



# La Vista Ecological Learning Center

A ministry of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate

July, 2020

## E-News and Eco-spirituality Calendar

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(Our monthly reflections are archived in the Blog on our web site.)

## July, Aphelion, and Independence Day

Aphelion is the point in the orbit of a planet when it is farthest from our amazing daystar, the Sun. It just so happens that Earth reaches this point on July Fourth this year. (The Southern Hemisphere is experiencing the opposite, perihelion, being nearest the Sun.)



Ziwaddi on Unsplash

Even though we are farthest from the Sun on this day, we are still intimately bound to it, a fact we want to experience if we are to live the new story of the universe.

Meditation can help us live this story in an embodied way. Try using this meditation adapted from one by astronomer Stephan Martin.

Notice our intimate relationship with the Sun, even when at aphelion:

- Feel solar energy running through your body as it comes to you through the food you eat, air you breathe, water you drink, and the environment surrounding you.
- Sense the Sun pouring forth 4 billion tons of itself every second of the day, generously sharing its mass with the cosmos, with us.
- Look at all life on Earth as the expression of the Sun's vitality. Wherever you look, you are seeing Earth's response to the light and life of the Sun: trees greening, birds flying, fish swimming. This is the energy of the Sun expressed in intimate form.
- Live each day bathed in the light of the Sun.
- Holding your cell phone, know that even your devices that use energy have the life of the Sun's vitality coursing through them.
- Love this: all life on Earth owes its being to the Sun. The generosity and grace of the Sun pour forth on every part of Earth equally, without preference.

- Be grateful that the Sun's generosity is reflected in your generous actions.

Independence Day is a holiday I have a hard time getting into; however, if there would ever be a celebration of Aphelion Day, well, that would evoke a celebratory spirit for sure. I can imagine people the world over united in our gratitude for all the Sun has done for 4.6 billion years. All of us could meditate on our intimate relationship with our Sun. When we eat together on that day we could be reminded that we are eating the Sun. When we smile at one another, we could recall that we are radiating the light of the Sun.

It might also be a day to critique our historically significant celebration of Independence Day. Thomas Berry's reflection below is instructive.

"Our political independence provided an ideal context for economic dominance over the natural world...We never understood that this continent had its own laws that needed to be obeyed and its own revelatory experience that needed to be understood. We have only recently considered the great community of life here. We still do not feel that we should obey the primordial laws governing this continent, that we should revere every living creature - from the lowliest insect to the great eagle in the sky. We fail to recognize our obligation to bow before the majesty of the mountains and rivers, the forests, the grasslands, the deserts, the coastlands. (p. 173, *The Sacred Universe* by Thomas Berry)

Food for thought on a national holiday that just may need to be reconsidered, maybe joined by a celebration that would unite all people under the Sun.

### **July 12: Work Day in the Oblates Preserve 9:00 - Noon**

We spend most of our workdays removing invasive species like bush honeysuckle, euonymus, golden rain tree, and tree of heaven. Invasive species have the unfortunate ability to multiply quickly, often



out-competing natives for food and habitat, posing a threat to a healthy

ecosystem. You can play an active role in preventing the spread of these species by joining our volunteer group. If weather permits, we will gather once more on July 12 as we care for our common home in a most practical way. Let us know if you are coming: 618-466-5004.

## July 20: New Moon

The very dark night of the new moon is perfect for inviting a friend, driving out beyond urban light pollution, and experiencing the Milky Way. When you do so, know that every star you see is part of our galaxy, our home. Enjoy the sacred gift of awe as you encounter its over 200 billion stars. Be stunned by its age as you realize it was fully formed 13.6 billion years ago and is almost as old as the Universe. Finally, hang on as you try to feel it moving 2.2 million kilometers per hour.

When you do this, you are coming into a more intimate understanding of the Mystery enveloping humanity, and you are carried deeper into the numinous ocean of beauty that holds you. Your existence on Earth has just been enriched as you opt out of our culturally poor awareness of who we are, where we are, and why we are here.



Photo: Jeff Nissen on Unsplash

## Looking Ahead: Climate Fiction Book Club Friday, August 7, 6:30 - 8:30

*Death for Gaia: Ecocide and the Righteous Assassin*, co-authored by Samuel Alexander and Peter Burdon, is a work of philosophical fiction about a global pandemic. Written before Covid 19, the authors note that the timeline and any similarities with our existing situation are coincidental. Join us as we explore the themes presented, sharing our own insights and mining our collective wisdom. The author offers this book free online or for a "pay as you want" donation. Visit *Simplicity Institute Publishing* to get your copy.

Location: To be decided. Call 618-466-5004 for information.

