



La Vista Ecological Learning Center

A ministry of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate

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E-News

Email: info@lavistaelc.org

Website: lavistaelc.org

November, 2019 Eco-spirituality Calendar Maxine Pohlman, SSND

November, Wildness, and Mystery

"The wildness of the Mystery of God cannot be contained." This quote from John Philip Newell's *The Book of Creation* strongly captured my imagination one beautiful autumn morning; so, carrying the words in my heart, I headed out to Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary to encounter wildness and Mystery.

As I walked the trail I immediately found myself in a wild presence. A lively frog jumped out of my way into native grasses. A striped garter snake felt my footfall and slithered to cover. The wind blew brittle leaves from the sycamore trees, scattering them abroad. And then, the pelicans! Hundreds of white pelicans flew in these amazing flowing lines, just above the riverlands. The wildness of the Mystery of God cannot be contained.....how beautiful, how stirring. How I longed to be wild, too!



Then something caught my eye in a patch of milkweed: rubber bands were wrapped around the pods. I supposed the idea was to keep the seed from being wild, flying out on silken threads to plant themselves wherever they fell to be intentionally planted later on.

Much to my chagrin, I found myself identifying with those bound pods. I realized that I try to contain the wildness of the Mystery when taming my own wild nature; while struggling to name the Unnameable;

when calling some places sacred and others not; some beings holy and others not...

And then there are the ways many religions and cultures try to contain the wildness of Mystery: labels and unjust laws, exclusivity and patriarchy...

The wildness of the Mystery of God cannot be contained!

November 1: Launch of the Climate Fiction Book Club

This Climate Fiction Book Club provides an opportunity to meet with other readers and engage the harsh reality of climate change in an alternative way. To participate please read Barbara Kingsolver's *Flight Behavior* and come prepared to share your reflections. Be ready for engagement with creative literature and good company on this pressing topic! We will meet every couple months as we go forward.

Place: *Afterwords Book Store*

441 East Vandalia Street Edwardsville, IL 62035

Time: 7:00 - 9:00 pm

No cost, no registration necessary.

Sponsored by: Confluence Climate Collaborative

November 1 and 2: All Saints' and All Souls' Days

Who/what is a saint? Who/what has a soul? Is this labelling another way to limit the wildness of the Mystery? We tend to think only human beings can be saints and have souls. Is there another way to think, one outside the limits of tradition? Is it time to embrace a larger reality even if it seems "heretical"? These holy days may just be the time to recognize the sacredness of all beings, all as manifestations of the Divine, all words from the book of creation. As we turn this awareness into action, we serve the sacredness of humanity and Earth.

A related quote from Thomas Merton: *The pale flowers of the dogwood outside this window are saints. The little yellow flowers that nobody notices on the edge of the road are saints...*

November 12: Workday in the Oblates Woods

Nature Preserve 9:30 am - Noon

Do you want to care for our common home in a very concrete way? Join our group of faithful volunteers as we continue to remove invasive honeysuckle. We enjoy refreshments and lively conversation when the day's work ends.

Let us know if you plan to participate: 618-466-5004

November 20: A Celebration of Food, Film, and Local Farms



Join the Goshen Market Foundation and the Confluence Climate Collaborative for an evening celebrating our region's local farms. The night will open with a cash bar and a complimentary selection of light appetizers sourced from local ingredients by Edwardsville's best chefs.

The feature event will be a screening of the Documentary "Biggest Little Farm" which follows a couple and their dog as they bring harmony and regeneration to 200 acres of desolate soil. Filmed over seven years, viewers watch the whole community of life transform.

Following the screening, there will be a panel discussion with local farmers David Ernst of Ernst Family Farms, Michael Hurley of Rolling Lawns Farm, and Bobby and Mindy Wolff of Rustic Roots. Proceeds will benefit the Confluence Climate Collaborative and Goshen Market Foundation's Diversity in Farming Seed Grants program, which support new farmers in the Metro East.

Schedule:

6:30 Complementary light appetizers; 7:15 Film screening; 9:00 Farmer panel discussion

Cost: \$20 per person. Purchase tickets through Goshen Market's

November 22: Fourth Friday Film Festival 7:00 - 9:00 PM

As with our previous documentaries, *Journey of the Universe* is designed to up-end the status quo! It presents a new understanding and closer relationship with Earth in our time of environmental and social crisis. In an easily understood conversation between the findings of science and ancient wisdom, the documentary attempts to expand your mind along with the images of an expanding universe. Please join us and deepen your commitment to love and care for our common home.

No cost - donations always welcome
Registration: Call us at 618-466-5004

November 27: Milkweed Pods Open



Michael Weidner on Unsplash

Yes, there is actually a specific date in Missouri Department of Conservation's *Natural Events Calendar* for this wild event. Following this month's theme, why couldn't this also be a holy day, one to be celebrated with ritual? On this day we could honor the boundlessness of Mystery. We would use the image of seeds flying away on the wind to remind us that Mystery cannot be contained. Since we share the essence of God, are made of God, we too have a special boundless capacity. How will you celebrate the wildness of Mystery and your own share in it?

Recommended Documentary: *The River and the Wall*

Walled in or boundless? Explore the stunning beauty of the Rio Grande River as you travel with 5 people who wanted to capture the wildness of the River before a wall is built "from sea to shining sea". I highly recommend this film as a way to appreciate the border wall issue as it relates to both environmental and social justice.

November 28: Thanksgiving

The loneliness of the last cricket calls, ripening pecans, the end of Daylight Saving Time, the sight of old bird nests while hiking in the woods, the first "frost flowers", putting up bird feeding stations and observing the birds begin to gather: these are just a few of the reasons to be grateful in November, grateful for all the wild beings and activities that awaken us to the unfolding Mystery.

