity and ecology of Amazonia and Antarctica” and analysing (“judging”) the situation of Amazonia, *Aparecida* offers a decisive unified pastoral plan: a program, proposals and orientations (“acting”). Here are passages that influenced the Amazon synod; I believe that they are relevant still today and for other regions of the world, such as your own:

- a) Evangelizing our peoples to discover the gift of creation, so that they learn how to contemplate and care for it as the home of all living beings and the source of the planet’s life, so that they exercise responsible human stewardship over the earth and its resources, that it may render its fruits as intended for all, and so that they develop a sober and austere way of life in solidarity. (*Aparecida* 474a). This evangelization has to be competently and honestly supported by national and international authorities, for example, by social monitoring and careful application of international environmental standards at the national level. (*Aparecida* 474e)
- b) Deepening pastoral presence in the most fragile populations and those most threatened by predatory development, and supporting them in their efforts to achieve equitable distribution of land, water, and urban spaces. (*Aparecida* 474b).

- c) Pursuing an alternative development model that is comprehensive and communal, in accord with the principle expressed in *Populorum Progressio*, “[True development is the] transition from less than human conditions to truly human ones” (PP 20). Such a model must include responsibility for an authentic natural and human ecology; it must be founded on the gospel of justice, solidarity, and the universal destination of goods; and it must overcome the utilitarian and individualistic logic that fails to subject economic and technological powers to ethical criteria. Concretely that means encouraging small farmers to organize themselves in such a way that they can achieve their rightful claims. (*Aparecida* 474c).
- d) Redoubling our efforts to promote government policies and citizen involvement that guarantee the protection, conservation and restoration of nature. (*Aparecida* 474d). (Note that this passage anticipates the fifth chapter of *Fratelli tutti*, “A Better Kind of Politics”.)
- e) Creating consciousness in the Americas of the importance of Amazonia for all humankind. Establishing a collaborative ministry among the local churches of the various South American countries in Amazonia, with diverse priorities for creating a development model that puts the poor first and serves the common good. (*Aparecida* 475).
- f) Providing the necessary human and financial resources for the Church that lives in Amazonia so that it may continue to proclaim the Gospel of life and to carry out its pastoral work in forming lay people and priests through seminars, courses, exchanges, visits to communities, and educational materials. (*Aparecida* 475).

It is noteworthy that the head of the group that wrote the final document of the *Aparecida* regional meeting was then-Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio. We should not be surprised to hear its echoes during his pontificate!

### **3) The new Pope’s outlook, including *Laudato si’***

A few months after he became the Successor of Peter, Pope Francis met with the Brazilian bishops. He spoke about “Amazonia as a litmus test for the Church and Brazilian society.”<sup>2</sup> The pope invited everyone to reflect on what *Aparecida* said about Amazonia (as we have already done here briefly). He also urged everyone to heed the vigorous call for respect for nature and for the stewardship of all creation, which God has entrusted to humankind, not to exploit it savagely, but to turn it into a garden.

Another few months later, Francis laid out his program in *Evangelii gaudium* (November 2013) “on the proclamation of the Gospel in today’s world” because only a Church continually

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<sup>2</sup> [Meeting with the Bishops of Brazil in the Archbishop's House of Rio de Janeiro \(27 July 2013\) | Francis \(vatican.va\)](#)

undergoing repair can really bring the good news everywhere that it's needed. In a nutshell: "I dream of a "missionary option", that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelization of today's world rather than for her self-preservation" (EG 27).

And then, a year and a half later, in mid-2015, this evangelizing thrust called for "dialogue with all people about our common home" (LS 3). Rather than an ecological distraction from the mission of the Church, *Laudato si'* applies the evangelizing logic of *Evangelii gaudium* to "questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor" (LS 49). And, believe it or not, dialogue is how we get to care for our common home, as the Encyclical's 5th chapter emphasizes. Francis's vision of the Church culminates in this most exalted mysticism: "Everything is interconnected, and this invites us to develop a spirituality of that global solidarity which flows from the mystery of the Trinity" (LS 240).

#### **4) The Amazon Synod in 2019**

Then came the Amazon Synod itself, in October 2019. How difficult it was for many to form a clear or useful understanding of the Synod process. This was due partly to the "noise" in the media, but it was also, and more profoundly, due to the fact that, from outside, it is hard to grasp the great significance of Amazonia for the rest of the world and the rest of the Church. For other countries and regions need to appreciate the significance of the Amazon, to address how their options of consumption contribute to the perilous state of Amazonia, and to face their own analogous issues locally.

