



Stations of the Forests



St Columbans Mission Society

First Published June 2009
ISBN: 978-1-902648-97-2

Missionary Society of St. Columban
Widney Manor Road
Knowle, Solihull
West Midlands B93 9AB

Columban Justice and Peace Office
St. Joseph's, Watford Way ,
Hendon
London NW4 4TY
E-mail: jpicssc@btconnect.com
020 8202 2555
Website: www.columbans.co.uk

Photo credits:
Columbans, Dalgan Park
Christian Ecology Link
Friends of the Earth UK
Greenpeace UK
Survival International

Production:
Peter Hughes ssc, Frank Nally ssc
and Ellen Teague – Columban
JPIC Team
Countrywise Communications,
Northampton

Australian Version:
Published March 2011

Columban Mission Institute
Centre for Peace Ecology and
Justice
Locked Bag 2002
Strathfield, NSW 2016
E-mail: pej.cmi@columban.org.au
+61 02 9352 8021
Website: www.columban.org.au

Production:
Margaret Tomlinson rsj,
Anne Lanyon, Fr Charles Rue,
Fr Jack Evans – Columban Mission
Institute PEJ Centre
Dynan Productions, Darlinghurst,
NSW
Jacqui Russell, Columban Mission
Centre, Essendon, Vic

Photo Credits:
Fr Charles Rue
Fr Vincent Busch
NASA
I-Stock
Emma Lanyon

Voice:
Jenny Collins-White, Catholic
Mission

STATIONS OF THE FORESTS

DVD and Resource Booklet

AUSTRALIAN VERSION

*“All praise be yours, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains us
and governs us, and produces various fruits with coloured flowers and herbs.”
St Francis of Assisi, Patron of Ecology*

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. A revised production was updated in 2009 by the Columbans in the UK, incorporating additional global issues related to rainforest destruction such as the extractive industries and climate change. This is the Australian version.

USING THIS DVD EFFECTIVELY

Target Audience

- Adult groups – both Catholic and ecumenical – particularly Peace Ecology and Justice groups, development agency support groups, and Religious congregations
- Teachers and senior students in schools – for staff days and curriculum subjects such as Religious Education and Geography or for school Peace Ecology and Justice 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.

Cairns Cathedral



St Monica's Cathedral in Cairns, Far North Queensland, features a wall of stained glass Creation windows. A series of 24 images begin with the dark void, the intimations of twisting shapes from which DNA and life will form. They progress through the evolution of life to humanity, then to the vision of a new heaven and a new earth.

STATIONS OF THE FORESTS

Script for DVD

Introduction

The Gospel challenges us to build right relationships with each other and all of creation. This powerful story reveals what happens when right relationships break down. The Subanen people of the Southern Philippines are literally having their forest environment cut down around them, with the timber slated for export and the vacant land for cropping. Feeling politically powerless they have drawn on their faith, creating their own Stations of the Cross to tell their story. This has helped them connect their own sufferings with Christ's and with the suffering of all of God's creation.

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 appetites 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.

Chain saws 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 a 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 gases 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 trees 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 meagre 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. If 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 live in the forest can never come back to life (biocide).

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. 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 when the trees are green, what will happen when they are dead?"*

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.

Conclusion

The Land of the SOUTHERN CROSS, Renewal in Australia

All powerful stories carry a universal message. Just as people and the earth are absolutely interconnected, so are the natural world and faith. The Earth is God's first revelation, something deeply and intuitively understood by the Subanen people. Their story helps us to tell our story. Looking at our landscape...its beauty...its scars...what challenges us? Can we remake the traditional devotion of the Stations of the Cross? Can it move us as a community to a new relationship with our land and each other?

Did you know?

Less than two years after the death of a vast expanse of Victorian forests on Black Saturday 2009, an exuberant profusion of green has emerged from the smouldering ruins of the land. With the rebirth of eucalypts and other native plants comes the animals and reptiles that inhabit the greening forests. (See *Out of the Ashes* DVD, ABC, 2011)

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 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: Australian Version

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 this 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.

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 on pages 22/23.

REFLECTION ON EACH STATION

Introduction

“God saw all that he had made and it was very good” (Genesis 1: 31)
Comment on this passage. What is it the good in creation?

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 pages 18/19)

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 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 animals 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 this 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 in 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? In Australia?

