



# Waterwheel

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

## Retreat to Advance

By Mary E. Hunt

Patriarchal logic and feminist spirituality are such that a good retreat can be a real advance. I do not mean to suggest we should back pedal toward spiritual deepening. But consider, perhaps even experience, the age-old tradition of a retreat and you may see what I mean. I did so recently with delightful results.

I must admit to a certain skepticism about retreats. Retreats have long been a way to carve out time for reflection, renewal, prayer and rest. Many spiritual traditions incorporate retreats into their practices. Buddhists, for example, have meditation weekends. But coming from the Catholic tradition, I associate the word "retreat" with those high school obligations when teens are hustled off somewhere for mandatory prayer and silence. I was not a spiritual prodigy to have intuited early that prayer cannot be forced and that good conversation can be as uplifting as silence.

Later, I discovered that when some Protestant colleagues suggest a retreat they mean an opportunity to get away to work more effectively together, like a board retreat, which is simply an elongated committee meeting. It is the opposite end of the spectrum but equally suspect. When I was in divinity school, a

group of women students went on what we called an "advance," a word that never really eclipsed "retreat" but was headed in the right direction. The point is not to leave the world as we know it in all of its swirling possibilities, but to take time to focus attention on certain aspects of it to handle the whole more gracefully.

I was privileged to spend two weeks at a unique retreat center, Vallecitos Mountain Refuge (see [www.vallecitos.org](http://www.vallecitos.org) or write: PO Box 1507, Taos, NM 87571) in rural New Mexico. It is one hundred thirty-five gorgeous acres, seven miles off paved road at nine thousand feet in the Rockies. The "Refuge Fellowship Program" invites a dozen social justice activists at a time (half the places are held for people of color) to spend two weeks unplugged from daily life. Without benefit of phone, fax or e-mail, flush toilets or electricity, the directors teach fundamentals of insight meditation, a marvelous cook prepares delectable vegetarian cuisine, and "refugees" chill out with hiking, horseback riding, swimming and plenty of solitude. A day a week is reserved for silence, and there is no talking until 10 a.m. every day. How civilized!

Mediation was offered four times a day. But  
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*Retreats have long been a way to carve out time for reflection, renewal, prayer and rest.*

*November 1 Feminist Liturgy,  
We Are All Saints, p. 4*



*Kate's Corner: Our summer intern brought a youthful air, an artistic eye and sound computer skills to the WATER office.*

## Editorial

Sarhawk gets it right in her new introduction to the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition of *The Spiral Dance*, the book that launched Goddess religions into the contemporary mainstream. She reflects on her life and work of the past two decades. Her former question, "How do I learn this?" has become her current question, "How do I pass this on?" Whether organic gardening or risking arrests for social change, Goddess

wisdom or community life, she looks ahead lest the movement end with her generation. To young people - indeed to all of us - she writes: "Decide what is sacred to you, and put your best life energies at its service. Make that the focus of your studies, your work, the test for your pleasures and your relationships. Don't ever let fear or craving for security turn you aside." Easy to say, some might be tempted to muse, when you have a best selling

book and a wonderful reputation, but the spiritual wisdom here is hard to pass over. Generation X people are every bit as idealistic as the rest of us, and every bit as practical when it comes to creating their lives with passion.

We at WATER look to young people with open hands. The Network of Presbyterian College Women seems to have caused great consternation among that denomination's conserva-

tive members because they dare to do their work in a feminist way. Congratulations to them. The Young Feminist Network is developing its identity. We support them. Here's an idea: Give this newsletter (we'll replace it free) to a young person in your life. Invite her/him to explore with you the marvelous riches of casting your lot with those who seek nothing less than to transform an unjust world.



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WATER is a feminist educational center, a network of justice-seeking people that began in 1983 in 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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*Happily, there are some feminist retreat centers now, with more in the offing.*

## Retreat...

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nothing was obligatory. The group met three times to share insights and feelings, again no coercion. We were cautioned against networking or talking shop, the natural pastime of social justice types. This breather was meant to be different, and we honored it.

By the end, I had become so comfortable in my yurt in the woods (a yurt is a circular tent on a frame, originally used by Mongolian nomads) that I lay on my bed completely fascinated during a hailstorm, watching the pellets bounce off my skylight. I missed my loved ones, of course, and I was ready to flush again by the time I left. Yet the experience equipped me with a new skill - I can meditate on the Metro if necessary - and with a deep appreciation for the fact that life goes on quite naturally in my absence. What counts is my presence, presence to nature and people, myself included, in whatever situation.

