News
EarthBeat



Celestina Fernandes da Silva, a Catholic activist, waters flowers in front of her home in the Wapishana indigenous village of Tabalascada, Brazil, April 3, 2019. (CNS/Paul Jeffrey)



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I was only halfway through the full text of Pope Francis' *Querida Amazonia* ("Beloved Amazon") when I had to shift gears and start editing some of the coverage you've found on the pages of EarthBeat and NCR in recent days. Once done with my editing tasks, I went back to read the full exhortation. At about 14,000 words, it might take you about an hour for a careful read.

I recommend both — the commentary as well as the document itself. But I also realize that all the articles we've thrown at you on the topic can be overwhelming. Here's a quick guide to the coverage, and a glimpse at what one reader (that would be me) is taking away from it all:

- NCR Vatican correspondent Joshua J. McElwee pointed out that Francis took a different path with this document than he did with his responses to the three other synods of his papacy, choosing neither to quote from nor respond to the final document of last Fall's Amazon Synod. Instead, he offered "a synthesis of some of the larger concerns" without addressing such particular questions as married priests, women deacons or specific courses of action to address the climate crisis.
- NCR staff writer Brian Roewe, who has covered environmental issues for us for a decade, zeroed in on two words — injustice and crime — in describing what he characterized as the pope's "denouncing in perhaps his strongest terms yet the unrestrained development in the Amazon."
- Philip Duffy, a leading climate scientist who teamed up with Cardinal Sean O'Malley to form the Faith Science Alliance for Climate Leadership, praised the pope's appreciation of the beauty and science of the Amazon but concluded that he missed "an opportuntity to 'exhort' us to action on climate change."
- NCR national correspondent Heidi Schlumpf found similar disappointment among "those hoping for an opening of clerical roles to married men and women," many of them expressing the wish that Francis would "extend his prophetic voice about environmental injustice to injustices in his own house,

the church."

- Meghan Clark, an associate professor of moral ethology at St. John's University, applauded Francis' focus on "Jesus as model for action..." but found his characterization of the role of women in the church as "patronizing rather than empowering."
- Mauricio López Oropeza, executive secretary of the Pan-Amazon Church Network (REPAM) and the only layperson to help draft the Synod's working document, described reading the exhortation — and reaction to it — as he rode by car from his home in Quito to the Amazonian region of Equador. After sharing the document with residents of the Amazon, he said he "saw hopeful eyes, vibrant commitments and concrete decisions to go forward in communion with what the pope has offered as a love letter sent to them directly."
- NCR columnist Michael Sean Winters acknowledged the disappointment that many have expressed with the document but suggested they stay tuned. "It should be noted... that Francis closes no doors in this document," he writes. "None." Winters also includes a reference to a New Yorker cartoon that makes the column worth reading all by itself.

Should you delve into all this reaction to *Querida Amazonia*, you'll be in good company. It turns out that Francis has been reading his own reviews, expressing to visiting U.S. bishops his frustration that people focused so much on issues of celibacy and women deacons at the expense of what's happening in and to the Amazon.

My sense of where all this leaves us? Let's take Francis at his word. Throughout his exhortation, he relies on phrases such as "a way must be found," "efforts must be made," "voices must be raised." For better or worse, it looks like the ball's in our court.

Here's some of what else is new on EarthBeat this week:

- Thea Ormerod of the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change provides an update on how people of faith have been responding to the bushfires that have ravaged the country.
- Staff writer Brian Roewe describes the efforts by students on seven Catholic campuses to encourage divestment from fossil fuel companies.

- In our latest Burning Question, staff writer Jesse Remedios takes on this one: "What is the relationship between the military and the environment?"
- Dennis Sadowski of Catholic News Service notes the passing of Glenmary Father John Rausch, an advocate for Appalachian people and the ground they live on.
- Columnist Mark Silk of Religion News Service makes note of "a day for environmentalist Judaism."

Here's some additional climate-related coverage:

- The Audubon Society has created an interactive "Guide to Climate Action" that includes such steps as starting the conversation, leading your community, rebuilding the machinery and joining a national cause.
- The Church of England has set a target date of 2030 to achieve net zero carbon .
- The Washington Post explores "how climate experts think about raising children who will inherit a planet in crisis."
- ABC News in Australia offers this six and a half minute video about " 'Quiet Australians' mak(ing) themselves heard on climate change."
- As part of its recognition of Black History Month, Young Evangelicals for Climate Action notes how "communities of color are hit first and worst by climate change" in this tweet posted to EarthBeat's Interfaith Climate Tracker.

Upcoming Event:

March 4-6: The annual Climate Leadership Conference hosted by the Center for Climate and Energy Solutions and The Climate Registry, a meeting focused on "addressing the climate crisis through policy, innovation and business solutions." You'll find more events — virtual as well as in person — on EarthBeat's Event Calendar. Don't forget to post upcoming events that you're involved in!

Closing Beat:

One way we keep track of what you like about EarthBeat is by consulting Google Analytics. The numbers tell us our readers have extraordinary interest in the spirituality of creation care. Given the popularity of last Fall's Season of Creation Daily by Peter McLoughlin and the Advent Reflections with Laudato Si' by Arthur

Jones, we're planning a similar series for Lent. (More on that next week.) We're also thinking about a short creation care reflection we might send you every other day of the year. If that appeals to you and/or you have suggestions about what you'd like to see in such an email, please let me know at bmitchell@ncronline.org.

We hope you'll forward this week's newsletter to anyone you believe might want to subscribe. They can do so here. And if you'd like to support EarthBeat, please join NCR Forward for as little as five bucks a month.

Thanks for reading!

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