

RESURRECTION UNIVERSITY CATHOLIC PARISH

Land Stewardship Committee

**The Lord hath created
medicines
out of the earth;
and he that is wise
will not abhor them**

ECCLESIASTICUS 38:4

N.S. Cooper and R.C.J Carling edited a book published by Chapman and Hill titled *ECOLOGISTS and ETHICAL JUDGEMENTS*. In the text there is an example of a very small population of Amazonian original people that were discovered by scientists who learned their work, food, medicine, and habits. This information was cataloged and published in an esteemed science journal.

One of the items reported on was a drug drawn from the sap of a certain tree. The Natives placed this drug on the tips of the arrow so that when they killed a tapir the creature bled to death from the anticoagulant that tipped the arrow. The story was clear evidence that the people of the tribe (about 250) had mastered the art of making use of the forest that God had given them.

After the article was published, and it listed who the tribe was, where they lived, how to find them in the Amazon jungle, and many more details, a group from a major pharmaceutical house appeared and coaxed from the tribe members all the information needed to make a major medical breakthrough on anticoagulation. Very important for open heart surgery. Very important for profit. The pharmaceutical supply house made millions.

The Amazonian tribal people got nothing.

DID YOU KNOW Getting to Know Your Land

The prefix "eco" in the words economy and ecology is derived from the Greek word "oikos" which means "house". And the word "logy" is the "study of" which means that this ecology of ours, so necessary for the economy, is really the study of our house.

Is it our house? Or is it someone else's? Or worst yet, is it just the place where our house sits?

The question becomes: is parish a PLACE WHERE or is parish a PEOPLE WHO...?

If we fail to study our house and the economy of our ecology, then we will pay the price. That is what stewardship is all about — the study of what we will pay or have to pay to preserve our home. Our God is a forgiving God, but Nature is a hanging judge.

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A Garden is a Grand Teacher

"... It teaches patience and careful watchfulness; it teaches industry and thrift; Above all it teaches entire trust. ... The good gardener knows with absolute certainty that if he does his part, if he gives the labor, the love, and every aid that his knowledge of his craft, experience of the conditions of his place, and exercise of his personal wit can work together to suggest, that so surely as he does this diligently and faithfully so surely will God give the increase. Then with the honestly earned success comes the consciousness of encouragement to renewed effort, and, as it were, an echo of the gracious words, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Gertrude Jekyll, *Wood and Garden*, 1899



Working in the Garden over the years has taught the Land Stewardship Committee members much, not only about plants, but about life. We have learned that:



The garden blooms in stages and so does our own lives. It is best if we learn to savor and appreciate each stage and not rush our life.



Plants have to be pruned in order to make room for new growth. In order for us to grow, we need to get rid of old ideas that are holding us back. When we do, we'll find ourselves blooming in ways we never thought possible.



Even weeds can be beautiful. There is the possibility for beauty in all things. Before you yank another weed from your garden or your life, make sure it doesn't have something to offer that you might have overlooked. John Dryden said "They say everything in the world is good for something."



Before planting anything, the soil must be prepared. If we plant a shrub in heavy clay, it won't thrive. The same is true of our children. We must prepare them for what they need to grow: moral values, spiritual principles, a sense of wonder and joy, and the knowledge that you'll always be there for them.



We may till the soil, plant, and water, but we realize that only God makes the plants live and grow. To imagine that everyone who works the ground is God's coworker means that each of us becomes closer to God through even the most insignificant tasks. We tend to believe that we have much more control over our lives than we actually do, and it is only when we face the uncertain future that we learn to rely exclusively on God as the great overseer of humanity. We do have free will to plant our seeds and to water and feed them, but if God does not wish that seed to sprout, it will not grow and there's nothing we can do about it. Gardening teaches us to accept our disappointments and to celebrate our successes as a tribute to a very intimate cooperation between ourselves and God.

City of Trees

Among things that arouse my pity
are trees that grow within a city.

The city dweller seems to know
exactly how a tree should grow.

His trees must bow unto the law
Of ax and pruning knife and saw.

He seems to think it is not right
For trees to reach a certain height.

And trees that grow too close or tall
Must either cease to grow or fall...

Though summer time puts up a screen
So that their wounds cannot be seen,
Autumn strips them with a breeze,
Revealing them as amputees.

John Engle, Jr.
Nature Magazine 3/1956



Pictured above is an example of a "hat-racked" tree. Removing the top by amputating the branches could result in introduction of pathogens, leaves unsightly remains, and upsets the "root-to-shoot" ratio which more often than not leads to explosive topside growth defeating the whole purpose of trimming the tree in the first place. Good land stewardship urges the assistance and advice from a horticulturist or tree trimmer with experience.

Interested in the Creation Care Ministry?

We are a faith-based environmental ministry focused on becoming more effective stewards of God's creation. We work on projects within four different areas:

- **Parish Sustainability- Stewardship is about caring for our next generations. We seek to work on energy efficiency, waste reduction, and resource responsibility in the church community.**
- **Environmental Justice- Ecological degradation disproportionately impacts the poor and the vulnerable in our society and, since all people are equal before God, we seek to rectify those inequalities.**
- **Education & Outreach- As a community of believers, Catholics learn the faith from one another. We seek to educate parishioners about how environmental issues concern people of faith, theologically and ethically.**
- **Advocacy- Catholics often take their values out into the public arena. We seek to support political initiatives on local, state, national, and global levels that help foster care for creation.**

RIGHT CHURCH — WRONG PEW!

High winds during a late July cold front passage accentuated the problem with the trees located along the east side parking lot. The Land Stewardship Committee, during a recent landscape inventory, highlighted several significant problems with trees, shrubs and other landscape details. The tree line located along the north border was one of the more significant problems as the trees were too tall for the space allocated to their growth.

The apartment complex adjoining the tree property, as well as the natural inclination of the trees, caused them to grow too high with very little in the way of trunk support. Over the years since Resurrection University Catholic Parish transitioned from a Neumann Center to diocesan parish the problem has become exacerbated to the point where almost all the trees have a dangerous lean toward the south.....where the cars are.....where the people are.

Last year the first of the trees was felled when a large split in the trunk forewarned of a pending break. Now the rest of the grove is "aging out". In the military they use the term "too long in grade and rank". In botanical circles they say "right tree in the wrong place". In the Protestant old religion practice of paying a pew tax they would politely tell an offender, "you are in the right church but the wrong pew".



Just as a parish people attends to music, liturgy, electricity saving, building maintenance, so too must they cast a steward's eye to the church grounds and make it part of the overall land stewardship oversight.

Jesus Curses a Fig Tree ([Matthew 21:18-22](#))

"Early in the morning, as Jesus was on his way back to the city, he was hungry. Seeing a fig tree by the road, he went up to it but found nothing on it except leaves. Then he said to it, 'May you never bear fruit again!' Immediately the tree withered. When the disciples saw this, they were amazed. 'How did the fig tree wither so quickly?', they asked. Jesus replied, 'Truly I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, Go, throw yourself into the sea, and it will be done. If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.'"

Admittedly, this plays a bit into proof texting, but the story makes a point. If we get some earmarked donations (for which we pray), the parish can begin to bring itself into harmony with good land stewardship and reduce risk to people and property. How about it?