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Author lauds older women

JUBILEE TIME: CELEBRATING WOMEN, SPIRIT AND THE ADVENT OF AGE, by Maria Harris. Bantam Books (New York, 1995). 224 pp., \$22.95.

Reviewed by Margaret O'Connell
 Catholic News Service


Maria Harris was inspired by Leviticus 25 — "you shall hallow the 50th year. It shall be a jubilee for you" — to write *Jubilee Time*, a book for women approaching, at or past their 50th year. She sent questionnaires to 135 women to gather ideas for an exploration of this command as it applies to aging women. It was a good idea, though the sample is statistically insignificant.

Still, *Jubilee Time* has much good material. As with *Dance of the Spirit*, the author's strong suit is spirituality. She notes "we must give thanks (to God) ... or perish from ingratitude." She reminds women to be present to the moment lest they "miss the gift of the moment." And in our frantic age she reiterates that women's lives must be "nourished by silence, solitude and prayer."

A series of exercises makes this a book which can be read thoughtfully. Among them are:

- Honoring your glorious age.
- Uncovering wisdom.
- The flight from freedom.
- Taking a power inventory.
- Where your treasure is.

Ending female impersonation (that is, being one's real self, not society's feminine shell).
 What then are signs of the approaching jubilee year for the childless wife? The never-married (childless) woman? The working woman whose responsibilities increase each year in response to increasing abilities? The wife who must work full-time because her husband has been laid off or fired just as he entered his jubilee year or reached maximum benefits and salary?
 But while Harris discusses at length "the loss of a life partner" as a threshold most women cross, the relational thresholds that the aging, never-married woman must cross are neither mentioned nor discussed. They exist. They are real.
 When she acknowledges her surprise that vital, involved older women fail to focus on decline and impairment, I wondered where she has been living her life. Women, older women, do not have the leisure to focus on decline and impairment.
 Gather the spiritual gems in *Jubilee Time*. Ignore the author's blind spots and inconsistencies. Contact the organizations for older people she mentions on page 122-123. And find yourself strengthened to be your real self, to meet the aging woman's realities.
Margaret O'Connell, a New York City media professional, is also a book reviewer and writer.



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