One of the great graces of this Synod was hidden in its title or theme: "New paths for the Church and for an integral ecology" The challenge is to seek, trace and follow both of these together: "new paths for the Church *and* for an integral ecology". Not some paths over here for the pious, and other paths over there for the greens; not two themes scotch-taped together. The powerful truth of these words grew on me over the three weeks of the Synod. I was exposed to the reality they reflect in the lives of the Indigenous people and the religious from the Amazon who participated. I came to understand how deeply they live in and treasure their two worlds that need to walk new paths together.

This is not unique to Amazonia. Just like the people of the Amazon themselves, all of us are citizens at once of the Church and of the world, needing both, loving both, caring for both. "Setting others free from their forms of bondage surely involves caring for the environment and defending it, but, even more, helping the human heart to be open with trust to the God who not only has created all that exists, but has also given us himself in Jesus Christ" (QA 41). Both the Amazon and our own territory are a *locus theologicus*, a theological topic for contemplation of sacred mystery as well as facing social, economic, environmental, political, and cultural issues (QA 5).

I also learned a profound lesson by watching the Holy Father, how he exercised his role as the chief shepherd, the successor of Peter, by encouraging and assisting and guiding the discernment. How he distinguished between noisy back-and-forth and real responses of the Holy Spirit to the great questions. Learning to detect that difference was another very important grace and benefit at the synod for me.

## **5) The Synod's Consensus: Final Document**

Synods end with a final document that captures the consensus of the deliberations during the Synod. Pope Francis accepted the Synod's Final Document in its entirety and put it into the hands of the whole Church by officially presenting it, in an unprecedented way, in his own Exhortation and calling for these fruits of a communal discernment process to be carried forward. He did this with the explicit intention that Churches in other places like Switzerland would discover its potential and fruitfulness for them. They could choose to do so by initiating their own synodal processes; thereby they might discover their own new paths.

The Synod concluded by articulating and giving direction to four interconnected dimensions of conversion as the basis of such new paths:

The first and most important conversion is pastoral, requiring a spirituality of listening (§20). By its very nature, the pastoral mission of the Church is Samaritan, merciful and in solidarity (§22).

The second conversion is cultural in both senses, inculturated and intercultural. You can't engage with people if you don't engage with their culture, and you can't engage with their culture unless you deeply respect them. It is very important for the Church, wary of the power of neo-colonialism (§81), to embrace ecumenical, interreligious and inter-cultural dialogue (§24) along with clear processes of inculturation (§56).

The third conversion is ecological or environmental. The Synod articulates the socio-environmental dimensions of evangelization (§§74-79) and urges a social approach to ecology, "which must integrate justice into discussions about the environment, to hear both *the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor*" (§66 quoting *LS* 49). Caring for the Amazon also requires fair, solidary and sustainable forms of development.

Finally, the fourth conversion is synodal, going towards horizons of deeper communion and inclusive participation. Its roots reach back to the first council of Jerusalem, described in chapter 15 of the Acts of the Apostles and possibly in chapter 2 of Paul's letter to the Galatians and running through all the Councils up to Vatican II. It was to make conciliar deliberation a regular feature in the life of the Church that St Pope Paul VI instituted the Synod of Bishops in 1965. A synod is a consultative assembly, convened by the Pope or a bishop, to advise on a particular topic of interest to the local, regional, or universal Church. It requires a process of involvement, reciprocal listening, dialogue, consensus and communion, prayer and spiritual discernment. Over

the past four Synods in Rome, the methodology has been developing to involve more and more individuals in the preparatory listening, engaging an impressive 87,000 people in the Amazon.

Here are three lessons drawn by a lay participant in the entire process of the Amazon Synod: “First, we saw the peripheries, considered for so long as irrelevant or secondary, moved into the centre of the church’s attention. Second, we saw a new ecclesiological paradigm emerging, focused on understanding the needs and gifts of the church in a particular part of the world. Third, many of us recognized anew that the church needs an openness to diversity in order to fulfil a central part of its identity to become more and more universal.”<sup>3</sup>

For me, the Final Document underlines the experience of synodality, of walking together. I hope that everyone who reads the Final Document gains a strong sense of the peace and consolation that came from the experience of being led by the Spirit and recognising so many gifts; of feeling the call to respond to a particular reality and to respond together, yes, to the cry of the earth and of our brothers and sisters, especially those on the peripheries.