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

Where are our superannuation 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 Twelfth 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 when the trees are green, what will happen when they are dead?”* (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 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

Conclusion

The Land of the SOUTHERN CROSS, Renewal in Australia

“The Earth is God’s first revelation, something deeply and intuitively understood by the Subanen people.”

Have you experienced this level of understanding within the Australian landscape? If yes, where and why? If not, why not?

What challenges can you identify in your community? Use the format of the traditional Stations of the Cross to reflect on them?

SUGGESTIONS AND LINKS FOR FOLLOW-UP

For information about the saving of forests, rainforests and tribal peoples:

Australian Forest Profiles www.daff.gov.au/brs/publications/series/forest-profiles

Deforestation. www.greenpeace.org/australia/issues/deforestation

Friends of the Earth, www.foe.org.au

Greenpeace, www.greenpeace.org/australia/

Saving Indonesia's Forests. [www.eco-](http://www.eco-business.com/news/2011/jan/10/business-key-saving-indonesias-forests-says-al-gor/)

[business.com/news/2011/jan/10/business-key-saving-indonesias-forests-says-al-gor/](http://www.eco-business.com/news/2011/jan/10/business-key-saving-indonesias-forests-says-al-gor/)

Most carbon-dense forest

www.sustainablebusiness.com/index.cfm/go/news.display/id/18387

National Forestry Education and Awareness Network (NFEAN) Australia.

www.australianforests.org.au/australiasforests/index.htm

Palm oil and Indonesia

www.brecorder.com/component/news/single/624:news.html?id=1157811

Palm Oil Green Development Campaign.

www.worldgrowth.org/palmoil/index.cfm?sec=19&subSec=73&id=530

Queensland Tropical Forests

www.worldwildlife.org/wildworld/profiles/terrestrial/aa/aa0117_full.html

REDD and Palm Oil. news.mongabay.com/2010/0222-palmoil.html

Survival International - The Movement for Tribal People, www.survival-international.org

Trees for the Future. www.plant-trees.org

UN Environment Programme: Billion Trees Campaign.

www.unep.org/billiontreecampaign/index.asp

World Rainforest Movement, www.wrm.org.uy

For climate campaigns, linking development, environment and justice issues:

Caritas Australia. www.caritas.org.au

Catholic Earthcare Australia. www.catholicearthcare.org.au

Catholic Social Teaching. www.catholicsocialteaching.org.uk

Changing Our Mine: the impact of mining on communities.

[www.nirs.org.au/index.php? +search](http://www.nirs.org.au/index.php?+search)

Mines and Communities, www.minesandcommunities.org

Operation Noah, www.operationnoah.org

Jubilee Australia www.jubileeaustralia.org

In addition:

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

Earthlinking is a community environmental education centre run by the Sisters of Mercy in Brisbane. www.earth-link.org.au/

FEN (Faith Ecology Network) is an Australian interfaith network. To subscribe email faith_ecology_network-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.au

Gumburu is a Catholic Environmental Education Centre in the rainforest of Northern Queensland www.gumburu.tsv.catholic.edu.au

Pallotti College is a retreat centre in the foothills of Mt Donna Buang, Victoria surrounded by wet sclerophyll forest. www.pallottine.org.au/index_2.htm

Rahamin is an Ecological Learning Community run by the Sisters of Mercy in Bathurst www.rahamin.org.au

The Centre for Ecology and Spirituality is a Christian Brothers retreat place in Victoria. www.edmundrice.org.au/glenburn

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.

INFORMATION ON RAINFORESTS

Worldwide, 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.

In Australia, rainforests make up only 2% of the total forest area which covers about 21% of the continent. The remainder consists mainly of native forests (predominantly eucalypts) and some plantations. The ancestors of some of Australia's rainforest species date back millions of years.

Tropical rainforests support the greatest biodiversity of living organisms on Earth - more than 50% of the planet's plants and animals. Although only a tiny fraction of Australia's landmass, rainforests are home to:

- 62% of Australia's butterfly species,
- 30% of marsupial and frog species,
- 17% of bird species and
- 60% of plant families" (NFEAN).

Rainforests form a dynamic ecosystem in which each species of plant and animal plays an integral part. For example, in the wet tropical rainforests of North Queensland the Southern Cassowary, a very large bird that lives for 40-50 years, helps to disperse the seeds of more than a hundred plant and tree species, including seeds too large for other birds. Thus it plays a vital role in the maintenance of the forest ecosystem. But the cassowary is a threatened species, due to fragmentation and loss of habitat through clearing for roads, subdivision and residential settlement, In the Mission Beach area, for example, cassowaries have lost nearly half their habitat in the last decade. With the enormous destruction of the remaining forest canopy and fruit by Cyclone Yasi in early 2011, the fate of the cassowary and, therefore, of the wet tropics rainforests in which it plays a crucial role looks bleak indeed.

