



# La Vista Visions

A NEWSLETTER ON THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

Published by the Oblate Ecological Initiative

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## A Just and Sustainable Harvest

By Maurice Lange, OMI

Do you remember a time when you *knew* that the food you were eating was indeed actually fresh? Possibly you had a hand in its recent growth or its just being harvested, or at least you knew the person who did. For many (and maybe for you) these memories are all too distant, and for an increasing number, no memory of this exists.

As a culture, **we have grown ever more separated from the source of our food.** Comparing this fact to the historical immediacy of human's relationship to the harvest, our current separation is viewed as quite strange indeed!

A particularly crucial facet of sustainability is one of food production. In this country, and even around the planet, agri-business is quickly replacing agri-culture. This fact has led to the widescale loss of small family farms, loss of seed stocks, erosion and poisoning of topsoil, water being polluted and injustices toward farm laborers.

There is general disconnect and alienation from the land. Kids think that milk comes from factories! (Well, it *does* come from factory farms!)

Through our society's receiving "nourishment" from a non-sustainable, and even violent, industrialized food system, is it any wonder we don't have the energy for creativity and lack the resolve for imagination?! Reading these signs of our times how can we not be moved to concern about the issue of sustainability of our human actions and presence on the planet?!

In the 1960's a group of Japanese women were attuned to these signs and engaged their own imagination. They dreamt up the alternative of "Community Supported Agriculture." These visionaries foresaw families becoming better linked to the land and to those growing the food. They remembered that food could be produced without the use of chemical pesticides nor synthetic

fertilizers. They believed that persons who grow the food should and could receive a just salary.

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) came to this country in the mid-1980's. Since that time many have come to see this alternative as one they wish to commit to as a way to integrate their life with their perspective of creation's integrity. Various women's religious congregations have committed to

sustainability in this regard by helping sponsor CSA projects on their lands.

This type of sustainable agriculture brings together into covenant community members, food producers and the land itself. The community members have pre-purchased a share of the food and are known as shareholders. These benefit by receiving a weekly share in the freshest, most nutritious food available. They share with the farmer both in the bounty of the harvest as well as in the possibility of a crop failing. By ensuring a market for the organic produce before the season begins, this system benefits the small family farmer and allows her/him to focus on the growing of the food. The land is benefited as well by being treated

with respect and not being "developed".

The *Community Supported Garden at La Vista*, our CSA project here in Godfrey, will distribute its first shares of food in Spring, 2003. Our initial 50 shareholders will not only know fresh food, they will know the farmer who grew it as well as the land it came from. This kind of deep knowing leads to a deepened personal integrity and a harmony with the Integrity of Creation.

*Come visit the Community Supported Garden at La Vista! Please call for an appointment. Our website is [www.lavistacsa.org](http://www.lavistacsa.org) or find your nearest CSA project at [www.csacenter.org](http://www.csacenter.org).*



*Braedon, son of shareholders  
Cody and Christine Favilla*

## Letter from the Director

Welcome to this 3<sup>rd</sup> issue of *La Vista Visions*! As we contemplate the season of Autumn, we see that deep in our collective memory as humans in the Northern Hemisphere we largely associate Autumn with harvest. Thus, this issue offers reflections on the harvest theme and as well as healthier alternatives to the predominant system of agribusiness in this country.

The Church has had a voice in such concerns for decades now and the *National Catholic Rural Life Conference* is featured on page 3. Kathy Davis, (former

administrative assistant of this office), current core group member of the Community Supported Garden, offers her reflections on pages 4-5. Also note the Pope's recent call for an "Ecological Vocation" on page 5.



**Maurice Lange, OMI**

## Autumn Equinox, 2002

With part of the Oblate Ecological Initiative being the *Community Supported Garden at La Vista*, we would like to share that this alternative, sustainable harvest project is taking shape as shareholders continue to meet monthly and build up the infrastructure. We recently acquired a tractor and plans for this Autumn include the construction of a donated greenhouse as well as deer-proof fencing. The summer cover crop of buckwheat on four acres was recently tilled in and the winter crop of vetch and rye has been sown. The process to search for a head gardener is in its final stages and we are choosing between several highly qualified candidates from different parts of the country.

Here in the office we welcome Anne Stotler as our new administrative assistant. She brings a youthful spirit as well as a background in desktop publishing. Anne follows up on Kathy Davis' great work of the layout of this newsletter.

We hope this edition prompts you to critically look at your food choices and evaluate their sources. Wendell Berry has said "How we eat determines, to a considerable extent, how the world is used". Let's support those who farm consciously and harmoniously in order to ensure both a healthy harvest today and adequate, life giving harvests for tomorrow.

