

Everything is interconnected as if we were one ...



"Everything is intertwined as if we were one. Everything is interconnected in this common Home" Amazon mantra in Portuguese.

This mantra has been ever present to me throughout this month, we are all part of this mother earth and this universe, we are connected to each other and together within this Common Home, everything we do affects the other whether it be a human being, an animal, a plant: every living being on our planet, large or small, depends on our way of acting, the lifestyle we choose, what we do or what we stop doing.

From this reflection, I can say that if we realize we are never really alone, solitude can be just a temporary feeling of someone who needs to open up to and feel with the other. We are always close to each other and constantly interacting with other people or other beings, whom we can perceive through our senses. Therefore, I can be responsible for what happens to the other both in the good and the not so good. It sounds hard because no one likes their happiness or harmony to depend on the other. Many psychology books encourage us to seek our own happiness within us and that seems to me all well and good, only sometimes we spend our lives focusing so much on ourselves and the pursuit of happiness that we spend most of our lives in that, and we fall into individualism, in which the world is so immersed, and we forget that happiness is a double-edged sword, that is, it is a giving and receiving unconditionally. I gratuitously make a gift to the other and the other gives back to me freely. In the way of Jesus, who invites us together with Him to continually recreate this world and to recognize the face of God in the other. In this Home, there is room for all and that the important thing is to learn to live together in harmony, in His love.

This is probably not very easy to understand and it is difficult for me to explain. However, it is what I have been discovering and experiencing in this period of volunteering. Where I have been able to feel the goodness of being human is where I come to know and see people living on this triple border in this Amazon, whether belonging to a Church or not, that spend their time helping the riverside communities in all sorts of activities be they pastoral, catechetical, navigating the river, publicizing indigenous legislation, supporting the demarcation of territory, training in the improvement of production and care of the land, accompanying and listening to the needs of indigenous people, sensitizing against trafficking in people, education, etc. People who move to this part of our Common Home, from distant places driven by a deep call to care, support and harmonize this lung of the planet that we still have. Unfortunately, I can also see the hand of the human being who come to disrupt this

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space with the indiscriminate extraction of natural resources, pollution, drug trafficking, human trafficking, etc.

Then, it occurs to me in my heart and mind: if we are all interrelated and affect each other in this world, for better or worse, we are all responsible not only for what we do, but also for what my brother or sister does. Confronted by social injustice or the destruction of the nature, which is my responsibility I ask myself what I am doing? What is my contribution, large or small? I cannot remain unaffected, watching what happens around me as others are deteriorating in this Home. I remember this paragraph of the Laudato



Si it says: "Ecological culture cannot be reduced to a series of urgent and partial responses to problems which are cropping up around the degradation of the environment, the depletion of natural reserves, or pollution. It should be a different perspective, a thought, a policy, an educational program, a lifestyle and a spirituality that form resistance to the advance of the technocratic paradigm." (LS 111)

In view of this presupposition that everything is interconnected, interrelated within this our Common Home, then we are not just on Earth, we are actual earth. And if I feel that way, then I care not what race, creed, language, or culture because in my essence I have a little of all, I feel like a sister to everything and everyone like Saint Francis. That is precisely how I am feeling with this Amazonian environment and its people, or rather I should say my people, in this privileged time of being with them, of discovering and valuing their great cultural wealth, their thought, their lifestyle, which seeks harmony with their environment.

From this space, I understand what for the indigenous culture is "Good Living": from this Amazonian biome, what my early colleagues intended or have been trying for so many years, is to build a society where we walk together, where we have the certainty that everything becomes available for all and that, of course, we do not worry that any one is missing out or is left behind. For them their God is a good God who always provides and never abandons, in them comes alive the passage of Matthew that says: "Look at the birds of the sky: they do not sow, they neither reap nor gather in barns; and their heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth more than they?" (Mt 6:26). How wonderful is the faith they have in their Father - Mother God, in their Creator! They are thankful for the food they receive each day with the sweat of their work in their chagras and every fish they manage to catch in the river. They do not complain because they do not know another way of life because for

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them, the way they live is the best, they enjoy life and have time to rest, play sports or play with their friends. In our Western language, we would call that waste time.

Instead, in our cities we have exchanged 'Good Living' for "Living Well" and there is a difference. Living well shuts us in an individualism in which we only seek our personal and maximum well-being for my family, forgetting about my surroundings, losing that ability to feel interrelated with the other and leading us to consumption and a supposed progress or development that devastates the environment because it is focused on the human being as dominator of everything.

We all measure life based on objectives, productivity, results, indicators, we always must be working to such an extent that we have lost the ability to relate to the other and our nature, hence illnesses such as stress and depression abound, because we demand of ourselves, or strive to meet the parameters demanded by a developed society full of comforts and so empty of relationships and affections - so noisy and with so few silences.

Now after eleven months in this corner of our Amazonian nature, I wonder who are the really developed? I would say theirs because they still keep in their heart that essence of God, of feeling and knowing that, without nature, they disappear along with it, for they are nothing without it and it is nothing without them, because they are interrelated, interconnected as with an umbilical cord from which they give and receive life and the cutting of it means death. That is why they are willing to give their lives to look after this space of land they have left.

These are some reflections that have been rising within me during this time, so it seems to me that when the Pope says that we should probably change our lifestyle and our spirituality, I feel that he is trying to tell us that we must return to our basic essence, our source, to our origins, to God.

Wherever we find ourselves, near or far from this Amazon, I believe that each one of us can contribute to improve the quality of life of beings in our environment. I leave you with some questions: Am I living the Good life or Living Well? Do I feel part of this Home and I do to take care of it? Would I be able to leave my comfort or my development to spend some time in this Amazon, in this frontier land? From my country, what is my contribution to "we all live together", so that "no one is left behind"?

Sharing my mission for this month, as a pastoral team we completed in the communities of Zaragoza, Libertad, Puerto Triunfo and Ronda the first stage of raising awareness of trafficking. As usual we worked with children in schools about body care, we had Eucharist in two communities thanks to the support of Valerio Sartor SJ, a Jesuit priest, and Capuchin Brother Manuel Vargas. The people of the

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community greatly appreciate the occasional presence of priests, asking them to visit them more frequently and to say mass at least once a month, feeling that this can help them to combat the temptations to which young people are exposed by the influence of development.



I also participated in the bimonthly meeting of the Anti-Trafficking Network against Trafficking in Persons of the Triple Border, in which we shared the situation in each country regarding the issue. There are children who disappear, girls who are sold to the elderly, or taken to Santa Rosa for prostitution, the picture is not very encouraging, because like in any border area, matters tend to be neglected by the authorities of each of the three states.

At the invitation of Natalia Forero, a co-worker of the Daughters of Charity in Colombia, who works on the theme against trafficking in Puerto Nariño, I accompanied her in raising awareness of the issue in Islandia, Peru. We spent two days working in the school with the children and young people. I must mention that there is a readiness on the part of the heads and teachers to monthly help with the training of the children. The international and inter-congregational community of five sisters and a diocesan priest welcomed us during these days. It was a beautiful sharing of experiences, mission and life.

Finally, to finish for this month, I visited Atalaia do Norte, a parish of the Alto Solimões Dioceses in Brazil, where I could share with Martha, a Spanish Xaverian missionary, who for three years will work with these people through pastoral programs with women and indigenous people and with whom, since her arrival three months ago, I have been building a beautiful friendship. I also used to visit and share with CIMI friends.

It was a month of sharing, of treasuring many faces in the heart and of many inner reflections.

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Thank you always for accompanying me with your prayers in this mission.

Lore

*Original in Spanish
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