



## La Vista Ecological Learning Center

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A ministry of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate

## E News and Ecospirituality Calendar

May, 2024

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Reflections are archived in the [blog](#) on our web site [lavistaelc.org](http://lavistaelc.org)

## Cosmic Celebration



It was an awe-inspiring day on April 8<sup>th</sup> when a solar eclipse captured the imagination of so much of so many. How delightful to be united in community around a peaceful, beautiful, silent event sponsored by the Universe rather than an event sponsored by corporations. How refreshing!

A week after the eclipse I participated in an online meeting where we shared what the eclipse meant for us spiritually. For one it was a reminder that we live on a planet, evoking gratitude for our rare and precious Earth which sustains us in being and offers so much creativity. For another it was the feeling of unity as people from various offices in his building gathered outdoors to share something in common, spontaneously creating community. One couple who viewed the eclipse from the top of Monks Mound commented that they were delighted with a gathering of various ages, races, cultures, and nationalities in a spirit of shared wonder. It was a heart-warming experience for them.

I viewed the eclipse from the bluffs at La Vista feeling myself an intimate part of what Thomas Berry called the great "cosmic liturgy", reminding me that "The universe is a single, gorgeous celebratory event". It was surely a high holy day from that perspective.

All of these eclipse experiences align with Thomas Berry's understanding of Earth spirituality. He writes, "We need a spirituality that emerges out of a reality deeper than

ourselves, even deeper than life, a spirituality that is as deep as the Earth process itself, a spirituality born out of the solar system and even out of the heavens beyond the solar system. There in the stars is where the primordial elements take shape in both their physical and psychic aspects. Out of these elements the solar system and the earth took shape, and out of the earth, ourselves...A spirituality is a mode of being in which not only the Divine and the human commune with each other, but we discover ourselves in the universe and the universe discovers itself in us.

How blessed we are to have been alive for this respite from bad news. How blessed to unite in celebration without paying an entrance fee. How blessed to discover ourselves in the universe and the universe in ourselves!

Photo Credit: Jeni Holland on Unsplash



## La Vista's Solar Eclipse Potluck

On the evening of the April 8th La Vista's Monday discussion group gathered for an eclipse potluck. We ate creative desserts like the ones pictured here and listened to songs like The Beatles' "Here Comes the Sun" and Cat Stevens'

["Moonshadow"](#).

That song captured my imagination because the lyrics invite listeners to be positive no matter what happens to us, even the loss of our hands, lands, eyes or mouth. What a good message at this time when Earth is losing so much, when we are losing so much. Click on the title above and celebrate a positive attitude with Cat Stevens.

## May 3: Monarchs Begin Arriving in the Midwest

Thanks to Virginia Nesmith who, with her husband Charlie, initiated the creation of La Vista's Pollinator Garden. Her reflection as it appears on our Garden brochure is a good meditation as the Monarch returns to our area:



*"It has taken the Monarch to convince me of the value of the holistic approach of Oblates and other religious communities to Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation.*

*Without those phenomena which speak to us of the majesty and mystery of God – a tiny butterfly traveling thousands of miles, the view of millions of stars in the night sky, the whisper of pines in the forest - we can't be whole enough to address the suffering we encounter.*

*It is only by marveling at the complexity and beauty of the universe that I can work with any hope for a gentler society, one that respects the needs of people and of butterflies to cross borders freely."*

Photo credit: <https://lasclay.com>

## May 12: Mothers' Day and Nest Weaving

Every year around Mothers' Day in the Midwest, Orioles begin weaving their lovely gourd shaped nests. In fact, May could be called Mother's Month, as many other birds also create nests at this time.

To keep eggs and the young safe from nest robbers, Orioles cleverly construct their nests on the ends of slender branches. How do these seamstresses achieve this wonder? [Watch an oriole build her](#)



nest and be amazed.

Just this morning I watched a robin gather dried grass from the lawn for her nest. She was so intent, picking up as much as she could possibly hold in her beak; then, with a mouthful, she flew off. I enjoyed this morning view, deciding to bring that same spirit to my own daily tasks. Let's all head out into the world like a mother, intent on nurturing life on our rare and precious planet.

Happy Mothers' Day to all human and other-than-human mothers. Photo Credit: Vg Bingi on Unsplash.



### Reflection: The Intercommunity Novitiate at La Vista

To celebrate Earth Day, La Vista Ecological Learning Center was privileged to present a day on ecological spirituality to seven novices from three religious Congregations of men and women religious. During the

morning we meditated on paragraph 85 of *Laudato Si*, "The Gospel of Creation", savoring images like: "*for the believer, to contemplate creation is to hear a message, to listen to a paradoxical and silent voice*". Each one then shared a memory of being deeply touched by the Divine in the natural world.

In the afternoon we considered how ecological spirituality leads naturally to ecological conversion and to embracing ecological justice. Afterward we headed outdoors to explore the Pollinator Garden and Nature Preserve as concrete ways Oblates act justly toward land and insects by setting aside and caring for these special habitats and the community of life that relies on them.

Despite the urgency of our ecological crisis and the seriousness of our topic, the day was an energetic and happy one, showing that this group of young religious have already taken to heart one of the final lines of the encyclical, "May our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope".



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