## Creating A Mutually Enhancing Human/Earth Relationship

## Autumn Abundance: Steps to a Healthy Harvest

- + Participate in the food production to the extent that you can...even just a pot in a sunny window to grow something in it to eat. Make a little compost of your kitchen scraps and use it for fertilizer.
- + Prepare your own food...it will give you a measure of "quality control."
- + Learn the origins of the food you buy and buy the food that is produced closest to your home. The locally produced food is most secure, the freshest and the easiest for local consumers to know about.
- + Learn as much as you can of the economy and technology of industrial food production. What is added to the food that is not food and what do you pay for these additions?
- + Whenever possible, deal directly with a local farmer, gardener or orchardist.

*Wendell Berry suggests these steps towards eating responsibly in "The Pleasures of Eating" from What are People For?*



# The National Catholic Rural Life Conference (NCRLC)

The National Catholic Rural Life Conference is an organization advocating the web of life as one. The NCRLC seeks out a living community in which people and the natural world are given respect deserving of their creation by a loving God. The NCRLC maintains a constant idea that every person is valued and recognized. The organization strives to serve the mission of the church by communicating a Catholic perspective and urging public action on rural life and environment issues. The NCRLC is challenging and enabling rural people to participate in the church's evangelizing ministry and to live the faith that does justice. The NCRLC also supports the replacement of factory farms of animals by sustainable and humane agricultural systems which are environmentally safe, economically viable and socially just and species appropriate.

The economy is for the human person; not the human person for the economy. The NCRLC has proposed several different steps that people can take to uphold the dignity of family farmers. We can oppose the industrialization of agriculture and animal factories. We can also oppose policies that depopulate the countryside, give us food insecurity and gamble with food safety and production. We can encourage our community institutions to buy locally and support a regional food system. We need to be supportive of policies that control urban sprawl, develop balanced approaches to growth and work against the loss of prime farm land. With these few steps, along with others, the future of the family farmer will prosper.



The "Green Ribbon" Campaign expresses solidarity with family farmers, rural communities and the web of creation. A green ribbon signifies that it is a time for new growth and renewed action to help farm families and rural communities stay viable. Wearing a green ribbon signifies faith in a thriving future. Many farm families suffer from low farm prices, rising input costs and unfair markets. They are vulnerable to unfavorable weather conditions such as drought. The situation becomes tragic when farm families are left to fend for themselves.

Wear a green ribbon to symbolize hope. To express your support and encouragement for farm families suffering distress, contact the NCRLC for "Rural Crisis Packs" that provide additional resource materials for par-

ishes. To be a "Green Ribbon" church means to share a concern over the future of family farming and to act decisively on that charitable concern.

## NCRLC's Member's Creed

**I believe** that feeding people is a honorable and socially just endeavor; that farming is a noble vocation that gives great pride to those involved in it; that farmers can feed the world safe, healthy, nutritious food.

**I believe** that agriculture needs a just marketing system that works for all people; that it is fair and just to have wide distribution of land and resources.

**I believe** that I am responsible to promote justice in my own life, in my community, and the world; I do this for the sake of my neighbor, future generations and all of God's glorious creation.

**I believe** that all my actions have an effect on the common good of creation; that I must carefully consider the choices I make that either positively or negatively impact: the use of farmland, tillage practices, my use of natural resources, technology, animal husbandry, and marketing and labor practices.

**I believe** that I have the personal and political responsibility to work toward supporting young and beginning farmers' efforts to stay on the land; creating and maintaining sustainable communities for future generations; and the creation of sustainable, safe and self reliant food system.

**I believe** that I am called to treat everyone with justice—even my enemy; that I have a special responsibility to those over whom I have economic, political or social power.

**I believe** in God, the source of all life, and in His Son Jesus Christ, our divine teacher, and in the Holy Spirit, who unifies us in the spirit of divine Love; in the wisdom of our faith, for herein lies the source, the reason and the support of all that is contained in this Creed.

**Amen**

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# Emergence of an Ecological Vocation

By Kathy Davis

Ignorance about my life-style sure was blissful. I was having a great day if I talked at length with a friend, found a fashionable name brand, quality clothing item on sale for 50% off and if I filled my body with a nutritious salad made with fixings from the grocery store. Then, at sometime, I suppose in college in the late 80's, I began to learn about *sweatshops* in developing countries and why I was able to find great deals on quality clothing. Wondering about the age of the person who made that shirt, their working hours, the work conditions and if they were earning a living wage sure put a damper on my clothing shopping.

After college I took a year to volunteer as a residential counselor in a home for disadvantaged boys. I had planned afterwards to enter the "real world" of career work. However, I discovered that my year in the boys home was not necessarily a year off but a door to a whole new "career" possibility (a vocation that had never been discussed in my 16 years of Catholic education): *lay missionary work*. So I joined the Society of African Missions and went to the Ivory Coast in West Africa to work primarily with refugees from the war in Liberia. I

ended up meeting my husband in the group and entered into the *vocation of marriage*. We combined those two vocations when we spent our second year of marriage working in an orphanage in Bolivia with the Salesians of Don Bosco.

