

# RESURRECTION UNIVERSITY CATHOLIC PARISH

## Land Stewardship Committee

### TIGER MAN—AN INSULT?

*"Did he who made the Lamb make thee?"*

When the history is written about the COVID-19 Pandemic of 2020, there is no doubt that *Tiger King*, the Netflix documentary about Joe Exotic and the big cat industry in America, will merit, if not a chapter, at least an extended footnote. *Tiger King* debuted on March 20<sup>th</sup>, just as the U.S. began to implement broad-based quarantining, and provided a welcome, albeit bizarre, respite from the burgeoning crisis. Leaving the shenanigans of the human characters aside, *Tiger King* is an excellent documentary that shines a much-needed spotlight onto the world of exotic pets, the trade in exotic species, and the abuse of the word "conservation".

The most startling revelation in *Tiger King* is that there are more tigers in captivity in the United States (around 5,000) than are estimated to exist in the wilds of Asia (3,700 -4,000). More troubling is the fact that only 6% of U.S. tigers are in accredited zoos or facilities (blog.wwf.ca). As the documentary unfolds, it becomes disturbingly clear that most of the main players are exploiting tigers for financial gain under the auspices of "education" and "conservation". Tiger cubs are especially lucrative; private or small group encounters with a cub can command upwards of a \$1,000 per person. Tiger cubs have a tendency, though, to grow up into adult tigers, and can no longer safely interact with the public. This means their peak earning is limited to a few months. After this period, they become a net expense for the owner.

Another thing you learn from the documentary is how much a tiger eats and how much it costs to feed (a lot, in both cases, in case you were wondering).

The documentary takes a dark turn when the sheer scale of the breeding is revealed. Cubs are taken from mothers as soon as possible, so that the mothers will go back into heat and be ready to generate another litter, up to three a year. Litter sizes can be anywhere from 2 to 3 cubs, all the way up to 6 in rare cases. So, one female can produce 3 to 9 cubs a year. While the captive tiger population is large, it does not accurately reflect the birth rates of captive females – in short, the cubs are being destroyed after their money-making days are over to make room for the next litter.

The human characters in *Tiger King* claim that they are doing all this for "education" or "to build awareness" or "conservation".

These claims are either deeply delusional or outright lies, as the documentary expertly exposes. Cubs born into captivity cannot be released into the wild and only serve to increase the population of captive tigers. One is reminded of the lines from William Blake's "The Tyger":

*Did he smile his work to see?  
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?*

If "thee" is man, especially the humans in *Tiger King*, then the answer is a resounding no.

*"Ask the beasts and they shall teach you, speak to the birds of the air, the plants of the earth, the fish of the sea and they will instruct you"*  
*Job 12:7-8*

#### GOT PRINTERS' INK IN YOUR BLOOD?

The Greenleaf is a publication of the Land Stewardship Committee of Resurrection University Catholic Parish. It is privately funded by parishioners and friends of RUC Parish. The editors are Paul A. Gore and Ellie F. Weber and they can be reached at 406-587-2001. All ideas and suggestions are welcome and we encourage students in high school and college to explore writing for the GreenLeaf.



## LAND STEWARDSHIP AT RESURRECTION UNIVERSITY CATHOLIC PARISH

- Land Stewardship is the practice of carefully managing land usage to ensure natural systems are maintained or enhanced for future

generations.

- Land stewardship is about re-connecting with our dependence on earth, air, water and sunshine and the abundance of life it supports.
- Land stewardship is about re-discovering our natural 'instincts' of awe and respect for nature.
- Land stewardship is about preserving "the capacity of the land for self-renewal".

So, how do we do that on this tiny plot of land in a tiny city, in a tiny county, in a not so tiny state, in a fairly big country, on a tiny globe in an immense creation—galaxy? Do like George Washington Carver.

George you see, prayed a lot and one day he asked God for the secrets of the universe. God, always faithful to his children answered : "No George, that is just too much for you."

So George became bold and said, "Well God, teach me the secrets of botany."

"No George," God said, "I can't do that for you, its just too much.

"Well then," George said, "how about teaching me the secrets of the peanut?"

"Yes George," God answered with love, "That is more your size."

Resurrection University Catholic Parish is about the right size for most of us. Maybe we begin, continue, or encuentro-rediscover, what land stewardship is all about. Here, on the parish grounds, the parish parking lot, on the front lawn, in the soon-to-be garden at the northwest corner, or the prayer paths circling the west end of the parish land, or in the southwest corner habitat learning center. It's a thought, approaching a musing, about to rise to the level of a challenge, and soon to be a reality. That is, if we make it so.

Watch your parish bulletin, the Land Stewardship Committee Bulletin board, and the on-line site for the LSC at [hoehoka.com](http://hoehoka.com) for news about summer events.

**New Books to whet your appetite and assuage your boredom and initiate a book club through on-line participation:**

**Last Child In The Woods  
Our Wild Calling  
Turning To The Heavens and the Earth  
Ask The Beasts  
Pronouncement From The Vatican and Bishops**