## **6) *Querida Amazonia* in 2020**

Following the long-running custom, the Pope examined the Final Document of the Synod Fathers and then formulated his post-synodal exhortation *Querida Amazonia*. Francis first re-iterated the Synod’s theme: “Everything the Church offers must become incarnate in a distinctive way in each part of the world” (QA 6). He then framed his whole exhortation in terms of four great dreams (QA 7):

*The social dream -- I dream of an Amazon region that fights for the rights of the poorest, the original peoples, and the least of our brothers and sisters, so that their voices can be heard and their dignity advanced.*

*The cultural dream -- I dream of an Amazon region that preserves its distinctive cultural riches, where the beauty of our humanity shines forth in so many varied ways.*

*The ecological dream -- I dream of an Amazon region that jealously preserves its overwhelming natural beauty and the superabundant life teeming in its rivers and forests.*

*The ecclesial dream -- I dream of Christian communities capable of generous commitment, becoming incarnate in the Amazon region and giving the Church new faces with Amazonian features.*

Truly, these four dreams apply to every region of the world. So I ask all of you attending this lecture or reading these words to ask yourselves: can we experience – spiritually and pastorally –

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<sup>3</sup> Mauricio López Oropeza, "I was at the Amazon synod. Here are its 3 significant lessons (and challenges) for the church," AMERICA, 19.2.2020  
<https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2020/02/19/i-was-amazon-synod-here-are-its-3-significant-lessons-and-challenges-church>

the integrity of these new paths for the Church and for an integral ecology? How can we also express – in words and in action – the integrity of the four dreams?

What the Holy Father has boldly suggested is a greater ecclesial sense that is opening horizons. It is quite striking that the dynamizing factor is not limited by our usual boundaries—my diocese, my state, my corner of the world—but rather it comes from this grander, more diverse, and more vulnerable Amazonia, which is ever more vital for the health of the world. Remember that Jesus himself came not from Judea but from Galilee; not from Jerusalem but from Nazareth; not from among the Pharisees and priests but from among the peasants and workers. And remember that the people around Jesus -- for example, Nathanael asking, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:46) -- found it difficult to recognize and accept this prophet without rank or pedigree. So also, we have a hard time recognizing how the peripheries of the world are providing us with an important message, an important opportunity, an important grace and providence.

### **7) Putting the Final Document and *Querida Amazonia* into Action**

The Synod proposed an appropriate and dedicated structure<sup>4</sup> for carrying out the programme it proposed. This is the first time, if I am not mistaken, that a Synod has not only made proposals but also suggested a new structure or organization for their implementation, and one that we believe is unprecedented in the Catholic Church. This suggestion, along with all the others, was “officially presented” (cf QA 3) by Pope Francis in *Querida Amazonia*, where he commented that “ecclesial structures must become incarnate” (QA 6).

Work began immediately to set up the Conferencia Eclesial de la Amazonía / Ecclesial Conference of the Amazon (CEAMA). Its appropriate structure is not restricted to bishops. Besides the Latin American Bishops’ Conference, the members include the Conference of men and women Religious, the CARITAS units of the region, and the Pan-Amazon Church Network which comprises roughly a thousand diverse organizations dedicated to human rights and the common good.<sup>5</sup> This mingling of priests, religious, lay and indigenous participants with bishops from throughout the Amazon reminds us -- doesn’t it? -- that “ecclesial” definitively means the entire People of God!

Rather than tell you more about the structure, interesting as it is, I prefer now to focus on the thematic working groups which, again with wide consultation, were set up to tackle the major issues facing Amazonia with the same breadth as the Synod itself. As you hear the names of the 16 working groups, I invite you to listen as if they applied here and now in Fribourg and the neighbouring regions from which you come; whether you are Catholic or not, active in your

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<sup>4</sup> See Section 115 of the Final Document.

<sup>5</sup> CELAM, CLAR and REPAM respectively.

parish or not, please imagine what it might mean to work together on these 16 important “pieces” of our life and our territory:

1. Intercultural bilingual education<sup>6</sup> and a new Amazonian University
2. Inculturation and the encounter of cultures in healthcare, pastoral care, and the new Amazonian Rite to be developed
3. New recognized ministries: of women, of the celebrant community, and of care for our Common Home
4. Amazonian peoples, traditional communities and the territory they are in (Territoriality)
5. The Church on the borders or frontiers: itinerant, migrant and refugee populations
6. Human rights and advocacy
7. Youth and Amazonia
8. Ecumenical and interreligious dialogue
9. Women and Amazonia
10. Missionary life and itinerant missions
11. On-going observation, research and mapping of the Amazon from both the pastoral and the socio-environmental viewpoints
12. Regional and international networks
13. Socio-environmental justice and *buen vivir*, the indigenous ideal of a wholesome, integrated way of living with one another and within the territory
14. Spirituality and theology
15. Pastoral formation and new pastoral methods
16. Media for communication and transformation

Some of these 16 will speak more to you than others. I myself would like to highlight two of them.

