

Renewal and Reconciliation: Reflections for a Holy Year

by Msgr. James D. O'Reilly

Imprimatur: Timothy Cardinal Manning
Archbishop of Los Angeles May 31, 1974
© 1974 James D. O'Reilly. All rights reserved.

I A HOLY YEAR

“The days are coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and Judah. In those days, in that time, I will raise up for David a just shoot; he shall do what is right and just in the land” (Jeremias 33:14).

Every year at the season of Advent we put ourselves in the position of those exiles to whom Jeremias was speaking. With them we experience the bitterness of life in Babylon, with them we taste the joy of the good news. Once again we savor the coming of Christ, the heir of David.

It takes no great effort of imagination to put ourselves in Babylon. We live in a new Babylon. Temples of industry and commerce rise on every side where merchants and traders meet from many lands.

Wizards of science explore the secrets of the universe. They guarantee access to ever new sources of power.

Scribes and clerks codify the laws and magistrates are busy administering them, And in the midst of wealth and gaiety, sadness and poverty abound. So much that is awesome coexists with so much that is terrible.

In the public domain God is more often disputed than revered. It is all as it was in the Babylon of old. No effort is required to recover the feeling of exile that Israel knew. With them we share the longing for a great king who would bring back the holiness of God into the city. All the longing that went into their years of waiting become ours again as we prepare to celebrate the first coming of our Savior.

This year (1973) our Advent season is enhanced by the opening of a holy year. Throughout the Catholic world the local churches have been invited by our Holy Father to begin a year of renewal and reconciliation. This year will culminate with the opening in Rome of the Holy Year at Christmas 1974.

The liturgy which we celebrate here today marks the beginning of our preparation in the Archdiocese. The occasion prompts us to reflect on what it is that we are about. It moves us to inquire as to the place of a Holy Year in an anxiety-ridden world.

It might seem at first glance that nothing could be more remote from the pressing needs of the moment than ceremonial declaration and ritual exercises.

What place, we might ask, do pilgrimage and pageant have at a time in our lives when the economy seems threatened with secession, the polity is wracked with dissension and intrigue and the stability of family and domestic life is being undermined?

When the accumulating problems of the day cause many within the church to weaken in their faith, to falter in their hope, to grow cold in their love and to abandon their religious practice, should we embark upon public exercises of piety?

Surely, it might be said, we ought to take our cue from the contemporary world. What the church needs is a vigorous program of institutional research, opinion surveys, systems analysis, strategic planning, organizational controls.

Should we not hitch the lumbering wagon of the gospel to the rising star of rational technique?

Out, then, with the small-scale, the spontaneous, the symbolic and the ritual. In with the largescale, the programmed, the real and the literal! Not the inauguration of a Holy Year! That is surely how the matter appears at first glance. But is it really so? Is a Holy Year really so wide of the mark?

Thinking it over one is made to pause. Might not the contrary be the case? Might it not be an egregious blunder at this point in time to transfer our hopes to those very forms of action whose bankruptcy is now becoming evident?

Have we noticed the growing tide of opinion which traces the present decline of culture to the worship of information at the expense of quality, of the discursive at the expense of the intuitive, of conquest at the expense of receptivity, almost we might say, of life at the expense of death?

Should we then abandon the wisdoms in our tradition at the very time when others are struggling to regain them?

It could well be the case that the celebration of a Holy Year in this last quarter of the twentieth century is very much in tune with the current rediscovery of the vital importance of symbol and myth, of pageant and ritual exercise in the life of a people. Not all the life of a people can be conducted in the head. There is another dimension of the heart and the deep spirit that needs

ministering to.

Hence, we would urge that the ritual exercises of a Holy Year — penance and pilgrimage, prayer and celebration, though remote from yesterday's world of purely rational problem-solving, are quite in harmony with today's growing movement of return to mystery and symbol.

As we approach the last quarter of the century we see the dream of progress yielding place to the desire for salvation. Signs appear that point to a great longing to reintegrate the sacred and the secular. Our inaugural celebration this morning comes much closer to the needs of our times and the mood of the day than appears at first sight.

