



La Vista Visions

A NEWSLETTER ON THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

Published by the Oblate Ecological Initiative

618.466.5004 • 4300 Levis Lane, Godfrey, IL 62035 • lange@omiusa.org

Spring 2008
Volume 7, Issue 25

Emerging Consciousness

by Jan Novotka

Once there was a little fish searching for the ocean. He came across an older and wiser fish and said, "Excuse me, sir, I am looking for the Sacred Ocean." The older fish replied, "The ocean is what you are in now." "No, sir, this is water. I am looking for the Sacred Ocean."

(*"The Little Fish"* adapted from *The Song of the Bird* by Anthony deMello.)

We all carry within certain beliefs about reality that are not necessarily true. We all have preferred perceptions and ways of interpreting what is Real. Our perceptions and beliefs can actually be an obstacle to seeing and experiencing what is Real. We'd rather live in the shelter and comfort of our illusions than be challenged by truth, by the Real.

One of our deepest and most destructive illusions is that we are separate from the Earth. The Earth is there, outside us, apart from us, other than us. Yet, how can this be? Are not the leaves and the tree one? Are not the trees and the forest one? Are not the grains of sand and the beach one? Are not whales and the ocean one? Are not the eagle and the sky, the lizard and the desert, the mountains and the Earth one? Is not all we see part of Earth? One with Earth? Are not we and the Earth one?

To care for the human community is to touch the Earth. To choose to live more consciously of the Earth and her future is to make a choice for humanity. There is no separation.

The thought that we are separate is illusion. We eat Earth, breathe earth, wear Earth, drink Earth...even our tears are Earth, the salty waters of ocean. Just as parasites and bacteria within our bodies feed off our bodies and are one with our bodies so too we live within the Earth, as the Earth, and feed off Earth. We are Earth dancing, singing, loving, praying. You and I can never be separated from what we are.

Separation is an illusion. This illusion is the root of all sin, of all war, of unnecessary destruction, death, and pain. And this illusion fosters fear. Fear of the unknown results in keeping our distance from ourselves, others, the natural world, and even God.

Fear causes us to pretend all is well rather than deal with what is. The illusion that we are separate alters our perceptions: perceptions of people, circumstances, cultures, relationships, our Earth and our God.

The amazing thing is that consciousness is still evolving,

and the perception that "I" am separate is losing its hold. You and I are separate...illusion! The Americans and the Iraqis are separate...illusion! Land and sea are separate...illusion! Humans and Earth are separate...illusion! Separateness is part of a fading consciousness.

A new consciousness is awaking in humans all over the planet. It is a consciousness that lives in the reality of utter oneness, seeing all as one body, one being, one essence. We are One. All is One. This is the truth. There is One Sa-

cred Communion that includes the whole of existence and dare I say, non-existence, the realm of the manifested as well as the realm of the unmanifested. The emerging consciousness is not just a new way of thinking or a new belief or a paradigm shift. *It is a tectonic shift that alters the very foundation of our experiencing, living and relating at all levels: self, family, community, global community, earth community and God.* There are thousands of humans around the world who now live in this new consciousness in a sustained and permanent way. Others are awakening to it and are beginning to get glimpses of its emergence.

How would our world change if this Consciousness of Oneness emerged as the primary mode of consciousness
(continued on page 6)



Letter from the Director



A sure sign of Spring: Potato Planting

Spring!

Have you spotted any signs of the season as of yet? Heard any "peepers" (night singing frogs)? Seen an early daffodil? Felt a warm breeze? Smelled warming Earth? Tasted any Spring Greens? Spring and Easter celebrate resurrection and unfolding new life. Can you sense such life welling up within and around you?

This new life might be seen as an emerging consciousness. Many thinkers are naming this as what is now required on both a planetary and individual scale. Our

Spring Equinox, 2008

friend Jan Novotka helps our perceptions to emerge through her lead article (which was actually a talk she gave for the IHM Sisters on Earth Day, 2007). We look forward to hosting Jan *this* Earth Day: April 22, 2008 for a concert here on the bluffs!

