

A Quarterly Newsletter of the Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual

Better to Marry?

by Mary E. Hunt

Del Martin, 82, and Phyllis Lyon, 79, married in San Francisco's City Hall on February 12, 2004. They became the first same-sex couple in the United States to have their marriage recognized legally by a government agency. They may also be the first to be divorced if the courageous decision by Mayor Gavin Newsom to grant marriage licenses to two partners of any gender constellation, rather than to a man and a woman, is overturned by the courts. After their fifty-one years of love and pioneering work together to make the world safe for lesbian/gay people, it is hard to imagine why anyone would deprive these good women of their desire to legalize their commitment. Ambivalent as I am on the whole question of marriage, I delight in the fact that they were first.

The San Francisco mayor's strategy of putting a human face on a social issue worked. In this case, it was two beautiful older women. Feminist filmmaker Joan E. Biren (JEB) made a marvelous documentary of

It is hard to imagine, given all of the progress on same-sex issues, what life was like for Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon and their friends fifty years ago. I bow before their sheer courage to claim their love and their sanity at the same time. They insisted that they were entitled to full citizenship then as now, regardless of what people thought of their intimate lives. They wrote books (*Lesbian/Woman*, 1972), started organizations (Daughters of Bilitis [D.O.B.] the first national lesbian organization), and worked on feminist issues such as violence against women.

Del and Phyllis were a family before anyone imagined what is now quite commonplace. I am sure that many of the lesbian/gay couples who are rushing to wed have never heard of them. Such is the fate of pioneers. However, they certainly give marriage a better name than Britney Spears and her erstwhile husband did when they married for a day in Las Vegas.

Nonetheless, I think there are serious questions to ask about marriage that have been obscured in the scramble for civil rights for lesbian and gay people.

their lives, "No Secret Anymore: The Times of Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon." It premiered on the eve of their golden anniversary a short year ago when no one was talking about same-sex marriage as a done deal. Now it is, for better or for worse, even if couples will be divorced preemptively by the State of California.

Massachusetts seems headed in the same direction on even stronger legal footing. That state's high court made clear that "civil unions" are not "civil marriages" and that separate has never been equal in this country. Despite the risk of living up to its liberal reputation at a time when one of its senators is a presidential contender, there is no putting the toothpaste back in the tube in Massachusetts. Some of the keenest legal minds in the nation are at work there on what promises to be another significant challenge to the hetero-only marriage laws.

President Bush's support of a constitutional amendment to codify discrimination against same-sex couples shows just how political the whole issue has become. Chances of such an amendment passing in the near future are slim. The fact that people would consider such a serious move attests to a fact that opponents are out of arguments.

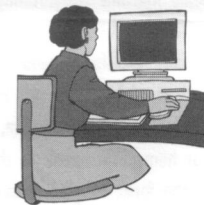
Nonetheless, I think there are serious questions to ask about marriage that have been obscured in the scramble for civil rights for lesbian and gay people. These hard questions will surely be passed over as same-sex marriage heats into an important presidential election issue. It is important to think carefully even when the reflexive reaction of progressive religious people is to recognize social change as it unfolds before our eyes. With same-sex marriage we celebrate

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Thank You! Xie xie! GRACIAS!
Asante! Siyabonga! Arigato!



WATERpower: 21st Century Technology for Change

Thanks to all of our WATER friends who gave to Project WATERpower: 21st Century Technology for Change for our 20th Anniversary! You have helped us take another leap into the world of technology. How did we ever do our work with outdated equipment and programs?

We now have three Pentium 4 desktop computers and one laptop, three LCD monitors, a multi-function laserjet printer, a color laserjet printer, a pocket PC, and software programs with 2003 updates. We are in the middle of a giant learning curve, and are thrilled with the excellent choices that we have made.

Now we realize that we need to update our phone systems because the intercoms on our phones do not work with our DSL line. We are on a roll to spruce up so that we can do our work even more efficiently and effectively. Thank you for your partnership!

Editorial

Religion is big news these days. The consecration of Bishop Gene Robinson of the Episcopal Church in New Hampshire occasioned serious threats of schism by conservative members of that communion because Robinson is an out gay man. The 2004 presidential election includes same-sex marriage as a major issue with religious arguments pro and con being bandied about with abandon.

This is a good news/bad news situation. On the plus side, religious activists cheer the fact that religion is considered relevant enough for public discussion. Polls show a remarkable interest in religion among U.S. residents while many European countries, for example, show a marked decline in participation in religious institutions.

The negative to all this is clear: What passes for religion is still the institutional, usually patriarchal form. Little if any attention is paid to the myriad exciting ways in which people express their deepest commitments that fall well beyond the predictable boundaries.

