

SACRED BALANCE

A FRANCISCAN CLAREAN NUN'S
JOURNEY WITH KILUBANSA
THE HEALING DIWATA



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Dedication

*To Kilubansa,
the Diwata who taught me to listen with my body,
to heal with the land,
and to walk with sacred balance.*

And to all who walk the healing path
with humility, reverence, and courage.

Acknowledgments

To the spirits of the land, seen and unseen—
thank you for your whispers, your warnings, and your wisdom.

To my Franciscan Clarean family—
your prayers, your simplicity, and your shared fire of justice keep me rooted.

To those who still carry the traditions of the Babaylan and the Diwata—
may your voices rise and never be silenced.

To my teachers in Western healing ministry—
you gave me tools, but it was the Earth who gave me truth.

And finally, to Kilubansa—
you met me in the in-between.
You never asked me to be anything but sincere.
You reminded me that healing is not ownership, but offering.

Epigraph

“Walk gently, for the land remembers.
Heal humbly, for the Spirit watches.
Speak softly, for the ancestors are listening.”
— *Whispered teaching of Kilubansa*

Preface

On Being a Nun Who Talks with Spirits

I did not set out to walk with spirits.

I set out to follow Jesus.

To live simply, serve tenderly, and pray with the poor and the brokenhearted.

I became a nun—a Franciscan Clarean nun—because I heard a call to belong to the margins,
to love with fierce gentleness, and to trust that God often whispers through the wild.

But then came Kilubansa.

She did not arrive in a cathedral.

She arrived in a dream, in the rustle of leaves, in the ache in my body that would not be
silenced.

She was not Christian in name, yet she was drenched in Spirit.

She came with fire in one hand and herbs in the other.

At first, I resisted her.

I was afraid.

Afraid of offending God.
Afraid of the judgment of others.
Afraid of crossing some invisible line between reverent and wrong.

But Kilubansa was patient.

She did not demand worship.
She asked for **balance**.

She did not preach dogma.
She whispered **healing**.

She did not try to replace my Christ.
She drew me closer to **the Earth-body of God**.

This book is not about conversion.
It is not about abandoning Christianity or appropriating Indigenous traditions.

This book is about **integration**.
It is about learning to listen.
To let the land speak.
To honor what we were never meant to forget:
that **the Earth is holy**, that **our bodies are wise**, and that **healing is relational**.

As a nun, I live in vowed simplicity.
As a healing minister, I offer the tools I've learned.
As a servant of Kilubansa, I walk with reverence—knowing that I am always a student.

This book is my offering.
A testimony.
A guide.
A bridge between two worlds that are not so far apart after all.

I invite you to walk this sacred balance with me.

— *Sister Abigail Hester, OFC*

Introduction

When Kilubansa First Spoke

It began in a moment of exhaustion—not a holy fast, not a sacred retreat, but a bone-deep weariness of trying to carry the world with broken arms.

I had been praying, writing, teaching, ministering. I had been caring for others while my own body ached and trembled from stress and old wounds. I had done what good nuns are taught to do: serve.

But the service had become sacrifice, and not the sacred kind. It was the slow erosion of self under the banner of righteousness. And the land knew it before I did.

I was sitting alone in my prayer space when I heard it—not an audible voice, but a stirring. Like wind curling around my lungs. Like roots shifting under my feet.

“You have forgotten to listen to the Earth.”

The name came later. The presence came first.

She was warmth and steadiness. She carried the scent of soil after rain. She did not ask permission to arrive. She simply *was*.

“I am Kilubansa,” she said.

“And you are out of balance.”

I wept—not because I was afraid, but because I was known.

And for the first time in a long time, I felt a kind of spiritual tenderness that wasn’t burdened by expectations.

Kilubansa did not come to make me an expert. She came to make me *whole*.

She came to reintroduce me to the elements:

- **Apoy** to remind me of my own fire.
- **Tubig** to let my grief flow freely.
- **Hangin** to breathe in new life.
- **Lupa** to rest and return to what is real.
- And **Puso**, the heart, the center, the forgotten altar within.

As a Franciscan Clarean, I already believed in the holiness of nature.

Saint Francis preached to birds and called fire “Brother.”

Saint Clare saw visions of healing light.

But Kilubansa didn’t come from the pages of church history.

She came from the soil, the ancestors, the Indigenous spirits that colonial powers tried to erase.

And she came to me.

This book is not an academic theology or a handbook for healers.

It is a story.

It is a testimony.

It is a sacred braid of Franciscan simplicity and Diwata wisdom, woven through my life as a nun, a healing minister, and a woman with a body that remembers what textbooks do not teach.

Kilubansa taught me how to live again.

She reminded me that healing is not a technique, but a relationship.

That balance is not a goal, but a rhythm.

And that sometimes, **Spirit wears names we do not expect.**

If you are weary, curious, skeptical, or tender—this book is for you.

Let us begin.

