



## La Vista Ecological Learning Center

A ministry of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate

November, 2020

### E-News and Eco-spirituality Calendar

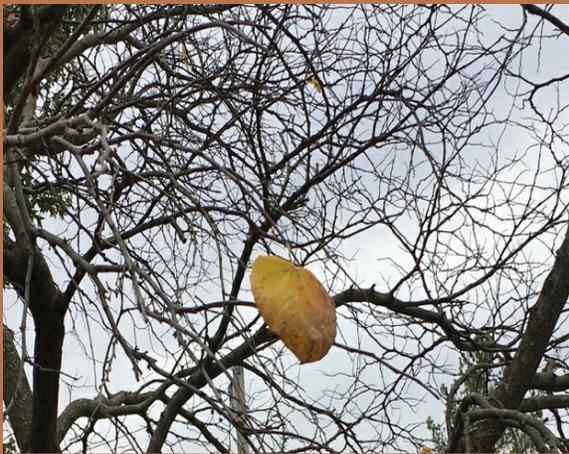
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(Our monthly reflections are archived in the Blog on our web site.)

### November Reveals an Ecological Virtue



Looking into my backyard and feeling an absence of sorts, I realize it is because of so much letting go in November: chipmunks have moved to underground dens, letting go of their frenetic activity which entertained me; morning glories have given up their lovely deep purple, replaced with brown seeds; oaks have released their grip on acorns

now covering the ground; and leaves are ending their rides on branches to take a trip downward. All of these are letting go of what no longer serves them as we head into the winter season.

One of my favorite autumn poems is by David Ignatow, and in it he brings perspective to all this non-attachment. Describing one leaf left on a branch he observes no *sadness, despair, or unhappiness*; nor does he hear it speak of *loneliness or death*. He concludes, *One leaf and it spends itself in swaying mildly in the breeze*. I want to be like that one leaf, trusting the evolutionary flow.

Recently during a webinar by Sister Sharon Zayac, OP, I was reminded that from an evolutionary perspective we are more like human *becomings* than human *beings*. Maybe the leaf gets it, that it is not just letting go and dying; rather, it is becoming something more. Isn't that the case for all in an evolutionary universe? Aligning with the letting go energy of autumn, we might ponder these questions: *What wants to evolve through me now? and now?* When making a decision about letting go we might ask, *Will this choice*

*enlarge or diminish my life?*

I was also reminded that, in an evolutionary universe, there are no certainties, no absolutes. I asked myself if I find that intimidating or freeing. It seems to me that the ecological practice of letting go should be a practice of freedom; so, I want to choose freedom and a larger life, and in the present moment spend myself swaying mildly in the breeze.

A final thought from Teilhard de Chardin: *Blessed be you, mighty matter, irresistible march of evolution, reality ever newborn; you who, by constantly shattering our mental categories, force us to go ever further and further in our pursuit of the truth. (Hymn of the Universe)*

### **November 3 Election Day and Laudato Si**

In her book *Ecopiety: Green Media and the Dilemma of Environmental Virtue*, Sara McFarland Taylor cautions that eco-piety is fine, but *privatized, small-scale voluntary, individualized acts of green virtue are utterly inadequate in dealing with our monumental planetary challenges*. The author implies that eco-piety needs to include political engagement in favor of sustainability for all life on Earth.

In that light the best opportunity to express ecological spirituality in November might be Election Day, November 3rd when we have the opportunity to cast our ballots for those individuals who align *with integral ecology*, the phrase Pope Francis uses for hearing the cry of both people and planet. Candidates who see one complex crisis which is both social and environmental might be the best choice. According to *Laudato Si*, *Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature.*

### **November 10 Workday in the Oblates' Nature Preserve**

**9:30 am - Noon**

Have you ever seen bittersweet growing on the side of a road and pulled over to collect some for decorating your home? If so, you may be unwittingly spreading this invasive vine!



During our October workday volunteers learned all about invasive oriental bittersweet pictured here.

Thanks to Robin Lyon on Unsplash

We found a large patch and spent hours pulling/digging it out. One person found it attached to a tree, and we learned that it characteristically attaches itself to anything nearby, choking the plants it clings to! We also learned it is easy to distinguish native from oriental bittersweet, in case we still want to collect some. The invasive fruits all along the stem, while native fruits at the end of the vine.

There's plenty more of this invasive to remove, so please join us for our November workday and contribute to our restoration efforts at La Vista! Call 618-466-5004 to let us know you are coming.

## November 26 Thanksgiving and a National Day of Mourning

The town of Plymouth, Massachusetts, on behalf of the United American Indians of New England, erected this plaque on a rock for all to read and ponder:

*Since 1970, Native Americans have gathered at noon on Cole's Hill in Plymouth to commemorate a National Day of Mourning on the U.S. Thanksgiving holiday. Many Native*



Thanks to Dulcey Lima - Unsplash

*Americans do not celebrate the arrival of the Pilgrims and other European settlers. To them, Thanksgiving Day is a reminder of the genocide of millions of their people, the theft of their lands, and the relentless assault on their culture. Participants in National Day of Mourning honor Native ancestors and the struggles of Native peoples to survive today. It is a day of remembrance and spiritual connection as well as a protest of the racism and oppression which Native Americans continue to experience.*

- Before your meal you might take a moment of silence and remembrance of those whose land we occupy.
- After your meal you could consider initiating a conversation about alternatives to our traditional Thanksgiving holiday.

### **November 27 Buy Nothing Day**

Since 1992 Black Friday has become a day to counter consumerism by joining the "Buy Nothing Day" protest. Since 2015 with the publishing of the encyclical *Laudato Si*, it has also become an opportunity for Catholics to protest our *throwaway culture*, to use Pope Francis' words.

Just as individualized acts of eco-piety are not sufficient to address our planetary challenges, so too, buying nothing one day a year doesn't cut it. Consumerism contributes to climate change, injustice for factory workers, environmental degradation, and so much more. Since Christmas during a pandemic will look quite different from usual, it might be an opportunity to make plans now for an alternative to Christmas gifting as well as to unnecessary purchases all year long.

