

Remarks in Forks, Montesano, Stevenson
March 10, 1994
Most Reverend Thomas J. Murphy
Archbishop of Seattle

A year ago, President Clinton invited me and people representing timber, environmental and community interests to the Forest Conference in Portland. We gathered to discuss issues important to us as citizens and members of communities whose lives and economies depend on the forest.

Before and after the Forest Conference, I have maintained a commitment to all the values involved in our respect for creation, but also our respect for human beings and the timber communities of Western Washington.

A year ago, I told the president, "The role of the church is to raise the moral values involved in preserving forests, employing forest workers, and saving forest-dependent communities. Our hope is that common ground will be discovered so that the common good will be achieved."

A year later, the search for the common good continues.

God has blessed the Northwest with the conditions that provide the best environment for trees to be planted, re-planted, grow and develop. But as nature fulfills its normal course, the same is not true for human lives and the life of timber communities. Unemployment continues to plague individuals and families. The vicious cycle of poverty has touched the lives of many.

Countless people are looking for ways in which they might replant their lives on a solid foundation that will enable them to remain in their communities and to preserve the values that have been part of their lives and communities for generations.

The Roman Catholic Church believes in the value of the environment and the value of human life. An urgent need at the moment is to seek ways to better the lives of people in the timber communities.

Our efforts to raise funds to provide small loans and emergency assistance is but one small step that we hope will make a difference. We have come to this decision as a result of listening to and talking with people in the timber communities of Western Washington. It is these people -- bankers, business men and women, government representatives and, most importantly, unemployed timber workers -- who will administer the loans that will put people to work again.

We pray that our program of Replanting Lives will help individuals and families experience a new quality of life that will sustain them and their communities. We hope that our efforts will provide common ground for people to come together to achieve the common good.