A problem with many organized retreats is that feminists still need to swallow hard and translate content in order to get maximum value. Sometimes the delight of time away, meals cooked by someone else and lots of extra rest dulls the critical capacities so that one is prone to tolerate what in other circumstances would be noticed. Bellicose imagery and male heroics that are finally violent, language about the divine and/or that includes triumphalist terms, all detract from the experience. It need not be that way.

Some leadership styles of certain schools - like some Ignatian and more fundamentalist Buddhist approaches - beg sustained feminist attention. Just the term "retreat master" is so off-putting that suitable alternatives recognizing spiritual wisdom but inviting collegiality are crucial to make a retreat an advance. Happily, there are some feminist retreat centers now, with more in the offing.

Local base communities find retreats refreshing. For example, Sisters Against Sexism in Washington enjoys an overnight away each year. We are fortunate to have access to members' beach homes where we can relax, play, party and pray in an informal setting. This year a magnificent croning ritual

planned by Diann Neu and Cheryl Nichols was woven into the weekend, giving it a festive flair none will soon forget. Of course we could have done it in our regular evening gathering, but this way we had time to savor the ceremony and internalize the changes that croning brought about in the whole group, both the elders now recognized for their wisdom and the rest of us newly attentive to our chronological places. Such things take time, and a retreat is that.

Retreats seem like a luxury in a world where most of us are occupied morning until night with the daily demands of home, work, family and community. Moreover, time away is costly - room and board, travel, lost wages, childcare, program expenses, not to mention time. For most women, a retreat is well beyond their means.

Among those who do take such periodic times of refreshment - whether women in religious communities for whom such is expected and built into the budget and calendar, or those lucky souls with beach houses or other get-away spots they create for themselves - there is consensus that retreat time is a necessary luxury. The feminist question is how to make it more widely available. Sharing such places is a start, and sharing one's retreat money with another woman every other year is another idea. But the major point is that we do not need to assume that what seems to be a luxury is necessarily elitist, rather, figure ways to socialize it.

A retreat is not meant to solve life's problems or provide a magic moment of insight. Instead, it is meant as a time to pay special attention. Like a birthday or anniversary, a good meal at a fine restaurant or a vacation, a retreat is not something extra or earned, but something well within the bounds of what ordinary life offers, or ought to if we share resources. Give it a try, and aid others to do the same. It works.

*Mary E. Hunt, Ph.D., feminist liberation theologian and ethicist, co-founded and co-directs WATER.*

# The Horse is Out of the Barn

By Mary E. Hunt

An abbreviated version of this article was published in the August 13 edition of the *National Catholic Reporter*.

Two decades ago when I came to Washington as a young feminist theologian, "Catholic lesbian" was a contradiction in terms. Today it, like "gay Catholic," is simply a description of one more member of a faith community whose name means "universal." Catholics come in all shapes and sizes, all sexual persuasions and races. What unites Catholics is not so much a man in Rome or a set of beliefs as it is an unwavering confidence that there is more going on than people can control. We call this the Holy Spirit. She always has her way, this time on homosexuality.

On matters of homosexuality Catholics have come a long way in a short time. This is thanks in part to the pioneering work of Sister Jeannine Gramick and Father Robert Nugent, who were prohibited recently by the Vatican from exercising their effective ministry with lesbian/gay Catholics, their families and friends. In an extremely harsh judgement, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, with the approval of Pope John Paul II, issued a statement that rendered them "permanently prohibited from any pastoral work involving homosexual persons" and "ineligible, for an undetermined period, for any office" in their religious communities. The mind boggles at how such a decree is implemented.

So far the decree's major impact has been to catalyze Catholics in defense of what they know to be right. Something similar happened in 1968 with the publication of *Humanae Vitae*, the encyclical prohibiting birth control. It helped to clarify Catholic conscience on that issue. The overwhelming majority of U.S. Catholics now use a form of birth control that is prohibited. Professor Charles Curran, a Catholic priest, was expelled from his teaching post at Catholic University in 1986 over this and other matters of sexuality. Like Gramick and Nugent, he paid a high personal price for what is finally a change in the *sensus fidelium*, or the sense of the faithful. This latest Roman silencing is tacit proof that the collective Catholic mind has changed even though Rome has yet to catch up.

