

# INDIGENOUS SPIRITUALITY FOR THE CARE OF THE LAND AND TERRITORIES OF ABYA YALA

## ORGANIZED BY:

Koinonia (Brasil) – Memoria Indígena – Renovemos nuestro Mundo – Iniciativa Interreligiosa por los Bosques (IRI Perú) – Paz y Esperanza (Perú) – ISEAT (Bolivia)



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**INDIGENOUS SPIRITUALITY**  
**FOR THE CARE OF THE LAND**  
**AND TERRITORIES OF**  
**ABYA YALA**



**2021**

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# INTRODUCTION

This book compiles the debates of the event "Indigenous Spirituality for the care of the Earth and the territories of ABYA YALA" held on 22 April 2021, the International Day of Mother Earth. On this same day, the Escazú Agreement was also ratified, the first regional treaty of ECLAC (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean) as a powerful ally for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The seminar brought together theologians and experts on religion and the environment from the territories of Abya Yala. In the language of the Kuna people, Abya Yala means "Mature Earth", "Living Earth" or "Earth in Bloom" and is synonymous with America ([Enciclopédia Latinoamericana](#)). Gradually, in summits and meetings of indigenous peoples, the name America is being replaced by Abya Yala to validate the importance and urgency of knowledge, traditions, struggles, and ancestral cosmologies of indigenous peoples.

The debate was mediated by **Jorge Arboccó**, Director of Paz y Esperanza Peru. The first part brings reflections on the Church and the Environment. The Reverend Canon **Marinéz Bassotto**, the first bishop elected in South America, discusses her actions in the Anglican Diocese of the Amazon to combat the Bolsonaro government's necropolitics; **Felipe Terán**, politologist, and professor at the Instituto Superior Ecuménico Andino de Teología (ISEAT) in Bolivia narrates the devastation caused by the global demand for meat and soy on Amazonian biodiversity; **Judyt Patiño**, a missionary from Mother Laura, tells us about the cosmogony of the Achuar people — inhabitants of the heart of the High Amazon between Peru and Ecuador; **Magali Cunha**, Ph.D. in Communication Sciences, narrates the research she coordinated at FESUR (South American Ecumenical Forum) on religious, political and economic fundamentalisms that devastate our region and peoples.

**Eduardo Salas**, Program Officer of the Inter-religious Initiative for Tropical Forests in Peru (IRI-PERÚ) coordinates the second part on Indigenous Spirituality and the Escazú Agree-

ment. Here, **Jocabed Solano**, theologian, and director of Indigenous Memory in Panama tells us about the philosophy and ontology of the Kuna people; **Sofia Chipana Quispe**, a member of the ABYA YALA Communities of Indigenous Wise Persons and Theologians and of the Articulation of Andean Theology and Pastoral Care (Peru — Bolivia — Argentina) tells of the many Andean worlds, "pluriverse", in contrast to the Western Cartesian notion of uni-verse, and the tireless struggle of the defenders of Mother Earth; **Yesica Patiachi Tayori**, bilingual teacher of the Harakbut people in Peru and counselor in REPAM (Pan-Amazonian Ecclesial Network) talks about the Harakbut cosmogony and, finally, **Javier Jahncke**, National Coordinator of the Rede Iglesias y Minería do Peru, reaffirms the importance of the ratification of the Escazú Agreement so that our peoples and rights are recognised and respected.

We hope that this publication will be a tool for reflection and action for all those who defend and fight for our Common Home. We endorse the Manifesto Reflorestamentos [da ANMIGA](#) (Articulation of Indigenous Women Warriors of Ancestrality) which defends a different kind of coexistence with these pluriversos from ancestral cosmologies and knowledge.

"To take care of Mother Earth is, deep down, to take care of our own bodies and spirits. The body is earth, the forest is mind. We want to reforge minds so that they add up to provide much-needed care for our body-earth."

This is the utopia, or "the unheard-of possible", on which we bet.

Enjoy your reading!

**Beatriz Leandro**

Coordinator of the Project Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue for Amazonia in KOINONIA — Ecumenical Presence and Service.



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307

# SUMMARY

08. JORGE ARBOCCÓ

**"INDIGENOUS SPIRITUALITY  
FOR THE CARE OF THE LAND AND  
TERRITORIES OF ABYA YALA"**

10. MARINÉZ BASSOTTO

**THE CHURCH AND THE DEFENCE  
OF THE ENVIRONMENT  
UNDERSTANDING THE MISSION OF  
THE CHURCH WITH THE PEOPLE  
OF THE FOREST**

14. FELIPE TERÁN

**CHALLENGES OF THE CHURCH  
IN DEFENCE OF MOTHER EARTH**

24. MAGALI CUNHA

**UNDERSTANDINGS FROM THE  
SOUTH AMERICAN  
ECUMENICAL FORUM**

30. JOCABED SOLANO

**WHAT SHOULD WE HEAR FROM  
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES?**

40. YESICA PATIACHI TAYORI

**THE SPIRITUALITY OF  
HARAKBUT**

48. JORGE ARBOCCÓ

**PRAYER**

49. SHEILA TANAKA

**FAREWELL**

**INDIGENOUS SPIRITUALITY  
FOR THE CARE OF THE LAND  
AND TERRITORIES OF  
ABYA YALA**

18. JUDYT PATIÑO

**THE PROCESS OF INCARNATION  
ACCORDING TO THE ACHUAR  
PEOPLE**

28. EDUARDO SALAS

**THE IMPORTANCE OF  
EARTH DAY AND THE ESCAZÚ  
ACCORD**

34. SOFIA CHIPANA QUISPE

**EXPERIENCES IN THE ANDEAN  
TERRITORIES**

44. JAVIER JAHNCKE

**THE CONTINUING STRUGGLE  
FOR THE ESCAZÚ AGREEMENT**

# "INDIGENOUS SPIRITUALITY FOR THE CARE OF THE LAND AND TERRITORIES OF ABYA YALA"



We are all seeds on the path of life, we are all a new dawn.

**JORGE ARBOCCÓ**, Director of Paz y Esperanza Perú

It is a pleasure to be able to celebrate this new time. We are all seeds on the path of life, we are all new dawn. On behalf of the organizations that are part of this work process today, KOINONIA of Brazil, **MEMORIA INDÍGENA, RENOVEMOS NUESTRO MUNDO, INICIATIVA INTERRELIGIOSA PARA LOSQUES TROPICALES, SIDE PERU, PAZ Y ESPERANZA**, and ISEAT, we welcome you.

On this day, we remember the Day of Mother Earth and the final consolidation in our Latin America, in ABYA YALA, of the Escazú<sup>1</sup> Agreement. It is a call to think about what our Latin America is living, what ABYA YALA is living.

We see that from the human rights movements, the ecclesial movements, and the indigenous movements, important work is being done, but there is a central agenda that we must strengthen.

<sup>1</sup> The Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean, better known as the Escazú Agreement, was ratified on 22 April 2021, International Day of Mother Earth. It is the first regional treaty of ECLAC (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean) and a powerful instrument for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

It is considered a milestone for the region, as it is not only the first environmental treaty in Latin America and the Caribbean, but also the first to include provisions for the promotion and protection of human rights defenders in the environmental sphere. It is available in Portuguese, Spanish, Quechua, English and French.

<https://www.cepal.org/es/acuerdodeescazu> (Date of access: 09/06/2021)



JESS KRAFT

We know that these are difficult times, that Latin America is currently considered the place where the largest number of human rights defenders are dying: more than 50% of the murders take place in Latin America and especially in the Amazon.

Our Amazonia, our mother earth, occupies more than 46% of all of ABYA YALA. It is more than 50 million hectares that have been depredated for years. Hundreds of activists have been assassinated, persecuted, and tortured for defending the rights of the land and the rights of nature. There is an eco-justice, a sense of life that needs to flourish and is not currently visible in many of our countries.

We feel deep pain for the more than 300 human rights defenders killed last year around the world. COICA — Coordination of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin reported that in 2020 alone, 222 defenders of nature from the indigenous movement were killed. This should represent a warning for all of us.

Currently, as we said, the Escazú Agreement is being reaffirmed in 12 countries — 24 have signed, but only 12 have ratified. The agreement draws our attention to the importance of changing our system of life. The Rio Declaration, from which the Escazú Agreement was born, in principle number 10, reminds us of the importance of citizen participation, justice, and access to information, and the urgent need for justice for those who are persecuted, mistreated, and murdered. We need justice.

We believe that the Churches, Faith-based organizations, among many others, are called to motivate this work. We feel that it is necessary, as COICA says: "to return to Maloca", "to return to Milpa", "to return to Canaan", to return to a space of our life, to recover our identity — not to return to the past, but to learn from it and to recover this community life. This perspective, to which we are all intertwined, seeks dialogue and transformation in an ecumenical way.

There will be two important blocks of dialogue: The first on the Church and the Defence of the Environment, and the second about Indigenous Spirituality and the Importance of Earth Day and the Escazú Agreement.



JORGE ARBOCCÓ

# THE CHURCH AND THE DEFENCE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

## UNDERSTANDING THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH WITH THE PEOPLE OF THE FOREST



HANS SCHWARZKOPF

**MARINÉZ BASSOTTO**, *Bishop of the Anglican Episcopal Church of Brazil — Diocese of Amazonia*

I thank you for the invitation and for the interest in amplifying the voice of the Church in Brazilian Amazonia, and also of the indigenous communities.

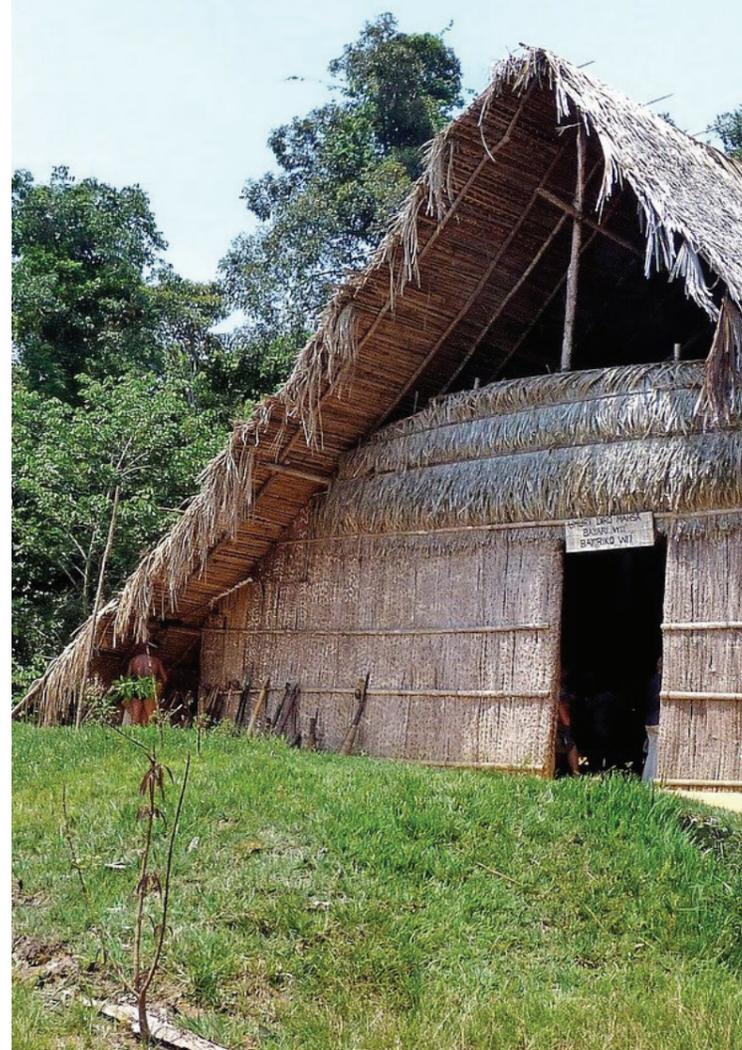
I was asked two questions, which I will speak about at this moment: The first is about the challenges of the Church in the theme of land and territory.

