



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

## Editorial

Ten good years we have had at WATER, a decade of hard, fruitful work in the service of social change and religious empowerment for women. Blessed Be. Ad multos annos.

Ten good years deserve ten more, so join us as we move ahead with enthusiasm. Recession and economic uncertainty render even our small budget in peril, so please write a celebratory check to keep up the momentum. Our second decade means unprecedented growth, but only with your financial help.

We reflect with gratitude at this point on the state of the movement, on the health and well being of some of our sister organizations in the United States. We note that the Women's Theological Center in Boston continues apace. Founding director Nancy Dale Richardson recently moved on to be director of Ministerial Studies at Harvard Divinity School, and new director Donna Bivens is handling the transition in characteristically capable fashion. We congratulate Pat Reif, founding director of the Immaculate Heart College Center's M.A. Program in Feminist Spirituality in Los Angeles, who has recently retired after a decade of distinguished service. Well done.

We encourage Jeanette Stokes who for fifteen years as founding director has led the Resource Center for Women and Ministry in the South in creative programs, retreats and publications, especially the indispensable newsletter, *South of the Garden*. We salute Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Judith Plaskow, founding editors of the *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, which is also at the first decade mark. The *JFSR* turns out distinguished volumes that literally set the pace for scholarly work in the field. Many of us tapped in to the importance of women's work in religion through our experiences now twenty years ago at Grailville, and to the Grail women we extend a special vote of thanks.

These and many denominational, congregational and/or theological school-based women's programs continue to shape the theological landscape. Increased diversity, international connections and better endowed institutions to publish and promote our work remain as challenges just ahead of us. Join the fun! WATER needs you all.

## What's Right With This Picture?

By Mary E. Hunt

The visit of the Pope to Denver in August 1993 provided progressive Catholics, especially religious feminists, with the proverbial fifteen minutes of fame. Undisputed king of the late night bull session, Ted Koppel set the pace with four white men discussing matters of church and state, as if they could possibly speak for and about what is finally a problem centered on women. What's right with this picture, I asked myself, coming up empty handed as I channel surfed. Since everyone, Catholic or not, was subjected to this remarkable array of religious hype, I decided to pay close attention, shuddering at what is foisted on people in the name of news, and eager to learn something about what to do in the future.

Young people camping in mile-high Denver, hiking hours in thin air, breathlessly told reporters what a spiritual experience the whole thing was, hour long waits for latrines and all. Church spokesmen, oops, this time some were women, reassured everyone that God's in his heaven, the Pope is meditating in the woods, and all's right with the world. Not.

Meanwhile, back on earth, several scientific

scrutiny has ended, it can be adjudged an opportunity lost to hasten the end of such crimes and bring about justice. I am sure the institutional church was as glad that it was over as the rest of us, but for very different and distressing reasons.

Coverage continued with religion journalists from *Newsweek* and the *New York Times* treated as experts on the church. Maybe it was simply because it was August when even pundits and their psychiatrists take vacations, but there is something fundamentally askew when those who report the news in print suddenly become the newsmakers on television. I thought "Double Jeopardy" was part of a game show.

Granted they were tapped in the capacity as commentators, observing the scene and reflecting on their previous studies. However, the impression left by television is that those who grace it are somehow the flesh and blood embodiments of what they discuss, leaving me to wonder who comments on the commentators. No one bothers to ask them their religious persuasions, their own faith perspectives and practices which so deeply color every comment.

*...there is something fundamentally askew  
when those who report the news in print  
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polls indicate that most Catholics, church-going or not, are quite far from the official line on a range of sexual issues; papal authority is no longer taken seriously as more than a symbol of unity. Parish life is not a given, and money is tight. The clincher is that clergy sexual abuse is a rampant problem in a church which has neither the cash nor the credibility to solve it without plenty of outside help. But the various subterfuges to avoid dealing head on with this reality, whether from ecumenical politeness or institutional collusion, were so cleverly set as to allow the elephant in the living room to grow by tons virtually on camera. Now that media

Somehow, whether with schoolboy faith or sophisticated reserve, theirs is the only pure view.

None of this is sour grapes, to be sure, as I did my share of television in English and Spanish. WATER's Diann Neu was on the BBC radio, and the expertise of Frances Kissling, Ruth Fitzpatrick, Maureen Fiedler, among many other feminists, was part, albeit a small part, of the mix. Yet in each appearance we were all duly identified, whether as dissidents or proponents, activists or intellectuals, all with a well articulated feminist starting point. The disparity, our  
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WATER is a feminist educational center, a network of justice-seeking people that began in 1983 as a response to the need for serious theological, ethical and liturgical development for and by women. We work locally, nationally and internationally doing programs, projects, publications, workshops, retreats, counseling and liturgical planning which have helped thousands of people to be part of an inclusive church and society.