As one of the Undersecretaries of the Migrants and Refugees Section, I am struck by topic # 5, the Church on borders and frontiers, these human constructions which often end up causing terrible injustices and sufferings. In response to refugees, asylum-seekers, trafficked persons and other needy migrants, Pope Francis invites everyone to take up the very Samaritan work of welcoming, protecting, promoting and integrating vulnerable people on the move. I know that

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<sup>6</sup> Red de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe Amazónica

this is a pressing reality for many of you, not just at your countries' boundaries but also at the sad dividing lines within local communities.

Another striking topic is # 12 in the list: regional and international networks. These are more and more central to our work in the Vatican. Thanks to ever more agile means of contacting one another, networks are an important new tissue of human existence, informing and forming, linking for solidarity and advocacy. Thanks to the networking we are involved in, I am constantly struck by how much the Church is doing all over the world and in such a variety of ways. Paying attention to others via networks can help anyone to see reality with fresher eyes, widen the range of thoughtful interpretations, and then come up with innovative plans of action.

Taking all 16 together, we have an impressive menu of renewal and responsibility, translating the original Synod theme "New paths for the Church and for an integral ecology" into a comprehensive set of problems to face, plans to make, actions to undertake and -- even in the face of the most daunting challenges -- hope to share!

### **8) *Fratelli tutti* in 2020**

A year ago, in the midst of the full pandemic, we received *Fratelli tutti* (3 Oct 2020): on siblings all and social friendship. Its warning could not be any clearer: "Either we are brothers and sisters, or everything fails [and] we destroy each other. Brother- and sister-hood is the frontier on which we must build, the challenge of our century, the challenge of our times"<sup>7</sup>. To the urgency of rebuilding the Church and responding to the socio-environmental crisis, Francis responds with an even more radical call to shared responsibility as siblings. He elaborates on the culture of encounter, on dialogue and friendship in society, on political love, and on paths of renewed encounter that include reconciliation and forgiveness. Neither the Church nor the world can be repaired if the terrible oppositions persist: indigenous peoples versus settlers, women against men, cities depopulating the rural countryside, North-vs-South and so on.

On this and many other points, *Querida Amazonia* already anticipated *Fratelli tutti*. "Efforts to build a just society require a capacity for fraternity, a spirit of human fellowship" (QA 20) "Christ redeemed the whole person, and he wishes to restore in each of us the capacity to enter into relationship with others. The Gospel proposes the divine charity welling up in the heart of Christ and generating a pursuit of justice that is at once a hymn of fraternity and of solidarity, an impetus to the culture of encounter" (QA 22)

### **9) The 2023 Synod on Synodality**

Looking ahead to October 2023, we anticipate with joy the Synod on synodality. It is already generating a great deal of interest. All dioceses are being asked to participate in preparing for it.

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<sup>7</sup> Pope Francis, *Video-address to the International Day of Human Fraternity*, 4 February 2021.

Here is the opportunity to pull the previous steps together into an ongoing process, turning the word “Church” into verbs: encountering, repairing, functioning, serving, praying. As the Pope said six years ago, on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our modern synods: “It is precisely this path of synodality which God expects of the Church of the third millennium. What the Lord is asking of us is already in some sense present in the very word ‘synod.’ Journeying together — laity, pastors, the Bishop of Rome — is an easy concept to put into words, but not so easy to put into practice.”<sup>8</sup> The theme is “for a synodal Church: communion, participation and mission”. Synodality refers to the very essence of the Church, her constitutive reality, and is thus oriented towards evangelization. It is an ecclesial way of being and a prophetic way of serving today's world.

This suggests to me that the vision of Pope Francis for the Church is not like a landscape, much less a portrait; rather it is more like unfolding and converging paths; and you don't so much think as walk your way into being Church. To be Church is to synod.

“The purpose of [any] synod is not to produce more documents. Rather, it is intended to inspire people to dream about the church we are called to be, to make people's hopes flourish, to stimulate trust, to bind up wounds, to weave new and deeper relationships, to learn from one another, to build bridges, to enlighten minds, warm hearts, and restore strength to our hands for our common mission”<sup>9</sup>

## 10) Conclusion – Questions Inspired by Pope Francis and the Amazon Synod

St Francis of Assisi heard Christ call to him from the Cross: “Go repair my Church, which, as you see, is falling completely into ruin.” On 13 March 2013, the new pope took the name of Francis. This suggests that he hears the same call, to go repair my crumbling Church, my deteriorating creation, my fratricidal humanity .... Nine hundred years after the *poverello* of Assisi, we have a new “Franciscan” program, suited to the particular issues of our times and in response to the timeless call of the Spirit.

