



La Vista Ecological Learning Center

A ministry of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate

August, 2022

E-News and Eco-spirituality Calendar

Maxine Pohlman, SSND

Email: info@lavistaelc.org

Website: lavistaelc.org

Monthly reflections are archived in the [Blog](#) on our web site.

August Nature's Vespers



I first learned of the blue hour from Maria Popova's weekly newsletter, [The Marginalian](#), when she showcased a beautifully illustrated children's book, *The Blue Hour* by Isabelle Simler. Luckily, it was in our library system, so I picked it up and used it for meditation since it so easily tuned me in to that ethereal time of day called twilight, also the traditional time for Vespers.

Since then, I learned that the blue hour is a beloved time of day for photographers, poets, artists, musicians! Many are as inspired by that spiritual time as I am. I also learned that it is a very specific time, occurring twice daily, just before sunrise and after sunset when the sun is far enough below the horizon that blue rays dominate, turning the sky a stunning shade of blue unlike at any other time of day. In the evening it occurs at least ten minutes after sunset and lasts between 20 and 40 minutes, so "hour" is not accurate, but makes for a memorable name.

Making the connection to the liturgical hour of Vespers, I decided that the next night I would set up my chair under the sky and be present for the blue hour in its entirety. Since I had also discovered online the very lovely instrumental [Hymn to a Blue Hour](#) by John Mackey, I used it to enhance my ritual, adding it to the music of katydids, frogs and birds. What a delightful way to transition from the work of the day to the calm and peace of night. What an opportunity to allow myself to be carried into a bigger world, the world of stars, galaxies, universe, and the larger numinous Presence suffusing all. Along with the ambience of the blue hour, I used this line from Thomas Berry as a mantra:

*At every moment we are experiencing
the overwhelming mystery of existence.*

Since waking up to the blue hour, I have been nurtured by this opening to Presence daily. I hope you also find inspiration during this sacred time.

Note: If the writings of Thomas Berry allure you, see "Coming in the Fall" below.

Tuesdays in August and September Workdays in the Pollinator Garden at La Vista 8:00 am – 10:00 am

You are likely aware that monarch butterflies have recently been declared endangered, having been decimated by habitat destruction, climate change, and pesticides. So it is timely that nine volunteers, led by a local master gardener and master naturalist, are in process of renewing La



Vista's pollinator garden begun in 2014.

The picture (taken in July) shows the native plant monarda in full bloom, providing nectar for **many** bees, butterflies, birds, wasps, and other pollinators. Now we need to introduce greater diversity in order to provide for monarchs and to have flowering plants throughout the growing season.

This leads to a request. If you have native plants, especially varieties of milkweed, that you are going to divide in the fall, please consider donating them to La Vista so we can reach our goal of greater diversity. Last year we received a large Joe Pye plant in October, and this year it is flowering as the monarda fades. Thanks to our donors!! If you have a plant to share, please give me a call at 618-4-66-5004. Finally, if you would like to join this group, let me know. We have a great time together. 618-466-5004.

August 9 Workday in the Oblates' Preserve

9:00 am – 11:30 am



Last month it was encouraging to have the Habitat Strike Team from the Great Rivers Research and Education Center join other volunteers for our workday. The Team just about eradicated all the invasive tree of heaven, restoring greater health to the woods. Thanks to each of you! And our other faithful volunteers had a great time working on the bluff prairie where they discovered the lovely wild petunias pictured here. Thanks to them for removing invasives from that special place. If you'd like to join the fun this month, let me know you are coming: 618-466-5004. (Photo credit: Bill Rathmann)

Coming in the Fall. . .

Online Book Discussion of

Thomas Berry: Selected Writings on the Earth Community

Edited by Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim

First and third Wednesday evenings of each month

2022 - 9/7, 21 10/ 5, 19 11/2, 16 12/7, 21 2023 – 1/4, 18 2/6, 20

6:30 – 8:00 PM Central time

*We need a spirituality that emerges out of a reality deeper than ourselves,
a spirituality that is as deep as the Earth process itself,
a spirituality that is born out of the solar system and even out of the heavens
beyond the solar system. (Thomas Berry, CP)*

Many who read this newsletter are already familiar with the writings of Thomas Berry. I frequently draw on his thought in these monthly reflections, as it has enriched my life daily since 2004 when I was introduced at Genesis Farm. If you also resonate with his writings, please consider joining this group, and together we'll deepen our appreciation for the breadth and depth of Berry's thinking as it impacts our spirituality and the current situation on Earth today. Sessions will include reflection as well as discussion, since his words touch us on that level of spirit that requires slowness and attention.

To register by email: info@lavistaelc.org Include your name, preferred email address, phone number, and favorite Thomas Berry quote. You will receive the Zoom link with your registration confirmation.

Cost: Free will donation to support the work of La Vista is appreciated- La Vista 4300 Levis Lane, Godfrey, IL 62035.

