



Religions for Peace CSW 66 Commission on the Status of Women (14-25 March 2022). Panel Event: Multi-religious Collaboration: The Tipping Point for Engendered Climate Change Policies. 15 March 2022.

### *Participation of Sr. Winifred Doherty, RGS*

Thank you for the invitation to be a panelist. I am Winifred Doherty, a Catholic sister from the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd. Today, I am representing Talitha Kum<sup>1</sup> – a network of networks present on the 5 continents, coordinating the anti-trafficking efforts of 50 inter-congregational networks. These networks are organized both at national and local levels. At the regional level, 10 networks are enabling the joint coordination of several counties.

In this experience, we can witness to the absolute necessity of engaging in multi-religion and multi-stakeholder approaches to end violence against girls and women and to ensure a sustainable planet. Talitha Kum has a two-pronged approach: caring for persons wounded by exploitation, and acting against inequalities caused by economic and cultural systems. The root causes of human trafficking can be attributed to inequalities caused by economic systems, particularly the neo-liberal capitalist systems that exploit people and the planet. There is no distinction between attitudes that discriminate, perpetuate violence, and infringe girls' and women's human rights; and the ones that exploit the planet. Pope Francis, in his final document on the Synod on the Amazon, states: "The Amazon today is a wounded and deformed beauty, a place of suffering and violence. Attacks on nature have consequences for people's lives."

Pope Francis declares, and I quote: "The pre-synodal consultations depicted this single socio-environmental crisis in terms of the following threats to life: appropriation and privatization of natural goods, such as water itself; legal logging concessions and illegal logging; predatory hunting and fishing; unsustainable mega-projects (hydroelectric); pollution caused by extractive industries and city garbage dumps; and, above all, climate change. These are real threats with serious social consequences: including violence against women, sexual exploitation,

---

<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.talithakum.info/>

and human trafficking. Behind all these are dominant economic and political interests. The victims are the most vulnerable: children, youth, women indigenous peoples, and Mother Earth.”<sup>2</sup>

The only response to this crisis is indeed multi-religion, multi-stakeholder approaches addressing gender-based violence and climate change. At the NGOCSW Consultation Day on Sunday, we heard that gender inequality and increasing climate change are two existential crises threatening humanity and the planet. The solutions to these crises are staring at us in the face: gender equality and acting in a sustainable way towards Mother Earth. Indigenous peoples hold the expertise and knowledge for the way forward. The global indigenous population of the world is 6%, and this 6% is caring for 80% of global biodiversity. And yet, there are ‘forces’ continuing to exploit indigenous peoples and their land, and destroy their way of life. It is a moral imperative of our multi-faith and multi-stakeholder engagements to uphold and bring this expertise and knowledge to the fore.

The interconnection of the nexus of human trafficking and climate displacement are well known to us. Yet we might not be fully aware that worldwide, indigenous peoples are particularly vulnerable to both trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor. As we know, indigenous persons, especially girls and women, are often economically and politically marginalized and are disproportionately affected by environmental degradation, climate displacement, and armed conflict, rendering them vulnerable to being trafficked.

Within our multi-religion, multi-stakeholder engagement, we need to challenge ourselves daily as to what beliefs and values we hold. We must be always alert to being co-opted, and further examine if we are complicit with the very ‘powers’ we seek to challenge. These ‘powers’ are death-dealing to women – all women, including indigenous women and Mother Earth.

What must we do? – We must remain updated on these issues and engage in new ways of understanding the interconnectedness of all – the person, the feminine. We are called to embrace, honor, and learn from differences. We must seek to develop mindsets of both/and, not either/or. A binary approach to life restricts, excludes, exploits, and destroys. The Holy One is gracious and merciful. We, multi-religious and multi-

---

<sup>2</sup> Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for the Pan-Amazonian Region: New Paths for the Church and for an Integral Ecology, Paragraph 10 See [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/synod/documents/rc\\_synod\\_doc\\_20191026\\_sinodo-amazonia\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20191026_sinodo-amazonia_en.html)

stakeholders, are uniquely placed and called to embrace 'difference', live the values we profess, center the sanctity of the person, the sacredness of our Indigenous sisters and brothers and of our Mother Earth. We cultivate attitudes of abundance for all while confronting mindsets of scarcity. We are interconnected – persons, indigenous persons, the feminine, all others, all life forms, and Mother Earth – all containing and revealing the Holy One in our midst. We must reverence this knowledge ourselves, and share it in our communities. We must denounce any and all violations – especially of gender and climate injustice – so that life, all life, every life, and the life of Mother Earth, can be healed, renewed, and flourish anew.

Thank you!