Changes in Catholic peoples' attitudes toward their lesbian/gay children, parents, friends and relatives are readily apparent to those who have eyes to see. When in 1977 Jeannine and

Bob founded New Ways Ministry, a small non-profit organization that provides educational and pastoral resources, they were virtually alone. I recall early board meetings and social gatherings of a handful of people, all finding our way against the odds.

In 1984, at the urging of Cardinal James Hickey, Rome prohibited them from working in the Archdiocese of Washington. They continued their workshops, lectures, writing and pastoral care under the aegis of their respective religious communities. Others took over at New Ways Ministry. Jeannine and Bob carved out an important niche in their work with parents of lesbian/gay people, helping countless of them square their faith with their children's lives.

This summer's picnic at New Ways was a melange of folks—priests and nuns, same-sex and heterosexual couples with and without their children, beloved parents, and even a bishop. The co-founders were in charge of the buffet table and the grill respectively, gracious helpers back at a family gathering. This is cause for silencing?

The institutional Church's position was and remains clear that homosexual orientation is "disordered" and homosexual acts are "intrinsically evil." But good people, in this case good Catholics, who come face to face with a lesbian daughter or a gay son, who live next door to a lesbian couple, or who work with a gay man on the assembly line, have come to realize that this is simply not correct.

Biological and social sciences show that sexuality is a complex matter about which there are few final answers. Philosophy has changed so that we make ethical judgements on the basis of actual people, not abstract categories. Theology contributes insights including "in all things, charity." Common sense plays a major role. The Vatican's position, in all of its nuance, is simply wrong.

A person who loves someone of the same sex is not disordered - discriminated against, bashed perhaps, even killed, but not disordered. Disordered describes people who do heinous things. Likewise, when my partner and I make love, we do not do something "intrinsically evil," but something lovely that is

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## Women-Church Convergence Speaks In Times of Oppression

Women-Church Convergence is a coalition of thirty-three autonomous Catholic-rooted organizations/groups raising a feminist voice and committed to an *ekklesia* of women that is participative, egalitarian and self-governing. WATER is an active member of this coalition; Diann Neu is one of the Coordinators. In response to the egregious injustices in the following three instances, the Convergence issued the following statement, which Mary Hunt co-authored:

**WE AFFIRM** Mary Daly for her creative contributions to feminist scholarship and pedagogy, her courageous commitments to the well being of women.

More so, we affirm women's space as a necessary part of doing justice.

**WE COMMIT** to create more women's spaces.

**WE AFFIRM** Jeannine Gramick, SSND, and Robert Nugent, SDS, for their pioneering pastoral work with lesbian/gay people, their families and friends.

More so, we affirm the healthy, good, natural and holy lives of lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered people.

**WE COMMIT** to work for a sex-positive Roman Catholic Church.

**WE AFFIRM** Margie Henninger, SSJ, for her prophetic stance as a member of a canonical religious community ministering with the Spiritus Christi Community, Rochester, NY.

More so, we affirm all people who engage in ministry in the style of a discipleship of equals.

**WE COMMIT** to advocate for the autonomy and moral integrity of religious communities.

*Women are the image of God. Young, middle-aged, crone - all mirror Holy Wisdom. All are saints. This November 1 All Saints Day liturgy was planned with Rose Mary Meyer, Sheila Dierks, Darlene Noeson and Joanne Cullen, members of the Women-Church Convergence, and celebrated at the 1998 Call to Action Conference in Milwaukee, WI.*

### Preparation

*On the symbol table in the center of the room pour a mound of sand and add three large cowrie shells. Around the sand place seven baskets filled with different breads, carafes of wine and juice, seven goblets and napkins. Intertwine these with cloths representing different cultures. Have a cowrie shell and sheet of music for each participant. Invite seven women to be bread blessers, and a dancer, a young woman, a middle-aged woman and a crone to interact with one another around the shells.*

**Song:** "Earthmaker's Child" by Kathy Sherman, from *Singing My Soul*, c. 1996.

Happy the eyes that see what you see.  
Blest are the ears that hear what you hear  
And happy the heart that loves what you love.  
Earthmaker's child are you.

### Call to Gather

*(The dancer blesses the space and invites the young woman into the center. The young woman picks up a large cowrie shell, looks at it playfully and puts it in the sand. She becomes a silhouette and watches as the dancer beckons the middle-aged woman. This one looks at a shell, holds it in her hands, becomes a silhouette and watches the dancer call forth the elder woman. The crone takes a shell and holds it to her heart. The dancer blesses each woman and invites the three to embrace.)*

Young, middle-aged, crone - each woman images the Holy. All are saints. (*Gesturing to the gathered*) Young, middle-aged, crone - we are images of God. We are saints. Welcome to this Women-Church Liturgy, "We are All Saints."

