

La Vista Ecological Learning Center

A ministry of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate



February, 2021

E-News and Eco-spirituality Calendar

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Monthly reflections are archived in the Blog on the web site.

Radical Relationality



Mariah during our Winter Solstice Celebration

For many people February is a month to just tolerate. I hear comments like this - *the holidays are over, and there are no festivities to carry us onward; the weather is horrible, and often there's slush on the ground; the days are still too short.* (Imagine several frown emojis here.)

This is surely not the perspective of a spiritual ecologist! In February so many good things are happening: groundhogs emerge from hibernation and start breeding; great horned owls are already incubating their eggs; northern cardinals sing on sunny days; maple sap is flowing best right now; large flocks of robins appear; chorus frogs begin their raspy songs; and possum young are born and climb into their mothers' pouch. What if we trusted the movement of the natural world and aligned our daily lives with it instead of bemoaning what some consider bad weather and a month be left behind?

I was recently introduced to a way of life that opens the door to this kind of relationship. The Norwegian word *friluftsliv*, translated *free air living*, is a pillar of Norwegian culture and proof that mindset transforms the way we experience our world. Friluftsliv is a lifestyle and philosophy, defining what it means to be Norwegian. It focuses on being outdoors whatever the weather, believing *there is no bad weather; only bad clothing*. It calls us to pay attention to the elements and to appreciate where we are in space and time. It helps us develop a sense of place where we are comfortable and at home.

What we believe truly transforms our experience. For so long we have believed that we are separate from the living world. Above it. In control of it. Conquerors of it. We cling to the built environment to avoid any kind of discomfort or inconvenience. We even pray to God to change the weather to our liking!

"Imagine ourselves not as standing aloof and distant from the world, but caught up into, transformed by, the intimate presence of the living world within and around us. Imagine a profound and lasting intimacy with the living world, with our own embodied selves, and with the Spirit who lives and breathes among us." These words by Douglas Christie encourage the kind of radical relationality one needs to become Norwegian in practice, if not in fact.

Christie's words call to my mind a quote from *Laudato Si* where Pope Francis comments that "...human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbor and with the earth itself." This is truly radical relationality and a call to open ourselves to the immensity of Divine Mystery in our most local experience of the universe. (Thanks to Douglas Christie for the concept of radical relationality in his book *Blue*

Sapphire of the Mind.)

The picture at the beginning of this reflection was taken at La Vista's online Winter Solstice Celebration on a cold evening on December 19th. Lovely Mariah decorated herself as a star and delighted all who were virtually present by going outdoors under the light of the moon for the ritual turning of the sun staff. What a radical expression of alignment with the Winter season and expression of *fritluftsliv*. Thank you to Mariah and her and photographer Sean!

February 5 Virtual Confluence Climate Collaborative Book Club 6:00 – 8:00 pm

"Unsheltered, I live in daylight. And like the wandering bird I rest in thee." Maybe this quote from the book will entice you to join us in a lively discussion of Barbara Kingsolver's *Unsheltered*. Request the Zoom link using this email address, info@lavistaelc.org.

Looking ahead - on Friday, April 2nd, we will discuss Robin Wall Kimmerer's delightful and thought-provoking book *Braiding Sweetgrass*. I love this quote from her book: "Action on behalf of life transforms. Because the relationship between self in the world is reciprocal, it is not a question of first getting enlightened or saved and then acting. As we work to heal the earth the earth heals us".

Request the Zoom link using this email address, info@lavistaelc.org

February 9 Workday in the Oblate Preserve 9:30 am – Noon

Call 618-466-5004 and let us know you are joining this good work.

February 14 Valentines All Day

In the spirit of *fritluftsliv* try celebrating outdoors all day.

- Morning – Enter sunrise and be part of it, breathing in beauty, breathing out love.
- Afternoon – Break out of routine and find a new park or path to explore. Love Earth by noticing what inspires wonder and awe within you.
- Evening - Bundle up in the backyard around a fire pit. Celebrate with these lovely words from

Gerard Manley Hopkins:

Look at the stars!

Look, look up at the skies!

O look at all the fire-folk sitting in the air!



February 16 Kyoto Protocol Day and COVID Relief Bill



Kyoto Protocol Day honors the anniversary of the 2005 Kyoto Protocol, an international agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to global warming. The Bad News: it was signed by the United States but not ratified; then, we dropped out of the protocol in 2001. The Good News : The Coronavirus Relief Bill of

Photo by Science in
HD on Unsplash

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The bill's provisions include

- a \$35 billion investment in zero emission technology
- an extension of tax credits for wind and solar energy
- a plan for phasing out hydrofluorocarbons (a coolant in refrigerators and air conditioning)

Hurray for the good news! Hurray for our rare and precious planet!

