

## **Pope Upholds Brazilian BECs' Commitment To Promote An Outgoing Church**

By Lisa Zengarini

Pope Francis sent a message of encouragement to a Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) meeting in Brazil, emphasizing that the Catholic Church must never remain “hidden.” Pope Francis has encouraged Brazilian Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) to continue working for an “outgoing” church, saying that a church that goes out to the world is stronger.

He gave this encouragement as the group opened their 15th Inter-ecclesial Meeting, which kicked off on 18 July, 2023 in Rondonópolis in the Brazilian State of Mato Grosso, on the theme “Basic Ecclesial Communities: An Outgoing Church Pursuing the Full Life For All Men and Women.”

### **The 15th BECs Inter-ecclesial Meeting**

The event gathers about 1,500 participants from across Brazil to discuss the current social and economic challenges facing the country including the negative impact on local communities and the environment of indiscriminate mining activities and the ongoing commitment of Basic Ecclesial Communities to transform and update the church’s mission in rural areas, urban centers and peripheries.

Participants include representatives of the regional BECs, of indigenous peoples, and of Quilombo communities (descendants of Afro-Brazilian slaves who escaped from slave plantations – ed.), leaders of social organizations linked to the church, social activists, religious men and women, priests and 63 bishops as well as guests from other Christian Churches.

Discussions, running until 22 July, 2023 are focused on five thematic areas including: Synodality and Power in the Church; the Political and Social Dimension; the Economy of Francesco; Integral Ecology and Education.

### **Going Out in the World Makes the Church Stronger**

[In a short video message](#), Pope Francis said he wished to convey his closeness to all participants and asked the Brazilian Basic Ecclesial Communities to continue their precious work in line with the theme chosen for the session. He compared the church to water, saying “if the water in the river doesn't flow, it stagnates and becomes unhealthy.” He therefore insisted that the Church must not remain “hidden.” “When the Church goes out (to meet the world), it walks and it feels stronger.”

### **Increasing the Role of the Laity in the Church**

Basic Ecclesial Communities are a Christian movement aimed at encouraging lay faithful to participate in the mission of the Church at the grassroot level, thus promoting a new way of “being Church.” They began to spread in Latin America, and in particular in Brazil, in the 1960s encouraged by the emphasis the Second Vatican Council and the 1968 Latin American Medellin Conference gave to a more active engagement of the laity in living and witnessing to the Gospel in society.

Opening the meeting on Tuesday, Bishop Gabriele Marchesi of Floresta, reference bishop for the BECs and a member of the Commission for Laity of the National Conference of Bishops of Brazil (CNBB), expressed his hope that the gathering may give a new energy to the Brazilian Basic Ecclesial Communities and help increase the role of the laity in the local Church. “Every layman and woman, every community has to know that they are called to be protagonists in the life and mission of the Church,” he said.

Brazilian BECs held their first national inter-ecclesial meeting in 1975.

A 1:57 minutes audio report on the Vatican Website can be found at: [Pope upholds Brazilian BECs' commitment to promote an outgoing Church - Vatican News](#)