

SINODALITY: PARTICIPATION AND CO-RESPONSIBILITY

The Experience of REPAM

In his speech to the bishops of Brazil on July 27, 2013, Pope Francis pointed out the fragility of the ecclesial networks in the country. This applies especially to the Amazon region, for two reasons. On the one hand, the structural precariousness of the pastoral teams, with a shortage of missionaries, scarcity of financial means, isolation and communication difficulties. On the other, the dioceses and other local ecclesial structures suffer from a limited perspective and find it difficult to recognize themselves within processes that affect the whole region. Today, the awareness of the vast scale of the phenomena we experience locally pushes us to overcome fragmentation. Moreover, the overwhelming and sufferings that have marked Amazonian history resound in the Church today as a call to conversion, leading to asking for forgiveness for all the times when the Church has failed to free herself from the influence of the colonial system. From what has not been done in the past, let us learn the lesson of what must be done today in the service of the most vulnerable. But in the Amazon we can find a heritage of ancient experiences of life in harmony with nature: the indigenous peoples offer an example and a teaching of how to "cultivate and preserve" Creation, which God has entrusted to humanity (cf. Genesis 2:15).

REPAM (Pan Amazonian Ecclesial Network) is a fruit of the Church's response to these demands. The reflection that arises within it must be understood within the historical journey of the Church in Latin America, with particular reference to the Fifth General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate of Aparecida (CELAM 2007) which, recognizing "the importance of the Amazon region for all humanity", invited "to establish, among the local Churches of the various South American countries that are part of the Amazon basin, a global pastoral care with differentiated priorities to create a model of development that privileges the poor and serves the common good" (n. 475). This request of the bishops has been implemented through the mission of REPAM, which consists of strengthening the action of the Church in the Amazon by creating coordinated, integrated, multi-level apostolic options inspired by the social doctrine of the Church, within a sharing platform of which the local Churches, religious congregations, other ecclesial institutions and lay movements are part. The supranational dimension, the ecclesial character and the commitment to the defence of life found the identity of the Network, as Card. Peter Turkson, at the time President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and currently Prefect of the Dicastery for the Service of Integral Human Development, noting that "the way in which REPAM, acting as a 'platform', will structure itself and define its mode of operation, its priorities for action, its allies or its accreditation procedures, could serve as a model for other local Churches on other continents facing similar challenges".

The structure of the Network is designed to articulate ecclesial unity and the plurality of local in-

stances. Chaired by the Justice and Solidarity Department of CELAM, the Amazon Commission of the National Conference of Bishops of Brazil, the Latin American Secretariat Caritas and the Latin American Conference of Religious, it is organized in thematic commissions. An important point is the articulation of the mission with the national instances, established by the episcopates of the respective countries.

Source:

<https://www.aggiornamentisociali.it/articoli/repam-per-una-chiesa-dal-volto-amazzonico/>

For personal and community reflection:

- = What strikes me about this experience of synodality? Why?
- = What does this experience evoke in me? For what reason?
- = What does it say to us as a local church?