

'Querida Amazonia' – An initial response (27 February 2020)

Introduction

Pope Francis has released his response to the recent synod on the Amazon - 'Querida Amazonia' (Beloved Amazon). Reactions have ranged from praise to disappointment. There are already messages for our Plenary Council. With much more to be revealed and considered, here, for now, is an initial response:

Initial response

Pope Francis has released 'Querida Amazonia' ('Beloved Amazon'), his response to the recent synod on the Amazon. Reactions have ranged from praise to disappointment. It should be stressed that Francis presented the exhortation as a "*framework for reflection*", without rejecting unaddressed aspects of the synod's document. And there are messages for our Plenary Council.

National Catholic Reporter (NCR) [*described*](#) the exhortation as "*a profoundly loving and detailed embrace of an endangered segment of the globe and of its indigenous cultures*", containing a searing critique of the "*rapacious nature of dominant economies that savage the land and destroy culture*". The disappointment has largely focussed on a lack of any response to the synod's requests for promoting the priestly ordination of married men and the role of women.

Francis has however again underlined the transition he is leading from a papal-episcopal Catholic Church to a synodal Catholic Church. *Querida Amazonia*, although disappointing as a missed opportunity in the area of ministry and the role of women, supports bishops in seeking renewal of our Church.

Pope Francis expects bishops' conferences throughout the world to identify and address the concerns of their people (subsidiarity). In that respect, the Pope's latest exhortation is relevant to the now imminent Australian Plenary Council and is a rebuttal of those that have been attempting to discourage renewal through the Council in the hope that they can get back to business as usual – a reflection for this Lenten season.