

STATIONS OF THE FORESTS

DVD Resource Booklet

*“The earth is precious to God and to harm
the earth is to heap contempt on its creator.”
Chief Seattle's Testimony*

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INTRODUCTION

Stations of the Cross

The Stations of the Cross is a devotion commemorating the Passion of Jesus. It is most commonly used during the Season of Lent, especially on Good Friday. The object of the Stations is to make a spiritual pilgrimage of prayer, through meditating upon the scenes of Christ's sufferings and death.

The Stations themselves are usually a series of 14 pictures or sculptures depicting the following scenes:

- I Jesus is condemned to death
- II Jesus carries his cross
- III Jesus falls the first time
- IV Jesus meets His Mother
- V Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry the cross
- VI Veronica wipes the face of Jesus
- VII Jesus falls the second time
- VIII Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem
- IX Jesus falls the third time
- X Jesus is stripped of His garments
- XI Jesus is nailed to the cross
- XII Jesus dies on the cross
- XIII Jesus' body is removed from the cross
- XIV Jesus is laid in the tomb

Although not traditionally part of the Stations, the Resurrection of Jesus is sometimes included as a fifteenth Station.

Stations of the Forests

In the mid 1980s, in the Philippines, Columban Father Vincent Busch developed a 'Stations of the Forest' using the popular 'Stations' format to lament the stages in the death of a part of God's Creation, the Philippine rainforests. Various versions of it were used by Catholic agencies over the next decade. This is a revised production, updated in 2009, incorporating additional global issues related to rainforest destruction, such as the extractive industries and climate change.

USING THIS DVD EFFECTIVELY

Target Audience

- Adult groups – both Catholic and ecumenical – particularly Justice and Peace groups, development agency support groups, and Religious.
- Teachers and senior students in schools – for curriculum subjects such as Religious Education and Geography or for school Justice and Peace groups.
- The DVD is also a valuable resource for the educational training of teachers, and church personnel at tertiary level institutions and seminaries.

Using the DVD and booklet

The process will be most effective when people discover insights for themselves. It is estimated that we retain:

- 70-90% of what we hear, see and DO as part of a whole learning process
- 45% of what we hear and see
- 25% of what we hear

Best use can be made of the DVD when it is used in a group context with time allocated for discussion and reflection.

An agenda for a meeting, incorporating the viewing of the whole programme, is provided. Notes for each station are available to facilitate group reflection on individual stations.

Practical Tips for presentations

ADVANCE PREPARATION

Check the equipment is working and primed to start. Make sure you bring extension cables to enable you to set up in the best position of the room being used. It is ideal for groups of more than 6-8 to have a projector to show the DVD on a large screen or white wall. For smaller groups a laptop can be used.

LIGHTING

Take special care with lighting. If you are not in a purpose-built audio-visual room with blinds, put the screen in a corner on the window side of the room. This will ensure that the screen is not wiped out for many in the audience by reflection from the window.

SOUND

Also, the sound will be better using a separate sound system, such as a surround sound amplifying system.

DISTRACTIONS

Try and avoid distractions during viewing. Anticipate noise from next door and announcements on the intercom.

ORGANISING THE MEETING

Ensure the meeting room is comfortable and heated, with a circular seating arrangement - if the group is fairly small - allowing participants to see each other. Tea and coffee could be organised plus a display of relevant resources. Make sure the participants know each other and check their expectations of the meeting before the presentation. Pens and paper should be available to note key points of the discussion before and after showing the DVD. The meeting could begin and end with a suitable hymn, song or prayer. Some liturgical ideas are given on pages 26, 27 and 28.

STATIONS OF THE FORESTS SCRIPT FOR DVD

THE FIRST STATION

The forests are condemned to death.

For millennia forests have given life and beauty to our planet, Earth. They have provided water for its rivers, nourishment for its flowers and plants, and homes for its animals, fish and birds. They help to regulate our climate. In the Book of Genesis, God the Creator says, "See, I give you all the seed-bearing plants that are upon the whole earth and all the trees". The writer of Psalm 96 tells us that the forests sing God's praises: "Let the trees sing out for joy". Yet, the forests are condemned to die.

THE SECOND STATION

The forests are targeted for destruction.

Bulldozers cut scars deep into the back of the tropical forests. Again and again, blades rip up the fragile skin of the forests. Soon logging trucks travel along the wounded back bringing people and machines with which to attack the helpless trees. In order to advance so-called 'development', and satisfy our voracious appetite for wood, paper, minerals and other products, rainforest trees are being sacrificed in tropical countries, along with rivers, soil, animals, birds and flowers.

