

BURKE AND SCHNEIDER

«A crusade of prayer and fasting to stop heresies in the Amazon Synod»

ECCLESIA

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Various prelates and lay commentators, as well as lay institutions, have warned that the authors of the *Instrumentum Laboris*, issued by the secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, to serve as the basis for discussion in the coming Special Assembly for the Pan-Amazon,

have inserted serious theological errors and heresies into the document.

We invite Catholic clergy and laity to participate in a crusade of prayer and fasting to implore our Lord and Savior, through the intercession of His Virgin Mother, for the following intentions:

that the theological errors and heresies inserted in the *Instrumentum Laboris* may not be approved during the synodal assembly;

that particularly Pope Francis, in the exercise of the Petrine ministry, may confirm his brethren in the faith by an unambiguous rejection of the errors of the *Instrumentum Laboris* and that he may not consent to the abolition of priestly celibacy in the Latin Church by introducing the praxis of the ordination of married men, the so-called "*viri probati*", to the Holy Priesthood.

We propose a forty-day crusade of prayer and fasting to begin on September 17 and end on October 26, 2019, the day before the conclusion of the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon. Anyone who first learns about the Crusade after the date of its beginning can naturally join the Crusade at any point.

During the forty-day crusade of prayer and fasting, we propose to pray daily at least one decade of the Holy Rosary and to fast once a week for the above mentioned intentions. According to the tradition of the Church, fasting consists in eating only one full meal during the day, and additionally, one may eat up to two smaller meals. Fasting on bread and water is also recommended to those who are able to do so.

It is our duty to make the faithful aware of some of the main errors that are being spread through the *Instrumentum Laboris*. By way of premise, it must be observed that the document is long and is marked by a language which is not clear in its meaning, especially in what regards the deposit of faith (*depositum fidei*). Among the principal errors, we especially note the following:

1. Implicit pantheism

The *Instrumentum Laboris* promotes a pagan socialization of "Mother Earth", based on a cosmology of the Amazonian tribes that is implicitly pantheistic.

Aboriginal people discover how all parts "are dimensions that constitutively exist in relation, forming **a vital whole**" (n°21) and therefore live "**in communion with nature as a whole**" (n°18) and "**in dialogue with the spirits**" (n°75);

Their life and "good living" are characterized by "harmony of relationships" between "**the whole cosmos - nature, men, the supreme being**

” and the “various **spiritual forces**” (n°12 & 13), captured in the “**mantra**” of Pope Francis: “**everything is connected**” (n°25);

The beliefs and rites of the “elderly healers” (n°88 & 89) regarding the “**many-named divinity**” acting with and in relation to nature (n°25), “create harmony and balance between human beings and the cosmos” (n°87);

Therefore, we must listen to the cry of (n°146), stop the extermination of (n°17) and live healthily in harmony with “Mother Earth” (n°85).

The Magisterium of the Church rejects such an implicit pantheism as incompatible with the Catholic Faith: *“The warmth of Mother Earth, whose divinity pervades the whole of creation, is held to bridge the gap between creation and the transcendent Father-God of Judaism and Christianity, and removes the prospect of being judged by such a Being.*

In such a vision of a closed universe that contains ‘God’ and other spiritual beings along with ourselves, we recognize here an implicit pantheism” (Pontifical Council for Culture & Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, *“Jesus Christ. The Bearer of the Water of Life: A Christian Reflection on the ‘New Age’*”, 2.3.1).

In the following affirmation the Magisterium of the Church rejects pantheism and relativism, teaching:

*“They tend to relativize religious doctrine, in favor of a vague world-view expressed as a system of myths and symbols dressed in religious language. Moreover, they often propose **a pantheistic concept of God which is incompatible with Sacred Scripture and Christian Tradition.** They replace personal responsibility to God for our actions with a sense of duty to the cosmos, thus overturning the true concept of sin and the need for redemption through Christ”* (John Paul II, Address to the United States Bishops of Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska on their “Ad Limina” Visit, 28 May 1993).

2. Pagan superstitions as sources of Divine Revelation and alternative pathways for salvation

The *Instrumentum Laboris* draws from its implicit pantheistic conception an erroneous concept of Divine Revelation, stating basically that God continues to self-communicate in history through the conscience of the peoples and the cries of nature. According to this view, the pagan superstitions of the Amazon tribes are an expression of divine Revelation deserving an attitude of dialogue and acceptance on the part of the Church:

The Amazon is a “theological place” where faith “or **the experience of God in history**” is lived; it is “a particular **source of God’s revelation**: epiphanic places” where the “caresses of God” become “**incarnate in history**” (n°19);