But it is vital to recognize the roots of this programme in Vatican II. The entire magisterium of Pope Francis is true to the Council and is constantly expressed in word and gesture: *Evangelii Gaudium*, *Laudato si'*, *Fratelli tutti*, and the 2023 Synod on Synodality.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Pope Francis, 50th anniversary of the Synod of Bishops, 17.10.2015.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.synod.va/en/news/preparatory-document.html> quoting Pope Francis, Address at the Opening of the Synod of Bishops on Young People (3 October 2018)

<sup>10</sup> In this connection, a helpful text could be Michael Czerny and Christian Barone, *Fraternità -- segno dei tempi: Il magistero sociale di Papa Francesco* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2021). It provides a synthesis of the magisterium of Pope Francis, in continuity with the pronouncements of the Second Vatican Council, urging universal brother- and sister-hood as a “sign of the times” for our age—a rejuvenated vision for

In this perspective, the Amazon Synod was a giant test case of this magisterium. What are the results of the test? That is up to many people. Obviously, the people of the Amazon region and their priests and their religious women and men and all the lay collaborators who pursue the mandates of the 16 working groups in CEAMA. And just as obviously, it is up to you, and me, because Francis entreats the entire Church world-wide to learn from the Amazon example and make its vision, its dreams, their own in their own territories.

Let us listen carefully and then turn to the task of rejuvenating a Church with a “Franciscan” face here in the Alps.

What might be the challenges ahead? Let me pose some questions:

Is the Church in the middle of Europe practicing outreach and presence? Is it contributing to the enormous task of educating the people of today so as to have a tomorrow for succeeding generations?

Is this Church practicing integral conversion? Is it open to confessing ecological sins and seeking reconciliation for its part in destroying our common home?

How Samaritan is this Church? Is it at the service today of the people who suffer and die in their daily lives due to isolation, poverty and injustice, all made worse by the pandemic? Is the current moment marked by courageous service or by self-preservation?

Is this Church encouraging inculturation, intercultural respect and dialogue, and the culture of encounter? Have colonialist attitudes been fully rejected? Is it open to new ecumenical and interreligious practices? Are they limited to religious and doctrinal concerns, or do they extend to socio-economic, political, cultural and socio-environmental concerns as well?

Does this Church dare to rethink ecclesial structures; to rethink the formation of deacon candidates and seminarians; to recognize the laity, especially the role of women and young people, and to promote a variety of lay vocations as well as the renewed diaconate; to become truly synodal, engaged in new paths of dialogue and discernment?

As we come to grasp that the Church is synodal in its very essence and life, we realize that the synodal path does not end, as the experience in the Amazon vividly shows. Nor is it limited to the jungles and waterways of the Amazon.

Here in Europe, the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union / la Commission des Evêques de l'Union européenne (COMECE) and other Catholic institutions and organisations are sponsoring the European Laudato Si' Alliance / L'Alliance européenne

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contemporary humanity, including all the religions, walking together and joining forces to build a more just and united world.

Laudato Si' (ELSi'A).<sup>11</sup> ELSi'A promotes the social teachings of the Church, emphasizing climate justice and environmental integrity. Right now, ELSi'A is preparing for the crucial COP26 in Glasgow. So here is an opportunity to move together in a civil and Christian manner. It's a chance for our Church here in the middle of the continent to become an ever more missionary and evangelizing force in the (re)construction of our common home in Europe.<sup>12</sup>

The Church exists in many shapes and forms, from the family (domestic church) and the local parish, through the diocese and all sorts of associations and organizations and movements, to the bishops' conferences and the See of Peter. All of them need processes of listening, cooperation and synergy. Regulated by humility and docility to the Holy Spirit, they might confidently aspire to a felicitous discernment of paths ahead and shared implementation, so that everyone participates in the Synodal path, whether traveling the waterways of the Amazon or walking up and down the mountains of Switzerland.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.comece.eu/>

<sup>12</sup> ELSi'A is a member of the Ecclesial Networks Alliance for Integral Ecology, which includes ecclesial networks in the Amazon, the Congo Basin, Asia-Oceania, Mesoamerica, the Guarani Aquifer and the Gran Chaco in South America, and North America.