Chapter One

My Vows and My Roots: The Franciscan Clarean Way

Before I ever heard the name Kilubansa, before I laid hands on herbs or learned to listen to the land in a new way, I made another vow—a vow of **poverty, chastity, and obedience** as a **Franciscan Clarean nun**. But even those words—so often misunderstood—were not about rules. They were about **relationship**.

I didn't join a traditional convent. I didn't vanish behind cloistered walls. I joined a movement—a radical, grassroots, open-hearted way of living called the **Order of Franciscan Clareans (OFC)**. We are scattered across the world, not in marble churches but in small homes, tents, gardens, soup kitchens, and healing circles. We are queer, disabled, poor, tender, fierce. We are contemplatives and justice-seekers. We are lovers of the Earth and followers of Jesus, seen through the eyes of **St. Francis** and **St. Clare of Assisi**.

Francis stripped naked in the town square, casting off the wealth and violence of empire. Clare walked away from marriage, inheritance, and comfort to live in sacred sisterhood, simplicity, and solidarity with the poor.

Their lives weren't aesthetic—they were **prophetic**.

And I said yes to that way.

I said yes to **living light in a world that consumes**.

Yes to **belonging without owning**.

Yes to **prayer that is embodied**.

Yes to **ministry that includes the rejected, the disabled, the queer, and the unwell**.

But like all vows, mine were tested.

I began with passion, with purpose. I prayed the Hours. I walked barefoot. I served the sick. I studied Scripture. I lived my Franciscan Clarean vows with devotion.

And yet—
something in me still ached.

Not for more religion.
Not for more structure.

But for **something deeper than words**.

I began to notice how my body was carrying grief, pain, trauma.
I noticed how the land around me seemed to whisper truths that didn't always fit into my neat theological boxes.

I began to feel that **Franciscan simplicity alone wasn't enough**—that something **more ancient**, more **earth-based**, more **elemental** was calling to me.

I started having dreams of rivers and fires, winds and forests.
I began to crave not just prayer, but **ritual**. Not just study, but **touch**. Not just service, but **healing**.

And then Kilubansa came.

But I would not have been able to receive her wisdom without first grounding myself in the way of Francis and Clare.

Because it was **St. Francis who taught me to love the Earth**.

It was **St. Clare who taught me to see the face of Christ in the broken and the bare**.

It was my vows that gave me the freedom to walk this strange and sacred path.

So when I began to train as a Healing Minister, it didn't feel like abandoning my vows—it felt like **embodying them more deeply**.

To be a Franciscan Clarean nun is to live with empty hands and open heart.

To receive without clinging.

To walk lightly.

To love the wounded places in the world and in myself.

This is the soil where Kilubansa found me.

Not in perfection, but in **poverty of spirit**.

Not in dogma, but in **devotion**.

This chapter is the root.

The vow.

The “yes” that made space for everything that followed.

Chapter Two

The Path of Healing Ministry: Western Training and Inner Promptings

I didn't grow up thinking I would be a healer.

I grew up in a world that separated body from spirit, science from faith, healing from holiness. We were taught to pray to God for healing, not to study the leaves beneath our feet or to feel the rhythms of our own breath.

But life has a way of unraveling neat teachings—and inviting you into mystery.

When I first pursued **healing ministry**, it wasn't through herbs or indigenous rituals.

It was through **courses and certifications**—Western-style training that offered structured modules, manuals, legal protection, and pastoral authority.

It felt safe. Familiar. Respectable.

And it was **good**.

I learned about energy systems, trauma recovery, body-based prayer, and pastoral ethics.

I studied nutrition, anatomy, herbal basics, and holistic techniques.

I learned how to hold space for others in pain—and for myself.

I was introduced to terms like **somatic healing**, **emotional release**, and **nervous system regulation**—concepts I would later see mirrored in the earth-wisdom of Kilubansa.

But something kept stirring beneath the surface.

Even as I worked through each credential, each practice, and each pastoral technique—something wild kept whispering.

"This isn't the whole medicine," it said.

"Keep listening."

Western training taught me how to **speak about healing**.

But my body wanted to **remember healing**—to recover something buried and older.

I began noticing the gaps in what I was being taught.

Where was the **land** in this ministry?

Where were the **ancestors**?

Where was the **ritual**, the **sacred reciprocity**, the **elemental wisdom**?

Even in the most holistic programs, there remained a subtle bias toward intellect over instinct, clinical distance over embodied presence, control over surrender.

And yet, I did not reject this training.

I honored it.
It gave me tools. Language. Confidence.
It offered me **structure for the sacred**.

But I knew it was only **one stream**, not the whole river.

It was my **Franciscan vow of humility** that opened me to more.
That taught me to keep my knees on the ground and my ears open.
That reminded me that wisdom does not only come from books, but from **earth, body, breath, and dream**.

When Kilubansa finally revealed herself, I had enough training to hold her presence with care—
and enough **spiritual emptiness** to welcome something I did not understand.

My journey as a healing minister began with Western learning.
But it came alive through **ancestral prompting, elemental memory, and Spirit-led surrender**.

