



La Vista Visions

A NEWSLETTER ON THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

Published by the Oblate Ecological Initiative

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Winter 2012
Volume 11, Issue 36

A Good Day

by Brother David Steindl-Rast

You think this is just another day in your life. It's not just another day; it's the one day that is given to you today. It's given to you. It's a gift. It's the only gift that you have right now, and the only appropriate response is gratefulness. If you do nothing else but to cultivate that response to the great gift that this unique day is, if you learn to respond as if it were the first day of your life, and the very last day, then you will have spent this day very well.

Begin by opening your eyes and be surprised that you have eyes you can open, that incredible array of colors that is constantly offered to us for pure enjoyment. Look at the sky. We so rarely look at the sky. We so rarely note how different it is from moment to moment with clouds coming and going. We just think of the weather, and even of the weather we don't think of all the many nuances of weather. We just think of good weather and bad weather. This day right now has unique weather, maybe a kind that will never exactly in that form come again. The formation of clouds in the sky will never be the same that it is right now. Open your eyes. Look at that.

Look at the faces of people that you meet. Each

one has an incredible story behind their face, a story that you could never fully fathom, not only their own story, but the story of their ancestors. We all go back so far. And in this present moment on this day all the people you meet, all that life from

generations and from so many places all over the world, flows together and meets you here like a life-giving water, if you only open your heart and drink.

Open your heart to the incredible gifts that civilization gives to us. You flip a switch and there is electric light. You turn a faucet and there is warm water and cold water — and drinkable water. It's a gift that millions and millions in the world will never experience.

So these are just a few of an enormous number of gifts to which you can open your heart. And so I wish for you that you would open your heart to all these blessings and let them flow through you, that everyone whom you will meet on this

day will be blessed by you; just by your eyes, by your smile, by your touch — just by your presence. Let the gratefulness overflow into blessing all around you, and then it will really be a good day. ☺

(continued on page 6)



Letter from the Editor

Winter 2012



Dear Friends of La Vista,

At a recent meeting I attended, participants were asked to imagine what their lives would look like if they took seriously what they had been learning: *human beings are radically interrelated with and dependent on everything else in the universe and especially on our planet.* This charge to engage our imaginations prompted two experiences that made the task quite interesting.

The first happened just two days later when I read "Imagine," an article in Orion magazine (Sept./Oct. 2011 issue) by Derrick Jensen. Caught by the title, I read with interest his conclusion that, "One of the (many) ways this culture is killing the planet is through a lack of imagination." He decided this as he read the response of a Japanese nuclear regulatory agency official to the Fukushima nuclear disaster: "Japan couldn't go forward without nuclear power in order to meet its demand for energy today." He said that a significant reduction in nuclear power would result in black-outs, then added, "I don't think anyone could imagine life without (nuclear generated) electricity."

The second experience arrived in an e-mail that same day. It was a video showing a young man in the Philippines who had the imagination to create an alternative to electricity for people living in concrete block homes without windows. To avoid using expensive electricity during the daytime, he created a "light fixture" out of recycled plastic bottles filled with water and a capful of chlorine. He hired helpers to install the solar bottle lights by cutting a hole in the roof and inserting the bottle attached to corrugated tin. PRESTO! Fifty-five watts of clean and free solar light without electricity, and green jobs for willing workers. No lack of imagination here!

Now, imagine growing, cooking, and healing with your own herbs; creating an outdoor oven with soil, sand, straw and water; using your dreams as your inner guide; staying flexible throughout life; eating local food grown at a community supported garden. In this calendar of events, the Oblate Ecological Initiative offers you these opportunities and more as you dream of a way of life that is good news for yourself and for our rare and precious planet, for WE ARE ALL ONE.

A final word from Albert Einstein: *Imagination is more important than knowledge.* ©

For La Vista,
Maxine Pohlman, SSND

Creating a Mutually Enhancing Human/Earth Relationship: A Book Recommendation



Spontaneous Evolution: Our Positive Future and How to Get There from Here
by Bruce Lipton, Ph.D. and Steve Bhaerman

Reading this book has been an adventure of a lifetime. The authors make creative use of metaphor and humor as they compare the evolution of cells to the evolution of societies. They compare this current economic age to a reptilian predatory phase, soon to be superseded by a "mammalian" phase which will be marked by greater caring and sharing because it makes common survival sense.

Cooperation, not competition, is the hallmark of most natural order. Humanity is just now learning about it and recovering the experiences of past isolated societies that had already known this. Without all parts, we are incomplete. Just as a cell has limits on its growth, or its outer membrane will burst, no individual parts/members of a society can continue to grow at the expense of the rest.

