"... There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, but Christ Jesus is all in all". (Galations Ch. 3:28)

This is the conclusion St Paul reaches in his great discourse on Justification by Faith. As such, it has sometimes been described as his "Magna Carta of Christian liberty". In Christ Jesus, all our divisions of class, status, race and gender have been broken down and all are now one in Him.

Many harsh things have been said about some aspects of Pauline writing, particularly to do with the role and status of women. His critics regard him as heavily patriarchal, reducing the status of women to that of a helper.

It is important to look to his best insights and to acknowledge that there may have been forces at work in the history of the church from the very earliest times which have tended to diminish the importance of matriarchy and to promote patriarchy. I choose my text from Galatians because it is largely free of this and it emphasises the great doctrines of justice and freedom.

This year draws to an end the Decade of Women. For a few minutes, before your National Conference actually begins I would like to reflect with you on the initial goals and directions set for the decade and then to consider with you where things might go in the next phrase of development. The extent of progress is something for you to examine and evaluate over the next few days and I will avoid making any detail comments in that direction.

Looking back over the decade the goals that have been set include the strong emphasis up on equal rights emerging out from the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights with it covenants on economic and political rights, and cultural and social rights. This brought forth policies such as equal opportunities, equal pay and access to work through affirmative action programs. It also led to moves to break down gender segregation in the work place, to remove harassment of women at work, to remove exclusive sexist language as symbolic of former divisions between men and women to secure control over one's body in the field of health and to secure access to adequate income security transfer payments, family allowances and child care services.
What is striking about this list is its emphasis upon the "instrumental", i.e., achieving the means of equality in a predominately male world on achieving rights on seeking to act "as women, from women's perspectives" of organising, fighting and lobbying through the political processes. Now the activist phase is a vital and inevitable part of change, but there will need to be other phases, emphasising new dimensions. When we consider what might characterise the next phase of development, it would appear that what is required is a broader pattern of relationships concerned with interaction between males and females, with a renewed effort to get back to what is fundamental for a wholesome social order. Putting those fundamentals in theological terms, I believe this means renewing our emphasis upon our shared interdependence and our co-partnership with Christ as co-workers in a world which is of God's creation.

Over the past few months in the Anglican Church there has been an intensive debate about the Ordination of women to the threefold orders of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons. When the issue of equality of rights for women has been raised, some have asked whether this is simply a modern secular trend and whether it is in fact opposed both to the Bible and to the traditions of the church. People who think in that way tend to regard the scriptures as being fixed and equally tend to ignore the fact that the word of God is constantly unfolding itself throughout the processes of history.

The most profound statement that one could offer in this respect is to uphold the incarnation, that is, our belief in the Word which is enfleshed in a Christ who is at work in the world. Thus, as issues of equality and liberation come to the surface, we can say in some measure that these are the outworkings of the gospel and that such doctrines are stated quite clearly in the St Paul's epistle to the Galatians. I am also bound to say that even in the writing of the scriptures and their reception in the early church, one can find evidence of what Elizabeth Moltmann-Wendel describes as a process of patriarchalisation. These are the phrases about the leadership of men over women to be found in 1 Corinthians. In the gospels themselves, people have wondered how Our Lord, if he had wanted women exercising leadership, had not included any among the twelve nor included any women at the last supper. I think we have to look at such issues as a very conscious act on the part of God in emptying himself and thereby limiting himself in many cases to the structures of the day, working within them until the world was ready to receive more holistic insights into his nature and purposes.

Where do we move to in the next phase after the decade of women? I want to approach this task on the assumption that there will be further changes and new directions. First however, we must address the question "how do we change?" Marilyn Ferguson in her book The Aquarian Conspiracy gives us some interesting insights. The first approach to change is what she calls "change by exception." Such an approach suggests that the basic order of things is alright except for a few matters which need to be rectified. Where there is an all male Board, all we need to do is include a woman, and everything will be alright! Where we tell the history of our civilisation, all we need to do is to balance up the exploits of men with the
exploits of women. For example, Charles Perry whose Cathedral Church this was as the first Bishop of Melbourne and the founder of this diocese; we must also remember that his wife Fanny was one of the founders of the Royal Women's Hospital and to name a wing after her puts their respective contributions in proper perspective.

The second approach to change, Ferguson discribes as "incremental change". This is gradual and imperceptible over the many epochs of human history. Gradually over time women are coming into their own and in the fullness of time everything will happen. Matriarchy will stand on equal terms beside patriarchy. Yet the study of history shows that the matriarchal tradition has often been rigorlessly suppressed and limited to domestic and household roles. The process of history has not been a matter of linear progress in this instance. In any case a modern rapidly changing world does not allow for this kind of gradualism. It will not allow us to say such things as "don't expect miracles overnight, don't expect change to occur in such a short period of ten years; Rome wasn't built in a day." The young are not much impressed by such sentiment because they are used to a world of instant change.

The third aspect of change is what Ferguson describes as "pendulum change", where one closed system gives way to another. People say that the old order was completely wrong and now the new order is completely right. The problem is that in this system there is no intergration between what was right with the old and frequently overstates what is right with the new. May I say respectfully this is one of the problems of radical feminism which tends to be separatist in its approach and therefore resists integrated approaches involving men and women in partnership. It condemns the old patriarchy and maintains its rage against society. In many ways it needs to maintain this rage in the sense that polarisation between the sexes in order to sustain itself, for this is its raison d'etre. Now one can understand perfectly well the dynamics of such an approach and this can be recognised without being critical of it. The point is however, that all three approaches stop short of the process of transformation. And it is for this reason that Ferguson proposes a fourth form of change which she describes as "paradigm change". In this view, previous approaches to change are only partial; previous world views are only partial. The process of transformation involves the covering over of all the parts to provide a completely new and holistic framework where the best of everything is affirmed rather than denied.