Emerging consciousness is plain to see in the reflections given by our Earth Literacy enthusiasts on pages 4 & 5. You are welcome to join *La Vista Ecological Learning Center* this August to deepen your own perceptions of Earth and sustainability. Please see (and post) our flyer on the following page.

Spring Greens are what we'll be enjoying soon as the *Community Supported Garden at La Vista* begins its sixth season of harvests. Those greens (including spinach, arugula, baby bok choy, etc) are incredibly tasty and grown with love by our farmer Kris Larson.

Finally we look forward to a retreat we'll be offering in late March called "Silent Spring: Listening to the Voices of Extinction." Rachel Carson alerted us some 45 years ago as to the danger of DDT and other chemicals threatening bird populations. Let us continue to deepen our own consciousness: that we humans are actually part of a tapestry of ecological relations. May we decide this Spring to live out of that awareness and may our lives and lifestyles foster this delicate balance. ☯

-Maurice Lange, OMI

Creating a Mutually Enhancing Human/ Earth Relationship



Jan Novotka "sings of the sacredness and oneness of all, the unfolding Universe, care for the Earth, the awakening of a new and vast dimension of human consciousness, and the Still Silent Presence within."

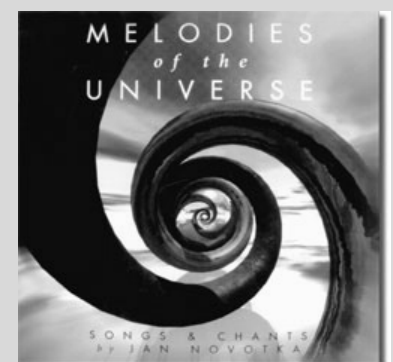
These CD's as well as "Ever Ancient, Ever New" and "In the Name of ALL THAT IS" are available.

Awakening Consciousness

Jan Novotka

Visit Jan's website at
www.jannovotka.com

or write to her at
Jan Novotka's Music, LLC
421 17th Avenue
Scranton, PA 18504
570-347-2431



Please post.



Join us - Summer, 2008 Earth Literacy Program!



La Vista Ecological Learning Center invites you to explore the *Universe Story* on scenic bluffs overlooking the mile-wide Mississippi River in **Godfrey, Illinois** (near St. Louis, Missouri).

Come explore Creation's integrity for a week in a setting that invites you to **broaden your vision!**

Throughout the week we will:

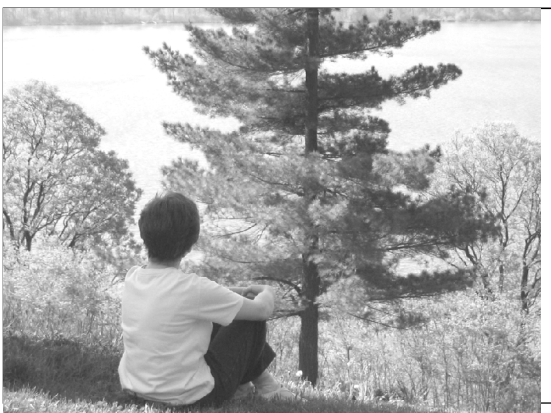
- **participate** in guided activities and instruction
- **be immersed** in direct experience of the natural world
- **develop** practical skills for a more ecologically-conscious life
- **contemplate** the wonder, awe, and newness of the Universe Story
- **critically examine** the perceptions that currently fashion our cultural world view
- **re-connect** to the Creator through Creation as we deepen our recognition of the inherent spiritual dimension of the Universe

Earth Literacy Program "Exploring the Sacred Universe"
August 3 – 10, 2008 \$500

To request an application call 618-466-5004.