Women have been in the vanguard in many of these movements. Small house churches, Havorah groups, Wiccan circles, and many other forms of community are doing just fine without huge infrastructures. There are problems with these forms as well, but the small size and focus seem to keep major legal and ethical issues at bay.

Some people prefer even less structure, engaging in private practices at home that speak to their deepest longing. Whatever the form, religion is alive and well in the human spirit. Some of its previously most powerful institutions are failing badly as in-fighting and power-grabs increase. Nonetheless, the search for meaning and values persists and we at WATER with it.



Pass It On

If you know someone (or have a list of friends and relatives) with whom you would like to share this issue, send us the name and address and we will mail a complimentary copy direct. For anyone who would like to receive WATERwheel on tape, we can arrange for audio transcription of the desired issue(s) with Volunteers for the Visually Handicapped at \$10 per tape.

My view is that marriage ought to be available to any adult who wants to marry, but that marriage is not necessarily the best way to organize a society to optimize the common good.

Better...?

(Continued from page 1)

a rare and perhaps fleeting victory. The role of theologians, and especially of feminist theologians, is to ask critical questions so that we generate thoughtful conversation to help shape what is emerging.

My view is that marriage ought to be available to any adult who wants to marry, but that marriage is not necessarily the best way to organize a society to optimize the common good. There are legal, religious, and political issues at hand. I raise them here to join that conversation.

First, the 1000+ legal entitlements that go with marriage, including such important issues as hospital visitation, access to a spouse's health care plan, and inheritance mean that married people actually enjoy social privileges that single people do not. I wonder what justification can be offered for this. Surely no one thinks marriage guarantees social stability at a time when 50% of all marriages end in divorce. Protection for children is the old saw, but now many children live in unmarried families and many married people have no children, so that won't do either.

I think it is time for a wholesale rethinking of marriage for everyone—straight and lesbian/gay alike. Then we can organize ourselves so that every adult designates who can visit her/him in the hospital, everyone has health care (not simply those with partners, because everyone has a body), and everyone designates heirs to whom they pass on their earthly goods. Radical notions? Pie in the sky? Perhaps, but so was same-sex marriage not very long ago, and look what has happened.

Second, the common religious question of the moment is whether religious officials can be forced to perform same-sex ceremonies against the teachings of their tradition. Of course they cannot be forced, offering religious institutions one more chance to discriminate "in good faith." However, I think this is an opportune time to raise a deeper question about the arrangement that makes religious officials agents of the state. How does this square with the cherished notion of separation of church and state when the state deputizes ministers of even the most marginal credentials to act on its behalf?

I favor what many other countries do, namely, have civil marriages performed by government officials and leave religious groups to handle commitments as they

wish with no legal bearing whatsoever. That would level several playing fields at once. It would make the default understanding of marriage a secular one. Romance aside, in fact, it is in the secular arena that marriage matters most: taxes, property, and other fiduciary responsibilities. It would acknowledge growing religious pluralism by encouraging all groups to handle commitments according to their beliefs without privileging any group.

Third, the political implications of same-sex marriage are being touted by its opponents as heralding the end of civilization as we know it, and by its proponents as ushering in a new era of equality and justice. I obviously agree with the proponents, but with a big caveat. Here is the problem: If same-sex couples cannot marry, we suffer discrimination; if we can, then soon we "must," with the result being yet more relationships under state control. While some consider this a small price to pay for justice, I see it as a clever ploy on the part of conservatives to win both ways. Suffer discrimination or be coopted; pick your poison. I worry about what happens to those who choose to remain single, opt for community life, or live in other forms of unmarried relationships.

I worry about women, especially women with children, whose lives become more difficult, more marginal still with all the pro-marriage rhetoric. The Bush Administration's "Healthy Marriage" Initiative is a \$1.5 billion effort to encourage, even coerce people to marry, heterosexually of course, as an antidote to poverty. That crass policy takes no account of many women's risk of domestic violence when they live with male partners to please the welfare system. The Administration passes over the fact that marriage helps economically only if one partner has more money than the other does, which is not often the case for most poor women and poor men. That such thinking is rampant in the society in which marriage, hetero or homo, is lauded gives me pause.

While we pop the champagne corks and congratulate the lawyers, I hope we will also make time to think and rethink what is at stake when one form of oppression falls. Without such care, I fear another form may simply take its place.

Mary. E. Hunt, Ph.D., feminist theologian and ethicist, cofounded and codirects WATER.



Being There for Children

by Mary E. Hunt

My heart leaps when I watch my two-year-old daughter sleep. Like most children her age, she is by day what a comedian once described as a blender running without a top. Everything is new and fun, amazing and possible. She exclaims, "Wow" when things really impress her, like a chocolate ice cream cone or multiple cans of bright colored play dough all lined up ready for action.

