



La Vista Visions

A NEWSLETTER ON THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

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Waking Up and Staying Up: The Transformation of Consciousness

by Terrence J. Moran, C.SS.R

Perhaps you've read or seen the most recent book by climate change activist Bill McKibben. Its title is *Eaarth*. McKibben intentionally adds the extra "a" to reinforce the central thesis of his book – Earth as we once knew it no longer exists. We now live on "eaarth" a planet whose life systems have been damaged beyond the point of no return by the activities of fossil fuel-burning humans. There is no going back.

You probably find this tremendously depressing news as I do. It makes you want to get back into bed and pull up the covers. As someone who has been involved in environmental advocacy since, at least, the first Earth Day in 1970, things can seem a little bleak to me. I tend to get disheartened not so much by politicians who are global warming deniers but by those who profess to understand the urgency of environmental issues but lack the will to do anything substantive about them.

The efforts I make to live more sustainably seem absurdly small. Denise Levertov in her poem *For the New Year, 1981* writes, "Only so, by division, will hope increase, like a clump of irises, which will cease to flower unless you distribute the clustered roots, unlikely source, clumsy and earth-covered, of grace." Using the image of Levertov, I am always on the lookout for someone who can share a little bit of hope with me, some small measure of success in the face of what seems to be an insurmountable crisis. As someone who is not a climate scientist, not a researcher into new sources of energy, what can I possibly do? What is my role in what Thomas Berry has famously called "the Great Work" of our time?

One of those profoundly hopeful moments for me was a keynote address of cosmologist Brian Swimme at the annual conference of Spiritual Directors International in Vancouver a few years ago. Against a background of slides of swirling galaxies millions of light years wide, Swimme brought home a cosmological truth. He said that the prime crisis of our civilization is not scientific or technological. Scientific information on climate change is clear and widely accessible. The problem is

that the information is not entering human consciousness. When the information reaches the human spirit it is blocked by one of the central stories of post-industrial civilization – that Earth is a thing that we use rather than a sacred community of life to which we belong. The most pressing task of our time is not invention of technologies but the transformation of consciousness. Relatively few of us are scientists or engineers – all of us are called to the sacred task of transformation of consciousness.

Someone once compared religious truth to a Buddhist meditation bell. Just as the bell only releases the sound inside it when struck by a mallet, so a religious truth releases its deep meaning only when it is struck by the needs of the world. Our new evolutionary, ecological consciousness can strike the bell of our religious traditions and bring sounds out of them that we perhaps have never heard before.

The Trinity, a central doctrine of the Christian faith, seems to most believers to be a hopeless abstraction with little relevance to daily life. But how the symbol of

the Trinity sings again when struck by the scientific truth that relationship is central to reality. All that exists shares a common origin and a common destiny with everything else that exists. Mutual relationship is at the very heart of the Holy Three and is mirrored in creation that is the overflow of the divine heart and an icon of the divine identity.

What richness is added to the doctrine of the Incarnation, the God who takes flesh, when we realize that the hydrogen atoms in the body of Jesus of Nazareth were born in the first moments of the universe's existence; that the other elements were birthed in the explosion of a star. The flesh-taking of God was in process from the first moments of creation!

Our sacramental tradition reminds us that God's self is expressed and touched in the stuff of this Earth. Creation is not in competition with God but the principal

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Sister Maxine with farmers Eric and Beau.

Dear Friends of *La Vista*,
After pondering Terry Moran's insightful article, I came across this inspiring and challenging quote by Andrew Cohen that helps me in my effort to make change practical. I hope it encourages you, too:

*In the end, as I see it, there are only two possibilities for a human life. Either you strive to move beyond where you already are or else you continue to do what you have already done. Unless you have a vision that reaches beyond everything your life has been about so far, what is more than likely to happen is more of what's already happened. Why? Because the structures of human consciousness are habit patterns. That's not a negative thing – it's how the universe is created. Habits are formed at the level of matter, at the level of biology, and also in consciousness and culture. We are habits. And so **unless there is a powerful energy and focused intention to break out of our habit-patterns and create new ones**, it's more than likely that what will happen in the future will be similar to what's happened in the past. **It takes an enormous degree of focused concentration, a big vision, and deep commitments in order to break through the established habits and create new ones.** But that's what conscious evolution is all about.*

The lovely image on page one is worth contemplating as a picture of what is involved in the kind of attention that is needed to effect change. All of us are called to sit still and unite ourselves with the whole Earth community until our very bodies are aligned with the natural world. Deep gratitude goes to Nancy Earle, SMIC, the creator of "Communion." I thank her for allowing us to share her painting with you.

The Oblate Ecological Initiative has always been about nurturing **big vision** and **deep commitments** in order to **change habits** that are contributing to social and environmental injustice. This calendar of events continues that tradition, offering opportunities for you to break out of habit-patterns and create new ones that are life-enhancing, not only for humans, but also for the whole Earth community. Please join us for a workshop or discussion course as you continue your journey into a more sustainable life.

