



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 our web site.

September - Sacred Balance



When I observe sunsets, especially from the Crow's Nest at La Vista, I am drawn into what Thomas Berry calls the *great cosmic liturgy of the natural world*. Referring to medieval Christianity Berry wrote, "Dawn and sunset, the rise and setting of the sun, the passing from night into day and day into night, these were recognized as moments of special presence of the divine and the human to each other".

September seems a good time to re-claim

that sacred sense as we move toward the autumnal equinox on the 23rd. Equal hours of daylight and darkness remind us of the sacred balance unfolding for eons on our rare and precious planet. I love the phrase *sacred balance* which I have borrowed from David Suzuki's 1997 classic *Sacred Balance: Rediscovering Our Place in Nature*. The 25th anniversary edition came out in 2022, and Suzuki noted in the introduction that it is as relevant today as it was then. As a scientist, Suzuki shows how our actions have thrown Earth's life support systems off balance. He concludes that to protect all life and our planet, we need to change our ways and restore sacred balance.

In a review of the new edition, Robin Wall Kimmerer suggests that with those two words, *sacred balance*, Suzuki gives us both a vision for the future as well as guidance for how to get there; however, she notes that we are further from this balance than we were in 1997. She comments that now we actually know what to do, but we don't do it! She muses about what holds us back and offers this suggestion, "The answers are legion, but if I had to name a root cause of our willful deafness to the suffering of the Earth, it would be the anthropocentric worldview that has powered the losses of colonialism and extractive capitalism and has us teetering on the brink of ecological catastrophe. This calls us to undertake a transformation from a worldview of domination and exploitation to a kin-centric worldview that acknowledges our dependence on the life-giving gifts of other species, before whom we can only bow in gratitude".

In the encyclical *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis agrees that modern anthropocentrism is a fundamental problem calling it *distorted, misguided, and excessive*. In various paragraphs he lays out a more balanced approach, inviting us to move away from destructive behaviors and toward what Kimmerer calls "kin-centric" ones:

- from being *masters, consumers, and ruthless exploiters*, to *feeling intimately united with all that exists* (Par. 11),
- from *indifference to universal solidarity* (Par. 14),
- from *dominion to a relationship of mutual responsibility* (Par. 67),
- from being *confrontational to extending a friendly hand* (Par. 106),

- from being *disconnected from the rest of creatures to being joined in a splendid universal communion* (Par. 220).

If we embraced the vision of Pope Francis, David Suzuki, and Robin Wall Kimmerer, we would be much closer to truly caring for our common home by restoring the sacred balance we are reminded of at the autumnal equinox. (Photo: Sunset from the Crow's Nest - Kevin McLaughlin)

September 1: World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation

[“Let Justice and Peace Flow”](#) is the theme of this year’s ecumenical Season of Creation that begins on this day and ends on October 4th, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi. In his Message encouraging participation in the day of prayer and in the Season of Creation, Pope Francis wrote, “Just as the hearts of babies in the womb beat in harmony with those of their mothers, so in order to grow as people, we need to harmonize our own rhythms of life with those of creation, which gives us life”. What a beautiful image! Please click on the link above to find a guide to help you participate in the day of prayer and the season of Creation.

September 4: Eco-Labor Day

What does an ecological celebration of Labor Day look like? There are many suggestions on Google like cleaning up after the parade, avoiding disposable party ware, etc. You get the idea; however, if we truly want to shift to a kin-centric worldview, we could include other-than-human beings in our celebrations.

One way to do this would be to extend our sense of gratitude to laborers in addition to human ones. We could be grateful for: our sun that converts 4 million tons of itself into light every second, giving life to Earth; bees that pollinate, making biodiversity possible; white oak trees which feed innumerable species of birds, butterflies, and mammals. This tiny list is just a sample of the innumerable laborers that go unrecognized and unappreciated every minute of every day. Let’s include them this Labor Day and shift our celebration to a more kin-centric one.



September 5, 19, 26: Workdays in the Pollinator Garden, 8:30 am

September 12: Workday in the Oblates Nature Preserve, 9:00 am

Online Autumn Book Discussion: *Explaining Life Through Evolution* Wednesdays, 9/27, 10/11, 10/25, 11/8, 11/15 12:00 – 1:00 PM



In his informative and witty style, author Prosanta Chakrabarty, author of *Explaining Life Through Evolution*, explains why the diagram showing the “march of progress” from caveman to us (mocked in this photo), has done more harm than good saying, "It is very wrong". The book is also more than this, highlighting the importance of understanding evolution

for many aspects of our everyday lives such as vaccination and herd immunity, sex and gender, ancestry and genealogy, as well as the challenges of life in the future on our rare

and precious planet. It is an intriguing read! (Photo: Thanks to Eugene Zhyvchik on Unsplash)

For help deciding if this book discussion is for you, listen to a six-minute [TED talk with the author](#) and/or read an [excerpt](#) from the book.

Registration: Email info@lavistaelc.org with your interest in joining. I will send you the Zoom link by email. If you would like to make a donation to support the work of La Vista, that would be lovely. Our address is 4300 Levis Lane, Godfrey, IL 62035. Thank you!

Important: It is very helpful for you to have the ability to join via Zoom with a camera.

September 23 Autumnal Equinox Celebration of Sacred Balance 2:00 – 4:00 PM in the Lodge at La Vista

Please join us as we continue to explore and celebrate sacred balance on our planet and in our own lives at this time of equal hours of daylight and darkness. After a long summer, we will delight in the prospect of another gorgeous autumn on our rare and precious part of Earth, our cosmic home.

Please bring a snack to share and meet in the Lodge. Drinks will be provided.
RSVP: [info @lavistaelc.org](mailto:info@lavistaelc.org) Thank you!



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