



Journey of Hope

Praying with the Amazon in Advent

*a prayer companion for the lighting of the advent wreath
in preparation for the Synod on the Amazon in 2019*

Introduction

Sunday, December 2 marks the beginning of the Season of Advent. It is a time of hope and yearning for peace, as we anticipate the coming of Christ into our troubled history. It is a time, also, of joy and love, as we remember the birth of Jesus at Christmas.

This year, we take this journey as the worldwide Catholic Church prepares for next year's Synod on the Amazon that seeks to examine and reimagine the Church's way of being present in the Amazon and how to accompany and stand in solidarity with indigenous and campesino communities in the region that face many threats to their people, environment and way of life. Those of us concerned about the impacts of extractive industries on humanity and our common home also commemorate the 70th anniversary of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (1948).

During this Season of Advent, the members of the Inter-religious Working Group on Extractive Industries invite you to join us on this journey of hope, particularly as we are attentive to the challenges that indigenous communities and environmental human rights defenders face throughout the world, including in the Amazon region of South America. They are the "first responders" and "protectors of creation," like John the Baptist crying out in the wilderness, and for their courageous defense of their ancestral lands, waters and territories, they have been the targets of repression by international mining companies and governments eager to make a profit.

"Today the cry of the Amazonia to the Creator is similar to the cry of God's People in Egypt," according to the Synod preparatory document released by the Vatican. "It is a cry of slavery and abandonment, which clamors for freedom and God's care. It is a cry that yearns for the presence of God, especially when the Amazonian peoples, in order to defend their lands, stumble upon the criminalization of protest - both by the authorities and public opinion - or when they witness the destruction of the rainforest, which serves as their ancient habitat; or when the waters of their rivers are filled with deadly substances instead of life."

The significance of this Pan-Amazonian Synod extends beyond the Amazon region and has implications for the whole Church and all people concerned about the future of our planet. We hear and see the suffering due to an extractive model of development in many parts of the world including the Congo Basin, the biological corridor of Central America, the tropical forest of Asia in the Pacific, and the Guarani water system. This Pan-Amazonian Synod asks each of us to consider: How can we move away from an economy of exclusion and help answer the call in *Laudato Si'* to build an integral ecology?

The Season of Advent reminds us that, even amidst this reality, we are people of hope, and we worship a God of hope.

In that spirit, we invite you each week to reflect on an excerpt from the Sunday readings and an excerpt from the preparatory document for the Amazon synod, and then light the appropriate candle(s) while offering a simple prayer.

Advent Hope

December 2, 2018

Jesus said to his disciples:

"Be watchful! Be alert!

You do not know when the time will come...

May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping.

What I say to you, I say to all: 'Watch!'" (Mk 13:33-37)

"How do you imagine your "serene future" and the "good life" of future generations? How can we work together toward the construction of a world which breaks with structures that take life and with colonizing mentalities, in order to build networks of solidarity and inter-culturality? And, above all, what is the Church's particular mission today in the face of this reality?"

As a society, we can all reflect on these questions as we take steps to turn away from a throwaway culture. We can instead reimagine a new path forward and how to move toward an integral ecology.

With Advent hope, we light this first of the four Advent candles, one for each week leading up to Christmas, and offer this prayer.

[light the first candle and then read the following prayer]

God of Light, open our hearts to the mystery of your love and the invitation of your grace. Let our complacency give way to conversion and our judgments to compassionate acceptance of others. Turn oppression to justice and transform conflict to peaceful accord. We ask this in the name of Jesus, who draws near, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever.

Amen.

- Katherine Feely, SND, Advent Prayer Service, Education for Justice

Advent Peace

December 9, 2018

*Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you;
he will prepare your way.*

A voice of one crying out in the desert:

*"Prepare the way of the Lord,
make straight his paths." (Mk 1:1-8)*

"Pope Francis, in his visit to Puerto Maldonado, called for a change in the historical paradigm, as a result of which States view the Amazonia as a storage room filled with natural resources, with little regard for the lives of indigenous peoples or for the destruction of nature. The harmonious relationship between God the Creator, human beings, and nature is broken by the harmful effects of neo-extractivism; by the pressure being exerted by strong business interests that want to lay hands on its petroleum, gas, wood, and gold; by construction related to infrastructure projects (for example, hydroelectric megaprojects and road construction, such as thoroughfares between the oceans); and by forms of agro-industrial monocultivation."