When I think of transforming lives, I immediately call to mind our "Exploring the Sacred Universe" Earth Literacy program. After a week of vegetarian eating, mindful living, and focused communal learning, participants feel prepared and enthused about going home so they can "break through established habits" and continue developing new ones. Save the date and plan to join is in 2013! ©

For La Vista,
Maxine Pohlman, SSND

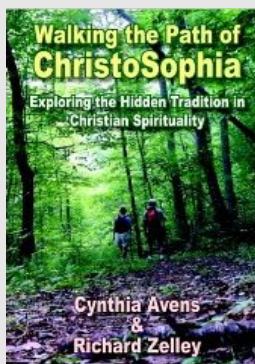
Creating a Mutually Enhancing Human/Earth Relationship: A Book Recommendation

Walking the Path of ChristoSophia: Exploring the Hidden Tradition in Christian Spirituality

by Cynthia Avens and Richard Zelley

Many people who have made the shift from the old cosmology to the new find themselves longing for readings that nurture a spirituality different from the one they embraced earlier, yet still firmly within the Christian tradition. *Walking the Path of ChristoSophia: Exploring the Hidden Tradition in Christian Spirituality* by Cynthia Avens and Richard Zelley is a book that satisfies this need in a most inviting way!

As an alternative to the well-worn path created by the mainline Christian tradition over the years, Avens and Zelley use the image of the "bypath" to describe the way taken by people "who are called by a sense of adventure to leave the interstate highway for less traveled, more picturesque byroads." These seekers feel closer to nature, travel more slowly, and find their spirits strengthened by the energy needed to progress in a way that takes extra commitment and more exertion.



Others have traveled this bypath before us, revealing three hidden traditions within Christianity: the feminine dimensions of the Divine, the presence of the sacred within the natural world, and the value of mystical experience. The authors name them the "Path of ChristoSophia" because they believe the discovery of the sacred Feminine is at the center of this hidden tradition. Learning about the hidden traditions simultaneously means discovering the depths of the Christian tradition. The enriching journey on this path leads to "internal transformation" which, the authors remind us, is the true essence of Christianity.

This treasure of a book is a blessing for all of us as we pursue the sacred task of transformation of consciousness. Read it and find support and delight in this intriguing journey!

Maxine

The most pressing work of our time is the transformation of consciousness.

SAVE THE DATE:

Exploring the Sacred Universe: Earth Literacy Program August 4 – 11, 2013

Why an Earth Literacy Program?

We need a common and compelling vision of the nature of the universe and the role of the human within it Only such a vision has a chance of awakening the deep psychic energies necessary to shape a new era of health, well-being, and true prosperity. Brian Swimme

La Vista's Earth Literacy program is an opportunity to embrace a "new and compelling vision" based on contemporary scientific understandings of the evolution of the Universe, Earth, life, and human consciousness as a single unfolding process, a new cosmology.

Through insightful presentations, animated discussions, creative rituals, vegetarian cooking and exploring this bioregion, participants will not only learn the new Universe story, but also address the implications of the story for our daily lives and the life of our planet. **Join us for a truly transformative learning experience!**

Request a registration form by calling 618-466-5004 or e-mail your request to info@lavistaelc.org. Read more about our program on our website www.lavistaelc.org.



Thomas Merton and the Wisdom of Peace and Nonviolence

October 6, 2012
9 am-11:30 am
in the Visitor's Center
at the Shrine of Our
Lady of the Snows

Sponsored by the
Partnership for Peace.
La Vista is a member of this
local interfaith group.

John Dear is an internationally recognized voice for peace and nonviolence. A priest, pastor, peacemaker, retreat leader, and author, he served for years as director of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. Archbishop Desmond Tutu recently nominated John Dear for the Nobel Peace Prize. John's many books include: *The God of Peace*, *Living Peace*, and his autobiography *A Persistent Peace*.

DISCUSSION COURSES:

Inspiring people to take responsibility for Earth

These thought-provoking discussion courses provide the information needed to help you break through established habits and create more sustainable ones. Each session includes excellent readings, questions for the group, suggested actions for practice, and supplementary resources for personal study.

Hungry for Change: Food, Ethics and Sustainability
Join us and explore the interconnections of our food systems and our relationship to and responsibility in these systems.

Thursdays, Aug. 23, Sept. 13, 27, Oct. 11, 25, Nov. 8
7:00 – 8:30 pm \$30 for book of readings due by Aug. 3,
so books can be ordered.

Voluntary Simplicity

The rich collection of readings explores the view that each of us can, at the same time, improve the quality of life, reduce expenses, and live more lightly on earth.

Fridays, Sept. 14, 21, 28, Oct. 5, 12
10:30 am – Noon \$30 for book of readings due by Aug. 31
so books can be ordered.