Confident that the time is ripe and the need is urgent let us commence this year of prayer and renewal.

Conscious of our state of exile in this Babylon we give utterance to our longing for the return of the holiness of God to the city of man.

We pray that this twentieth century which has experienced so much of alienation from God may rejoice at its close to see His face.

2 THE WORLD

Words, like money, are a medium of exchange susceptible to inflation. When the currency of words is inflated their purchasing power declines. Use them to cover too many meanings and you end by making them valueless.

A case in point is the theme for our yearlong preparation for the Holy Year in 1975 — "Reconciliation and Renewal." Conceivably those words might be

interpreted to cover practically every aspect of moral and religious life. But then they would lose “purchasing power.” Somehow we must limit the scope of “reconciliation” and “renewal.” How shall we do this? How shall we give the words distinctive reference to the ills that beset us as we enter the last quarter of the 20th century?

We might begin by dividing up the territory to be covered. Consider separately our temporal activity in the world and our trans-temporal life in the church. Between them these two cover the entire present. In each area we might seek out the factors of estrangement that are in need of reconciliation and the elements of decline that call for renewal.

Naturally we will expect to be forced back upon our secret selves. All our troubles, whether as citizens of the world or members of the church, have their deepest roots in our personal lives. There is where the quest for the meaning of “reconciliation” and “renewal” will end. But it need not begin there. We may begin the search farther out. Let us start with the level of the temporal.

It seems fair to say that our temporal life in the world is bounded by the economic, the domestic and the political. Marketplace, hearth and forum are the scene of our daily striving. Business, industry and profession; marriage and the family; law and government — that, in a sense, is “what it’s all about.” There is where we must look for outward evidence of inward estrangement and decline. Or to put the matter in concrete and symbolic terms, the initial focus of reconciliation (through not the final) must be upon money, sex and power. We cannot think of our transtemporal life towards God apart from our temporal engagement with these basic human goods.

Let it pass for the moment that the first is

sometimes spoken of as filthy, the second as dirty and the third as corrupt. In seeking them humanly we find life and love. Through money, sex and power our lives can open upward to God. Contrariwise, it is in respect of money, sex and power that we experience estrangement and decay in our lives. There is where the desire for reconciliation and renewal begins to be felt.

One has only to think of Jesus — propertyless, wifeless, powerless for our sakes — to realize the depths of reconciliation and renewal waiting to be worked out in the economy, the family and the polity. Come to think of it, were not yesterday’s Lenten exercises designed to reconcile us in Christ, to money, sex and power so that they might be turned from weapons of hate and greed to instruments of love and caring. What else was the purpose of thrift and almsgiving, of fasting and continence, of prayer and reflection!

If then, we should give precision to this year’s theme of reconciliation and renewal, we could not do better than start where now we stand in the church’s year, in Lent. Let’s be reconciled with Lent. Let’s renew that first. That is where economics, politics and family life can be freed of their heartless relationship to money, power and sex and brought into reconciliation with Jesus — poor, chaste, obedient because He was full of the Spirit of Life and Love. So much for our temporal activity in the world. Next, life in the church.

3 THE CHURCH

Our life in the church as well as our life in the world need renewal.

Granted that the two cannot be separated in the order of reality, they need to be distinguished in the order of thought.

If in regard to life in the world there are reconciliations that need to be effected in the economic, the domestic and the political spheres, in regard to life in the church we can also discern areas in which there is a need to reconcile elements which have become estranged. How shall we designate them?

Yesterday the different spheres of life in the church were designated as those of faith, worship and government. They correspond in the Body of Christ to the saving actions of Christ the Head considered as prophet, priest and king.

Today these domains are more commonly described as ministries of word, sacrament and community.

However we decide to name them, it is clear that just as in the world it is the economy, the family and the polity that are afflicted with tensions and dislocations, so too in the church there are certain broad areas of ecclesial life which are troubled.

Interestingly enough, they also relate respectively to a seeking for sustenance — the bread of truth, to a fruitful intimacy of the spirit — sacramental communing with the Word made flesh, and to a “political” work — and harmonizing of belief, celebration and life in the Christian community.