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If you or someone you know would like to receive WATERwheel on tape, we will be happy to arrange for audio transcription of the issue(s) you desire. Contact WATER, 301-589-2509. Cassettes will be made by Volunteers for the Visually Handicapped at a cost of \$5 per tape.

pedigree versus the journalists' objectivity, only highlights the power inequity which makes normative the institutional view, whatever the institution, and makes odd, weird or otherwise recalcitrant those who disagree. This cannot persist much longer, as polling data show that the middle has shifted decidedly to the left, making people who were dissidents when the Pope first came to call nearly fifteen years ago now appear to be pillars of what's left of the church. On second thought, maybe it can persist, and will if we do not speak up louder and more often.

The whole papal episode, and it was simply an episode, brought up the fact that access to media, to shaping news and spinning issues, is expensive, political, and finally very powerful work. Even religious broadcasting, better, especially religious broadcasting, has figured this out. No progressive religious types have suc-

ceeded in getting even a small piece of the market. Mother Angelica has a network, after all, and we of women-church are still talking to one another by phones which feel by comparison like orange juice cans with strings.

have learned, the hard way to be honest, that media people in general are an important part of the process of social change. This is not because, as the right-wing would paint it, they are all very liberal, especially the ones around Washington. Rather, it is because they are professionals doing a job in a culture which has virtually deeded the public order to them in the absence of other shaping forces. Churches, even, with all due respect, the Roman Catholic Church (which is the largest single denomination in this country), does not, and in my judgement should not, shape the moral consensus any more (or less) than a storefront congregation.

We need good information, lively, fair discussion, opportunities to sharpen our wits by reading and hearing positions with which we disagree. This is what the media can provide if we insist, and if we participate. There was a time

## *Journalists call WATER and centers like ours regularly for background information, opinions and resources.*

The right-wing in this country has led the way in shaping the media. Programs like Russ Limbaugh's and Patrick Buchanan's (he has both "Crossfire" on television and an afternoon radio talk show every weekday, not to mention a syndicated newspaper column) reach millions of people with a not so veiled religious message. Progressives appear at our peril, always on the defensive at best, never part of the normative brotherhood that shapes the stage.

Liz Thoman, founding editor of **Media and Values**, a publication that stems from the Center for Media and Values in Los Angeles (1962 S. Shenandoah, 90034) is one of the early religious feminists to realize the importance of gaining access to and monitoring the media. Her efforts, especially her educational packets which provide students with the tools to analyze what's at stake, need to be multiplied all over the country by people who represent a range of religious traditions, racial/ethnic groups and other particularities who can push the so-called envelope beyond the Emmy Awards.

Journalists regularly call WATER and centers like ours for background information, opinions and resources. They also call academics who sometimes spurn them as information freeloaders who ought to read their books. This reaction is rank stupid in my judgement. I

when I did not pay attention to the media, considering it pedestrian, boring and somehow unworthy of my time and attention. There was a time when I said no to a major network show because I was on deadline for an article like this. I could have reached millions of people with important ideas, but I declined just because I did not know any better. Now I do know better, and have the solid-color, vividly telogenic silk dress and obligatory pearls when I need them. I am not afraid to don these when necessary. I highly recommend that other women in every local and national media market do the same as a way to make the picture right.

### **Study Questions:**

1. What biases do you note in your local media?
2. List the positive, helpful contributions of mass media as well as the problems outlined above.
3. How can you and your group help to make the picture right?

*Mary E. Hunt, Ph.D., co-director of WATER, is a feminist liberation theologian and ethicist.*

# Enter: Ivone Gebara

*Editor's note: WATER's "Women Crossing Worlds" program keeps us in touch with women in religion in various Latin American countries, including Brazil. Ivone Gebara is a Brazilian feminist theologian who will be spending January to June 1994 as a visiting theologian at Union Theological Seminary in the Auburn Seminary Program in New York City.*

*She has co-authored **Mary: Mother of God, Mother of the Poor** with Maria Clara Bingemer, as well as written many articles and books published in Portuguese and Spanish. Sr. Gebara, a member of a religious congregation, was a faculty member at Instituto Teologico in Recife under the stewardship of Helder Camara. But when it was closed by Vatican forces for being too progressive, Ivone stayed in Recife to do her theology in the shantytown environment where women and men struggle for survival.*

*It is from this context that she reflects on what she calls "holistic ecofeminism" in an interview conducted and shared with us by Judy Ress of the ecofeminist journal **Con-spirando**, available in*

*Spanish by subscription c/o Casilla 371-11 Correo Nunoa Santiago, Chile.*

Holistic ecofeminism questions a theology that sees God as above all things. God has always been used by both the left and the right to justify particular political programs. There simply is no pure God!

