



## 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 the web site.

## October - Loving the World



In one of my favorite poems Mary Oliver wrote, *My work is loving the world . . . which is mostly standing still and learning to be astonished . . . which is mostly rejoicing . . . which is gratitude.*

I worked really hard last week, at least according to Mary Oliver's definition. A black and yellow garden spider spun her web on a yew bush just outside the window near my computer. For over a week I learned to be *astonished* at her patience as she waited for an insect to get caught in her orbit. I *rejoiced* when, after a storm with downpours and gusty winds, she survived, zipper intact. I *loved* watching her eat an entire moth slowly over many hours. I was *grateful* for this unexpected visitor,

one who required nothing of me and offered me no possibility of infection.

Another more creative name for this species is "writing spider" because of the zipper-like part of her web biologists call a stabilimentum, pictured here. It is thought that this is where E.B. White got his idea for *Charlotte's Web*. The writing spider I observed may not have woven the words "enjoy, be astonished, rejoice, be grateful" into her web, but the message was clear to me.

I know spiders fulfill their role in the ecosystem by preying on a variety of insects and by being predators for other species, and this led me to ponder our human role in the ecosystem at this critical time on Earth. I think Pope Francis says it well in the encyclical *Laudato Si: The universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely. Hence, there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person's face. The ideal is not only to pass from the exterior to the interior to discover the action of God in the soul, but also to discover God in all things. Saint Bonaventure teaches us that "contemplation deepens the more we feel the working of God's grace within our hearts, and the better we learn to encounter God in creatures outside ourselves". (233)*

After a week this Orb Weaver disappeared from view, and I surmise she is reweaving at another site, ready to be silent and wait. Our encounter surely nurtured my contemplative heart. May all of us live so lightly and contemplatively on our rare and precious planet.

## October 4 Feast of St. Francis, Lover of Creation

In the encyclical *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis describes another Francis whose work was loving all creation:

*He was particularly concerned for God's creation and for the poor and outcast. He loved, and was deeply loved for his joy, his generous self-giving, his openheartedness. He was a mystic and a pilgrim who lived in simplicity and in wonderful harmony with God, with others, with nature and with himself. He shows us just how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace. (10)*

What a model for all of us who claim loving the world as our work!

## October 9 Rescheduled Autumn Equinox Celebration 2:00 – 4:00 pm

This year we will be late in celebrating the beginning of autumn, and I do hope you can join the fun. Get ready to be inspired as we learn about **The Heartlands Conservancy**, an important eco-organization that has been working for clean water, access to the outdoors, healthy ecosystems, and resilient communities in southwestern Illinois since 1989! Gary Huelsmann, Board Member and faithful participant in our events, and Mary Vandevord, President of Heartlands, will be our presenters. Of course, we will turn the sun staff to welcome the change of season as we remember and give thanks for our place in the Cosmos! If you have an autumn poem to share, we will make them part of the sun staff ritual.



We'll meet outdoors, near the barn, so you can park there. Please bring a lawn chair so you can place it where you feel safe. We won't share food, but feel free to bring a snack and drink for yourself. **To register**, email your name and the number participating: [info@lavistaelc.org](mailto:info@lavistaelc.org)

## October 11 Indigenous Peoples' Day

According to Sherri Mitchell of the Penawahpseek Nation, Indigenous peoples make up 5% of the global population while their lands hold some 80% of our planet's biodiversity and about 40 - 50% of the remaining protected places in the world. Her conclusion: "This makes the protection of Indigenous rights, along with our lands and ways of life, critical to the well-being of the planet, and it makes us natural partners in the race to address climate change." (*All We Can Save*, pp.19-20)

## October 12 Workday in the Oblates Woods Nature Preserve

9:00 am – 11:30 am



Thanks to volunteers who turned out for our September workday. We accomplished so much! Working at the base of the bluff just off the Great River Road, we enjoyed a great breeze as we pulled euonymus and removed honeysuckle.

A special treat was the discovery of Rusty Blackhaw, a native tree we had not noticed before. Every emerging native tree or plant puts the stamp of approval on our work

which contributes to increased biodiversity.

If you would like to join this effort to care for creation in a very concrete way, let us know! 618-466-5004 or [info@lavistaelc.org](mailto:info@lavistaelc.org)

### **October 24 Interfaith Prayer Circle 10:30 – 11:30 am**

Every Sunday you are invited to join in an hour of prayerful readings and conversation at the Center for Spirituality and Sustainability on the campus of Southern Illinois University in Edwardsville. Spiritual ecology is the theme for the fourth Sunday of each month, so please bring a poem, story or song that focuses on the sacredness of our rare and precious planet. No registration is necessary. For more information, call 618-466-5004. La Vista is a member of the Confluence Climate Collaborative, one of the sponsors of this monthly gathering.



### **October 31 Halloween and Composting Pumpkins**

Here in Madison County, the *Pumpkin Purge Community Composting Program* is part of a state-wide initiative providing sites where you can drop off pumpkins and gourds for composting. Many of the sites accepting pumpkins are farms which will recycle them, restoring valuable nutrients to soil in the composting process. Since food waste is a huge issue in our country this seasonal effort is one way to raise awareness, contributing to a change in a consciousness that sees every effort to care for creation and counter climate change as important!

Is there a pumpkin compost effort in your area? If not, DIY!

