



3rd Sunday of Advent





CULTURAL DREAM: EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENT

*“I dream of an Amazon region
that can preserve its distinctive
cultural riches, where the beauty
of our humanity shines forth in
so many varied ways.”*

Papa Francisco



Contemplate

Entre las complejidades del territorioAmong the complexities of the Amazonian territory, we highlight the fragility of education, especially among indigenous peoples. Although education is a human right, the quality of education is poor and school dropout rates are high, especially among girls. Education evangelizes, promotes social transformation, empowering people with a holy critical sense. "A good school education at an early age lays seeds that can produce lifelong effects" (LS 213). It is our task to promote an education for solidarity, based on the awareness of a common origin and a future shared by all.(cf. LS 202) [...]

Promoting education in a culturally and linguistically diverse context, marked by ongoing struggles for recognition and visibility, is a great challenge that the educational mission of the Apostolic Vicariate of Puerto Maldonado (VAPM) has taken on since its inception. For many years, the schools run by the Dominicans operated independently, until in 1953, with RM N° 11466-1953-ED, the Ministry of Education authorized their operation as "Grupo Móvil de Educación Fundamental de la Selva" (Mobile Group of Fundamental Education of the Jungle). Later, with RS N° 0123-1971-ED, it was called "Red Escolar de la Selva del Sur-Oriente Peruano" (RESSOP).

The RESSOP serves more than 4300 students from 45 native communities, primarily Amazonian communities that are difficult to access due to their dispersion and demographics, historically excluded and impoverished, in which 81 educational institutions operate, grouped into three sub-networks: Madre de Dios (Tambopata and Manu), Cusco (La Convención) and Ucayali (Atalaya). Through an agreement between the Ministry of Education and VAPM/RESSOP, the Church joins efforts to promote intercultural and bilingual education; however, the challenges are pressing and limit the respect and full exercise of education as a fundamental right. The educational path of students in RESSOP schools is complex and incomplete, due to structural problems in the educational environment and the difficulties faced by RESSOP's management due to scarce human and financial resources. RESSOP has been establishing all possible articulation alliances at the territorial, national and global levels to ensure the sustainability of the educational project, and to make it possible to make the budget feasible to strengthen the management of the coordination and pedagogical accompaniment of the Network. It also joins the processes of civil society to demand that governments move towards quality education, ensuring the implementation of relevant public, intercultural and bilingual education.



Contemplate



PUAM was born as a response to the educational, cultural, social and ecological challenges in the Amazonian territory, it articulates and generates higher education processes with an intercultural approach, from the territorial proximity to the peripheries, attending to the educational challenges present in the peoples of the Pan Amazonian region; "... it assumes a liberating, itinerant, popular and dynamic pedagogy that is based on close, permanent and active listening to and with the identified priority individuals. In this way, the educational offer will be able to add existing processes and experiences, and thus respond more effectively to the needs and urgencies identified by the communities in order to develop emerging and transformative proposals.

The constitution of REPAM (Ecclesial Network of the Pan-Amazonia) and CEAMA (Ecclesial Conference of the Amazon) is making possible the construction of common commitments, generating diverse processes of articulation within the Church, contributing to a global view of the Amazonia as a whole, as a great biome, a great territory without borders. RESSOP participates in synodality of the various efforts from the educational field in an intercultural perspective, and of strengthening for a greater impact and interaction with territorial public policies. By the year 2024, the Amazon University Program (PUAM) has taken on the challenge of implementing a community learning center, which has been establishing strategic alliances with institutions of academic trajectory and positioning to accredit and certify its higher technical education programs.



As Dominican Family we are called to live this Amazonian and universal ecclesial itinerary as a transforming force of profound witness of synodality, renewed commitment and solidarity, to join efforts and possibilities of collaboration that make possible the attention to the formative needs of young students and women of native peoples who yearn to access opportunities of a higher technical education such as PUAM, favoring intercultural education experiences from the contribution of their own contexts and community processes.

Dominican Friars - Puerto Maldonado Vicariate

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Do not quench your spirit, do not reject the gift of prophecy, but rather, test everything and hold on to what is good" (1Thess 5:16-24).

On this Third Sunday of Advent, the readings invite us to keep the fire of the spirit burning and to cultivate the gift of prophecy. We have been anointed, the first reading reminds us, "to bring the Gospel to those who suffer, to bandage the brokenhearted..." (cf. Is 61:1-11). This spirit should not be quenched in our mission but should encourage us to exercise it as did the prophets, and especially as did the Lord's precursor, John the Baptist, who identified himself as the voice of God crying out in the wilderness, inviting us to approach God by practicing conversion. Today, applying the mission of the Order, we can say with great joy: I am the voice that cries out in the Amazonia.



This Sunday we want to apply the message of God's word to one of the cries in the Amazonia: to the cries of the "Indigenous Peoples in Isolation and Initial Contact".



In this era of communications, it is incredible to think that today there could be peoples in the Amazonia that remain disconnected from the rest of humanity. These are families belonging to native Amazonian peoples, who after massacres in the Amazonia during the rubber boom (late nineteenth century, early twentieth century) isolated themselves in remote areas of the Amazon forest, and opted for isolation as a way of life, precisely to protect themselves from slavery and death.



A century later, their descendants have internalized this way of life, surviving in total symbiosis with the forest and maintaining no contact or very sporadic contact with the rest of the indigenous or national society. We refer to them as Indigenous Peoples in Isolation and Initial Contact (PIACI). And it is regrettable that, at this point in time, they continue to suffer harassment and threats to their territories and their lives.

