



# La Vista Visions

A NEWSLETTER ON THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

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Winter 2014  
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## Words Shape Our Worldview

By Paulette Zimmerman, SSND

Recently someone mentioned how often – and how unconsciously – gun/violence language is part of our vocabulary: we use *bullets* to make a list; if we're correct about something, we're *on target*; if we try something, we *take a shot at it*. Even *the Big Bang*, originally a dismissive term, suggests a gun shot or explosion, unworthy of our sacred cosmic origin, which is better expressed as the *Great Radiance* or *First Flaring Forth*.

Language both shapes and reveals attitudes. In the present ecological crisis, we need to be especially aware of our "Earth language." Our home planet is usually referred to as *the earth* (no capital letter) even though we never say *the Venus* or *the Mars*. Earth deserves the same respect.

We also refer to *natural resources* as if abundant ecosystems and beautiful life-forms, having evolved through millions of years, were merely for human use, as if a forest were only timber, instead of an interconnected web of life. Such utilitarian language reinforces the notion of a hierarchy with humans at the top and also the degrading depiction of humans as mere *consumers*. It seems we stopped being citizens and never named our true identity: planetary and cosmic beings, a unique species among the other members of the Earth community, with the task of creating, healing, celebrating, and loving. In *A New Climate for Theology*, theologian Sallie McFague asserts, "Our task is to awaken to and acknowledge who we are: we are reflections of the divine, as is all creation." In short, we are not *consumers* and everything else *resources*.

A phrase of questionable value is *global warming*, which may sound pleasant on cold days in northern regions; on the other hand, the scientific and neutral *climate change* lacks feeling and the suggestion of the extreme and destructive weather events caused by it. *Climate crisis* may be off-

putting but not overstated.

A misleading term is *the environment*, as if all but human beings are part of the scenery, a mere backdrop with which we have no connection. It might be helpful to talk about protecting *the planet*, respecting *all life-forms*, and preserving *intact ecosystems*. Miriam Therese MacGillis says that we are not to be *environmentalists*, but *ecologists*, those who listen to the voices of our *oikos*, the household of Earth, and also speak on her behalf.

Miriam also cautions against the word *creation* because it's an abstraction. We are challenged to think and speak in the concrete about other life-forms, bioregions, ecosystems, rivers, trees, plants, mammals, marine life, and birds. Only then are we likely to translate "respecting all creation" into specific actions.

The current trend often includes putting a monetary value on other-than-human Nature to justify protective measures. If money is our primary value, we need to show how much Nature helps the economy; indeed, bees, butterflies, and other pollinators do provide millions of dollars in services; rivers clean impurities; oceans yield seemingly endless bounty; trees and deep-rooted plant systems prevent soil erosion. The terminology includes *ecosystem services* and a *green economy* with little understanding that the human economy is a subset of Earth's economy; that is, humans must fit into Earth's way of "managing the household."

Recently *Audubon* magazine had a special Why Birds Matter issue. Authors offered various reasons, but the essay "Beyond Measure" captured the essential message about the value of birds: "Their intrinsic worth is



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## Letter from the Editor

Winter 2014



Sister Maxine with members of the OMI Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Committee

Dear Friends,

It seems like yesterday that we celebrated the new millennium, and here we are beginning 2014! I hope this year of life finds you embracing, ever more deeply, the reality

that we are all one on and with our rare and precious planet.

This shift in consciousness away from a dualistic worldview of separateness, individualism and isolation, and into a perspective that honors the deep connection among all beings of the Earth community, is a process that moves in fits and starts. Sometimes we find ourselves in alignment with this change in thinking and behaving, and at other times we recognize that we are still embedded in a former way of life, entranced by consumerism, convenience, and self-concern that is harming our planet and ourselves.

I am grateful for Paulette's article on page one addressing how changing our vocabulary helps us make the transition into another way of speaking and being. Each time we carefully choose our words we are affecting the whole and contributing to consciousness of our deep unity and a more sustainable lifestyle.

