

SOUTH, AUGUST

6 TO 12

1987

GAUG NATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

*In Christ there is neither
male nor female; neither,
Jew nor Gentile...*
Gal 3:27

*The freedom of our
people, lies bound up
with the freedom of
women —
The freedom of
women, lies bound
up with freedom of
our people.*



'Contradictions' in the church on role of women

THE strength and courage shown by 20 000 women when they marched on the the Union Buildings on August 9 1956 to protest the extension of passes to women remains an outstanding achievement.

But the role of women in the church needs to be questioned and challenged so that the meaning of "total liberation for all God's people" can be discovered, says the

Youth Department of the Cape Town Diocese of the Church of the Province of South Africa.

"Total liberation cannot be achieved without the liberation of women," it says.

"The church has limited women to home functions; serving children, the old and the sick; fund-raisers and tea makers.

"Never can it be said that Jesus Christ conformed to such dehumanizing ideas of the role of women. Christ's message is a call for liberation for all people regardless of race, sex or creed.

"The vision of equality, wholeness and freedom is expressed in Galatians 3:27: 'In Christ there is neither

male nor female; neither Jew nor Gentile."

This message was echoed by the Board for Social Responsibility which said: "The challenge for Christians is to work for the Kingdom where there is no domination of one group over another, and no sexual, colour or class discrimination... a Kingdom of true equality and justice."

The Women's Division of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) said while the Hebrew Scriptures in the Old Testament clearly espoused male priority and superiority in the religious community as well as in the national community, there was no sexist statement or act from Jesus.

"Perhaps we can say that throughout the Bible, Jesus is the only man who is non-sexist and practises equality between men and women," the Women's Division said.

Women accompanied Jesus as disciples in Galilee, Judea and Jerusalem, witnessed his death on the cross and were the first to witness the resurrection.

"Thus according to Gospel traditions women were the primary apostolic witness for the Early Church, and they were the witnesses of Jesus's ministry, his death, his burial and his resurrection."

There are contradictions in attitudes towards women in the Bible, for example in the letters of Paul which contain personal greetings to both men and women as his co-workers.

On the one hand he says: "There are no more distinctions between Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female," (Gal 3:28). On the other hand he makes a very oppressive remark like: "Husband is the head of the wife... and wives should submit to their husbands in everything." (Eph 5:23).

Such a contradictory tendency is still experienced in the church. "As Jesus called Mary by name and sent her to tell the disciples that he would soon ascend to his father (John 20: 16-17), so women must understand that today Jesus calls them by name and sends them forth in mission."