THE THIRD STATION

The forests fall the first time.

Chainsaws of logging companies slash the trunks of the trees. As each tree crashes to the ground, the splintering wood fills the forest with its screams. Smaller trees are broken or crushed and the soil is stripped as the logs are dragged to the logging trucks. Only stumps remain. One and a half acres of rainforest are lost every second somewhere in the world. Rainforests are being destroyed because the value of rainforest is perceived as only the value of its timber by short-sighted governments, banks, investors, multi-national logging companies, agri-businesses, and energy and mining companies.

THE FOURTH STATION

The trees meet their mother, Earth.

Like a mother the soil protects the seeds and nourishes the young trees. Now the trees lie dead in the arms of their mother, Earth. The whole Earth too is under threat, for without the protection of the sheltering trees, the life-giving soil will erode and disappear. Without sufficient tree cover to absorb the rains and fossil fuel gasses produced in our industrial societies the climate becomes less hospitable to all life on Earth.

THE FIFTH STATION

The loggers help carry the logs.

For a few coins people are hired to cut and carry the logs. They cannot refuse because they need to buy food for their families. When the forest is destroyed they will be hungry. Tragically, the poor help to destroy their own future in order to eat today. They and those who try to help them use the forests sustainably often fall victim to human rights abuses and are even killed.

THE SIXTH STATION

The clouds wipe the face of the forests.

Even in the dry season the cool wet tropical forests continue to form rain clouds. Soon the forests will be destroyed and the barren land will be too hot and too dry to make clouds. There will be floods and destruction or the rivers will dry and droughts will create hunger and famine. For the last time the clouds gently touch the face of the dying forests.

THE SEVENTH STATION

The forests fall the second time.

Forests are cleared to make way for cattle ranches, bio-fuel plantations and urban sprawl. Very often the wood is simply burned to make charcoal or simply burned for agriculture, with massive forest fires releasing hundreds of tonnes of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

THE EIGHTH STATION

The forest people weep for the trees.

They mourn as they watch not just the trees but their home being destroyed. Here they gathered food and root crops from the forest floor that was protected by centuries-old majestic trees. They made medicine from the leaves and plants. They were nourished by fish and wild animals. But most of all they cry now over the loss of this beautiful part of creation they cared for. Here God planted the rarest flowers and composed the magnificent songs of the birds. The people of the forest weep, not only for their forest and the loss of its biodiversity but for all people who will no longer have this cathedral where they can experience and chant to the glory of God. Their culture, language, meaning, spirituality and traditions were intimately linked to the environment. They too are condemned to die.

THE NINTH STATION

The forests fall for the last time.

The seeds of the trees left in the soil try to sprout again but become victims to mining companies that come to claim the gold, copper, nickel and other minerals. They claim the trees and the rivers as theirs. The people are left without rights to their lands. They receive meager compensation – “30 pieces of silver”. The soil and the agriculture that the poor people depend on are sacrificed to feed globalisation. The mining companies destroy the landscape, even the mountains, to get at the minerals beneath. These are regarded as more valuable now than the trees, the land, the marine environment and the local people. Pollution from mining operations poisons local agriculture, rivers and seas. The harmony between people, land, sea and air is broken.

THE TENTH STATION

The land is stripped.

The loggers and miners are gone. The forests are now deserts, wastelands. Only rocks and sand and enormous craters remain. There are no trees to protect the soil and there is no soil where new trees can grow. There is no food, no rice or corn. There are no animals, no birds, no flowers, no fish. There are no loggers, no slash and burn farmers, no mining companies. There are no fresh and clear streams and rivers. There are no forest people. The stripping of the land means death for life itself.

THE ELEVENTH STATION

The rain hammers the unprotected soil.

The sheltering plants are gone. The watersheds are no more. When the rainy season comes, there is nothing to protect the soil from the force of the driving rain. The rain hammers the soil, hitting the ground like exploding bombs. There are landslides and villages are buried under the rubble and mud. The soil bleeds into the rivers and is washed down to the sea.

THE TWELFTH STATION

The forests are dead.

The death of forests is forever. Once the rainforest is destroyed, all the forms of animal and plant life that lived in the forest can never come back to life. In only a few years the beautiful forests which took God millennia to create are destroyed forever by humans and their machines. The consequences are tragic for the whole global community. The death of forests is the death of the planet's biodiversity, and since rainforests absorb one-fifth of global carbon dioxide emissions, their loss means that global warming will be further speeded up. The healing power of Mother Earth is compromised.

