

Mauricio Salgado reflection

Friday August 21st was my last day with Elaine and Ched at Casa Anna Schulz in Oak View, California. We closed the day by visiting the Grandmother Oak of the Ventura Watershed, discussing the art of giving as we hiked and then reflecting on the ongoing work of cultivating a healthy relationship over a vegan chocolate cake. Friday night's activities and discussions captured the primary aspects of my internship with Bartimaeus Cooperative Ministries over this summer: connecting with the watershed, understanding Sabbath economics and nurturing my relationship with my beloved Cindy and my community.



I was introduced to the concept of the watershed during Ched's seminar at the Maryknoll Institute titled, *Denial or Discipleship: Bioregional Theology and Practice in a World of Ecological Ultimatums*. Early on, Ched offered an idea that seemed obvious but was deeply profound for me – "Creation is defined by the way the water flows," he said; creation is defined by the way the water sheds. Although this seems obvious, and to an extent, I have understood this idea, in that moment during the seminar I realized I had been trapped in a narrative that defined creation by the way the word was/is interpreted. Furthermore, insofar that

creation was defined by the word and that the word was a construction of a relationship between human beings and God, understanding creation had nothing to do with understanding the way the water flowed. This is the narrative that understands the earth and the water flow as a beautiful home that has to be built and maintained. A hierarchical narrative that understands the word creation to mean "nature" and that places God outside of nature and human beings somewhere in between the two, working hard to distance themselves from their human nature while stewarding the nature of the land.

However, recognizing that creation is defined by the way the water flows, is to recognize, that creation is not anthropocentric. Moreover, it is to recognize that I am not above anything but instead a part of the divine ecosystem that is calling me to my roots. Or as Ivone Gebara puts it,

"We are constantly being invited to return to our roots; to communion with the earth, with all peoples and with all living things; to realize that transcendence is not a reality "out there," isolated, "in itself," superior to all that exists, but a transcendence within us, among us, in the earth, in the cosmos, everywhere. That transcendence is here and now, among those who are similar to us and different from us, among plants and animals, rivers and seas." [\[1\]](#)

Ultimately, this invitation to my roots is an invitation to remember that my roots belong to a place. Elaine and Ched reminded me of my place as they highlighted the native plants growing in their garden and the native bugs aerating the soil. At the Abundant Table Farm Project, Reyna reminded me of my place as she thanked God for the "Madre Tierra" caked on her hands and in her fingernails. Guadalupe reminded me of my place as he shared his yearning to return to his watershed and cultivate tomatoes cooperatively with his community. Jeannette reminded me of my place as she exhorted that weeds weren't bad but a sign of a beneficent land teeming with life.

Aside from learning about the watershed through the garden at Casa Anna Schulz and the Abundant Table's farm in Camarillo, I also learned about watershed activists throughout the

country that are inviting their communities back to their roots. Through an anthology on Watershed Discipleship that Ched is in the final stages of editing, I learned about Lydia Wylie Kellermann's efforts to restore the Great Lakes; The ritual efforts and free flowing activities coordinated by the West Atlanta Watershed Alliance in order to include the beloved community in the watershed; The Carnival de Resistance that travels the east coast, flipping the anthropocentric script and lifting the Raven and the Dove's commentary on our beginnings.

Secondly, my beloved Cindy and I spent a couple of weeks considering what it would be like to glean alongside the prophets and prepare for the Jubilee. We remembered that our matriarch's taught us that basking in God's abundance would restrain our greed. We reflected on our understanding of money based on what we've learned from the dominant culture, our families and each other. Practically, we considered how our money is currently invested and how we plan on giving. We talked through our concerns for the future and how we can mitigate them by cultivating our community. Most importantly, we recognized that we are called to rest – if God abundantly provides, then we can rest in the way our ecosystem rests. We are called to rest in each other, with each other and for each other. With Elaine and Ched, we found rest in the saints and stories. We rested on bike rides and while doing the hustle with friends. We rested while making tortillas, beans and pica-gee and we rested after we ate it all up.

As this summer's intern with Bartimaeus Cooperative Ministries, I marched with the Forward Together Movement in North Carolina; sang with Charlie King and the Maryknoll sisters, prayed with Myra Brown and her congregation at Spiritus Christi, praised with clergy, educators and activists at CDF's Proctor Conference in Tennessee and danced with my beloved Cindy. I was blessed to be with Chad Schwitters; Dennis, Tensie, Rozella and Thomas; Sue and Wes; Grecia and Josh; Michael and Tina, Reyna and Guadalupe, Ben and Annie, Frankie and Beatrice; Jeannette and Lola, Aida, Dion, Erynn, Sarah, Chris, the folks at Casa de mi Padre and the folks of the Farm Church. I swept, read, cooked, baked, and swept, harvested, sheet mulched, weeded, and swept, discussed, prayed, listened, and swept... and was joyful.



Thank you.