



STEWARDS OF OUR EARTH All of God's Creation

Social Justice Committee, Holy Cross Parish, Mt. Airy, August 11, 2024

The Genius of Ecosystems

“It is important to take the time to fully consider the entirety of the place ... to understand the genius of the ecosystems” (Carter Roberts, president & CEO of World Wildlife Fund (WWF) – US). In his letter for the fall 2024 issue of World Wildlife Magazine, Roberts shares the advice of the late Tom Lovejoy, the first scientist with WWF. “In order to understand and protect a place, **‘do whatever you can to look at the whole.’** By which he meant: Look at the birds, look at the trees, look at the bodies of water, look at the people and how they live on the land. Look at everything that makes a place tick.... Because only by understanding the entirety of a place can you understand what it needs to thrive.” (Carter Roberts)

This philosophy is evident in the practices of **regenerative farming**, which relies on an approach that reduces soil erosion due to wind and rain and enhances soil health. In a departure from industrial farming practices, regenerative farming uses techniques that include **no-till planting** which prevents topsoil from drifting away, **diverse cover cropping** which provides protection for the soil in between plantings, **eliminating or limiting pesticides**, herbicides and synthetic fertilizer to improve soil health, and **planned grazing** where animals fertilize the soil.

Last Saturday evening, a group of fellow parishioners from Holy Cross, St. Vincent's, and OMC watched and discussed the eye-opening documentary *Common Ground*. The film features the Brown Ranch located just east of Bismarck, ND. Gabe Brown is a pioneer of the soil health movement. Brown made the change after losing acres of farmland to soil erosion. Since 1993, he has practiced holistic management, a part of which is farming and ranching in nature's image, striving to solve problems in a natural and sustainable way. Regenerative strategies have allowed the health of the soil, the mineral and water cycles to greatly improve. The ecosystem remains intact. This results in increased production, profit, and a higher quality of life with sustainability for not only present but future generations as well.

The benefits of regenerative farming for humans and the environment are innumerable. As part of preserving a natural ecosystem, it takes massive amounts of carbon out of the atmosphere and uses it to support healthy soil life in synchrony with nature. Toxic chemical sprays used in industrial farming which leak into our food, air and water are no longer needed. And farmers using regenerative practices, on average, save a million dollars a year.

When we conserve the soil, we conserve life, we save species from extinction, we have a healthier planet.

Comments on this column may be directed to the Social Justice Committee at socialjustice@holycrossphl.org.