

Nicola Slee

Praying Like a Woman

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In *franciscan*, May 2005, Nicola Slee writes in her article 'Praying Like a Woman', "Any spirituality worthy of the name must engage with the full reality of what it means to be human and, for me, this means that my prayer is rooted in ... all that I experience as a woman... "

Her collection of poetry, prose and liturgical verse bear this out, being textured by the experiences of living, loving, struggling and suffering from within our human condition. From her raw and gutsy words is wrung the belief that the locus for the Divine encounter is precisely the mess and beauty of our human condition and for the author, the condition of her womanhood.

This gathering of honest, heart-felt cries of pain and praise offers a refreshing and daring voice for those feeling paralysed and excluded by masculine images for the Divine. She gives us a God who is to be discovered everywhere and in everyone: 'in the worker and shirker, the stumbler and raver; in the cursed and lonely, the loony, the silent; in the angel, the fool and the friend...'

God is Quester and Jester: 'Jester God, clown your disruptive presence / Into the comedy of my days... ' Her words rise above self pity, and consecrate her losses and griefs to the cause of God's Domain. In her poem 'Prayer of A Childless Woman' she writes: 'Though this belly has never swollen with the burden of a baby, let me grow big with the longing for justice which shall be for all the children of God.' (I recommend this particular prayer for all living a life of consecrated celibacy).

Here in this collection are words and images that may startle some with their frankness and newness. They invite the reader into a wide vista of unfettered exploration. For those, particularly women, searching for a holistic way to pray, these pithy and beautiful poems and prayers can only encourage and enrich the praying life. Anyone concerned for contemporary, inclusive and 'human' prayer and liturgical material will find here a rich treasure.

Catherine Joy CSF