THE THIRTEENTH STATION

The forests and the minerals are taken down to the seaports for export.

Little of the wood from the forests remains in the global south. Wood and minerals are taken away in ships to wealthy nations, whose remaining forests and environment is protected. The tropical forests are gone forever, taken away to be buried in foreign lands. Before humans started destroying the rainforests, they covered 15% of the Earth's land area. Today, they cover less than 7%. The Philippines has lost nearly 90% of its original rainforest over the past 50 years, Thailand 80%. Experts estimate that the last remaining rainforests, including the mighty Amazon rainforest, could disappear within the next 40 years.

THE FOURTEENTH STATION

The burial of the forests is the burial of the people.

The forest is dead. The loggers and poor farmers return to the lowlands to look for work as farmers and fishermen. But floods and droughts caused by deforestation, pollution and mining have ruined the lowland farms, and the soil that was washed to the sea has destroyed the fishing areas. The death of the forests has become the death of the people. They are forced to go far from home to earn a living as environmental and economic refugees.

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus turned to those who were weeping as he walked to Calvary and said: *“Do not weep for me; weep rather for yourselves and for your children.... For if this is what is done to green wood, what will be done when the wood is dry?”*

THE FIFTEENTH STATION

Fragile grounds for hope.

After the burial of Jesus there is a fifteenth station: the Resurrection. The forests that are dead are finished and cannot be brought back to life again. Christian hope must be based on what can be done with the forests that remain. We can and must act now or they too will soon be gone. The task of preserving and healing our planet is a daunting one, given human greed and the relentless drive of our plunder economy. But there is also generosity, and people have given their lives to protect the forests and the people who live there.

God has given us creativity and ingenuity which we can harvest in the service of life. The Spirit of God, who breathed over the waters and brought life out of chaos, urges all people to enhance and protect the integrity of creation. We must change our lifestyles and take action now, both commercial and political, to safeguard the life of the forests that remain and the poor who depend on them. We should live simply so that others may simply live. Let us listen to the stories of the rainforest peoples, to those affected by mining and climate change around the world. Together we can change and protect our home, planet Earth. We can and must live sustainably so that future generations can live on the vibrant planet we have inherited.

Let us together renew the face of the Earth.

Did you know?

Lincoln Cathedral has 15 Forest Stations, which are exhibited in panels on the North wall of the Nave. Using wood in an imaginative and innovative way, sculptor William Fairbank has created a set of wood panels involving intricate carving, inlay and juxtaposition of different woods, to create a narrative of the journey Jesus makes to Calvary and then victory over death - Resurrection.

AGENDA FOR A MEETING USING THE DVD

The meeting should last roughly one and a half hours. The organisers/group leaders should view the DVD in advance and be familiar with the written script. They should clarify the objectives of their planned meeting and select suitable questions from examples suggested below.

If the group is large it is recommended that the participants are divided into smaller groups (4-8 people) after showing the DVD.

10 mins

Welcome and situate the meeting in a faith context by reading from Psalm 96:

*Sing a new song to Yahweh! Sing to Yahweh, all the earth!
Let the heavens rejoice and earth be glad!
Let the sea thunder, and all it holds!
Let the countryside exult, and all that is in it,
and all the trees of the forest cry out for joy
at Yahweh's approach,
for Yahweh is coming, coming to judge the earth;
Yahweh will judge the earth with liberating justice,
and the nations with peace.*

What are the expectations of this gathering?
How has the subject matter attracted you?
Have particular trees been important in your own lives?
Name them.

Brainstorm - what do people know about the rainforests of the world and climate change?
Any first-hand experience?
What relevant stories have been noticed in the media lately?

20 mins

Show DVD: The Stations of the Forests

30 mins

In discussion groups examine some of the following questions:

What image or phrase stays with you after seeing the DVD and why?

What in the presentation surprised you and why?

Identify some of the key causes of poverty, environmental destruction and migration.

What links can we make to our own lifestyles?

Why are rainforests important in the world?

10 mins

What does the following reading mean for us today?

“And he told them a parable, ‘Look at the fig tree and indeed every tree. As soon as you see them bud, you can see for yourselves that summer is now near. So with you when you see these things happening: know that the kingdom of God is near.’”

Luke 21:29-31

Think of passages of Scripture which show God's love for all Creation. The Book of Genesis, for example, talks of God looking at Creation and regarding it as “good”.