Rainforests 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: cocoa, coffee, sugar cane, fruits like avocados, coconuts, figs, oranges, lemons, grapefruit, bananas, guavas, pineapples, mangoes and tomatoes; vegetables including corn, potatoes, rice, 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 U.S. 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.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Around 50 million indigenous 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.

In Australia, the Australian Heritage Commission acknowledges the interaction between the first peoples of this country and the creation and wellbeing of forest wilderness: "Indigenous custodianship and customary practices have been, and in many places continue to be, significant factors in creating wilderness".

MINING

Large scale open-cut mining projects 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. Leaching of toxic materials into 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 divided, displaced and destroyed.

Mining is potentially destructive at all stages - from initial exploration, through to mineral extraction and finally to mine site closure, abandonment or rehabilitation. In addition, the use and pace of military and paramilitary oppression by state and private forces, employed or acting on behalf of mining companies, in countries like the Philippines, has dramatically increased. Accompanying this is significantly greater intimidation, arbitrary arrest – and murder – of community and church leaders, whose only "crime" has been opposing the mining projects that threaten their peoples' livelihoods and territorial integrity. 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.

In Australia, indigenous people / traditional owners have found themselves in years of conflict with mining companies in some areas where they hold native title, such as in the Kakadu and Kimberley regions. When Kakadu was established as a National Park in 1981, the Ranger and Jabiluka uranium mining sites were specifically excluded from the National Park, though it surrounds them on all sides. After widespread opposition, operations at Jabiluka ceased in the late 1990's, but the Ranger mine remains a concern. There were reports in 2009 and 2010 of millions of litres of contaminated water flowing into creeks which then flow into the surrounding Kakadu Park, including its wetlands, with destructive consequences for its ecosystems.

As was evident in the recent dispute over the proposed location of Woodside Ltd's gas operation at James Price Point on the Kimberley coast, indigenous communities experience a sharp-edged dilemma: If they take advantage of money/royalties and the opportunities that it affords, will they also see cultural and environmental destruction and the death of country?

DEFENDING THE FORESTS 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

“The earth is precious to God and to harm the earth is to heap contempt on its creator”

Chief Seattle’s Testimony

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 t-shirt that said, "The death of the forest is the death of life". Sr Dorothy's assassination occurred 16 years after the murder of Chico Mendes, an environmentalist whose death drew worldwide attention to the dangers faced by environmentalists in the Amazon.

In Indonesia, a group of NGOs, has done investigative reporting on the destruction of the forests of Sumatra by Asia Pulp and Paper, part of a large corporation called Sinar Mas. WWF alleges that APP is responsible for “more natural forest clearance in Sumatra... than any other company”. It is threatening the forests in which the critically endangered Sumatran orang-utan has, at great expense and trouble been reintroduced.
www.worldwildlife.org

In Australia there is a tradition of ordinary people standing up for pristine forest areas in the face of logging companies and governments. Some of the most significant campaigns for the protection of forests and their ecosystems have been in Tasmania: the area around the proposed Gordon-below-Franklin Dam, the Tarkine Wilderness (expected to be declared a National Park National Park), the Styx Valley (home to the tallest hardwood trees on earth; some 500-600 years old).

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)

Rainforest

The forest drips and glows with green.
The tree-frog croaks his far-off song.
His voice is stillness, moss and rain
drunk from the forest ages long.

We cannot understand that call
Unless we move into his dream,
Where all is one and one is all
And frog and python are the same.
(*"Rainforest"*, Judith Wright, *Collected Poems*)

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 1918. 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 Australia, 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 Australia key missionary challenges have been identified as:

- Building 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.
- 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;

Further information:

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

THE COLUMBAN MISSION INSTITUTE CENTRE FOR PEACE ECOLOGY & JUSTICE

“God’s creation is one and it is good. The concerns for non-violence, sustainable development, justice and peace, and care for the environment are of vital importance for humanity”

Pope Benedict XVI World Youth Day Address, Barangaroo, Sydney 2008.

Sharing the Columban mission experience, we respond to these challenges.

