



## Pastoral Letter on the occasion of the Centennial

Dear brothers and sisters of the Apostolic Vicariate of Yurimaguas:

I write to Christians and non-Christians; to men and women of good will: receive my warmest greetings and salutations on the occasion of the 100th Anniversary of the Creation of the Vicariate of St. Gabriel of Our Lady of Sorrows of the Marañón, created by Pope Benedict XV on February 27, 1921 and entrusted to the Passionist Congregation.

Exactly 100 years ago today, this Vicariate was constituted, and we join with God in giving thanks for the innumerable favors and blessings he has given this fertile land and those who live on it.

I would like to pay warm tribute to the missionaries who have served so faithfully and bravely over the past century in the work of Evangelization.

On October 10, 1921, the first four Passionist missionaries arrived in Yurimaguas: Fathers Gabino Basaras, Marcos Salazar, Eutiquio Ruiz, and Br. Bernabé Guridi. A few months later, on February 8, 1922, future Bishop Msgr. Atanasio Jáuregui arrived in the company of Fathers Felipe Uriarte and Jenaro García and Brs. Juan María Odriozola and Francisco Veiguela.

And since then, hundreds of missionaries have written a history that is faithful and proud of their commitment, abnegation, and sacrifice. In the first years, conditions were harsh, as they had to live far from one another. It was a heroic adventure. The five missionaries who drowned in our mighty rivers are testimony to that:

1. Father Eleuterio Fernández in 1914
2. Father Aquilino Iribertegui in 1933
3. Father Gabino Basaras in 1935
4. Father Cayetano Ardanza in 1963
5. Sr. María Lourdes Fernández in 1978

During the century that we celebrate today, men born in other lands and in other cultures came to Huallaga to become Amazonian men and thus initiate a new stage in the evangelization and promotion of the Amazon. They came to spend their lives, because in those years transportation was difficult... And with their testimony, they teach us to be true missionaries and witnesses of the Gospel.

I invite you to celebrate this **Jubilee Year** with full joy and happiness. I would like this year to be the **YEAR OF THE CENTENNIAL** and for it to be for all:



- ◆ **A year** of special grace, mercy, and renewal.
- ◆ **A year** to express our gratefulness to God for the graces received during these years.
- ◆ **A year** to give new fruitfulness to our Vicariate of Yurimaguas, to seek new ways of witnessing and shouting to the world today that God is the Father of all, merciful, and that he has created us so that we all have life, and Life, in fullness.
- ◆ **A year** to intensify our life of prayer and participation in the Eucharist.
- ◆ **A year** to listen to the cry of the poor, to grow in closeness and solidarity with those crucified today.
- ◆ **A year** to mature in respect and care for creation.
- ◆ **Finally:** a year of renewal, a new beginning, a search for new opportunities in life and relationships with God, our neighbors, and nature.
- ◆ May it be the beginning of a new **Amazonian spring** in the Church.

The Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation "Beloved Amazonia", by Pope Francis, begins by saying: "*The beloved Amazon is shown to the world with all its splendor, its drama, its mystery.*"

Also, in this document, Pope Francis shared his "*four great dreams for the Amazon region*": an Amazon region that "*fights for the rights of the poorest*", that "*preserves that cultural richness that makes it stand out*", that "*jealously protects the overwhelming natural beauty that adorns it*" and, finally, that Christian communities are "*capable of fully committing themselves and personifying the Amazon.*"

With these dreams, we are invited to live a passionate Year, enthusiastic about the synodality that we want to live, prioritizing the role of laity and women in our communities.

One of the most important challenges that our Vicariate faces is that of "*passing from a Pastoral of Visitation to a **Pastoral of Presence***". *It is a new type of pastoral ministry that would welcome the presence of native ordained ministers, who live within the same community, so that they can preside over the Eucharist in it.*

*Our challenge continues to be the training of these Christian Cheerleaders and to give a more important role to laymen, laywomen, and female religious. A ministerial church with shared service needs to be further developed, to "declericalize" evangelization and give way to new ministries. We are all evangelizers and from the moment of our Baptism we are called to be messengers of the Gospel*<sup>1</sup>.

The Pope in "Dear Amazon" asks of us: Develop a Church with an Amazonian face through a "great missionary announcement" (No. 61), an "indispensable announcement in the Amazon" (No. 62-65). We have to feel that we are essentially missionaries and that we have that Amazonian face. That is why I want to ask all the communities to make an effort to designate two or three Christian animators in their communities if they do not already have them, and to prioritize the training of these Christian Cheerleaders. In the same way, I ask you to try to have a catechist in all communities who is in charge of the evangelization of our children and young people.

---

<sup>1</sup> Aristín, Jesús María. "History of the Apostolic Vicariate of Yurimaguas". Apostolic Vicariate of Yurimaguas. p. 380. In the book's conclusion.



## **Conclusion:**

To finish, it is worth remembering these words of the Apostle Paul:

*"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4: 6-7 NIV)*

## How to BE A CHURCH DURING A PANDEMIC?:

"Let us not be robbed of hope" by fears, or by corruption, or by anything..., the Peruvian Episcopal Conference told us in its latest statement.

God is calling us to "go from a Christianity of customs to one of witnesses", to be a Church (and a Vicariate) on the way out, with missionaries and in solidarity, and we will be able to help the resurrection of our country, the freedom that our anthem proclaims. Let us ask the God of Life and history, and Mary, Our Lady of the Snows, to teach us to be servants of those who suffer the most.

The celebration, the thanksgiving to God for our vicarial Church, remains in the hands of each of us. With the joy of the Jubilee in our hearts, let us live brotherhood and build a new vicarial history, facing the challenges that arise. In the style of Jesus, "let us announce the good news of the Kingdom and heal the ailments of the peoples."