During this season we remember the ongoing relationship between the living and the dead. This communion of saints bonds us with the community of women, children and men, past, present and future. The worlds of the living and the dead are very close at this time of year.

Saints image God as we image God. Look around. Notice the faces among us. Turn to those around you and introduce yourself, say-

ing, "Hi! I'm Saint \_\_\_\_ (name). I am an image of God." (*Introductions*)

**Song:** "When the Saints," Traditional.  
Oh, when the saints go marching in,  
Oh when the saints go marching in,  
Oh yes I want to be in that number,  
When the saints go marching in.

### Invocation

Divine Imagination, Thoughtful God, Wisdom-Sophia. You bring us together to celebrate that each of us is a gift of your sacred creativity. As we come into your community today we are conscious of your presence as we see sacredness in the faces to our left and right, in the eyes of those both like us and different. You are here in our discovery and in the joy it brings us in this holy moment as we celebrate your spirit in each of us. Amen. Blessed Be. Let It Be So.

**Reading** from Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, in *Discipleship of Equals*, c. 1993.

A "great cloud of witnesses" surrounds us and has preceded us throughout the centuries in the ekklesia of women. We derive hope and courage from the memory of our foremothers and their struggles for survival and dignity, from the remembrance of our foresisters who have resisted patriarchal dehumanization and violence in the power of the Spirit.

**Question** (*The young woman asks the crone*):

Wise Grandmother, tell me, when do I image God? When do I look like Wisdom-Sophia?

**Response** (*The crone answers*):

When you are yourself...

**Response by All:** You image God.

When you laugh with others...R

When you heal the injured...R

When you share your gifts...R

When you march in protest...R

When you simplify your life...R

When you challenge the church...R

Look into the face of the person next to you.

When you are yourself, every day...R

**Reading** from Diana L. Hayes, in *Trouble Don't Last Always Soul Prayers*, c. 1996.

My hope lies in the dream of a new understanding of civilization, a new understanding of humanity that does not require the dehumanizing of some and the exalting of only a few. I seek a new vision that uplifts all, regardless of race, ethnicity, color or sex.

**Question** (*The crone asks the middle-aged woman*):

Soul Sister, tell me, when do I image God? When do I look like Wisdom-Sophia?

**Response** (*The middle-aged woman answers*):

When you share another's joy...

**Response:** You image God.

When you break bread and do justice...R

When you teach the rejected...R

When you appreciate nature...R

When you recognize creation...R

When you share a meal...R

When you confront patriarchy...R

Look into the face of the person next to you.

When you are yourself, every day...R



**Reading** from Mary Hunt, in *Fierce Tenderness*, c. 1994.

New images abound for a friendly divinity. Like the figure of justice, justice is no longer blindfolded. Justice stands with open arms and ample bosom ready to embrace and to nurture as necessary, to propel and encourage as appropriate. This is an image that women friends know and appreciate.

**Question** (*The middle-aged woman asks the young woman*):

Dear Friend, tell me, when do I image God? When do I look like Wisdom-Sophia?

**Response** (*The young woman answers*):

When you light a candle...R

When you hold someone who has been abused...R

When you show compassion...R

When you make love...R

When you recognize yourself as an image of God...R

When you risk arrest for what is right...R

When you make friends...R

Look into the face of the person next to you.  
When you are yourself, every day...R

### Sharing

Look at the cowrie shell in your hand. Cowrie shells focus women's powers. They represent healing, fertility, rebirth, connection across cultures and generations, spirituality. Call to memory a woman who is holy, a saint, and an image of God for you. This could be a woman who helped you at some point in your life; someone who shared her wisdom with you; your mother, your grandmother, your neighbor; one who noticed you needed a hug and embraced you. *(Pause)* Let this cowrie shell represent this woman. *(Pause)* How does she image the Holy?

# Are All Saints

Diann L. Neu

Describe her saintly qualities. What stories about her will you tell the next generation of women? *(Pause)*

Now, turn to one or two people and share the name of this woman and one of her virtues that you admire. *(Sharing)*

### Litany of Women

Let us create a litany of women represented here. Proclaim the name of a woman whose memory has come to you during this liturgy. Let us hear a chorus of names. *(Naming)*

**Eucharistic Prayer** by Diann L. Neu  
*(The blessers come to the center and pray)*

1. Lift up your hearts.

**All: We lift them up to God.**

Let us give thanks to our gracious Mother Goddess, Wisdom-Sophia.

