



# Religious Campaign for Forest Conservation

Information Service

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## Roman Catholic Franciscan Declaration on Forest Conservation

ratified, January 17, 2002

Around the world, there remain only about 20% of Earth's original forests, with greatest losses occurring within the past three decades. Healthy forests stabilize the climate, provide clean air and water, prevent erosion and landslides and buffer the planet against global warming. Moreover, they provide habitat for about two-thirds of the world's animal and plant species. Finally, forests have always provided people with a special space where they could more deeply encounter God in the diversity and beauty of creation.

In spite of all this, God's forests are rapidly disappearing. At the current rates, an estimated two-thirds of the world's plant and animal species that rely on these forests for their habitat will become extinct by the year 2100. These forest ecosystems are being sacrificed on the altar of unbridled consumerism and greed. It is especially the poor and future generations that will pay the full price of our shortsighted actions.

The seriousness and urgency of this problem is one of the signs of the times to which the Holy Spirit calls us to respond. Our Franciscan tradition challenges us to walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ who came to heal and reconcile not only people, but also all of creation. St. Francis forbade his followers to cut down a whole tree so that it might grow up again. With a great gladness he exhorted the forests to love God and serve Him joyfully. His awareness of the profound interconnectedness and kinship with the creation led St. Francis to experience all life as being upheld and embraced by a loving God. The poor, the lepers, the birds and the forests were all Francis's brothers and sisters. Each was worth to him far more than the limited value ascribed to them by his contemporary society.

Mindful that the way we live in relation to God's creation is the way we live in relation to God, we, Franciscans, commit ourselves to raising the issue of forest conservation among our brothers and sisters and to advocating for better public policy.

Also, we call upon ourselves and the rest of society to:

- \* Recycle waste paper and reduce the consumption of wood products.
- \* Purchase paper that has been 100% recycled or one made with a high percentage of post-consumer recycled paper.
- \* Prayer and a search for wisdom concerning the spiritual value of forests, and our duty to care for them.

Furthermore we call upon our federal government and urge people to advocate for:

- \* Cessation of commercial logging on all public lands,
- \* The immediate end to all cutting of ancient and old growth forests, and the phase-out of international trade in old growth lumber.
- \* The redirection of taxpayer logging subsidies into forest restoration that would benefit communities dependent on timber harvesting.
- \* Increase of grants for research and development of environmentally sensitive non-wood alternative paper.

*The Franciscan Justice and Peace and Integrity of Creation committee of the Holy Name Province, United States*