The Church must “discover the incarnate and **active presence of God**” in “**the spirituality of original peoples**” (n°33), recognizing in them “**other avenues / pathways**” (n°39), since the Creator Spirit “**has nurtured the spirituality of these peoples for centuries, even before the proclamation of the Gospel**” (n°120) teaching them “**faith in the God Father-Mother Creator**” and “**the living relationship with nature and ‘Mother Earth’**” as well as “**with ancestors**” (n°121); Through dialogue, the Church must **avoid imposing “petrified doctrines”** (n°38), “**formulations of faith expressed with other cultural referents**” (n°120), and a “**corporatist attitude, that reserve salvation exclusively for one’s own creed,**” (n°39); by so doing, the Church will be journeying “**in search of its identity towards unity in the Holy Spirit**” (n°40);

The Magisterium of the Church rejects the relativization of the uniqueness of God’s revelation as contained in Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition, teaching:

“The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures just as she venerates the body of the Lord (...) She has always maintained them, and continues to do so, together with sacred Tradition, as the supreme rule of faith, since, as inspired by God and committed once and for all to writing, they impart the word of God Himself without change, and make the voice of the Holy Spirit resound in the words of the prophets and Apostles. Therefore, like the Christian religion itself, all the preaching of the Church must be nourished and regulated by Sacred Scripture” (Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum*, n°21).

The Magisterium of the Church affirms that there is one unique Savior, Jesus Christ, and the Church is His unique Mystical Body and Bride:

“In connection with the unicity and universality of the salvific mediation of Jesus Christ, the unicity of the Church founded by him must be firmly believed as a truth of Catholic faith. Just as there is one Christ, so there exists a single body of Christ, a single Bride of Christ: ‘a single Catholic and Apostolic Church’. Furthermore, the promises of the Lord that he would not abandon his Church (cf. Mt 16:18; 28:20) and that he would guide her by his Spirit (cf. Jn

16:13) mean, according to Catholic faith, that the unicity and the unity of the Church — like everything that belongs to the Church's integrity — will never be lacking" (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith – Declaration *Dominus Iesus* on the unicity and salvific universality of Jesus Christ and the Church, n°16).

3. Intercultural dialogue instead of evangelization

The *Instrumentum Laboris* contains the erroneous theory that aboriginal people have already received divine revelation, and that the Catholic Church in the Amazon should undergo a "missionary and pastoral conversion", instead of introducing doctrine and practice of universal truth and goodness. The *Instrumentum Laboris* says also that the Church must enrich herself with the symbols and rites of the aboriginal people:

An "outgoing Church" avoids the risk of **"proposing a solution with universal value"** or the application of **"a monolithic body of doctrine guarded by all"** (n°110) and favours interculturality, i.e. **"a mutual enrichment** of cultures in dialogue," because **"the active subjects of inculturation are the indigenous peoples themselves"** (n°122);

Furthermore, the Church recognizes **"indigenous spirituality as a source of riches for the Christian experience"** and undertakes "a catechesis that assumes the language and meaning of the narratives of the indigenous and Afro-descendant cultures" (n°123);

By mutually sharing their **"their experiences of God," believers** make "their differences a stimulus to grow and **deepen their own faith"** (n°136).

The Magisterium of the Church rejects the idea that missionary activity is merely intercultural enrichment, teaching:

"Missions' is the term usually given to those particular undertakings by which the heralds of the Gospel, sent out by the Church and going forth into the whole world, carry out the task of preaching the Gospel and planting the Church among peoples or groups who do not yet believe in Christ. (...) The proper purpose of this missionary activity is evangelization, and the planting of the Church among those peoples and groups where it has not yet taken root. (...) The chief means of the planting referred to is the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ" (Second Vatican Council, Decree *Ad Gentes*, n°6).

"Through inculturation the Church makes the Gospel incarnate in different cultures and at the same time introduces peoples, together with their cultures, into her own community. She transmits to them her own values, at the same time taking the good elements that already exist in them and renewing them from within. Through inculturation the Church, for her part, becomes a more intelligible sign of what she is, and a more effective instrument of mission"

(Pope John Paul II, Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, n°52).

