



La Vista Ecological Learning Center

A ministry of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate

December 1, 2019

E-News

Email: info@lavistaelc.org

Website: lavistaelc.org

December, 2019 Eco-spirituality Calendar Maxine Pohlman, SSND

December Celebrates



Photo: Ray Hennessy on Unsplash

One year I chose to make my annual retreat during December, and someone commented that this was a poor choice as I would be missing the seasonal parties. What I found however, was that I missed nothing! All I had to do was look out a window or take a walk to celebrate December's natural parties.

I observed downy, hairy, pileated, and red-bellied woodpeckers wildly flinging suet from the bird feeder, and I heard passionate courting calls of great horned and barred owls. At night, casting an eye upward, I watched Gemini, Orion, and Taurus dance across the sky. I found myself envying cardinals in trees flaunting their best seasonal red against the snow, and I was enchanted by green pines gathering flakes and dropping them in festive puffs. This annual party begged for my attention, my participation.

As I pondered these festivities, a quote by Thomas Berry came to mind: ... *the universe, by definition, is a single, gorgeous celebratory event.* My retreat became an immersion in a daily party, and I not only felt the oneness of life, I heard it, saw it, and celebrated with it as I expanded my identity to include a deepening cosmological consciousness.

During the week, a lovely poem by William Stafford was offered for my prayer: *Breathe on the world. Hold out your hands to it. When mornings and evenings roll along watch how they open and close, how they invite you to the long party that your life is.*

May all of us experience time on our rare and precious planet as a long, gorgeous celebratory!

**December 10: Work Day in the Oblates Woods Nature Preserve
9:30 am - Noon**

Let us know if you plan to join this work party: 618-466-5004

**December 12: Advent, Our Lady of Guadalupe,
and Long Night's Full Moon**

The interplay of darkness and light find expression in the events occurring on this day in December. *Long Night's Full Moon* is a Native American name reminding us that midwinter nights are a long celebration of darkness punctuated by the dance of Moon's phases. Although these nights are the longest of the year, we get the slow pleasure of enjoying a full measure of lovely moonlight because the Moon is above the horizon for a long time.

For those of us who find ourselves deep in the season of Advent at full moon, this comment by Barbara Brown Taylor in her book *Learning to Walk in the Dark* can be a light for our sacred path, "New life starts in the dark. Whether it is a seed in the ground, a baby in the womb, or Jesus in the tomb, it starts in the dark."

This is also the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe whose icon shows a pregnant Mary waiting to give birth to Light.



This coincidence of full moon, Advent, and Guadalupe are really no coincidence at all. They reveal the awesome truth of oneness, the awareness of nonduality that is emerging so strongly in our day. Remember: *The universe is a single, gorgeous, celebratory event.*

**December 21: Winter Solstice Celebration
7:00 - 9:00 pm**

Our yearly solstice party is a welcome alternative to cultural holiday

parties. For fifteen years we have joined together on one of the longest nights of the year to fling light into the world. In a lovely ritual we walk the pine universe spiral lit with candles and proclaim our ecological promises for the coming year. Join us and celebrate your efforts to live as a committed member of the Earth community.

Please bring a snack to share; Mexican hot chocolate, coffee and tea are provided.

Registration: Please let us know you are coming -
info@lavistaelc.org

December 25: Incarnation and Transparency

Teilhard de Chardin shares that what is essential to the Divine Milieu "is not exactly the *appearance*, but the *transparence* of God in the universe". He speaks of "a universal transparency aglow with fire" and to a divine fire playing in created beings "as though in the purest crystal".



Water droplet by Aaron Burden on Unsplash

Is this what Jesus revealed through his birth, life and death?

Is this what draws us to celebrate in December with owls and snow, stars and pines and the full moon?

Is this what Mary Oliver means when she writes, *But nothing you ever understand will be sweeter, or more binding, than this deepest affinity between your eyes and the world ?*

Blessed feast day from La Vista!

Climate Fiction Book Club January 3 6:30 - 8:30 pm

Ishmael: An Adventure of Mind and Spirit by Daniel Quinn is an excellent choice for this month's book club. Ishmael, a thousand-pound gorilla, becomes the teacher who urges the narrator and all of us to wake up and end our culture's war on Earth.

To participate please read this unusual novel and come ready to

engage in a stimulating conversation. You will enjoy a beautiful setting, creative literature and good company!

Place: *Afterwords Book Store* 441 East Vandalia Street
Edwardsville, IL 62035

No cost

Registration: Call 618-466-5004

Sponsored by: Confluence Climate Collaborative

