



La Vista Ecological Learning Center

A ministry of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate

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E-News and Eco-spirituality Calendar

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

June – Be Here Now

“‘Be here now’ is the fundamental discipline of all traditions and, of course, it is the most difficult of all.” – Elaine Prevallet, SL



I read this quote from Prevallet's book *A Wisdom for Life* as I was beginning to think about this June reflection, and even though it is familiar and quoted in an older book, it produced a new awareness in me about the *why* of these monthly essays: each unique month offers many anchors that keep me in the here and now.

One anchor is the weather. How easily June weather holds me in the now - warmth on my skin, breeze in my hair, an array of flowery scents coming into my nostrils, rain touching my body, thunder in my ears, luminous clouds and blue sky delighting my eyes. At any moment every day weather is calling me to pay attention and *be here now*. All I have to do is be attentive and

appreciative, and I am drawn into the profound Mystery underneath all that happens in the atmosphere.

I might also simply observe activity around me, and in June it is likely that I will see birds feeding their young. As I watch this process I am reminded of an amazing fact I have held in my memory: a single pair of breeding chickadees must find 6,000 – 9,000 caterpillars to rear one clutch of young. Here is an example of total focus. Every day, morning until evening, for about ten days, these parents are in the present moment. What an example of being here now, doing what they do every June. I develop the discipline of attentiveness as I watch, amazed, and I am drawn into the profound Mystery underneath all that nourishes life.

If I am lucky, I might have the opportunity to develop a relationship with one of June's special beings like the snail pictured here. One morning I spotted this tiny,

delicate being on the rocks in the birdbath outside the back door. I watched frequently throughout the day as Snail explored the rocks with exquisite slowness. By evening Snail had moved under a rock, drawn into her silent home-shell for the night, and in the morning she was on the lowest rock getting a drink! I was delighted to have such a visitor so nearby, one I had known before only as an empty shell. As I watched, I realized that during the day my mind had been where my body was, lured by the stunning life of this being that had become a “thou”, and I was drawn into the profound Mystery within all beings.

A favorite night-anchor is our Moon in her mesmerizing phases – day after day, month after month, year in and year out. Moon accompanies me, there to be noticed and appreciated, teaching me to be with whatever is happening, to accept the reality of the present moment as it waxes and wanes. *Be here now*, Moon shines out, and I am drawn into the profound Mystery underneath all that beams.

Further in her book, Prevallet reminds us that we need spiritual disciplines long-term, that *none yields quick results*. How blessed we are as Earthlings to have a spiritual discipline embedded in every moment of our daily lives, however long these lives may be. Even though this might be the most difficult of all practices, what excites me is that it is also the most accessible. No guru needed, no books or equipment, no time constraints, just absolute availability if we wake from our sleep and *be here now*.

Where are you right now, in this present moment?

June 4 Coal Mining’s Dark and Dirty Truth Past and Present: A Book Discussion of *Sixteen Tons* and a Visit with Author Kevin Corley (In – Person and Zoom Options Available)

7:00 - 8:30 pm

The past: the novel *Sixteen Tons* explores Big Coal in the early days of mining, exposing racism, corporate greed and human suffering. Author Kevin Corley will be present to join the discussion. The present: *The Destruction of Longwall Mining*, is a presentation showing how communities, farmland, homes and individual farmers are suffering nearby in Hillsboro, IL. The evening will conclude with time for Q and A as well as an opportunity to act on this issue. Sponsored by the Confluence Climate Collaborative.

Location: Center for Spirituality and Sustainability on the campus of SIUE, Edwardsville, IL

To register to receive the Zoom link OR to be present in person, please Email info@lavistaelc.org or call 618-466-5004.

Sponsored by the Confluence Climate Collaborative.

June 5 World Environment Day

Food for reflection and action from the World Environment Day website: *This is our moment. We cannot turn back time. But we can grow trees, green our cities,*

rewild our gardens, change our diets and clean up rivers and coasts. We are the generation that can make peace with nature. Let's get active, not anxious. Let's be bold, not timid.



June 8 Workday in the Oblate Nature Preserve **9:00 am - 11:30 am**

Please join our dedicated group of volunteers! Here is a recap of our work in the past five years: removal of bush honeysuckle, wintercreeper, and golden raintree, planting of native species, removal of old fencing, participating in a fire crew, removing of trash from the River Road area after flooding, and removal of trash from dump and hillside. The Preserve is now in much better shape thanks to our volunteers.

Call 618-466-5004 and let us know you are coming. Thank you.

June 9 The Destruction of Longwall Mining: Presentation and Panel Discussion 7:00 - 8:30 via Zoom

Join us to learn how communities, farmland, homes and individual farmers are suffering from the effects of longwall mining in nearby in Hillsboro, IL. After an informative presentation an outstanding panel will help us explore this issue in depth:

- Aimee Erickson, Executive Director of Citizens Coal Council
- Mary Ellen DeClue, Karyl Dressen, and Joyce Bluemenshine, members of *Citizens Against Longwall Mining* and the Illinois Sierra Mining Issues Team
- Carl Behme, Macoupin County farmer with longstanding experience with coal mine impacts from room & pillar mining

We'll conclude the session with a Q and A period and an Action Request.

Registration: send your request for the Zoom link to toinfo@lavistaelc.org

June 17 World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought

This United Nations' World Day is observed to raise awareness on the international level about the urgent need to curb the desertification process.

What is it? *Desertification* refers to degradation of land in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas caused primarily by overexploitation and inappropriate land use. It undermines the health of both land and people.

Why make it a World Day of observance? Desertification and drought are global problems, affecting all regions of the world.

What can we do about it? Pope Francis offers a clue in this quote from the

encyclical *Laudato Si'*: Here I would reiterate that “God has joined us so closely to the world around us that we can feel the desertification of the soil almost as a physical ailment...”(89) If human beings recognized how intertwined we are with every aspect of creation, we would experience the devastation of the planet as an assault on our person. This identification should lead to greater care for our common home by way of action on behalf of planet and people for long-term survival. How expansive is your self-identification? What are you going to do with your awareness?

June 19 Celebrating Summer Solstice and Fathers' Wisdom 2:00 – 4:00 pm



We invite you to join us outdoors as we again mark the longest day of the year, the beginning of summer, and Father's Day.

Many fathers share their life experience by way of warnings, words of encouragement, and life lessons. **Please bring some words of wisdom from your own father or grandfather to share.**

We will meet outside the barn and have time for sharing, wandering the land, and just plain enjoying the beginning of summertime! Please bring a snack to share if you are comfortable doing that. Drinks will be provided. Also, bring your lawn chair.

Registration: email info@lavistaelc.org.

June 30 A Thought to End the Month

From author Annie Dillard: *We awake, if ever at all, to mystery.*