I want to begin by mentioning that the Brazilian Amazon region is a territory of approximately 5 million km<sup>2</sup>, which is equivalent to 53% of Brazilian territory. In the same way, I want to emphasize that it is the region with the largest quantity of tropical flora in the world, but it is also a region with many inequalities.

For many years it has lacked public policies and had many territorial problems. The situation got much worse with the beginning of the government of Bolsonaro, where there was much more damage to human rights, to Quilombola, Ribeirinha, and Indigenous populations.

This was even worsened in 2020 when there was a large number of fires in the Amazon region, 19% of the Amazon area was burnt, which caused a lot of damage.

These days, the only thing that the government considers good in the Amazon region is the profit that can be made from extractivism; not the conservation or preservation itself of the diversity of the Amazon. There is also stagnation — no progress — in the laws and policies on environmental issues. There is a lack of structure within the Brazilian government in the instances of environmental protection.



The Bolsonaro government wants to make these laws more flexible so that they can exploit these territories protected by indigenous communities. There are no actions to protect against the violence that these invasions cause; and with that comes a great panoramic increase in deforestation and damage to these lands, which were previously protected. We call these policies necropolitics or politics of death. One of these necropolitical politics that is in process of approval is the temporal landmark, which is a law that recognizes as indigenous lands those that were occupied before 1988 when the Federal Constitution of Brazil was promulgated. It means that if up until 1988 these indigenous peoples were not on these lands, then they are not considered native lands.

We must remember that since the beginning of the invasion of Brazil, the indigenous peoples were removed from their territories. In this way, they were taken away from what guaranteed their survival and now the same thing is happening: they are taken away from these lands that are no longer considered indigenous lands.



MARINÉZ BASSOTTO

As churches, we understand the situation of conflict in Amazonia, but we also need to understand the justice concerning the original peoples. We need to take actions that encourage us to amplify the voices of the people in this region. For the native peoples, their territory is home to the knowledge and experience of all that they have as tradition. Indigenous peoples do not see the land as profit, but as sacred, as if it were their bodies.

The struggle for the existence and resistance of their culture involves securing their territories and thereby maintaining their way of life.

Like the Anglican Church, we repudiate all actions that disrespect the indigenous peoples of Amazonia. Through letters from the House of Bishops and Women Bishops of the Anglican Church, and also through interventions from the Anglican Community, we have demonstrated our rejection of these actions. We also carried out actions together with the indigenous communities, especially in Manaus and in the metropolitan area, in villages near the Purus and Solimões rivers and the Manaus river. We accompany in solidarity the indigenous women in the region of Manaus. These actions are not only carried out by the Anglican Church, they are also done in an ecumenical way, that is, with other churches, especially with those that are part of the National Council of Christian Churches (CONIC).

In the Manaus region, there is an ecumenical network called **AMAZONIZAR**, and in the Para region, where I live, there is the Amazonian Council of Christian Churches, which for decades has been struggling for the rights, justice, and protection of the Amazonian and indigenous peoples.

Something important that I would like to highlight is that one of the most sincere, most important aspirations that we have as a Church is this desire to have a better world and a world with greater solidarity. We seek to build justice with the fullness of life, not only for Christians but for all mankind. And just as the Ecumenical Movements have been present in the historic moments of humankind, so it is now: the Churches are united in favor of Amazonia.

Here in Amazonia, and the State of Pará, we have an ecumenical project called "**Plantando Vidas**" (**Sowing Lives**)



[HTTPS://WWW.TWENTY20.COM/PHOTOS/6385A048-25DE-431D-8D11-FADCE2A5F7B6/?UTM\\_T20\\_CHANNEL=BL](https://www.twenty20.com/photos/6385A048-25DE-431D-8D11-FADCE2A5F7B6/?utm_t20_channel=BL)

which seeks to influence the peoples of Amazonia through environmental protection, replanting, and reforestation. This is done ecumenically, with the support of Caritas, the Anglican Church, and other organizations and churches that are in the region.

I want to conclude by saying that the Christian Church, to be truly faithful to Christ, does not have to be proselytism, that is, it does not have to work solely for the support of the activities of its church, but it requires and needs to walk together with the native populations who claim the right to their territories, and who cry out for respect and care for their cultures.

We need to remember that attacks on indigenous populations, Quilombolas and Ribeirinhos are not only damage to flora, vegetation, but also harm and violate the right of physical bodies, violate their spirits and souls, therefore violate the integrity of God's Creation. To accomplish environmental justice in Amazonia, it is necessary to guarantee the identity of the forest peoples and the protection of their lives.

//  
LONG LIVE MOTHER EARTH DAY!  
LONG LIVE THE ESCAZÚ AGREEMENT!  
LONG LIVE THE PEOPLES AND LONG LIVE THE PEOPLE WHO FIGHT TO DEFEND THESE PEOPLES!

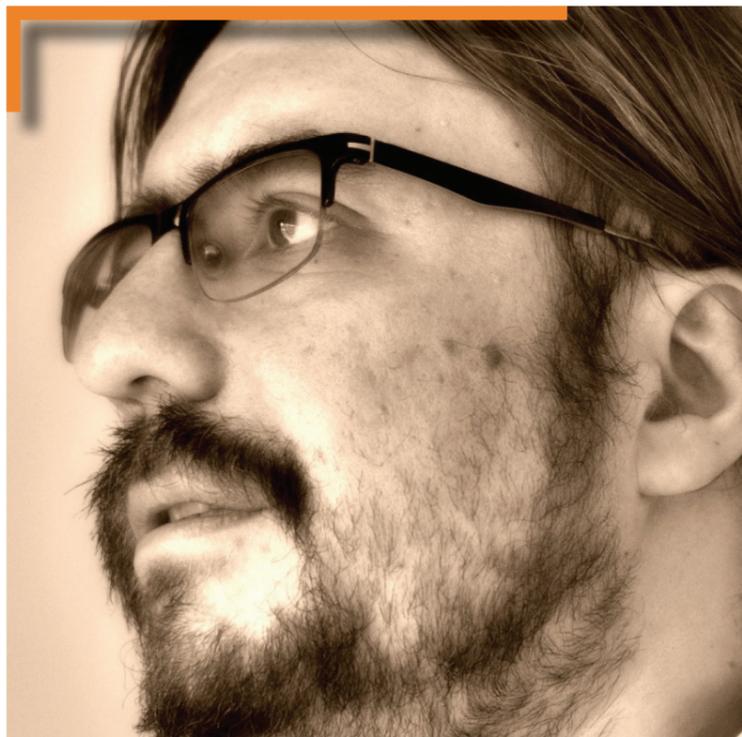
# CHALLENGES OF THE CHURCH IN DEFENCE OF MOTHER EARTH

**FELIPE TERÁN**, political scientist and professor at the Instituto Superior Ecuemênico Andino de Teología (ISEAT) and at the Universidad Pública del Alto, Bolivia.

Today is a very important day for us as humankind, a day declared by the United Nations as Mother Earth Day. Particularly, it is a declaration that was encouraged by the government of Bolivia and the utmost importance for humanity. I am from ISEAT, **Instituto Superior Ecuemênico Andino de Teología** (Higher Ecumenical Andean Institute of Theology), and we have been working for several years on the issue of Amazonia. We are an institute specializing in the Sciences of Religion and Theology. We have a deep ecumenical conviction, working for many decades on issues related to the environment, and in the last year, we have contributed research on the subject. We have worked with Mosestenes, and Chimanes indigenous peoples, as well as with several Amazon peoples, and lately, we have written a text about the spirituality of water, which deals with the spirituality of Amazon peoples, mainly in a place called San Ignacio de Moxos. Where the people still maintain a strong connection with water.

What are the challenges facing the Church in supporting the defense of Mother Earth?

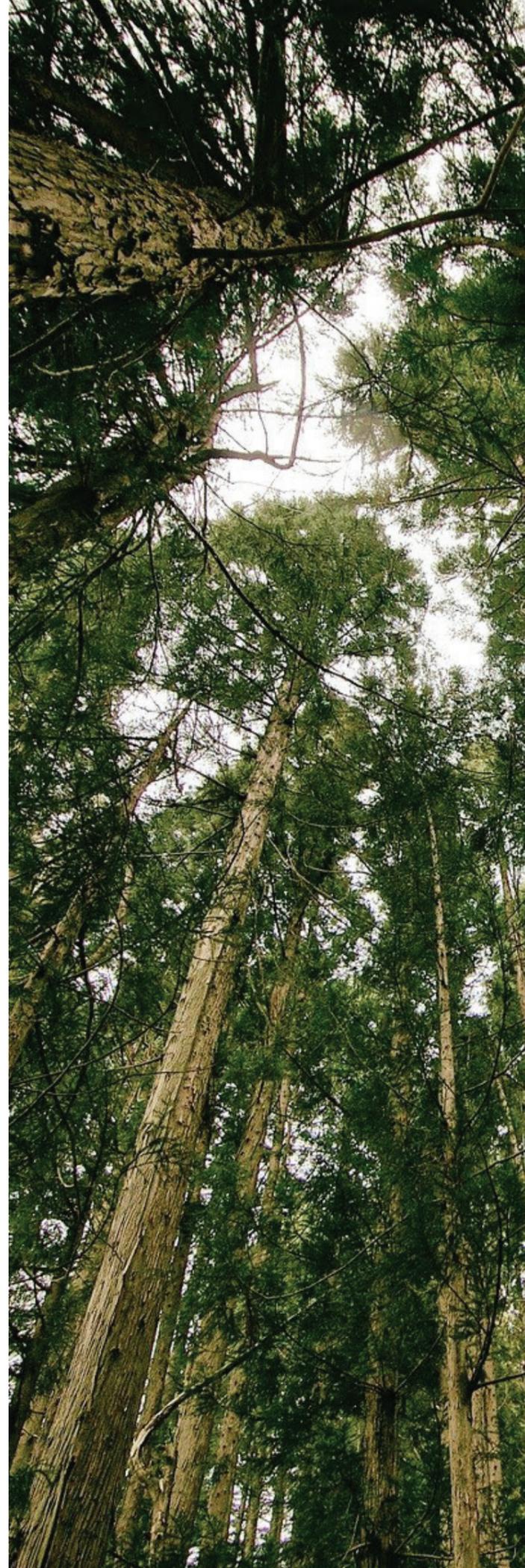
Here in Bolivia, the issue of biodiversity and care for the environment is a very significant problem. We have almost 854,000 km of Amazon, but we also have eco-parks in the Andean regions. And effectively here, from our experience, all of our Amazonian parts, but at the same time our Andean part, is being threatened by the global increase in demand for food, mainly two: meat and soy.



