



**5 June 2012**

**World Environment Day**

# **RAINFORESTS: RESOURCES FOR LIFE**

**A Day of Prayer**

Sponsored by  
**The Carmelite NGO**  
[carmelitengo.org](http://carmelitengo.org)

Please feel free to copy and distribute

- ◆ Rainforests once covered 14% of the earth's land surface; now they cover 6% and experts estimate that the last remaining rainforests could be consumed in less than 40 years.
- ◆ Nearly half of the world's species of plants, animals and microorganisms will be destroyed or severely threatened over the next 25 years due to rainforest deforestation.
- ◆ One acre of rainforest may contain over 750 types of trees and 1500 species of higher plants.
- ◆ Approximately 80% of the developed world's diet originates in the tropical rainforest.
- ◆ As the rainforest species disappear, so do many possible cures for life-threatening diseases. Today, 121 prescription drugs come from plant-derived sources.
- ◆ The U.S. National Cancer Institute has identified 3,000 plants that are active against cancer cells. 70% of these plants are found in the rainforest. 25% of the active ingredients in cancer-fighting drugs come from organisms found only in the rainforest.
- ◆ An estimated 10 million indigenous people lived in the Amazonian Rainforest 500 years ago - today there are less than 200,000.
- ◆ The Amazon Rainforest has been described as the "Lungs of our Planet" because it continuously recycles carbon dioxide into oxygen. More than 20% of the world's oxygen is produced in the Amazon Rainforest.
- ◆ Preserving the rainforest intact and harvesting its many nuts, fruits, oil-producing, and medicinal plants, the rainforest has more economic value than if they were cut down to make grazing land for cattle or for timber.
- ◆ Managed properly, the rainforest can provide life sustaining resources on a perpetual basis.

*Taken from Rainforest Facts at [www.rain-tree.com/facts](http://www.rain-tree.com/facts)*

**THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD; I SHALL NOT WANT.  
IN VERDANT PASTURES HE GIVES ME REPOSE**

**Psalm 1:1-3**

Happy are they who follow not the counsel of the wicked.  
Nor walk in the way of sinners, nor sits in the company of  
the insolent.

But delights in the law of the Lord and meditates on the law  
day and night.

They are like trees planted near running water,  
That yields its fruit in due season,  
And whose leaves never fade.

*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. In verdant  
pastures he gives me repose.*

**BESIDE RESTFUL WATERS HE LEADS ME;  
HE REFRESHES MY SOUL**

**Proverbs 3:13-20**

Happy the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains  
understanding.

For her profit is better than profit in silver,  
And better than gold is her revenue.

She is more precious than corals, and none of your choice  
possessions can compare with her.

Long life is in her right hand, in her left are riches and honor;  
Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace;  
She is a tree of life to those who grasp her,  
And he is happy who holds her fast.

The Lord by wisdom founded the earth, established the  
heavens by understanding:

By his knowledge the depths break open, and the clouds  
drop down dew.

*Beside restful waters he leads me; he refreshes my soul.*



## LET THE EARTH AND WHAT FILLS IT LISTEN

### Isaiah 35:8-11

For the Lord has a day of vengeance,  
A year of requital by Zion's defender.  
Edom's streams shall be changed into pitch and her earth  
into sulphur,  
And her land shall become burning pitch.  
Night and day it shall not be quenched,  
Its smoke shall rise forever.  
From generation to generation she shall lay waste,  
Never again shall anyone pass through her.  
But the desert owl and hoot owl shall possess her,  
The screech owl and raven shall dwell in her.  
The Lord will measure her with line and plummet  
To be an empty waste for satyrs to dwell in.  
*Let the earth and what fills it listen.*

Rainforests have evolved over millions of years and have become incredibly complex environments. They represent a storehouse of living renewable natural resources that for eons, by virtue of their richness in both animal and plant species, have contributed a wealth of resources for the survival and well being of humankind. The inner dynamics of a tropical rainforest are an intricate and fragile system so interdependent that upsetting one part can lead to unknown damage or even destruction of the whole.

