

Concerned Catholics

Amazon Synod Forum.
Querida Amazonia.

2 April 2020

Paul Nicoll

Querida Amazonia. Apostolic Exhortation Goals

- ▶ 1. To propose a framework for reflection on life in the Amazon region.
- ▶ 2. To officially present the Synod's final document and to encourage all to read it. That was because there were issues, outside the nine countries sharing the Amazon region, that could assist other areas of the world with their challenges.
- ▶ The apostolic exhortation neither accepted nor rejected the Synod's many recommendations. It is not an encyclical letter. Rather, it is an encouragement for thought and action.
- ▶ Lots of poetry and few statistics.

Nine Countries in the Amazon Region



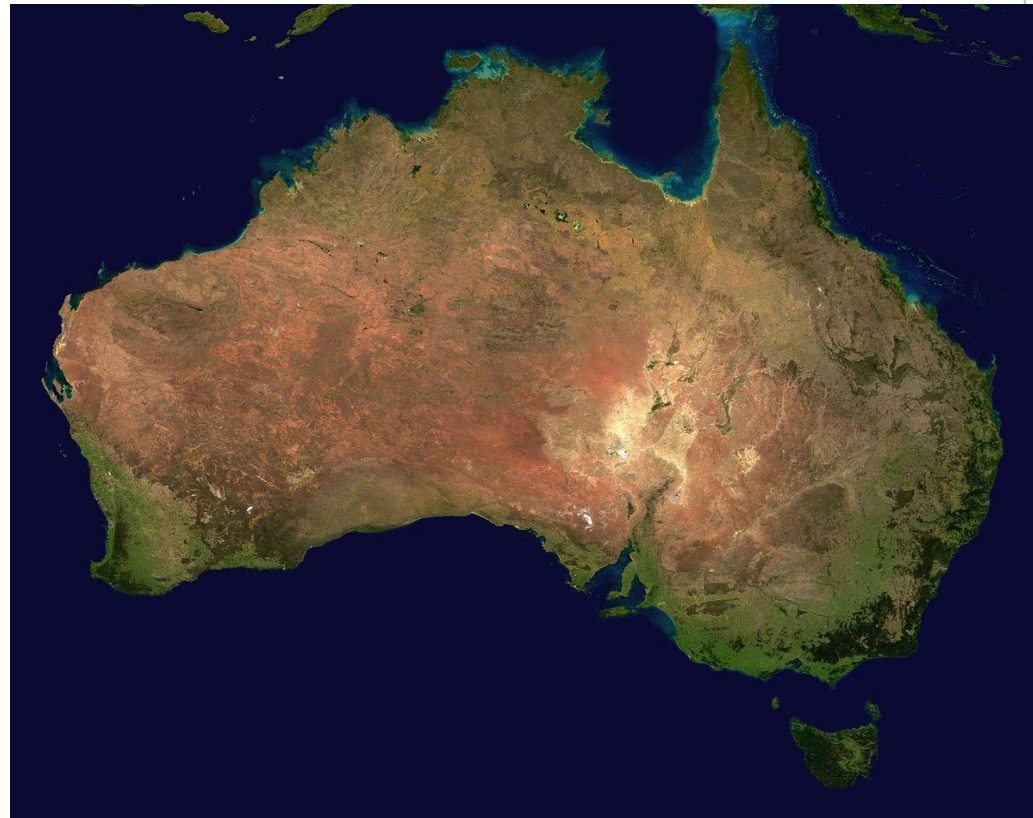
Four Dreams That the Pope Invited Us to Consider

1. An Amazon region that supports the rights of the poor and the original indigenous peoples.
2. Preservation of its cultural riches.
3. Preservation of its natural beauty.
4. A committed and generous Church and Christian communities.

Relevance to Australia?

The day after the Vatican published the Exhortation, the Brazilian President demanded to know why the Pope had not criticised Australia because of the enormous bushfires and loss of wildlife.

That is, the Brazilian President argued that Brazil was not the only country with difficulties in managing rich natural resources.



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA](#)

Relevance to Australia



A photo of the Darling River, part of the Murray-Darling Basin.

“Closing the Gap” report released
In the same week as the Papal Exhortation.

The report concluded that the life expectancy of Aboriginal Australians was eight years less than that of other Australians.

Chapter One: A Social Dream

- ▶ Amazon region facing an ecological disaster.
- ▶ Stability and change in the environment was linked to stability and change in the life of its inhabitants, including indigenous peoples.
- ▶ Mining, timber and agricultural industries continued to marginalize indigenous peoples. These were injustices and crimes.
- ▶ A result is mass migration to cities with poverty, xenophobia, racism, sexual exploitation and drug trafficking.
- ▶ A common view was that the Amazon region was a giant empty space waiting to be exploited. This view ignored the existence of indigenous communities.
- ▶ There was an enormous imbalance of power between governments, industries and indigenous communities.
- ▶ The challenge was not to oppose globalisation but for this to have a sense of solidarity with local communities.
- ▶ Acknowledgement that the churches did not always share these views.

Chapter One: A Social Dream

- ▶ Where did civil society and its institutions stand?
- ▶ There was a loss of confidence in these, and little confidence in elected representatives.

