



# La Vista Visions

A NEWSLETTER ON THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

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## The Many Calls of Laudato Si'

by Maxine Pohlman, SSND

The picture in the center of this page shows the diverse range of people who marched from the heart of Rome to St. Peter's Square in June of 2015. Waving banners of white doves and carrying posters with heartfelt messages, the thousands of interfaith participants were sending a message to Pope Francis:

*Thank you for your encyclical Laudato Si'!*

On Saturday, November 21, 2015, Kathleen Deignan, CND, a GreenFaith fellow, theology professor, and one of the participants in this march, offered a day of reflection to an audience of one hundred in St. Louis, an event co-sponsored by La Vista. She catalyzed the group immediately with a video of the parade which she said was "the most hopeful, promising experience I've had in all my years doing this work in eco-awareness."

GreenFaith, an interfaith organization that trains people to be environmental leaders, invited 100 young people from many cultures and a variety of faith traditions to share a message with the Pope: *we want to act courageously to take a moral stance on inequality, environmental degradation, and the suffering of humanity.*

With this introduction, our speaker went on to inspire within us the desire to answer the many calls she reads in the document.

### Called to Be Elders

She called older participants to embrace our role as elders. She encouraged us to help the young think long term, past immediate needs. She told us there is nothing more important now than activating

our creativity in imagining how to invite youth into this Great Work of building a "civilization of love" and offering ourselves as mentors in the process. We must give them the wisdom we have, so humanity does not forget what we have come to know.

### Called to be Architects of Novelty

Young people in the audience, novices from several congregations, are called to be *architects of novelty and creativity* in bringing about a sustainable life on Earth. Throughout the day she encouraged the young, lifting them up and honoring their evident commitment to a healthy planet in light of their Christian faith tradition. One youth challenged us to take the cold facts of data and turn them into action warmed by the heart. Our speaker repeated his insight more than once, confirming his evident conviction and encouraging his vision.



Photo Credit: Hoda Baraka 350.org

### Called to Contemplate the Book of Creation

Pope Francis calls us to read anew the book of creation. In paragraph 85 he quotes Canadian and Japanese Bishops who tell us, "God has written a precious book, whose letters are the multitude of created things present in the universe. From panoramic vistas to the tiniest living form, nature is a constant source of wonder and awe. It is also a continuing revelation of the divine... for the believer, to contemplate creation is to hear a message, to listen to a paradoxical and silent voice, and, alongside revelation properly so-called, contained in sacred Scripture, there is a divine manifestation in the blaze of the sun and the fall of night". For too long we have

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## Letter from the Editor



Dear Friends,

While writing this letter on a cold and rainy day I was visited by ninety five year old Oblate, Clarence Zachman. He drove himself from Belleville, a 40 mile drive, to bring me directions for doing Tai Chi, an exercise which he said saved his life. He also shared his support for and keen interest in the work of La Vista. I felt such a kinship with this enthusiastic member of our Earth Community.

He currently lives with about twenty other Oblates where he has joyfully taken on many daily tasks like recycling paper, magazines, newspapers, plastic and aluminum cans. He also enflashes his love for creation by raking leaves and appreciating the lake on the land where he resides.

Father Zachman reminds me of this quote from Laudato Si': *There is a nobility in the duty to care for creation through little daily actions, and it is wonderful how education can bring about real changes in lifestyle. Education in environmental responsibility can encourage ways of acting which directly and significantly affect the world around us, such as avoiding the use of plastic and paper, reducing water consumption, separating refuse, cooking only what can reasonably be consumed, showing care for other living beings, using public transport or car-pooling, planting trees, turning off unnecessary lights, or any number of other practices. All of these reflect a generous and worthy creativity which brings out the best in human beings.*

It is obvious that Clarence's life choices have brought out the best in him. His engaging smile, zest for life, and desire to make a difference until the end of his days reflect his noble spirit and infectious generosity.

May we all be encouraged by the example of his life and by Laudato Si', two special gifts for our rare and precious planet.

For La Vista,  
Maxine Pohlman, SSND

## Creating a Mutually Enhancing Human Earth Relationship

### Discussion Group Shares Reflections on Laudato Si'

This past fall La Vista hosted a six week series to engage participants in dialogue about Laudato Si'. Each week we shared quotes/concepts we resonated with, anything we resisted, and points that called us to re-align our thinking or behaving. Participants were happy to share their responses to the question: *What changed in your life as a result of reading the encyclical?*

*"I have more fire for my work with Cool Cities. I am empowered to speak my mind and be less wishy washy since I have a dude with a lot of clout behind me now."*



*"I plan programs at an interfaith center, and I am going to be more assertive about bringing people to an awareness of how care for Earth connects to all faith lives! So, I have been motivated to take risks."*

*"My awareness of the sacredness of the place where we live has deepened."*

*"I am going to pass my book on to others so they can read it and also become enlightened."*

