

Restoration for Rio's iconic *Christ the Redeemer* statue

by [Janet Tappin Coelho](#) in the [January 12, 2017](#) issue

The Archdiocese of Rio de Janeiro has launched an international appeal for donations to help restore *Christ the Redeemer*, Brazil's 98-foot-tall statue, considered one of the modern Seven Wonders of the World.

"*Christ the Redeemer*, with its open arms, is the greatest showcase for Rio and Brazil," said Cardinal Orani João Tempesta, the archbishop of Rio, at the recent launch of the Friends of Christ the Redeemer campaign. The initiative is a way of "continuing to spread the Christian faith."

The iconic attraction suffers from numerous cracks due to lightning strikes, said Omar Raposo, the priest who serves as dean in charge of the upkeep of the monument.

"For the past 85 years the monument has been maintained with the help of private donations and the Catholic Church's own resources," Raposo said. "But unfortunately, with the economic crisis in Brazil, we need to appeal for more contributions to make ends meet."

The statue, which was completed in the Tijuca National Park in 1931, receives more than 3 million visitors a year. However, the sanctuary where it is located doesn't receive income from the park's ticket office.

Raposo said the money raised would help maintain the statue and pay the 30 employees who work in the sanctuary. The annual cost of managing the site is about \$1.5 million.

According to Cristina Ventura, the architect responsible for the restoration, emergency work needs to be undertaken soon to avoid the risk of irreversible damage that includes the threat of losing parts of the original structure to decay and corrosion.

"Moisture is seeping in through cracks in the soapstone that lines the Christ and building up inside, leaving it damp and causing rust," she warned.

In addition, researchers said, the crown atop the head of Christ, which also acts as a lightning rod, is no longer able to protect the monument. The structure receives an average of six strikes a year and needs several new high-tech conductors.

Administrators of the park from the Chico Mendes Institute acknowledged the shortfall in funds and said they are in discussion with the archdiocese to set up a new agreement that could include helping the sanctuary financially.

In 1923 and 1929 the Catholic Church held two campaigns to raise funds to launch the *Christ the Redeemer* project.

“Just as it was built with the help of the people,” Raposo said, “we want it to be maintained with the help of the people.” —Religion News Service

*A version of this article, which was edited on January 13, appears in the February 1 print edition under the title “Brazil’s iconic statue Christ the Redeemer is in need of restoration.”*