



La Vista Ecological Learning Center

A ministry of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate

April, 2021

E-News and Eco-spirituality Calendar

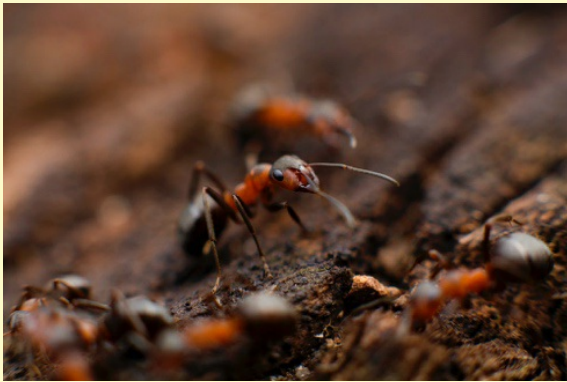
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Monthly reflections are archived in the Blog on the web site.

April and Taking Pleasure in Little Things



At the conclusion of March's reflection, I asked the question Gnat asks Alice in Lewis Carroll's [Through the Looking Glass](#): *What sort of insects do you rejoice in where you come from?* An enthusiastic reader responded by sharing her fascination with ants: *I have always admired ants! They are hard-working, cooperative, social, and not-to-be-deterred!*

They seem to embody the spirit of [The Little Engine That Could](#): "I think I can... I think I can"...and they DO!!! I can lose a lot of time just watching their ceaseless endeavors.

Her delight in ants delighted me and reminded me of another lover of ants, E.O. Wilson. I had just viewed a documentary of his life, *E.O. Wilson - Of Ants and Men*, available on PBS. A true southern gentleman and world-renowned entomologist, he changed the world by introducing the concept of biodiversity and the discipline of sociobiology. Wilson has had a lifelong fascination with ants which he calls *these little things that run the world*.

What most amazed him throughout his life is their mysterious instinct to build complex societies. He tells the story of one massive abandoned leaf-cutter ant nest. Brazilian scientists decided to find out its extent, so they poured concrete into it, and it took ten tons! After excavating it for weeks they discovered "a labyrinthine web of underground highways, gardens, and garbage dumps". Wilson said the scale was breathtaking, "It was a metropolis, a Manhattan of the insect world." The nest led him to wonder how ants, with a brain the size of a pinhead, organize such astonishing and intricate societies.

This wonderment led him to explore connections between human and animal natures and eventually to introduce the discipline of *sociobiology* which teaches that human behaviors, emotions, and morality evolved just as hands and eyes and stomachs evolved – just like

evolution in the insect world! This was quite a controversial subject in its day and evoked protests even within the scientific community. One protester even came to the podium where he was speaking and dumped a pitcher of ice water on his head! It seemed okay to apply his thinking to animals but not human beings. Eventually his ideas were widely accepted and paved the way for other scientists to study human nature from a biological perspective!

Fully aware of the personal violence and ecological destruction human beings are capable of, Wilson shared his take on our current problems this way, "We are a dysfunctional species. We have Paleolithic emotions, medieval institutions, and on top of all that we've developed godlike technology, and that's a dangerous mix."

Despite this awareness, Wilson remained optimistic throughout his ninety years, and looking back mused that, rather than traveling the world lecturing people about saving the planet, he chose instead to share the joy, complexity, diversity, and beauty of creation. I think this reveals a deep understanding of human behavior and the way we are more motivated by beauty and love than commands, threats, or fear of losing the way of life we are used to.

His concluding comment is a wonderful way to elicit humanity's cooperation in addressing our many ecological crises. He said, "This isn't some moral obligation, it's a pleasure!" What motivates you to care about our rare and precious planet?

(Photo by Mikhail Vasilyev on Unsplash)

Friday, April 2 *Braiding Sweetgrass* Book Discussion via Zoom 6:00 – 7:30 pm

The Confluence Climate Collaborative invites you to join us for a discussion of Robin Wall Kimmerer's *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*. Here is a quote to encourage your participation: *Action on behalf of life transforms. Because the relationship between self and the world is reciprocal, it is not a question of first getting enlightened or saved and then acting. As we work to heal the earth, the earth heals us.*

Registration: email info@lavistaelc.org and request the Zoom link.

Sunday, April 4 Easter Sunday Meditation

Now the green blade rises
from the buried grain,
Wheat that in the dark earth
many days has lain;
Love lives again,
that with the dead has been:
Love is come again like



wheat that springs up green.

Adapted from a hymn by John Macleod Campbell Crum
(Photo by Wolfgang Haselmann on Unsplash)

Tuesday, April 13 Workday in the Oblate Preserve 9:00 – 11:30 am

Springtime not only awakens lovely wildflowers in the Preserve, but also their nemesis – bush honeysuckle! Join us as we enjoy a morning in the woods serving our local region of life by removing invasive species.
Registration: Email info@lavistaelc.org

Thursday, April 22 Earth Day Reflection

*We all care to protect this world,
This riddled blue marble, this little true marvel
To muster the verve and the nerve
To see how we can serve
Our planet.*



May these few lines encourage you to take time on this important day to take pleasure in your intimate relationship with Earth by listening and watching as Amanda Gorman performs

“[Earthrise](#)” (Clicking on this title will link you to the poem on YouTube.) (Photo by NASA on Unsplash)

Monday, April 26 Anniversary of the Chernobyl Nuclear Accident

On this day in 1986 there was an explosion at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant in Pripyat, Ukraine, when a safety test went wrong. Over 100 radioactive elements were scattered into nearby cities and towns. The region is expected to remain uninhabitable for thousands of years.

Let's use this anniversary as an opportunity to consider the negative impacts of nuclear energy disasters on all humans, rich and poor, as well as on all species, large and small, and on land itself, for we believe Earth is a sacred community of life. In Amanda Gorman's poetic words,

“For it is the obscure, the oppressed, the poor,
Who when the disaster
Is declared done,
Still suffer more than anyone”.

Two Excellent Resources

[Faith for Earth – A Call for Action](#) is a free reproducible booklet created by the United Nations

Environment Program. It addresses critical ecological issues, focusing on how faith communities address them. Covering the world's religions, it is a wealth of information and inspiration for practice.

[Ecumenical and Interreligious Guidebook: Care for Our Common Home](#) offers readers theological and practical resources to put *Laudato Si'* as well as interfaith voices into practical action.

(Clicking on both titles above will link you to the books on the Internet.)

