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**New grounding for mission and discipleship on the margins  
Reading the Syrophenician woman in Amazonian perspective**

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Abstract

The encounter between the syrophenician woman in Mc 7:24-30 par with Jesus and the disciples is a showcase of inequality and power imbalance: She is vulnerable, a "pagan", excluded, and desperate. Jesus and his entourage are not at all forthcoming and open-minded.

The first step is a careful reading the gospel text. It shows a turn in mission perspective in the young church: Through the encounter with this woman believer who does not care for the narrow mindset of Jesus himself and the men around him, the early community became able to take a wider approach to the others outside their community.

This shows that it is this woman's *Sitz im Leben* of the ill and suffering daughter that brings her into a position of committed arguing with the foreign *rabbi* and to widen his perspectives of faith.

The second step is a re-reading of this story after the Amazon Synod of the Roman Catholic Church in view of a missiological re-orientation. The Synod took place in the Vatican in October 2019, the publication of its conclusions by Pope Francis are expected before Christmas.

This Synod has explained the situation of Amazonia as vulnerable, threatened and challenging. It has placed the church in a position of solidarity together the peoples there and indeed with creation, following the lead of Pope Francis' seminal encyclical *Laudato si'*. Again, the situation of Amazonia constitutes a setting outside and at the margins of the traditional church-controlled system. Facing these challenges from ecological devastation, life threatening economic injustice, and marginalisation, the disciples move towards the margins of society and promote a thorough conversion of church structures. Engaging consciously the context in Amazonia – and probably any other place on earth – has deep implications for the church and opens up for new articulations of human relationships in perspective of an integral ecology, as one of the central demands at the Synod states.