

- 1 One of the world's worst environmental disasters started in September 1997 in the Far East. Fires were lit by landowners in Indonesia, wanting to clear the jungles for quick-cash crops.
- 2 Fires on the Indonesian islands of Sumatra and Borneo left a blanket of smoke over a vast region. The extensive fires burned for several months, disrupting transport and industry, and causing health problems in several countries - Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, the Philippines and Thailand. The smoke is thought to have contributed to at least 3 collisions of ships, and an air crash in which 234 people were killed.
- 3 Some plantation companies blamed the long drought and the weather-system called '*El Nino*', but it was proved that many of the fires were started deliberately by people wanting to make "quick money" by clearing the land of the natural vegetation and habitat of the jungle.
- 4 In March 1998, similar fires were set in Brazil where, for decades, the practice has been to use fire to clear the land of trees and jungle, ready to farm huge areas of land with fast money-making crops or wood.
- 5 This process has been shown to produce only short-term financial gain. Much soil - previously protected by the root systems of the jungle vegetation - is later washed away by the heavy tropical rains, leaving barren land. The process has other serious and even global implications, such as reducing significantly the number of trees that absorb carbon dioxide, one of the gases that produce the '*greenhouse effect*'.
- 6 *Let us pray:*

God our Father,
we give you thanks
for the talents you have given
to mankind,
and for the blessings received
through those who use their gifts well.
- 7 **We think of the beauty of the world**
which you proclaimed to be good,
but we are also conscious of our misuse
of what you have given to us:
- from the ore in the ground
 we fashion bullets and weapons;
- from the oil under the sea
 we derive explosives;
- we damage and pollute
 our own environment
 for short-term gains;
- from the atoms of existence
we produce bombs of mass destruction.
- 8 **Our governments spend money**
 in our name
 maintaining "butter mountains"
 and "wine lakes",
 and we subsidise farmers
 to "set aside" land
 so that less food is produced,
 even though our brothers and sisters
die each day from hunger.
- 9 **On our paper money**
 we print the images of famous people,
 yet often do not treasure and uphold
 the dignity of all who are made
 in your image and likeness.
- 10 **Open our hearts**
 to be influenced for good,
 and inspire us
 to touch the hearts of others.
Enable us to change
 the things that contradict your love,
 and may all your people
 work and grow together
 as brothers and sisters,
 building up your kingdom on earth.
Amen.

This is an excerpt from the page of this date in
'Praying Each Day of the Year',
a 3-volume book
by Nicholas Hutchinson, FSC.

For details:
<http://www.matthew-james.co.uk/>

Could make use of a search engine
to research this topic further.

This material is part of
the prayer and education website
of the De La Salle Brothers
in Great Britain:
www.prayingeachday.org