**All: It is right to give her thanks and praise.**

Blessed are you, Loving and Challenging Friend, Wisdom-Sophia.

With joy we give you thanks and praise for creating a diverse world

And for creating women in the image of God.

You call us to share your story, and we say:

**All: Holy Wisdom-Sophia, we praise you,  
we thank you, we image you.**

2. Blessed are you, Womb of All Creation, Wisdom-Sophia.

You create women in your divine image,

From age to age you form us from your womb;

You breathe your breath of life into us.

You call us to share your story, and we say:

**All: Holy Wisdom-Sophia, we praise you,  
we thank you, we image you.**

3. Blessed are you, God of Our Mothers, Wisdom-Sophia.

You call diverse women to participate in salvation history,

Eve, Lilith, Sarah, Hagar, Miriam, Naomi, Ruth, Mary, Mary Magdalene, Tecla, Phoebe, Hildegard, Sor Juana Inez de la Cruz, Sojourner Truth and countless others.

You call us to share their stories, and we say:

**All: Holy Wisdom-Sophia, we praise you,  
we thank you, we image you.**

4. Blessed are you, Creator of all seasons and all peoples, Wisdom-Sophia.

You call women by name

To be prophets, teachers, house church leaders, saints,

And to image your loving presence.

You call us to share their stories, and we say:

**All: Holy Wisdom-Sophia, we praise you,  
we thank you, we image you.**

5. Blessed are you, Companion on the Journey, Wisdom-Sophia.

You have built yourself a house,

You have hewn seven pillars,

You have prepared a rich banquet for us.

You call us to share your story, and we say:

**All: Holy Wisdom-Sophia, we praise you,  
we thank you, we image you.**

*(Each blesser picks up a basket of bread and drink and the seven pray together.)*

**All Blessers:** Blessed are you, Holy Bakerwoman, Wisdom-Sophia.

In your abundant love you welcome all to come and dine.

You proclaim from the rooftops,

"Come and eat my bread, drink the wine which I have drawn."

You call us to share your story, and we say:

**All: Holy Wisdom-Sophia, we praise you,  
we thank you, we image you.**

6. Come, O Holy Sister Spirit, Wisdom-Sophia,

upon this bread and wine.

Come as wind and breathe your life anew into our weary bones.

Come as rain and water our thirsty souls.

Come as fire and purge us and our church of sexism, racism, classism, heterosexism, and all evils.

You call us to share your story, and we say:

**All: Holy Wisdom-Sophia, we praise you,  
we thank you, we image you.**

7. Come, Soul Sister, Wisdom-Sophia,

And bring the new creation:

The breaking of bread, the raising of the cup, the doing of justice.

You call us to share your story, and we say:

**All: Holy Wisdom-Sophia, we praise you,  
we thank you, we image you.**

1. Eat, drink and partake of life's banquet.

Receive the love, healing and nourishment of Wisdom-Sophia.

*(Blessers pass bread and goblets around)*

**Communion and Song:** "This Day is My Daily Bread" by Kathy Sherman, from **Singing My Soul**, c. 1996.

This day is my daily bread, take it, bless it,  
break it, give it, to all I meet this day.

### Blessing

Raise your hands in blessing over the heads of those saints around you. *(Pause)*

### Sending Forth

Women saints, let us go forth with courage,

For we are the image of God.

Let us go forth in beauty,

For we are the image of God.

Let us go forth to recognize the face of the sacred in all living beings,

For we are the image of God.

**Song:** "Dance in the New Day" by Kathy Sherman, from **Dance in the Dawn**, c. 1993.

Women go forth to proclaim your stories,  
Go with your visions and go with your dreams.  
Women go quickly, the night is waiting  
For us to dance in the new day.

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*Diann L. Neu, M.Div., MSW, co-founder and co-director of WATER, is a feminist liturgist and licensed psychotherapist.*

## In Memory of Her

From Carol and Joe Scinto, Rockville, MD:

In memory of the September 4 wedding celebration of **Blaise Scinto** and **Morton Posner** in which WATER in all its many manifestations played such a significant part. Our dear daughter and her chosen mate found that family and friends, love and laughter, ceremony and champagne, combined with spirited dancing, easily bested Hurricane Dennis, especially with the quick-witted guidance of **Diann Neu**, accompanying backup from **Mary Hunt** and helpful connections of **Cindy Lapp**. It was a grand deluge of a day!