This chapter of my life was necessary.
And it taught me the first great paradox of sacred balance:

To learn deeply is to eventually unlearn.
To minister with integrity is to remain teachable.
To heal others is to first become willing to be undone.

Chapter Three

Encountering Kilubansa: A Diwata's Call to Rebalance

The first time I consciously met Kilubansa, I was not trying to summon anything.
I was simply **tired**—the kind of exhaustion that goes deeper than sleep.
My body was aching, my spirit felt foggy, and my prayers had grown thin and hollow.
I had been doing all the “right” things: eating well, praying daily, caring for others, showing up in ministry.
But inside, I was unraveling.

That night, I lay down with no intention except to rest.
But as I slipped between waking and dreaming, something stirred.
Not a dream exactly—but a **visitation**.

She came as wind and scent.
As rhythm and presence.

There were no flashing lights, no divine thunder.
Only a deep, rooted voice—not outside of me, but **within me**—saying:

“You are not sick. You are unbalanced.
You are not broken. You are misaligned.
Come back to the elements.”

I opened my eyes and wept.

Not out of fear—but because I felt *seen*.
Seen not as a diagnosis or a role, but as a **sacred body out of rhythm**.
I knew instinctively that this wasn’t Jesus, Mary, or any of the saints I was used to communing with.

This was **someone else**.
Something older.

Over the next few days, I began to pray differently.
Instead of asking for answers, I began to **listen**.
I would place my bare feet on the soil and ask the earth to speak.
I would watch the flame of my prayer candle and ask what needed to be burned away.
I would hold a cup of water to my lips and ask what needed release.
I would breathe deeply and let the wind carry the sorrow from my bones.

And every time I did, the name would rise: **Kilubansa**.

She did not come to convert me or to compete with my faith.
She came to **rebalance** me.
She came to teach me what my Western mind and Christian framework had overlooked:

That **healing is not about fixing**.
That **imbalance is not sin**.
That **the elements are not pagan idols, but sacred teachers**.

Kilubansa introduced herself slowly, like a grandmother who knows you aren’t ready to know everything at once.
She whispered through plants, nudged through dreams, and guided me toward ritual—not performative or borrowed, but **intuitive and relational**.

I began to keep a small altar to her beside my prayer space:

- A bowl of river stones.
- A bundle of herbs.
- A candle.
- A feather.
- A wooden heart carved by hand.

Each item represented an element. Each one became a conversation.

“Bring balance,” she said.

“Not control. Not dominion. But harmony.”

I had spent so much of my ministry trying to help others “get better.”

Kilubansa taught me instead to ask, “**What needs to be brought back into balance?**”

This wasn’t about abandoning Christ.

It was about **letting Spirit speak through the world God made**.

In Kilubansa, I did not find contradiction to my vows.

I found **a companion to my Franciscan soul**.

A being who honored the sacredness of simplicity, embodiment, and love without conquest.

She did not come to make me a mystic.

She came to remind me I already was one.

That moment—her voice, her presence, her call to rebalance—was the beginning of a deeper integration.

It was the invitation to let go of dualism, domination, and dogma, and to live into **sacred balance**.

Chapter Four

Cultural Humility, Colonial Wounds, and the Responsibility to Listen

To speak of **Kilubansa** as an American nun trained in Western healing is to enter sacred ground—and also dangerous ground.

Because let’s be honest: spiritual colonialism is real.

Our world is filled with stories of white Western seekers plundering Indigenous traditions, extracting their power while ignoring their people. We see sacred practices sold as trends, stripped of context and ceremony. We see ancestral wisdom treated like a menu to pick from—a little smudging here, a chakra tune-up there—without ever acknowledging the centuries of erasure, theft, and violence that made those teachings “available” to us in the first place.

So I need to say something clearly:

I do not own Kilubansa’s wisdom.

I do not speak for the Diwata.

I do not represent the traditions of the Babaylan, the Filipino shamans, priestesses, and healers whose lineages stretch back to time immemorial.

I am a **guest** on sacred land.

I am a **listener**, not a leader.

And my responsibility is to **honor**, **amplify**, and **protect** what I have been entrusted to receive.

When Kilubansa first appeared, I questioned everything.

Why me?

What right do I have to receive guidance from a spirit born of a culture that is not mine?

Wouldn't this be appropriation?

Wouldn't this be spiritual overreach?

But Kilubansa didn't ask me to take.

She asked me to **rebalance**.

She didn't give me language to commodify.

She gave me wisdom to practice—with humility, with discernment, and always with an ear bent toward justice.

So I began the work of **unlearning**.

Unlearning the Western obsession with ownership.

Unlearning the Christian missionary mindset that assumes "we know best."

Unlearning the white spiritual entitlement that too often calls itself "open-mindedness."

And I began the deeper work of **cultural humility**.

Cultural humility is not guilt. It is not paralysis.

