



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.

June – Agency Breeds Hope



I didn't know what to expect when I read the invitation for a Barge Bash in late April, but I quickly accepted since I always wanted to see a barge up close, having observed them from the bluffs for so many years. On the parking lot of Alton, Illinois' Melvin Price Locks and Dam I was given a life jacket before heading to the *Living Lands and Waters* barge docked there. I

could not have imagined the impact the evening would have on me as I felt myself rocking between hope and despair.

One young man with one boat began collecting trash on the Mississippi near his home in 1998 and sorting it in his parents' back yard. Now his organization has a fleet of 4 barges, 2 towboats, 5 workboats, 5 trucks and a crane. All of these are needed to do the work of trash removal and sorting, watershed conservation, tree plantings and education on the Mississippi, Ohio, and Illinois Rivers. His web site reports that he and his crew of 9 have collected over 12 million tons of trash with 120,000 volunteers. They say they are the only group doing "industrial strength" river cleanup in the world. And they do all of this in a spirit of fun. Their impact on the river made me feel hopeful; the fact that the amount of trash has increased over the years evoked a feeling of despair. The barge in the photo is one of three the crew filled during their 3 weeks in our area!

Part of the *Barge Bash* evening included a Sierra Club presentation on the *Mississippi River Restoration and Resilience Initiative* (MRRRI) This piece of legislation seeks federal funding to care for the Mississippi and its communities threatened by flooding and other extreme weather events, and pollution. Imagine that this river, which provides drinking water to 20 million people, is a flyway for millions of migratory birds, and provides habitat for endangered species, is only now about to get federal protection!! While the Initiative evokes hope, the fact that there has not been legislation to care for our precious river until now does not. This called to mind Thomas Berry's desire for Earth jurisprudence which recognizes Earth as a living being with intrinsic value and every constituent, including rivers, as having the right to be, the right to habitat, and the right to fulfill its role in the Earth community. Sadly, we are a long way from that visionary perspective.

Not long after my barge experience, I listened to the webinar *The Language of Trees* featuring Kathleen Dean Moore and Alison Hawthorne Deming who helped sort my feelings. Both women have been writing and teaching about the natural world for decades, and they are intimately familiar with the inclination to hope as well as despair. In response to a question about how to nurture hope Moore commented, *If despair comes knocking at your door, double bolt it and pretend you are not at home. Despair denies meaning and relieves you of responsibility. It is moral abdication!* Deming responded with equal sincerity, *Hope is a moral choice. There is plenty of evidence that we should not be optimistic, but to be of use in the world, choose hope!*

One webinar participant indicated that when she dies, she wants to be "fully used up", and so she asked, *what can we who are not writers and speakers do?* Their reply: Use the gifts you have and do what gives you a sense of agency. Because of the extreme urgency

of the climate crisis, ratchet up your activities however you can, making them happen on a larger, broader scale.

Hearing the wisdom of these two seasoned women shed light on my barge experience. I know I can't match the energy of the youthful crew on the barge, but I absolutely can respond to life as Kathleen and Alison propose. Also, I felt confirmed in using my ability as a writer to continue these reflections as one of my gifts to our planet in crisis. Following are some opportunities for you to act and nurture hope.

La Vista E-News

Please consider making a donation to La Vista Ecological Learning Center to keep this little newsletter happening: send your check to 4300 Levis Lane, Godfrey, IL 62035. Thank you kindly for your past support including many emails in which you share your own wonderful reflections with me. What a boost! And/or you may choose to extend the reach of our e-news by sending the name and email address of someone who would appreciate receiving it. (With their permission, please) Send to info@lavistaelc.org.

Support the Mississippi River Restoration and Resilience Initiative:

Contact your Congresspersons: <https://act.americanrivers.org/page/40188/action/1>
It is an act of hope to exert your agency in this way because we must not give in to despair, thinking sign-ons don't matter!

Thank you!

June 5: World Environment Day – Only One Earth!

In the universe are billions of galaxies,
In our galaxy are billions of planets,
But there is Only One Earth.

Only One Earth is the theme for this year's consciousness-raising commemoration of World Environment Day. Take a quiz on our "[Triple Planetary Crisis](#)" – and remember to hang onto hope as you use this challenging tool.

June 8 World Ocean Day



Sign on to this petition to our nation's leaders asking them to protect at least 30% of our Blue planet by 2030. The petition reads:

To create a healthy ocean with abundant wildlife and to stabilize the climate, it's critical that at least 30% of our planet's lands, waters, and ocean are protected by 2030 (30x30). As you make decisions leading up to the United Nations Biodiversity Summit (COP-15) in September, we encourage action!

- *We thank the leaders in over 90 countries who have already adopted the 30x30 goal and urge you to follow through on those plans.*
- *For leaders who have not yet committed, we urge you to join the movement and adopt the 30x30 goal as soon as possible.*

This letter is offered for your affirmation on the [World Ocean Day web site](#).

June 14 Workday in Oblates' Woods Nature Preserve 9:00 - 11:30 am

Join other ecological volunteers as we continue restoring these lovely sixteen acres.
RSVP: info@lavistaelc.org.

June 18 Summer Solstice: Celebrating Ecological Volunteers 2:00 – 4:00 pm

Thinking about the 120,000 volunteers who support Living Lands and Waters as well as the faithful volunteers who work monthly at La Vista removing honeysuckle evokes the ecological virtue of hope. Join us as we hear from and celebrate ecological volunteers on the longest day of the year. Of course, we also take joy in the change of season and give thanks for another summertime! We will meet outdoors at the Lodge at La Vista.

Please bring a snack to share if you wish and please RSVP: info@lavistaelc.org or 618-466-5004.