There is also a growing suspicion that the age-old conviction that "redemption comes through suffering" might not be true. There is growing dissatisfaction with liberation theology. The promise of a new society founded upon justice and equality just hasn't happened. We are tired of the struggle, which is often violent and which promises our liberation at the end. All we have seen is destruction and death, never victory. So we are suspicious of this approach, tired of yet another document. Analysis on the political and economic situation of our people is very important, but it is not everything!

Instead, we look at the air, the water, the earth. We look at all the garbage surrounding us and we sense deep within ourselves that our

planet is not just a place -- it is our own body. Ecofeminism proposes a new relationship with the earth and with the entire cosmos.

For me, "holistic ecofeminism" has a double purpose. First is the fundamental concern for the oppressed--the voiceless of history -- who when they are born are de facto excluded from the chance to live a full life because of their economic situation. It is the poor who are the greatest consumers of patriarchal religion because of the consolation it provides! They are caught in a vicious circle here, but for me it is absolutely key to avoid distancing myself from these voiceless ones.

Second is the commitment to put an end to patriarchy in all its forms. I suggest that we must first change our image of men and women within the cosmos. And when we change that image, our image of God changes. Any image of God is nothing more than the image of the experience or the understanding we have of ourselves. We must re-situate the human within -- not above -- the cosmos.

## Staff Rounds

**Anna Mae Mayer**, Catholic Campus Minister at Dartmouth College, spent her summer vacation in the WATER office following the Women in Campus Ministry gathering in Washington. Her skills, openness, and eight years of mission experience in El Salvador made Anna Mae a welcome colleague whom we hope will make WATER a habit.

**Lanell Dike**, a Community Studies major at the University of California, Santa Cruz, is doing her internship this year at WATER. She brings a lively mind and a willing spirit to the work, proving that another generation is training to take it on.

**Carol Scinto**, editor par excellence (or is it excellence?), has earned the first WATER sabbatical which she will enjoy with her husband Joe, who is retiring as Deputy General Counsel of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission. They will meander for six months through Australia, New Zealand and South Pacific islands while WATER commits typos to paper. Bon voyage. Speed back. {*Editor's Note: Be prepared for upcoming Down-Under-WATER reports--and continued nagging about errant punctuation.*}

**Kelly Cregan**, summer intern with a terrific future in this kind of work, offers the following

reflections on her experience of Summer of '93 at WATER:

"It is hard to believe that a single phone call to the WATER office in December 1992 would lead to a summer experience that could not have been better had I carefully planned each moment of it. The women who make up WATER taught me about diversity, friendship, justice, women, feminist theology, feminist liturgy and ritual, and most importantly how to laugh and enjoy oneself while working towards a more just and inclusive church and society. My only regret is having too little time to read more of the plethora of books and articles in the WATER library.

"My heartfelt thanks go to Mary and Diann who welcomed me to WATER way back in December and facilitated the whole process that brought me to D.C. this summer. I thank, too, all the people who helped make this summer so enjoyable and memorable: Pat and Louise for sharing their home with me; Dierdre for companionship and conversation; Nancy, for many laughs and the ride to Columbia; Helena, Lanell and Anna Mae for sharing the intern experience; and Carol for editing these words and offering vacation advice.

"The summer of '93 is over now, but WATER is alive within me as a source of hope, strength, and life."





# Choosing Wisdom:

by Diann L. Neu

## Background

Aging, the transition to elderhood, is a phenomenon in world culture that needs to be celebrated. Groups of women around the world are creating and participating in croning ceremonies, rites of initiation into full-bodied wisdom for women age 56 to 70. Choosing to be an elder and honoring these wise ones recaptures the importance of the passage to later years. It transforms cultural attitudes which are hostile toward older women and old age.

Historically, a crone was a woman past menopause who was recognized by others for her wisdom. She was a spiritual elder, a wise mentor, one who had lived long enough to have reflected fully and sensitively about the human enterprise.

Croning ceremonies honor a woman for her transition beyond child bearing, beyond menopause, and sometimes beyond active professional life. Each ceremony expresses the idiosyncratic nature of the woman being celebrated. Each is different; each is unique.