With Advent peace, we light the first two of the four Advent candles, one for each week leading up to Christmas, and offer this prayer.

[light the second candle and then read the following prayer]

God of Light, open our hearts to the mystery of your love and the invitation of your grace. Let our complacency give way to conversion and our judgments to compassionate acceptance of others. Turn oppression to justice and transform conflict to peaceful accord. We ask this in the name of Jesus, who draws near, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever.

Amen.

- Katherine Feely, SND, Advent Prayer Service, Education for Justice

Advent Joy

December 16, 2018

*A man named John was sent from God.
He came for testimony, to testify to the light,
so that all might believe through him.
He was not the light,
but came to testify to the light. (Jn 1:6-8)*

“For the indigenous peoples of the Amazon Basin, the good life comes from living in communion with other people, with the world, with the creatures of their environment, and with the Creator. Indigenous peoples, in fact, live within the home that God created and gave them as a gift: the Earth. Their diverse spiritualities and beliefs motivate them to live in communion with the soil, water, trees, animals, and with day and night. Wise elders – called interchangeably “payés, mestres, wayanga or chamanes”, among others – promote the harmony of people among themselves and with the cosmos. Indigenous peoples “are a living memory of the mission that God has entrusted to us all: the protection of our common home”

With Advent joy, we light the first three of the four Advent candles, one for each week leading up to Christmas, and offer this prayer.

[light the third candle and then read the following prayer]

God of Light, open our hearts to the mystery of your love and the invitation of your grace. Let our complacency give way to conversion and our judgments to compassionate acceptance of others. Turn oppression to justice and transform conflict to peaceful accord. We ask this in the name of Jesus, who draws near, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever.

Amen.

- Katherine Feely, SND, Advent Prayer Service, Education for Justice

Advent Love

December 23, 2018

*The angel Gabriel was sent from God
to a town of Galilee called Nazareth,
to a virgin [whose] name was Mary...
"Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son,
and you shall name him Jesus." (Lk 1:26-38)*

"Our neighbor acquires a central position in our horizon. This involves practicing global solidarity and overcoming individualism, while opening up new paths to freedom, truth, and beauty. Conversion means freeing ourselves from the obsession with consumerism. Purchasing is a moral act, not a merely economic one. Ecological conversion means embracing the mystically-interconnected and interdependent nature of all creation. Thankfulness becomes a part of our attitudes when we understand that life is a gift from God. Embracing life through community-based solidarity entails a change of heart."

With Advent love, we light all of the four Advent candles, and offer this prayer.

[light the fourth candle and then read the following prayer]

God of Light, open our hearts to the mystery of your love and the invitation of your grace. Let our complacency give way to conversion and our judgments to compassionate acceptance of others. Turn oppression to justice and transform conflict to peaceful accord. We ask this in the name of Jesus, who draws near, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever.

Amen.

- Katherine Feely, SND, Advent Prayer Service, Education for Justice

About Us

The Inter-religious Working Group on Extractive Industries is a Washington, DC based coalition of faith, human rights, and environmental organizations concerned about the negative impact of extractive industries on creation, which includes both the human and natural world.

As people of faith, working in the United States and abroad, we witness and support communities devastated by the effects of extractive ventures such as oil extraction, mining, and logging. We have seen that ill-concieved and poorly managed projects can bring conflict, damage human health, displace people from their homes and lands, pollute the environment, and feed corruption. Expanded exploration by extractive companies has weakened local economies, hindered development and curbed human rights, in the United States but even more so in Latin America, Africa, and Asia.

To learn more about the impacts of extractive industries and to find our working group's resources, please visit our website.

www.justresponse.faith