Lucie Leduc's reflection on last summer's Earth Literacy program is evidence of someone whose consciousness continues to change as she opens herself to different experiences. My hope is that her inspiring words will encourage you to join us for this summer's "Exploring the Sacred Universe" Program from August 3 – 10.

This year the Community Supported Garden at La Vista will begin its twelfth season. All of us who are members are deeply grateful to the Missionary Oblates and to our farmers Crystal and Eric for providing us with a way to eat locally, seasonally, sustainably – and deliciously!

Finally, we are grateful to Cindy Gelsthorpe and Tom Bechtold (pictured above, standing on the left side) for generously donating a hybrid solar oven to the Learning Center. We demonstrated it at the Autumn Equinox celebration, so it has already been a catalyst for encouraging a more sustainable cooking experience! ☺

For La Vista,  
Maxine Pohlman, SSND

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

### Spiritual Ecology: The Cry of the Earth

Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee, Editor

Once in awhile a book comes along that not only warms the heart and challenges the spirit, but also addresses our crisis on Earth in the best way possible. This collection of essays by well-known spiritual and ecological leaders from a variety of faiths and ethnicities is one of those books. Each unique voice leads the reader to ponder the deep connection between our present ecological crisis and our lack of awareness of the sacred nature of the whole Earth community. Consider these quotations:

*The world is part of our own self, and we are part of its suffering wholeness. Until we go to the root of our image of separateness, there can be no healing.*

- LLEWELLYN VAUGHAN-LEE

*Don't apologize if you cry for the burning of the Amazon or the Appalachian mountains stripped for coal. The sorrow, grief and rage you feel are the measure of your humanity and your evolutionary maturity.*

- JOANNA MACY

*The food that we eat, the food that nourishes us, is a gift from the earth, from the sun, from the millions of years of evolution....When we forget the earth from where we receive our food, food becomes non-sustainable. Food is life. Food is not just our vital need: it is the web of life.*

-VANDANA SHIVA

*In a nutshell, we have to live a spiritual way of life and engage in the protection of the earth, enlightenment of the self and restoration of social justice.*

- SATISH KUMAR

*We must remember that it is not only the human world that is held securely in this sacred enfoldment, but the entire planet.*

- THOMAS BERRY

*The future of all life, including our own, depends on our mindful steps. We have to hear the bells of mindfulness that are sounding all over our planet. We have to start learning to live in a way that a future will be possible for our children and our grandchildren.*

- THICH NHAT HANH

The essay format of this book makes it ideal for use by a discussion group. Why not organize a book club in your own area? If you live nearby, see the offering on page four of this newsletter and please join us!

***Plan now to attend!***  
**Exploring the Sacred Universe:  
 Earth Literacy Program  
 August 3 - 10, 2014**

**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 infolding 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!**

Read a participant's thoughtful reflection on this program in the article below. For more information visit our website: [www.lavistaelc.org](http://www.lavistaelc.org). Request a registration form by calling 618-466-5004 or e-mail your request to [info@lavistaelc.org](mailto:info@lavistaelc.org).

## **A Healing Homecoming**

by Lucie Leduc

"Where have I been for the past thirty years?" This is the question I ask myself as I pore through the reading material in preparation for a week long Earth Literacy program at La Vista. The question arises because the literature I am reading, i.e. Thomas Berry's "Dream for the Earth" and other articles, were written in the mid-1980's, and they are vividly impressing my heart with liberating truths that have long lain dormant, if not downright repressed. Finally, the beginnings of a theology that puts us in touch with the sacredness of our living planet; our living home, and invites us to participate in a deeper intimacy with her rhythms and cry for balance.

I come from Alberta, Canada, and I grieve, even as I ponder with hope and promise, the phosphorous-ridden lakes, and the vast wound of the oil sands in the north that threatens our peoples and landscape. La Vista is a coming alive to a new story that offers spiritual grounding to labor with God for the whole of creation's healing. Not a "man vs. nature" of years gone by, but of human and planet in one destiny, where human kind needs to access the Spirit-given creativity to work for the planet's healing and wholeness at least as much as we do for our own.