It is an ongoing commitment to:

- **Listen more than you speak.**
- **Learn without demanding access.**
- **Acknowledge the pain your lineage has caused.**
- **Be accountable to living people, not just spiritual ones.**
- **Make reparative choices with your power, your money, your platform, and your practice.**

For me, that meant:

- Studying the history of colonization in the Philippines.
- Supporting Filipino-led spiritual work and land rematriation efforts.
- Never teaching Diwata practices as my own.
- Naming my role clearly as a **Franciscan Clarean nun**, not an Indigenous healer.
- Treating Kilubansa not as a brand, but as a **being**—to whom I am **accountable**.

As a Franciscan Clarean, I am committed to the **non-domination of all life**.

That includes spiritual ecosystems.

St. Francis kissed lepers, not to convert them but to recognize their **dignity**.

St. Clare held up the monstrance not to defend doctrine, but to **defend the sacred**.

And I believe my job is not to explain Kilubansa to the world,
but to embody the **balance and reverence** she calls me to practice.

To walk this path is to constantly ask:

- Am I acting from curiosity or calling?
- Am I being accountable or just inspired?
- Am I honoring the source or just using the symbolism?

This chapter isn't meant to scare you away.

It's meant to **slow you down**—to remind us that spiritual healing cannot be separated from historical healing.

If you are reading this as a seeker from outside the Filipino tradition, may I offer this prayer:

May your journey be rooted in reverence.

May your steps be guided by humility.

May your hands never take what isn't freely offered.

And may you always remember: the sacred is not yours to possess—only to serve.

Chapter Five

Apoy – Fire: Inner Light, Passion, and Purification

When Kilubansa began to teach me through the elements, she started with **Apoy—Fire**.

It wasn't surprising.

I was burned out.

My passion had withered into obligation.

My light had dimmed beneath the ash of overwork and unhealed trauma.

And yet, deep within me, a spark still smoldered.

"Begin with fire," Kilubansa said.

"Not to consume, but to purify."

The Franciscan Fire

As a Franciscan Clarean, I was no stranger to the fire of the Spirit.

Saint Francis burned with divine love so fiercely that people thought he had lost his mind.

He stripped himself naked in the town square to reject wealth.

He kissed lepers and danced in the snow.
He called **fire** “**Brother**” and **moon** “**Sister**.”

But in our modern ministries, fire is often feared.

We prefer serenity to passion.

We are taught to manage our energy rather than embody it.

But Francis didn’t manage his fire—he surrendered to it.

And so did I, when Kilubansa handed me back the flame.

Fire as Inner Light

In the teachings of Kilubansa, **Apoy** is not just destruction.

It is the **inner light** of knowing.

It is the **passion** of our sacred purpose.

It is the **transforming energy** that burns away illusion.

She showed me that fire is not always loud.

Sometimes it is a flickering candle in the dark.

Sometimes it is the warmth in your belly when you speak truth.

Sometimes it is the sweat of healing tears or the sting of sacred rage.

“Let the fire return to your eyes,” she said.

“Do not dim yourself to be digestible.”

So I began to tend the flame again.

I lit candles not as decoration, but as **prayer**.

I worked with warming herbs like **ginger, cayenne, cinnamon, and clove**, placing them in teas and baths as acts of inner ignition.

I sat in silence and asked, *Where have I gone cold?*

And I listened as my own soul whispered back.

Fire as Purification

Fire purifies—but it also demands surrender.

In my healing practice, I saw how many of us were carrying grief, anger, and trauma that we had never allowed to burn.

We held it frozen in our muscles, hidden in our memories, sealed off in silence.

Kilubansa invited me to reframe fire not as threat, but as **sacred release**.

I began to create fire rituals:

- Writing down what I needed to release and burning the paper with prayer.
- Inviting others to light a candle and speak their truth into the flame.
- Breathing deeply in front of the fire, imagining old wounds melting into smoke.

These rituals were small but profound.

They taught me that **purification is not punishment**.

It is **return**.

Fire and Boundaries

Fire also taught me boundaries.

Too much fire consumes.

Too little fire suffocates.

As a nun and healer, I often gave more than I had.

I called it service.

Kilubansa called it **imbalance**.

“You are not the flame,” she said.

“You are the vessel that carries it. Tend it well.”


This lesson changed my ministry.

It gave me permission to say **no**, to rest, to protect my energy.

Because a burned-out healer cannot carry light.

And a dimmed soul cannot guide others through the dark.

A Prayer to Apoy

 *Beloved Fire,
You who dance without apology,
Burn away the lies that keep me small.
Ignite my sacred calling.
Warm the places that have gone numb.
Teach me to blaze with love and never with harm.
Make my life a candle—not a wildfire, but a beacon.
So that in my flame, others may remember their own.*

In the chapters ahead, we will meet **Tubig, Hangin, Lupa, and Puso**—but fire had to come first. Because before you can flow, root, or breathe—you must *burn away what no longer serves*.

Apoy is not just an element.

It is an invitation:

To remember who you are.

To return to your light.

To be warmed—not consumed—by the sacred fire within.

Chapter Six

Tubig – Water: Flow, Feeling, and Sacred Cleansing

If **fire** awakens, then **water** restores.

