

## **AN TAIR SEACH HAS GIVEN ME NEW EYES TO SEE!**

An Tairseach has given me new eyes to see! I arrived the centre on the 8<sup>th</sup> of August 2019, not knowing what to expect! I was going to be in the centre for 10 weeks learning how to be animal friendly, no killing of flies, mosquitoes etc., or so I thought!

The first week was slow. We had orientation around the house and the centre as well as the program. It was a welcome relief when the week went by and the second week began. This was the real thing, but real what? It was nothing like what I imagined it would be and my 14 group mates echoed my thoughts. The universe began from a big bang. Big what?? Yes there was this explosion of energy, and everything flared forth from that! But the Bible said in the beginning God created heaven and earth.....and he created the heavens and earth in 6 days! Where are all these jaw breaking words coming from? Supernova, big bangs, explosions, gases, evolutions, sharing same DNA with animals?

My whole existence was in turmoil. In the fourth week during one of the classes, we were giving an opportunity to air our confusion. The presenter was bombarded with questions: what will happen to my body when I die? Do animals have souls? Did the church lie to us in presenting the Bible story? How do I explain this to people out there? How am I supposed to live henceforth? Oh, my God, I feel am going to have a faith crisis! There were no answers to the questions, but it was like a balloon finally bursting and the air was out! We felt freer. We could now joke and laugh about the possibilities of the world exploding someday like all other galaxies, we laughed when somebody referred to death as recycling!

We had finally arrived, there was greater openness to the presentations. I felt a greater openness and less anxious. Amazingly, this was reflected in our dreams that week. It was our sixth week. I had three different dreams in which my mother, younger brother as well as myself died. This was interpreted during the dream work class that week. To my amazement the dream was a mirror of all that was happening inside me. The old me was dying and a new me was been born. Interestingly, about 5 other persons in the group had almost similar dreams.

Evidently, confronted by our new knowledge and experiences, our inner selves were gently inviting us to renewal. Through the weeks, we had learnt to see our interconnectedness with the whole universe. This called forth a tenderness and gentleness to the whole of creation. We were all related, unique, unrepeated, but connected to one another hence were come from the same source. This awareness created in me a desire to thread the earth with gentleness and awe. Above all, I felt an indescribable wonder at the greatness of God, his intelligence, creativity, patience and incomprehensible nature.

At the end of the six week, during the dance class, I thought my group the Tiv dance, the dance of my tribe in Nigeria. This for me is an expression of my acceptance of my unique

heritage. In the Art class, I painted the rising sun on my candle symbolising a new awakening, this too another expression of my present inner state.

In this new invitation to grow, the papal encyclical *Laudato Si* seem to be a map for me. It occupies an important place here at the An Tair Seach, and through studying it, I am understanding interdisciplinary studies in different fields in a new light. I am an intelligent being, I could never know everything. However, this no excuse to remain ignorant, am challenged to engage in more personal studies, and to make connections with my own fields of study and profession with the new knowledge am acquiring. How can this new knowledge and insights help me to be a better religious woman, a missionary and a clinical psychologist?

Furthermore, I am adopting the attitude of Job, as in silence I learn to stand in awe before every creature of God, especially the least significant and see his face in them. I am understanding the spirituality and Charism of my founder (Bishop Joseph Shanahan) and Congregation in a new way, Lord that I may see thee for whichever way I turn you are present and at work. And am invited to acknowledge and honour him in each. This approach brings everything in to harmony in one awesome God the source of all life. Suddenly there is no east or west, north or south, no Jew, no Greek, no man, no woman, no insignificant creature. Everything is important, all is good, all is holy, all is one. Lord, grant me new eyes, to see you in each in all.

***Written by Sr. Bernadette Nyam, A missionary sister of the Holy Rosary from Nigeria doing a sabbatical program at An Tairseach. 2019 Autumn set.***

## POEMS

### ON THE THRESHOLD

Seems I was a ghost. Caught between two world, neither here nor there,

As if my ancestors could not let me in,

Because they could not recognize me,

Dressed in foreign robes.

Now I return,

From my wanderings

Tired and exhausted

Finally traced my way back

To the old ways

Everything suddenly makes sense

I know my home again  
And I recognize the sound of my name  
I can sit down with my ancestors  
And drink from the same clay water pot.  
And pass it on, to my children, for their children.

**Bernadette Nyam**

### **NO LONGER THE SAME**

It is no longer business as usual,  
No more speculations  
Blame games,  
Now is the time,  
Either I change,  
Or die.  
It is no longer business as usual  
Eating, drinking and buying,  
Destroying the earth  
With my garbage,  
Waste  
Filth.  
Taking and taking, more and more,  
For me, myself and I, and mine,  
And giving back nothing,  
Without perception,  
Blind and deaf,  
Senseless.

Nothing is the same anymore,  
The moment of truth is now,  
The scales removed, I see,  
I look into the mirror,  
The universe is me,  
Looking at me.  
No longer business as usual,  
In her death my death,  
Her life my life  
To choose life  
Is change.  
Conversion.

**Bernadette Nyam**

**NB: the An Tairseach program lasts for 10 weeks. All the above write up, have been written 7 weeks into the program.**