15 mins

Then consider the following:

What response can you make to the issues raised in the DVD?

Think in terms of lifestyle, political/economic action, awareness-raising and worship.

5 mins

Concluding hymn or prayer, possibly based on liturgy ideas given on pages 26, 27 and 28.

REFLECTION ON EACH STATION

THE FIRST STATION

The forests are condemned to death.

The writer of Psalm 96 tells us that the forests sing God's praises:

"Let the trees of the forest cry out for joy" Psalm 96:12.

Yet, the forests are condemned to die.

What have trees meant for you in your life?

Why are rainforests important to the world? (see page 23)

When have trees been mentioned or used in church?

What does the following phrase from Psalm 96 mean:

"Let the trees of the forest cry out for joy"?

THE SECOND STATION

The forests are targeted for destruction.

In order to advance so-called 'development', and satisfy our voracious appetites for wood, paper, electricity, minerals and other products, rainforest trees are being sacrificed in tropical countries, along with rivers, soil, animals, birds and flowers.

What do you understand by the phrase "sustainable development"?

Why has human society been so destructive of God's creation?

Discuss the following quote from scripture:

"I know a cedar tree in the Lebanon with noble branches, dense foliage, lofty height. Its top pierces the clouds. The waters have made it grow, the deep has made it tall, pouring its rivers round the place where it is planted, sending rivulets to all the wild trees. This is why its height was greater than that of other wild trees, its branches increased in number, its boughs stretched wide, because of the plentiful waters making it grow. All the birds of heaven nested in its branches; under its boughs all wild animal dropped their young; in its shade sat many, many people."
Ezekiel 31:3-6

THE THIRD STATION

The forests fall the first time.

One and a half acres of rainforest are lost every second somewhere in the world.

How does human society demonstrate short-sightedness in relation to the natural world?

How will the loss of trees affect food security?

Discuss the following from scripture:

“Your fortifications are all fig trees, with early ripening figs: as soon as they are shaken, they fall into the mouth of the eater.”
Nahum 3:12

Discuss the following from the Mass: “Blessed are you Lord God of all Creation....”

THE FOURTH STATION

The trees meet their mother, Earth.

Without sufficient tree cover to absorb the rains and fossil fuel gasses produced in our industrial societies the climate becomes less hospitable to all life on Earth.

Identify some of the reasons why we might fail to appreciate God's gift of the natural world.

What, if anything, can we do about this?

How far do you feel that all living things should have rights, including animals and plants?

How comfortable are you with the concept of 'Mother Earth' which nurtures all life on Earth, including human life?

What does the following passage mean for us today?

“And the forests and every fragrant tree will provide shade for Israel”

Baruch 5:8

THE FIFTH STATION

The loggers help carry the logs.

Tragically, the poor help to destroy their own future in order to eat today.

What links are there between poverty and environment?
Why does meeting short-term needs often prevail over meeting long-term objectives?

What impression does the following text give about God's continued participation in human history?

"The days of my people will be like the days of a tree, and my chosen ones will themselves use what they have made. They will not toil in vain, nor bear children destined to disaster; for they are the race of Yahweh's blessed ones and so are their offspring."
Isaiah 65:22-23

What initiatives have individuals or the group been involved in which addressed the issue of poverty? How were churches involved?

THE SIXTH STATION

The clouds wipe the face of the forests.

Soon the forests will be destroyed and the barren land will be too hot and too dry to make clouds.

What do 'clouds' mean to you?
In what ways are desertification and drought linked to the loss of forest cover?
How is the world's hydrological cycle linked into the world's trees?

Reflect on the following scriptural text:

"All the trees of the forest cry out for joy at Yahweh's approach, who is coming to judge the earth. Give thanks to Yahweh, who is good, whose faithful love lasts for ever!"
1 Chronicles 16: 33-34

THE SEVENTH STATION

The trees fall the second time.

Massive forest fires release hundreds of tonnes of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

Identify the factors that are contributing towards climate change.

What are you doing to address climate change? Are you involved with any of the current awareness-raising campaigns?

What does the following text suggest about the need for humility towards God's creation?

"Have you an inkling of the extent of the earth? Tell me about it if you have!"

Job 38:18

THE EIGHTH STATION

The forest people weep for the trees.

Their culture, language, meaning, spirituality and traditions were intimately linked to the environment. They too are condemned to die.

Brainstorm on what you know about the world's tribal peoples today.

What can our society learn from their lives and perspectives?

What does the diversity of languages, religions and peoples mean for mission and church today?