At night, tucked into her bed, squeaky clean from her bath, teeth freshly brushed, she gives the angels a run for their money. That she is adopted and has two moms is irrelevant. All that matters is that we are there if she awakens from a dream in the night, and that we are there when she is ready to start another fun day in the morning. All that matters is that we are there. Love is finally so simple even if everyday life, especially with a toddler, can seem so complex.

Yet the Vatican had the unmitigated gall, or perhaps it was just invincible ignorance, to suggest that our adopting our daughter "would actually mean doing violence to these children." This statement, buried in their recent document against legal recognition for same-sex marriages, is proof positive that the gentlemen in Rome are on their last legs. When they suggest by inference that it would be better for thousands of children to live in institutions than to be part of loving families with lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender parents, their credibility looks like Swiss cheese.

Scientific studies, anecdotal evidence, and plain common sense all show that children raised in loving families, regardless of the gender constellation of the

parents, fare far better than children brought up in institutions. I know dozens of such families with children who otherwise would languish in foster care systems, or, in the case of my Chinese daughter, live in orphanages until age 14 and then sweep streets for the rest of their lives. Instead, our children have health care, education, and, most of all, the love and stability that every human being deserves. I await proof of what's wrong with that.

Cardinal Ratzinger and company contradict themselves profoundly when they venture into areas about which they know nothing. Catholic teaching on the importance of family simply trumps their tizzy over the fact that same-sex couples are increasingly common and with them come children. The Vatican has painted itself into a corner by arguing the counter case: by their own logic the only good same-sex marriage ends in divorce. Yet they teach that divorce violates Catholic moral teaching. They can't have it both ways.

I suggest that the Vatican guard a prudent silence on such matters. Their own house is in such disarray over priest pedophilia and episcopal cover-ups that no one will take them seriously anyway. Too bad, because some of those celibate men might make good dads for children who need parents. Meanwhile, let families flourish as they will, where love means being there all the time, forever. Children deserve no less.

This article was a commentary on Interfaith Voices, a radio show produced by Maureen Fiedler. Tune in: www.interfaithradio.org

In Memory of Her

From WATER, Silver Spring, MD:

In grateful memory of the Rev. Penny Penrose, an early WATER supporter who hosted some of the first conferences at the Methodist church in Silver Spring, Maryland, where she was on the ministry staff.

In vivid memory of Peg Buzy, Nurse Massage Therapist and WATER colleague. Peg offered a massage workshop at WATER years ago that is still remembered fondly. She pioneered massage with elderly people in nursing homes, confident that healing touch gives life.

In loving memory of Josephine Merrill Kirkpatrick, a longtime WATER donor and active justice-seeker who did socially conscious financial planning. She was a pillar of the Immaculate Heart College Alumnae Board and a friend to countless people who mourn her early death.

From Natalie Ambrose, Santa Clarita, CA:

In memory of my dear friend Josephine Kirkpatrick.

Feminist Seders Available

Each spring in the northern hemisphere (autumn in the southern) Jews gather with family and community to observe the ritual of Passover and Christians come together for the celebration of Easter. We at WATER use this traditional time of ritualizing the renewal of life as the occasion for bringing Jewish and Christian women, children, and men together for a Seder meal. We invite you to plan a Seder for Passover, April 5, or Holy Thursday/Passover, April 8.

WATER has developed four different inclusive Seders that many groups worldwide use. The WATER community prays with Gathered at Sophia's Table, Together at Freedom's Table, Miriam's Sisters Rejoice, or A Seder for the Sisters of Sarah.

Place your order today, water@hers.com or 301-589-2509, so that you will have a copy of the Seder haggadah for each person at your table. Each booklet contains a full script, music, and recipes.

Order Form for Seders

Please send me:

☐ Gathered at Sophia's Table

☐ Together at Freedom's Table

☐ Miriam's Sisters Rejoice

☐ Seder of the Sisters of Sarah

Single copies, \$5 each. Multiple copies, \$4 each.

Other WATER books by Diann Neu also available:

☐ Women's Rites: Feminist Liturgies for Life's Journey, \$21

☐ Return Blessings: Ecofeminist Liturgies Renewing the Earth, \$20

☐ Peace Liturgies, \$15

TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ _____

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WATER

8035 13th Street

Silver Spring MD 20910

301-589-2509, water@hers.com

www.hers.com/water

Visit WATER's Website for descriptions of these liturgy books and more.

When two people find one another as lifetime companions, they usually want to gather family, friends, and colleagues to celebrate their good fortune. They often want a blessing of their union.

