

Author challenges all to revise model of reality

Women, Earth and Creator Spirit by Elizabeth A. Johnson; Paulist Press (Mahwah, N.J., 1993); 79 pages; \$4.95.

By Christine M. Bochen
Guest contributor

Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit is the most recently published Madeleva Lecture in Spirituality, a series of annual lectures initiated in 1985 by the Center for Spirituality at St. Mary's College, Notre Dame, Indiana. The series honors Sister M. Madeleva, C.S.C., who, as president of the women's college, established its theology department.

The lectures — later published as books — focus on such themes as Scripture, prayer, teaching, mysticism or sex-

uality and explores the ways in which feminist perspectives contribute to theological understanding.

In *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, Elizabeth Johnson challenges us to think about the ways in which the present ecological crisis is "an ethical, religious, and theological issue of critical importance." The exploitation of the earth, she insists, is "intimately linked to the marginalization of women" and "to forgetting the Creator Spirit who pervades the world in the dance of life."

After citing signs such as signs of ecological devastation as toxic waste and animal extinction, Johnson concludes that we are "wasting the world" and that unless "there is a radical reversal soon, we must ask the question whether life, our

own and that of future human generations as well as that of myriad living creatures, will flourish on this planet or will pathetically diminish, even disappear."

Such a reversal will entail a new way of seeing and being in the world, Johnson notes. We need first to recognize how we have marginalized and denigrated both women and the earth — which is most often symbolized as female; how we have regarded nature as something to be subjugated, manipulated and dominated; and how we have come to see God as "essentially separate from and over against the world."

Once this recognition dawns, she observes, we will be able to embrace a new vision that recognizes and celebrates our

interconnectedness by building a community characterized by the "mutuality of equals;" realizing our kinship with the earth; and remembering that God is the Creator Spirit: the life-giver, who renews the face of the earth.

Wind, fire and water, Johnson reminds us, are symbols of the Spirit who "awakens and enlivens all things." Johnson's reflections on the Creator Spirit are especially rich and provocative to thought and to prayer.

This is an exciting book that challenges us to rethink our relations to each other, to the earth and to God. Johnson urges us to revise our model of reality, trading in the pyramid for the "web." Like the other books in this series, it is well worth reading.

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