1—3 JULY 2020
Matthew-Mary Okereke, AA

Having the chance to hike during this difficult Covid-19 era was an opportunity I still feel indebted to God for. The enormity of this opportunity can be seen in the fact that for my safety, the safety of my other brothers in the community, and the safety of the society at large, I, like every other member of our Emmanuel House community, have been on lockdown for more than three months. Getting out to see the mountains and the beauty of nature, while following stipulated health precautions and CDC guidelines, was definitely a break that rejuvenated me.

For me, hiking is a metaphor on many grounds. From one standpoint, hiking represents what life is generally—a journey. Life is a journey to a beautiful destination. St Augustine and Fr d'Alzon insist in many places that our lives must journey us back to God. But a journey is probably not well travelled if all the traveler waits to notice is his destination. While the views from the top of the mountains are absolutely stunning, a hiker who misses the tiny waterfalls, the chirpings of the birds, the perfectly choreographed dance of the trees, and all other attractions along the way to the mountaintop is a hiker who got less when he could have gotten more. The beatific vision is the ultimate satisfaction of every human. However, God blesses us with little beauties as we journey to him. To not appreciate these tiny beauties is going for less when "more" has been given. While we wait to enjoy God who is to come; we must enjoy him for he is already here with us.

Hiking with my brothers is also a metaphor for my Assumptionist religious life. Hiking gives me the opportunity to build friendship with my brothers and vice versa. For St Augustine and d'Alzon, friendship is very important. Hiking is some sort of work that reminds me in a powerful way the active aspect of our Assumptionist religious life. Hiking with my brothers is not always all chit chatty. Sometimes, we go for a long stretch in utter silence. This, for me, symbolizes the contemplative aspect of our Assumptionist religious life. While hiking, we don't choose those we meet. We meet people from all walks of life. This is like a symbol of our apostolic mission and outreach. Thus, I can say that hiking gives me the opportunity to reflect on some of the major components of our Assumptionist religious life: active life, contemplative life, community life, and mission.

It is from the standpoints above that I have chosen to reflect on my first hike in New Hampshire