



La Vista Visions

A NEWSLETTER ON THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

Published by the Oblate Ecological Initiative

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An Emerging Vision for 2010 and Beyond

by Nancy Cronin

As you read this article, the year 2010 is here, and with this, the opportunity to align ourselves with the magnificence of our ever-expanding Universe! Yes, the Universe *is* expanding and so is our understanding of our place in it. What does it mean to align ourselves with the Universe? How can human beings do that?

Cosmologist Brian Swimme has creatively explained this in his 11-part DVD series, "The Powers of the Universe." So, since this is a new year, let's take this opportunity to explore one—the Power of Emergence—and see, through Brian's vision, how we humans are intimately connected in this process.

In this 14.7 billion-year history of the Universe, there were many "emergences" of epochal proportions. However, I'd like to describe three of the most amazing emergences: Carbon, Earth and the Human.

First, Carbon! At a particular moment in a star's life, the center became so hot that the hydrogen and helium were both consumed, causing the star to implode. Then the inner temperature soared to 100 million degrees. At this point the helium nuclei fused into Carbon—the **basis of all life**. As the supernovas exploded, the Carbon flooded the Universe, impacting all future existence. This Power of Emergence that brought forth the Carbon elements operates in *our* very bodies!

Second, the emergence of Earth! As the early planets assembled themselves 4.5 billion years ago, smaller ones—Mars and Mercury—hardened. Larger planets, like Jupiter and Saturn, remained turbulent and gaseous. But Earth's Emergence was so amazing: it was *between* the extremes—it had a hot, molten core, yet a cooled, crusty surface, AND there was movement! Magma in the core continued to bubble up forming more crust; mountains arose; tectonic plates shifted. Earth, in its stage of *in-between*, came alive! Jupiter was too chaotic, Mercury too rigid.

What great Mystery! Out of Earth, churning with molten rock, emerged delicate butterflies, playful otters, colorful flowers and great whales! Out of ROCK has emerged such astounding *diversity*, such deep *interiority*, and—as we learn more about our DNA—such profound *communion* with all living beings! This same Emergent Power that brought all this forth elicits the uniqueness of every human being!

Third, as the Power of Emergence continued in the evolution of Earth, it brought forth—from the same stardust and light en-

ergy—the two-legged beings who would gradually awaken, *see*, and feel awe... and wonder at the Mystery of Life. From the stuff of Earth emerged hunters and gatherers, those who drew on cave walls, Jesus, Galileo, Einstein, Gandhi, Teilhard de Chardin, Rachel Carson, Martin Luther King, Jr., Thomas Berry, Edwin Hubble, Joanna Macy, Brian Swimme and so many more whose courage, energy, love and vision have profoundly influenced humankind. This Power of Emergence also calls us to awaken



to the meaning of *our* lives.

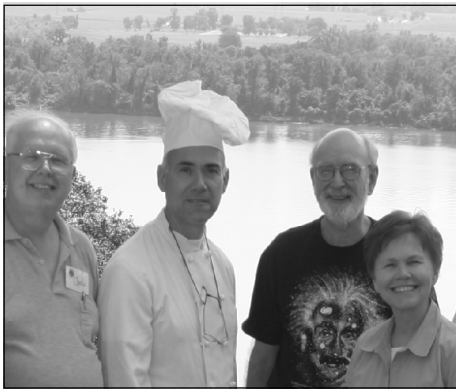
The creativity of the Universe is awesome! And this "creativity"—a word that we've only recently applied to our Universe—has taken place without hands or brains! However, it was *self-reflective* humans who perceived the Universe as "*a single, multiform energetic unfolding of matter, mind, intelligence and life.*" The Universe is filled with Creativity, with Emergence, and so are we! So how can we participate with this Cosmological Power of Emergence in 2010?

Brian Swimme suggests, first, that we begin with **the idea** that we are engulfed with creativity! Because we are rooted in the very *fireball* of the Big Bang, we **are** creativity in the form of the human. When it was "time" for the galaxies to appear, they

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Letter from the Editor

Winter, 2009



Sister Maxine and Oblate members of our staff - Charlie Gilbert, OMI, Jack Lau, OMI, Norm Comtois, OMI - look forward to your participation with us here at *La Vista*.

Dear Friends of *La Vista*,

You've probably noticed your houseplants growing in the direction of the winter sun as it shines in your windows. This natural mechanism of plants is called *heliotropism*. As we begin the year 2010, a meditation on *heliotropism* could bear much fruit for our lives and for our rare and precious planet Earth.