Use this ceremony as a model to stretch your imagination to plan the one you and your friends and family need to celebrate. It can also be a model for a retirement observance.

## Preparation

Invite friends, family and colleagues to the celebration. Mention that a festive potluck will follow the ceremony and suggest guests be prepared to tell stories about the crone-to-be.

Hold the ceremony in a place that is sacred to the crone-to-be: her home or garden, a place by water or in the mountains, a retreat center or church sanctuary, a women's shelter or community center.

Decorate the space with symbols that are dear to the crone-to-be: quilts or cloths, shells or rocks, nature symbols or herbs, flowers or plants, special clothing or candles, objects for each decade or major period of her life.

Bake bread with her, using her favorite recipe, or ask a friend to make the bread. Buy champagne or sparkling cider. Choose an oil that is a favorite of hers, perhaps scent it with her perfume, and pour it into a special bowl. Place these elements on an altar covered with a cherished cloth of the crone-to-be, or with one that will become a treasure. Gather additional gifts that will be given to the crone: crown of flowers, purple stole, declaration, crystal, and bell.

## Welcoming of Participants

*(Spoken by a daughter, sister, or special friend or colleague.)*

Welcome, each of you, to this croning ceremony for \_\_\_\_ (name). We are here to honor you, \_\_\_\_, for attaining wisdom in your life. We recognize the beauty of your bodily changes, the wisdom of your life experiences, and the integrity of your intimate relationships. *(Continue to add what reflects the characteristics of the one being honored.)*

## Naming the Circle

Wise women are our ancestors, our mentors, our friends. They have gone before us; they are here with us; they will come after us. Think of the wise women in your life. *(Pause.)* Speak your name and the names of these crones as we create our circle and call upon their wisdom to be with us. *(Naming.)*

**Song:** "Walk Through These Doors" by Marsie Silvestro, c 1987, last verses adapted by Diann L. Neu for this occasion.

*(Dancers dance in with the gifts that will be given to the crone, and place them around her.)*

Grandmothers whose names we call.  
Ancient ones whose spirits have flown.

*(Refrain)* Walk through these doors  
with blessing.  
Walk through these doors with peace.  
Walk through these doors as holy ones.  
Enter the words we speak.

Crones whose beauty circles here.  
Wisdom sisters of every race. *(Refrain)*

## Calling to Celebrate the Crone

When Saturn, the teaching planet, spins back for the second time in your natal chart, you are fifty-six years old. This is the age we recognize as the doorway into the years of wisdom. We are gathered to honor \_\_\_\_ and to bless her as she walks through the doorway into the age of wisdom. We are gathered to make history by creating a new ceremony for our wise elders.

A croning ceremony is a rite of initiation into the wisdom years of life. A crone is a woman who is 56 years of age or older, who has gone through menopause, and is recognized by others as a wise woman. She is a spiritual elder and a wise mentor. She is a treasure of power and wisdom. In our historical time, as women live longer than ever before, we need new rituals for this life passage into later life.

Croning ceremonies empower the elder woman by affirming her attainment of wisdom. They acknowledge her beauty, her new status, her contribution to society, and her ongoing transformation. They challenge the oppression by patriarchal societies of elder women as old, unbeautiful, has-beens, and useless.

Look around and notice the wisdom, beauty and power of our elder women. This is what we celebrate tonight by honoring our dear friend \_\_\_\_\_. This is indeed the wisdom of the ages and we are creating and dancing wisdom's circle.

**Dancing A Circle:** "Wisdom's Circle" adapted from "Jacob's Ladder," a Spiritual.

*(Women join hands in a circle and dance.)*

We are dancing \_\_\_\_'s (name) circle, (3x)  
Sisters all around! (Sisters, brothers, all.)

On and on the circle's moving...  
Wisdom flowing all around us...

## Readings

*(Friends share a few poems, scripture passages, journals, diaries or writings that are favorites of the crone-to-be or written for her. Some we have used include:)*

from Julian of Norwich

Thus  
I saw God  
and sought God.  
I had God  
and failed to have God.  
And this is,  
and should be,  
what life is all about,  
as I see it.

from Wisdom 6:12-17

Wisdom is bright, and does not grow dim.  
By those who love her she is readily seen,  
and found by those who look for her.

Quick to anticipate those who desire her,  
she makes herself known to them.

Watch for her early and you will have no trouble; you will find her sitting at your gates.

Even to think about her is understanding fully grown; be on the alert for her and anxiety will quickly leave you.