What does this diversity tell us about God?

What does this text mean in the context of the discussion about this Station?

"The spirit of the Lord is on me, for he has anointed me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind, and to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord."

Luke 4:18-19

THE NINTH STATION

The forests fall for the last time.

The mining companies destroy the landscape, even the mountains, to get at the minerals beneath.

What links are there between our lifestyles and the activities of mining companies? (The slides are from the Philippines). How could we reduce our demand for minerals being mined overseas?

How true is it that our society gives little value to beautiful landscapes, forest environments and the habitats of other species?

Where are our pension funds invested?

What do we learn about God's Covenant with Creation from the following:

“When I gather the clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, I shall recall the covenant between myself and you and every living creature, and never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all living things. When the rainbow is in the clouds I shall see it and call to mind the eternal covenant between God and every living creature on earth, that is, all living things.”

Genesis 9:14-16

THE TENTH STATION

The land is stripped.

The stripping of the land means death for life itself.

How should we repent for what is happening to the natural world?

What would reconciliation involve?

How is this passage of scripture challenging us today?

“The vine has withered, the fig tree wilts away; pomegranate, palm tree, apple tree, every tree in the countryside is dry, and for human beings joy has run dry too.”

Joel 1:12

THE ELEVENTH STATION

The rain hammers the unprotected soil.

There are landslides and villages are buried under the rubble and mud.

The second image shows a massive mudslide that happened on 17 February 2006 on the Philippine island of Leyte. It engulfed the village of Guinsaugon, killing more than 1,100 people, including pupils and teachers at an elementary school. Ten days of heavy rain on hillsides, bare after logging, contributed to the tragedy.

Think of other examples of extreme weather which have impacted recently on people and environment anywhere in the world. Which communities are especially vulnerable? Was there an element of human responsibility?

How important is the natural world in scripture?

“So they came to Elim where there were twelve springs and seventy palm trees; and there they pitched camp beside the water.”

Exodus 15:27

THE TWELTH STATION

The forests are dead.

The healing power of Mother Earth is compromised.

How far do you feel that mainstream human society and politicians must question the prevailing notion of “development”?

Would you regard the wholesale destruction of other species (extinction) in the natural world as “sinful”?

How does this extinction of species limit our perception of God as Creator?

What have you heard in the churches about the destruction of creation?

What does the following passage say to us today?

“I shall plant the desert with cedar trees, acacias, myrtles and olives; in the wastelands I shall put cypress trees, plane trees and box trees side by side; so that people may see and know, so that they may all observe and understand that the hand of Yahweh has done this, that the Holy One of Israel has created it.”

Isaiah 41:19-20

THE THIRTEENTH STATION

The forests and the minerals are taken down to the seaports for export.

Experts estimate that the last remaining rainforests, including the mighty Amazon rainforest, could disappear within the next 40 years.

In what ways do you 'benefit' from rainforest destruction?
How true is it that urbanised peoples in particular feel little of a sense of loss about the destruction of rainforests?

What do you think the following text means for us today?
“We are well aware that the whole creation, until this time, has been groaning in labour pains.”

Romans 8:22

THE FOURTEENTH STATION

The burial of the forests is the burial of the people.

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus turned to the women who were weeping as he walked to Calvary and said: *“Do not weep for me; weep rather for yourselves and for your children.... For if this is what is done to green wood, what will be done when the wood is dry?”* Luke 23:28-31

What do these words mean for us today?

Struggles over the world's natural resources are mounting.
How are we involved in them?

THE FIFTEENTH STATION

Fragile grounds for hope.

We can and must live sustainably so that future generations can live on the vibrant planet we have inherited. Let us together renew the face of the Earth.

What or who gives us hope in times of despondency?

What are Christian individuals and communities doing to respond to the problems identified?

What more could our faith community do to respond to environmental degradation in our own neighbourhoods?

What does the following psalm suggest about God's role in creation?

