



*Women
Speak of
God*

Lesson 4: Juana Inés de la Cruz – Intellectual in the Kitchen

Dear friends,

Nature or nurture? Do we become who we are as individuals because of our genetic make-up, or do we become who we are through the ways we are nurtured by our parents and our environment? This is an age-old debate that expresses our desire to understand and explain how each person becomes the particular person that they are. Recent work on the Human Genome Project as well as strides in pharmacology have shown us how much of one's personality is indeed based in genetic and biological determinants. At the same time, we push as a society to create programs and environments that will promote human flourishing. Most of us would agree that this nature-nurture debate is not a choice of "either-or," but rather a "both-and."

Still, you know in your own life the awareness that you have certain talents or personal characteristics that seem to have been yours from the start. Even as a child, there were certain things that seemed easier for you than for others. Maybe it was math or athletics or music. Maybe you've always been curious about the natural world, or always loved working with your hands. In large and small ways, we know the tendencies and talents God has given us. It is as though we are each hard-wired in particular ways. It also may be that some of our tendencies and talents are very faint or unformed. You may feel a nudging or a longing in a particular direction for years before acting on it.

Sor Juana reminds us that God has implanted in each of us specific gifts that we are to use to God's glory. Such gifts cannot be completely squelched, because they are permanently installed in each person. But, says Sor Juana, our environment plays a big role in cultivating and celebrating these gifts. God plants the seeds, and we do the watering. When the seeds are neglected or ignored or, in her case, suppressed by the church, then we, as God's children, have failed to provide an environment for the flourishing of God's gifts.

Sor Juana's story tells of the persistence of the natural gifts that God implants in each of us. Your story undoubtedly tells of the same persistence, from the very start, of the gifts God has implanted in you. This week I hope you will water those seeds.

Blessings, for the journey,

Amy