

## And They Danced Before the Lord

*Initiated in 1982 by the International Dance Committee of the UNESCO International Theatre Institute, International Dance Day falls on April 29 of every year, commemorating the birthday of Jean-Georges Noverre, a distinguished choreographer who brought about significant reforms in ballet production. Dance is both an art form and a method of communication in cultures around the world, and is practiced by millions of people.*

The Scriptures remind us, in vivid images,  
That we can worship with the gift of our physical bodies,  
Our incarnate souls longing for wholeness and healing.

We reflect on Miriam, the sister of Moses,  
Who helped lead her people from suffering in the Exodus:  
She “took the timbrel in her hand, and all the women  
Went out after her with timbrels and with dancing.”

We remember King David,  
Displaying his love for the Divine,  
“Dancing before the Lord with all his might”  
To recognize and honor the One God of his people.

We recall the references to dance  
In the Psalms, which give thanks to God  
For turning “my mourning into dancing;  
Girding me with gladness.”

We rejoice with the prophets  
Such as Jeremiah, who spoke to the community  
Inspired words: “Again I will build you; Again  
You will go forth to the dances of those rejoicing.”

We recognize in Matthew’s gospel  
That Christ affirms there is a time  
For joyful music and dancing  
Just as there is a time for mourning and lamenting.

We celebrate these images of wholeness  
And of holiness, these reminders  
That we, too, are called to harmony  
Of body and soul, to incarnate joy. Amen.

— Jane Deren, Ph.D.