In his book *The Spontaneous Fulfillment of Desire*, Deepak Chopra tells us that our thoughts, intentions – even our resolutions – are the equivalent of sunlight, and Earth itself grows in a direction to meet our intentions! He says that **intention** is a power as real and strong as gravity. It is a power we can harness for the good of the whole Earth community!

Recall the resolutions you made on New Year's Eve. Were any of them about helping to alleviate climate change? How

about one to reduce your carbon footprint? Now ponder the fact that your resolutions are a power drawing the Earth to change in that direction. All of us together, as we commit to our intentions for Earth, are bringing about our dreams for the integrity of Creation!

This issue of *La Vista Visions* is one way we express our intention for Earth. Another is through our programming. These programs are an effort to empower participants to shift their understanding of what it means to be human on our fragile planet. Won't you join us for one of these opportunities at *La Vista*? We also welcome your monetary support as we continue our mission into the future.

As the year 2010 emerges, we can look back at an awesome 2009 at the Community Supported Garden. Our farmer teamed up with great weather, rich, vital soil and enthusiastic shareholders to give us the most bountiful harvest ever. We look forward to the 2010 growing season, the eighth for our Garden.

As we begin to watch the greens growing toward the sun in the greenhouse, we are reminded of our resolutions for Earth. We are grateful for your influence on the planet and for your continued partnering with us!

For La Vista,
Maxine Pohlman, SSND

Creating a Mutually Enhancing Human/Earth Relationship



The Sacred Universe: Earth, Spirituality, and Religion in the 21st Century

Edited and with a foreword by Mary Evelyn Tucker

Published by: Columbia University Press, September 2009

These essays are a timely and urgent call for the world's religions to respond to the growing ecological crisis. Berry's special insight into the need for a new story of universe and Earth emergence is one of his unique contributions to situating the role of the human in the 21st century.

The Christian Future and the Fate of Earth

Edited by Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim

Published by: Orbis Books, September 2009

These essays represent the most comprehensive reflections of Thomas Berry on the role of Christianity in our times. He asks boldly why Christians have not been more consistently concerned about the destruction of ecosystems, the loss of species, and the fate of future generations. In powerful and poetic language he presents a compelling vision of the sacredness of the universe and the interrelatedness of the Earth community.



Events Calendar: Winter - Spring 2010

To register for one of our programs, contact us at 618-466-5004.

Programs can also be viewed on our web site: www.lavistaelc.org.

Programs are held at *La Vista Ecological Learning Center* unless otherwise indicated.

Winterfires Coffeehouse

Saturday, January 23, 7:00 – 9:00 pm

Our gathering promises an intimate evening of camaraderie around a glowing fire in our rustic lodge! This is a magical night of sharing your favorite poems and/or original poetry, as well as inspiring music - real soul food that nourishes us through this wonderful Winter season. Please bring a dessert to share; we'll provide Mexican hot chocolate and coffee. Dress warmly! \$5. Donation.

Film Night - Food, Inc.

Friday, February 19th, 7:00 – 9:00 pm

We're teaming up with the Sierra Club to co-host a viewing of Robert Kenner's 2009 film *Food, Inc.* Join us and discover how our nation's food supply is now controlled by a handful of corporations that often put profit ahead of consumer health, the livelihood of the American farmer, the safety of workers and our own environment. After the viewing there will be time for a lively discussion. \$5. optional donation

AWAKENING to the POWERS of the UNIVERSE:

Ten Afternoon Sessions from February – November

These sessions involve an interactive viewing of Brian Swimme's series, Powers of the Universe. In these 10 presentations, participants will journey from the vast reaches of the ancient cosmos down into the most infinitesimal elementary particles and discover that no matter where we look, even into the human heart, the Powers of the Universe are present.

Each session will consist of interactive viewing of one of Swimme's DVD presentations, reflection questions, quiet time, dialogue, and closing ritual. In order to participate it is suggested that participants have some familiarity with the new cosmology and the Universe story.

Co-sponsored with the Mission Effectiveness Office of the School Sisters of Notre Dame

Saturdays from 1:00 – 3:30 pm

Feb. 13, Mar. 13, Apr. 17, May 15, June 12, July 17, Aug. 14, Sept. 18, Oct. 16, Nov. 13.