She says,

"in paradigm change we realise that our previous views were only part of the picture - and that what we now know is only part of what we will know later. Change is no longer threatening. It absorbs, enlargers, enriches. The unknown is friendly, interesting territory. Each insight widens the road, making the next stage of travel, the next opening easier."

In a moment I will explore what we mean by a paradigm, but sufice it to say that
when we wake up to the flux and the alteration of our own awareness, we begin to augment change. Synthesis builds upon synthesis and in many ways it links up with a whole evolutionary process. Theilland de Chardin once said, the aim evolution is "ever more perfect eyes in a world in which there is always more to see." We must apply this insight to the human condition itself and in particular to the relationships between men and women in that society.

To return to the theme many modern writers have observed the fact that contemporary society is in the midst of a major 'paradigm shift'. May I now attempt to explain what is meant by this. The term was first introduced by Thomas Kuhn, a science historian and philosopher in his book "The structure of scientific revolutions" (1962). A paradigm is a framework of thought deriving from the Greek 'paradima' or pattern. It is a scheme for understanding or explaining certain aspects of reality. Whilst Kuhn was writing about science the term has been widely used in other disciplines, such as in education, town planning, and medicine. A paradigm shift then, is a distinctly new way of thinking about old problems. Thus, a powerful new insight emerges which explains a number of apparent contradictions. It may produce a crisis, but instead of being destructive, it is instructive because it offers a more comprehensive explanation of life. Such shifts have always been part of human history; we have harnessed the use of fire, the wheel, language, writing, we have learnt to communicate, fly and explore. In more sophisticated terms Einstein's theory of relativity superceded Newton's paradigm of a universe based upon predictable mechanical forces.

We could regard the recent breakdown of gender segregation as an example of a paradigm shift in the area of human relations.

A paradigm involves a principle which was present all along but which was unknown. It includes both the old as a partial truth, one aspect of how things work, yet it allows other things to work in other ways as well. Traditional knowledge is transformed and new observations are reconciled with the old.

Thus in a new paradigm, patriarchy and matriarchy work hand in hand together in a new expression of interdependence and shared partnership.

Incidently, Kuhn also mentioned that paradigms are almost always received with coolness, even mockery and hostility. And this may help to account for the difficulties that occurred in the early stages of the decade of women.

Surely we can all agree that we ourselves and our society is in need of continuing transformation. The question is, of course, how does transformation occur? And to share those insights with others. But perhaps one of the most important places to start is to recognise that there are two centres of consciousness which have to be brought together - the mind and the heart.

Post-mortem examination of the human brain shows subtle structural differences between the left and the right sides. It would appear that the left
hemisphere controls speech. It adds, subtracts, hyphenates, measures, compartmentalises, organises, names, and generally handles the rational dimensions of life. The right hemisphere has little control over the mechanisms of speech, it understands language and gives speech its emotional inflection. It is more colourful, musical and sexual than the left hemisphere. It thinks in images, sees in wholes, detects patterns and it seems to mediate pain more intensively than the left hemisphere. At the risk of oversimplification it would appear that in Western society we have isolated the left from the right, the heart from the mind, and we have allowed the left or rational hemisphere to dominate. Thus, we have two cultures, one which is aesthetic, feeling and humanistic, and the other which is cool, analytical and scientific. We have allowed them to function somewhat independently rather like the right and left hemispheres of a split-brain patient. We have become the victims of our collective, divided consciousness. The quest for wholeness is the challenge of bringing the two together in a wider and more integrated framework.

Clearly we can see how the process of role segregation has occurred with regard to gender. Women have been segregated socially into the "Right Hemisphere" functions. Thus their work has been circumscribed, and their role has been to concentrate on household management, domestic concerns, the socialisation of the family, child rearing, the management of human relationships and so forth. This has meant that men have been allowed to get on with the more aggressive, instrumental and task orientated activities associated with the left hemisphere. Thus the dominance of economic over social, male over female, scientific over aesthetic aspects of life are all part of an historical process of segmentation.

Now when we see what has happened within the framework of such a paradigm, we can see that the task ahead is not simply to do with equal rights and opportunities and wider choices for women. Ultimately, the break down of gender segregation is to do with bringing together two centres of consciousness within the human race, bringing them together into a new and fuller framework which is to be as Paul said, free from such matters as class, status, race and gender.

Ferguson called her book The Aquarian Conspiracy. Like so many of the great words of our language the verb to conspire has been debased and distorted in its meaning. To conspire means to "breath together". The task ahead is for men and women to breath together and in the midst in an increasingly inhumane and divided world to breath new life together to co-operate in manifesting a new sense of humanness. One of the great contemporary theologians is Jurgen Moltmann, and you may recall I quoted his wife Elizabeth Moltmann-Wendel as the co-author of the book "The Humanity of God". There can be no better way of summing up the challenge for the next phrase following the decade of women. Together, men and women, we must seek to uncover a contemporary understanding of the humanity of God which will address the human condition and help to bridge the gulf between the church and the modern world.