

In Defense of Life and Harmony

Jocabed Reina Solano Miselis

One day outside our hut, I was playing in the mud. Touching it, I felt superior. I could manipulate it however I wanted, throw it, stomp on it. I felt my grandfather's eyes watching me keenly. He called to me and said, "Come, daughter. I've got a story for you." His deep, bold eyes commanded silence, and he spoke these words respectfully: "It was a huge party. Baba and Nana (God) gave life to the flowers. The flowers stretched themselves up, pulsing with life. When we say this, it means they were our very own image. They held our own life within them."

I could not look at the mud the same way after that. I went back to the mud, I reached out and touched it, but it was different. I saw myself reflected in it. From that day on I knew that the earth and human beings were united, just as a baby is connected to her mother through the umbilical cord.

Jocabed Reina Solano Miselis, from the Guna Yala region in Panama, is studying for her master's degree in interdisciplinary theology through the Comunidad de Estudios Teológicos Interdisciplinarios (CETI). She works among indigenous young people with the intersections of identity, faith, and culture.



169

Vol. 11, No. 2

Over the eons of our planet's history, different cultures have related in different and dynamic ways with the earth: some in a more utilitarian and consumeristic way, others in a more harmonious and care-taking way. By and large, indigenous peoples have cultivated a relationship of harmony and protection with the earth. We believe that we have received the earth as a gracious gift of the Creator. God is good and has poured out his multiform grace on the different peoples of the world.

Life

Life is the existence of all created things, both visible and invisible. It encompasses the reality of being, of the other, of all others interwoven together, of humanity and nature not as one superior to the

_____ *Our attempts are merely that: attempts of our being to understand, discover, and know God.* _____

other but rather as interdependent beings with distinct roles. Harmony on earth is present through the distinct imprint of God which both bear. Nature gives us clues about the Creator; humanity, too, tells of this God; and the harmony between both swells as a music that inspires our poems and books. It draws us to imagine this great God whom we know so partially yet of whom we dare to speak, think, and reason. Yet we must always recognize that our attempts are merely that: attempts of our being to understand, discover, and know God.

God's presence in life brings harmony. Our interpretation of this harmony is a factor of our worldview and culture, as is the way we relate to what we see, hear, feel, and touch. Who we are and what we believe about the world permeate our scale of evaluating what is more important and what is less, as well as our reflections on what God thinks. Our beliefs about God can never be severed from our experiences and relationships.