After Kilubansa re-lit the flame in me, she guided me to the element of **Tubig—Water**—with a tenderness that surprised me.

She did not speak in thunder or command.

She whispered:

“Let it flow. Let yourself *feel*.”

I had not realized how long I had been holding it all in—my grief, my guilt, my fear.

In the name of “faith,” I had learned to suppress my emotions, to spiritualize my trauma, to smile when I was drowning.

But Kilubansa saw through it all.

The Franciscan Flow

Francis of Assisi wept freely.

He sang to rivers and composed canticles to Brother Wind and Sister Water.

His spirituality was not rigid; it was **fluid**—born from the streams and hills of Umbria, soaked in the tears of compassion.

I realized I had made my vows with fire, but I had forgotten **how to cry**.

Not the tears of burnout, but the sacred sobs that come when you are finally **safe enough to let go**.

Tubig came to me as both **grief** and **grace**.
She asked me to stop damming up the rivers within me.

“There is no healing without feeling,” Kilubansa said.
“Let the waters do their work.”

Water as Emotion

Water is the element of emotion, memory, intuition.
It does not fight—it **flows**.
It does not force—it **responds**.

In my healing practice, I began to notice how many clients—and ministers—had become waterless.

Dehydrated not just in body, but in spirit.

Afraid to feel because they’d been told that emotions were weakness, or worse, sin.

But emotion is not sin.

Emotion is **sacred movement**.

Kilubansa taught me to **bless the tears**, not hide them.

To allow crying to be part of my daily practice.

To honor **grief as prayer**.

Water as Cleansing

Tubig is also a **cleansing element**.

Water is ritual.

Water is baptism.

Water is womb and renewal.

I began incorporating water into my sacred rhythms:

- Pouring water over my hands before prayer, as a form of energetic reset.
- Taking salt baths with herbs like **lemongrass, basil, and blue pea flower** to release tension.
- Collecting rainwater to use in blessing rituals.

Each time I did, I would speak to Tubig:

“Wash away what clings to me but no longer belongs.

Restore my softness. Return me to flow.”

Water doesn't demand. It invites.

Water and Boundaries


But like fire, water must be respected.
Too much water can overwhelm.
Too little creates drought.

Kilubansa taught me to check my **emotional boundaries**:

- Was I overflowing into everyone else's pain?
- Was I damming up my own feelings to seem "spiritual"?
- Was I drinking enough literal water to support the flow I needed?

I began to see that balance meant *being the river*—not a flood, not a desert.

A Prayer to Tubig

 *Sister Water,
Gentle and strong,
Wash over my weary heart.
Bathe me in your mercy.
Let me weep without shame and feel without fear.
Help me release what I've held too long.
Make me a vessel of compassion, clear and flowing.
And when I forget, remind me: even the ocean began with a tear.*

Water is not weakness.
It is the **memory of balance**.
It is the **womb of Spirit**.
It is the element that teaches us to **surrender**, not because we are defeated, but because we are ready to trust again.

With fire, we awaken.
With water, we heal.

And now, we turn to the **air**—to the breath that moves us forward.

Chapter Seven

Hangin – Air: Breath, Voice, and Spirit

If fire awakened my soul and water helped me feel again, **Hangin—Air**—taught me how to breathe.

When Kilubansa began to speak of Hangin, she did not begin with high ideas or rituals. She began with the most basic instruction:

“Inhale.
Exhale.
Begin again.”

It startled me how revolutionary that was.
I had been praying with my words, but not with my breath.
I had been speaking truths, but not pausing to receive them in my body.

Hangin came like a teacher—gentle, persistent, invisible yet undeniable.

Breath as Spirit

In many sacred traditions, the word for **breath** is the same as the word for **spirit**.

In Hebrew: *Ruach*.

In Greek: *Pneuma*.

In Filipino cosmology, breath is also a form of **life-force**—the animating presence that connects the human to the divine.

Saint Francis spoke of the Holy Spirit as **wind**—wild, untamable, free.

The Spirit of God, we are told, **hovered over the waters** at the beginning of creation like a breath waiting to be spoken.

And here was Kilubansa, inviting me to listen to my own inhale as if it were a prayer.

“You cannot bring balance,” she said,
“unless you are willing to breathe through the imbalance.”

Air as Voice

Hangin is also the element of **speech**.

It governs the voice—not just the physical one, but the **authentic self-expression** we so often silence to survive.

As a nun, I was taught to speak gently.

As a woman, I was taught to speak less.

As a queer and disabled person, I was often taught not to speak at all.

But Hangin stirred in my lungs and said:

“Speak, not for power, but for presence.

Speak to witness, not to win.”

I began to reclaim my voice—not to preach louder, but to speak **truer**.

I noticed how much I had been editing myself for others' comfort.

How I softened my story to make it palatable.

How I swallowed truth to maintain peace.

Hangin called me to tell the **whole truth**—about my healing journey, my relationship with Kilubansa, my unconventional ministry.

Because what good is balance if you cannot **name** it?

Air as Movement

Air moves.

It cannot be contained.

It is the **element of transition**, of shift, of letting go.