For some women, their life partner is a man, for others it is a woman. For some men, the same holds true. The theme of a wedding and a commitment ceremony is the same. Two people promise publicly to love as equal partners, cherish and respect one another, nurture one another's personal and spiritual growth, create community together, and work for a more just society.

This liturgy has been adapted for holy unions, for commitment ceremonies, and for marriages. I used it recently for a same-sex marriage of two lesbians. Use it as a model to design your partnership liturgy.

Preparation

Choose a setting that matches your values and lifestyle, one that will accommodate your guests. You might choose a community center, a garden, a backyard, a place of worship, a home, a park, a private room in a restaurant or hotel, outside by the sea or riverbank. Set chairs in a semicircle. Place a table in front and cover it with a meaningful cloth. Put candles, flowers, rings, bread, wine, cups or other symbols on it. This is a time to use family heirlooms and symbols that have sentiment for you now and in the future.

Choose music with musicians. Choose who will read each part of the following script. This could be a main celebrant or several people.

Introductory Music

Welcome

On behalf of N. and N., I want to welcome you and thank you for joining us tonight. We are so happy you are here to share in their joy. You are the people in their lives who have helped them arrive at this place on their respective paths. You have helped them to be who they are and to create the relationship they are so delighted to have. Each of you has made some difference in their lives.

This sacred hour we are gathered as friends and family to witness the love and commitment N. and N. have created from the union of their own individual lives. We gather to give thanks for their love and for the new life it creates. Their love for one another, for each of us here, and for the broader community shows that love makes a difference in the world. Proclaiming that love publicly is an act of courage. Thank you for inviting us to witness your love.

Our presence here for and with you, N. and N., is a sign of our support, of our love, and of our commitment to you as a couple. Our coming together tonight in the context of this "Ceremony of Hearts" is a declaration that love is powerful and transforming, that human companionship and love are precious treasures. We come together, not to mark the start of your relationship, but to recognize a bond that already exists between you.

Opening Prayer

Let us ask the Holy One to bless us.

God of Love, Spirit of Commitment, Wisdom Sophia,
Thank you for this day!
Bless this occasion that brings us together
to celebrate with N. and N. as they join their lives.
Bless what we do and say here and let it reflect our
deepest selves, our sense of the sacredness of life.
Bless all creation through this sign of your love shown
in N. and N.'s life together.
God of Love, Spirit of Commitment, Wisdom Sophia,
Thank you for this day!

Reflections/Blessings from Attendants & Lighting of Candles

Love is revealed to us through the beautiful faces of N. and N. What memories do you have of their love? Share a memory about them with us now, then float a flower in the bowl of water.

Reading One

The story of Ruth and Naomi reminds us of love's qualities. A reading from the book of Ruth 1:16-18.

But Ruth said, "Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; Where you lodge, I will lodge; your people will be my people, and your God my God. Where you die, I will die — there will I be buried. May God do thus and so to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you!" When Naomi saw she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her. This is the word of the God of Love.

Response: Thanks be to God.

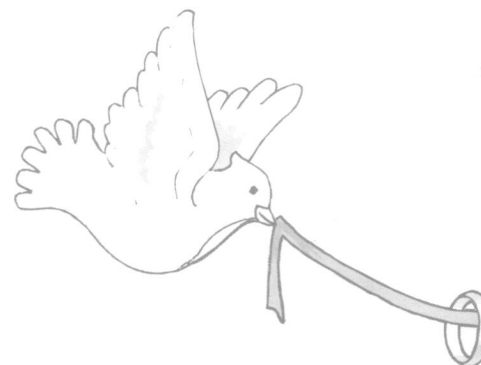
Reading Two

(The couple selects another reading that is meaningful to them such as a poem or sacred text.)

Music

Rite of Partnership

We as a community are here to witness love. Come forward, N. and N., to speak your vows to one another.



Ceremony

by Dia

Vows of N. and N.

(N. and N. face each other, and repeat in turn)

I take you N. to be my partner / and I promise you these things: / I will be faithful to you and honest with you / I will respect you, trust you, / help you, listen to you, / and care for you. /

I will share my life with you / in plenty and in want, / in sickness and in health. / I will support you and encourage you / to share your gifts with family and friends / and with the larger community to which we belong.

Family Vows

Families of N. and N., please come forward and form a circle around them. The vows N. and N. have made affect not just each of them but everyone around them. Their union is not just of two individuals but of two families and two communities. We ask now if N. and N.'s families will promise to support N. and N. as they build a life together. We also ask N. and N. to commit to love and support their families as they build their life together.