Lipton and Bhaerman invite us to reconsider

- The "unquestionable" pillars of biology, including random evolution, survival of the fittest, and the role of DNA.
- The relationship between mind and matter. Their explanation of the four basal paradigms in relation to the evolution of the matter and spirit is very helpful and clear. They give a short history of animism, polytheism, monotheism, and materialism to holism.
- The influence of DNA as exclusively controlling life. This discussion takes us into field theory. It is fascinating how they develop Einstein's quote, "the field is the only reality." From there we discover that science and religion are describing the same thing: an invisible moving force.

This last consideration takes us into the core of the book which demonstrates how our beliefs about nature and human nature shape our politics, culture, and individual lives. The authors show how cells hold all the wisdom we need to move into the spontaneous evolution or, as Thomas Berry would say, into the Ecozoic.

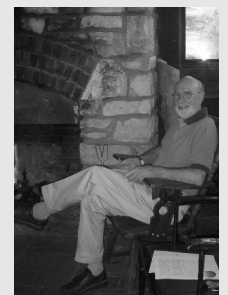
Imagine how each of us is a community of 50 trillion cells. The total number of cells in a human body is greater than the total number of humans on 7,000 earths!

Imagine nearly every cell in our body has all of the functions present in the entire human body, which means that every cell has its own nervous, digestive, respiratory, musculoskeletal, reproductive, and even immune systems. Because these cells represent the equivalent of a miniature human, conversely, every human is the equivalent of a colossal cell.

The story that Bruce Lipton and Steve Bhaerman tell is eye opening, logical, compassionate, inspiring, and hopeful. They paint a picture of a holistic future for humankind, a state of cooperation unlike any seen before. It will call upon every "imaginal cell" willing to join the party and give this new life form birth.

Spontaneous Evolution is a book I have read from cover to cover and plan to again.

Norman Comtois, OMI, is on the staff at Berakah, a renewal program for women religious and a center for summer retreats. He serves as a priest, teacher of the new Cosmology, and retreat director. He is also a team member of the Earth Literacy Program at La Vista Ecological Learning Center.



Exploring the Sacred Universe: An Earth Literacy Program

6:00 pm Tuesday, June 5th - 1:00 Tuesday, June 12

All around us evidence is mounting that our current industrial perspective is harmful both to Earth and to humans. The corrective that is needed includes not only practical lifestyle changes, but also a shift in our basic understanding of what it means to be a human being on this rare and precious planet.

The purpose of the Earth Literacy program is to provide an opportunity to explore the implications of this more expansive understanding of ourselves in the evolutionary process and our embeddedness in Earth's web of life.

The insights of Thomas Berry, Brian Swimme and Miriam MacGillis provide the foundation for the week.

Cost: \$550.00 includes lodging and meals

For information call us at 618-466-5004.

Throughout the week you will:

- * **AWAKEN** to the mystery of our origins and of our place within the evolutionary process
- * **CONTEMPLATE** the sacredness of the Universe Story as a new transforming context for our lives
- * **CRITICALLY EXAMINE** the perceptions that fashion our cultural world view
- * **PARTICIPATE** in guided activities, instruction, dialogue, reflection, journaling, art, ritual, cooking, gardening and field trip
- * **BE IMMERSED** in direct experience of the natural world
- * **DEVELOP** practical skills for a more ecologically conscious life
- * **SHARE** expertly prepared vegetarian meals



Register today
and take advantage of
our transformative
Earth Literacy program
in the cool month
of JUNE!



Celebrate EARTH DAY with ARUN GANDHI presenting *Lessons I Learned from My Grandfather, Lessons for the 21st Century*

Saturday, April 21, 2012

9:00 am

- Presentation and book signing
- Self-guided prayer pilgrimage
- Lunch with the speaker (Added \$15 per person)

Cost \$20 (With student ID: \$10)

Place: Our Lady of the Snows Shrine

442 S. De Mazenod Dr. Belleville, IL 62223

Register Online: www.snows.org/gandhi

(Please register only through Our Lady of the Snows Shrine.)

*Presented in cooperation with
the Partnership for Peace and the
Apartment Community at Our Lady of the Snows Shrine*

Praying Our Dreams, Finding the God Within

A Retreat Day

Saturday, May 5, 9:30 - 4:00

Dreams open us into our inner landscape. Using a Jungian approach, we will learn about symbols and archetypal themes found in our dreams. We'll also use alchemy as a metaphor for the individuation process experienced in our dreams. Come for a day of retreat with your inner guide

Cost: \$55

Includes vegetarian lunch.