From Mary E. Hunt & Diann Neu of WATER:

In memory of beloved **Mary O'Keefe** of the Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa, WI, a long-time supporter of our work at WATER. Here in Washington, DC, she prowled Capital Hill and other places where decisions are made, always seeking truth and promoting justice. We will miss her but are grateful to her order and to the Creator for her life among us.



## Smart Giving

There are many ways to help WATER grow. First thoughts tend to center on cash donations. But don't stop there. As a non-profit 501 (c) (3) organization, WATER can also accept your gifts of stocks, life insurance or IRAs. Sometimes it is more advantageous to give such assets away and receive the tax deduction than cash them in yourself and pay a steep capital gains tax. Let us help you get a tax break (and give us a break, too).

And you don't have to limit your giving to this lifetime. While we wish healthy long lives to each of you, we encourage you to plan ahead for when you are not here to share in WATER's gifts. Including WATER as a bequest in your will is a way to make a difference for justice and inclusion, for ensuring that your concerns for women and religion are heard even after your voice is gone. For more information on donating stocks, life insurance, IRAs or including WATER in your will, contact WATER.

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## Experiencing WATER

By Kate Holbrook

*"It was a felt thing, that I was traveling toward myself... returning to people I'd never met... Water going back to itself. I was water falling into a lake and these women were the lake..." - Linda Hogan, Solar Storm*

Coming to WATER this past summer was for me like rain falling into a lake. It was a time of traveling toward myself, moving toward a home for which every cell in my body had been waiting. I became part of many bodies of WATER, part of a lake, a community of strong, justice seeking, creative women who have a passion for people, the divine, life and change; part of rivers of activists across the country, around the world, who are calling their religious traditions and governments to accountability and change through compassion and love. I became part of the life-giving network that WATER has created over sixteen years, that has given me a stronger understanding of being both rooted and having wings to fly in the herstory of women and religion.

Some time has passed since my internship, and I still find it difficult to articulate how meaningful my experience was, how much I learned and will continue to grow because of my time at WATER. Some of my feelings cannot be expressed with words; perhaps someday I can convey them with movements or with paints. For me, being at WATER meant being in an affirming, loving, empowering community of wise women who journeyed with me, a college student passionate about women, religion, spirituality, social justice and art. The openness and inclusiveness of WATER embodied in both work and play allowed me to be who I am, in a safe space. Involvement in the day to day work, from liturgies to research to office work, reinforced for me the importance, uniqueness and need for WATER.

*Kate Holbrook, summer intern at WATER, is now back at Bates College in Maine, working on her senior thesis.*

## ... Out of the Barn

(Continued from page 2)

a human right when enjoyed safely, responsibly and with care. In fact, our love, like all love, builds human community. Moreover, good people rightly perceive that all of us are more than our sexuality. Undue emphasis on the sexuality of lesbian/gay people is called homohatred.

Thousands of Catholics belong to Dignity, the denominational support and advocacy group, or to the Conference for Catholic Lesbians. Many Catholic parishes today extend a warm welcome to their lesbian/gay members. A number of religious orders - both nuns and priests/brothers - have lesbian/gay groups. Many Catholic theologians, myself included, are writing about sexual ethics within our tradition, assuming that lesbian/gay sex is as healthy, good and natural as heterosexual sex. The issues of human relationships are never easy, but starting with a sound premise is necessary if we are to be helpful.

Ironically, Rome's argument for silencing the pair was based on the notion that Catholics were confused about the Church's teaching. To the contrary, Catholics understand it fully but an increasing number of us respectfully disagree. I detect that what Rome wanted

from Sister Gramick and Father Nugent was finally not so much about sex as about power. It was as if they were in a fight for which the victor demanded that the vanquished cry uncle.

This back and forth with Rome has gone on for nearly twenty years, Rome insisting that the priest and nun agree with every jot and tittle of an outmoded worldview, the two insisting that yet more nuance was necessary lest they say something that would jeopardize their credibility in the community they serve. In fact, that community holds them in the highest esteem, but has moved on to clearer, stronger affirmations of same sex love. Their work has sparked others. The pressing needs of ministry trump ideology, whether progressive or conservative.