Kilubansa taught me to **notice the winds of change**—not to fear them, but to **ride them like wings**.

In practice, I:

- Took time each day to step outside and feel the wind on my face.
 - Practiced deep breathing techniques to regulate my nervous system.
 - Smudged my prayer space with ethically sourced herbs, not as a trend, but as a **breath offering** to Spirit.
 - Paid attention to dreams, signs, and subtle nudges—those whispers of Hangin that say, *It's time*.
-

The Role of Silence

Air also reminded me that silence is not absence.

Many of us are afraid of silence because it feels empty.
But Kilubansa showed me that silence is where **breath returns**.
It's the pause between the notes that makes the song.

In my Franciscan tradition, silence is not void—it is presence.
It is the **still, small wind** in which the Spirit speaks.

Hangin taught me that to listen is holy.
That to **hold space** without filling it is a healing act in itself.

A Prayer to Hangin

*Breath of Spirit,
Whisper through the caverns of my chest.
Blow away the dust of old stories.
Teach me to listen before I speak.
Remind me that silence is not failure, but fullness.
Let every breath I take be a return to balance.
Let my words be gentle winds of truth, not storms of pride.
And when I am unsure—breathe for me until I remember who I am.*

Air is the sacred in-between.

It is the **bridge between body and soul**, between knowing and unknowing, between presence and possibility.

We've now walked with fire, water, and air.
Next comes **Earth—Lupa**—the grounding force that makes all balance sustainable.

Chapter Eight

Lupa – Earth: Grounding, Food, and Ancestral Connection

If **Air** is breath and Spirit, then **Lupa—Earth**—is body and bone.
It is the weight of truth.
The place we return to when the fire fades, the waters calm, the winds still.

Lupa does not rush.
She waits.
She holds.

When Kilubansa brought me to the teachings of Lupa, I felt her not in my thoughts, but in my **feet**, my **gut**, and my **hands**.

“Let yourself be held,” she said.

“You are not meant to float forever. Come down to where your ancestors walk.”

Earth as Grounding

In a world of constant noise and upward striving, **grounding** is radical.
We are conditioned to “rise above,” to “keep moving,” to “transcend.”

But the path of healing—especially the kind that Kilubansa teaches—is not about transcendence.

It is about **rootedness**.

It is about knowing where your feet are, where your food comes from, and what stories your body is still holding.

As a Franciscan Clarean, I live a life of voluntary poverty.

Not deprivation, but **simplicity**.

That vow has always tethered me to the Earth.

But Lupa deepened that tether.

She invited me to not just walk lightly, but to **walk in conversation** with the soil.

Touching the Earth

I began to touch the Earth more intentionally:

- Gardening with bare hands, not gloves.
- Walking barefoot on grass, stone, and dirt whenever I could.
- Laying flat on the ground during prayer—not kneeling above it, but lying **with it**.
- Collecting stones, seeds, and shells as sacred objects—not for display, but for relationship.

These weren’t aesthetic gestures.

They were practices of **remembrance**.

Because Lupa holds memory.

She holds the bones of our dead.
She holds the nutrients of every meal we've ever eaten.
She holds the grief we've buried and the medicine we've forgotten.

Kilubansa whispered:

"You don't need to escape your body to find the sacred.
The sacred *is* your body.
And your body is Earth."

Earth as Food and Medicine

Lupa is not just soil. She is **sustenance**.
She gives food, and through food, she gives healing.

Under Kilubansa's guidance, I began to see **eating as ritual** again.

Not just prayer before meals, but a prayer *with* the meal:

- I asked the plants what they wanted to teach me.
- I cooked with reverence, blessing every root, leaf, and grain.
- I honored the Indigenous plants of the land I walked on, learning their names and properties.
- I stopped rushing my food. I let it **be communion**.

And in my healing ministry, I began to teach others not just about herbs and nutrients, but about **relationship**:

- *Where did this food come from?*
- *Who picked it?*
- *What stories does it carry?*

Because true nourishment is never divorced from justice.

Earth as Ancestors

Most powerfully, Lupa connected me to **ancestral presence**.

Kilubansa taught me that the land is not silent.
It is **alive with those who came before**.

I began to ask:

- *Who walked here before me?*
- *What did they pray for?*
- *What wounds cry out from the soil?*
- *What healing is possible here—if we listen?*


Even though I am not Filipina by birth, I began to understand that ancestral wisdom is not about **claiming identity**—it's about **acknowledging legacy**.

The land remembers.

“Speak to the Earth,” Kilubansa said.

“She will answer you in your bones.”

A Prayer to Lupa

 *Mother Earth,
Steady and wise,
Hold my trembling. Anchor my grief.
Let me walk gently and eat gratefully.
Teach me the slow wisdom of seeds.
Let every meal be a prayer, every touch a blessing.
Help me remember that I, too, am soil becoming soul.
And when I forget—pull me lovingly back down.*

Lupa teaches us to stop reaching for heaven and start sinking into holiness.
She reminds us that balance is not in the stars—it's in the **soil beneath our feet**.