FELIPE TERÁN

Bolivia is a large producer of soya and meat — not in the same proportion as other countries such as Argentina, Uruguay, and even Brazil — but in recent years it has begun to increase its meat production at an accelerated rate. Curiously, the expansion of meat and soya production coincided with the fires suffered by the Chiquitano forest.

Why? Mainly because of the demand from China, but also from other markets for meat, the current agricultural frontier is being extended to supply those demands. So the mega cattlemen try to expand them, which has a direct incidence of forest fires. It is worth clarifying that these are not natural causes, but fires caused by human beings.

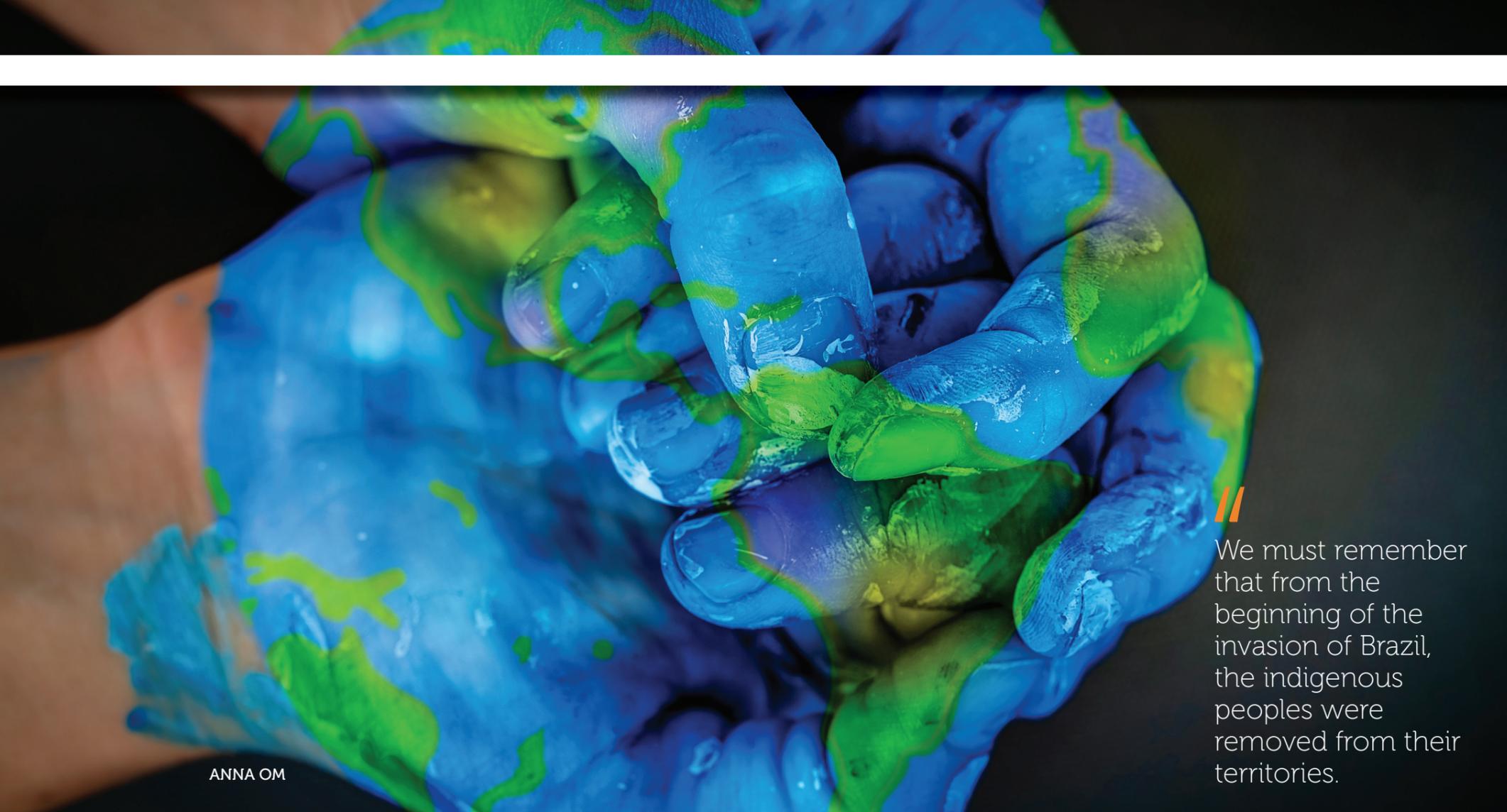


So, agribusiness, although it economically sustains Latin American countries, is not exactly environment-friendly, especially when it comes to deforestation. This is a problem we have experienced in recent years, and growth and development threaten peoples' lives, especially in Amazonian places. This territory is always seen by the States as usable, but sometimes the States forget that people are living there. This is the problem I want to highlight.

Today, on Mother Earth Day, the Bolivian Government revoked the decrees that established the entry of transgenics, which is good news because it affected all our biodiversity.

Let us now analyse the problem of the Church in Latin America. There has always been a strong predominance of the Catholic Church. Its influence, both politically and ideologically, has always been contrary to the interests of the Andean and Amazonian peoples. However, the Church of Rome has experienced changes since Pope Francis assumed the papacy. He has positioned before international public opinion the idea of the care of Creation as a central element from what he tried to do with the Amazon Synod. However, the Bolivian branches have only taken this position from a declarative point of view.

On the other hand, we have the historical Churches and the Protestant Churches. The Catholic Church, from the whole of the 20th century and part of the 21st century, has practically undergone a re-accommodation. Although it used to be a much more political Church and much more tied to life projects, in the pact made mainly by Ratzinger, but also by John Paul II with the great capitalism, the Catholic Church goes from proposing alternatives of life or hope to have a doctrine of universal values, but that is not capable of transforming anything. Its mission has been transformed to support the established order.



ANNA OM



We must remember that from the beginning of the invasion of Brazil, the indigenous peoples were removed from their territories.

In this context, it is a Church that has always been linked to power, and in a very easy way has attached itself to this idea and has forgotten the great transformations necessary for most of the needy.

In Bolivia, the Catholic Church has become one of the most conservative spaces in public life. However, the space that the Catholic Church has neglected in the communities and villages has been occupied by the historic churches, such as the Methodist, Lutheran, Baptist, and other Pentecostal churches. The interesting thing is that where these churches appeared, they did not go against the spiritualities of the people, but on the contrary, they found a way to build Churches without trying to extirpate, frighten or demonize spiritualities. Above all, the Methodist Church.

The Methodist Church and other Neo-Pentecostal Churches, which were practically built in the heat of the moment, instead of a doctrine that has been established in communities and peoples both in the Andean Area as in the Amazon, somehow, have managed to build intercultural and interreligious spaces. This is why the internal relationships of the historic Churches have determined that the peoples take control of the Churches, a phenomenon that has happened with the Lutherans and Baptists.

So now the Church has a central – challenge, when I speak of Church, I mean the Christian Churches in a mostly ecumenical way, it has to start proposing a prophetic voice, that is, the need for transformation. I consider this a central element because cli-

mate change is not an exclusively national issue. For example, the problem of Bolivia, or the Bolivian Amazon, is not restricted to its territory, because if the Amazon ends, in global terms, the planet ends.

The problems are not reduced to states, they are global problems that are linked to the increase in the dialectic of "production-consumption / production-consumption". So, this accelerated growth in the way we consume is generating much greater imbalances and is the cause of the climate crisis.

At this moment, what can the Church do to better focus or specify the struggle?

This Church must find more inter-religious ways because a dialogue with the

spirituality of the peoples will be necessary. The Churches cannot go against the spirituality of the people. For example: in San Ignacio de Moxos, the people believe in "el Jichi", a deity. It is a serpent, an anaconda that inhabits a lagoon.

According to the local churches, the anaconda was a boy, who, when he went with his mother to wash clothes, was swallowed by the anaconda, and when it entered the ground, the lagoon appeared. This region never suffers from drought, never has problems with water. They believe that this anaconda lives inside the lagoon and is the guardian spirit that gives life to the water, and that is why they look after the lagoon. It has a logical sense. Somehow these spiritualities mark our journey back, also concerning our spirituality with the land. It is something we cannot lose; I believe this is central.

How can we recover this spirituality with the land? This is a very interesting challenge that the Churches have because many of them do not want to relate to and do not want to start from the spirituality of the people. They do not see points of interaction, and I believe that there are more points of interaction than differences. This is also part of our work for a more inter-religious world. I think this is a fundamental alliance, because while the Church and the peoples are reforming the spirituality and as we relate to the earth— mystically and prophetically— we will open up spaces for possible changes.

# THE PROCESS OF INCARNATION ACCORDING THE ACHUAR PEOPLE

JUDYT PATIÑO, Missionary of Mother Laura. General Councillor for the Mission Area.



JUDYT PATIÑO,

I share with you my experiences of walking with the indigenous peoples and the peoples of African descent of Colombia, Peru, and Ecuador. These experiences have helped me a lot to see that it is only by walking with the people that we can find the characteristics to follow God, the Jesus of life that is concretely present in the faces of our indigenous brothers and sisters and our brothers and sisters of African descent.

I want to respond to the challenges with the expression of an Achuar girl, in the border region between Ecuador and Peru, who says:

**A territory is a sacred place** that shelters life. In the Achuar world, they call the trees and animals "Iwianch" which are manifestations of Arutam: the boa constrictor, the owl, the deer, the jaguar.

**In the bowels of the earth there is Nunkui** (mother of the earth), a female deity very much related to women, she becomes the owner of the chakra — aja

El territorio es un lugar sagrado que abriga la vida. En el mundo Achuar al árbol y los animales lo nombran como "Iwianch" que son manifestaciones de Arutam: la boa, el búho, el venado, el tigre.

wainin — sacred, intimate space of fecundity. She sows, tends the crops, learns to heal the plants, chants sacred songs — enent — that she **learned** in her **dreams** and fasts so that Nunkui will give her good harvests (Chimento, 2019).

I think that this expression of Chimento is a challenge for us as a Church. It is a challenge because this whole world of the original peoples implies an openness to that whole cosmovision and cosmos experience that they have kept for ages in the depths of their being. Therefore, to open ourselves to the message of these people is to enter into a process of incarnation; just as our fingernail is incarnated and is so strong that when it touches it hurts.

For us it is a great challenge how to incarnate ourselves today, how to enter to see this Achuar people, to see Iwianch in that big tree, in that sacred manifestation, and to approach that spiritual reality of the people. We will only achieve this when we see that the original peoples and the territory are our schools: a school that

will teach us life, help us to deepen the roots of our following of God, of the Jesus of history. Only in this way will we be able to listen to and understand the dreams.

In the image below we see an old man accompanying his grandchildren so that they can get a vision. This is how we will understand that it is possible to go beyond, only from the openness of the incarnation, and to see our process as a school.

A territory is a sacred place that shelters life. In the Achuar world, they call the trees and animals "Iwianch" which are manifestations of Arutam: the boa constrictor, the owl, the deer, the jaguar.

In the bowels of the earth there is Nunkui (mother of the earth), a female deity very much related to women, she becomes the owner of the chakra - aja wainin - sacred, intimate space of fecundity. She sows, tends the crops, learns to heal the plants, chants sacred songs - enent - that she learned in her dreams and fasts so that Nunkui will give her good harvests (Chimento, 2019).