Our aims are:

- Awareness in the Church and society of the connections between peace, ecology and justice
- A Culture of Peace as a framework for these connections
- Action on issues

The PEJ Centre works in partnership with other agencies, cultures and faith groups, offering inservice, forums and workshops.

We run short programs:

- “Growing a Culture of Peace” Formation
- Chocolate Slavery and Debt
- Eucharist, Justice and Peace
- Ecological Conversion

We publish the newsletter ***Columban Connections***

We facilitate:

- The Faith Ecology Network (FEN). To join email faith_ecology_network_subscribe@yahoo.com.au
- Youth Theatre of the Oppressed

We advocate on issues of economic justice and the debt campaign, GM food, climate change and globalisation.

We welcome interns and volunteers

Further Information:

Columban Mission Institute Centre for Peace Ecology and Justice,
Locked Bag 2002, Strathfield NSW 213, Ph +61 02 9352 8021, E
[*pej.cmi@columban.org.au*](mailto:pej.cmi@columban.org.au) [*www.columban.org.au*](http://www.columban.org.au)

FURTHER RESOURCES

ASSISI (*A Strategic, Systems-based, Integrated Sustainability Initiative*) by Catholic Earthcare Australia The Australian Catholic Bishops' sustainability initiative provides an ecological vision for Catholic schools, parishes and church communities, agencies and congregations. www.catholicearthcare.org.au

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. sales@kevinmayhewltd.com

BETWEEN THE FLOOD AND THE RAINBOW Climate Change and the Church's Social Teaching - A 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 *Operation Noah*, www.operationnoah.org

CLIMATE CHANGE: WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT. P. Holper & S. Torok. CSIRO/Pam Macmillan, 2008. An interesting, informative and practical book by two CSIRO scientists on what we can do at home, work and school.

ECOLOGY AT THE HEART OF FAITH, Denis Edwards, Maryknoll: Orbis, 2006.

EUCALYPTS: a CELEBRATION. J.Wrigley & M. Fagg, Allen & Unwin, 2010. Eucalypts are an integral part of the Australian landscape; 79% of Australia's native forests are eucalypts. This beautifully produced book is a comprehensive study of eucalypts and their significance in Australian life and history.

HERE ON EARTH: AN ARGUMENT FOR HOPE, Tim Flannery, Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2010.

JUDGEMENT DAY: the Struggle for Life on Earth, Paul Collins, Sydney: UNSW Press, 2010.

LET THE SON SHINE *An Australian Catholic Response to Climate Change.* Fr Charles Rue 2009. A book that explores two major ways to address Catholic thinking and acting on climate change in the light of faith. www.columban.org.au/our-works/JPIC-Justice-Peace-Integrity-of-Creation/climate-change/

ON HOLY GROUND An education document outlining an ecological vision for Catholic schools in Qld, Vic and NSW. www.onholyground.edu.au/

OUT OF THE ASHES. DVD. ABC TV, 2011. The story of nature's rebirth after the devastating Victorian fires of 2009.

PAINT THE CHURCH GREEN A group course by Ellen Teague Published in the UK 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. sales@kevinmayhewltd.com

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. *Download from www.piplinks.org*

THE AUSTRALIAN GREEN CONSUMER GUIDE, Tanya Ha, Sydney: UNSW, 2008. A practical guide to making responsible consumer choices that respect the environment.

THE MAN WHO PLANTED TREES. Jean Giono, 1953. Also DVD. Classic, inspiring story of the solitary man who turned a desolate French valley into a beautiful forest.



This DVD and Resource Booklet uses the format of The Stations of the Cross to lament the stages in the death of a part of God's Creation, the rainforests.

It invites you to reflect on our place in the Australian landscape in a similar manner and take hope-filled action.

The Subanen people of the Southern Philippines are literally having their forest environment cut down around them, with the timber slated for export and the vacant land for cropping. Feeling politically powerless they have drawn on their faith, creating their own Stations of the Cross to tell their story. This has helped them connect their own sufferings with Christ's and with the suffering of all God's creation. Their story helps us to tell our story. Can we be moved as a community to a new relationship with our land and each other?

Produced by Columban JPIC Office, Britain with Australian additions by the
Columban Mission Institute,
Centre for Peace, Ecology and Justice, Strathfield, NSW
Email: pej.cmi@columban.org.au
02 93528021
Website: www.columban.org.au
© St Columbans Mission Society 2011
ISBN: 978-1-902648-97-2

