



Intervention on Chapter I Part II of *Instrumentum Laboris*
on
Integral Ecology

Your Holiness, Your Eminences & Excellencies, Rev. Fathers, Brothers & Sisters,

I wish to reflect on the content of Chapter I of Part II of the *Instrumentum Laboris*, which focuses on integral ecology.

First of all, I commend the decision of the Holy Father to convoke this Synod on the Amazon. It could not be more timely. One might even say that it should have been done much earlier, considering the fact that one of the greatest enemies of our planet is *climate change*. It is a reality which affects every section of the globe; some more adversely than others.

For example, I come from the small Caribbean island of Dominica. In September 2017 we were devastated by Hurricane Maria. Now Dominica is regarded as the Nature Island of the Caribbean because of its greenery and its rivers. In just a matter of hours the island had lost all that greenery along with houses and property. Fortunately, with the resilience of nature, the island is green again. Last year, 2018 and this year too we have had threats of hurricanes.

The Bahamas was the unfortunate victim in this cycle. The mere intensity of the recent cyclones, to my mind, is indicative of the effect of changes in the *climate*, for which we, human beings, are greatly responsible.

There is a not-too-positive saying in the Caribbean which describes the socio-cultural influence of the United States on the region. It says: “*Whenever the United States sneezes we catch the cold.*” We can use a similar phrase to describe the importance of the Amazon and Congo Basin in the economy of today’s climate. I would put it like this: “*If the Amazon and the Congo Basin stop breathing, the rest of the world suffocates.*” This is most aptly reflected in Paragraph 54 of the *Instrumentum Laboris*, which tells us:

“The massive falling of trees, the extermination of the tropical forest by intentional forest fires, the expansion of agricultural frontier and monocultures are the cause of the current regional climate imbalances, with obvious effects on the global climate, with planetary dimensions such as great droughts and increasingly frequent floods” (and I would add hurricanes and Typhoons). In Paragraph 38 of *Luadato Si* Pope Francis refers to the Amazon and Congo basins as “*the lung of the planet,*” understanding the urgency of protecting them.

However, I believe that after this Synod, notwithstanding all the pastoral issues to be dealt with, and which are deemed urgent, what is most important is the practical steps that will be taken to combat this reality called *climate change*. The *Instrumentum Laboris* is correct when, after

enumerating in Paragraph 46 all the abuses present in the Amazon region, says: “Today ... we have to realize that a true ecological approach *always* becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment so as to hear the *cry of the earth and the cry of the poor*” (LS 49). This is what the Holy Father calls integral ecology.

Truthfully, it is not a responsibility only of the Amazon but the entire world. In little Dominica, for example, following Hurricane Maria in 2017, the Government introduced a “*National Resilience Development Strategy*” to be realized by 2030. It aims at *Building the World’s First Climate Resilient Country* viewing it as *Our Collective Responsibility.*” It may be regarded as a tall order but it is a conscious effort.

In its introduction, the working document states: “In confronting the task of developing the Dominican economy and people from the visible destabilising and horrendous effects of climate change and economic driven shocks, it is not business as usual. Instead, there is a dire need for a collective response in which each citizen is willing to contribute to the rehabilitation and reconstruction of this country with a focus to build back better and more resilient, thereby providing an opportunity for each citizen to be an active participant in and reaping the benefits of a more modern, peaceful and prosperous Dominica.”

The operative phrase in this text here is “*collective response.*” It is clear that the salvation of our planet is in

the hands of all of us - from the smallest to the greatest. Our Holy Father has put it well in his Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si* when points to the fact that the ecological challenge is in reality *Caring for our Common Home*. In this regard, therefore, the way forward for any positive consequence cannot but be the integral approach.

I thank you.