

+ What is REPAM?

REPAM is a Latin American Catholic church transnational network created to respond to the challenges facing the people of the Amazon and their natural environment. It began in 2014, in Brazil as a project of the nine Churches of the Amazon region under the umbrella of the Latin American Bishops Conference.



REPAM

RED ECLESIAL PANAMAZÓNICA

fuentes de vida en el corazón de la Iglesia

In the face of growing development and globalization, indigenous and *campesino* communities in the Amazon region face many threats to their people, environment and way of life. The church plays an important role in accompanying and standing in solidarity with these communities as they work to gain respect for their territories and rights.

Through ecclesial, political, academic, and social spaces all over the world, including the United States, REPAM seeks to share the reality of indigenous people in the Amazon, the role of accompaniment of the Catholic church, the importance of the Amazon biome, and the urgency to answer the call in *Laudato Si'* to care for creation and the most vulnerable communities.



+ In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis writes:

“We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (Gen. 2:7); and our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshments from her waters.”

Spiritual Foundation of REPAM

The call to protect the environment and the vulnerable comes from the deepest parts of our faith. In *Laudato Si'*, which moved the Catholic Church to the heart of the fight for environmental justice, Pope Francis calls us to care for our common home.

He specifically lifts up the Amazon, which he calls the “richly biodiverse lungs of our planet,” as crucial to “the entire earth and for the future of humanity.” He laments “global economic interests which under the guise of protecting them, can undermine the sovereignty of individual nations,” in the Amazon.

Laudato Si' calls all human beings to respect God’s creation, and highlights how our abuse of creation harms the poor the most.

More than anything, *Laudato Si'* is a call to action: “Our goal is not to amass information, but rather to become painfully aware, to dare to turn what is happening to the world into our own personal suffering and thus to discover what each of us can do about it.”

While each of us can do small things to change our consumption habits, Pope Francis calls us to something greater when he asks us to join in shared responsibility for the common good.

The Importance of the Amazon

“The Amazonia is at the heart of the Church.”

--Archbishop Pedro Barreto, S.J. Huancaayo, Peru

The Amazon stretches across more than two million square miles of South America, contains 10% of all biomass on earth, 20% of the world's flowing water, and a third of all known terrestrial plant, animal, and insect species.

The Amazon is home to more than 30 million people, 1.6 million of these people are indigenous and they belong to 400 different indigenous groups. Some are isolated tribes who choose to avoid contact with the outside world.

Over thousands of years, the indigenous population of the Amazon has managed, protected, and enriched the rainforest while being a fully integrated part of it.

Since the 1950s, the Amazon rainforest has entirely lost 18% of its original forest cover, and up to 50% of the forest has been partially destroyed. This is mainly due to oil and gas production, mining and logging, and the need for more space to practice agriculture and cattle ranching.

The Impacts of Extractive Industries

Throughout the Amazon, the lives of indigenous are threatened, and their communities displaced, by extractive industries, like logging, oil, gas, and dam projects, as well as by large-scale infrastructure developments, like roads, electrical interconnections, and commercial ports.

Indigenous people have historically gained little from large-scale resource development on their traditional lands, and have suffered from its

negative impacts on their environment, cultures, economies, and societies.

Often times they are not consulted by their home governments and the operating companies before a project begins and they have very few avenues for stopping the projects.

Not only do extractive projects threaten indigenous communities, they also contribute to climate change through the increased production of fossil fuels,

deforestation, and environmental degradation. At the same time, extractive industries decrease the ability of vulnerable communities to respond to the impacts of climate change.



For More Information

- REPAM: <http://redamazonica.org>
- Vatican Backs Pan-Amazonian Church Network, America Magazine
- Faith-Based Statement of Principles on Extractive Industries, The Extractives Industry Working Group
- On Care for our Common Home: Laudato Si' commentary by Fr. Sean McDonagh, SSC

REPAM is hosted by:

- [*The Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach*](#)
- [*Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns*](#)
- [*Sisters of Mercy of the Americas*](#)
- [*Jesuit Conference*](#)
- [*USCCB*](#)