She herself walks about looking for those who are worthy of her and graciously shows herself to them as they go, in every thought of theirs coming to meet them.

**Song:** *(Sing a favorite of the crone-to-be.)*



# A Croning Ceremony

## Choosing the Croning Path

The croning path is available to all women if we so choose it. We need our wise crones to share with us what it means to follow this path. \_\_\_\_\_ [name(s) of other crone(s)], tell us what it means to be a crone. (*Sharing by crones.*)

Your stories reaffirm that each crone's journey is unique. \_\_\_\_\_ (crone-to-be), share with us what choosing to become a crone means to you. (*Sharing.*)

## Testifying to Wisdom

How have you seen \_\_\_\_\_'s wisdom revealed? Share with us stories about our new crone's wisdom. (*Sharing.*)

**Chant:** "All Knowing Spirit," three part round, traditional.

1. All knowing wisdom with me,
2. Teach me to see
3. You are my own true self through all eternity.

## Blessing the Crone

(*A dancer escorts the crone to the center of the circle where she is invited to sit. All gather around her. The youngest in the group sits beside the crone holding a bowl of oil.*)

Today we recognize that you, \_\_\_\_\_, have walked through the doors of wisdom. Receive now our blessing in thanksgiving for you and your life. We bless you with oil in gratitude for all the parts of yourself that you have shared with us. Oil is a symbol of anointing, of strengthening, of soothing, and of healing.

Come, sisters, put oil on your hands, and bless our crone by touching her with the oil and naming an aspect of her that reveals her wisdom. (*Such as:*)

loving friend,  
compassionate listener,  
creative visionary,  
hard-working colleague,  
tender poet,  
surprise package,  
profound thinker,  
committed feminist,  
skillful carpenter,  
eternal well,  
transforming grace,  
(*Add others.*)

Come close to our wise woman, and put your hands on her as we pray: (*The participants simultaneously lay hands on the crone.*)

Blessed are you, O Holy Crone, for bringing \_\_\_\_\_ into our lives. You, \_\_\_\_\_, are a precious treasure throughout every decade of your life. As you journey through your croning years, may you enjoy

integrity, to make peace with the roads you have traveled;

companions, to share your wisdom and your longings;

laughter, to stay connected with life's joys;  
challenges, to stretch your imagination  
and deepen your knowledge;  
solitude, to enter the well of your being and the womb of the universe.

Blessed are you, O Holy Crone, surround our beloved sister, \_\_\_\_\_, with grace, energy and wisdom. Walk beside her all the days of her life. Let your Spirit, Sophia-Wisdom, radiate through her. Bless her on her journey through her wisdom years as she comes home. Amen. Blessed be. Let it be so.

## Honoring the Crone

\_\_\_\_\_, we honor you this day with gifts that remind us of you. (*She is honored with gifts that are appropriate for her. The following, together or in combination, have been given to other crones.*)

(*She is given a crown of flowers.*)

\_\_\_\_\_, receive this crown of flowers as a symbol of your beauty. Remember, you are beautiful.

(*She is given a purple stole.*)

\_\_\_\_\_, receive this stole of wisdom as a symbol of your new status. It weaves together the decades of your life.

(*She is given a declaration.*)

\_\_\_\_\_, receive this declaration as the official document that states you are a crone, a wise woman. We, as witnesses, will sign it later.

(*She is given a crystal.*)

\_\_\_\_\_, receive this crystal as a symbol of your ongoing transformation.

(*She is given a bell.*)

\_\_\_\_\_, receive this bell as a symbol of the sounds you have made for (*saying the years of her age*). We'll pass it around the circle to ring it for each year of your life.

**Song:** refrain "Walk Through These Doors"

## Blessing of Bread

(*The crone takes the bread, blesses it, breaks it, and shares it with the participants.*)

Blessed are you, Sophia-Wisdom, for this bread which makes us wise.

## Blessing of Champagne or Sparkling Water

(*Another blesser pops the champagne or sparkling water, pours it into a glass, blesses it and shares glasses of champagne or sparkling water*

*with the participants.*)

Blessed are you, Transforming Grace, for this fruit of the vine which calls us to festivity and celebration.

## Blessing of Food

(*Another blesser invites everyone to gather around the table of food, extend their hands, and pray after her:*)

Blessed are you, Nourishing Friend, (*echo*)  
for these gifts of women's hands (*echo*)  
which feed our hunger, (*echo*)  
strengthen our bodies, (*echo*)  
and comfort our souls. (*echo*)

## Eating the Festive Meal

## Sending Forth

We have honored our sister, \_\_\_\_\_.