OPENING → SCHOOL → DREAMS → INCARNATE CHURCH

The following image leads me to the challenges: take off your shoes, because the ground we are stepping on is a sacred ground, a holy ground. Taking off our sandals implies leaving our personal schemes, leaving our culture, and entering the other without losing our own.

When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? Acts 2:6-8

**Time of the Spirit**

"Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." Exodus 3:5

Decolonisation process to let God act      Active listening

Today we speak of decolonising: decolonising our minds, our customs, without imposing anything. To arrive there and sit next to the brother and sister who are learning. To sit there without imposing anything and to listen. We say that this is the time of kairós: the time of the spirit. Now we are at Easter, in Easter time, waiting for the spirit, and this is indeed our time. The peoples of Amazonia are in this time of the spirit, in this integrating force that motivates us to come together, that motivates us to resolve community situations. They say: on hearing that noise, the people who were gathered were perplexed to hear them speaking each in their own language. Amazed, they said, "Are not all these men speaking Galileans? How is it, then, that we hear them, each in our own language in which we were born?"

We know that the mother tongue, the mother tongue of our peoples, is the door that will help us to understand the thought of a people. But, even so, we must take off our shoes, since that is the only way we can learn the language. For, with our sandals and our schemas, we will not arrive with sufficient openness and incarnation to accompany a culture.

Can the different Christian Churches work together??

I think so. In the representation of the image of the corn, we are all one family, a variety of peoples, a diversity of languages, of cosmovisions. Why can we not unite in a braid and fight for life? For the life of the land, for the life of the children of the land.



Santiago Manuín, a leader of the Awajún people, who was one of the strongest in the defence of the Peruvian Amazon, said:

*"The indigenous people's backbone for protecting their territory is the deep conviction of their identity as a people. This principle is achieved by approaching the sacred space through the master plants: they guide the way to wisdom."*

The Achuar people and the original peoples tell us:

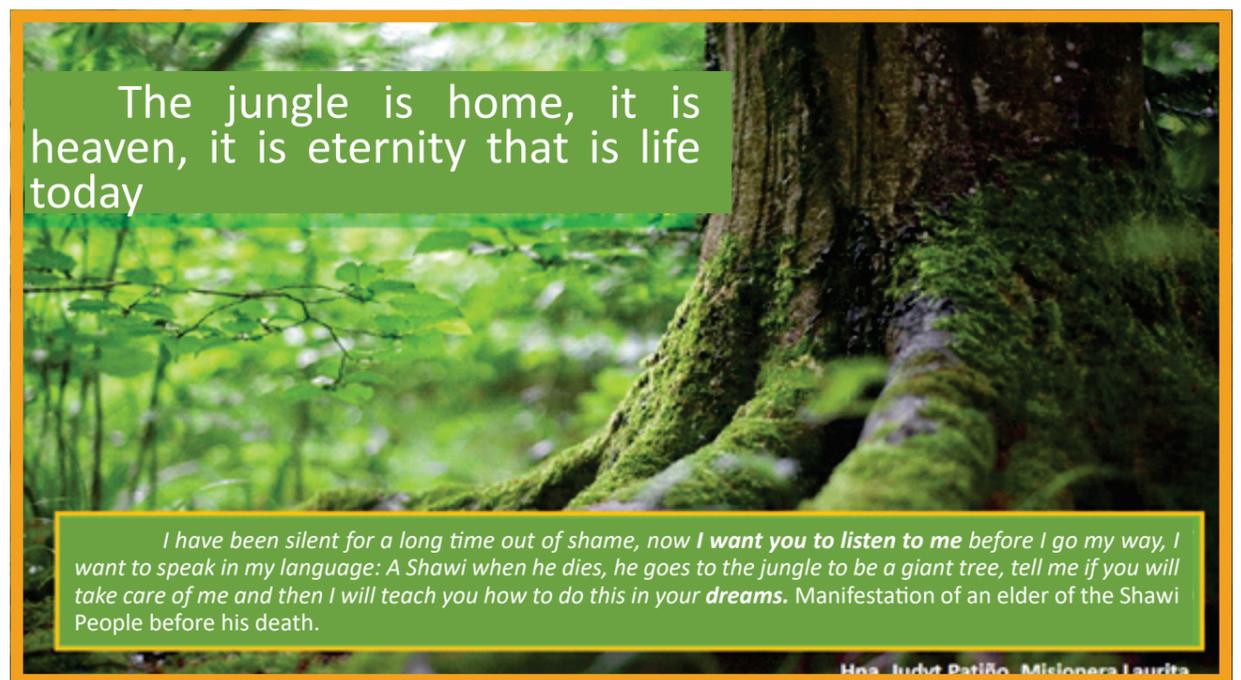
*"The territory is sustained by the spirituality that is found in the oral tradition of their myths and the experience of the rites".*

If Santiago tells us about the identity that sustains the people and about spirituality, I believe that our commitment as the church is to have an identity, the identity of the risen Jesus, the identity of that spirit that is present as a Kairós, as a new event.

As Felipe Terán told us, the previous participant, prophetism, our testimony is to have a profound identity with this God of life who is present in nature and this great territory, in this great Amazonian biome, also Andean and coastal. This testimony should connect us and, sincerely I tell you, if we keep a deep charge of spirituality, we are going to see that the other is no different. In the indigenous peoples there is no such internal discrimination, they assume and see that what strengthens us is what will unite us. Just like the corn "chicha", I think that we can be firm in the defence of our territory and the children of the land, who give their lives for their prophetic testimony of defence and love of the territory.

The last image is an experience with a Shawi elder. *"I have been silent for a long time out of shame, now I want you to listen to me before I go my way, I want to speak in my language"* — and in his language, he told us: *"A Shawi when he dies, he goes to the jungle to be a giant tree, tell me if you will take care of me and then I will teach you how to do this in your dreams."*

I think Shawi has died and probably he is there as a leafy tree. It is our hope, but we know that in the Amazon devastation and logging is huge. Everything is seen as an economic and accumulation diligence. But the indigenous peoples teach us that the trees are adult and mature Shawi that when it died became a tree and stayed there, and will continue to guide future generations in the heart of the jungle, in the heart of



Amazonia. These expressions of the indigenous peoples represent a challenge and a strong source of unity. I believe that the differences are not so important in the face of this common challenge, which this elder of the Shawi people shows us.

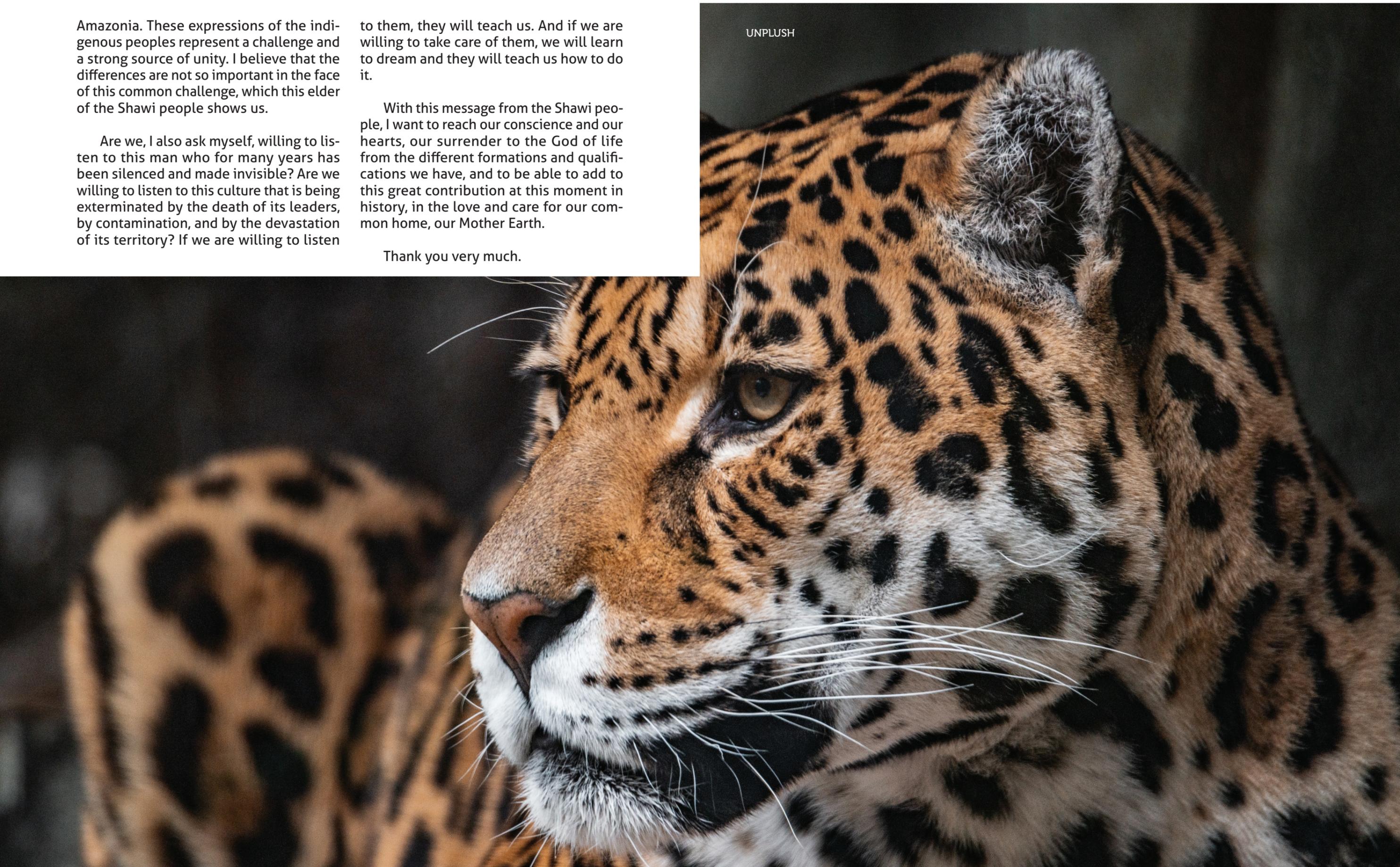
Are we, I also ask myself, willing to listen to this man who for many years has been silenced and made invisible? Are we willing to listen to this culture that is being exterminated by the death of its leaders, by contamination, and by the devastation of its territory? If we are willing to listen

to them, they will teach us. And if we are willing to take care of them, we will learn to dream and they will teach us how to do it.

With this message from the Shawi people, I want to reach our conscience and our hearts, our surrender to the God of life from the different formations and qualifications we have, and to be able to add to this great contribution at this moment in history, in the love and care for our common home, our Mother Earth.

Thank you very much.

UNPLUSH



# UNDERSTANDINGS FROM THE SOUTH AMERICAN ECUMENICAL FORUM

MAGALI CUNHA, PhD in Communication Sciences (University of São Paulo), Researcher at the Institute for Studies of Religion (ISER) and collaborator with the World Council of Churches.



MAGALI CUNHA

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... if the land disappears, the communities disappear.

I am going to share understandings from a research of the South American Ecumenical Forum, of ACT Alianza FESUR, which I coordinated in 2020, and it has to do with what was shared by Bishop Marinéz and Professor Felipe. I am referring to the challenges of confronting fundamentalisms in this context. Fundamentalisms are a worldview based on the idea of the submission of majorities and the supremacy of the white race, which has a conservative and reactionary understanding of the Christian faith. They make a decontextualised and selective biblical reading to justify this worldview. Fundamentalism denies the rights of minorities, especially workers, women, men, traditional commu-

nities, indigenous people, and people of African descent on our continent.