Visit our website at www.lavistaelc.org

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

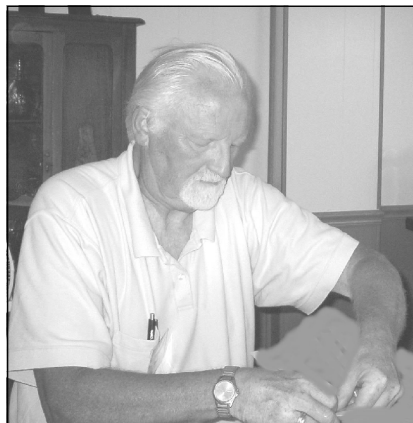


**Come,
broaden
your vision
at La Vista!**



How did “*Exploring the Sacred Universe*” Earth Literacy Program help in awakening your consciousness?

*Each summer from August 3 – 10, participants and presenters from all over the country make their way to La Vista to share in a weeklong experience of shifting consciousness. To continue the theme of this Spring issue, we asked some Earth Literacy enthusiasts to reflect on the following: **How did the “Exploring the Sacred Universe” Earth Literacy Program help in awakening your consciousness?** We hope you enjoy their reflections, and may they encourage your own awakening.*



John Anderson

First of all Earth Literacy tuned me in to my bioregion. It has motivated me to reduce my intake of meat. I have purchased mostly organic foods. I have made a point to purchase from CSA's and farmers' markets (local). I have relocated the flowers from the front yard and will have our very own garden. I am recycling everything possible and reduced trash to 1/2 a trash barrel or less a week from 3 barrels. Even though the subject matter was a review for me, I was amazed at the awareness and enlightenment I received. It reinforced my belief and the feeling of oneness for Mother Earth and the universe. An experience and sharing that will always be with me.

Norm Comtois, OMI

The Earth Literacy Program at La Vista has awakened me to the immensities of our universe. I am waking up and thinking with a global mind rather than simply a local mind. I see the connection between the macro and micro phases of Earth life. I now know where I come from, who I am, and where I am going as a planetary person.

Awakening begins on the first night of Earth Literacy when Maurice invites us to choose some part of nature and tell how we identify with its primary revelation of life. Sharon then tells us how stories have a way of engaging all creation in one single web of life, in one great creative work of art. Bob walks us through the vastness of the galaxies and solar system. There, I wake up to the magnitude of the universe and to the reality that the very atoms that compose our bodies were created not so much when we were conceived by our parents but shortly after the birth of the universe itself, 13 billion years ago. This awakening allows me, as a team member, to present Earth as living planet and to present the Human Story within it from my own sense of wonder.

I then listen to Maurice and Maxine speak of the various bioregions of Planet Earth — as they gently awaken us from our own sleepiness in relation to the animal, plant, and vegetation life in our own area. They ask “from what bone country do you come?”



I wake up to Earth as self-nourishing as I partake of the bounty of the organic garden, as I delight in listening to farmer Kris talk about our relationship with the food we eat and the community that develops around locally grown crops. I anticipate each vegetarian meal creatively prepared by chefs Jacques and Charlie.

And finally, I wake up to the celebration of the web of life. Rituals and celebrations awaken me to the reality that humanity is the one species in which the universe reflects and celebrates itself and its numinous origins in a special mode of conscious self-awareness.

La Vista is truly a threshold to Awakening Consciousness.

Jane Wand, SSND

"I am stardust." I discovered my wonderful connection to the Universe at the Earth Literacy Program three summers ago. A paradigm shift occurred within me as I journeyed through the week with learner and teacher companions. The Universe Story and the Cosmic Walk awakened something primordial in me, and I felt that I had come home.

