

Synod on Amazon

## SYNOD ON AMAZON ORDINATION OF MEN AND WOMEN OF THE PEOPLE



The Synod on the Amazon, in this October in Rome, calls for a structural and ministerial change on the part of Church. The pre-synodal reports were to deal with three major issues, ecology, pastoral and community, and ministerial dimension of the Church. These issues have a global scope. Once again, we see that synod of bishops is entirely male, and no participating woman, regardless of her or his competence, has the right to vote in this synodal assembly. In 1979, I published my first book in Spanish (Structural and Ministerial Change of the Church) on university Presses of Javeriana University in Bogotá, and I see that nothing has really changed in the Church.

Two issues are fiercely discussed, the possible ordination of virtuous and spiritual community leaders on the one hand, and the other hand the ordination of influential and competent women to the diaconate. But a structural or ministerial change in the Church is not won in advance.

Among the linguistic groups (Spanish, French-English, Italian, Portuguese), two of them clash, (the Latin circle and the Italian circle), on how to make up for the lack of priests and to recognize the commitment of the women in the Church. Among Spanish speakers, the diaconate of women and ordination of married men are two possible avenues to explore, and among Italophones nothing is mentioned in their reports. Radio silence! This silence is not foreign to the weight of Roman Curia in the balance of this synod. In any case the final report has only a power of advice to the Pope and he is who makes the final decisions.

## IS MINISTERIAL STRUCTURE MODIFIABLE?

This is what the people of Amazon are asking for now. They want to save their Christian faith. Church authorities need to reconnect with the grassroots, with small isolated communities proposing new ways of doing Church. We have to think outside the box and innovate. This call for change scares many priests and bishops who quietly seek to surround themselves with submissive people who do not question anything. The new face of Christian practice in Amazon will be marked by the rediscovery of the royal priesthood and the place of women in the Church.

## WE ARE ALL PRIESTS

Jesus repealed the first priesthood of the Old Testament, (in hands of Levites, priests and high priests) to establish a second priesthood, the royal priesthood: "Christ therefore begins by saying: First he said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them"—though they were offered in accordance with the law. Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second. And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all... And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching." (Hebrews 10, 8-25)

The apostles and disciples of Jesus knew that he was not a high priest, priest, or Levite, but a baptized person of John the Baptist, a member of the new people of God. It was only after his Resurrection the apostles realized that the Risen One had fulfilled priestly function that God desired, (no more sacrifices of animals, incense, offerings), but offering of his own person for the forgiveness of sins. What pleases God is the gift of our heart that we offer him, he seeks "worshipers in spirit and in truth." "Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the

Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.” (John 4, 23)

## TO CONTINUE WHAT JESUS STARTED

" As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him— 5 you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ... But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.” (I Peter, 2, 2-5, 9-12) In the offering of themselves, the baptized present to God demands, expectations, desires, joys, and sorrows of all those who surround them. The baptized are for each other true intercessors, true mediators, true priests, united to Jesus.

## A NEW AND APOSTOLIC PRIESTHOOD

After the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, apostles disperse. Little by little small Christian communities were formed and apostles can not be present everywhere. In the time of the apostles, the "elders" were community leaders, influential lay families who also sat in the Sanhedrin. In the absence of apostles, the whole community, represented by one of the "elders" (presbuteros), remembered the body and blood of Christ. There was no shortage of "president" to celebrate the Lord's Supper. Saint Luke addresses the leaders of communities: " Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.” (Acts of the Apostles 20, 28)

## ALL CHANGE IN THE III CENTURY

In the third century, authorities of the Church move away from the Word of God regarding the new "priesthood" established by God in the person of Jesus. The Church gradually emancipates itself, which is very good, but what is sad is that it inspired by the model of empire, hierarchizes itself and adopts a ministerial structure definitively: diaconate, priesthood and episcopate. The leaders become "ministers" and they are less and less seen as "pastors". And the only minister empowered to do Eucharist, to consecrate bread and wine, is vested in the Bishop. It was only much later that that "power" was shared with priests. These ministers have three great functions: to gather the baptized, to proclaim the Word of God and to root the priestly people in Eucharist and sacraments.

Today everything is changing. It is not uncommon in the West to see priests appointed pastors of several parishes. They spend most of their ministry celebrating masses. We are in presence of an aging clergy who are out of breath. Even in the countries of mission, Christians do not have the privilege of meeting in Eucharistic and sacramental communities, for lack of priests. This is happening in many remote villages in our countries and especially in the Amazon now.

Commission, in our prayers, Pope Francis to open the door of new ministries (for men and women leaders) responding to the needs of Christian communities in Amazon and the world.

**Marius Morin, October 2019**