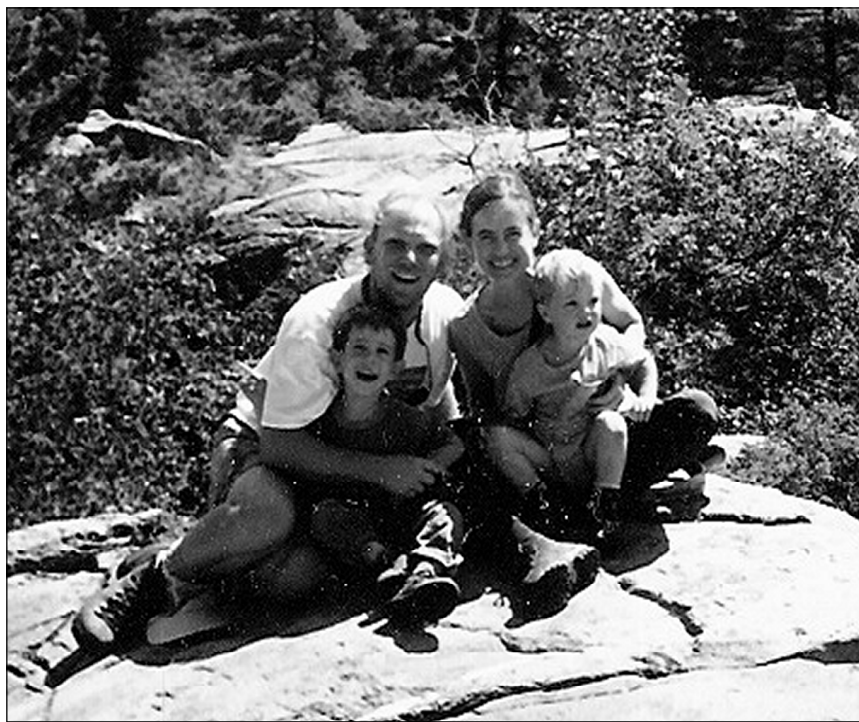
We had a difficult time – and we still do – reimagining our life-style in American culture according to additional values and beliefs we've learned along the way. For example, as we prepared for our wedding a few months after my return from the Ivory Coast, we followed the tradition of registering at a department store. I almost had a nervous breakdown in the parking lot after meeting with the saleswoman who wanted us to register for china and silver and all sorts of items that I no longer felt I needed but still wanted on some level of my image of what is proper (and in appreciation of pretty things).

At that time, I was having a great day if I made time for praying the divine office and centering prayer, if I found the perfect clothing item at a thrift store, took a walk with my husband, and if along with one meal, I ate a salad (with fixings from the supermarket). We

had a baby and my scheduled quiet prayer time went out the window. Two years later we had another baby and it became increasingly difficult to keep up with friends. So, along with all the new joys of motherhood, the relaxation of family walks and the fun of thrift stores, I also still enjoyed one bliss from the past: salads.

Then, about two years ago, we met Fr. Maurice and through discussion groups I learned I could no longer descend into blissful ignorance in even my "healthy" supermarket salad – topped with tomatoes all year round. Why am I able to buy "fresh" tomatoes in January? All the way from Peru!? The workers can't begin to support a family on that wage. How often do they see their families? How old are the workers, what are their working conditions? Often times they're working with pesticides - without gloves and masks – work environments and chemicals

that aren't legal in the U.S.!? What is the effect on my health, the health of my children, of ingesting the chemical residue on all the "fresh" vegetables we've been buying and eating? Speaking of fresh, the veg-



*Kathy, her husband Mark and 2 sons, Will and Levi. The family are shareholders in the Community Supported Garden and Kathy serves as consultant to the office of the Oblate Ecological Initiative.*

etable was picked before it was ripe because it had to be shipped how many thousands of miles?! Then, how long has it been sitting on the grocery shelf? What kind of nutrients are in some *thing* like *that* compared to a locally grown, organic vegetable? What are the social impacts for small family farmers in my region and for small family farmers and farm workers in developing countries of when I buy truly fresh – local - organic produce and compared to when I buy supermarket produce? What are the environmental impacts on Earth, God's creation?

