Columns
Spirituality



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I came to the U.S. in August 2019 to study. Because of the many challenges in Kenya, my congregation could not afford to finance my studies, but Assumption College for Sisters came to my rescue by offering me a scholarship. The college is in New Jersey, in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States of America.

The dictionary defines "nature" as the physical world and everything in it — plants, animals, mountains, oceans, stars — not made by people. As a Christian, a religious nun and a student, many things are unfolding for me. In my rural home in Africa, my parents — devoted Christians — together with my spiritual fathers and mothers, tried so hard to drill into my little mind all the goodness of God. In school, teachers taught about the physical environment, and books emphasized and gave deeper meaning to the same lessons. But could all this give meaning to the searching soul?

Formation in religious life allowed a short time for inner reflection and soul-searching into my union with the love of my life and spouse, Jesus Christ himself. As with marriage, discernment for a vocation is deeper than mere listening, but also requires contemplation and meditation.

Through further study of the physical environment and my own life experiences, I encountered the four seasons: winter, summer, spring and autumn. Had I ever experienced a season before? Mmmmh! I doubt it. I remember reading in the book of Isaiah 1:18 "... said the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow."

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Snow? I wonder. This might be in the other world. Not the one we live in.

The spiritual life can reach a point where one no longer experiences or feels the presence of God, nor His existence. I could understand how it might be a completely normal base for someone who was not a believer, especially for our brothers and sisters known as atheists. As a devout Christian and Catholic, the word of God is always everywhere for me. This is because, in our world, technology has become the order of the day. Therefore, reading, listening and meditating on what we hear becomes easier and accessible.

However, even with all these resources, some still find themselves doubting. Have you ever asked yourself why? I think it is because we like to use our five senses to truly believe.

In John 6:30 they asked Jesus "What sign will you give that we may see and believe you?" What will you do? And in Matthew 12:38 the scribes and pharisees said, "Teacher we want to see a sign from you." Even in the Old Testament, Moses was ready with a sign for Pharaoh (Exodus 7:9: “Produce a sign or wonder.”)

Beauty is a sign: Beauty! Beauty! Beauty! Woah! What is this all about? Who does not like beauty? Michael Pope Joy, a fellow from the Harvard Department of Philosophy reflected on Ralph Waldo Emerson's words: "I declare this world is so beautiful that I can hardly believe it exists." He adds that the beauty of nature can have a profound effect upon our senses, those gateways from the outer world to the inner, whether it results in disbelief in its very existence as Emerson notes, or feelings such as awe, wonder or amazement. But what is it about nature and the entities that make it up that cause us, oftentimes unwillingly, to feel or declare that they are beautiful?

When I witnessed snow for the first time in America, I was filled with awe. I looked through the window to see this wonderful thing that covered the earth, making it pure white. The whiteness of the snow is beyond the ability of any dhobi (washer man/woman) on the earth, and its cold is remarkable!

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I looked around again, and could not believe my eyes, seeing beautiful flowers, grasses and leaves growing up from the ground and leaves sprouting on trees. Waugh! The glory of God is here. What marvels the Lord has done for us! Springtime gives a new beginning to a new world after a cold winter that seemed to engulf us.

What about summer? That heat from the ground — oh, my God! You would never believe it. This same place where you could not walk the other day because it was so cold, now burns without mercy. Blessings to the bus operators and the private cars — like the houses, they are equipped with both heaters and coolers so you are not

left behind.

Then comes the autumn, when all the beauties on the earth's surface begin to change. Leaves fall, flowers fade and grasses wither day after day. These seasonal changes happen over and over again, the only differences being the degree to which each is expressed.

It is fascinating. Why this? I have never experienced these wonderful seasons in my lifetime. The part of North America where I live is endowed with these four dominant seasons, easily identifiable, unlike in our African continent. As I watch all these, my imagination and thoughts take flight, with questions arising deep from my heart: If there were no God, then what makes all these seasons possible, over which no human being has power or control? There is someone superior beyond the cosmos. The four seasons nourish my reflections, meditation and contemplations, and affirm my hope and trust in the living God.

When I find myself dry and empty in my spiritual journey, I reflect and think on such simple life experiences. To truly believe and trust in the existence of God, this can be the starting point. America, America, *America the Beautiful* — (especially the version of that song sung by Elvis Presley!) — truly testify to my amazement. The four seasons together with other God-given gifts, experienced in most parts of the world not only make it beautiful, but magnify the glory of God in creation, leading us out of our unbelieving cocoons to the wonders of God's love.