Columns
Spirituality



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In a world filled with constant noise — including news headlines and social media — discerning the voice of God can be challenging.

The human person comprises mind, body and soul, which serve as openings to various voices, including those of the media, culture, economy, pain and love. We might wait to hear God speak to us in a low whisper like Elijah, yet God's voice may also be present in the strong wind, the earthquake and the fire. A quick glance at the news reveals how the media carry the voice of God through Gospel songs that encourage and teach about the wonders he has done, giving hope to his people.

Over the last decade, Africa has witnessed massive growth in online media, which urban and rural communities use to access and share information for social and business purposes. The media play a critical role in facilitating social change and shaping public opinion. While media can reinforce stereotypes regarding gender, religion and culture, they also have the potential to foster positive change.

Despite the positive changes brought about by the media, we must acknowledge the impact on family life. In many homes I have visited, upon introduction, the host turns on the television to watch a movie or listen to the news rather than initiating a conversation with the guest. This practice should be discouraged; we must honor our visitors by giving them our full attention.

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Social norms are also changing within my culture. Among the Agikuyu in Kenya, dowry payment was once a serious practice that united families. However, this aspect of our culture has been commercialized, transforming it into a mere business transaction. This shift has led to negative consequences, such as domestic violence, divorce and even death. Nevertheless, we can hear the voice of God calling communities back to a social life that values the lessons passed on to the next generation.

For economic growth to flourish, people require good health, shelter, access to education, nutrition, social connections, respect, peace, human rights and happiness. These needs reflect God's desire for human flourishing and community well-being.

At the heart of these needs are specific goods and services — health services provided by nurses and doctors, housing, and education from teachers. Here, God's voice calls us to create systems that ensure equitable access to these necessities, emphasizing our responsibility to one another as stewards of his creation, especially when we witness situations of injustice, inequality and poverty.

Pain is an unavoidable part of the human experience, serving as both a warning mechanism and a means of growth. Pain can remind us of our limitations, prompting us to seek solace in God's presence. As we endure suffering, we may find that it deepens our relationship with God, allowing us to hear his voice more clearly amid our trials. Each of us has encountered pain, whether affecting a small finger or our very hearts. If God allowed his only son to experience pain, how can we, as a flawed humanity, expect to be exempt? God has a purpose for our suffering; if we can be still enough to listen, we will hear his message of hope and healing.

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Can love truly change the world? Love is a powerful emotion that builds bonds and fosters positivity, transcending romantic feelings to serve essential purposes for families, society and one's self-image. It reflects the very nature of God, who is love (1 John 4:8).

Listening to Mother Teresa's story of rescuing street children in Calcutta, one can hear God's voice calling her to alleviate the suffering of others. As St. John teaches in his first letter, "No one can say he loves God, whom he does not see, if he does not love the person whom he sees." Love, then, becomes a tangible expression of God's voice in our lives, urging us to act compassionately and selflessly. In embracing love, we attune ourselves to the divine voice that calls us to serve and uplift one another.

There are many voices that surround us — and they are often inevitable — but individuals experience them at different intensities and with varying impacts. The way we handle our experiences may strengthen one person while overwhelming

another. Nonetheless, we all have the opportunity to hear, listen to and experience the voice of God, regardless of the surrounding voices and circumstances. We can always ask ourselves, "Where is God in all of this?" Or, "What is God trying to tell me?"

No matter the source, intensity or vastness, no voice can surpass the voice of God. Perhaps that is why the psalmist says, "If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts" (Psalm 95:8).