In this sense, fundamentalisms deny the care of the earth, the integrity, and the Creation of God, as Bishop Marinéz says. It brings an anthropocentric vision to the faith, seeing the earth as a place of exploitation and wealth, so it keeps silent in the face of the destruction of the land. The mission of these churches is to convert people, as Professor Felipe said, to proselytize. With this they have also begun to act in a way that threatens the culture of the traditional peoples of indigenous origin that we are especially emphasizing here today, classifying the traditional

peoples and their spirituality as witchcraft, as something demonic, totally ignoring dialogue and inter-religious cooperation.

Conversion to the Christian Faith has always meant the assimilation of white culture, of missionaries to the adoption of their language, their way of dressing, of eating, of forming a family, of relating to them, of living in community, of integrating with the environment, of "doing politics"; always through this fundamentalist understanding of conversion to the Christian faith, always this assimilation of the white culture of the North.

These fundamentalist groups that are in our land, especially in Amazonia, in our spaces in our Latin America, are also Catholic, despite some progress, some advancement in the Catholic Church, and throughout the 20th century. Professor Felipe spoke about this. Several Catholic groups still maintain these fundamentalist practices of claiming conversion, of imposing white culture, and there are many evangelical groups, especially through US missionary agencies.

We have seen during two decades of the 21st century, of the 2000s, that neoliberal policies impose norms for the reconstruction of the state that affect the land, the forests, their inhabitants, the rivers, the seas, the minerals, the air, and reach traditional communities also with the extinction of public policies for the preservation of territories and crops of ancestral cultures. The majority of these communities do not have the minimum conditions to exist, this means the deconstruction of conquered rights, the imposition of deterritorialization to exploit lands historically occupied by agro-industries and mining companies. The determination of integrationism means that these populations have to adhere to this model to be part of society.



DAHIANA-WASZAJ-NMFPZI1TZUO-UNSPLASH

These policies have also been integrated by fundamentalism. In 2000's we have identified the expansion of the activities of fundamentalist groups, some of which are linked to agro-industrial companies, mining companies, logging companies, and real estate speculators who seek to intervene in the territories of these populations and destroy the land and water in pursuit of their economic interests. There is a risk of extinction of traditional peoples, especially now with the pandemic of COVID 19 which has generated impoverishment, poverty, food insecurity, and many deaths of people and land.

To conclude this commentary, FESUR's 2020 research has pointed out possible responses to all this, that Churches and faith-based Religious Organisations can offer responses to this issue, especially calling for responsibility to the land. One element pointed out in the survey is the resumption of critical formation processes, so that Churches and faith-based groups have the opportunity to understand their spirituality, the spirituality of the peoples of Latin America, of the peoples who are on the earth, as Professor Felipe Terán spoke about.

The research also stated that indigenous communities have resistance because of their affection for the land, and the understanding that if the land disappears, the communities disappear.

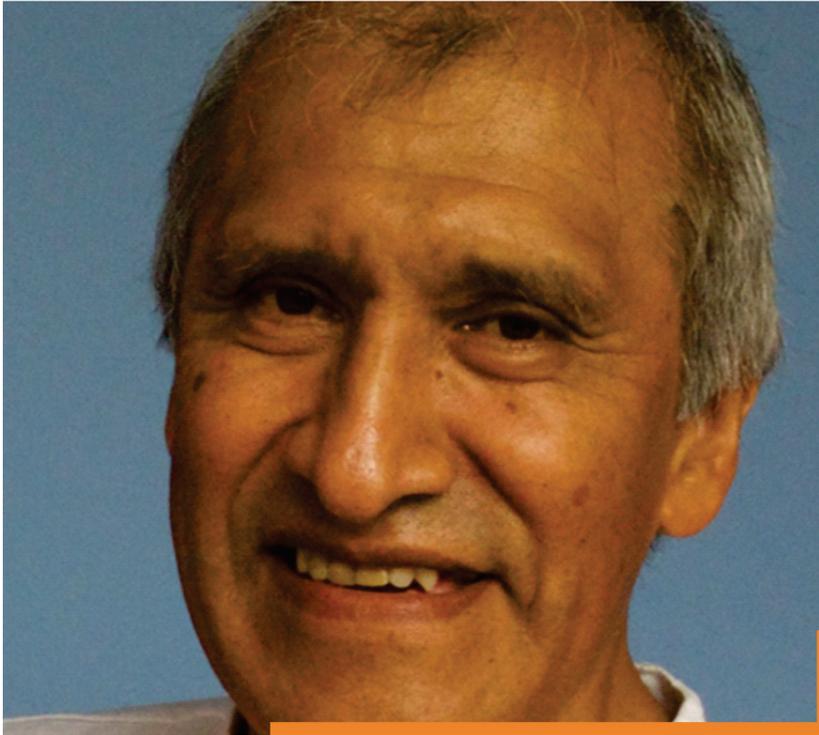
Christian theology and other religions, especially those that think of the new heaven, the new earth, respond to this original religiosity. There is an encounter that fosters the occupation and defence of indigenous territories especially, this must be emphasised, in a critical formation. These elements need to be in this formation process of the religious groups so that especially the Churches that have an attachment to fundamentalism, live a process of conversion of their spirituality.

Finally, it is important to emphasise the theme of food security relating to health in the face of the insecurity imposed by agribusiness and the industrialisation of food. The indigenous experience regarding food is a learning point for us.



LUCIGERMA

# THE IMPORTANCE OF EARTH DAY AND THE ESCAZÚ ACCORD



**EDUARDO SALAS**, *In charge of the Program of the Inter-religious Initiative for Tropical Forests in Peru (IRI— PERU)*

**EDUARDO SALAS**

We are here on this Mother Earth Day, and we would like to remember that we are soil and to see the relationship that we have with this land, with this house, with this planet, with this common space that has been granted to us.

In the Interreligious Initiative for Rainforests in Peru, IRI Peru starts from an important fact: 94% of the population in the country has a religious conviction, and in all religious communities the land is a gift from the Creator. A gift that should be achievable and viable for all generations.

It is clear that, in this task, we must learn from the indigenous peoples who inhabit Amazonia, 53 peoples in the case of Peru, of the harmony they have in living with it without plundering it, without destroying it, and aware that the health of nature is also the health of human beings.

To this end, we have brought together the faith communities with the indigenous peoples, with private enterprise, with local, regional, and national authorities, and with civil society, to put the achievement of a healthy, sustainable, productive, and resilient Amazonia on the national agenda.

We need this dialogue, this meeting, and this approach to feel nature, to live it, and to enjoy it, aware that we are just another element in the beautiful scenario organized by the Creator.

In this third block, we will talk about Indigenous Spirituality and the importance of Mother Earth Day and the Escazú Agreement. For this, we have two presenters: Jocabed Solano, Theologian of the Kuna People of Panama, from the organization Indigenous Memory, and Sofia Chipana, who is a religious and a member of the

Community of Wise Persons and Indigenous Theologians of Abya Yala and the Articulation of Andean Theology and Pastoral Ministry (Peru, Bolivia, Argentina).

So, I am going to invite you to present your reflections based on three questions that we have asked you to bring us closer to the subject:

First question: What foundations of Indigenous Spirituality can be important references for the Churches in the defense of the environment?

Second: What is missing for the churches to recognize Indigenous Spirituality and its relation to the care of the earth and territories?

And finally: What is the importance of the Escazú Accord and Mother Earth Day for the churches?



It is clear that, in this task, we must learn from the indigenous peoples who inhabit Amazonia



GALYNA\_ANDRUSHKO

# WHAT SHOULD WE HEAR FROM **INDIGENOUS PEOPLES?**

**JOCABED SOLANO**, *Directora en Memoria Indígena y misionera en Unidos en Misión (United World Mission)*



**JOCABED SOLANO** Nation: Gunadule — Contry: Panamá

Special greetings to all the sisters and brothers of our beloved ABYA YALA, remembering especially our grandfathers and grandmothers, in the indigenous territories, they are the ones who continue to struggle for the preservation of the identities of our peoples.

I want to begin by sharing some brief impressions around the 3 questions that were proposed to me, with this narrative:

*"I touched it, I felt superior, I could manipulate it to my whims, throw it, trample it. One day, outside the Kuna Dule house, I saw my grandmother staring at me. She called me and said, 'My child, come here, I will tell you a story.' She, with her deep eyes, with her steady hands and her silence, and with respect, said these words to me: 'Everything was a great celebration. Baba*

*and Nana gave life to the flowers, and they moved with life. They embodied our life.*

*When she finished telling me the story, it was no longer possible to see the earth in the same way, I sought it and when I touched it, I saw myself reflected in it; from that day on I knew that the earth is our mother, Nabgwana, the heart of the mother, the heart of the father. We are bound and united to her, as the umbilical cord binds the mother to her children."*

And facing this life experience, told from an account, and listening to the stories of the Guna Dule people about the way a people perceive and conceive cosmogony, and how my people understand the process of the relationship of the Guna Dule people with Mother Earth, I would like to make some proposals:

How is the vision of our world? And, in this case, how is our vision and relationship with Mother Earth? How do we live and understand life?

For the Guna Dule people, this relationship is very close to our spirituality, which we call the Way of God, but which in the Kuna language is: the way of our fathers, our mothers, the Way of the Great Mother, and the Great Father (Babigala anmar daniggid igala). This spirituality that is present in daily living, in our narrative of life — because of the difference that the original peoples propose, the indigenous peoples in ABYA YALA, as the Guna Dule people recognize the American continent — mature land, land of blood, full land— there is a great difference in epistemology, but from the Guna Dule wisdom, we could call the paradigms of the wisdom of Mother Earth, that is: it is not us and the earth, but, we in the earth, because we are part of it.

Grandfather Guna Dule affirmed it by saying: we are not without the earth, that is, we are part



GUNA DULES

of it. It has always been said that where there is a Nabgwana, that is, where Mother Earth is, indigenous peoples, flourish, says a brother called Aristides Turpana from the Kuna people. And what does this mean? The bond that exists between Nabgwana and the life of the Guna Dule, meaning the children of the surface of the earth, is an ontological subject of being and not one of meaning because Nabgwana is the spiritual existence of the indigenous peoples of ABYA YALA, the subjectivity that we are part of it and so many living beings. This spirituality represents a new way of being able to see and live life, that is, from the senses, being part of the body of the earth, and not as people alienated from it.

Moreover, when we think about this approach, we also have to recognise that the life of human beings could not be possible without the land. "I will be nothing without the earth, I will be poor without it," says a Guna grandfather. This wisdom of Mother Earth presents us with a new form of the economy of life that is new to us but is ancestral, yet new to scholars in the social sciences and economics today, but for the indigenous peoples of ABYA YALA, it represents the forms of relations and coexistence with all other living beings.

On the other hand, the recognition of the goodness of Mother Earth, as a form of ethics of the good life, which proposes us a relationship between all living beings to recognize this reciprocity of life and gra-

tuity is present, not only in receiving from Mother Earth but also in giving.

This way of thinking that we emerge from her, that we are part of her, that we are nourished by the land, and that when we die we are cultivated in her, represents the cycle of life. For example, when we understand as Guna Dule people, that at birth we sow our first tree, as a ceremony that covers us all in this cycle of life, and when children are asked, who is your sister tree? They may say the cacao tree, the mango tree, the avocado tree... This family relationship that we precisely recognise as a part of it.