“Turn away your face and they panic; take back their breath and they die and revert to dust. Send out your breath and life begins; you renew the face of the earth.” Psalm 104:29-30

SUGGESTIONS FOR FOLLOW-UP

Contact the following organisations for information about their campaigns involving the saving of rainforests and tribal peoples:

Friends of the Earth, www.foe.co.uk or 020 7490 1555

Greenpeace, www.greenpeace.org.uk or 020 7865 8100

World Rainforest Movement, www.wrm.org.uy

Survival - The Movement for Tribal People,
www.survival-international.org or 0207 687 8700

Mines and Communities, www.minesandcommunities.org

London Mining Network, www.londonminingnetwork.org

Philippine Indigenous Peoples Links, www.piplinks.org or
020 7326 0363

The following have climate campaigns, linking development and environment issues:

Operation Noah, www.operationnoah.org or 020 7324 4761

CAFOD, www.cafod.org.uk or 020 7733 7900

Progressio, www.progressio.org.uk or 020 7354 0883

Christian Aid, www.christianaid.org.uk or 020 7620 4444

ECCR, www.wccr.org.uk or 01865 245349

In addition:

The *livesimply* project (www.livesimply.org.uk) helps Christians to examine their own lifestyles and to choose to live simply, sustainably and in solidarity with the poor.

Christian Ecology Link (www.christian-ecology.org.uk) helps Christians to understand and relate responsibility for creation to their faith.

INFORMATION ON RAINFORESTS

Tropical rainforests are found in Africa, Asia, Australia, and Central and South America. The largest rainforest in the world is the Amazon rainforest, where trees can be hundreds and even more than a thousand years old.

These rainforests support the greatest biodiversity of living organisms on Earth - more than 50% of the planet's plants and animals. They are important to the global ecosystem, helping to stabilise the world's climate and are a key source for foods and medicine. They are integral for tribal peoples, supporting their distinctive and fascinating cultures.

- At least 80% of our diets have originated in tropical rainforests: rice, cocoa, coffee, sugar cane; fruits like avocados, coconuts, figs, oranges, lemons, grapefruit, bananas, guavas, pineapples, mangoes and tomatoes; vegetables including corn, potatoes, winter squash and yams; spices like black pepper, cayenne, cinnamon, cloves, ginger, and vanilla and nuts, including Brazil nuts and cashews.
- At least 3,000 fruits are found in the rainforests; of these only 200 are used in the western world. Indigenous people in the Amazon rainforest use over 2,000 fruits.
- While 25% of Western pharmaceuticals are derived from rainforest ingredients, it is estimated that less than 1% of tropical trees and plants have been tested by scientists.
- 25% of the active ingredients in today's cancer-fighting drugs come from organisms found only in rainforests. In 1983, there were no US pharmaceutical manufacturers involved in research programs to discover new drugs or cures from plants. Today, over 100 pharmaceutical companies and several branches of the US government are engaged in plant research projects for possible drugs. Biopiracy and Patenting are widespread.

TRIBAL PEOPLE

Around 50 million tribal people live in the world's rainforests. They depend upon the forests for their food and shelter. As more forests are destroyed, people are killed too. Many native tribes have been wiped out because their governments have failed to protect them from logging companies, mining companies and slash and burn farmers.

MINING

Large-scale open-cast mining projects have enormous environmental impacts. Half of all new mining projects are on lands of indigenous peoples who, together with local communities, are impacted by reduction and contamination of agricultural and marine productivity. Problems in places like the tropical Philippine archipelago include deforestation, water and soil degradation, and an increasing loss of habitat and biodiversity. Mercury and cyanide leaching for gold extraction is especially damaging when the chemicals escape into the atmosphere or surrounding environment. Toxic contamination of groundwater is a major health and environmental concern.

Many communities affected by the world's big mining corporations have sought support from groups such as the Working Group on Mining in the Philippines (WGMP), Mines and Communities (MAC) and the London Mining Network (LMN), of which the Columbans are members. Their struggles for human rights and livelihoods are highlighted. The claims of mining companies that they are catalysts for development and poverty alleviation are refuted by vibrant communities on the ground who have seen their livelihoods and cultures increasingly destroyed.

In recent years, the mining laws of over a hundred countries have been changed to accommodate the goals of mining capital. Protocols protecting Indigenous Peoples and environmental rights continue to be diluted or undermined.

DEFENDING THE RAINFORESTS AND PLANET EARTH

“It is necessary, therefore, to stimulate and sustain the **'ecological conversion,'** which over these last decades has made humanity more sensitive when facing the catastrophe toward which it is moving.” *Pope John Paul II, 2002, on the eve of the Johannesburg Summit on Sustainable Development*

“Modern society will find no solution to the ecological problem unless it takes a serious look at its lifestyle.”
Pope John Paul II, 1990 World Day of Peace Message
<http://www.shc.edu/theolibrary/environ.htm>

“Twenty years after our pastoral letter regarding our environment, we reflect on the gains and failures of the years that have passed. The document began with a sombre reflection that our country is in peril. All the living systems on land and in the seas are being ruthlessly exploited. The damage to date is extensive and, sad to say, often irreversible. We encourage the faithful to see their work to protect creation within the context of their faith. As a people of the covenant, we are called to protect endangered ecosystems like our forests, coral reefs and mangroves, and to establish just and humane communities.”*Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, November 2008*

A 74-year-old American-born missionary Sr Dorothy Stang was assassinated on 12 February 2005 for defending the Amazon forest and rural workers in Brazil. She often wore a tee-shirt that said, "The death of the forest is the death of life".