The church’s life too has its “economic,” its “domestic” and its “political” dimensions. Indeed it might not be altogether amiss to detect a parallelism between money, sex and power as symbolic of life in the earthly city below on the one hand, and word, sacrament and community as symbolic of life in the heavenly city that descends from God on the other hand.

Thus, if in respect of life in the world our

quest for reconciliation and renewal should lead us to ponder over our troubled relationship to money, sex and power, likewise in respect of our life in the church the same quest should lead us to reflect upon our relationship with word, sacrament and community.

At all events, these six terms or labels may provide us with convenient symbolic, elements or significant reference points about which to order our further understanding of the theme of “reconciliation and renewal.”

4 THE ECONOMY

The energy crisis brought forth from nationally known figures comments that could well provide us with directions for renewal and reconciliation in our economic life.

Barry Commoner suggested that we had brought on the present crisis by permitting the profit motive to be a principal determinant of what we should produce and what not produce.

Robert Heilbroner hinted darkly that we must become ascetic if we are to save our world. Our consumption-oriented, production-happy style of life is simply not compatible with long-term survival. Maybe, he said, we have to find a way of life in which we will act more like trustees of the planet.

Surely all of this has a familiar ring to Christian ears. Recall the Jubilee Year practice of the Old Testament. During the year of Jubilee economic injustices were to be set right and the depleted soil was to be allowed to rest so that it might be restored to productivity.

Recall the plea of Jesus that we consider the lilies of the field — by being less anxious about our affairs we might take better care of them. Certainly the above comments point the way to a new kind of relationship with money and machines that we might cultivate as we prepare for the Holy Year in 1975.

First, as to the practice of what we are wont to call “money-making.” The evil surely does not lie in seeking profit but in maximizing the profit. The pursuit of “easy” money, the habit of charging everything that the market can bear, that’s where the harm is done.

Secondly, as to our relationship with the world of Nature. It is not the machine as such that does the damage but the overuse of the machine — maximizing the productivity. In the purely quantitative search for easy money and toil-free work we destroy the quality of life, in the deeper sense of that much misused phrase.

In the pursuit of maximum profit we allow our choices of jobs, of enterprises, of residence, even of friends and education, to be determined by monetary considerations.

The money we make is making us! The possessor is possessed, and in the process it is our fellowmen who are devoured. The consumer is consumed!

In the overuse of the machine we stimulate the very appetite which the machine is needed to feed. We end by desiring whatever machines produce. The engineer is mechanized and in process it is the world of Nature that is overpowered.

Shall we return to the horse and buggy? A thousand times No. Rather must we effect a reconciliation between man and money, between Nature and machine. Finally, we must make peace between Homo faber and

Homo sapiens. Can that be done without pain? Ecce Homo! Wisdom sold for thirty pieces, the Carpenter raised on the wood, sapiens et faber.

And if we will not hear Him then, like the publicans and harlots, the economists and ecologists will go into the kingdom before us — children of the world, yes, but wiser in their generation than the children of light.

5 THE FAMILY

Thirty years ago a study of ancient peoples led its author to an interesting conclusion. In his massive work on “Sex and Culture” J. D. Unwin wrote: “Any human society is free to choose either to display great energy or to enjoy sexual freedom; the evidence is that it cannot do both for more than one generation.”

Perhaps what he had in mind would be better described as license rather than freedom. A licentious people is soon drained of its energies. With sexual freedom the case is otherwise.

Sexual freedom in the sense of disciplined spontaneity in the service of love and life is a great good. In that sense sexual freedom surely makes for a youthful and energetic society. But the mistaken use of the word “freedom” is significant. It points to the need for a reconciliation in our day between discipline and sexual freedom.

Moving towards the last quarter of the century we can hardly fail to be distressed at the unhappy state of marriage and the family.

Cynicism about love and hostility towards life grow apace at the same time that sexual restraint is thrown to the winds.

In the face of such a debacle legal measures are powerless to do more than contain the evil effects.

To cure them nothing less than an interior renewal of spirit is needed. Basic to the renewal is the recognition that conscious discipline liberates sexual energies in the service of love and life, and contrariwise, manipulative technique in the service of unexamined sexual feeling leads to the profanation of love and the repudiation of life.