I have always considered myself close to nature, having grown up on a farm and ministered in rural places, including a reservation in Arizona. Yet, what happened through the activities of the week was an awareness and appreciation of Earth as our Mother from whom we came and who provides and cares for us. Since then I have come to

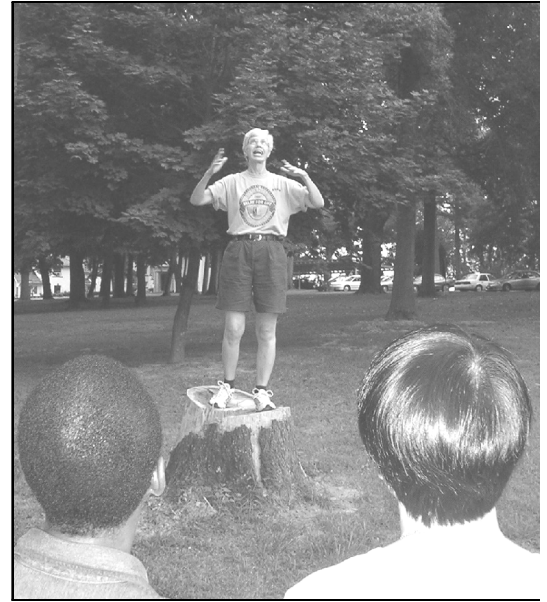
love her as one who is to be cherished and cared for in return.

Now in playing with the Quincy symphony orchestra, I am aware and awed at the music that the composers created because of the beauty of majestic mountains, the flow of springs and rivers, the flight of birds and bumblebees. I help send a symphony of colorful sound into the air waves as a thank you to Earth for her inspiration.

I was saddened when I learned of the swift extinctions taking place and the passing of our Cenozoic Age of beauty and plenty. Since the Earth Literacy Program, Sister JoAnn, a community member, and I have a worm composting program and a small vegetable garden in the back yard. We eat locally grown foods as much as we can. As a result of recycling at home, JoAnn was

influential in setting up a recycling program in the entire school in which she teaches and I recycle materials used at our Center and encourage staff to do the same.

It seems to me that since Earth opened my eyes and heart, I cannot now stop learning from her or doing as she asks. The other day as I waited at a car wash, I became aware of how much precious water is being poured onto the cars in order to clean them. I wondered how I had gotten into that habit of waste myself and determined to go back to the bucket method. I will be forever grateful for that August 3-10, 2005 metanoia moment.



Frances Padberg, SSND

My participation in the "Exploring the Sacred Universe" Earth Literacy Program at La Vista initiated me into a new awareness of God's presence surrounding me. I began to think of the liveness of Earth.

I have always been a walker. Now when I walk in nature (Tower Grove Park – St. Louis "south side cathedral"), I experience a mellowness that I can trace back to the knowledge I gained at La Vista through discussion, quiet time, "active" prayer and challenges.

Continued reading of the Universe Story has given me greater ability to live in wonderment and in gratitude. ☸





NON PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 225
ALTON, IL 62002

*“Creation
is holy;
it is the first
manifestation
of God’s
mystery,
it is God’s
first word.”*

- 1997 Oblate Vade Mecum
on Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation, p.12



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


(continued from page 1)

within the human community?

On the night before Jesus died he uttered this prayer: “May they all be one, as You and I are one.” That we might be the realization of this prayer! That we might wake up out of the illusion of separateness and awake within a consciousness of oneness.

There is a new consciousness emerging in the human, an awareness, a realization that is deeper than thought, emotion, or reason. Consciousness is waking, experiencing itself as One Self, One Being, One Life. And it is doing this within the consciousness of individuals, within you and me.

Are we not like the little fish in the parable that opened this article, unable to see beyond our perceptions, our illusions, our beliefs about Earth, about God, about each other, about ourselves? If only we could open the eyes of our minds and hearts and see that we are in the Sacred Ocean. We live in Sacred Communion already. We live in God.

If we could remember this, if we could wake up out of our small consciousness into the consciousness of One, would anything change? 

Jan Novotka is an eco-spiritual songwriter and retreat director. With an MA in Religious Education and certification in Earth Literacy, she is committed to the awakening of consciousness, reverence for the Earth, simple living, and the growing of healthy, organic food.



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

Used with permission of the author.