We learn about the importance of story, and marvel at the wonders of the Universe story, the story of planets, especially our home planet Earth, of the human journey from an evolutionary perspective, and recover our own sense of place in the world. We interpret Genesis in the light of current scientific understandings and find ourselves appreciating with grateful relief (i.e. didn't we really know it deep down all along?) that we are not to 'dominate' the earth and 'subdue' it, as though this were even possible let alone desirable, but that we are to care for the earth, tend it like our own skin.

This is no time to fret about where I've been for the past thirty years, but to open my eyes and heart to participating fully in the Creator's immense love for creation. Earth Literacy at La Vista opens the doors, helps us form the vision, and sends us out to live the call for collaborating with Grace in the "creation of a new heavens and a new earth".



*Lucie Leduc works as Executive Director for Star of the North Retreat Centre in St. Albert, AB, Canada. She has written regularly for the Prairie Messenger, a Catholic newspaper in western Canada. She is an Oblate Associate, a mother and a grandmother, committed to empowering creative gifts and works for healing of Earth and people; future generations and the planet.*

## PROGRAM CALENDAR January - June 2014



**Winterfires Coffeehouse**  
**Saturday, January 11,**  
**7:00 - 9:00 pm**  
**(Snow date: Sat., February 1)**

Our popular coffeehouse promises an intimate evening of camaraderie around a glowing fire in the rustic lodge at La Vista. This is a magical night of sharing your favorite songs and original or found poetry – real soul food to nourish us through

this wonderful winter season. Along with your poetry and/or music, please bring a dessert to share. We'll provide plenty of hot drinks! Dress warmly; the lodge is heated only by you and the blazing fire!

Cost: Suggested donation of \$5 - \$10 is appreciated.

Registration: Call 618-466-5004 and leave your name and the number attending.



**Teilhard de Chardin, Pilgrim of the Future**  
**Saturdays, 1/25 and 2/22, 1:30 – 3:30 pm**  
**Held at Loretto Center, St. Louis, MO**

Teilhard saw himself as a pilgrim of the future, and today he is recognized as a visionary whose insights and spirituality respond to some of the deepest needs and hungers of our time.

Jan. 25: Who Do We Say that We Are?" Teilhard's Appreciation of the Human Person

Feb. 22: Celebrating Life and the Constructive Value of Suffering

Each session includes input, reflection time, table discussion, and Q/A period.

Presenter: Don Goergen, OP, a Dominican friar, preacher, lecturer, teacher, and author.

Place: Loretto Center, 590 E. Lockwood Ave., Webster Groves, MO 63119

Cost: \$15 per session

Registration: Please send payment to La Vista ELC, 4300 Levis LN, Godfrey, IL 62035

**Spiritual Ecology: A Book Discussion**

**Thursdays: 1/30, 2/13, 2/27, 3/13, 3/27 7:00 – 8:30 pm**  
**Held at The Family Center, Webster Groves, MO**

Join this discussion group and enjoy lively conversations inspired by *Spiritual Ecology* (see description on page two of this newsletter). Members are asked to purchase your own book before the first session. Upon registration you will receive information on how to prepare for the first discussion.

Place: The Family Center, 602 W. Kirkham Ave. Webster Groves, MO 63119

Cost: \$15 (Does not include cost of book.)

Registration: Please send payment to La Vista 4300 Levis LN Godfrey, IL. 62035

**Weaving a Tote Basket**

**Saturday, February 8**

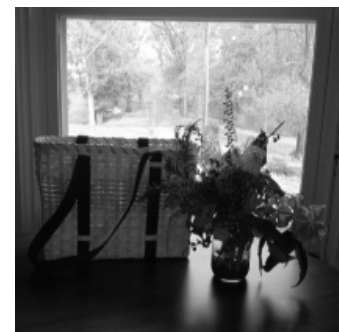
**9:30 am – 4:00 pm**

Human beings have been weaving baskets for thousands of years. Join the spirit of our ancient ancestors as we create this versatile tote you'll use frequently. We'll enjoy the act of weaving as a meditative practice.

