



La Vista Ecological Learning Center

A ministry of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate
March 2023

E-News and Eco-spirituality Calendar

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



March - Benign Presence

Since September La Vista has sponsored an online book discussion of *Thomas Berry: Selected Writings on the Earth Community*, and our conversations have been engaging and inspiring to say the least. After discussing chapter 9, *The Role of the Human*, I wished everyone could benefit from Berry's insights since I found them deeply moving.

Berry calls humans' role at this critical time on Earth the "Great Work", and he tells us that it applies to everyone living on

Earth. Berry names our task as, "moving modern industrial civilization from its present devastating influence on Earth to a more benign mode of presence".

I love this challenge – to be part of the transition moving humanity into a benign mode of presence. I had to wonder what it would be like to get up in the morning and enter the day thinking this way. When I eat plant-based meals, walk to work, drive less, take my compost to La Vista's farm, volunteer for Sierra Club's mining issues team, I could experience myself as a benign mode of presence and integral part of this transition. Do you also see the many ways you are a benign mode of presence?

I then considered the work of La Vista over the years and realized we have constantly involved participants in this transition. For fifteen years we offered organically grown vegetables through La Vista's Farm, helping people move out of the industrial food system; for ten years we provided an Earth Literacy program educating about many aspects of this transition; at present groups of volunteers practice benign presence when they labor to restore the Oblates' Woods and the pollinator garden; online and in-person groups read challenging books and articles that deepen our understanding and help us find ways to make the

journey.

I also think of the broader context of our lives: the movement toward renewable energy in our country and our world, our greater awareness of how we have mistreated marginalized people and are working to repair those relationships; our expanding consciousness regarding gender; concern for how we manage waste; growing concern about the climate and biodiversity crises. Truly this transition has been happening for a long time and will continue into the future.

Inspiring final thoughts from Berry: "We are...thrown into existence with a challenge and a role that is beyond any personal choice. The nobility of our lives, however, depends upon the manner in which we come to understand and fulfill our assigned role ... Yet, we must believe that those powers that assign our role must in the same act bestow upon us the ability to fulfill this role. We must believe that we are cared for and guided by these same powers that bring us into being."

A Lenten practice could be increasing the ways we act as benign modes of being on our precious planet. Lenten blessings Photo: Hand-built Trail Workshop at La Vista

March 14: Workday in the Oblate Preserve 9:30 - Noon

To volunteer call 618-466-5004 or email info@lavistaelc.org.

March 18: Celebrating the Spring Equinox and Shifting Consciousness 2:00 – 4:00 pm

Have you had an experience with an animal that was magical and/or life changing? Please bring your story to our gathering as we celebrate the coming of spring and an emerging consciousness that goes beyond a use-mentality toward other species. Thomas Berry reminds us that "anima" means "spirit", and animals are ensouled beings that not only delight us but also elicit care and concern during this time of extinction.

This emerging consciousness may save other species and ourselves!

Register: call 618-466-5004 or email info@lavistaelc.org

Please bring your story and a snack to share.

Location: Meet at the Lodge at La Vista.





March 25 DIY Earth Hour at Home 8:30 – 9:30 PM

Since 2007 individuals, small groups, and businesses all over the world have been practicing a more benign mode of presence intentionally during [Earth Hour](#) on the third Saturday of March as they reduce electricity use. You may want to gather friends and family to join with people worldwide in this reminder about the need to transition from being a destructive presence on our planet to having a beneficial rapport with Earth. You might gather outdoors around a fire, go for a night hike, or just sit in the dark enjoying conversation under the stars. You could even make this a “holy hour” as you extend your circle of compassion to include the whole Earth community.

***Our Wild Calling* Book Discussion**

Wednesdays, April 5, 19, May 3, 17, 31 Noon – 1:00 pm

The book *Our Wild Calling: How Connecting with Animals Can Transform Our Lives – and Save Theirs* was written by Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods*. Once more he is challenging readers become a more benign presence on Earth. Filled with stories of life-changing encounters with species other than our own, this book offers thoughtful ways we can consider animals with respect and reverence, changing our mentality toward them. Thomas Berry is known for saying *Earth is a community of subjects, not a collection of objects*, and Louv deftly brings this reality to life.

Registration by March 20: Please email info@lavistaelc.org to let me know you are interested. I will then have your email address so you can receive a Zoom link and other communications for the discussion. It is important that you are able to access Zoom and allow use of the video so we can see one another during the discussion.

Cost: A donation of \$20 would be appreciated to help pay for the technology that makes online discussions possible. Thank you for sending your donation to La Vista, 4300 Levis Lane, Godfrey, IL 62035.



Oblate Ecological Initiative | 4300 Levis Lane, Godfrey, IL 62035

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