

9 AUGUST INTERNATIONAL DAY OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES



"The right of indigenous peoples to self-determination: a path towards food security and sovereignty."



OPENING PRAYER

"Father-Mother of the Earth and of Life,
God Tupa of our fathers and mothers
revered in the forests and rivers,
in the silence of the moon and in the cry of the sun
by the altars and by the lives destroyed in your name, desecrated
in our colonised Abya Yala,
we ask you to strengthen the struggle and hope of the indigenous peoples
in the enjoyment of free autonomy.
And give us (us, the neocolonialists)
shame on our faces and love in our hearts
so that we may respect these original peoples
and to commune with them in the Eucharist
Awere, Amen, Hallelujah
PEDRO CASALDALIGA.



"*Tupa or Tupave*" specifically means the supreme God and creator in the Guaraní culture.

"*Abya Yala*" comes from the Kuna language, spoken by the Guna people of Panama and Colombia, and means land in full maturity, living land or land in bloom. "Abya Yala" is more than a name, it is a concept that represents the struggle for self-determination, historical memory and connection to the land for the indigenous peoples of America.

THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE DEFENSE OF THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES



Proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly through Resolution 49/214 in 1994, August 9 was established as the International Day of Indigenous Peoples.

Through the commemoration of this day, various forums and events, the UN seeks to highlight and address the challenges and aspirations of indigenous peoples, recognising the importance of cultural diversity and the need for intercultural dialogue to promote peace, stability, and sustainable development.

In 2025, special attention will be given to how the self-determination of indigenous peoples can contribute to ensuring food security and food sovereignty, recognising their knowledge systems as valuable assets for addressing global hunger, biodiversity conservation and climate resilience.

This theme emphasises the right of indigenous peoples to govern their lands and resources, as well as the importance of their traditional practices for food security and environmental sustainability. It also emphasizes the importance of protecting territorial rights, highlights the need for consultation on development projects and participation in decisions that affect them, as well as the necessity of safeguarding leaders and peoples from discrimination and violence.

Self-determination is essential for the food security and sovereignty of indigenous peoples, as security implies physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food for all. On the other hand, sovereignty goes further and refers to the right of peoples to define their food policies, protect their food production systems, and control their resources. By guaranteeing the self-determination of indigenous peoples, they are allowed to exercise their food sovereignty, which in turn contributes to their food security and the preservation of their cultures.

LLAMADO DEL PAPA FRANCISCO EN EL MENSAJE AL FORO MUNDIAL DE LOS PUEBLOS INDIGENAS.



At the World Forum of Indigenous Peoples, held in Rome on February 10 and 11 this year, Pope Francis made a strong call to defend the right to self-determination as a path to food security and sovereignty. This event was attended by Monsignor Fernando Chica Arellano, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations), IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development) and WFP (World Food Programme), who read the Pope's message addressed to Dr Myrna Cunningham, Chair of the Steering Committee of the Forum, leader and political activist for indigenous rights.

In the text, Pope Francis first expresses his hope that the meeting will be **"a meaningful space for debate, study and reflection on the priorities, concerns and just aspirations of indigenous communities"**. Turning to the theme, Francis calls for **"recognition of the value of indigenous peoples"** and **"the ancestral heritage of knowledge and practices that positively enrich the great human family, colouring it with the diverse characteristics of their traditions"**. **"All of this reveals a horizon of hope in the present time, marked by intense and complex challenges and not a few tensions."** **"The defence of the right to preserve one's own culture and identity necessarily involves recognition of the value of their contribution to society and the safeguarding of their existence and of the natural resources they need to live,"** Pope Francis affirms. He denounces the serious threat posed by the **"growing appropriation of agricultural land by multinationals, large investors and States"**: **"These are harmful practices that threaten the right of local communities to a dignified life."**

"Land, water and food are not mere goods, but the very basis of life and of these peoples' relationship with nature," he reiterates in the message. Therefore, "defending these rights is not only a matter of justice, but a guarantee of a sustainable future for all." "Encouraged by a sense of belonging to the human family," the Pope concludes, "we can guarantee future generations a world in keeping with the beauty and goodness that guided God's hands in creating it." Hence the desire that those responsible for nations may take "appropriate measures to ensure that the human family walks together in the search for the common good, so that no one is excluded and no one is left behind."



States must recognise indigenous peoples' forms of expression of autonomy, with full respect for their cultural diversity. This is an exercise in intercultural dialogue that enables international human rights law to engage with and reflect the worldview of indigenous peoples and their political, economic, cultural, and social systems, grounded in their rights.

This may involve overcoming historical legacies of discrimination, racism, and colonialism that have marked the lives of indigenous peoples on our continent for centuries. It is also an opportunity for the strengthening of the state's legitimacy from the local level, promoted through its recommendations and the work that follows, thereby reinforcing fully inclusive democracies.

THE CLARETIAN FAMILY AND THE MISSION WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

As the Claretian Family and from this space of JPIC, the mission with indigenous peoples focuses on caring for and defending life in all its expressions: accompanying communities, working to understand and respect the cultures, languages, and traditions of indigenous peoples, seeking to establish relationships of dialogue and collaboration. We also defend territorial, cultural, and social rights, denouncing injustices and promoting the active participation of communities in decisions that affect them. Seeking to promote the integral development of communities, addressing issues such as education, health, food security, and income generation, always from an intercultural perspective. Supporting the creation of solidarity-based economies based on the principles of cooperative ventures, which enable indigenous communities to generate income in a sustainable and environmentally friendly manner. By fostering an "ecological conversion" that renounces predatory extractivism, speaking out against mining and other extractive projects that threaten indigenous territories and generate negative socio-ecological impacts, and promoting a development paradigm that values social, climate, and environmental justice and the common good.