In this respect it is possible to detect a similarity between art and sexual life. Art needs discipline if it is not to dissipate itself in a vulgar excess of form over content.

Still, discipline must be exercised with prudence lest creative freedom of the imagination be stifled. Likewise the sexual impulse needs discipline if the reality of love is not to be stifled by the overexpression of it. Love's ritual is easily reduced to mere gymnastic.

At the same time discipline must be sensitively imposed lest the creative warmth of love be chilled.

Need we be surprised at the similarity between art and the sexual life? If art is a conscious work of creative love should not creative love be a conscious work of art, so that loss of refinement in the one is quickly translated into vulgarity in the other. When beauty languishes the good dies.

Thus, we might approach ethics by way of esthetics. Our present sexual mores are unlovely and therefore, unloving. But we might even go back of the esthetic sense to the lowly level of money and the "useful" sense.

The infection begins in the economic life.

An economy perverted by easy money and toil-free work has invaded the living cell of love through the protective membrane of the arts, violating the one by commercializing the other. If the rape of things is easily followed by the rape of persons, maybe disciplined frugality in the use of money will lead us back to chastity in sex.

That's how it was with the House of David. Kings and princes have not been noted for chasteness in love. Family peace was more often found in the huts around the palaces. The scandal of David and Bethsabee, of Solomon and his concubines was not resolved until there came from David's line a greater than Solomon. But He was poor and He came by the power of God and the consent of a Virgin.

Fittingly enough the scene of Annunciation and Nativity has ever since inspired the world of art — goodness repaid by beauty. Sex, love and art were reconciled in the simplicity of Nazareth.

There is where we must begin to bring them together again. Sexual peace waits on economic virtue and artistic joy on both — holiness is wholeness!

6 THE POLITY

In searching about for areas of reconciliation in our temporal life in the world we turn from money and the economy, from sex and the family, and we come to power and the polity.

Here we are not focusing narrowly on the concerns of government and citizens. What we have in mind is power and polity in their widest extent.

It could be the power of the strong to subdue the defenseless, of the intelligent to

master the intricate, of the beautiful to captivate the beguiled.

The polity in question could be that of the battlefield, the bureau or the boudoir. The web of polity and the network of power extends through all of our life, economic and domestic as well as political.

If we dwell on “politics” in the narrower sense it is only because that is the place where the private exercise of power emerges upon the public stage for all to see.

Backstage, the play is being rehearsed in our daily lives. Oh, we may flatter ourselves by putting our rulers on trial for their “tricks” but secretly it is ourselves who are being arraigned.

We too love the key position, the point of vantage, the top seat. We too refuse to be overcome in home, church, school, factory and office. Can it be that deep down inside we have not accepted creaturehood? We aspire to godhead?

Wherever power is exercised in whatever polity there is no escaping the necessity of reconciling strength with weakness, the will to win with the readiness to lose and, in the end, divinity with humanity.

Just as economic life must be seasoned with the spirit of poverty and conjugal life with the spirit of chastity, so must political life — again, in the widest meaning of the term — be seasoned with a spirit of obedience.

The willingness to be “under” is an indispensable counterweight to the readiness to be “over” if every polity, whether of marketplace or hearth or forum is not to become an arena for warring factions of managers and workers, of sons and fathers, of government and people.

The answer to the problem of power goes beyond mere democratization. We must somehow reconcile fatherhood and sonship in a way that seems to have evaded the modern republic. The equality of brotherhood which followed upon the killing of the father in the name of liberty has merely replaced absolute monarchies with absolute republics.

Now we can see that popular power is able to corrupt the people in the same way in which royal power corrupted the king.

With the extension of sovereignty has gone the spread of the royal “disease”! Now it is the common man who becomes much moneyed, more married, most powerful, but lonely too. We the lonely people, come of age, but as orphans!

Liberty, equality and fraternity are offered us in a new polity in which the king reconciled his manhood with divine sonship, matched the love of life with the readiness to die, refused to crush evil by becoming a “power” for good.

