

Nature Notes

A digital journal documenting the search for truth, beauty and goodness in God's lovely creation throughout the diocese of Fort Worth.

November 14, 2019

I wonder. . .

What are the names of the trees providing all the gorgeous color this fall?



Maple, St. Maria Goretti campus, notice the samara seed pod. What's a samara? It's a papery coating around the seed that helps it to "fly", so the baby trees will not compete with the parent tree. Learn more about samaras and their impact on micro-aircraft technology [here](#)

Find a great seed identification chart here: <http://texastreeid.tamu.edu/content/howToID/>

The combination of cold nights and sunny days this autumn has created a stunning display of fall colors!

When leaves have similar shapes, you can use the seed pods to identify the plant.



Sweet gum, Nolan campus, notice the prickly ball seed pod. Surprisingly, the seeds within the "gum ball" closely resemble maple seeds, with a papery coating to help with wind dispersal.

This blog post has a great summary of North Texas trees, with links to each tree that include leaf photographs: <https://www.tree-land.com/sugar-and-sap/top-trees-fall-color-north-texas/>

I notice. . . .

Piles of leaves covering nearly every green space on campus.

These leaves provide insulation to plants during the winter, and homes to a wealth of insects and tiny organisms. These creatures play a vital role in natural recycling, by breaking down the dead leaves into chemicals and nutrients that absorb back into the soil, and are available to plants the next spring.

Check out this site for a great activity to explore the leaf litter ecosystem:

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/bring-science-home-leaf-litter-biodiversity/>

And if you want an in-depth look at leaf litter and the organisms who call it home, download this fantastic guide, available in English and Spanish!

<https://www.amnh.org/research/center-for-biodiversity-conservation/resources-and-publications/biodiversity-guides-and-handbooks/life-in-the-leaf-litter>



Good Reads

Last week I had the opportunity to meet with the new teachers in the diocese, and we enjoyed nature journaling activities on the beautiful St. Elizabeth Ann Seton campus. For prompts, we encouraged the teachers to use the following:

I wonder. . . .

I notice. . . .

It reminds me of. . . .

Mr. Mishork made a wonderful connection between using these prompts in nature walks, and using the same prompts during Lectio Divina (which could rightly be compared to a walk through Scripture). What an amazing world we live in, that we can marvel at the truth and beauty of God's creation in the world around us and in His written words.

For more on Lectio Divina, check out this helpful leaflet from the US Conference of Catholic Bishops:

<http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/catechesis/catechetical-sunday/word-of-god/upload/lectio-divina.pdf>

Some people, to discover God, read books. But there is a great book: the very appearance of created things. Look above you! Look below you! Note it. Read it. God, whom you want to discover, never wrote that book with ink. Instead, he set before your eyes the things that He had made. Can you ask for a louder voice than that?

- St. Augustine

Courtyard Adventures



We turned the Activity Courtyard into an archaeological dig site for Ms. Yarmchuk's World Geography class.

Did you know?

"Both animals and human beings are capable of tool use and tool making. But when archaeologists look for evidence of truly human activity in their digging, they have a sure method of detecting it-look not only for tools, but for tools that have been *artistically designed*. . . . , they are designed to be visually pleasing- to be beautiful. And in this way there can be no doubt that they are human tools- tools that reveal rationality in the design."

- Faith, Science and Reason- Theology on the Cutting Edge" by Christopher T. Baglow

Where to find Mrs. Breclaw next week

Monday 9:30-3

Tuesday 8:30-3

Wednesday 8:30-10

Available through e-mail for remainder of the week

Nolan Outdoor Learning Headquarters

In the office immediately to the left of the teacher boxes in room D22.

Please come by anytime! Let's chat about how we can work outdoor learning into your lesson plans!

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