(To the families)

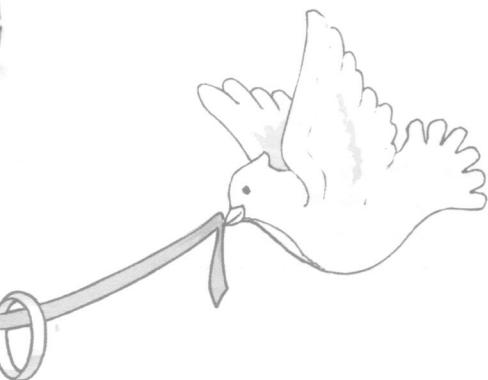
Families, will you support, celebrate, and witness N. and N.'s relationship? Will you forgive and ask for forgiveness when there is hurt and misunderstanding? Will you

strive with them as they strive to live together in mutuality and love, as they work toward making their dreams a reality?

Response: We will.

(To N. and N.)

N. and N., will you support and celebrate with your



of Hearts

n Neu

families who have loved you, cared for you and let you go? Will you forgive and ask for forgiveness when there is hurt and misunderstanding? Will you strive for deeper understanding, love, and mutuality with your families?

Response: We will.

Community Vows

Friends gathered here, you have come from diverse parts of N. and N.'s lives, but you all have in common your relationship with each of them. Tonight you are one community who have been asked by them to witness, support, and celebrate their commitment.

(To the community)

Friends, will you support, celebrate, and witness N. and N.'s relationship? Will you forgive and ask for forgiveness when there is hurt and misunderstanding? Will you strive with them as they strive to live together in mutuality and love, as they work toward making their dreams a reality?

Response: We will.

(To N. and N.)

N. and N., this is your community of friends. Do you promise to support and celebrate with your community? Will you forgive and ask forgiveness when there is hurt and misunderstanding? Will you be a source of love and strength to them?

Response: We will.

Exchanging Rings

The giving and receiving of rings is not simply a perfunctory act, not simply the giving of a piece of jewelry. Rather, rings are a visible sign of the sealing of a promise, an announcement that can be seen for all the days and years to come.

N. and N., rings are made of precious substances and symbolize the treasure that your relationship holds. Fashioned to be worn as a circle, they are a sign of love that is a continuous, strengthening tie. N. and N., as you give and receive rings, may you be attentive to the bond of love that is ever deepening between you.

(The couple exchanges rings, and each says in turn)

N., I give you this ring / as a sign of my love for you, / as a symbol of the communities / to which we belong, / and as a reminder / of the vows and promises / we have made here tonight. *(She puts the ring on the other's finger.)*

Pronouncement of Holy Union

With the power of life invested in me and in us as a community, I pronounce you, N. and N., joined together as partners in life, love, and spiritual integrity. Put your seal on this ceremony of hearts with a holy kiss!

Lighting the Unity Candle

N. and N., come light this unity candle. This one candle with two wicks symbolizes your life together.

Music

Blessing the Couple

Let us ask the God of Love, Wisdom Sophia, to bless and keep N. and N. I invite each of us to respond "Blessed be" to the following blessing.

N. and N., may your lives together be joyful and content, and may your love be as bright as the stars, as warm as the sun, as accepting as the ocean, and as enduring as the mountains.

Response: Blessed be.

May you respect, have patience with, and delight in your cultural, spiritual, and personal differences.

Response: Blessed be.

May you remember that your love, like planet Earth, when nurtured, fertilized, and watered can withstand the most treacherous storms. May you let the roots of your

relationship be planted into the solid ground of love so that in the dry season you may drink deeply from its source.

Response: Blessed be.

May your heart hear more than words, listening to each other's silences. May you have the courage not always to agree, but always to understand.

Response: Blessed be.

May your love for each other pull you beyond yourselves into the hearts and lives of all those calling for justice, dignity, and love.

Response: Blessed be.

May you be blessed with wisdom to find a common path upon which you both may walk, and with clear vision to keep sight of the grace that surrounds you.

Response: Blessed be.

May you continue to make your love clearly and truly a reflection of the infinite love that embraces us all.

Response: Blessed be.

And may you, N. and N., be blessed in the name of the Holy One, Wisdom Sophia, who loves us into being, the Beloved who is the way of love, and the Spirit whose burning love sets us free. Amen. Blessed be.

Blessing the Banquet

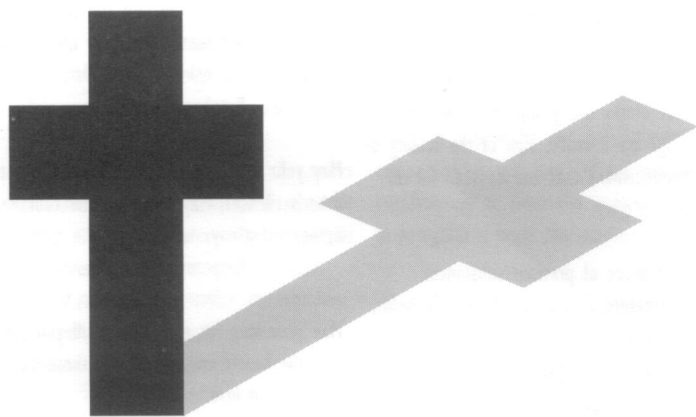
Let us gather around the banquet table and extend our hands toward the food and drink.