Not seizing power in time he received it for eternity. Being overcome, he overcame. Dying, he was raised up and of his dominion there is no end. In him we are able to be grown-up while remaining sons.

The Holy Year of 1975 carries us towards the U.S. Bicentennial. Should we not reflect upon the deep-seated antipathy to monarchy that has come to be equated with loyalty to the republic? “Every man his own king” might easily make for a nation of tyrants, ungovernable and therefore unable to govern, under the same judgment as those whom we banished in the name of liberty, equality and fraternity.

Let’s think of Pilate’s Hall and Christ, our Brother, leaving power in the Father’s hands,

careless about his rights, and now forever seated on the right hand of the Father.

There's a logic there which escapes both the gospel of the Superman and the doctrine of the Superpeople.

7 THE WORD

We began these reflections on the theme of reconciliation and renewal with the observation that our trans-temporal life in the church has structural similarities with our temporal life in the world so that reflection on the renewal of life in the world might shed light on the problems of renewal in the church.

If, as we observed, the economic, domestic and political activity of the world has some correspondence with faith, worship and government in the life of the church it would not be surprising to find that the renewal of the second, like the renewal of the first could be described in terms of poverty, chastity and obedience.

Or, to put the matter in terms of symbolic elements — if money, sex and power need to be reconciled with poverty, chastity and obedience so also do word, sacrament and community. It remains for us to consider each of these three in turn. We turn first to word.

What has poverty got to do with word? Is word like money so that it needs to come under the governance of some kind of poorness. What resemblance is there between economic life and the life of faith? Our traditional figures of speech point to the answer.

Do we not speak of the "treasure" hidden in the Gospel? Is not the spoken word a kind of 'medium of exchange' that plays a role

in the "business of life?" Is there not a certain "risk" of faith by which a man ventures all he has to buy the treasure, an "investment" on which he hopes to receive a return of fifty or a hundredfold? The point is clear enough. But there is a further consideration which we have in mind. It has to do with theological activity.

Theological exploration of the word occupies an honored place in the life of faith — we think of Anselm's "fides quaerens intellectum." The fact is not unrelated to the existence of certain class distinctions in the church.

Might we not speak here as we do in relation to the economy of "haves" and "have nots"?

Certainly there is some problem of the distance between the intellectually "rich" and the faithful "poor" in the church. Theological models keep rolling off the production line in a sort of planned obsolescence to glut the appetites of wealthy "consumers" while the faithful "poor" live on the "soul food" of the lower class.

It would be fatally easy to fall into the antiintellectualist plaint, "I would rather know compunction than define it" — a sort of "hate the rich" sentiment.

Just the same there is some truth in the contention of recent writers that our present crisis of faith began with the Catholic intellectual. Rich in their conceits, they excite the envious "middle class" to go hunting for post-Vatican II "synthetics." Farther down the line, the "poor" continue to flop around in the coarser yarn of post-Vatican I days wondering what should one wear (believe?) today.

Joking apart, enough has been said to indicate the relevance to the life of faith and

the word of some kind of spirit of poverty in handling the word. Reason is not a whore. To banish her from the house of the faith would be to cultivate squalor. But there is an affluence of reason which can rob the poor of their faith — the vulgarity of “nouveaux riches.”

“Horse and buggy” religion is “out,” but somewhere we need to bring about a reconciliation between radical theologies and people’s religion. Moving towards 1975 we look back at the troubled life of faith in the 60’s and 70’s. We need to think of poverty and affluence in relation to the economy of the word.

Are we polluting the environment? The ecological balance of the life of faith is not less delicate than that of nature. Each has a claim on tenderness.

8 SACRAMENT

A little reflection suffices to show that sex and sacrament, love and liturgy, occupy similar places — one in our temporal life in the world, the other in our trans-temporal life in the church.

In the world, human love cannot be confined to the domain of spirit. It must emerge visibly and tangibly. Community of mind and heart needs to be made perceptible in a ritual of the body. Love is promoted in the act of being expressed.