We have shared in this festive meal.

We have made history by creating a croning ceremony.

Let us go forth remembering that wisdom surrounds us as together we pray:

**Closing Prayer:** adapted from Sarun Primer Benediction, 1636

May wisdom be in our minds, and in our thinking;

May Wisdom be in our hearts, and in our perceiving;

May Wisdom be in our mouths, and in our speaking;

May Wisdom be in our hands, and in our working;

May Wisdom be in our feet, and in our walking;

May Wisdom be in our bodies, and in our loving.

May Wisdom be with us all the days of our lives.

## Greeting of Peace

Filled with this Wisdom, let us embrace one another as wise women. (*Hugging.*)

## Closing Song and Spiral Dance:

"O, Freedom," a Spiritual

(*The crone leads the group in a spiral dance.*)

O freedom, O freedom, O freedom over me,  
And before I be a slave, I'll be buried in my grave,  
And go home to my God and be free.

They'll be dancing... singing... laughing...

Diann L. Neu, M.Div., STM, is a feminist liturgist and therapist who co-directs WATER.

## Thinking of You... Letters to WATER That Buoy, Prod, Inspire

*from Mary Wallace, La Porte, Texas:*

Thank you for your wonderful ritual on menarche! I cannot describe to you what a healing it worked for me, a 49-year-old woman. I spent the years from 17 to 45 locked in a sleepwalking state, role-playing the patriarchy-dictated roles of wife and mother, raising my children "by the book," out of touch with my frozen emotions and womanhood. It was so dry and cold and lonely! After several years of therapy and sharing with newfound women friends, I have emerged from that state and am growing and healing.

I was raised in such a rigid pattern of male values that I did not identify with or value the feminine things, including menses. No one ever celebrated mine. I am just now learning to acknowledge the power of my blood, my fertility, my creativity, and just now I find myself a menopausal woman. It grieves me to know that I missed the most important third of my life, my fertile time. I was blind, frozen, "locked up;" I simply "went through the motions."

When I started reading your wonderful ritual celebrating menarche, I tried to visualize my daughter (now 24) as the honoree, but I couldn't. She was too old when I awakened from my zombie state. (Once when I mentioned to her that I wished I had known how to celebrate her menarche with her she was aghast at the thought.)

Halfway through reading the ritual, I realized that what I was longing to do was to celebrate my own menarche. I went back and started at the beginning, inserting my own name for the girl passing into womanhood. As I read and celebrated (in solitary) the ritual, I found a wonderful feeling of peace and healing settling over me. I pictured my mother and grandmother (whose emotions were frozen too) blessing me, and a feeling of great power came over me.

I have long sought this healing, knowing that I must have it and grieve my "lost womanhood" before I could get on with my life and deal with this business of becoming a crone (which I do value too). Your ritual came out of the blue and healed me. God/ess does provide! Blessed be, and thank you, Diann, for being Her instrument.

I value each and every issue of WATERwheel and only wish it came more often. I wish I lived close enough to be a part of the WATER family. I want to thank Mary for her insight into the Women-Church convocation. I was there with you in Albuquerque, and found it hard to describe it to my friends (I am usually more articulate). I send my blessings and my support to you both and to everyone who participates in the WATER effort. Blessed be!

*from Elizabeth Thoman, Center for Media and Values, Los Angeles:*

Your fresh--and cheeky--insights are what keep ME reading and savoring WATERwheel.

Along with Diann's wonderful liturgies. The political women's litany is brilliant -- will use it THIS WEEK -- have joined a Lenten women's prayer group.

Thanks, too, for the Index -- but I notice there is NO ENTRY for "media." Hope we can do something about that before 1997!

*from Jeanette Stokes, South of the Garden, North Carolina:*

I've noticed that I get a little depressed every November. The days get shorter. I have to chase the sun all day to sit in its warmth. And I wonder how I am going to raise enough money to pay my salary for another year.

And the good news arrived. In late December the light begins to return. Generous friends send kind responses to our Solstice greetings fundraising letter.

I liked what you said about fundraising, "Reluctant No More." And I had just figured it out again yesterday, that the point is not paying me a salary. The point is doing this work. I get it turned upside down in November every year. I can more easily ask people to support the work than to just pay a salary.

Hurrah for Kim Klein (of Grassroots Fundraising Journal). Where would we be without her? Disliking fundraising and having few models or ideas for other ways to feel. I'm still not wild about fundraising, but at least I have hopes and I understand that it is a community activity. It's more than my learning the multiplication tables. It is all of us breaking bread together.