Blessed are you, Holy God of Love, All in All, for giving us this wedding banquet. May this food and drink nourish us in body, mind, and spirit. May they bond us together in love. Amen. Blessed be. Let it be so.

Toasting the Couple

Let our party begin with a toast to N. and N. *(Toasting)*

Diann L. Neu, MSW, D.Min., feminist liturgist and psychotherapist, is cofounder and codirector of WATER. Contact her dneu@hers.com if you would like help designing and celebrating a liturgy.



The Passionless

by Mary E. Hunt

Mel Gibson's movie, "The Passion of the Christ," is one of the most hyped films in years. I am neither a film critic nor a biblical scholar, but I was invited by a friend to a pre-premier showing sponsored by a local evangelical church.

The movie is a sign of the times—a literal, if selective, overblown, Hollywood read of an often-told story. It is geared to an audience that has not benefited from any modern tools of biblical criticism, has not thought about the consequences of stereotypes, and does not want to. Those who like blood and guts with their popcorn will enjoy it. The rest of us can safely skip it. I preferred the book, though that has problems, too.

The R rating for violence ought to be enough to keep the pious at home, but it isn't. Maybe that is why conservative Christian groups are buying up whole showings for their members. As the credits rolled, the pastor of the church that sponsored the showing I attended asked us all to bow our heads and join him in prayer. I expected a collection. No need to raise hands, step forward, or do anything but imbibe his prayer in our hearts and we, too, could be saved. My Irish heart! How fast can I get to the parking lot?

I would put the movie somewhere between "Ben-Hur" and "E.T." The epic style and weird special effects earn it a place in both camps. For sheer gore, the movie ought to get some award. However, for sophisticated theological anything it is a zero. I was not expecting depth, but I was surprised by how pitiful it was, costumes and all.

The depiction of the passion narratives is over the top, so ridiculously overdone as to border on caricature. No human being could ever handle the amount of pain and loss of blood in the first fifteen minutes. But hey, folks, we still have two hours to go. Enough is too

much in this case. I am aware of no serious theologians through the ages who have considered Jesus to be Superman. My guess is that this film may backfire on Mr. Gibson's stated goal of lifting up forgiveness and love of enemies. Instead, I think it will turn off thinking people who recoil at the sight of dead animals, torture, and group mayhem.

The anti-Semitic dimensions have already been discussed widely. There is some evidence that the worst of those were left on the cutting room floor. However, even the hint of such slurs in crude stereotypes is what makes this film's commercial hype so dangerous. In fact, most of the men, other than the disciples of course, are disgusting characters. Their violence felt at times like a fraternity hell night gone awry, with all the homosocial bonding and egging one another on that those events entail.

Jesus and his band came across as the sweet, good, if mostly ineffective boys. So much for Mr. Gibson's boast that he did not want a weak savior figure. The women were mostly flat and benign characters. Mary's young face never showed the agony and urgency one would expect of a mother watching her child be killed. They had mostly cameo appearances in this macho film, not unlike the book on which it was based. Another reason to stay home.

I am not giving away the ending by saying that the resurrection scene lasts less than a minute and consists mostly of a rock rolling away from a cave. I tried to imagine how someone who had never heard of Christianity might think about it after seeing this flick. I think the person would go away shaking her/his head at the sheer magnitude of the violence and ask what it all means. That is what feminist scholars have been doing for years with more passion.

WATER in Motion

WATER staff participate in a wide range of activities in the community and around the country and the world. Here is a sample of recent doings that serves as a good measure of WATER's outreach.

Summer intern Lauren Dunn from Tufts University participated in the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice's summer training program for college women where Mary Hunt spoke on being religiously pro-choice. The event was so successful that RCRC will sponsor a summit focusing on "Putting Faith into Action for Reproductive Rights." (www.rcrc.org)

Mary was WATER's presence at several summer events. At the WOW (Witness Our Welcome) 2003 conference in Philadelphia, she offered morning discussions on ethical issues including living with integrity in a religiously pluralistic age. She was part of CLOUT's "Evening of Passion" where she read short vignettes suitable for family audiences! WATER joined Re-Imagining for its last conference, and delighted to receive a generous donation from them.