Pope Francis affirmed that "the native Amazonian peoples have probably never been so threatened in their territories as they are now". (Francis, Meeting with the peoples of the Amazonia, Puerto Maldonado, January 19th, 2018).





It seems unbelievable, but the mercantilist interests in the Amazonia, in their eagerness to open the extractivist frontier, either deny their existence, making them invisible so that they can enter their territories without anyone or anything to stop them, or simply elude the right of these peoples to possess an intangible territory where no one bothers them and where they can live in peace as forest societies in the way and conditions in which they have always done so.

While it is true that they should also be respected when they want to establish relations with the world around them, it is only fair that those who had to choose captivity to live in freedom should not be run over again by a society that destroys them and sweeps away their dignity. The Pope calls on us: "Continue to defend these most vulnerable brothers and sisters. Their presence reminds us that we cannot dispose of common goods at the pace of greed and consumption. There must be limits that help us to preserve ourselves from any attempt of massive habitat destruction that we are part of".

It would seem that the Amazonia and the lives of these peoples have nothing to do with us. We might even be tempted to ask ourselves, are we the guardians of these peoples, without realizing that this is the same question that Cain asked God after the murder of Abel (Gen 4:9). The encyclical letter *Laudato Sí* reminded us that "everything is interconnected". Our lifestyles and exaggerated consumption rhythms end up having repercussions on the overexploitation of resources and the pressure on the territories and the lives of these peoples. For this reason, the call to ecological conversion already made by St. John Paul II and recalled by Pope Francis in *Laudato Sí*, is an imperative that obliges us to review our consumption habits, seeking greater respect for the life of others. "It is always possible to redevelop the capacity to go out of oneself towards the other. Without it, other creatures are not recognized in their own value, there is no interest in taking care of something for others, there is no ability to set limits to avoid suffering or the deterioration of what surrounds us... When we are able to overcome individualism, an alternative lifestyle can really develop and a major change in society becomes possible." (LS 208). In a world where everything is interrelated, we must be confident that a change in my lifestyle can have a positive impact, significantly reducing the pressure on the environment, the Amazon and these peoples.

We are in the time of Advent, which is favorable to prepare our hearts for a God who is coming to meet us. Bartolomé de Las Casas narrated that in 1511, on the fourth Sunday of Advent, Friar Antón de Montesinos, on the island of Hispaniola, called for the conversion of those who, numb in their conscience, committed serious attacks against life and, therefore, against God. To the invaders and exploiters on the island of Hispaniola, he asked: "Are they not people? Do they not have rational souls? Are you not obliged to love them as yourselves?" The echo of these questions in the face of the mistreatment of the indigenous people at the beginning of the 16th century challenges us today with respect to the treatment of our native peoples of the Amazonia, especially those we call PIACI.



"No "Do not quench the spirit, nor reject the gift of prophecy" St. Paul encourages us today. It is the same Spirit who encourages us to proclaim freedom to the oppressed. In Christ Jesus, we are all brothers and sisters, and it is he who encourages us to discover his face in that of our invisible brothers and sisters. To be informed by their reality, to know and make visible their existence, will be a first fruit of the action of the liberating Spirit in us.

The Order, like the Baptist, wants to be witness of the Light. In the Amazonia we have the mission of allowing ourselves to be challenged by the reality of these peoples who show us the face of a God who comes to life in their simplicity and who through them wants to send us the message that there are other simpler paths for humanity and that with these peoples we can find other more sustainable ways of interacting with the planet.

Just as on that Fourth Sunday of Advent the friars were able to launch a cry in favor of the oppressed native peoples that resounds to this day, today we too can be a reminder to humanity that with PIACI we can rethink ourselves as creatures of God, called to live as one big family that protects the Amazonia and the rest of our Common Home, caring for it as the Home that it is, not as an object of the market. Let not the spirit be quenched in us, nor the gift of prophecy be rejected

+ David Martínez de Aguirre Guinea, OP
Bishop of the Apostolic Vicariate of
Puerto Maldonado





Celebrate

Cultural Dream: educational improvement

LISTEN TO MY HEART

(Prayer of the Amazonian peoples)

Lord, You are always with us,
You know us,
You know who I am.
Lord, You protect me and accompany me,
From dawn to dusk,
In joy and in sorrow,
In laughter and in tears,
You are always with me.
You do not abandon us.
Lord, You look at me with love.
I see You too
I see You in a thousand faces,
When you can't get up,
When you're hungry and cold,
When you can't breathe
And also, when they can't understand you,
When they don't want to see you.
In an ambulance at full speed
Or in the furthest corners
of the mountain range.
I see you, Lord.
I feel you; you are with me.
Listen to my words,
Listen to my heart, Lord.
The heart of your people,
The heart of your land
Beats It is alive
We are alive.
Amen





Amazonize

As Dominican and ecclesial family, we are corresponsable and urged to strengthen the processes of articulation in the defense of the rights of the most excluded Amazonian youth; opening the doors for students of native peoples who did not see higher education as an alternative.. This connection, in continuity with the educational programs of secondary or high school, reflects the historical commitment of the Order of Preachers to the integral education of the most vulnerable populations in the Apostolic Vicariate of Puerto Maldonado.

Students from native communities find themselves in a position of inequality, not only in terms of academic preparation but also in terms of general culture, as well as in terms of social capital, since their networks are largely disconnected from the higher education system. In this context, their personal commitment and skills will be fundamental elements for the successful completion of their studies, but at the same time the community learning center and the support team will be assured, which will contribute to the construction of a cohesive and close social network.



CHALLENGE FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

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+ INFO

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"Committed to the Amazon"