The Vatican erred this time, just as it erred earlier against Galileo. In the latter case it took centuries, but the Church finally admitted its error and continued apace. In theology, time is measured in centuries, not years. I am confident that this error will be corrected, albeit long after Jeannine, Bob and I are dead. History is like that, and Catholics believe that the Holy Spirit prevails.

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## Resources

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Boucher, Sandy. **DISCOVERING KWAN YIN, BUDDHIST GODDESS OF COMPASSION.** Boston: Beacon Press, 1999 (132 pages, \$18).

A study in compassion written with compassion, this is a treasure. Sandy Boucher combines scholarly sophistication with spiritual simplicity offering the reader the Goddess Kwan Yin for meditation and accompaniment.

Dyer, Mary Heron. **YEAR OF JUBILEE: A GUIDEBOOK FOR WOMEN REINVENTING THEIR LIVES.** Corvallis, OR: Dandelion Seed Press, tel. 541-753-2819, 1999 (247 pages, \$18.95).

What a great way to look at turning 50, or any other time when one needs some rest and renewal, a new start, retirement (jubilarse in Spanish means to retire!). This book is a guide and a faith accompaniment all at once.

Fiedler, Maureen and Linda Rabben, eds. **ROME HAS SPOKEN: A GUIDE TO FORGOTTEN PAPAL STATEMENTS, AND HOW THEY HAVE CHANGED THROUGH THE CENTURIES.** New York: Crossroad, 1998 (243 pages, \$19.95).

The Vatican doth protest too much. "Rome has spoken, the case is closed"? It seems Rome changes its collective mind a lot, as documented by scholars on a range of controversial issues.

Gadeberg, Jeanette. **BRAVE NEW GIRLS.** Minneapolis: Fairview Press, 1997 (180 pages, \$12.95).

Our girls need this wonderful think and do book as they develop their girl power and become confident, competent women.

Greene, Dana. **EVELYN UNDERHILL: ARTIST OF THE INFINITE LIFE.** Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998 (179 pages, \$16).

It is hard to capture the mystic on paper, but Dana Greene does a

wonderful job of bringing this one to life.

Karaban, Roslyn A. **EXTRAORDINARY PREACHING: TWENTY HOMILIES BY ROMAN CATHOLIC WOMEN.** San Jose, CA: Resource Publications, Inc., 1996 (96 pages, \$13.95).

Whoever said Roman Catholic women can't preach ought to read this sample of their homilies.

Kassmann, Margot. **OVERCOMING VIOLENCE.** Geneva: WCC Publications, 1998 (96 pages, \$6.95).

It is hard to imagine a topic around which there is more ecumenical agreement and less international accord. Hopefully, this book will help.

McNeill, John J. **BOTH FEET FIRMLY PLANTED IN MIDAIR.** Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998 (184 pages, \$18.95).

The best of traditional religious autobiography and the best of gay memoir make this a compelling story by a spiritually mature man.

K, Amber. **COVENCRAFT: WITCHCRAFT FOR THREE OR MORE.** St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 1998 (504 pages, \$17.95).

A good primer to get over the stereotypes and into the reality of the craft.

Rose, Lucy Atkinson. **SHARING THE WORD: PREACHING IN THE ROUNDTABLE CHURCH.** Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997 (158 pages, \$17).

The move from on high to among us, from hierarchical authority to sharer in the community's wisdom is arduous but necessary if new models of church are to prevail. Schüssler Fiorenza, Elisabeth. **THE BOOK OF REVELATION:**

**JUSTICE AND JUDGEMENT.** Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998 (243 pages, \$12).

As the new millenium dawns, popular culture is rife with images and symbols from the Book of Revelation. Elisabeth brings scholarly insight to the text and steers readers toward a praxis of justice.

Stuart, Elizabeth et al. **RELIGION IS A QUEER THING: A GUIDE TO THE CHRISTIAN FAITH FOR LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDERED PEOPLE.** Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 1997 (152 pages, \$15.95).

Part study guide, part catechism, part theology, this unique resource will help many individuals and groups cope with the new "Good News" that gay and Christian can be compatible.

### Videos

**ANCIENT HEALING, A RITUAL FOR OUR TIME FROM THE CLAN OF THE NOT-SO-MANY BREASTED WOMEN ON BEHALF OF THE GREAT MOTHER AND PLANET EARTH: THE VIDEO** by Sharon Thomson et al. Grailville Bookstore, 932 O'Bannonville Road, Loveland, OH 45140, tel. 513-683-2340 (35 minutes, \$10 plus \$4 p+h).

