



The Pastoral Land Commission
Communication Office

After 15 years of Sister Dorothy's martyrdom, the people of Anapu (PA) still resist

Today, February 12, 15 years have passed since the murder of the north-american missionary, Sr. Dorothy Stang. A naturalized Brazilian religious, Sr. Dorothy belonged to the Congregation of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur. The nun, who was part of the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT), in Anapu, Pará, was shot six times at the lot 55 of the Sustainable Development Project (PDS) - Esperança, on February 12, 2005. The murder was ordered by two farmers, Vitalmiro Bastos de Moura, known as Bida, and Regivaldo Pereira Galvão, known as Taradão, due to a dispute over lands that belongs to the Brazilian State. Even threatened with death, Dorothy never failed in her life mission, to fight for the poors of the land, so they have their rights guaranteed and a dignified life. From 2005 to 2019, according to the Documentation Center Dom Tomás Balduino (Cedoc), there were 23 murders in conflicts, in Brazil rural area, in the city of Anapu (PA).

In 1966, Sr. Dorothy began her ministry in Brazil, in the city of Coroatá, in Maranhão. In the 1970s, she started working with rural workers in the Xingu Region. Her pastoral and missionary activity intended to create jobs and income through reforestation projects in devastated areas, with rural workers of the Transamazônica highway area. She also fought to reduce agrarian conflicts in the region.

Without rest, Dorothy was active in social movements in Pará. Her participation in sustainable development projects crossed the borders of the small village Vila de Sucupira, in Anapu, located 700 kilometers from Belém, capital of Pará state. Her work received national and international recognition.

The nun was a member of the CPT since its foundation, and followed with determination and solidarity the life and struggle of rural workers, especially in the Transamazônica region, in Pará. Defending a fair and wide agrarian reform, Sister Dorothy kept an intense dialogue agenda with peasants, politics and religious leaders. Among her many initiatives in favor of the poor people, Sister Dorothy helped found the first teacher training school on the Transamazônica highway, which crosses the small town of Anapu in the middle. It was the Brasil Grande School.

The nun received several death threats during her journey. Shortly before being murdered, she declared: "I'll not run away or abandon the struggle of these peasants who are unprotected in the middle of the forest. They have the sacred right to have a better life in a land where they can live and produce with dignity without devastating".

Dorothy's struggle remains alive!

During the funeral of Sister Dorothy Stang, in Anapu, it was said that the nun was not being buried, but "planted" in Brazilian soil.

Sisters Jane Dwyer and Kátia Webster, from the same congregation as Dorothy, continue the struggle and give hope to their legacy. Similarly, Father Amaro Lopes, does so. However, the same forces that took Dorothy out of that plan, continued to try to assassinate her presence among the poor people of Anapu.

On March 4, 2018, after a long criminalization process, Father Amaro Lopes was arrested. He was the victim of false accusations by farmers and the Civil Police of Anapu, with the aim of keeping him away from his activities in the city. The Public Prosecutor's Office found no evidence to support several of the accusations raised by the police. A campaign for the moral elimination of Padre Amaro was carried out.

The priest was released after a habeas corpus in June of the same year. However, the process is still going on and Father Amaro's activities were limited because of this.

In these 15 years, which saw the execution of Dorothy and the imprisonment of Father José Amaro, the PDS Esperança and Virola Jatobá were not only listed as the Dorothy Project. In these 15 years, PDS Esperança and Virola Jatobá have been life projects for many. About 400 families constituted, in the lands called Bacajá and Belo Monte, which comprise the two PDS, ways of living alternatives to the agribusiness exploitation system. And this is the greatest threat to land grabbers, loggers and ranchers in the region: living the forest in a sustainable project.

Synod of the Amazon and the Dorothy's legacy

On the same date that Dorothy is remembered, the document “Querida Amazônia” (Dear Amazon) is published, the post-synodal exhortation born of everything that was experienced during the Synod for the Amazon, held in Rome, from October 6th to 27th 2019.

One of the moments that most marked the Synod was the procession from St. Peter's Basilica to the synodal room, with the posters and banners of the martyrs of the Amazon.

Dorothy Lives!

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