



RESURRECTION UNIVERSITY PARISH

Land Stewardship Committee

GRATITUDE FOR THE WEE THINGS

By Linda Weinland

I first learned to use the word “wee” instead of small or tiny after visiting a friend in Belfast, Northern Ireland. She spoke of her small, yellow dog as my wee pet, and I was captivated. Wee, to me, has come to mean small and enchanting and maybe even magical. As I walk the verdant woods of the natural areas in southern Florida, I am especially drawn to one group of wee creatures the often small and inconspicuous insects. I don't mean the showy, graceful and much adored butterflies and dragonflies, but the beetles, ants, weevils and others like them the ones that elicit the comment "EEEEUW, A BUG!" when we encounter them.

One group of insects has a special place in my heart, not only because they are incredibly beautiful and industrious, but because they taught me to become better at observing and learning from nature. On a lonely country road in the late autumn, I was driving along very slowly, looking for birds and other wildlife. Suddenly, I saw what appeared to be a small crayfish crossing the road. Surprised that such a creature was in the upland area, far from its preferred habitat, I brought the car to an abrupt halt and got out to investigate. What I saw there was not a crayfish, but a hardworking beetle pushing a dung ball across the road with its hind legs. The combination of the beetle and its sizable treasure appeared at first to be a much larger animal.

But the wee creature I watched that day was an insect, a member of the family *Scarabaeidae*, which includes the scarab beetles and dung beetles. These industrious harvesters are significant, because they utilize the waste products of cows and other large animals in such useful ways. Most eat dung, but some scavenge carcasses or feed in decomposing plant material and fungi. Several species shape a brood ball of dung, with the warm and nutritious orb of food surrounding the hungry larva. They roll this, hind legs first, into a burrow, where the larva completes development. Some of the larger dung beetles are incredibly strong and move balls of dung up to 50 times their own weight.

One of the most colorful scarab beetles (like the one in the photo shown here) has been observed in southern Florida feasting in large numbers on road kills such as opossums and raccoons. Dung beetles and scarabs have caught the attention of mankind for a long time, and in ancient Egypt they both became important religious symbols. In some Indian tribes from South America, a dung beetle named *Aksak* is supposed to have modeled the first man and woman from clay.



TAKE A LESSON FROM A COUNTRY ROAD

Linda's experience on the country road is an important lesson. Sometimes its necessary to become a child again, to get down to the elfin scale, to view life from an ant's perspective and to be filled anew with a sense of wonder and gratitude for wee gifts.



GREEN LEAF

A Soliloquy

October Gives The Best Sunrise

October gives the best sunrises and sunsets. The low flat clouds that bump up against the Bridger Mountains to the Northeast and the Hyalites to the south give a perfect canvas for the "*Old Master Painter From The Faraway Hills*" to use the morning and setting sun to splash pink, orange, and red hues rippling across the blue-gray palette.



When the wind is quiet and the color dances across the sky, the journey to the mailbox on the front street is more than an exercise in alliteration it is pure pastoral pleasure. The distant staccato call of the crows add a musical touch to the dawn symphony as errant deer trot across the lawn on their way to their day beds in the gullies and ravines of the surrounding land. Winter of bright and dull whites, brown and ash gray trees and leaves does not yet hold sway. It awaits, with waning patience, its time at the back door of Fall.

TREES IN SCRIPTURE

School is now back in session for the kids. More learning. Adults continue learning as well through their jobs, newspapers, books and other sources. As Catholics we can also learn much from scripture.

In his article *What Trees Teach Us about Life, Death, and Resurrection*, Matthew Sleeth, MD states that in the bible there are many verses having to do with trees as a special gift. For example: In Genesis 1: 11-12 *Then God said: Let the earth bring forth vegetation: every kind of plant that bears seed and every kind of fruit tree on earth that bears fruit with its seed in it. And so it happened: 12 the earth brought forth vegetation: every kind of plant that bears seed and every kind of fruit tree that bears fruit with its seed in it. God saw that it was good.*

In Psalm 1:3 *He is like a tree planted near streams of water, that yields its fruit in season; Its leaves never wither; whatever he does prospers.*

Note that in Revelation 22:2 *On either side of the river grew the tree of life* that produces fruit twelve times a year, once each month; the leaves of the trees serve as medicine for the nations.*

The Bible refers to wisdom as a tree in Proverbs 3:18 *She is a tree of life* to those who grasp her, and those who hold her fast are happy.*

Trees teach us about the nature of God. Sleeth noted “trees give life, beauty, food and shade.” If we think about it, trees give life even after their death. Think about the wooden desk you are sitting at.

God in his loving nature provides us with food through a variety of trees such as apples, oranges. During the summer months we are thankful for the shade that trees provide. They can help us survive the high temperatures. The variety of trees we have provide beauty in our world. Each tree has a special look. Trees have the ability to provide an essential of life for all living things on our planet – oxygen, and the power to remove harmful gases like carbon dioxide making the air we breathe healthier. They also reduce air pollution and help to purify the air by absorbing carbon and other pollutants. A mature tree absorbs between 120-240 pounds per year of small particles and gases, like carbon dioxide, which are released into the air by automobiles and industrial facilities. Trees reduce the amount of storm water runoff, which reduces erosion and pollution in our waterways and may reduce the effects of flooding. Many species of wildlife depend on trees for habitat. Trees provide food, protection, and homes for many birds and mammals and provide, as well habitats for songbirds, small forest animals, wildflowers, and other understory trees and plants.

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