4. An erroneous conception of sacramental ordination, postulating worship ministers of either sex to perform even shamanic rituals

In the name of inculturation of the faith, and on the pretext of the lack of priests to celebrate frequently the Eucharist, the *Instrumentum Laboris* supports tailoring Catholic ordained ministries to the ancestral customs of the aboriginal people, granting official ministries to women and ordaining married leaders of the community as second-class priests, deprived of part of their ministerial powers but able to perform shamanic rituals:

Since “clericalism is not accepted in all its guises” (n°127), “change is requested in the criteria for selecting and preparing ministers authorized to celebrate the Eucharist” (n°126), studying the possibility of priestly ordination “for older people, preferably indigenous, **respected and accepted by their community, even if they have an existing and stable family**” (n°129), who **show “another way of being church (...) without censorship or dogmatism or ritual disciplines”** (n°138);

Because in the cultures of the Amazon “**authority is rotational**”, it would be opportune “to reconsider the notion that exercise of **jurisdiction** (power of government) **must be linked in all areas** (sacramental, judicial, administrative) **and in a permanent way to the sacrament of Holy Orders**” (n°127);

The Church must “identify the type of **official ministry that can be conferred on women**” (n°129);

Recognition should be given to “**indigenous rituals and ceremonies**” that “**create harmony and balance between human beings and the cosmos**” (n°87), as well as to “traditional elements that are part of healing processes” **performed by “elderly healers”** (n°88), whose “rites, symbols and styles of celebration” should be integrated into “liturgical and sacramental rituals” (n°126).

The Magisterium of the Church rejects such practices, and their implicit opinions, teaching:

“The ministerial priesthood differs in essence from the common priesthood of the faithful because it confers a sacred power for the service of the faithful. The ordained ministers exercise their service for the People of God by teaching (munus docendi), divine worship (munus liturgicum) and pastoral governance (munus regendi)” (Catechism of the Catholic Church

, n°1592).

*“Christ, the only Son of the Father, by the power of the Incarnation itself was made Mediator between heaven and earth, between the Father and the human race. Wholly in accord with this mission, Christ remained throughout His whole life in the state of celibacy, which signified His total dedication to the service of God and men. This deep concern between celibacy and the priesthood of Christ is reflected in those whose fortune it is to share in the dignity and mission of the Mediator and eternal Priest; this sharing will be more perfect the freer the sacred minister is from the bonds of flesh and blood (...) The consecrated celibacy of the sacred ministers actually manifests the virginal love of Christ for the Church, and the virginal and supernatural fecundity of this marriage, by which the children of God are born, ‘not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh’” (Pope Paul VI, Encyclical *Sacerdotalis Caelibatus*, n°21).*

*“The will of the Church finds its ultimate motivation in the link between celibacy and sacred ordination, which configures the priest to Jesus Christ the head and spouse of the Church. The Church, as the spouse of Jesus Christ, wishes to be loved by the priest in the total and exclusive manner in which Jesus Christ her head and spouse loved her. Priestly celibacy, then, is the gift of self in and with Christ to his Church and expresses the priest's service to the Church in and with the Lord” (Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores dabo vobis*, n°29).*

*“Priestly ordination, which hands on the office entrusted by Christ to his Apostles of teaching, sanctifying and governing the faithful, has in the Catholic Church from the beginning always been reserved to men alone. (...) The fact that the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God and Mother of the Church, received neither the mission proper to the Apostles nor the ministerial priesthood clearly shows that the non-admission of women to priestly ordination cannot mean that women are of lesser dignity, nor can it be construed as discrimination against them. (...) In order that all doubt may be removed regarding a matter of great importance, a matter which pertains to the Church's divine constitution itself, in virtue of my ministry of confirming the brethren (cf. Lk 22:32), I declare that the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgment is to be definitively held by all the Church's faithful” (Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, n°1, 3 & 4).*

5. An “integral ecology” that downgrades human dignity

In tune with its implicit pantheistic views, the *Instrumentum Laboris* relativizes Christian anthropology, which recognizes the human person as made in the image of God and therefore the pinnacle of material creation (Gen 1:26-31), and instead considers the human a mere link in nature's ecological chain, viewing socioeconomic development as

an aggression to “Mother Earth”.

“A fundamental aspect of the root of **human sin is to detach oneself from nature** and not recognize it as part of the human and to exploit nature without limits” (n°99); “A new paradigm of integral ecology” (n°56), should base itself on “the wisdom of indigenous peoples” and their daily life that “**teach us to recognize ourselves as part of the biome**” (n°102), “**part of the ecosystems**” (n°48), “**part of nature**” (n°17);

The Magisterium of the Church rejects the following opinions: that humans do not possess a unique dignity above the rest of material creation, and that technological progress is bound up with sin, teaching:

“To human beings God even gives the power of freely sharing in his providence by entrusting them with the responsibility of ‘subduing’ the earth and having dominion over it. God thus enables men to be intelligent and free causes in order to complete the work of creation, to perfect its harmony for their own good and that of their neighbors” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n°307).

