



La Vista Ecological Learning Center

A ministry of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate
January 2023

E-News and Eco-spirituality Calendar

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Monthly reflections are archived in the [Blog](#) on our web site.



January - What Will You Be Shedding?

Naturalists tell us that during the mating season bucks relied on their antlers to show dominance over other bucks and as weapons in their struggles with their foes; but in January other hormones kick in and antlers are shed. What an example for all of us as we begin a new year - shedding what no longer serves our cause.

If words were antlers, this year I would shed the word *urgency*. Many days my emails contain messages such as, *Urgent! We need your help to fight the climate crisis!* After reading so many of these, I find myself on the verge of overwhelm, and I delete them without responding to the urgent cause even though I agree that our situation is urgent to the hilt.

In her book *Perseverance* Margaret Wheatley offer an insightful reflection on this word. She writes, *Urgency is the unavoidable companion of crisis*. She continues by describing its ramifications, *...we work very hard, push our agenda, get aggressive. And we get angry. Anyone who doesn't respond immediately becomes our enemy*. This touched me because she is describing not only those sending urgent emails my way, but also myself.

Frequently I am perplexed by those who don't share my sense of urgency around the climate and biodiversity crises. And yes, like the bucks using their antlers as weapons, I strike out at them even if it is only in my mind. It sets me up for the dualistic stance of "me vs. them".

Wheatley concludes, *... we fail to notice it's our own behaviors that are intensifying the opposition. Stop. Urgency leads nowhere except into the wilderness of aggression and failure. It doesn't serve our cause. It doesn't serve anything.*

I am going to place the shed pictured here near my desk for the duration of 2023 as a reminder that there are alternatives to urgency, ones that make friends, not enemies, ones that are sustainable and dialogic, that promote interconnectedness and interdependence. These alternatives invite me to change my behaviors so that I become more patient, allowing gradual change as nature models so beautifully.

January 6 - Epiphany and Full Moon Benevolence



We live in [Benevolent Universe](#), according to Satish Kumar in a mind-expanding article. He illustrates his point with examples of benevolence in nature such as:

- *soil that helps one single seed to multiply into millions of seeds for hundreds of year;*
- *rain, delivering itself to every farm, field, forest, mountain and human habitat, free of charge, without needing any external supply of energy;*
- *the sun which burns itself to maintain life; and*
- *the moon which maintains the cycle of life and the cycle of time.*

How lovely that the feast of Epiphany and January's full moon coincide this year, reminding us of the benevolence of our good and gracious God manifested in our benevolent Universe. In the reflection's conclusion, Kumar offers us a way forward when he writes, *If we sow seeds of malevolence, malevolence will grow; if we sow seeds of benevolence, benevolence will grow.*

There is a lovely Buddhist practice that is helpful in sowing these seeds. Called [benevolent glancing](#), it involves looking at other beings and wishing well, without the other's knowledge of our practice. Some people do this on public transportation, or at family gatherings, or on a Zoom call as people are joining on the screen. We intentionally send goodwill to those we see, human and other-than-human. On this celebration of Epiphany and January's full moon, we might take on the practice of benevolent glancing as way to sow seeds of benevolence during such a dark time on our rare and precious planet.

Photo: thanks to Sanni Sahil on Unsplash

January 10 - Workday in the Oblate Preserve 9:30 - 11:30

Recently I was taken by this phrase in the book *Braiding Sweetgrass: **the active force of love for land made visible***. This called to mind our volunteers who drive a distance and work hard month after month, year after year, to care for the land and for all the wildlife that rely on this habitat. I am grateful for this dedicated group that works not only at La Vista, but also at other Preserves in southern Illinois. What an active force of love for land made visible! Thank you!

Thoughts for a Snowy Day

From Matthew Fox -
*Snow at its best
is a kind of covering
rendering things
once again.*

And from Teilhard de Chardin
*By means of all created things, without
exception, the divine assails us, penetrates us
and molds us. We imagine it as distant and
inaccessible, whereas in fact, we live steeped in its burning layers.*



Save the Date

February 4 - Winterfires Coffeehouse

7:00 - 9:00 pm

Registration: info@lavistaelc.org

*There's a revolution that needs to happen,
and it starts from inside each one of us.
We need to wake up and fall in love with Earth.
– Thich Nhat Hanh*

Bring your poems, stories or music to celebrate love in all its varieties - human, Earth, Universe, animal, the whole shebang. February, the month for Valentines and cold temperatures, is perfect for a warm gathering of friends, poetry, story, and camaraderie around a crockpot of Mexican hot chocolate! So, gather your poems and head out to La Vista on Saturday, February 4th.

Thank you for registering early, by Saturday, January 28th: info@lavistaelc.org

Please bring a snack to share along with your poetry, story and/or music.

Bring a friend!

NOTE: If you have any kind of COVID or cold symptoms, please wait until next year to participate. This event will be cancelled for inclement weather or spikes in Covid in our area. I will communicate cancellation via email, if necessary.



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