“The ecological question must not be faced solely because of the frightening prospects that environmental destruction represents; rather it must above all become a strong motivation for an authentic solidarity of worldwide dimensions.” – *Pontifical Council for Justice & Peace, 2005, #486*

“At its core, global climate change is not about economic theory or political platforms, nor about partisan advantage or interest group pressures. It is about the future of God’s creation and the one human family. It is about protecting both the human environment and the natural environment.” - U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good*, 2001.

The scale of human pressures on ecosystems is enormous. Since 1980, the global economy has tripled and the world population has increased by 30%. Consumption of everything on the planet has risen – at a great cost to ecosystems.

## THE LORD’S ARE THE EARTH AND ITS FULNESS

### Job 14:7-9

For a tree there is hope, if it were cut down,  
That it will sprout again and its tender shoots will not cease.  
Even though its root grow old in the earth,  
And its stump die in the dust,  
Yet at the first whiff of water it may flourish again  
And put forth branches like a young plant.  
*The Lord’s are the earth and its fullness.*

### Reading: James 3:13-18

If one of you is wise and understanding, show this in practice through a humility filled with good sense. Should you instead nurse bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, at least refrain from arrogant and false claims against the truth. Wisdom like this does not come from above. It is earthbound, a kind of animal, even devilish, cunning. Where there are jealousy and strife, there also are inconstancy and all kinds of vile behavior. Wisdom from above, by contrast,



Photo by Ingolf Vogeler, from the uwec.edu website

is first of all innocent. It is also peaceable, lenient, docile, rich in sympathy and the kindly deeds that are its fruits, impartial and sincere. The harvest of justice is sown in peace for those who cultivate peace.

*The Word of God.*

Massive deforestation brings with it many ugly consequences – air and water pollution, soil erosion, epidemics, the release of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, the eviction and decimation of indigenous tribes, and the loss of biodiversity through extinction of plants and animals. Fewer rainforests mean less rain, less oxygen for us to breathe, and an increased threat from global warming.

“It is to the Creator of the universe, then, that we are accountable for what we do or fail to do to preserve and care for the earth and all its creatures.” – *Renewing the Earth: An Invitation to Reflection & Action on Environment in Light of Catholic Social Teaching*, 1991, 6.

## Prayers of Petition

Creator God, grant us the courage to accept your grace to respect and care for your creation.  
Strengthened by you, we cannot fail.

Creator God, help us to end the suffering of the poor and bring healing to all of your creation.  
Strengthened by you, we cannot fail.

Creator God, help us to use our technological inventiveness to undo the damage we have done to your creation and to sustain your gift of nature.  
Strengthened by you, we cannot fail.

## Prayer

Blessed are you, God, Creator of the universe, who has made all things good and has placed the earth in our care. May we share with all in need and be good stewards of God's earth and its abundance. Grant that we may always use created things gratefully and share your gift with those in need, out of love for you.  
Amen.

### Resources for Information and Action

Catholic Coalition on Climate Change  
[catholicsandclimatechange.org](http://catholicsandclimatechange.org)

The Forum on Religion and Ecology  
[religionandecology.org](http://religionandecology.org)

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change  
[ipcc.ch](http://ipcc.ch)

United Nations Environment Program  
[unep.org](http://unep.org)



## Things to Think About

Can we and should we continue to use nonrenewable fossil fuels at the rate we do? Or will the environmental ills we cause today call us in the future as a society to use environmentally benign wind and solar energy?

Do we see connections between hospitality to people and to other creatures? Is there a connection between community relations and providing protective habitats?

Do we regard our homes as God's dwelling space, a sacred trust and healthy place?

Should we not give more attention to how our lives can bear fruit in Christ and in the protection of our forests?



## The Carmelite NGO

211 East 43<sup>rd</sup> Street, Suite 708,  
New York, NY 10017 USA

The **Carmelite NGO**, a non-governmental organization in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations and affiliated to the Department of Public Information (DPI) of the United Nations, is comprised of the men and women from around the world who are members of the Carmelite Order or its affiliated Congregations, Institutes and ministries within the Catholic Church.

**For more information about us and our work,  
visit our website: [carmelitengo.org](http://carmelitengo.org)**