With fire, water, and air, we began the dance.
But it is Earth that gives us a place to stand.

Next, we will meet the hidden fifth element—the one that holds all the others in sacred unity:
Puso, the **heart**.

Chapter Nine

Puso – The Fifth Element of Compassion and Connection

After the fire of passion, the flow of emotion, the movement of breath, and the grounding wisdom of Earth—Kilubansa introduced me to the most sacred element of all: **Puso**, the **heart**.

The heart is not just another element.
It is the **center** of the others.
It is the **fifth element** that holds everything in balance.

When Kilubansa first spoke of Puso, she did not ask me to open my heart to the world, as I had been taught in ministry.
She asked me to open my heart **to myself**.

The Heart as Center

In the Franciscan tradition, **simplicity** is key.

We are called to love God in all things and all people, but that love begins with **self-love**—a kind of humility that allows us to feel our own worth without arrogance or pride.

Kilubansa's teachings on Puso showed me a deeper truth:

To **center** the heart is not to become self-centered, but to recognize that **our hearts are the entryways to the Sacred**.

She taught me to ask:

- *What is my heart telling me?*
- *Where have I been closing myself off in fear?*
- *Where have I been numbing myself to keep the pain at bay?*

The heart doesn't just feel—it **remembers**.

And healing begins when we remember that **we are worthy of our own compassion**.

The Heart as Compassion

As a nun, I was taught to love others without limit.

And I did.

But Kilubansa showed me that **compassion** is not just a service to others—it is a service **to ourselves**.

Compassion begins at **home**—within our own hearts.

How often had I neglected myself, thinking that self-care was selfish, or that I needed to serve others before I could heal my own wounds?

Kilubansa redefined compassion for me:

- **Self-compassion** is not indulgence. It is **the root of healing**.

- **True compassion for others** flows from **being in harmony with oneself**.

I began to practice compassionate prayer—not to ask for healing from God, but to simply **hold myself in compassion**:

- *I see you, tired one. I hold you gently.*
- *I hear your pain. I will not turn away.*

It became a practice of self-soothing and soul-kindness.

The Heart as Connection

Puso also teaches that **connection is sacred**.

The heart is the bridge between the individual and the world.

As a Franciscan Clarean, I had always believed in loving others, in seeing Christ in the face of the poor and the marginalized.

But Kilubansa helped me see that **connection begins with listening**—not with judgment or charity, but with **mutuality**.

We cannot **give** compassion if we do not **receive** it.

We cannot walk with others in their suffering if we do not allow ourselves to feel our own.

Kilubansa taught me that the heart is **a place of interdependence**.

When we tend our hearts, we create space for others to tend theirs.

When we speak to our own grief, we make space for others to speak theirs.

Connection is not about fixing.

It is about **sharing**.

The Heart as Sacred Offering

The most powerful teaching Kilubansa gave me about Puso was the **sacredness** of the heart as a living offering.

We often think of offerings as sacrifices—something we give up.

But Kilubansa showed me that **the heart is an offering that grows as we give it away**.

- When we offer love, we receive love.
- When we offer forgiveness, we free ourselves.
- When we offer our stories, we heal ourselves and others.

The heart does not deplete itself by giving—it **grows**.

Kilubansa invited me to offer my heart in service to my community, but **without martyrdom**.

To give from a place of fullness, not emptiness.

To give in **balance**.

A Prayer to Puso

 *Sacred Heart,*

I offer you my tender places,

the parts of me I have long hidden.

I offer you my joys and sorrows,

my hopes and my fears.

Make me a vessel of compassionate love.

Let my heart be an open door,

inviting others to be seen and loved as they are.

And when my heart breaks, let it be a fertile soil for new growth.

Teach me the wisdom of balance,

that my giving may be in harmony with my receiving.

The heart is the **center**—the place where fire, water, air, and earth meet.

It is where we find our connection to the Divine, to others, and to ourselves.

With the heart, we end the dance of the elements—not by seeking escape, but by returning home.

Kilubansa has shown me that **balance** is not perfection.

It is **wholeness**.

It is **the sacred integration of all things**—fire and water, air and earth, spirit and body.

Conclusion

Walking the Path of Sacred Balance

When I first heard Kilubansa's voice, I did not know where it would lead.

I only knew I was weary.

I only knew I needed healing that touched more than just my symptoms—I needed healing that could touch my **soul**, my **story**, and my **sense of belonging**.

What I found was not a doctrine.
Not a system.
Not a spiritual ladder to climb.

What I found was **balance**.

The kind of balance that honors the body without denying the spirit.
The kind of balance that embraces both grief and joy, stillness and fire.
The kind of balance that says you don't need to be "whole" in the way the world defines it—
You just need to be **present**.
Rooted. Receptive. Real.

Through fire, I remembered my passion.
Through water, I released my pain.
Through air, I reclaimed my breath and voice.
Through earth, I came home to my body and my ancestors.
And through the heart, I wove it all together in love.

