

Presentation at the Amazon Synod



Holy Father, Pope Francis,

Dear sisters and brothers, good afternoon!

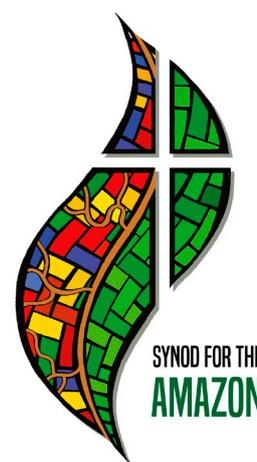
I would like to make reference to the presence of women religious in the Amazon Region, with special emphasis on the **urban challenges**, regarding what is mentioned in the document *Instrumentum Laboris* 72, 73 and 74.

I bring all women religious from the various congregations ministering in the Pan-Amazonian Region. I take advantage of this opportunity to thank you for the opportunity granted to the International Union of Superiors General (UISG) to be represented at this Synod through the ten sisters, members of the mentioned above entity.

I also bring all women, mothers, widows and young people who are true heralds of the Gospel, especially in the most isolated areas. They are brave and prophetic women who advocate for life in all its aspects.

Pope Francis has challenged us to be an outgoing Church and at the same time has encouraged us to live our baptismal commitment as women religious, joyful, merciful and committed to our brothers and sisters who suffer. He has been reminding us to cultivate a good sense of humor that helps us face life with faith and hope, striving for better days for all. Thank you, Pope Francis.

Regarding urban challenges, I believe there is no need to mention them. The *Instrumentum Laboris* document, in the numbers previously referred to, lists some of these challenges and we face many others in our daily life. Urban pastoral ministry programs require reaching out to everyone, since everyone is in need in different ways. Here, however, I would like to point out those living in the urban peripheries.



Who are those living in the urban peripheries?

Regarding the Amazon reality those are our indigenous brothers and sisters, the rubber tappers, riverside dwellers, quilombolas, small farmers and many others. The list is huge. In the urban peripheries, everyone becomes migrant, landless and homeless. They have no rights, no voice, and are condemned to invisibility.

As Sisters of Notre Dame, we are members of an NGO entitled UNANIMA INTERNATIONAL. This NGO advocates for women and children (especially those living in poverty), immigrants, refugees, and the environment. Our job at the United Nations, New York, together with other members of the civil society, is to influence policies for global application. In solidarity, we work to bring about systemic change which contributes to a more equitable world.

This NGO is formed by 22 women religious congregations ministering in over than 80 countries. Addressing the United Nations, Pope John Paul II referred to NGOs as "**the conscience of the UN.**"

UNANIMA is formed by two words: **UN + ANIMA** (from Latin) means breath, soul, the feminine spirit in the UN.

Among the many activities we are carrying out, there is one I would like to highlight. It is an International Project with the purpose of assisting the homeless. This project includes our sisters and brothers already mentioned, as well as, refugees and victims of human trafficking. As an International Project it includes countries other than the Pan-Amazonian Region. This project aims to give a concrete approach to those living in the urban peripheries, periphery here considered in a broader way, not only geographically. The Gospel in Matthew 25:31-46 is our inspiration: "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

To conclude, I have an invitation and a very concrete request:

That the Synod may prompt us to strengthen the Justice and Peace Commissions and the Human Rights Commissions so that we can network in defense of our planet, in spirit and in action, for an integral ecology as expressed in the Document *Laudato Si*.

Thank you very much.

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Sisters of Notre Dame

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Translated from Portuguese by Sr. Lory Inês Rockenbach