Ultimately, our commitment to justice, peace, and the integrity of creation is essential for achieving food security and sovereignty for Indigenous peoples.

The recognition of the right to self-determination of indigenous peoples is a crucial step towards the realisation of these principles. The protection of indigenous territories and their natural resources, as well as respect for their traditional knowledge and systems, are essential to guarantee their food security and their ability to decide their future.

PROCLAIM AND REFLECT ON THE WORD

This special day of prayer for indigenous peoples invites us to give thanks to God for the gift of thousands of brothers and sisters who preserve and enrich us with their cultures and traditions. Today, we ask the God of Justice and Mercy to enlighten the minds and hearts of those in whose hands lie the possibilities of dignifying Indigenous Peoples with more and better opportunities for integral development, always ensuring respect for their identity.

Therefore, we offer a heartfelt prayer to the God of the poor to pave the way for an encounter between children of the same land, where the most neglected are restored to their dignity, where all grow with the same opportunities, and where the identities of different cultures are seen as signs of the presence of God who made us different but loved us equally.

Prayer for forgiveness

For the times when we remain silent in the face of situations of injustice and discrimination experienced by our brothers and sisters of the indigenous peoples. **Lord, have mercy.**

For our indifference to the current situations and realities experienced by indigenous peoples. **Christ, have mercy.**

For the lack of government policies that promote openness to dialogue and coexistence, and that sometimes generate situations of violence against the demands for the rights of indigenous peoples. **Lord, have mercy.**

Abrimos el Corazón a la Palabra. Del Evangelio según San Juan 1,1-4

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

² He was with God.

³ All things were made through the Word, and without it nothing was made that has been made.

⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The Word of God

In the Word of God, indigenous peoples have preferred texts that mark the way forward: John 1:1ff is one of them.

Reflection leads to the certainty that the Word, the Son, has always been present in their peoples. "Without Him nothing was made." Not only "the seeds," as St. Irenaeus says, but everything. "The Word was present from the beginning in cultures and then became present (flesh) and gives strength to all of us." "He is the beginning of creation yesterday, today, and forever." Jesus, as the Word, has always been present in our peoples. Jesus has always been with the peoples, which is why we must discover him in our indigenous peoples. Jn 1:1ff: "Jesus Christ, the Word incarnate, always present in the indigenous people, yesterday, today and forever, strengthening with his Spirit the unity and solidarity in the Ayllu. (*Ayllu is a word of Quechua origin. It refers to a political and territorial unit based on community life and the collective right to land in environmental diversity.*)

The land, in the tribes of the nascent people of Israel, is the centre of the promise; for indigenous peoples, it is part of their very identity. Without land, one is nobody; it is like losing one's life. It is there on the land that the family, the organisation, the people grow... When it is taken away from us, it feels as if something of our own has been taken away... The land is like our nest: when you leave it, you learn bad habits, you change, but you always return to the nest... Without land, life is destroyed because the relationship with God, with nature, with our brothers and sisters is broken.

For the biblical tribes, the land is given to be "dominated and subjugated". For the indigenous peoples, the land is a mother who must be cared for. They are part of her. Moreover, what affects the mother affects the children, which is why the land is not a commodity. The earth, being central to the tradition of biblical tribes and indigenous peoples, has significant differences that must be understood in their respective contexts so that the enlightenment provided by the Bible may truly be the Word of God. Indigenous peoples, in their ongoing struggle to reclaim and preserve the land, make intensive use of their celebrations as the basis for an exegesis that affirms that the earth is a gift for all men and women. The earth is a constitutive part of 'God's justice' for indigenous peoples.

The earth is the effective mediation of God's loving manifestation. For this reason, in addition to justice and fraternity, which are at the heart of the Gospel message, pastoral agents who accompany indigenous peoples and the whole Church must take up, support, and encourage the struggles for land rights. Indigenous Christians find in the Bible the enlightenment and strength for their just claims; these processes are not only economic and political but also religious, emanating from faith in God as the creator and preserver of all things for all, in justice and fraternity.

LET US PRAY TOGETHER

Great Spirit, essence of all Nature, Breath of life that creates and recreates all beings, our indigenous and native peoples hear Your voice in the waters, the lands, the sun, the winds, and the dew that moisten our sister Mother Earth and the germinating seeds that become food. They see the love of your beauty in the flora and fauna, in the pollination of birds, butterflies, and bees, the nectar of life everywhere. Teach us to listen to their sacred instruments and flutes that lift the body and spirit to the eternal world. Give us Your Wisdom to rescue our harmony, interconnecting us in a grand scheme, weaving and spinning the web of life. May your power be the light of the sun that illuminates our coexistence for "good living," "sumak kawsay."

Force of Life, give us Your Strength to keep alive our peoples who care most for our common home. Sustain our great Hut, which longs for life and respect. Make us hear Your life in the groaning, the clamour, and the voice of the forests and of the peoples who grow from the womb of the earth. Amen

"Sumak kawsay" is a Quechua expression that means "good living." In its deepest essence, "sumak kawsay" is a call to transform society to live in harmony with nature and among ourselves, seeking a more just, equitable, and happy life for all peoples.



<https://youtu.be/buojgPQvc5U> KÜME MONGUEN (Living well in the Mapuche language) Music for an integral ecology can be used to accompany the prayer.

https://youtu.be/HBMrUIBGQHc?si=3qPcJKi6cEWl_5-q Lands without evil.