Please bring your lunch. Drinks and snacks will be provided.

Cost: \$45

Registration: Due by 1/26 so reeds can be ordered. Send payment to La Vista ELC, 4300 Levis LN, Godfrey, IL 62035



**Christian Simplicity: A Lenten Discussion Program**

**Thursdays 3/6, 13, 20, 27, 4/3, 10, 17 10:30 am - Noon**

Simplicity is a movement, a practice, and for many, a purposeful way of living out the Christian faith in a complex, often over-consumptive society. Simplicity results in a life that is outwardly simple and inwardly rich. This seven-session discussion course encourages participants to learn about the ramifications of living in a First World country and to understand the connection between their lifestyle choices and walking in the footsteps of Jesus on our withering planet.

Cost: \$20 for book of readings.

Registration: Due by 2/20 so books can be ordered. Send payment to La Vista ELC 4300 Levis LN Godfrey, IL. 62035.

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- **SPREAD THE WORD:** Tell others about us by sharing this newsletter.
- **DONATE:** Thank you kindly for mailing your donation to us to support this newsletter as well as our programs, retreats, workshops, and discussions.
- **VOLUNTEER:** Help at the Learning Center. Call 618-466-5004.
- **HELP!** Please let us know how you want to continue receiving this newsletter.

**Electronically** Reduce paper usage. E-mail us at [oeiatlavista@yahoo.com](mailto:oeiatlavista@yahoo.com) with your request. We'll send you a notice when *La Vista Visions* has been posted on our web site twice each year.

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**E-mail address**

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

**THANK YOU** for your participation. We delight in working with you for the healing of our planet and ourselves!

Cost: A free will offering to support the programming at La Vista is always welcome.

Registration: Call 618-466-5004, leaving your name and the number attending.

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incalculable—they matter because they matter. Every [single] one of them.” This makes *creation* concrete and applies to every individual of every species.

A gift of our Christian tradition is a language of sacredness: we speak of sacrament as a sign of inner grace and the presence of the divine. A manifestation of Ultimate Mystery, fragile and beloved Earth – and every being within the web of life – is sacred just because it is. ☺

**Paulette Zimmerman, SSND**, served in formal education as an English teacher for many years until she was drawn to the New Cosmology and a spirituality embedded in the sacred Earth community. She now serves the Central Pacific Province of the School Sisters of Notre Dame as one of the Justice, Peace, & Integrity of Creation coordinators.



## Celebrating the Seasons on the Bluffs

**Spring Equinox:** Sat., March 22 2:00 - 4:00 pm  
**Summer Solstice:** Sat., June 21, 2:00 - 4:00 pm  
Cost: Donations are appreciated  
Registration: Call 618-466-5004.

## Ongoing Discussion Groups

**Ecological Discussion Group** meets the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Monday from 7:00 – 8:30 pm at La Vista.

**Cosmological Discussion Group** meets the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of the month from 1:00 – 3:00 pm at the School Sisters of Notre Dame Campus, 320 East. Ripa, St. Louis, MO.

To join either group, please call 618-466-5004.

## Bring Your Group To La Vista

Call S. Maxine at 618-466-5004 to discuss options to meet the needs/interests of your group. Possibilities include:

- Tour our Garden and learn about Community Supported Agriculture
- Participate in the “Cosmic Walk” - a contemplative prayer celebrating our sacred origin story
- Hold a “Council of All Beings” - a communal ritual allowing us to speak on behalf of other life-forms, deepening our sense of solidarity with them.
- Explore the meaning and implications of embracing ecological spirituality

Cost will be negotiated at the time of registration.

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

