

RELEASE

Amazonize yourself

Church and civil society organizations launch awareness and care campaign for the Amazon

Next Monday, July 27, at 4 pm Brasilia-time, the “Amazoniza-te” (Amazonize yourself) Campaign will be launched. Organized by the Episcopal Commission for the Amazon of the National Conference of Bishops of Brazil (CNBB) in partnership with other ecclesial and civil society organizations, the initiative appears sensitive to the context where violence against traditional peoples is aggravated by the Covid-19 pandemic. We are facing a situation where deforestation and land grabbing, fires, legal and illegal mining are being intensified, becoming agents of proliferation of coronavirus in the Amazon region communities.

The campaign raises the call “Amazonize yourself”, in an invitation for actions that articulate the leadership of traditional peoples and communities, the Catholic Church and different ecclesial bodies in the Amazon, artists and opinion makers, researchers and scientists. The “Amazonizing” call proposes the active participation of all people in defense of the Amazon, its biome and its peoples, threatened in their territories: voices joining together in the face of the reality of many violated lives; lives expelled from their lands, tortured and murdered in agrarian and socio-environmental conflicts, victims of a policy geared to the interests of agribusiness and to large developmental economic projects that do not respect the limits of nature or its preservation.

The initiative joins in the stream of activities implemented over the past few years in view of the Synod for the Amazon, held in October 2019 in Rome. With Pope Francis, the Amazon region and the lives of the peoples who inhabit the region gained the center of debates in the Church. “In the Amazon there are all kinds of injustice, destruction of people, exploitation of people at all levels. And destruction of cultural identity”, pondered Pope Francisco at the end of the Synod of Bishops on the Amazon.

According to the president of the Brazil National Conference of Bishops, Mgr. Walmor Oliveira de Azevedo, the “Amazonize yourself” campaign is an invitation, a call and an opportunity to express solidarity with the forest and with the peoples of the region. “In this invitation to 'amazonize', we want to overcome the systematic violation of environmental protection legislation and the dismantling of public bodies by government action to deregulate and illegally expand the activities of mining companies, agribusiness, loggers and ranchers in the region”, highlighted Mgr. Walmor.

Intent on listening to those cries and hopes, the campaign is the culmination of the different actions and mobilizations carried out by Church and social organizations that work in, or in defense of, the Amazon, such as the Indigenous Missionary Council (CIMI), the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT), the Pan-Amazonian Ecclesial Network (REPAM), the Ninja Media and the Right Humans Movement (MHuD).

In the launching live, which will take place next Monday (27) at 4pm, the campaign's *hot site* will be released with supporting materials, political manifestos from organizations and a compilation of studies on the reality of the Amazon to support actions and positions. The campaign features a series of videos with testimonies from the traditional populations of the Amazon in dialogue with the voices of national and international artists. The cluster of organizations will propose a list of concrete actions to be taken personally or collectively with a view to “Amazonizing yourself”.

THE CAMPAIGN

The “Amazonize yourself” campaign was born out of a dialogue among Church organizations and from the need to sensitize Brazilian and international public opinion about the dangers to which life in the Amazon is being exposed, with its territories and populations. The dismantling of public environmental protection agencies, the continuous disregard for legislation, as well as the absence of civil society participation in the areas of regulation and control of public policies also motivated the creation of the campaign.

Therefore, the Amazonize yourself campaign is structured around three lines:

1. Vulnerability of Indigenous Peoples and traditional communities to contamination by the new coronavirus, with emphasis on the inadequacy of the structure of public health care in the region’s states and municipalities, below the conditions of other regions of the country;
2. Acceleration of the destruction of the Amazon Biomes due to the uncontrolled increase in deforestation, fires, the invasion of indigenous territories and traditional communities by agents of land grabbing, mining, livestock and planting monocultures, and the effects of hydroelectric power plants on riverside populations;
3. Systematic violation of environmental protection legislation and dismantling of public control agencies, through intentional action by the government to deregulate and expand, unlawfully, the activities of mining companies, agribusiness, loggers and ranchers in the region.

AMAZONIZE YOURSELF

The 'amazonize' neologism was first used in 1986 in a Pastoral Letter from the then bishop of the diocese of Rio Branco, Acre, Mgr. Moacyr Grechi. At the time, the bishop called on the people to take up the cause of the Amazon and defend their peoples. The verb has been widely used in reference to the defense of the Amazon. During the Synod for the Amazon process, the term Amazonize was also widely used and popularized. This is the meaning of the campaign: more than conjugating the verb “amazonize”, making it a personal expression, a call to all people to amazonize themselves.

SERVICE

Activity: Launching of the Amazonize yourself Campaign

When: July 27, 2020

Time: 4pm

Location: CNBB YouTube

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