*"I have a greater appreciation of nature and the way we are highly dependent on Earth and connected to it. Very practically, I cut my hair short so I no longer need to use a hair dryer or any product!"*

## Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'* Speaks in a Language Every Young Environmentalist Needs to Hear

By Caitlin Zera



With *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis has given us a truly unique document in the history of the Catholic Church and indeed in the history of climate activism and communities of faith. *Laudato Si' Encyclical on Capitalism & Inequality: On Care for Our Common Home* was published in June 2015 by the Vatican and translated in Italian, German, English, Spanish, French, Polish, Portuguese and Arabic. It was then made available as a free e-book through the radical London-based publisher Verso. The accessibility of *Laudato Si'* is critical. In *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis chooses to speak a language that bridges environment and economy. Nothing could be more necessary for such an Encyclical.

At a time when many citizens in wealthy nations deny climate science and environmental problems, *Laudato Si'* brings us a renewed hope that we can connect issues of environment, justice, and economy in the same discussion across party lines, class divisions, national borders, and religions. This renewed hope stems from the document's central theme in addressing the inequalities of the global capitalist economy and using economic language to define our current environmental crisis.

For many years, the mainstream environmental movement in the United States shied away from the economic causes of environmental problems. The rise of the unified environmental justice movement - of which many Catholic sisters were a part - began to bring issues of racial and wealth disparities into conversations about environmental activism. Still, environmentalists who used an economic framework to talk about big picture environmental problems including climate change, were a rarity.

The current environmental movement, more inclusive and global than it has ever been, now increasingly speaks a language that points to the "more realistic and radical conclusion that the problem is capitalism itself" as sociologists John

Bellamy Foster, Brett Clark, and Richard York write in their book *The Ecological Rift*.

It is not unusual anymore to hear the chant "System change not climate change" at rallies for climate action. Immediately following the massive People's Climate March in September 2015 in New York, protesters launched another demonstration "Flood Wall Street" to raise awareness about capitalism as a driver of the climate crisis. "End Capitalism. Stop the Climate Crisis," they asserted.

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis does this same thing - he transforms economic language, the language of capital which we cannot ignore in our conversations about the environment, into ethical, activist language. He issues a moral call for the larger Catholic community of faith to respond to climate change as an issue of inequality.

"Capitalism is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods. It represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day," he writes in paragraph 25.

Pope Francis recognizes the urgency of using this language. He bravely refuses to shy away from economic terms and concepts that make other leaders cringe. For global citizens, especially young people who will inherit environmental crises and the environmental movement, we cannot afford to ignore the realities of income inequality and the environmental havoc it wreaks. *Laudato Si'* gives a tremendous starting point moving forward in this conversation.

**Caitlin Zera** is a documentary filmmaker with a passion for environmentalism. She currently works as a grants manager for an education nonprofit in St. Louis, MO, as well as for the Missouri Coalition for the Environment as Membership Specialist.



## Program Calendar January - May, 2016

### **From the Pipeline Documentary:**

#### **Making the Journey Along the Flanagan South**

Monday, January 18  
7:00 – 8:30 PM



In 2013, construction on the Flanagan South Tar Sands pipeline began in the heart of the Midwest. This 593 mile pipeline originates in Illinois and stretches across Missouri, Kansas and Oklahoma, traveling under rivers and cutting through farmland, wetlands, and wildlife areas. *From the Pipeline* captures the stories of the changing landscapes and communities along the entire Missouri route of the pipeline. Join us and the film's director, Caitlin Zera, for a viewing (26 minutes) followed by a stimulating community conversation about what has happened and what can happen.

Registration: Call 618-466-5004 and leave your name and the number attending. Optional donation.

### **Winterfires Coffeehouse**

Saturday, January 30  
7:00 – 9:00 PM

*In the dark of the moon, in flying snow, in the dead of winter, war spreading, families dying, the world in danger, I walk the rocky hillside, sowing clover.*

- Wendell Berry



Wendell Berry would applaud La Vista's annual Winterfires Coffeehouse as a way to ponder possibility and ward off despair during wintertime. Join us and celebrate life, creativity, local humor and a warm sense of community as we share poetry, story, and music around a warm fire in the Oblates' home at La Vista.

Please bring original or found poetry, music, and/or story, along with a snack to share. Coffee, Mexican hot chocolate and tea will be provided.

Registration: Call 618-466-5004 and leave your name and the number attending. Optional donation.

### **Rumi's Poetry and Authentic Indian Food**

Saturday, February 20,  
10:30 am – 12:30 pm



In this workshop we will learn about Rumi as poet of the heart and kitchen. In a wonderful metaphor, Rumi likens being human to a process in which you start out as a raw chickpea and end up cooked and grateful for the experience. *"Boil me some more. Hit me with the skimming spoon. I can't do this by myself."*

Our presenters will delight us reading Rumi's poetry and serving lunch with chickpeas as the guest of honor.

