

Remedios, Limpias y Escobas

By Patrisia Gonzáles



I struggle with keeping my house swept, but la comadre tlazohteotl, fuerza regenerativa de la madre tierra, has taught me the spiritual power of the broom. It is one of the most basic limpias that we do.

I still bring in the New Year with ritual sweeping. In El Paso, I learned to sweep the house minutes before midnight, to sweep out the old year and make way for the new. La escoba and ritual sweeping are recorded in the ancient picture books of Mexico. The daily sweeping so common among our elders and Mexican women is a legacy of the ritual sweeping our ancient abuelas did as part of their sacred responsibilities for healing, purification and ceremonies. Our ancestors knew we must cleanse matter and spirit. Tlazohteotl, which the Spaniards translated as the "goddess" of filth and sex, is instead a feminine healing energy of the Earth associated with regeneration, fertility, the partera and the temazkalli, the sweatlodge tradition of indigenous Mexico. Y la escoba is one of her instruments. Our ancestors were great scientists who did not believe in "gods," but rather energetic functions, the way we understand gales and other forces of nature.

Cleaning house is not only sanitary but a spiritual act because we clean out emotions and the energy of the days gathered in dust and dirt. My abuelas taught me to clean on Fridays (some say because it was an odd day and therefore potentially unlucky or because it was a powerful day for healing). I then smudge my house with copal or sage, romero or incense. Before there was Pinesol, nuestras abuelas put flowers in the pale and rinsed the house with agua florida – our aromatherapy. I like lavanda, agua florida or agua de limon, especially on the day of a full moon, when things come into

completion. Do limpias for the new beginnings, such as the new year, the beginning of the month, or weekly. La abuela Celia also advises to smudge ourselves daily and pray to live in a good way.

Our most basic limpia that we do everyday is when we take a shower or bath. Baños espirituales also are powerful ways to cleanse our spiritual, emotional and physical bodies of stress and other elements attached to our energy field. Baños are made like teas and then poured over us as we pray, following our showers or bath, or added to bath water. Herbs or flowers can clean our spirit and body and many herbs drunk for stress or calming can be used as a baño. It is best to use the herbs that grow around us or that we have a relationship with – like ones our abuelas used. A basic herbal bath includes a couple of handfuls of plantas maestras -- romero, albacar, ruda. They should be boiled in a non-metal pot, strained and kept covered to contain vapors until you are ready to pour. After your regular shower or bath, pour the liquid over you and pray que las plantas santas cleanse you deeply, releasing stress and any mitotes you have with others. Helga Garcia- Garza of Calpulli Tlalpalcalli in San Benito, whose encuentro de medicina is this June during summer solstice, suggests this baño fuerte, using the three plantas maestras. Prepare as above, except do not strain. With your legs in a V, take the herbs and rub them from below your stomach up, breathing deeply to release spiritual crud. Do for three consecutive days.

Such is the poder of a bath and a broom, the power el baño y la escoba.

Patrisia Gonzáles is a healer and a writer with the Column of the Americas, Universal Press Syndicate.