Mary has been teaching, too—summer school at Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley where she is currently offering an online course through the miracle of the Internet. She was part of the Maryknoll Mission Association of the Faithful (AKA the Lay Missioners) training program.

Sarah Godbehere was a Visiting Scholar at WATER in January. Diann directed her research for her senior thesis on feminist ritual.

WATER works abroad as well. Mary joined the festive tenth anniversary celebration of *Catolicas pelo Direito de Decidir* in Sao Paulo, Brasil. Her lecture, "The Challenge of Sexual Diversity in Ultra-Conservative Times," is published in *Conscience*, Volume XXIV, No. 3, Autumn 2003, pp. 26-30.

Diann will join feminist theologians in Salzburg, Austria, in April for their conference "Rituale: Flügel oder Fesseln?" She will give the keynote, "Women's Rites/Rights: The Theo-Politics and Practice of Feminist Rituals," and a workshop on "Designing Feminist Rituals for Life Passages."

The European Region of the World Student Christian Federation met in Saint Cheron, France, where Mary Hunt provided the keynote address, "Beyond Either/Or: Toward Theologies that Do Justice." Students from Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Georgia, Herzegovina, and many other countries gathered for a week of dialogue, prayer, and socializing. The future looks bright with this kind of leadership in the pipeline.

Diann continues WATER's spiritual direction and counseling program where she meets with individuals and couples. Contact her, dneu@hers.com, if you would like to make an appointment.

Christ, Carol P. **SHE WHO CHANGES: RE-IMAGING THE DIVINE IN THE WORLD.** New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003 (277 pages, \$24.95).

Carol Christ uses insights from process theology as well as her own broad experience to demonstrate how language about the divine makes a difference linguistically, spiritually, and politically.

Cooper-White, Pamela. **SHARED WISDOM: USE OF THE SELF IN PASTORAL CARE AND COUNSELING.** Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2004 (246 pages, \$18).

Counter transference, or looking at how one reacts in a pastoral or counseling relationship, provides insights. Sifted through multi-cultural, postmodern, and differentiated theological and psychological perspectives, a new synthesis can emerge that is very helpful.

Crawford, A. Elaine Brown. **HOPE IN THE HOLLER: A WOMANIST THEOLOGY.** Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002 (134 pages, \$14.95).

Powerful womanist voices give new, rich meaning to a theology of hope.

Donaldson, Laura E. and Kwok Pui-Lan, Eds. **POSTCOLONIALISM, FEMINISM & RELIGIOUS DISCOURSE.** New York, NY: Routledge, 2002 (219 pages, \$23.95).

These essays, from a variety of religious and cultural backgrounds, point the way beyond colonialist assumptions to liberatory theory and practice. The many layers of analysis and the many angles of the discourse make this a challenging text for serious discussion.

Ellison, Marvin M. **SAME SEX MARRIAGE: A CHRISTIAN ETHICAL ANALYSIS.** Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2004 (198 pages, \$24).

The best theological resource on this topic. Marvin goes beyond either/or and says let us rethink the whole matter of marriage while at the same time letting those who wish to marry marry.

Jakobsen, Janet R. and Ann Pellegrini. **LOVE THE SIN: SEXUAL REGULATION AND THE LIMITS OF RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE.** New York, NY: New York University Press, 2003 (175 pages, \$22.95).

Resources

Creative new moves in old debates are welcome. This book is full of them, putting the emphasis on religious freedom as a tool for making social change rather than religious limits aiding the status quo.

Jarl, Ann-Cathrin. **IN JUSTICE: WOMEN AND GLOBAL ECONOMICS.** Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003 (177 pages, \$17).

A Swedish feminist theologian proposes that meeting basic human needs can be a useful horizon for measuring economic justice. She explores the resources of feminist theology and feminist economics to make her convincing case.

Johnson, Elizabeth A. **TRULY OUR SISTER: A THEOLOGY OF MARY IN THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS.** New York, NY: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2003 (379 pages, \$26.95).

The author offers "a marian theology rooted in scripture read through women's eyes with feminist hermeneutical methods." Using sources from feminist theologians around the world and building on her own work on "the communion of saints," she gives Mary a new look.

Lewis, Helen M. and Monica Appleby. **MOUNTAIN SISTERS: FROM CONVENT TO COMMUNITY IN APPALACHIA.** Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2003 (299 pages, \$35).

The Glenmary Sisters worked for justice in Appalachia for decades. However, as they became increasingly disillusioned with patriarchal Catholicism they became a secular group, the Federation of Communities in Service (FOCIS), to continue that work unfettered by such constraints. Theirs is a moving story of committed women in action.

McEwan, Dorothea and Myra Poole. **MAKING ALL THINGS NEW: WOMEN'S ORDINATION — A CATALYST FOR CHANGE IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.** Norwich, England: Canterbury Press, 2003 (243 pages, £12.99).

