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## **Betsey Beckman Brings Movement to CWIC**

**Nikki Nordstrom**

**E**ighty women gathered at the January CWIC meeting at St. Patrick's in Seattle to share story through movement with Betsey Beckman, a nationally celebrated liturgical dancer. A range of interests drew women together that morning, from curiosity about ways to expand their prayer experience to a well-developed interest in liturgical dance. Betsey began by unfolding the creation story through words, music and movement. Her vision "that we as people would feel and more fully embrace our emotional and physical selves so that we could more deeply experience our range of our being" (CWIC Newsletter, Winter 1995 issue) was evidenced that day. The feminine perspective of creation was explored as God "birthed" light, the planets, water, the galaxies. We shared in Her longing for other creatures to take delight with her in life and beauty.

After the creation story we began exploring some of our own emotions and longings through movement to music, feeling liberated by the space we had in which to move. The experience was a mixture of surprise, vulnerability and liberation. The sharing that followed powerfully mirrored that discovery.

There is a growing interest in liturgical dance. St. Joseph Parish in Seattle now has an eighteen member Liturgical Dance Ministry that is part of their Liturgical Commission. As part of their goals to interpret word, enliven processions and bring dramatic focus to part of the liturgy, they worked with Betsey Beckman to interpret through movement the first readings during Advent.

Paul Gates, the Liturgical Director at St. Joseph's, has long been supportive of liturgical dance. "It is vital to put more energy into learning to pray with our bodies. Liturgical dance is an expression of the Incarnation." Mary Guerra, a St. Joseph's parishioner, feels liturgical dance "enhances peoples' awareness of embodiment of prayer and the deepening of prayer that can result."

St. Therese Parish in Seattle also introduced liturgical dance into their Advent Liturgies. Liz Ellman, one of the dancers, reports, "As a novice to dance, I expected to be very nervous about my body when we danced during St. Therese's and St. Joseph's Advent liturgies. Once I started dancing, I was surprised to discover how comfortable I felt. My body yearns to move and pray in this way, and I felt very supported by the other liturgical dancers and the faith communities with whom we celebrated Mass. "