



La Vista Ecological Learning Center

A ministry of the
Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate
October, 2023

E-News and Eco-spirituality Calendar
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October - Giving One's Gold Away

This reflection is adapted from October, 2020 E-News.

During fall the pollinator garden at La Vista brings to mind Mary Oliver's delightful poem "Goldenrod". She describes these ubiquitous fall flowers as having "light-filled bodies... giving their gold away". I appreciate that way of looking at goldenrod which seem to be everywhere at this time of year.

Her poem came to mean more to me after hearing a talk on the physics of light by astronomer Stephan Martin. He told his listeners that *light is how we know the Universe!* Just that thought gives me pause. He invited us to recall the many ways we encounter light daily; for example, in the morning when we open our eyes and see light from the window which travels to our brains creating an image. He said that our eyes are the interface between ourselves and our world, and that *seeing is a sacred connecting act we experience first thing upon awakening!*

Next, we may take a morning walk and observe goldenrod growing and giving on the roadside. He explained that we are actually experiencing light from the sun absorbed by atoms of the flower. Goldenrod then emits the energy from these atoms, so we are seeing the light of goldenrod – not just a reflection, *but the essence of goldenrod*. How wonderful is that! Here is another reason to be in awe, and he said this is true for all that we see – each being is radiating itself into the world like a star, creating intimacy, healing our separation from nature - when we are receptive to this truth.

Later in the day we might be sitting near someone and feel heat radiating from them. The reality is that *we are feeling light*. They are glowing; we are glowing. Our bodies both see and feel light. Ponder this, our entire lives are powered by sunlight, and our energy IS the sun's energy. Light is what we are!

No wonder Jesus was moved to say, "You are the light of the world... let your light shine..." No wonder Buddha said at the end of his life, "Make of yourself a light". No wonder Mary Oliver implicitly encourages us to imitate goldenrod and *give our gold away*.
How can we not?

October 4: Feast of St. Francis of Assisi

To celebrate this feast and to close the liturgical Season of Creation, Pope Francis is sharing a follow-up to his encyclical *Laudato Si'*. Called an "Apostolic Exhortation", it is expected to encourage all people to re-commit to caring for creation at a time when extreme weather events are causing hardships for all of us, but especially those living in

poverty. My guess is that the same spirit of encouragement will pervade this document as *Laudato Si'*, a spirit of hope we read in its conclusion: *May our struggles and concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope*". May our hope move us to action!

October 6: OMI Novices and Laudato Si' Field Trips

Meet OMI's new novices who will be spending one year discerning their vocations on this beautiful land. From left to right: Elisha, Chandu, Robby, Jesse, and Alvaro. Once a month they will get to know our bioregion by taking field trips that will illustrate various concepts from the encyclical *Laudato Si'* as well as from recently published OMI documents.



On September 1st, we pondered the urgent problem of biodiversity loss and connected it with the Oblate's longtime effort at ecological restoration which preserves land and protects biodiversity at the same time. We explored the pollinator garden, the Woods Nature Preserve and the Forest Legacy Land. In October we'll visit our near neighbor, The Nature Institute, which is dedicated to land preservation and restoration on a large scale. Stay tuned for that report in November.

October 3, 17, 24, 31 Workdays in Pollinator Garden 9:30 - 11:30 am

Everyone is welcome to join us to work, have fun, and learn what it takes to create and sustain an effective pollinator garden that serves many different pollinators throughout the year. Please let me know if you plan on participating: info@lavistaelc.org.

October 10: Workday in Nature Preserve 9:30 - 11:30 am

Fall and winter are perfect seasons for the work of honeysuckle removal since ticks are letting us alone, and the temperatures make it a pleasure to be in the woods. Please join us, and let me know if you plan on it: info@lavistaelc.org.

October 11, 25, November 8, 15 12:30 - 1:30 pm Book Discussion of Explaining Life Through Evolution continues

For those unable to join the conversation, here is a quote from the book by Prosanta Chakrabarty to ponder:

Why look at the rainbow that is humanity in just black and white? If instead you look at that rainbow carefully you would celebrate the fact that all of that colorful diversity comes from the same little drops of water, each with a little different shine... To the cosmos, we are all still just "star stuff,"...all of us life forms are made up of the same chemical elements... It's what we do with our star stuff that makes us so special.

I have included another photo of our OMI novices because they clearly illustrate human diversity: L to R, Jesse from Los Angeles; Alvaro from Tijuana; Elisha from Zambia; Chandu from India; and Robby from Zambia. It is one of the Oblates' priorities to have diversity in their formation houses. How important in our very diverse world.



October 19: Road cleanup with the Godfrey's Sustainability Commission 12:00 - 1:00 pm

For those who live in the area, this activity is a great way to contribute to the broader community of life. Please join us and let us know you are coming: info@lavistaelc.org



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