So, in this season of light and shadows, I thank you for reminding me...

*from Ginny Williams, St. Louis:*

Thanks for sending the Women-Church Sourcebook. I have just leafed through it at this point and it looks really good. There is really quite an assortment of material in it and I say it's a steal at \$12.50.



### In Memory of Her

*from WATER staff:*

Dorothy Jaccard, mother of longtime WATER volunteer Tish Jaccard, whose faith and friendliness sparked many lives.

*from Marianne Soldavini, Milwaukee, WI:*

To Kathe Kominiarek, in memory of Geraldine Kominiarek, from your sisters in fem thea group.

### And in Memory of Mothers

*from Valeen Pon, Edmonton, Canada:*

In memory of two women [Florence Murdock and Josephine Gentilesca] I'll always remember.

*from Erna B. O'Shea, New York, NY:*

In memory of my mother, Erna Marie Keppler Browne, whom I adored.



# Resources



Lynn Roberson

Caraway, Nancie. **SEGREGATED SISTERHOOD: RACISM AND THE POLITICS OF AMERICAN FEMINISM.** Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1991 (282 pages, \$14.95).

An insightful treatment of racism and feminism which can be very helpful in pushing us toward serious work on the issues.

Carson, Anne. **GODDESSES AND WISE WOMEN: THE LITERATURE OF FEMINIST SPIRITUALITY 1890-1992. AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY.** Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press, 1992 (248 pages, \$12.95).

A good resource for finding good resources.

Downing, Christine. **WOMEN'S MYSTERIES: TOWARD A POETICS OF GENDER.** New York: Crossroad, 1992 (194 pages, \$19.95).

Chris Downing has crafted a small jewel, a glistening reflection on "a poetics of gender" which is long on wisdom if occasionally short on argument. Never mind. The Crone knows. Also, her **GODS IN OUR MIDST: MYTHOLOGICAL IMAGES OF THE MASCULINE: A WOMAN'S VIEW.** New York: Crossroad, 1993 (160 pages, \$14.95) is an excellent antidote to the mytho-poetic morass, a step in the right direction for men as this savvy woman leads the way.

Eiker, Diane and Sapphire, editors. **KEEP SIMPLE CEREMONIES.** Portland, ME: Astarte Shell Press, 1993 (150 pages, \$12.95).

The Feminist Spiritual Community of Portland is an innovative group whose delightful, useful, informally written collection allows readers to take the ideas and go!

Esquivel, Julia. **THE CERTAINTY OF SPRING: POEMS BY A GUATEMALAN IN EXILE.** Washington, DC: EPICA (Ecumenical Program on Central America and the Caribbean), 1993 (no page numbers, \$11.95).

A lovely volume in which a well respected poet captures the hope that a struggling people crave and carve.

Goss, Robert. **JESUS ACTED UP: A GAY AND LESBIAN MANIFESTO.** New York: HarperCollins, 1993 (240 pages, \$19).

The new insights of the queer movement are given theological expression in this fiery book. But was Jesus really gay?

Hardesty, Nancy A. **YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY: REVIVALISM AND FEMINISM IN THE AGE OF FINNEY.** New York: Carlson Publishing Inc., 1991 (200 pages, \$50).

It is surprising to find that revivalism and feminism have a connection, but it is true and here's how.

hooks, bell. **A WOMAN'S MOURNING SONG.** New York: Harlem River Press, 1993 (79 pages, \$8).

Another in bell hooks' stunning collection of clearly reasoned, beautifully written prose, and now, poetry. Read it and weep with recognition and gratitude.

Kramarae, Cheris and Paula A. Treichler. **AMAZONS, BLUESTOCKINGS AND CRONES: A FEMINIST DICTIONARY.** London: Pandora Press/HarperCollins, 1992 (587 pages, \$19).

A rerelease of a feminist dictionary that will orient readers to the nuances of a non-patriarchal world. What is exciting is that there are words we do not even know and they are about us.

Levine, Elizabeth Resnick, editor. **A CEREMONIES SAMPLER: NEW RITES, CELEBRATIONS AND OBSERVANCES OF JEWISH WOMEN.** La Jolla, CA: Women's Institute for Continuing Jewish Education (4126 Executive Drive 92037), 1991 (127 pages, \$9.95).

There are now several books of this sort, but this one is simple, straightforward and includes diverse events such as welcoming a daughter, rabbinic ordination, accepting the loss of the dream of a biological child.