But when we think a little about the Protestant and Catholic Church, what should we recognise and continue to dialogue with and listen to from the indigenous peoples? I want to give some brief implications:

For the Guna Dule people, when it said Nana and Baba, it meant that the Great Mother and the Great Father manifest to Mother Earth, for which the Guna Dule people have over 72 names. Mother Earth is a living being who feels, thinks, renews herself, reflects, suffers, laments, celebrates, generates, believes, dies, and revives. The different names that the Guna Dule people give her speak of the process of change that Mother Earth has experienced. Before human beings existed, Mother Earth already existed. Therefore, her voice and her

memory are the most ancestral about all creation and the human being.

And there are some differences, but also agreements, between Christian Theologies and Indigenous Spiritualities. The revelation from Catholic Theology is a decision of God himself, who on his own initiative, according to his Universal Salvific plan, reveals himself through the interest and love he has for each man and woman throughout history. Of course, we are talking about a tradition that has many theologies, for example, it is only when this self-communication is made known that the revelation of God takes place in the full sense.

God's giving of himself and his revelation are two inseparable aspects of the Jesus event. There are other proposals that we can understand, but when we go to expose a little more of the Guna Dule people in their spirituality, what it represents is that divinity, The Great Mother, and the Great Father reveal themselves on earth and for the earth. So it suggests that the most ancient theologian is Mother Earth, as a teacher and as an ancestor, also as the theological space where human beings can understand and relate to God.

On the other hand, we also think that in this process we recognize that Guna Dule Abyayalense theology suggests that the Great Mother and the Great Father reveal and manifest themselves to and in Mother Earth, is a whole different perspective from the great tradition of Christianity that conceives of creation as a living book that reveals the nature of God. However, here it is affirmed that this deep relationship that human beings have is in relation to Mother Earth.

Finally, to summarise, is that when we understand indigenous spirituality, much is revealed to us and fertilises the theologies of the Christian Church. Without the theology of the earth, of Mother Earth, and



a hermeneutic of the earth, of indigenous peoples, we could not then be fertilized by this millennial wisdom that speaks to us of divinity in Mother Earth.

Now, why the importance of the Escazú Agreement? And with this, I conclude this question.

#### **What is the Escazú Agreement?**

It is the Regional Agreement on access to information, public participation, and access to justice in environmental matters in Latin America and the Caribbean. And, what does all this have to do with what we are presenting? It emphasizes protection and gives tools to people defending human rights in environmental matters.

In ABYA YALA, regrettably, in 2019 they murdered more than 200 activists, and this also has to do with the brothers and sisters

and indigenous and Afro-descendent communities that inhabit this space that we call ABYA YALA. Therefore, for the Escazú Agreement to become effective as of today is also a call, not only an agreement of political incidences but also profoundly spiritual. Thus I conclude, as grandfather Guna Dule would say:

"We are not, we do not live without Mother Earth, because from her we emerge, from her we are feed and cultivated in her. The protection and the right to public policies that take care of human rights defenders is a deeply spiritual repercussion. Therefore, we recognize the importance of spirituality without the dichotomy of political incidence from the policies of the Kuna Dule people and indigenous peoples."



# EXPERIENCES IN THE ANDEAN TERRITORIES

**SOFIA CHIPANA QUISPE**, member of the Communities of Wise Persons and Indigenous Theologians of ABYA YALA, and of the Articulation of Andean Theology and Pastoral—Peru, Bolivia and Argentina.

It is a pleasure to be able to share these paths, in this time and these places, thanks to Jocabed for this wisdom that comes to us from his beloved territories of Gunadule, with which we also connect from the strength of the territorial sense of Abya Yala.

From my site, I will share the experience we have lived in the Andean Territories. Although I am part of several articulations, I bring back the reflections on the sense and feeling of Andean spiritualities, concerning or from the incorporation with other peoples that we have received the "colonizing" name of Indians or indigenous, even if, from our resistances, we feel incorporated in our identity to sustain ourselves as peoples.

In the first meeting that we had as a community of indigenous women, we constituted ourselves as a Community of Theologians, because many of us joined the theological studies; since we are from different church denominations. But as we went along as a community, we saw that the theological studies were becoming limited, since, for our millenary ancestral peoples in Abya Yala, the wise men and women are important because they have the recognition of their communities and, in some peoples, they are called grandfathers and grandmothers because they preserve their knowledge and wisdom.



**SOFIA CHIPANA QUISPE**

Therefore, from this understanding we affirm ourselves as "Community of Wise Persons and Theologians", still using this western name related to theology, however, we move on from the recognition of the ancestral spirituality that passes through our bodies and in the great network of relationships. In turn, it is the vital force that expresses itself in our languages, colours, melodies, dances, festivals, rituals, myths, traditions, flavours, and aromas. Consequently, the spiritualities for the Andean peoples and the other fraternal peoples, is the relationship, in the sense that we conceive ourselves as part of a fabric, of a network of life, that as a human community we are not the centre: we are a thread in this great fabric of life.

// ... we are a thread in that great fabric of life.

Assuming that this whole fabric is interwoven, everything is connected, everything flows in the various reciprocal and complementary relations. So in the Andean context, Ayni is very important because it has to do with these reciprocal relations that seek the harmonisation and balance of all the communities of life, of all these worlds that we see, but also of other worlds that we do not see, but that are and dwell with us on earth — in this cosmos — and that we also inhabit these spaces or these worlds.

Therefore, in these relations, mutual correspondences are established that happen constantly, in a daily way, and which are deeply expressed in the rituals proper to each time and each space. Because it is not just a matter of invoking the sacred forces, but of establishing links, approximations, and relations.

In this sense, our rituals around the Pachamama (Mother Earth) have to do with this dynamic of mutual correspondence. She feeds us and we also feed her. Thus, our rituals seek to re-establish relationships and, in this way, to acquire their meaning to generate harmony and balance.

As we can see, when we share as Andean peoples from our diversity, it is very beautiful to let ourselves be surprised by other ways of seeking to re-establish relations in the experience of exchanges, for each territoriality has its own ways. Sometimes we think that the Andean world is only one, and it is not so. We are many worlds, we feel part of the pluriversal world, not universal (the hegemonic notion of modern western thought), because each population situated in this territoriality called Andean, seeks diverse ways of relating, not only with the sacred but also with other beings that are considered protectors, as well as with everyone that is part of daily life.



Altar of the ilas, protectors of animals



celebration of seeds

I recall that the Collas peoples of Argentina preserve the profound ritual of feeding Pachamama (Mother Earth), that is, preparing a banquet for her in a place of respect, which in Spanish is called "Lugar Sagrado, designado ao sagrado, ao divino" (Holy place, designated for the sacred, the divine). However, for the contexts of the ancestral peoples, these are places of respect. So, in this ritual bond of feeding Pachamama (Mother Earth), these are places considered places of respect, where a very affectionate relationship is generated, asking permission from the grandparents to open what is considered the mouth of the Pacha (earth), to feed and drink her. Therefore, there is a very close bond with this life force, and the same thing happens to other beings.

I am going to read a short communication that Sister Vicenta Mamani offers us in the seed ritual since she is another being that is highly respected and loved. We have various seeds with which we establish a very close relationship of familiarity so that a broad kinship is established with them since they are considered part of the community, the same as the various beings with whom we live. In the ritual proper with the Ispallas, in the Andean context there is a dialogue with them, as we see in Vicenta's relation with the potato seeds:

*Mother Ispalla — which is the spirit of the potato — you quench our thirst and hunger, through you we are people and we have a voice, even to shout, to serve you this coca, I anoint you with this llama tallow so that you are strengthened, so that you are well fecundated, so that you are not afraid in the face of hail and frost, face them with all your strength and courage. Now that you are blossoming, you will dance to the rhythm of the wind of the mountains and the pampas. You know that I am your sister and I will not abandon you, that I will accompany you for-*

*ever. You will return soon, I will wait for you, day and night, making sure that you sleep in the body of Mother Earth.*

So, talking with seeds is not only about guaranteeing food, because this is a discourse that many companies also use, and they have even stolen the patent on our seeds to put them in the hands of companies like MONSANTO, which is the largest, and which, with the discourse of preserving or guaranteeing food, offer their transgenic seeds.

Thus, the dialogue with seeds has to do with food sovereignty and the self-determination of peoples. Food sustains the life of our peoples and our bodies, thus creating the link between body-soil and body-territory, in this way establishing a strong alliance between the bodies. Since we are talking about bodies that have been devastated and alienated and that resist the strength of the cosmic consciousness that returns us to the recognition that we are part of this great network of life relationships. So that, as peoples, we are on this path to recover that which has been expropriated and assaulted, such as our bodies, but also our territories, our identities, and spiritualities.

Based on this bond and the strength that various peoples offer us through the wisdom they preserve, as the Maya people remind us from the memory of the Popol Vuh, that "they have uprooted our fruits, cut our branches and burnt our trunk, but they could not kill our roots", we weave relational spiritualities with the torn and burnt threads, recognising that these spiritualities are interwoven and energise all the dimensions of the life of our peoples.

Therefore, for many peoples in the struggle and defense of territories, their spirituality or our spirituality is KAMASA — which in the Andean world means —



the force that sustains our resistance to the appropriation of life and territories by the great powers, who appropriate them at all costs and criminalize our struggles with the permission of the States in many cases.

This is why some documents are adopted that provide ways to defend the territories of the different peoples in ABYA YALA. For example, clause 169 of the ILO or the document on the rights of indigenous peoples, promulgated in 2007, proposes prior consultation, respect for territories, and self-determination in the communal organization. However, they remain on paper, because many of our States, unfortunately, do not take them on, and when they do, they leave them without effect. Therefore, all our resistance and struggles are often diluted or lost, because there is no support within the States' own institutions.

The most regrettable thing is that the criminalization of our struggles is sustain-

ned by certain colonial religious discourses that are issued by the rulers since spiritual relations pass through the prism of the pantheistic, the superstitious, the syncretic, and the demonic, so they do not understand that many peoples are fighting to protect the Apu from mining, which are the high peaks where the cosmic ancestry of which we are part inhabits.

This lack of understanding is sustained by the binary notions or dualistic spiritualities that Christianity left in the processes of conquest and colonisation, which permeated various spaces and periods because from these perspectives they do not see us as "beings". Therefore, the criminalisation of the struggles of our peoples is justified, because they have to do with the extent of the campaigns of extermination of indigenous peoples, which were undertaken both in the colonial system and in its extension of the "independent" and "democratic" states. This is why many leaders, wise men, and women in the different territories are harassed, persecuted, judicialised, sentenced, and murdered; this criminal system knows who to touch to generate fear.

However, despite the regimes of fear and terror in which capitalism is sustained, our peoples are affirmed in the conviction that each brother and sister who dies unjustly is a seed. A seed that will sprout in the lives of the peoples in fullness. For this reason, those who are on the path of defending territories and lands are a danger, is a thorn in the system's side. Indeed, because by maintaining our resistance they are persecuted and murdered.

