Vatican
EarthBeat



articipants from the Synod of Bishops for the Amazon celebrate Mass in the Catacombs of Domitilla in Rome Oct. 20. Several dozen synod participants at the Mass signed a pact promising to care for people and the earth and to give up a "colonist mentality and posture." (CNS/REPAM/Julio Caldeira)

Cindy Wooden

View Author Profile

Catholic News Service

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

Rome — October 21, 2019
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

More than a half century after a group of bishops at the Second Vatican Council made a solemn pledge to live a simple lifestyle close to their people, a group of participants from the Synod of Bishops for the Amazon signed a new pact in the Catacombs of Domitilla.

Brazilian Cardinal Claudio Hummes, relator general of the synod, presided at an early morning Mass Oct. 20 in the catacombs where he and several dozen synod participants signed the new "Pact of the Catacombs for the Common Home."

The original Pact of the Catacombs was signed by 42 bishops Nov. 16, 1965, in the Catacombs of Domitilla.

Invoking the martyred Christians buried in the catacombs and the martyrs of the Amazon, the signers of the new document promised to defend the Amazon rainforest, to promote an "integral ecology" of care for people and for the Earth and, "before the avalanche of consumerism," to live "a happily sober lifestyle, simple and in solidarity with those who have little or nothing."

They made a renewed commitment to listening to and walking with migrants, the poor and, particularly, with the indigenous people of the Amazon, helping them "preserve their lands, cultures, languages, stories, identities and spiritualities."

Doing so, the signers said, meant "to abandon, consequently, in our parishes, dioceses and groups all types of colonist mentality and posture," instead "welcoming and valuing cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity in a respectful dialogue with all spiritual traditions."



Brazilian Cardinal Claudio Hummes, relator general of the synod, and other participants in the Synod of Bishops for the Amazon celebrate Mass in the Catacombs of Domitilla in Rome Oct. (CNS/REPAM/Julio Caldeira)

Without mentioning the possible ordination of married men who are leaders of their communities, an idea that garnered much support at the synod as a way to give Catholics regular access to Mass and the sacraments, the bishops signing the pact committed themselves to "ensuring that the right to the table of the Word and the table of the Eucharist are effective in all communities."

They also promised to "recognize the services and real 'diakonia' of a great number of women" already ministering to Catholic communities in the region. Many of the small working groups at the synod spoke of a need to recognize officially the ministry of women in the church and a couple of the groups, in reports released Oct. 18, called for the ordination of women deacons.

According to the news site Crux, the pact was signed by about 40 bishops and by women and men participating in the synod as observers, experts or "fraternal delegates" of other Christian churches.

The pact included a pledge "to walk ecumenically" in finding ways to inculturate and proclaim the Gospel and to defend the environment.

The bishops also promised to enact a "synodal" style for the life of the church in their dioceses to ensure that all members of the church, "because of their baptism and in communion with their pastors, have a voice and vote in the diocesan assemblies, in pastoral and parish councils and, ultimately, (in) everything that concerns the governance of the communities."

In addition, they promised to stand by "those who are persecuted for their prophetic service of denouncing and repaying injustices, of defending the earth and the rights of the poor, of welcoming and supporting migrants and refugees."

Adding specifics to their vow to protect the environment, to shun privilege and to live like their people live, the signers promised — like the signers of the 1965 pact did — to use public transportation where possible and, additionally, to reduce the amount of garbage they produce and to avoid using plastic.

They also promised to "cultivate true friendships with the poor, visit the simplest people and the sick, exercise the ministry of listening, comfort and support that bring encouragement and renew hope."

Advertisement

This story appears in the **Synod for the Amazon** feature series. View the full series .