Columns
Arts and Media
Spirituality



Star-forming region NGC 3324 in the Carina Nebula, captured by the Near-Infrared Camera on NASA’s James Webb Space Telescope (NASA, ESA, CSA, STScI)



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On beautiful Michigan mornings, I pray outside, immersed in a swath of colors as all the flowers greet me. One of the sisters with whom I live is the gardener. She plants a variety of flowers, mindful of their blooming cycles, so some are always beginning to blossom.

I have a special place to sit and I'm quite pleased with what I see from that vantage point.

However, one day I saw peeking from the other side of the house a white hydrangea. That part of the garden is beyond my field of vision. And so, I forget that those flowers are there.



Hydrangea around the corner (Nancy Sylvester)

When I got up and moved around the house, I was amazed to see the white fluffy faces of so many flowers. It was spectacular.

Too often, we get used to what we see and hear, and we forget that there is so much more to look at or know that can give us a new perspective.

I think I need that additional perspective right now. Even though I like the routine I have to learn about what is going on in the world — "Morning Edition," the BBC, New

York Times, Detroit Free Press, PBS News Hour — I realize it is only one part of the garden of news in our lives.

This part of the garden provides me with good information about everything — yet sadly, too much of what is broadcast shares the violence, the wars, the political rivalry, the devastating effects of climate change and the suffering of our world.

I thought before the summer is over, I would get up and go around the corner of my news garden and see what else is growing offering a different perspective.

I delighted in the Yes! magazine articles. Even the titles inspire hope. "One of the World's Biggest Cities Outlawed Single-Use Plastic," "Should I Wear Plants or Plastic? " "Awakenings: Movements adapt and evolve toward a new social justice," " Reforming Laws From Behind Bars," "A Journey From Rage to Mindfulness," "A Better World Needs Better Economics" and "Being the Change."

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I also felt gratitude for the work of people like Lester Levine, who founded CommGoodGov. He is working around the country, organizing interested voters to raise up and support candidates for public office who are willing to talk with those on both sides of the aisle. He sends a newsletter updating their successes and failures.

Then I focused on some exciting things going on locally. The Allied Media Conference , which covers topics like "AfroFeminist Futures for the World We Want," "Queering the Black Gaze" and "Reparations: Repairing Harm in the Age of Mass Surveillance." The inauguration of a special art stroll on one of Detroit's major boulevards to highlight galleries along this historic street. The continual growth of the Detroit Youth Choir, who came in second in "America's Got Talent" in 2019.

I watched a few of the PBS "Brief but Spectacular" segments that highlight individuals who share their passion and how they lived it.

I also went way beyond my earthbound garden and marveled at the pictures that are coming from the Webb telescope. For the first time, we see into deep space and far into the past. We see the birth of stars and will be able to trace galaxies back to the beginning of cosmic time. We are part of that evolutionary journey begun some

13.8 billion years ago. The stars are our ancestors. Today, our choices shape the future of our emerging universe.

What we see and how we see is truly important.

Perhaps you will join me before the summer is over to:

- Look up Yes! magazine or other resources that savor the positive things that are happening.
- Investigate what is going on around you in your neighborhood, in your parish, or politically that helps life flourish.
- Get in touch with your passion and how you live it.
- Take time to simply sit and allow the night sky to envelop you. Allow yourself to feel in your body that you have come from stardust and that you are part of this incredible evolutionary process.

All of this will enter your being and widen your vision.

And enrich your contemplative seeing.