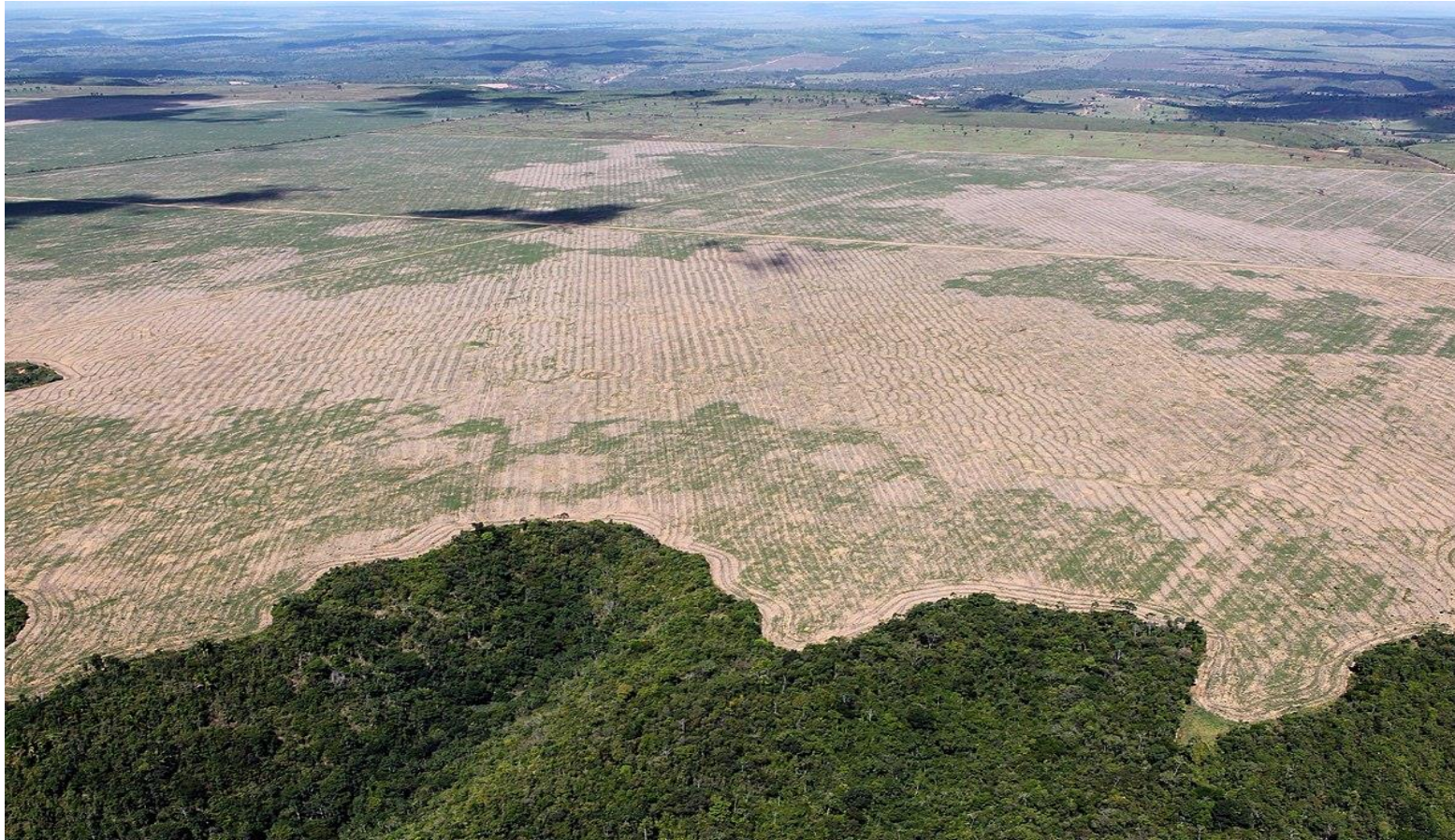
Chapter Two: A Cultural Dream

- ▶ The region contained thousands of indigenous communities and communities of African descent. Therefore, generalisations must take account of this diversity.
- ▶ Environmental and economic change compelled many to move to the cities where they lived in poverty. Sense of identity weakened and alienation, social problems and crime more common.
- ▶ Indigenous peoples had identities and languages linked to particular places. This was difficult for Europeans to understand and accept. Ways of life were associated with the rivers and forests.
- ▶ No proposal to separate indigenous communities from other cultures.
- ▶ Encouragement of dialogue between different groups and sharing of cultural identities.
- ▶ A challenge was how to promote intercultural relations when globalisation and western cultures in particular weakened other cultures and ways of life.

Chapter Three: An Ecological Dream

- ▶ The longest chapter.
- ▶ Pope Benedict wrote about the inseparable nature of care of people and care of ecosystems. Pope Francis continued this theme.
- ▶ The equilibrium of the planet depended on the health of the Amazon region. The Congo and Borneo-Kalimantan were also highly important for this equilibrium.
- ▶ Most topsoil was poor, and when the forest was eliminated it was not replaced.
- ▶ The interests of a few powerful industries, such as the soy bean industry, should not be considered more important than the good of the Amazon region and of humanity as a whole.

An Example of Deforestation in the Amazon



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA](#)

Australia After the Fires



Seven Steps

- ▶ Greater sense of responsibility by national governments. Acknowledgement of the contributions of civil society and international organisations.
- ▶ Combine ancient indigenous knowledge with western science. EG: small fires in the Australian bush, Red Bull and acai.
- ▶ Acknowledgement of the rights of indigenous people to receive information about projects.
- ▶ Insistence on a legal framework to set boundaries and to protect ecosystems.
- ▶ Reject the illusion that things do not look so serious and that we should get on with normal life and more consumerism. Take decisions.
- ▶ Appreciate the beauty of nature.
- ▶ Strengthen education.

Querida Amazonia and the 2020 Plenary Council

- ▶ How relevant is the Pope's February 2020 encouragement to the Plenary Council?
- ▶ Is there time to bring the Pope's February encouragement to the attention of Plenary Council participants?
- ▶ Will the Plenary Council's structure provide a means to consider and to incorporate the Pope's February encouragement?
- ▶ How adequately will the report of the Plenary Council's working group on indigenous Australians in the Church respond to the Pope's encouragement?

Insert Heading

- ▶ Insert text