In the 1970s, an organised resistance to the destruction of forests spread throughout India, called the Chipko movement. The name of the movement comes from the word 'embrace', as village people – especially women - hugged trees,

Kenya's Green Belt Movement – founded by nobel laureate Wangari Maathai in the 1970s – has planted over 30 million trees across Kenya to prevent soil erosion and flooding.

LITURGY MATERIAL

Transform our lives.

May God who established the dance of creation,
who marvelled at the lilies of the field,
who transforms chaos to order,
lead us to transform our lives and the Church
to reflect God's glory in creation.

(CTBI Eco-Congregation Programme)

As the air sings with songs of glory,
as the water flashes with the silver of creation,
as the forests bloom with leaves for the healing of the nations,
so may God's light and love
fill our hearts and souls and minds.

(CTBI Eco-Congregation Programme)

Guide us as we gather, Eternal God.

We thank you for the glory of your creation,
A mystery that surpasses our knowledge.

Eternal God,

We thank you for the earth and water, sun and wind,
Creatures and people, nations and cultures.

Guide us as we gather to confess

That we have violated the gift of life given to us.

Strengthen us

As we seek to affirm that the earth and all therein is yours.

Enable us

As we seek to recall your covenant

And make it our own. Amen.

(World Council of Churches)

Creator of the mighty trees, the broad oceans, the atmosphere,
the earth, and all that lives,
forgive us and reconcile us to you.
Let us remake this world in the love and compassion of the
One who makes all things new,
who is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End.
We, the children of God,
cry aloud to you, Lord our God.
Restore, reconcile and re-equip us
to live in harmony with all creation,
and to be signs to each other and to the world
of your kingdom come on Earth.

(Operation Noah Launch - Coventry Cathedral, 2004)

Forgive us, Lord, our obsession with ourselves.
We are not able to recognise our own limits.
We are so concentrated
on our present needs and on our own work
that we forget to be grateful
for the gifts You have given us
through the generations who have gone before us.

(European Churches Environmental Network)

Time for God's creation

Forgive us, Lord, for our closed horizon,
preventing us from looking towards tomorrow,
preventing us from handing over to our children
a fertile and clean earth.

Forgive us, Lord, for our greedy selfishness,
for our closed hands, grasping to hoard all we can
to squeeze our natural resources dry.

Open our hands, Lord, to the joy of sharing.
Teach them the sower's generous gesture,
so that we may sow seeds without caring
who will benefit from the fruits of the harvest. Amen

(Luca M. Negro, European Churches Environmental Network)

Show us how to do things well today,
so that others may not suffer,
here or there, now or in the future.
Show us how to make our contribution
as we change the way we live,
travel, make and consume, pack and unpack,
use, misuse and re use energy, heating and lighting.
Show us how to do simple things well in our home,
places of work and lifestyle choices.
Show us how to protect the world you made,
in all its diversity and goodness,
from our carbon emissions,
global warming and climate change,
rising temperatures and sea levels,
the displacement of peoples, environmental poverty,
harm and destruction.
Show us how and show us why, so that alone and with others
our contribution will make a difference. Amen.

(Robin Morrison)

Praise be to the Holy Trinity!
God is sound and life, Creator of the Universe,
Source of all life, whom the angels sing;
Wondrous Light of all mysteries
Known or unknown to humankind,
And life that lives in all.
(Hildegard of Bingen, 13th Century)

COLUMBAN MISSION

The Missionary Society of St. Columban was founded in 1916. Today there are 477 priests, 38 students and 67 lay missionaries worldwide, primarily in Asia and Latin America. There are 200 Columban sisters. It is called to be a missionary presence in Britain, encouraging and listening to the local Church in its efforts to reach out beyond its boundaries for the sake of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Internationally and in Britain key missionary challenges have been identified as:

- Working for a just society in which the poor and the marginalised are given special attention and all experience the life God intends for the human family;
- Promoting respect for and care of the earth as an imperative of our Christian faith;
- Creating a society in which the migrant and the stranger are treated with compassion and respect for their human dignity, culture and rights;
- Encouraging peoples of different faiths to relate in mutual understanding, respect and tolerance and to cooperate as people of faith in God, wanting to respond together to common human needs;
- Building multi-cultural Christian communities in which all have a sense of belonging and which reach out beyond their boundaries as living signs of the Gospel values they proclaim.