6. A tribal collectivism that undermines personal uniqueness and freedom

According to the *Instrumentum laboris*, an integral “ecological conversion” includes the adoption of the collective social model of the aboriginal tribes, where individual personality and freedom are undermined:

“The sumak kawsay [‘good living’] concept has been forged from the ancestral wisdom of the indigenous peoples and nations. It is an experienced, older and more actual word, which proposes **a community lifestyle where all FEEL, THINK and ACT the same**, like a woven thread that sustains, wraps and protects, like a *poncho* of different colours” (Appeal “The Cry of the Sumak Kawsay in Amazonia” referred to in note 5 of n°12); “Life in the Amazon is integrated and united with the territory; there is no separation or division between the parts. **This unity includes all of existence: work, rest, human relationships, rites and celebrations. Everything is shared; private spaces**, so typical of modernity, **are minimal**. Life proceeds on **a communal path where tasks and responsibilities are distributed and shared** for the sake of the common good. **There is no place for the idea of an individual detached from the community or its territory**” (n°24).

The Magisterium of the Church rejects such opinions, teaching:

“The human person must always be understood in his unrepeatable and inviolable uniqueness. In fact, man exists above all as a subjective entity, as a centre of consciousness and freedom, whose unique life experiences, comparable to those of no one else, underlie the inadmissibility of any attempt to reduce his status by forcing him into preconceived categories or power systems, whether ideological or otherwise” (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, n°131).

“Man rightly appreciates freedom and strives for it passionately: rightly does he desire and must form and guide, by his own free initiative, his personal and social life, accepting personal responsibility for it (Veritatis Splendor, 34). In fact, freedom not only allows man suitably to modify the state of things outside of himself, but it also determines the growth of his being as a person through choices consistent with the true good (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n°1733). In this way man generates himself, he is father of his own being (Gregory of Nyssa, De Vita Moysis), he constructs the social order (Centesimus Annus, 13)” (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, n°135).

Conclusion

The theological errors and heresies, implicit and explicit in the *Instrumentum Laboris* of the imminent Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon, are an alarming manifestation of the confusion, error and division which beset the Church in our day. No one can excuse himself from being informed about the gravity of the

situation and from taking appropriate action for love of Christ and of His life with us in the Church. Above all, all the members of Christ's Mystical Body, before such a threat to her integrity, must pray and fast for the eternal good of her members who risk being scandalized, that is led into confusion, error and division by this text for the Synod of Bishops. Moreover, every Catholic, as a true soldier of Christ, is called to safeguard and promote the truths of the faith and the discipline by which those truths are honored in practice, lest the solemn assembly of the Bishops in Synod betray the mission of the Synod, which is "to assist the Roman Pontiff with their counsel in the preservation and growth of faith and morals and in the observance and strengthening of ecclesiastical discipline" (can. 342). On October 13, 2019, during the coming Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon, there will take place the Canonization of Blessed Cardinal John Henry Newman. May the Holy Father and all the members of the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon hear and accept the following luminous teaching of this newest Saint of the Church, in which he warned against theological errors similar to the above-mentioned errors in the *Instrumentum Laboris*:

"Private creeds, fancy religions, may be showy and imposing to the many in their day; national religions may lie huge and lifeless, and cumber the ground for centuries, and distract the attention or confuse the judgment of the learned; but on the long run it will be found that either the Catholic Religion is verily and indeed the coming in of the unseen world into this, or that there is nothing positive, nothing dogmatic, nothing real, in any of our notions as to whence we come and whither we are going" (*Discourses to Mixed Congregations*, XIII).

"Never did Holy Church need champions against [the spirit of Liberalism in religion] more sorely than now, when, alas! it is an error overspreading, as a snare, the whole earth; ... Liberalism in religion is the doctrine that there is no positive truth in religion, but that one creed is as good as another, and this is the teaching which is gaining substance and force daily. It is inconsistent with any recognition of any religion, as true. It teaches that all are to be tolerated, for all are matters of opinion. Revealed religion is not a truth, but a sentiment and a taste; not an objective fact; not miraculous: and it is the right of each individual to make it say just what strikes his fancy. Devotion is not necessarily founded on faith. Men may go to Protestant Churches and to Catholic, may get good from both and belong to neither. They may fraternize together in spiritual thoughts and feelings, without having any views at all of doctrines in common, or seeing the need of them" (*Biglietto Speech*, May 12, 1879).

May God, through the intercession of the many truly Catholic missionaries who

evangelized the indigenous American people, among whom are Saint Turibius of Mogrovejo and Saint José de Anchieta, and through the intercession of the saints whom indigenous American people have given to the Church, among whom are Saint Juan Diego and Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, and especially through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Queen of the Holy Rosary, who vanquishes all heresy, grant that the members of the coming Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon and the Holy Father be protected from the danger of approving doctrinal errors and ambiguities, and of undermining the Apostolic rule of priestly celibacy.

Raymond Leo Cardinal Burke

Bishop Athanasius Schneider

September 12, 2019

Feast of the Most Holy Name of Mary