S. Olga Wittekind is an Oldenburg Franciscan, a Jungian Analyst and Director of the Oldenburg Franciscan Retreat Center in Oldenburg, Indiana. She is both a retreat director and spiritual director who enjoys sharing psychology and spirituality.



Hungry for Change: Food, Ethics and Sustainability

Six Session Discussion Course during Lent
Fridays, February 24, March 2, 9, 16, 23, 30
10:30 am - Noon

Participants in this course will:

- Explore the interconnected nature of food systems and our relationships to them.
- Examine the impact our food choices have on our health, the health of others and the health of our planet.
- Consider the ethical and political implications of our current food system and our personal food choices.

Cost: \$30 for guidebook which includes thought-provoking readings and discussion questions for each session.

Registration form must be received by Friday, Feb.10 so books can be ordered.

NOTE PLACE: The Family Center, 602 W. Kirkham,
Webster Groves, MO 63119

Tai Chi for Flexibility: Moving Meditation

Thursdays, April 12, 19, 26, May 3 9:00 - 10:00 am

Practice the ancient art of Tai Chi and unite with the energy of the universe as you experience gentle meditative movements that increase range of motion in joints, aid in circulation, soothe anxiety and depression and help lower blood pressure and hypertension. Our instructor also incorporates Qi Gong breathing movements that help with memory and alertness, as well as TaeBo for strength in the arms and shoulders.

Mary Ann Pitchford is a certified Tai Chi instructor and a certified lecturer/instructor of Senior Programs for the National Arthritis Foundation.

Cost: \$28.00
for four sessions



Herbs and More - A Workshop Series

"Natural Household Cleaners"

Saturday, May 12, 1-5pm

Save money and help the environment by creating your own household cleaners using simple, non-toxic ingredients. Learn how to make dish soap, laundry detergent, and scouring powder.

"Medicinal Herb Walk & Herbal Remedies"

Sunday, May 27, 1-5pm

Join us as local herbalists lead a medicinal herb walk and reveal the medicinal properties of many "weeds" found in your own back yards. Learn how to stock your medicine cabinet with hand made natural remedies for minor ailments.

"Growing Herbs for Health"

Sunday, June 3rd, 1-5pm

Discover the medicinal properties of culinary herbs. Learn how to grow your very own tea garden & how to create a kitchen herb garden for your back yard or back porch.

"Cooking Naturally Outdoors"

Sunday, July 22, 1-5pm

Calling all foodies..... Wood fired, fire roasted, Tuscan style baking, skillet seared.....you name it. Taste the distinct flavors of cooking with wood in the outdoors. This workshop combines the nostalgia and aromas of campfire cooking while achieving the culinary bliss of local and gourmet foods. Held right here on the grounds of La Vista Farm where vegetables literally will be harvested from the field moments before. We will be cooking a 7 course meal together using farm fresh ingredients and then feasting together on the beautiful grounds of La Vista.



"Healthy Foods, Healthy Families"

Sunday, August 26, 1:00 - 5:00 pm

Don't miss this opportunity to create healthy meals your whole family will enjoy!

- * learn how to make your own baby food
 - * discover how to get creative in the kitchen with your older children
 - * create traditional meals that kids love using healthy ingredients such as black bean brownies, mac n cheese with sweet potato cheese, and pasta sauce using several fresh raw veggies
 - * learn how to make incredibly healthy treats to indulge your sweet tooth
- Join us for a life time of healthy eating habits for you and your children!



"Building with Cob"

Sunday, September 16, 1:00 - 5:00 pm

Learn how to combine clay, sand, water and straw to create a sustainable building material called *cob*. We'll use this mixture to demonstrate how to build your own cob oven. Discover ways this mixture can also be used in smaller eco-friendly building projects and even modest homes.



"Natural Dying with Plants"

Sunday, October 7, 1:00 - 5:00 pm

Plan out a Dying Garden to plant in the Spring and learn how to dye fabric using three native plants. Bring your own cotton garment to dye. This workshop will be messy so dress accordingly.

Cost: \$25 per workshop.

Crystal Moore-Stevens and Eric Stevens are our farmers at the Community Supported Garden at La Vista. They have taught herb classes at the Ozark Natural & Cultural Resource Center and children's classes at the Bonebrake Center of Nature and History in Salem, MO. **Colleen & James Smith** will be co-hosting the workshops, sharing their home-steading knowledge, and vibrant creativity. They bring with them their passion for utilizing the materials around them while living in harmony with nature.

