



FORESTS AND RELIGION

THE ASSISI DECLARATIONS ON NATURE

In 1986, HRH Prince Philip, then President of the WWF International invited five leaders of five of the major religions of the world – **Buddhism**, **Christianity**, **Hinduism**, **Islam** and **Judaism** - to meet to discuss how their faiths could help save the natural world.

The meeting took place in Assisi in Italy, because it was the birth place of St Francis, the Catholic saint of ecology. From this meeting arose key statements by the five faiths outlining their own distinctive traditions and approach to the care for nature.

“ We are convinced of the inestimable value of our respective traditions and of what they can offer to re-establish ecological harmony; but, at the same time, we are humble enough to desire to learn from each other. The very richness of our diversity lends strength to our shared concern and responsibility for our Planet Earth. ”

Father Lanfranco Serrini, OFM conv.
Opening ceremony, Assisi, 1986.

In the Assisi Declarations on Nature of 1986...

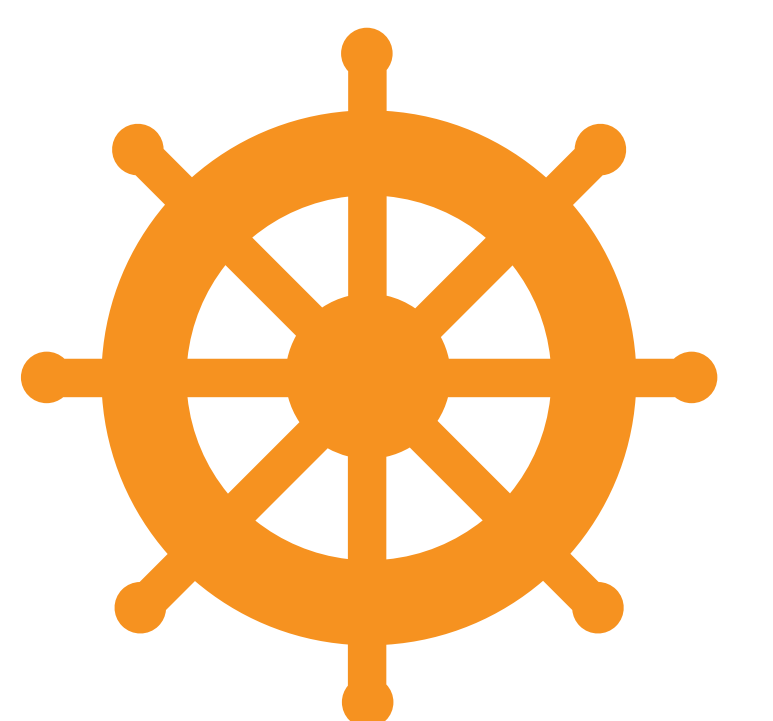
THE HINDU STATEMENT WAS:

- The human role is not separate from nature. All objects in the universe, beings and non-beings, are pervaded by the same spiritual power
- The human race, though at the top of the evolutionary pyramid at present, is not seen as something apart from earth and its many forms. People did not spring fully formed to dominate lesser life, but evolved out of these forms and are integrally linked with them
- Nature is sacred and the divine is expressed through all its forms. Reverence for life is an essential principle, as is ahimsa (non-violence)
- Nature cannot be destroyed without humanity destroying itself.
- The divine is not exterior to creation, but expresses itself through natural phenomena



THE BUDDHIST DECLARATION WAS:

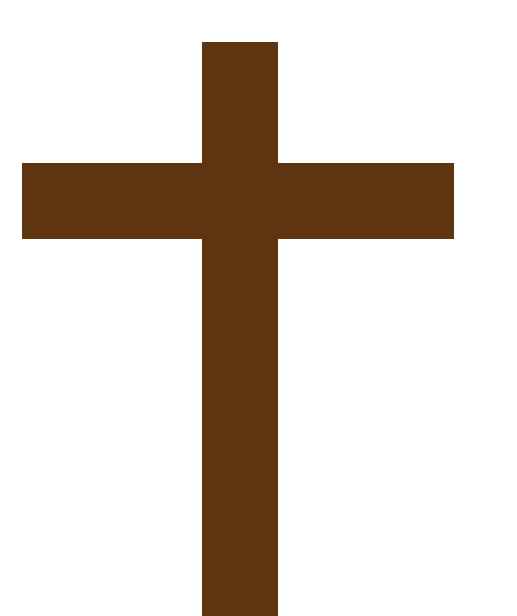
“Such destruction of the environment and the life depending on it is a result of ignorance, greed and disregard for the richness of all living things. This disregard is gaining great influence. If peace does not become a reality in the world, and if the destruction of the environment continues as it does today, there is no doubt that future generations will inherit a dead world...we are the generation with the awareness of a great danger. We are the ones with the responsibility and the ability to take steps of concrete action, before it is too late.”



THE CHRISTIAN DECLARATION WAS:

“Christians repudiate:

- all forms of human activity which do not respect the authentic interests of the human race, in accordance with God's will and design, and do not enable men as individuals and as members of society to pursue and fulfil their total vocation within the harmony of the universe.
- all ill-considered exploitation of nature which risks to destroy it and, in turn, to make man the victim of degradation.”



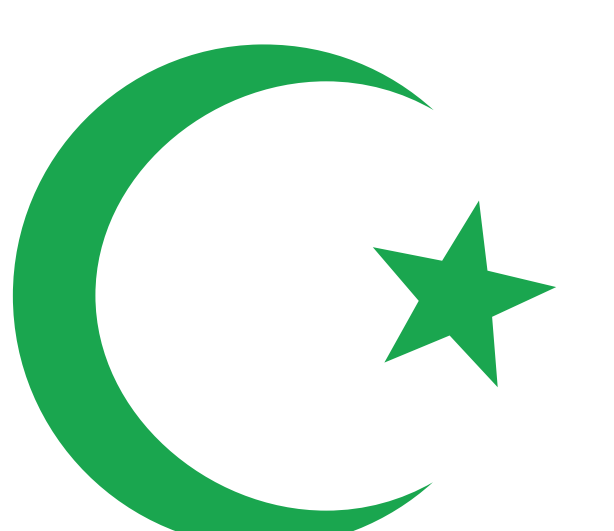
THE JEWISH DECLARATION WAS:

“Now, when the whole world is in peril, when the environment is in danger of being poisoned, and various species, both plant and animal, are becoming extinct, it is our Jewish responsibility to put the defence of the whole of nature at the very center of our concerns...Man was given dominion over nature, but he was commanded to behave towards the rest of creation with justice and compassion.”



THE ISLAM DECLARATION WAS:

“Unity, trusteeship and accountability, that is tawheed, khalifa and akhrad, the three central concepts of Islam, are also the pillars of the environmental ethics of Islam. They constitute the basic values taught by the Qur'an. It is these values which led Muhammad, the prophet of Islam to say: “Whoever plants a tree and diligently looks after it until it matures and bears fruit is rewarded,” and “if a Muslim plants a tree or sows a field and men and beasts and birds eat from it, all of it is charity on his part,” and again, “The world is green and beautiful and God has appointed you his stewards over it.”



Environmental consciousness is born when such values are adopted and become an intrinsic part of our mental and physical makeup.”