



Easter with an Amazonian Face Week 1: “Amazon Easter”

By Mauricio López Oropeza

The colonizing interests that have continued to expand – legally and illegally – the timber and mining industries, and have expelled or marginalized the indigenous peoples, the river people and those of African descent, are provoking a cry that rises up to heaven: “Many are the trees where torture dwelt, and vast are the forests purchased with a thousand deaths.” -Querida Amazonia, #9

Easter is, no doubt, the most significant feast for Catholics as it represents the completion of the journey of Jesus, the fulfillment of His mission, and the invitation to everyone, with no distinction or preference, to participate in His calling to contribute in the building of the kingdom. It is the distinctive remembrance of the path between the Incarnation and the Resurrection of Christ.

This year we are called to recognize again the path of Jesus among us in our beautiful and injured Amazon reality. It is through the eyes of the indigenous peoples and the Amazon communities that we are confronted by the presence of a Jesus who suffers and encounters His fate, as so many do in this region, for standing up and defending their culture, their territory, the place in which their spirituality blossoms, and their rights. There is no romantic portrait about the Amazon these days, her beauty is under threat, and her sons and daughters are being criminalized, expelled from their lands, and even assassinated because they stand in the way of so-called progress.

Inequality is reaching a point in which more and more people become disposable, producing a “throwaway” society, where diversity has no place. We are experiencing the most severe climate crisis in history, and even so, we fail to recognize the radical change we have to undergo, especially by those more developed societies.

Our common home, including the Amazon, is literally on fire as a result of the unlimited desire to accumulate more and more by very few, as if there were no tomorrow, no future generations.

As we face this, we are tempted to lose hope and to abandon any pursuit for truthful change, but this is where the Paschal hope overcomes any feeling of despair: we know death will never have the final word. The certainty of our hope in the resurrection is the result of our trust in a

Jesus who does not abandon us, as he has committed himself to unite his life with our own lives.

He is present in the beauty of the diversity of the Amazon region, in the cultural expressions of those communities in which He lives and is present undeniably through the seeds of the incarnated Word, and in the daily resistance of the Amazon communities who refuse to be dominated by the powers of this world. They know that God journeys with them, and they shall prevail as they always have, just as surely as the risen Christ will return to them over and over again.

In this Easter season, may your heart be filled with the hopeful indignation of allowing your heart to recognize the resurrection of Christ in your midst, and to find your own call to action to make this world a better one.

May your life be full of reasons to stand up for justice and with an ongoing pursuit for the kingdom in your ordinary life, in which extraordinary things can happen when we allow that Easter hope to take place. During these days you're invited to feel the calling and to recognize your own inner and outer Amazonia. By finding the mystery of God in that, do whatever it takes to protect it, defend it, and to see it blossom once again. ■

About the Author *Mauricio Lopez is executive secretary of the Pan-Amazon Church Network (REPAM), which connects the bishops' conferences and church communities across the nine-nation Amazon region. He was the only layperson among the 18 members of the council that helped draft the Synod's working document and was later a participant at the Synod.*

FOR REFLECTION

Is your life “full of reasons to stand up for justice?” What might that look like for you in this Easter season?

SUGGESTED ACTION

Organize a small group to study and reflect on the Pope's exhortation on the Synod on the Amazon, *Querida Amazonia*, using a [study guide](#) prepared by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.