



# La Vista Ecological Learning Center

A ministry of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate

August, 2021

## E-News and Eco-spirituality Calendar

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

### August - Mushrooms and Creative Potential



Spring and summer have been unusually wet and cool here in the Midwest. What this aspect of climate change has currently meant for the backyard is a plethora of mushrooms. I spotted the ones pictured here near the house, then ventured out and found myself walking over a variety of them - Chestnut bolete, hortiboletus, grisette amanita, mower's mushroom, hypomyces - what wonderful names describing each unique mushroom. I learned them from the *iNaturalist* App on my phone as I wandered the back yard, discovering them hidden in the grass and

dead leaves. Why so many here? Some like oak trees, and there happen to be two of them, one on either side of the yard. Also, much to my ecological delight, they are more likely to be found in yards not smothered in weed killers and fertilizers. Yes, another reason to go natural and avoid monoculture lawns!

I was taken by my discovery, moved by the way they appear in silence overnight, live their hidden lives, and then decay in place. I learned that one way that mushrooms serve the ecosystem is by decomposing dead organic matter. Biologists say without their service, especially in woods, we would be buried in meters of dead materials! These mushrooms are what they are, contributing to the ecosystem as they grow from miniscule spores to fungi, reaching their potential as fully developed mushrooms.

Mycologist Paul Stamets believes that mushrooms, and the fungi creating them, are so much more than we have known and that they can help save the world by cleaning polluted soil, making insecticides, treating smallpox and even flu viruses. For a real eye-opener view his TED talk [Six Ways Mycelium Can Help Save the World](#). How impressive, even fantastic! What a service! Oh, to be so **whole** – and that's the point.

In an insightful article *The Green self: Ecological Crisis and Individuation*. Jonah Saifer connects the idea of humans reaching our creative potential with our impact on the ecological crisis. He says, "We, too, can contribute to healing Earth by becoming our fully developed selves, and one way we can do this is through the process Carl Jung called *individuation*." He continues with a wonderful, organic

image that made me think of mushrooms. “This is a natural process of inner development similar to an acorn’s innate potential of becoming an oak tree or a caterpillar emerging from the chrysalis as a butterfly.” To paraphrase Saifer, just as oaks, butterflies - and mushrooms - contribute to the flourishing of the ecosystem through individuation – becoming whole – we can gain the wisdom needed to respond to external crises appropriately. Saifer continues, “Until then we are subject to the influence of unconscious drives, neuroses, and compulsions that put our biosphere in peril.

When I get overwhelmed with the impossibility of personally affecting the ecological crisis, when this goal seems completely beyond my reach, I know I can contribute by reaching inside, continuing to seek wholeness through the difficult process of individuation. The question is for all of us is whether we’ll have the *courage* and *will* to do so. Not easy, but so essential for the wellbeing of our rare and precious planet, including all life on it.

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## August 6 and 9 Remembering Hiroshima and Nagasaki

These anniversary days in Japan are set aside to remember the dead, console victims and pray for the realization of lasting world peace. Let’s join our hearts in meditation with our Japanese brothers and sisters as we treasure being alive and working for peace.

“When you make peace with yourself,  
you make peace with the whole world.”

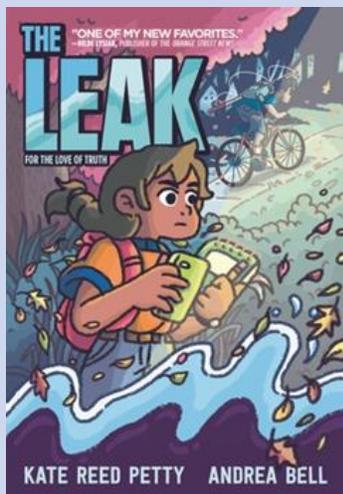
-Maha Ghosananda

(Photo of paper cranes at the Hiroshima Peace Park  
on Unsplash by Lily li)



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## August 6 Climate Fiction Book Club Discussion of *The Leak* 6:30 – 8:00 PM In-person and Online



Please join us and, if you can, bring a young environmentalist with you to discuss the graphic novel *The Leak* by Kate Reed Petty who will be with us online! *The Leak* is a graphic novel for middle schoolers, but its theme of community activism and citizen science is appealing to all ages. Local young environmentalists will also be on hand to share their own efforts to curb pollution in our area.

We’ll be live and on Zoom at the Center for Spirituality and Sustainability (Fuller Dome) on SIUE’s campus. Email me for the link if you would like to participate online - [info@lavistaelc.org](mailto:info@lavistaelc.org) OR if you need directions to the

Dome.

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## August 10 Workday in the Oblate Preserve

9:00 am - 11:30am

The number of faithful volunteers continues to grow! Thanks to each of you for pausing your busy life to contribute to the integrity of the Preserve. Please let me know if you plan on participating – [info@lavaistaelc.org](mailto:info@lavaistaelc.org)  
**For good news about our volunteers, be sure to read the announcement in the August 21st calendar item below.**

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### **August 12, 13 Perseid Meteor Shower**

Who doesn't love spotting a falling star? If you're lucky, you'll be able to see many bits of cosmic dust burning up in space in the dead of night this year. Peaking just a few nights after the new moon, they should be easily seen in the dark sky all night long. As you lie on the ground or lean back in your chair gazing into the cosmos, open your awareness of the divine spirit present in all.

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### **August 21 Volunteers of the Year Award**

Congratulations to the Friends of the Oblates Nature Preserves, our monthly volunteers, who have been nominated to receive the *Volunteers of the Year Award* from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources! The award will be given during a ceremony on August 21<sup>st</sup> at the Illinois State Fair in Springfield, Illinois. Their persistence in maintaining the Missionary Oblates Woods Nature Preserve over several years, in the heat and humidity as well as many beautiful days, deserves to be noticed. Thanks a million to each of you!

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### **Resource - Cosmos as Home: Evolution as Context**

In her article [\*Cosmos as Home: Evolution as Context\*](#) Mary Evelyn Tucker takes readers on a journey that evokes wonder and awe as she explores questions like *How do we humans belong to this vast universe, and what is our role? How do we break through to a new cosmological understanding that orients us within the vast forces of the universe and grounds us in Earth processes?* You won't want to miss this compelling article.

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