Cost: \$5.00 per session

Place: SSND Motherhouse Ecology Resource Room, 320 East Ripa Avenue, St. Louis, MO.

Registration: Participants are encouraged to commit to all ten sessions, creating a community of learners. If you are unable to attend a session, you can arrange to borrow a DVD and participate on your own.

Voluntary Simplicity

Tuesdays, February 23, March 2, 9, 16, 23
 7:00 – 9:00 pm Cost: \$25 for discussion guidebook

This five session discussion course is a special opportunity during Lent to:

- * explore the meaning of voluntary simplicity in a consumer culture
- * consider the material and psychological distractions preventing us from caring for Earth
- * discuss how life might be enriched through the practice of simplicity

Participants will receive a book of readings to discuss with others in an informal setting.

Seasonal Celebrations

Spring Equinox – Saturday, March 20, 4:00 pm
Summer Solstice – Saturday, June 19, 7:00 pm

Human beings are an intimate part of the whole web of life, a fact we often ignore or forget. Seasonal celebrations at La Vista are a delightful and powerful way to celebrate and experience that intimacy. Join us and welcome each season as it presents itself to us in the movement of the sun across the sky! We celebrate outdoors, so dress accordingly and bring a dish to share as we conclude each celebration with the bounty of the season.

Registration is requested.

Optional donation of \$5 is welcomed.

Living In Between Stories - A Weekend Retreat

Friday, April 9 - Sunday, April 11

In *The Dream of the Earth*, Thomas Berry opens his essay “The New Story” by observing: “We are in between stories.” The old story shaped our emotional attitudes, provided us with life purpose, and energized action. However, this context of meaning provided by the old story is no longer operative.

Today we find ourselves as a planetary people living in between stories: the end of the Cenozoic Era and the emergence of the Ecozoic Era. What does this mean? What are the issues facing us and who are our companions as we journey in this unfamiliar territory guided by the dream of the earth?

Join **Norman Comtois, OMI** as he reflects on the meaning of living in between stories and invites us to discover fire for the second time as we approach the season of Pentecost. This weekend retreat will include presentations, dialogue, ritual and a time for personal reflection.

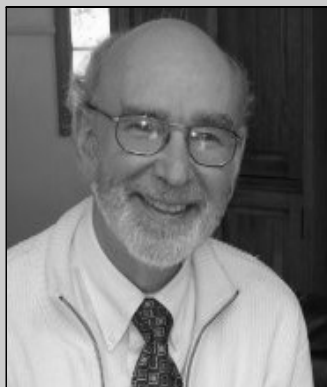
Fri., Apr. 9, 7:00 pm - Sun., Apr. 11, midday brunch

Overnight (with meals) \$150; Commute (with meals) \$110.

Down to Earth Spirituality - Evening Lecture and Light Supper

Sunday, April 11

In Thomas Berry’s vision, human beings are called not only to appreciate Earth, but also to recognize the planet itself as graced with innate sacredness, endowed with a spiritual mode of being.



Join us this evening as Norman Comtois, O.M.I., invites us to consider the sacredness of our planet and suggests ways of practicing a “down to Earth” spirituality.

Light dinner buffet available, 5:30 – 6:30 pm Presentation and discussion: 6:30 – 8:00 pm
 Cost: \$15

Held at King’s House Retreat and Renewal Center, 700 N. 66th Belleville, Illinois

Norm 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 also serves as a team member of the Earth Literacy Program at La Vista Ecological Learning Center.



Awakening the Dreamer, Changing the Dream Symposium

This Symposium is part of a rapidly expanding global initiative – nearly 70,000 people in 40 countries on six continents have participated so far!

Join us and experience this inspiring exploration into the links among humanity's most critical concerns: ***environmental sustainability, social justice, and spiritual fulfillment.***

This symposium uniquely combines leading edge information through live presentation and facilitation, video clips, and group interaction, drawing upon the wisdom of many of our most respected global elders.

Together, we'll:

- go on a journey of inquiry into the current state of planet Earth and what's possible for the future
- grapple with assumptions underlying how we see ourselves in the world today
- gain new and deeper levels of awareness and readiness for effective action
- leave with a profound sense of potential, hope, and purpose

9:30 am – 3:30 pm Saturday, June 5, 2010 \$25 per person
Please bring a no-waste lunch; coffee and tea provided.

Held at Maria Center, located on the campus of the School Sisters of Notre Dame Motherhouse, 320 East Ripa Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63125

Co-sponsored with Rockhaven Ecozoic Center, St. Joseph's Woods, and the Mission Effectiveness Office of the School Sisters of Notre Dame.