Cost: \$15

Registration: Send your check with your information including e-mail address to La Vista 4300 Levis Lane Godfrey, IL 62035 by Wed., Feb. 17.

### **Spring Equinox Celebration and Butterfly Puddles**

Saturday, March 19 2:00 – 4:00 pm

Celebrate the Spring Equinox and prepare for the coming butterfly season! You might have noticed in the summer how butterflies cluster around damp spots on a dirt path or road. Those butterflies aren't thirsty; rather, they are "puddling", searching in a wet area for minerals they need to be healthy. Join us and find out how we created puddles for La Vista's pollinator garden so you can make one in your own yard.

Join us and become apart of a growing movement to create necessary habitats for our insect friends.

Registration:

Call 618-466-5004 and leave your name and the number attending.

Please bring a spring time snack to share. Optional donations are welcomed.



### Opportunity to Change How You Receive La Vista Visions

Thank you to so many readers who responded to our request for help with our mailing list. Most readers are now getting it online; however, we intend to continue printing some hard copies for those who prefer it, for those who share it with others, for those who post it on a bulletin board and those who place it in a library setting.

To change the way you receive your newsletter, to add a name to our maillist, or to change your e-mail address, please let us know:

[info@lavistaelc.org](mailto:info@lavistaelc.org) or 618-466-5004.

Enclosed is my donation to support the newsletter and the programming at La Vista.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Street

City

State

Zip Code

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

La Vista Ecological Learning Center 4300 Levis Lane Godfrey, IL 62035

#### Spring Wildflower Walk and Work Day in the Oblate Woods Preserve

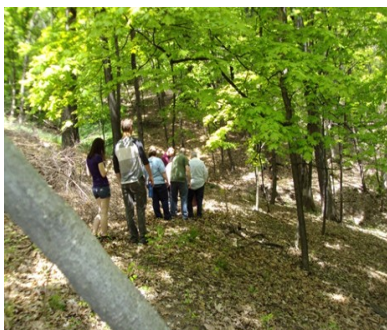
Date and time to be announced

Led by Natural Areas Preservation Specialist Debbie Newman, we will venture into the beautiful Woods Preserve to see what has sprung up since the removal of invasive honeysuckle. Last year we spotted Wistar's Coralroot, a native orchid. Maybe we will be even luckier this year! After the walk we will pull honeysuckle and other invasives that have emerged this season.

Registration:  
Call 618-466-5004 and leave your name and the number attending.

Lunch:  
Please bring your own no-waste lunch. Tea and herbal drinks will be provided.

If possible, please bring work gloves and a lopper.



#### Annual Godfrey/Alton Earth Day

Saturday, April 16  
Noon – 6 PM

Read detailed information about this event in our monthly e-news or check this link:

<http://www.greatriverroad.com/eventpages/godfreyearthday.htm>

**Keep current with additional programs and announcements from La Vista: [www.lavistaelc.org](http://www.lavistaelc.org) and [www.facebook.com/EcologicalLearningCenter](https://www.facebook.com/EcologicalLearningCenter)**

The Oblate Ecological Initiative  
is a ministry of the  
Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate



La Vista Ecological Learning Center  
4300 Levis Lane  
Godfrey, Illinois 62035

*"All it takes  
is one good  
person to  
restore hope."  
- Pope Francis*

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ignored this beautiful revelation of the divine, but the signs of the times are calling us to reclaim this ancient practice of the Christian faith.

### **Called to Integrality**

All of us are called to weave everything together now. To leave nothing out. No more binary mind. No either/or. Pope Francis calls us to widen our framework and embrace *integral ecology*, which hears both cries – of Earth and the poor. *"Today, however, we have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor."* (49) This seamless garment is part of our new era, the *anthropocene*, which means that our planet will not survive without human will. It will go the way of human consciousness, so we take seriously our call to action now.

### **Called to a New Sense of Self**

Francis invites us to take the suffering of our planet into ourselves as if it were our own. Sister Kathleen invited us to make a green vow to allow the pain of the world to be our own. Many of us have done this with other human beings, but now we need a comprehensive compassion that takes the pain of river pollution, deforested acres, extinguishing of species, into ourselves. *"Here I would reiterate that 'God has joined us so closely to the world around us that we can feel the desertification of the soil almost as a*

*physical ailment, and the extinction of a species as a painful disfigurement'"* (89)

### **Called and Sent on Mission for Earth**

To conclude a day full of insight and challenge, Sister Kathleen led a ritual during which participants made a personal vow for Earth, re-

ceived an anointing of their hands and a stole to affirm their authority for the task. During the missioning we heard these words, *"Listen my soul. This is your task, to bless Earth and all her creatures and to walk the way of mindfulness."* This touching ceremony was an ideal conclusion to a day that empowered all present to embrace the ecological conversion to which *Laudato Si'* calls us.



Sr. Kathleen and OMI Novice Josh Nash