This is a must see video on breast cancer, detailing a powerful ritual put on by survivors featuring music, dance, solid information and spiritual depth.

**GOD, GAYS AND THE GOSPEL,** directed by Mary Anne McEwan. New York: The Cinema Guild, Inc., 1991 (58 minutes, \$59.95).

A well-fashioned documentary on the beginnings of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Churches (UFMCC), a Christian denomination with preferential concern for lesbian/gay/bisexual and transgendered people. This

story tells the tale only until 1990, but it is a rich, welcome video.

**YOUR MOM'S A LESBIAN. HERE'S YOUR LUNCH; HAVE A GOOD DAY AT SCHOOL.** Produced by John Ankele and Anne Macksoud. Leonardo's Children, Inc., 26 Newport Bridge Road, Warwick, NY 10990, tel. 914-986-6888 (27 minutes, \$32.35).

The story of Janie Spahr and her family. She is a lesbian minister who lives and loves, ministers and socializes just like everybody else.

### For Children of All Ages

Karon, Jan. **MISS FANNIE'S HAT.** Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1998 (32 pages, \$16.99).

A delightful tale of a wonderful woman who takes her hat off to the church, literally!

Hearne, Betsy. **SEVEN BRAVE WOMEN.** New York: Greenwillow Books, 1997 (20 pages, \$15).

The story of seven women who lived during a range of wars but never fought in any of them. Still, they were brave and courageous - going to medical school, riding in a covered wagon to new territory, making up stories. Marvelous.

### Music

Sue Fulton. **"UNDER THE MOON."** Sue Fulton, 424 West Eighth Street, Apt. 2, Plainfield, NJ 07060, tel. 908-754-2942 (\$10 plus \$3 p+h).

Sue is a popular performer and song leader at Kirkridge and part of Woman Song. Contact her for the earlier two tapes and get the whole collection.

Sandy Rapp. **"WE THE PEOPLE."** Sandy Rapp Music, PO Box 1191, Wainscott, NY 11975-1191 (CD \$15.95, Cassette \$9.95).

Fun folk music for justice seekers.



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*We Give Thanks for You!*

**M**ary E. Hunt enjoyed the beauty of Highlands, NC, where she led the Women's Dialogue Seminar of the Highlands Institute for American Religious and Philosophic Thought (HIARPT) on "Post-Patriarchal Ethics – A Feminist Theopolitical Approach." She also lectured for the HIARPT summer weekly series on "Ethics for a New Millenium." Highlands is a vibrant intellectual community where WATER colleague **Jean Hammond** summers.

Dr. Hunt lectured for the **E Pluribus Unum Conference**, a creative effort to bring together Jewish, Protestant and Catholic students who have just graduated from high school and will begin college in the fall. These students spent several weeks in Washington engaged in interfaith learning and strategizing.

Mary also spoke with young women and men who are the pro-choice leaders of the future at the **Gloria Steinem Institute of Choices, Inc.** This innovative program gathers 75 young people who are campus leaders in the struggle to safeguard reproductive health care.

## WATER Power



*WATER meets water: Mary Hunt and Diann Neu took a healing sip at St. Anne's well in the heart of Malvern, England, during August travels.*

**D**iann Neu designed and celebrated a "Bless This House" liturgy for long-time WATER friends **Dorothy Vidulich, csjp**, and **Jeanne Keaveny, csjp**. She created and, with Cheryl Nichols, led "Choosing Wisdom: A Croning Ceremony" for **Ruth Fitzpatrick, Caroll Saussy** and **Maclovía Rodriguez** of SAS, a DC based Women-Church community. She planned and presided at "A Circle of Friends" liturgy to bless **Jackie Dienemann** as she and her husband retire and move to NC.

Diann presided and preached on "Praise the Spirit of Faithful Women" for the **Unitarian Universalist Congregation** of Columbia, MD. She was interviewed about feminist prayer by **Maureen Fiedler, sl**, on the radio program, "Faith Matters," and lectured to 40 high school students through the **United Methodist Seminars on International and National Affairs**, which focused on "Scriptures, Authority and Human Rights."

WATER gathered DC area communities for a "**Summer Solstice: Honoring the Sun**" liturgy. Call if we can help you with lectures, workshops, spiritual direction, psychotherapy, resources, liturgies, internships and Visiting Scholarships