I remember when we lived in Bolivia working in a large city, I couldn't understand why on Earth all these families from the country, poor, poor peasants were flocking to the city and living on the streets. How could life not be better in the country with a small patch of ground to support a subsistent life-style? Here, through the Oblate Ecological Initiative, I've been learning some of the reasons why small family farmers can't survive. Each country, each region has its unique problems with many facets – *political* (the war on drugs in Columbia includes massive general spraying of herbicides which make the earth untillable; U.S. subsidized grain being sold in foreign markets which undercut the local farmer's price), - *corporate* (corporations- many US owned and operated- employing policies that would not be legal in the U.S. concerning their treatment of workers and the environment), - *environmental* (drought, natural disasters). Why are the small family farmers struggling in this country? The prices are controlled by how few corporations?! Under the farm subsidy program, these agricultural corporations have been receiving our money via the government?!

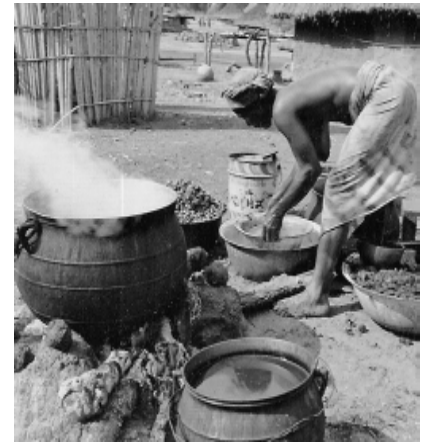
In trying to live simply and in learning about how to live in a mutually enhancing manner with Earth, my husband and I do not make cold turkey transitions. Our efforts are slow-going and inconsistent. Convenience is such a big factor. So I am very thankful that along with exposing one of my oldest refuges of bliss, that Fr. Maurice has also initiated the Community Supported Garden to help us respond to the call of caring for Creation. By caring for Creation, I mean caring not only for the land but also for the health of our bodies and for the dignity and health of those who work with the land.

For me, it can be stressful to be challenged to think so profoundly for so many seemingly minor details of day to day living from food to laundry detergent. I can become bogged down with the negative energy of the guilt when we choose not to live simply, or choose to

indirectly support social injustice, or choose to contribute to the destruction of Earth. So I think I'm learning how to deal with that by trying to focus on the holy decisions we make and to be strengthened and inspired by the blessings resulting from those decisions, like when a meal on our table reflects reverence for all Creation.

And sometimes I can resent the fact that my bliss, my old sense of what I thought was peace, has been chipped away. Then I reflect on a message from Jesus in John's gospel which helps explain how my desire for "peace" can be more about perception. He says "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you...."

(John 14: 27). A friend related to me that her parish priest used to close Mass by saying not "May you go in peace" rather, "May you go be disturbed by the peace of Christ..."



*On the eve of the recently held major United Nations summit on the environment, Pope John II said the idea of an "ecological vocation" has become an moral responsibility in today's world.*

*"In an increasingly interdependent world, peace, justice and the protection of the created world must be the fruit of a firm commitment by all to promote the common good," the Pope said.*

*The Holy See also stresses that there are ample resources to nourish all the earth's people, but that the problem of distribution needs to be resolved. In advance of the summit, the Vatican also issued a new book, entitled, "**From Stockholm to Johannesburg: A Historical Overview of the Concern of the Holy See for the Environment.**" The book details, how under Pope John Paul II, the Church's official teaching on environmental issues has joined a spiritual and theological perspective with a practical approach to concrete issues ranging from global population growth to access of water resources.*

*The book concludes, "The contemplations of the wonders of nature has led Pope John Paul II to address an evermore urgent appeal to all to turn toward creation, to see in it the reflection of the Creator and to assure that its fruits are for all."*





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*A vision without a task is but a dream, a task without vision is drudgery,  
a vision with a task is the hope of the world.*

-Inscription on a church in Sussex, England, 1730

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## How Can I Participate?

All people seeking a mutually enhancing relationship with Earth are welcome to participate in the scheduled programs and the Community Supported Garden of the Oblate Ecological Initiative. Just call or write for more information and/or to register. Due to the wonderful response, we will probably need to put newly interested possible shareholders on a waiting list. Volunteer opportunities definitely exist for different tasks in the office as well as the garden.

Fr. Maurice is also available for presentations and retreats at other locations. Contact him with your requests.

We do ask that guests and shareholders respect this site and its primary function as a novitiate. Visits to the office and garden are made by appointment. Please call Fr. Maurice Lange, OMI for directions.

## OEI CALENDAR

October 6 Sunday	Community Supported Garden Shareholder Meeting 5 pm
November 2 Saturday	Community Supported Garden Shareholder Meeting and Celebration 4 pm
December 1 Sunday	Community Supported Garden Shareholder Meeting 5 pm
December 21 Saturday	Winter Solstice Celebration 7 pm; followed by a potluck feast
January 4-5 Sat & Sun	"Frost and Chill, Bless the Lord" Ecospirituality Retreat

For more information, please call 618-466-5004