HELD AT: The Family Center, 602 W. Kirkham,
Webster Groves, MO 63119

Homesteading knowledge and vibrant creativity evoke practical lifestyle changes.

Herbs and More - A Workshop Series

Cost: \$25 per workshop

Growing Herbs for Health

Sunday, June 3, 1:00 -5:00 pm

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

Medicinal Herb Walk & Herbal Remedies

Sunday, July 8, 1:00 - 5:00 pm

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

Cooking Naturally Outdoors

Sunday, July 22, 1:00 - 5:00 pm

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 at the Community Supported Garden where vegetables literally will be harvested from the field moments before. Together we will be cooking a seven course meal 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 learn how to create healthy meals your whole family will enjoy!

You will learn how to: make your own baby food; get creative in the kitchen with your older children; make incredibly healthy treats to indulge your sweet tooth; and use healthy ingredients to turn out “traditional” dishes that kids love like black bean brownies, mac ‘n’ sweet potato cheese and pasta sauce made with fresh raw veggies.



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 Dyeing with Plants

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

Plan out a Dyeing 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 please dress accordingly.

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 homesteading and vibrant creativity. They bring 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. Email us at info@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.

Home Canning Tomatoes: Good for You and Our Planet

Saturday, August 4 1:00 – 5:00 pm

In this hands-on introductory canning class you will learn how to safely pressure can whole tomatoes, preserving them for long-term storage. In addition, you'll receive information and recipes for canning salsa, pasta sauce and ketchup. Participants will take home a jar of freshly canned tomatoes and a booklet with directions, tips, and recipes from our seasoned instructor.

Please bring enough tomatoes to fill a quart jar plus a few more and a cloth bag or hand towel to transport your hot jar. Cost: \$25

Annie Kelley, our presenter, has been gardening and canning since 1971. Last year she canned, dried, and froze 85% of the food she and her husband ate all year! Annie's 25 years in the restaurant business has given her lots of practical experience regarding food preparation and safety.

Tai Chi for Flexibility: Moving Meditation

Thursdays, 9:00 am – 10:00 am

Tai Chi continues on Thursday mornings in a series of four classes with breaks in between sessions. Please call us at 618-466-5004 to find out the dates for the next session.

Mary Ann Pitchford is a certified Tai Chi instructor and lecturer/instructor of Senior Programs for the National Arthritis Foundation. \$28.00 per session

Celebrating the Seasons on the Bluffs

At La Vista we celebrate the seasonal cycles, aligning ourselves with the great pattern that is revealed in the relationship between our generous sun and our rare and precious planet. Please join us on the beautiful land atop the bluffs and immerse yourself in this astounding reality.

Summer Solstice

Saturday, June 23, 2:00 – 4:00 pm

Autumn Equinox

Saturday, September 22, 2:00 – 4:00 pm

Winter Solstice

Saturday, December 22, 7:00 – 9:00 pm

Free will offering.

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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.**

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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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way in which God is experienced. Abuse of creation is truly a sacrilege – the violation of a sacred thing. By our unsustainable life style we commit the gravest liturgical abuse imaginable – we compromise the cleanliness of water, the pureness of wheat, grapes, olives; we pollute the air from which we draw breath to praise God in word and song. Our actions to preserve creation are not merely political, they are liturgical. Does it make any sense to bring solemnity to our acts of worship and not bring a sense of liturgical awe to our dealings with the whole of creation?

Among the many consciousness changing tools available, I would recommend two that are particularly powerful:

1. Awakening the Dreamer, Changing the Dream Symposium. This is a powerful and engaging seminar consisting of videos, group exercises and discussions which gathers people around three goals: to bring forth an environmentally sustainable, spiritually fulfilling, socially just human presence on this planet. <http://awakeningthedreamer.org/>

2. The “Transition Community” movement – founded on the idea that climate change can be addressed not just at the national and international levels but also by local communities. Its primary focus is not campaigning against things, but rather on creating positive, empowering possibilities

and opportunities. <http://www.transitionnetwork.org/>

People of faith have an irreplaceable role in the transformation of consciousness that will make a new relationship with Earth possible and lasting. As Katy Hinman of Georgia Interfaith Light & Power remarks, “We need the science provided by An Inconvenient Truth as a wake-up call. But there’s a difference between a wake-up call and what gets me out of bed to make a difference in the world.” ☺

Fr. Terrence J. Moran, C.S.S.R. has given retreats and workshops on theology and spirituality throughout the United States and in twenty five other countries.

Fr. Moran is the author of two books and has published articles in *Commonweal*, *America* and *Church* magazines. He currently teaches at the College of St. Elizabeth in New Jersey and serves as Chair of the Board of Spiritual Directors International. In addition to his teaching and preaching ministries, Fr. Moran also serves as a consultant to religious congregations.



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