Yet the system that takes lives does not know that from our cosmo-experiences we have other configurations of death. We know that we don't disappear, that there is no absence, the physical one, yes, however, there are other forms of life that continue to accompany us. These notions of life do not prevent the cry for justice by many sis-

ters and brothers, because they demand that the names of those who lost their lives before their time, as well as the names of those who murdered them, be given with first and last names. According to the communication received from the peoples, we know that in ABYA YALA, specifically in the territories of Brazil, Peru, Colombia, Honduras, and Mexico, there is a high rate of criminalization and murders of brothers and sisters who defend the land. However, many of these countries did not confirm Escazú's signature, although Mexico gave us some relief at the last minute.

From the articulation of the Andean Theology from Peru, Bolivia, and Argentina, we have been keeping an eye on the process, since Bolivia was one of the first countries to approve the Escazú Agreement. So we have waited and supported the process in some instances, which required the signature of 11 countries to make the Agreement viable. We waited for Peru's confirmation until the end, but it didn't happen, mainly because of the fallacious discourse of the loss of sovereignty of private enterprise in Peru, which monopolises its interests from free trade treaties.

We are very sorry that the Peruvian Congress did not ratify Escazú, but we rejoiced with Argentina, because it is a step towards recognizing indigenous peoples, and the joy was complete with Mexico's signature, which made it possible for Escazú to follow the process for its effectiveness. Although I am concerned about the countries that have not signed, at the same time I am convinced that the solidary incorporation of the peoples will transcend borders. However, we cannot ignore the opposition that assails us, because the powers that be take over life are very strong.

I conclude with the invitation to the Churches to awaken to a cosmic consciousness, which has to do with changing certain traditions, dogmas, doctrines, and theologies that still sustain the anthropocentric

and androcentric notion. This will undoubtedly lead to overcoming this dualistic spirituality that separates good and evil, the sacred and the profane; since realities are complex and, in the cyclical dynamics of life, interrelationships are established through which all forces flow. Therefore, the commitment of the human community corresponding with other communities of life and as part of the Network of Life must provide balance and harmony in the face of human forces that cause disharmony and imbalance.

In this sense, it is important to consider that the human being is not positioned as administrator or as the centre, but in the recognition that he/she is a son and daughter of the earth, therefore, he/she is the earth that walks, the earth that feels, the earth that sings, related to other beings. From these ways of understanding life, Christianity in the peoples of ABYA YALA is called to establish alliances, for some peoples say: "in the face of any persecution and threats that we experience, we seek allies". Therefore, the approach of the Churches would have to do precisely with this: how to establish alliances for a full life, a good life.



PIXABAY

# THE SPIRITUALITY OF HARAKBUT

**YESICA PATIACHI TAYORI**, Bilingual teacher of Harakabut in Madre de Dios, Peru, member of the Indigenous Pastoral of the Apostolic Vicariate of Puerto Maldonado. Councillor of REPAM



// So, in order for all this to be respected, to be manifested, obviously, it must not only remain good intentions, but legal actions must be taken.

**YESICA PATIACHI TAYORI**

More than anything, I want to share with you how to understand the spiritualities of indigenous peoples in the face of the Western world. For example, in my people, there is no specific deity to worship, but our grandparents always told us that the moment there was a great catastrophe, a tree saved us — the ANAMEI tree, the tree of salvation. So we have as a reference this great tree that saved us and from which we are descendants. And as descendants of ANAMEI, the tree of life, our surroundings manifest themselves in this fabric that mentioned the sister.

In our people, for example, there exists in the world, the aquatic world and the Wäwëri, Kurudneri world that we call

the world of those who dwell in the sky because in these worlds dwell beings that we must respect. We would say those who inhabit or beings who are in the same woods, beings who have ceased to live, those who have gone to another life, hence the WANDARI, which is where we interact every day. When we die, there is neither hell nor heaven. On the contrary, when we die it is as if we were changing skin and passing into another dimension where the jungle still exists and is still full of vegetation. In other words, it is a continuation beyond what we are living today, beyond what our grandparents left us.

In this way, everything has a connection with the Wanökiren, the spiritual

world is interconnected with the physical world and it is with them that we interact every day. Obviously, the jungle and everything that surrounds us welcomes us, and so in our way of seeing the world, we must protect it, because we inhabit it and feed off it. This remains very present in my people because we believe that animals, too, were once people. They even sacrificed their lives and became trees, and for this reason, I replied to a sister who said that in her people, when an elder dies, his spirit leaves.

It is practically the same with us, even if it is in an animal or goes to another world, but the spirit does not disappear. We believe that "when I die, my spirit will transform into a soul or any being of the jungle, it can transform into a tree or manifest in the world of water". Therefore, we must take care of these worlds.

This respect enables us to connect with these worlds. But there is also a way of having this respect in body painting. For example, when you paint yourself with urucum or with jenipapo and you enter the jungle which is the world of the Numberi, where all the beings are, the trees and other spirits that rest there, then the body painting, having this jenipapo on the skin, is like a passport, which you need to travel to another country and to get it you have to present a series of documents. So it is with us, our body painting with jenipapo is telling these beings that we are not evil beings, on the contrary, that we are brothers.

It is these connections that allow us to be in balance with nature. The woman has an important role in this whole process, as the other sisters also mentioned because the care of the seeds belongs specifically to the woman. The Amazonian indigenous person never cultivates a single product on his land. If he clears a certain space for his cultivation, then he will have several things next to each other: he will have bananas,

sweet potatoes, peanuts.... everything in a perfect balance. This mixture of different products sown makes it so that there are no pests, for example, so that we can find everything there: fruits, tubers, etc.

When we talk about these things, many people think: "oh no, they are superstitious, those are their beliefs". They minimise the way we see the world, they don't respect it. I feel that this is even a lack of respect for our people as if there was only one spirituality that should crush the others.

Does this mean that what I believe and feel is not valid? This is a mistake because it would mean accepting that what comes from outside is better than what we have. This should make us think! I believe that this way that we have of understanding the world, this communication, this link, this fabric that we have with the worlds, leads us to have respect for our space, our creation, and our common home. Would they come in here to destroy the churches because they have a different structure? So we must ask them to respect our spiritual structure too, because throughout history, unfortunately, this has not been the case.

But I am happy that at this point in my life, I see this movement that accepts the possibility of other structures and other ways of seeing the world. What would become of the world if we were all the same? If we were all blond there wouldn't be this mixture, there wouldn't be this diversity of people. The same thing happens with spiritualities, even when we go to school, I remember very well when they used to ask "What is water?" and then say that "water is an inert being, it has no life". For me, water has another meaning, and I am sure that for other indigenous peoples water is life, water is an extra being, an extra sister. This has another connotation, which is not limited to this school teaching that water has no life, that it only belongs to you. This is a total lack of knowledge.

So are plants and trees. Some people understand that trees are only good for making wood and firewood. For us they are another living being, they are like our sisters. For example, understanding that human beings at a certain moment become animals means that the Harakbut people, who respect this spirituality, do not hunt the same animals every year. It is necessary to respect their reproduction and mating seasons because there has to be this balance. If this balance is disturbed, obviously this species runs the risk of becoming extinct.

Because of this respect and balance, we already know that a certain animal can only be killed during the fattening season and so on, and it varies all the time because you can't kill any animal at any time of the year. Nature is perfect because everything is in harmony.

So, for all of this to be respected, we need to go beyond good intentions. We need to take legal actions, such as the Escazú Agreement. We need to secure those ecosystems that remain alive, because as we know, for large extractive companies or personal or national interests, the Amazon and the Andean Regions are seen only as a pantry, where they can be plundered without respecting the spirituality and lifestyle of the native peoples.

It is believed that the famous development comes like this, "development" in inverted commas because it only brings destruction. Therefore, when nature is not respected, as a consequence of what we are currently seeing happens, the pandemic. They bleed their own mother, the earth, they deplete, they drill. It is obvious that Mother Earth cries out in pain and will react because she feels because she lives. We say that when the earth screams and cries, heaven hears her and also cries, and this is why we see heavy rains because heaven is in solidarity with and feels the pain of the earth.



That is why we see heavy rains because the sky is in solidarity with and feels the pain of the earth. Thus, little by little, Mother Earth is denigrating, showing her deep wounds, screaming and crying, and so the sky also feels this pain and begins to cry. And in this way, everyone interacts and we ask ourselves: What happens? Here we have a clear sample which is the epidemic. So it is important to take care of our surroundings, the earth, and the forests.

This is what I wanted to express and share with you. I am very happy to be able to listen and share, every day you learn more. Today I have already had another presentation and now this one. I am very happy to be accompanied by great women with different spiritualities, but with only one common objective: that we have to take care of and protect our Mother, which is the Earth.

NEJRON

# THE CONTINUING STRUGGLE FOR THE ESCAZÚ AGREEMENT

JAVIER JAHNCKE, *National Coordinator of the Churches and Mining Network in Peru*



JAVIER JAHNCKE

It is a privilege to be the only man in this seminar, therefore, grateful to share today with the companions, to listen to so much wisdom that commits us to continue receiving and sharing. Jocabel, when collecting the memories of her people, said that we are nothing without the earth and when we die we are cultivated by it, that we are part of the cycle of life where we die and live together. In the same logic, she spoke of the continuity of life in other forms linked to nature itself. Sofia spoke of this direct relationship of feeding in the mouth of the Pacha (Earth). And then I remembered our companion, Sister Yolanda Flores of the Aymara people, from the South Andean Peru, when she spoke about the space of the Churches, Peru and Mining. We are also part of this Episcopal

// we live in an economic system centered on the God Money that plunders nature

Commission for social action. She told us that to make furrows in the earth, you have to ask permission from Pacha, you have to consider the wind, talk to the potato, the earth, dialogue with it so that it allows the product to grow. That is why the defence of the earth is fundamental, of which we are all part, and that it is fundamental to understand that everything is connected in this perspective of the Common Home.

However, we live in an economic system centered on the God Money that plunders nature, that maintains a frenetic rhythm of consumption that is inherent to it. We are here with our little phones, that because of connectivity we are obliged to use and that we insist on consuming, but with these devices, there are minerals and metal parts that are linked to the need for more consumption of our ecosystems, of the spaces in which our ancestral peoples lived.

From this demand that this model proposes to us, to continue consuming, to continue tracing highways, diverting rivers, and destroying vegetation, where are our

peoples, where is our Common Home in which everything is connected? It is part of every experience that in reality we still maintain part of our incoherence. That is why the Accra<sup>1</sup> Confession proposed precisely this requirement to call the Churches to listen to the cry of the people who suffer and see these wounds caused to Nature, which are also wounds caused to ourselves, because of the logic of this unfair system that is defended even by the armed forces, the police, and criminalization, as Sofia reminded us.

The Escazú Agreement, which we remember today, unfortunately, has not been ratified by Peru, because of this, we emphasise the need to turn our gaze towards the integration of everything. The world presents us with the need to see that everything is connected, that we are all part of one great Nature, of one great creation. This perspective is fundamental, the logic of conversion: to become one single creation, this is what our peoples are calling today. We remember today our ancestral peoples, their struggles for their territories, and the need to understand that this is the way also for our Church spaces; It is not that of the Theology of Prosperity that proposes the theory of taking advantage of natural resources, of financial well-being, that we should take advantage of what is given to us, because we are going to benefit from the creation of wealth and we are going to feel better as human beings, that

<sup>1</sup> The Accra Confession was adopted by delegates of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) at its 24th General Council in Accra, Ghana (2004), based on the theological conviction that the economic and environmental injustices of today's global economy require the Reformed family to respond to them as a matter of faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Accra Confession invites Reformed Christians around the world to address injustices in the world as an integral part of the witness and mission of their churches. Source: : <https://bityli.com/keuQ1> (Accessed: 02/07/2021).

anthropocentrism should be at the centre and above the situation of our ancestral peoples, of our Common Home.