There are many ways to bring about change in Catholicism, and ordination of

women is surely one of them. These authors lay out a wide range of women's experiences and choices in creating alternatives to a patriarchal institution.

Mollenkott, Virginia Ramey and Vanessa Sheridan. **TRANSGENDER JOURNEYS.** Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2003 (184 pages, \$19).

An incomparable team, Virginia and Vanessa have written a personal, revealing, substantive, scholarly, and spiritual book in the Christian tradition that provides a large window into transgender experiences. Readers are in their debt for candor, insight, and generosity.

Moore, Zoë Bennett. **INTRODUCING FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES ON PASTORAL THEOLOGY.** London, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002 (157 pages, \$17).

Another in this useful series of Introductions, this volume highlights the theology and practice of pastoral ministry from a feminist perspective. Worth reading for ministers who can learn what seminaries still do not teach.

Neumark, Heidi B. **BREATHING SPACE: A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY IN THE SOUTH BRONX.** Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2003 (286 pages, \$25).

This contemporary spiritual autobiography by a Lutheran pastor ministering in the South Bronx has real merit. It is lucidly written, sensitive, and self-aware on the part of the author who does not gloss over the hard stuff nor glorify the everyday difficulties of all ministries.

{Editor's note—Lovely to meet in print a woman I knew during her studies in Argentina. MEH}

Ress, Mary Judith. **WITHOUT A VISION, THE PEOPLE PERISH: REFLECTIONS ON LATIN AMERICAN ECOFEMINIST THEOLOGY.** Santiago, Chile: Sociedad Con-spirando, Ltda., 2003 (275 pages, \$20).

For many Latin American feminists, liberation theology has given way to ecofeminist work in religion. This gracefully written study incorporates the

author's considerable personal experience with her interviews with Latin American colleagues. They point to the earth, the struggles for justice, and one another as companions on the way as key elements for actualizing a vision.

Ruether, Rosemary Radford, Ed. **GENDER, ETHNICITY & RELIGION: VIEWS FROM THE OTHER SIDE.** Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002 (262 pages, \$19).

Rosemary gathered essays by a dozen young scholars who do their work with attention to issues of race, gender, and ethnicity. Caribbean, African American, and others yield a rich and challenging next step for feminist work in religious, theological, and historical studies.

Schaberg, Jane, Alice Bach, and Ester Fuchs, Eds. **ON THE CUTTING EDGE: THE STUDY OF WOMEN IN BIBLICAL WORDS: ESSAYS IN HONOR OF ELISABETH SCHÜSSLER FIORENZA.** New York, NY: Continuum, 2004 (254 pages, \$29.95).

A wonderful way to honor Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza's pioneering scholarship, this "critical collaboration" highlights a wide variety of persons and disciplines that have been influenced by her work. From utopian thought to slavery, from Magdalene to "deviant" readings of Wisdom, this engaging collection is a fitting tribute "in memory of her."

Ward, Hannah and Jennifer Wild, Eds. **RESOURCES FOR PREACHING AND WORSHIP YEAR C: QUOTATIONS, MEDITATIONS, POETRY, AND PRAYERS.** Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003 (310 pages, \$29.95).

A useful compendium of readings to enliven the biblical texts and enrich sermons with vivid images.

Yee, Gale A. **POOR BANISHED CHILDREN OF EVE: WOMAN AS EVIL IN THE HEBREW BIBLE.** Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003 (298 pages, \$24).

An important and compelling study that began on women and concluded that class, race, colonialism, heterosexism, and all the other forms of oppression need to be interwoven into hermeneutical tools for dealing with the Hebrew Bible and for doing justice.



Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual
8035 13th Street, Silver Spring, MD 20910-4803 USA

Address Service Requested

WATERwheel (ISSN 0898-6606) is published quarterly by the Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual. Annual subscription, \$35. Additional copies of this issue, \$5 each. Complimentary copies available on request for conferences, classes, discussion groups, family, friends, and colleagues.

WATER is a feminist educational center, a network of justice-seeking people that began in 1983 in response to the need for theological, ethical, and liturgical development for and by women. We work locally, nationally, and internationally doing programs and projects, publications and workshops, counseling, spiritual direction, and liturgical planning which help people actualize feminist religious values and bring about social change. If you would like to subscribe for weekly updates from the office and occasional news from colleagues in the field, send a message to majordomo@hers.com with the words "subscribe water-I" (that's water-hyphen-letter "I", NOT number 1) in the body of the message.

Mary E. Hunt, Ph.D. and Diann L. Neu, D.Min., MSW, editors

For more information about **WATER**

Phone 301-589-2509; Fax 301-589-3150

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