



# La Vista Ecological Learning Center

A ministry of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate

October, 2020

## E-News and Eco-spirituality Calendar

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(Our monthly reflections are archived in the Blog on our web site.)

### October and Giving Your Gold Away



Looking across my back yard into the bird sanctuary during fall brings to mind Mary Oliver's delightful poem *Goldenrod*. She describes these ubiquitous fall flowers as having "*light-filled bodies... giving their gold away*".

This autumn her poem means more to me as it reminds me of a talk I heard recently on the physics of light by Stephan Martin.

He told his listeners that light is how we know the Universe! Just that gives me pause. He then 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 reflected that our eyes are the interface between ourselves and our world. Seeing is a sacred, connecting act we experience first thing upon awakening.

We might take a morning walk and observe goldenrod on the roadside. He explained that when we see it we are 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! Another reason to be in awe.

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 the heat from them. The reality is that we are feeling light. They are glowing; we are glowing. Our bodies both see and feel light. Maybe we are sitting together in the sun, that remarkable being generously pouring out four million tons of itself every second. 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 1 and 31: Two Full Moons - So Much Light!**

Now that we are tuned in to the physics and spirituality of light, we can celebrate October's full moons with deep appreciation. According to the laws of physics, the light we see when we gaze at the moon is not just a reflection of sunlight; rather, light from the sun is absorbed by the moon's atoms and then emitted anew, so the essence of moon is meeting our essence when we engage in the sacred act of moongazing.

During these days when so much of the Earth community is suffering through pandemic, wildfires, violence, extinction, and anxiety, we are called to give our light away in acts of kindness and generosity. Just as the sun and the moon shine on all, we strive to enlarge our circle of compassion to include all beings on our rare and precious planet.

## **October 4: Feast of St. Francis**

The Feast of St. Francis finds us in the middle of the Vatican's "Laudato Si' Anniversary Year, honoring the fifth anniversary of the encyclical *Laudato Si'*. It extends from May 24, 2020 through May 24, 2021, allowing ample time for each of us to participate in actions on behalf of our planet. One opportunity will be a series of webinars offered by the Missionary Oblates,

beginning on Saturday, November 3rd. Our next newsletter will have information so that you can participate.

In the meantime, please mark this feast day by turning your attention to the one million species facing extinction in the coming decades. I strongly encourage you to join the University of New Mexico's *Species in Peril Project* and participate in their Fall Biodiversity Webinar Series which focuses attention on the intensifying crisis of



biological annihilation, one of the root causes of the coronavirus crisis. Google "Species in Peril Project" and register for this outstanding free educational event.

### **Friday, October 2: Climate Fiction Book Club 6:30 - 8:30 pm**

Our selection this month is *Sharks in the Time of Saviors* by Kawai Strong Washburn. A native Hawaiian, Washburn credibly draws us into the contrast between the indigenous experience of the Islands and an outsider's experience. In this story of a native family we encounter the poverty as well as the richness of the native life, and we feel the lure of the land and the real wealth it holds. Please join us. 618-466-5004 to register. Meet in the barn at La Vista. Masks required.

### **Tuesday, October 13: Workday in the Oblate Nature Preserve and Golden Rain Tree 9:00 am - Noon**

Maybe you are someone who enjoys seeing the golden rain tree which blossoms yellow in spring and sports lovely brown lantern-like seed pods in fall. The Oblates' Nature Preserve had over-abundance of this

invasive tree that produced vast amounts of seeds and quickly spread, shading out desirable natives.

The Habitat Strike Team has diligently worked to remove this tree from the Oblates' Preserve. Join us for a workday and see for yourself the oak tree seedlings that have sprouted now that sunlight reaches the forest floor.



Gradually, these preserved acres are recovering and are on their way to becoming a healthy oak and hickory forest, thanks to the generosity of the sun and our many faithful volunteers. To join this worthwhile effort, call 618-466-5004.

Habitat Strike Team pictured above L to R: Linsday Grigg, Phil Rathz, Michael Hamilton, Cody Berry