Sharing the Columban mission experience, we respond to the challenges by:

- working, in solidarity with the poor and the exploited earth, for justice, peace and the integrity of creation;

- life-giving relationships between peoples of different cultures and religions;
- facilitating the exchange of personnel and resources between Britain and other places where Columbans work;
- seeking the signs of God's Spirit at work in our situation, we engage in mission in cooperation with others of like vision and in openness to what God is doing among us and in our world;
- raising awareness of and eliciting support for Columban mission overseas.

Outreach in the area of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC) has been an important dimension of the Society's work over the past two decades. There have been close links with Catholic development agencies, Justice and Peace networks and ecumenical groups tackling poverty and injustice at home and overseas. Key areas for the Columbans have been Climate Change, Migrants, Mining and Genetically Modified Food.

*Further information:
Columban JPIC Team, St. Joseph's,
Watford Way, Hendon, London NW4 4TY. 020 8202 2555.
www.columbans.co.uk*

Columban action in the Philippines

During 1987-88, in the Columban parish of San Jose in Midsalip, Mindanao, the church led a five-month long 'People-Power' picket to stop illegal logging to protect the environment. The Philippine Government Department of the Environment and Natural Resources cancelled the company licenses in December 1988.

FURTHER RESOURCES

PAINT THE CHURCH GREEN

A group course by Ellen Teague

Published by Kevin Mayhew

Paint the Church Green enables church groups to explore the relationship between faith and concern for the natural world. By highlighting environmental issues, unsustainable development and the link with global poverty, it prompts reflection on western lifestyle and makes suggestions for change.

Price: £5.99 + £2.00 p&p from 01449 737 978 or sales@kevinmayhewltd.com

BECOMING A GREEN CHRISTIAN

Ellen Teague

Published by Kevin Mayhew

This is a 'green' guide for individuals. There are many different ways to be a little greener, such as recycling, cycling to work, reusing plastic bags, reducing food miles and buying locally produced food. Also refusing to buy hardwood furniture.

Price £8.99 + £2.00 p&p from 01449 737 978 or sales@kevinmayhewltd.com

BETWEEN THE FLOOD AND THE RAINBOW Climate Change and the Church's Social Teaching - A Study Guide

This Study Guide on Climate Change has been produced by Operation Noah, supported by CAFOD, Columban JPIC, and the National Justice and Peace Network of England and Wales. Based on key themes in Catholic Social Teaching, it is intended for study and reflection by adult groups. The Guide contains agendas for six Meetings with accompanying Appendices, Reflection and Action Sheets, Reading Sheets, plus a Prayer and Worship Section.

Price £5.00 plus £1.00 p&p from Operation Noah, 020 7324 4761 or www.operationnoah.org. Cheques to 'Operation Noah'

PHILIPPINES: MINING OR FOOD?

Working Group on Mining in the Philippines

This second report, from a Working Group that includes Columban Faith and Justice, calls for a moratorium on new mining in the Philippines, a review of existing mining projects and a withdrawal of international investment in Philippines mining. The report provides evidence that mining is causing large-scale destruction of island environments and people's livelihoods, particularly undermining food production.

£15.00 inclusive of P&P from 020 7794 8131. DVD £3.00.

<http://philippinesminingorfood.blogspot.com/>

Vocation for Justice is the newsletter of the Columban JPIC Team, distributed three times a year. To join the mailing list, contact vocforjus@aol.com or phone 020 8202 2555

The following books are by Columban **Sean McDonagh** and are available from Amazon Books and good bookshops:

To Care for the Earth: Call to a New Theology

An encouragement for Christian churches to take a lead in protecting the natural world. The author offers new insights into sacramental practice, Christian prayer and missionary practice.

The Death of Life: The Horror of Extinction

Human activity causes extinction in three ways according to the author: habitat destruction, the introduction of alien species into an ecosystem, and human-created pollution. He cites the destruction of tropical forests, over-fishing and modern fishing techniques, and changing landscapes as being typical of habitat destruction.

Climate Change: The Challenge to All of Us

The threat of global warming is examined and how the churches have responded to this threat to date.