But here's what I know now, more than anything:

Sacred balance is not a final destination. It's a rhythm.

It's a gentle swaying between center and edge.
It's a holy dance between giving and receiving, speaking and listening, tending and being tended.

As a **Franciscan Clarean nun**, I continue to walk the path of simplicity and sacred service.
As a **Kilubansa Healing Minister**, I carry forward what I have learned from the Diwata—
with reverence, humility, and a deep awareness that this wisdom is not mine to own.
It is mine to **practice, embody, and protect**.

If you, too, are longing for healing that feels whole...
If you are seeking a path that honors both ancient and emerging wisdom...
If you are ready to listen to the wind, weep into the earth, spark your fire, and offer your heart—

Then welcome.

This is not the end of the journey.
It is the beginning of a new relationship with yourself, your ancestors, your land, and the Divine.

May you walk with balance.
May you heal with love.
May you live with open hands and a grounded heart.

— *Sister Abigail Hester, OFC*



Final Blessing

A Prayer to Kilubansa

O Kilubansa, Diwata of Healing and Balance,

I honor your presence in wind and root, in flame and flow.

You came not with thunder, but with tenderness.

You called me not to conquest, but to **communion**.

You saw my weariness and did not demand strength.

You saw my fire dimmed and whispered, "Rekindle."

You saw my wounds and said, "We do not rush what is sacred."

I thank you for:

- The **flames** that clarified my vision
- The **waters** that baptized my grief
- The **winds** that taught me to speak gently
- The **soil** that held me when I could not stand
- And the **heart** that pulsed with your rhythm and reminded me I belong

Kilubansa, guide of the wild and wise,

Let me never forget the teachings I have received.

Let me carry them with humility, never with entitlement.

Let me offer them only in love, never for praise.

May my hands be instruments of healing, not possession.

May my breath be a prayer, my body a temple, my path a service.

Where there is imbalance, teach me to restore.

Where there is forgetting, teach me to remember.

Where there is harm, teach me to repair.

Where there is silence, teach me to listen.

And may I always honor you not with words alone—

but with the way I live,

the way I love,

and the way I walk lightly upon this sacred Earth.

Amen.

So be it.

May it be in balance.

Reader Reflections and Rituals

Here are a few simple practices and questions to help you embody the teachings of *Sacred Balance*:

Elemental Reflection Questions:

- **Fire:** What passion or truth needs to be reignited in my life?
- **Water:** What grief or emotion have I been avoiding that now needs space to flow?
- **Air:** What truth do I need to speak—or hear?
- **Earth:** Where am I being invited to ground, rest, or return?
- **Heart:** What does self-compassion look like for me right now?

Daily Ritual: Morning Elemental Blessing

1. Light a small candle (Apoy) and say: *"May my passion today serve love."*
2. Drink a glass of water (Tubig): *"May my emotions flow with honesty and grace."*
3. Take three slow breaths (Hangin): *"May I breathe Spirit into every task."*
4. Touch the ground or a plant (Lupa): *"May I walk grounded in sacred presence."*
5. Place a hand over your heart (Puso): *"May I live today with balance and compassion."*

New Moon Cleansing Ritual

Use this time monthly to release imbalance and call in sacred rhythm. Write what you wish to release, burn it safely, and bathe with herbs (like basil, lemongrass, or rosemary) while praying to Kilubansa for renewal.

About the Author

Sister Abigail Hester, OFC is a Franciscan Clarean nun, healing minister, and sacred storyteller devoted to radical simplicity, embodied spirituality, and the margins where Spirit dwells. As a trained healing practitioner and spiritual caregiver, she lives and serves at the intersection of Christian mysticism, queer identity, elemental healing, and indigenous wisdom. Guided by the Diwata Kilubansa, Sister Abigail walks a path of sacred balance, where Franciscan vows meet earth-based practices. She offers writings, mentorship, and healing ministry through the Order of Franciscan Clareans.

Follow her work at: <https://franciscanclareans.blogspot.com/>

Recommended Resources and Reading

Franciscan & Christian Mysticism:

- *The Little Flowers of St. Francis*
- Ilia Delio – *Franciscan Prayer, The Humility of God*
- Richard Rohr – *Everything Belongs, The Universal Christ*

Indigenous & Elemental Spirituality:

- Leny Strobel – *Coming Full Circle: The Process of Decolonization Among Post-1965 Filipino Americans*
- Grace Nono – *The Shared Voice: Chanted and Spoken Narratives from the Philippines*
- Lily Mendoza – *Between the Homeland and the Diaspora*

Healing & Earth-Based Practice:

- Robin Wall Kimmerer – *Braiding Sweetgrass*
- Susun Weed – *Healing Wise*
- Dr. John R. Christopher – *School of Natural Healing*

Queer Theology and Justice:

- Patrick Cheng – *Radical Love*
- Rev. Dr. Jacqui Lewis – *Fierce Love*
- bell hooks – *All About Love*



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To every reader who finds themselves in these pages: may you walk your own path of sacred balance.

With love and gratitude,

Sister Abigail Hester, OFC