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Peace and goodwill!

During the time we spent on the sacred grounds of Our Lady of Guadalupe and St. Juan Diego in Mexico City, we lived days of intense ecclesial, synodal, and ministerial communion. Women and men, servants of the Good News, shared life and mission, with the strength of prophecy, which is incarnate in the here and now of history; building paths, which lead to a recognition of the gift, the strength, and the diaconal service of women in the Church, because "everything that the Church has to offer must become incarnate in a distinctive way in each part of the world... Preaching must become incarnate, spirituality must become incarnate, ecclesial structures must become incarnate" (Apostolic Exhortation *Querida Amazonia*, no. 6).

The gratitude to God is immense for such a significant experience. Women and men of faith, walked to the hill of Tepeyac to drink from the sacred source, to make a commitment to the life of the original peoples, here to represent the countless poor and marginalized – who cry out for life, for justice, and for a place in society and in the Church. We have all come to Mother of Guadalupe to learn from her, to serve the little ones, allowing ourselves to be enveloped by her sacred mantle of service and by the Good News of God for all peoples.

The presence of women in the Church is fundamental for the animation of the life of countless communities, and without their generous service, the faith would have already collapsed in many parts of the Americas, and I would risk saying, in many parts of the world. This tender and maternal presence makes people draw near and seek encouragement, but it is also a firm and vigorous presence, which vivifies and strengthens life where it is most threatened.

In the Magnificat, Mary exalts the wonders of God in her life: "The Almighty has done great things for me"; she recognizes His liberating power; she announces and denounces: "He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty." She places herself at the service of all humanity, carrying in her womb the very force of life, the Liberating God. In her womb she carries the Son of God, Jesus Christ in all his humanity and divinity.

Mary, mother invoked by so many names, Mother of the Amazon, Mother of the Pilgrims, Mother of the Refugees, Mother of Sorrows, Mother of the Original peoples and Mother of the Americas. Mary, brown-skinned Mother of Heaven, Our Lady of Guadalupe, prophet of hope and of a new dawn, helps us to recognize the strength, the gift, and the *diakonia* of women in the Church.

Women are in frontier services in the Church. They serve among the most vulnerable, be they children, refugees, youth, abused women, migrants, native peoples, peasants and so many others. Women are also in the service of animation of basic ecclesial communities, ministers of the Word and the Eucharist, in various pastoral ministries, energizing the life of the communities, in the service of an integral pastoral care, for faith and life. These women are similar to the women at the foot of the cross, who stand in solidarity with the historical crucified and those who, at dawn, carry the perfumes to anoint the body of Jesus and of the many brothers and sisters who yearn for a dignified and full life. They, "the women" have the strength and do not accept that death has the last word. "The Lord lives and is in our midst," this life force places women as deacons of hope and life.



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Patriarchal and colonialist attitudes still persist among us, and in the face of this "sin" we are invited to enter into a dynamic of conversion of mind, heart, and will, in order to recognize the service that women render to the Church, without making distinctions among men and women, but with dignity and equity in ministry. In this way, the diaconate of women will be understood and practiced fully as a service of integral and inculturated evangelization, and at the service of the innumerable communities that clamor for a permanent evangelizing presence, with the charisms given through baptism for the building up of the Church.

The times we live in today ask us for steadfastness and audacity in the Spirit in order to live the ecclesiality, synodality, and ministeriality in the communities where we come from, and thereby make visible the protagonism of women in the Church. I bring to memory the extraordinary Amazon Synod, "Amazonia: New Paths for the Church and for an Integral Ecology," when it emphasizes that, "In the many consultations carried out in the Amazon, the fundamental role of religious and lay women in the Church of the Amazon and its communities was recognized and emphasized, given the wealth of services they provide" (no. 103).

In the Synod of Amazonia, Pope Francis invites us all, not to "put new patches on old clothes", nor to "put new wine into old wineskins". Pope Francis urges us to witness, to "overflow," to have creativity for an integral and inculturated evangelization, in the commitment to the poor and to the common home, that cry out for the Good News of the Kingdom of God.

We gathered from various parts of the American continent, "like a river that welcomes many rivers, all wanting to drink from the same source." We are 'bridge people' who join Pope Francis for an inculturated evangelization in its diverse contexts and for living out an integral ecology, being Church on the way, Servant, Samaritan, Marian, and Magdalene, at the service of the countless ecclesial communities in this immense America.

The meeting of women and men, which took place from August 31st to September 5th, was marked by the experience of synodality, attentive listening to the Spirit of God, and discernment of the pathways towards an integral and inculturated evangelization in communion with Pope Francis and all his magisterium. The attentive listening and the sharing of life and mission give us elements to integrate the contributions to the continental stage of the Synod of Bishops on Synodality – For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission.

May Our Lady of Guadalupe help us to listen and live the Word of God as a generous service to the people of God, preferably as life given to the poorest.

† Roque Paloschi
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Brother on the journey and Bishop of the Church in Porto Velho, Brazil