I reject any theology that affirms that human interests must impose themselves on Nature. We should propose to our Churches — Catholic, Evangelical, and Christian — this perspective of what was mentioned in the first presentation, that we should exercise a concrete prophetic role, of a Church that goes out concretely, but that is based on concrete foundations, of a theology of the soil, as was mentioned before, but with an ancestral conception that is born from the logic of our people and that respects the logic of our peoples. Several theologians have spoken about this— I am not a theologian, I am a lawyer by profession— but the link with the spaces of the peoples, working for more than twenty years accompanying processes, lead me precisely to understand these perspectives of a need to work the theology of the soil, as Monsignor Dufain mentioned in the Integral Human Development Moment when he saw that the subject of the need to visualise the logic of land, starting from our peoples and must relate it to the vision of the Promised Land, of the land as a memory portrayed in ancestral security that intersects with the Covenant of the biblical text. This is the logic of our peoples: the ancestral memory and experience, life as part of the land, assuming itself as being part of the land. And this implies that the human being is not the centre, not anthropocentrism, but the centre is the community together and this is the logic to move forward.

The theologian Sandro Gallazi recalled that in the biblical text the conflict was the centre and it is on earth where conflict always takes place. And that's where I go back to the Promised Land, to the Holy Land, with God always putting himself on the side of the poor and saying "In this, there is no discussion, in this, there is no

negotiation". Therefore, we need to revise, a constant reform of our ecclesial spaces to advance in this logic that the centre of Christian ethics is the community.

The Amazon Synod was proposed precisely in this perspective, trying to advance in this logic, and despite the many difficulties and with all the inconsistencies that there will certainly be, but in the logic of seeking this relationship of the land and how to live with it, being participants in this process of revision with it. And it is in this process of revision and ecological conversion that I want to end by presenting the theme of the Regional Agreement on Information, Participation, and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters, which is the Escazú Agreement. And here I will speak a little more as a lawyer and as one who follows processes. I believe that it is central to oppose any economic injustice. The Agreement restores the need for our peoples to be recognised and for their rights to be fulfilled. But these issues were perceived as being against Peru's sovereignty when the centre was precisely the people.

So I conclude by saying that mechanisms like these are essential. Now that the Agreement is coming into force, let us not forget the countries that have not ratified the Agreement. We are once again in an electoral campaign in Peru, we are in a difficult situation, and in this sense, it is important that we rescue this ancestral knowledge of our people, its processes, its rights, and its ways of life, that it is recognised and recovered in society. Just like the Escazú Agreement, which we are seeking to legitimize in Peru, just like the Accra Confession, what has always been fundamental for us is this call to oppose any economic injustice and the destruction of Creation. In this perspective, what the Escazú Agreement proposes is to recover

and recognise the identity of our peoples, and that their rights are recognised, that there is effective respect for the logic of their relationship with their territories and access to their natural resources. And that in the defence of their territories, in the logic of this joint evidence for the defence of nature and considering themselves part of nature, that these people who are defenders of the environment are given guarantees for their lives. In Peru, there is impunity for this type of crime. This year 7 people were murdered because they were defending their territories. There are no official guarantees of security so that people can carry out their activities and have their rights recognized in the face of a conflict situation.

From Peru, we salute the countries that have ratified the Escazú Agreement. In our country— I join the compañeras from Peru who are present— this Agreement has not been ratified. There has been a campaign against the ratification of the Agreement by economic interests and by Congress.

GALYNA\_ANDRUSHKO

# JORGE ARBOCCÓ

We lead us in a special prayer. The author is our companion from the Kuna People of Panama, Jocabed Solano. Let us pray with this poetry. It is important to remember this wonderful day that is the Mother Earth Day, and so we pray:

Poetry Mother Earth

Mother Earth, mistress who teaches us how to live.

She shows us the path of divinity.

Mother Earth, oldest kin, memory of all living beings.

She tells us about the goodness of God.

Mother Earth, theologian, who reveals to us God's love for Creation.

Shalom for all Creation.

Mother Earth, place where we meet with God.

We join this cry in this collective dance.

The circle of life.

We ask forgiveness from the God of life, we ask forgiveness from the Earth.

We, your daughters and sons, have violated you.

We have violated ourselves.

As we suck your blood, our hands are filled with pain.

We pray that you give us wisdom.

That we may learn from Mother Earth.

To live in communion with all living beings.

Have mercy on us.

Help us to join in your collective dance around the fire, when we see the water.

And feel with the wind your words with all our senses.

Renew us, Jesus, to live with the first vocation of being loved.

And cultivators of the goodness of the earth.

That we may enter into the experience of good living.

Remembering that we are daughters and sons of the earth.

First memory of Our Mother with us.

United to you, beloved God.

Amen!

JKRAFT5

PIXABAY

# SHEILA TANAKA

This brings us to the end of our meeting, and on behalf of all the organizations that convened it, I would like to thank everyone who participated, everyone who listened to us here, I believe that it has been very inspiring and challenging evening.

All of us, as brothers and sisters from Civil Society Organizations and Faith-based organizations, have seen that we have many common challenges in our Region, for the defense of nature, for the protection of defenders, and the protection of territories, but we also have many paths in common. We will walk together towards a society in which spiritualities are respected and human beings see themselves as integrated, as part of Mother Earth, and as part of wisdom. That is why we would like this dialogue not to stop here.

It was not only an inspiring evening, but that we can continue this dialogue together, I believe that each one of us still has much to reflect on what we have heard here from all the exhibitions.

So on behalf of Koinonia, on behalf of Peace and Hope Peru, the Interfaith Initiative for tropical forests, Indigenous Memory, ISEAT and Renew Our World, I would like to thank all the speakers, exhibitors, and commentators, thank you very much for the dialogue and the openness of all who listened to us, we continue together in our struggle in Latin America, for the defense of Mother Earth and Latin American Peoples.

Thank you very much and good night!

Greetings and thanks from all exhibitors, commentators, moderators, and other event participants.



## ABOUT ORGANIZATIONS

### INICIATIVA INTERRELIGIOSA PARA LOS BOSQUES TROPICALES EN EL PERÚ — IRI PERU

The Interfaith Initiative for Tropical Forests in Peru is a platform that brings together the religions present in the country united in the defense of the forests and the people who inhabit them.

In our country 94% of the population professes a faith and has in common the paradigm of care: care for human beings and care for nature, since creation is a gift from the Creator. Forests occupy more than 60% of the national territory and to them we owe the water for the whole country, they contribute to the health of the planet, they have an immense biodiversity and 53 indigenous peoples live in it and have taught us to live in balance with the forests.

Our concern is to make it possible for us to live in harmony with our Amazon, without depredate it, without harming it, because the health of the forests is also our health.

IRI Peru was launched in December 2018 with a broad participation of diverse actors: ministers of state, religious leaders, indigenous, NGO, social organizations and academia. Since then IRI Peru is recognized as a social and political actor as a defender of forests and the peoples who inhabit them.

We participate in the large network of institutions and people concerned about

the environment and working to care for the planet. We are present in various spaces where issues related to forests are discussed: the congress of the republic, regional governments, municipalities, among others.

We have formed the Pact for the Amazon, which is a great alliance that links indigenous peoples, faith communities, the State, businessmen and NGOs in a space for dialogue to put the construction of a healthy, sustainable, productive and resilient Amazon on the national agenda.

Additionally, we are present in several regions of our Amazon where we have formed 10 local IRI spaces in cities of the Peruvian Amazon. Participating in these IRIs are the faith communities present in each locality, such as the Catholic, Evangelical, Adventist, Jesus Christ, Islamic, Jewish, Baha'i, Brahma Kumaris.

<http://www.interfaithrainforest.org/>



### MEMORIA INDÍGENA

Memoria Indígena is a project that aims to record, compile, write and publish all possible stories and testimonies that speak of the emergence and life of the indigenous/autochthonous/native Christian faith communities of Abya Yala. The main focus lies in the production of biographical materials, stories of faith communities, testimonies and accounts of historical events that have played a significant role in the processes of conformation and life of the Christian churches in the indigenous context.

With this we wish to transcend the formalized dynamics of the churches to contribute and remember the stories of the leaders of our peoples and nations who have struggled and persevered, some becoming martyrs, without whose work the existence and permanence of numerous communities of faith in Jesus Christ throughout Abya Yala would not have been possible.

<https://memoriaindigena.org/>



# PAZ Y ESPERANZA

We are an organization that works with the poor in Peru, so that they can be free from different forms of violence and injustice.

Paz y Esperanza is a human rights organization, inspired by Christian principles and values, born in Peru in 1996 and has now become a fellowship of independent organizations in Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador, with sister organizations in the United States of America and the United Kingdom.

We are united by the same mission, principles, values and commitment to make it possible for individuals, families and communities to live in dignity, to obtain justice and to be actors in their own development.

We are a team of Peruvian professionals that encourages volunteerism from people all over the world.

We promote democratic institutions and the exercise of rights of populations in vulnerable situations, through capacity building, citizen participation, public policy advocacy and generation of opportunities in the Amazon, Andean zone and Peruvian coast.

We serve children and women who are victims of violence, indigenous peoples, communities living in extreme poverty, migrants, displaced persons, unjustly imprisoned people, people with disabilities, families and communities whose rights have been or are threatened by the actions of civilians, government authorities, people or groups with power that threaten the environment.

<https://www.pazyesperanza.org/pe/>



## EL INSTITUTO SUPERIOR ECUMÉNICO ANDINO DE TEOLOGÍA (ISEAT)

The Higher Ecumenical Andean Institute of Theology (ISEAT) is a center of academic, theological and pastoral formation at the service of churches and social movements in Bolivia and the Andean region.

Our work aims to strengthen the work of churches, social development institutions and social organizations. Our programs and initiatives respond to the demands of theological, religious and social formation of our brothers and sisters in faith.

<http://www.iseatbolivia.org/>



# RENOVEMOS NUESTRO MUNDO

Renovemos Nuestro Mundo is a global movement of Christians who believe that because we are truly made in the image and likeness of God, we must act in the same way, demonstrating love for our neighbors in action and in truth.

Our vision is to achieve a world in which the basic needs of all people are met and in which they have the opportunity to develop to their full potential; we care about creation and reducing inequality between rich and poor. Through national campaigns, in combination with global campaigns, we are building a global movement of Christians who pray, live and campaign to make this a more just and sustainable world.

<https://renewourworld.net/>



# KOINONIA

KOINONIA Ecumenical Presence and Service is a Brazilian ecumenical organization with national and international work, funded in 1994 and composed by people of different religious traditions, gathered in civil association. KOINONIA's mission is to mobilize ecumenical solidarity and services to historical and culturally vulnerable groups and promote the ecumenical movement and its egalitarian values. The initiative Ecumenical and interreligious dialogue for the Amazon is coordinated by KOINONIA and the Regional Ecumenical Advisory and Service Center (CREAS). It aims to strengthen ecumenical initiatives for human dignity in Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia and Peru, promoting shared analysis and joint actions.

<https://kn.org.br/>





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