La Vista Program Registration Options

1. Call to register at 618-466-5004
2. E-mail us at info@lavistaelc.org.
Payment may be made by check or using Paypal at our website: www.lavistaelc.org.
3. Complete and mail the form below with your check.

Event Title: _____ Date(s) _____

Name: _____ Phone _____

Address: _____
Street City State Zip

E-mail: _____ I have enclosed a check for: _____

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

Supporting the Work of La Vista Ecological Learning Center
We are grateful for your support through donations or service.

- To continue receiving La Vista Visions Newsletter please mail your donation of \$10 to the address above.
- If you would like to receive La Vista Visions electronically, please make that request by emailing us at info@lavistaelc.org.
- To make a donation to support the Great Work of La Vista, please mail your check to the address above.
- To volunteer at La Vista, please call Sister Maxine at 618-466-5004.



Basketry: Weaving a Handy Tote Bag



Saturday, February 11
 9:30 am – 5:00 pm

Weaving your own tote bag out of reeds is a wonderful way to exercise creativity while making a functional carry-all. This tote features decorative cloth over-the-shoulder handles.

Program includes detailed instruction, materials, refreshments and camaraderie!

Please bring a bag lunch.
 Call 466-5004 to register.
 Cost: \$30

Seasonal Celebrations

Spring Equinox - Saturday, March 24, 2:00 - 4:00 pm
 Summer Solstice – Saturday, June 23, 2:00 – 4:00 pm
 Autumn Equinox – Saturday, September 22, 2:00 – 4:00 pm
 Winter Solstice – Saturday, December 15, 7:00 – 9:00 pm

“The sun, with all those planets revolving around it and dependent on it, can still ripen a bunch of grapes as if it had nothing else in the universe to do.” - Galileo

Our one wonderful sun not only holds the planets in place and ripens grapes, but also gives us four distinctly beautiful seasons as it shines on a planet tilted on its axis.

Join us each quarter as we celebrate the power of our one Sun and our one lovely planet. We'll spend time giving thanks, immersing ourselves in the special gifts of each season and enjoying delight in the natural world.

Optional donations are welcomed and appreciated.



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

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**Offering
programs
and resources
for living
consciously
within the
integrity of Creation.**

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



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

Visit us at www.lavistaELC.org & www.lavistaCSA.org
or on Facebook: www.facebook.com/EcologicalLearningCenter

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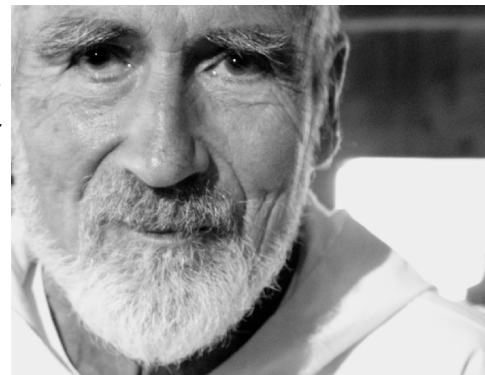
"A Good Day" is reprinted with permission of gratefulness.org and the kind help of Margaret Wakeley.

Ways to continue using "A Good Day" in 2012:

1. Re-read "A Good Day"
 - a) substituting the word "year" for "day".
 - b) on the first of each month, fixing the theme in your heart; then, ask yourself, "Has this been a good day, month, or year for Mother Earth?"
2. Visit www.gratefulness.org
 - a) Choose the topic "Caring for Earth" to find many helpful resources such as this child's grace before meals:
 "Earth, who gives to us this food,
 Sun, who makes it ripe and good,
 Dearest Earth, dearest Sun,
 We won't forget what you have done."

- b) Subscribe to their "Word for the Day" to receive a daily e-mail quote to nurture your grateful heart.
- c) "A Good Day" video with pictures and music can be viewed online. Use it as prayer for yourself, your family, your community. Google "A Good Day video Brother David Steindl-Rast."

Brother David Steindl-Rast, a Benedictine monk, is a master teacher of the spiritual practice of gratitude, hospitable pioneer in Christian-Buddhist dialogue, and author of many books including Belonging to the Universe which he co-authored with Fritjof Capra.



All events are held at La Vista Ecological Learning Center
4300 Levis Lane, Godfrey, IL unless otherwise indicated.