Earth Day Activities: Sat., Apr. 23

~ Environmental Art Workshop ~

1:30 pm - 6:00 pm

Create your own "Spirit Stick" which represents a item of honor and spiritual potency. You'll craft your Spirit Stick in a prayerful manner using found objects, color, beads and feathers. Spirit Sticks can be held and used in prayer, storytelling, and song. Cost: \$30.00 (Includes materials and 5:00 supper)

~ Coffeehouse with Poetry and Music ~

7:00 – 9:00 pm

Bring your Earth-themed poetry and music to share with an enthusiastic audience at our second annual Earth Day Coffeehouse! Please bring a springtime dessert to share; we'll provide Fair Trade coffee and tea. Optional donation appreciated.

Exploring the Sacred Universe Earth Literacy Program

6:00 pm Mon., Aug. 3 through 1:00 pm Tues., Aug. 10

All around us evidence is mounting that the 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 human on this rare and lovely planet.

Join us this summer and explore Creation's integrity for a week along the bluffs with a community of learners. Together we'll explore the profound shift in understanding evoked by the story of an evolutionary universe. As we sit with the wonder, awe and newness of the Universe Story, we'll also critically examine the perceptions that currently fashion our cultural worldview.

This week-long program includes

- * guided activities and instruction
- * immersion in direct experience of the natural world
- * practicing skills for a more ecologically-conscious life
- * contemplating the story of an evolving Universe
- * examining the perceptions that fashion the current cultural worldview
- * deepening our appreciation for the inherent spiritual dimension of our sacred universe

Registration information will be sent to you upon request by calling 618-466-5004. Cost: \$550

All overnight programs must be pre-registered. Overnight retreats must be paid in full with registration due 14 days prior to the retreat. If you are unable to attend, 75% of the cost is refundable up to two weeks prior to the beginning of the retreat.



Earth Literacy participants gather for a meal together.

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LaVista Ecological Learning Center
4300 Levis Lane
Godfrey, IL 62035

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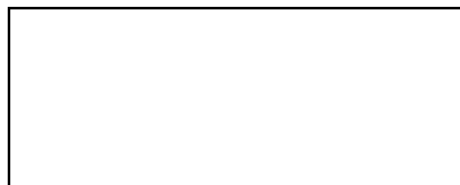
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"Faith
is the strength
by which
a shattered world
shall emerge
into the light."

-Helen Keller

The Oblate Ecological Initiative
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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Visit us at www.lavistaELC.org & www.lavistaCSA.org

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did. If we hold the idea of being *engulfed in creativity*, at the right moment it will become clear just what our creative endeavor will be.

Second, we need the courage to live with ambiguity, the tension of "in-between," groping, being confused... But out of this *abiding-with*, the Universe brought forth Carbon, Earth, and the Human. There may not be "quick solutions" for us either, but we are called to do our part to creatively resolve tensions and enhance life.

Third, those drawn to the path of Emergence will sense that "there's more to be done." This restlessness-within is a personal invitation from the Universe to participate in bringing forth a new era. *Cherish restlessness!* You now know yourself to be *one-with* with the Power of Emergence!

The Universe has been aiming at **vibrant life** all along! The Power of Emergence is coming alive in the souls and psyches of humans, in those who believe in the Power of Possibility. These are persons of Cosmic faith who know deeply, intuitively, that even within the suffering and chaos that are present in our Earth community today, there, too, is the potential for creative resolution.

As we ponder the long line of ancestors who emerged from Earth—those saints, scientists, mystics and visionaries on whose shoulders we stand—we discover the truth of Darwin's statement: "*It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the ones most responsive to change.*"

Do we self-reflective humans want to be part of this exciting Emergence in 2010? Well then let's embrace the final challenge in Brian Swimme's presentation:

"The ideal state for the human is not exactly bovine placidity. It is rather the highest degree of tension that can be creatively borne." - A.L. Kroeber

Nancy Cronin holds a M. Ed. in Psychology and works with Autistic children in Nashua, NH, where she lives. She has been *allured* to Cosmology through the works of Brian Swimme, and feels her "*heart burning within*" when listening to Brian's DVD series ***Powers of the Universe***. Nancy is a graduate of *La Vista's* "Exploring the Sacred Universe" Earth Literacy program.

(Image on page one by Sue Peacock)