Rushin, Kate. **THE BLACK BACK-UPS.** Ithaca, NY: Firebrand Books, 1993 (96 pages, \$8.95).

A fresh voice, an accomplished poet, a first collection that left this reviewer wanting more and more.

Taylor, Dena and Amber Coverdale Sumrall, editors. **THE TIME OF OUR LIVES: WOMEN WRITE ON SEX AFTER 40.** Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press, 1993 (329 pages, \$12.95).

In case you wondered if older women have much sex, wonder no more and get a life. The

authors of this anthology leave no doubt that we get older and better in every way. Hooray!

Ward, Edna M., ed. **CELEBRATING OURSELVES: A CRONE RITUAL.** Portland, ME: Astarte Shell Press, 1992 (50 pages, \$6).

We can never do enough to honor women, and this gem makes a real contribution on how.

Weaver, Mary Jo. **SPRINGS OF WATER IN A DRY LAND.** Boston: Beacon Press, 1993 (140 pages, \$22).

A wonderful read by a trustworthy writer. Dr. Weaver addresses issues that plague many religious feminists in a mature, honest, wise yet open way.

Webb, Pauline. **SHE FLIES BEYOND: MEMORIES AND HOPES OF WOMEN IN THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT.** Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 1993 (88 pages, \$6.50).

Foremothers and contemporary leaders who are shaping an ecumenical ecclesia based on equality share their wisdom.

Wilson, Lois Miriam. **TELLING HER STORY: THEOLOGY OUT OF WOMEN'S STRUGGLES.** Toronto: The United Church Publishing House, 1992 (61 pages, \$7.95 Canadian).

This book is a great answer to the question "How do we share feminist faith with children?" The answer is given with ecumenical and global sensitivity, and lots of insight.

**PSALM SERIES: GRATITUDE, JOY, MERCY, PEACE.** Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1993 (57 pages, \$3.95 each).

These lovely little inclusive language psalters make nice books for meditation.

**RESOURCES IN THE STUDY OF GENDER VIOLENCE.** Los Angeles: Immaculate Heart College Center, 425 Shatto Place, Suite 401, 90020-1712.

A useful beginning bibliography and resource list on a growing problem. May it help to stem the tide.

## For the children

Willhoite, Michael. **UNCLE WHAT-IS-IT IS COMING TO VISIT!!** Boston: Alyson Wonderland, 1993 (30 pages, \$12.95).

Uncle Brett is "gay," whatever that is. A great story answering a good question in a creative, child-sensitive way.

# Rhodes Award to WATER

Bill Clinton's Rhodes Fellowship may have helped him get to the White House, but WATER's Mary Rhodes Award from the Loretto Community is equally inspiring. This year the Loretto Women's Network chose WATER co-founders and co-directors Mary E. Hunt and Diann Neu to be among the recipients of their annual award which honors "outstanding women whose lives and work promote justice and equality for women." Other awardees this year included Rosa Martha Zarate Macias, a Mexican activist, and Josepha Eyre, founder of the Women's Bean Project in Denver.

The award, named for Mary Rhodes, a founding sister of the Loretto Community, took on special significance when it was given to WATER staff on the eve of the group's annual assembly in Keystone, Colorado. It was the first time that

the award was conferred jointly to two people for a common project. Maureen Fiedler, a Sister of Loretto and co-director of the Quixote Center, presented the award.

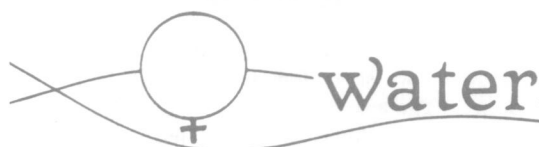


presents  
recipients of the

MARY RHODES AWARD

Likewise, the award was distinguished by the fact that it was given to Mary and Diann both for their work at WATER as well as for their well known committed relationship. Maureen called "the fruits of their relationship justice, peace, concern for women and wonderful hospitality." Loretto's willingness to acknowledge this dimension in the face of Colorado's Amendment 2 and the Roman Catholic institutional church's infamous theo-political position showed that Loretto continues to provide courageous leadership, making the Mary Rhodes Award even more dear.

Diann and Mary received silver pendants with geodes, made by Loretto artist Mary Lucina Tighe. Their names will be added to a quilt which hangs in the Loretto Staff Offices in Denver. Their gratitude abounds.



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## Complimentary

To Share with a friend

Donors to WATER receive WATERwheel free.

WATERwheel, Vol. 6, No. 3, Fall 1993

## Celebrate Ten Years of WATER