Granted that human perversity may intervene to turn the liturgy of love into soul-less performance, yet the natural intent of bodily intimacy is to effect what it signifies so that an “invalid” sexual relationship always appears as a profanation of the sacred.

Likewise, in the church, the love of God

and man cannot be confined to the invisible realm of the spirit. For our sakes, at least, God’s gift of Himself and man’s response must be made visible. God’s gift of Himself — His “grace,” as we call it — is promoted by the very act of giving it expression in a rite in which the divine touches the human, in which heaven and earth embrace.

Granted that human perversity may turn the liturgy of sacrament into mere ritual performance, yet the native intent of sacramental “intimacy” is to effect what it signifies so that a willfully sterile sacrament is rightly termed a sacrilege.

We had observed earlier that the ritual of sex best ministers to the art of loving when it is chastened by discipline. We may now add a further dimension to chastity. Liturgical ceremony and sacramental rite minister best to the art of divine worship when they too are made “chaste” through discipline. “Free” liturgy, like “free” sex is the mark of a licentious people. Ancient history testifies how often they have merged together.

It is as easy to vulgarize liturgy as it is to cheapen sex by seeking spontaneity apart from discipline. At the same time we note that there is a pseudo-discipline, Jansenism, that makes for frigidity and inhibition in liturgy as in sexual life. That too must be avoided.

Surely a large part of our program of reconciliation is that we should reconcile Apollo and Dionysius in the celebration of the liturgy. Failing that we may never achieve the renewal which Vatican II hoped for.

In these days of sexual revolution it is unsettling to note the discrepancy between the growing numbers of those who flock to receive the Eucharist and the dwindling

numbers of those who first seek the sacrament of penance and reconciliation.

In the anxiety to purge ourselves of an earlier Jansenism — sexual and sacramental — along the primrose path of “easy” sex, are we moving paripassu in the sacrilegious direction of “easy” eucharist. That kind of “unchastity” in divine love could be disastrous. Sterilized sacrament could quickly lead to zero population growth of the People of God!

As contemplation and art are “play” of the mind and the sensibilities, so are sex and liturgy in the category of “play” in the truest sense of that word. But there is a danger that in an age of “playboy” sex — an immature form of true love — we may be more vulnerable to liturgical “games” — an immature form of true worship.

There is so much more to chastity than sexual mores. It reaches into every form of art where prudent discipline supports creativity. It frees the world for earthly and heavenly “play.” Let’s reconcile discipline and the “games” of love. The footballers do as much do they not?

9 THE COMMUNITY

The tensions most in need of reconciliation in the Church as we approach the Holy Year are not those which concern word and manner of belief, nor which relate to sacrament and mode of worship, but those which have to do with community and style of freedom.

We have seen the need of reconciling word and faith with “poverty” of intellect, sacrament and worship with “chastity” of the sensibilities — liturgical “chastity.” It remains for us to consider our need to reconcile community and government in the

church with “obedience” to the Spirit.

It is unfortunately the case that Catholic emphasis on “church” is pitted against Protestant emphasis on “freedom.” Unfortunate, because in the debate “freedom” comes to be understood and defined as standing at the opposite pole from “authority” so that the formula “more freedom, less authority and more authority, less freedom” gets assumed as a self-evident principle on both sides.

Church and authority become synonymous. In that kind of context the desire for freedom can never be satisfied short of the abolition of every conceivable structure, rank, class, difference. Every limit must go. In the end individualism must triumph and community perish.

The mistake lies in forgetting the Holy Spirit in His relation to the Church. The Church is not an organization controlled by a system of checks and balances in which exterior “freedoms” are secured by constitutional documents and political maneuvering.

No, the church is a living body in which the Spirit dwells to bestow interior freedom. Hence the operative formula is “more Spirit, more freedom.”

Nowhere in the Creed do we profess belief in “freedom,” or belief in “authority,” or belief in the “clergy,” or belief in the “people.” Rather do we profess belief in the Holy Spirit who gives gifts differently to the different members that make up the entire body.

It is not by more authority over freedom, nor by more freedom from authority but by obedience to the different gifts of the Spirit that personal freedom and community structure coexist in a genuine People of God.

Lately the waters have been muddied by those who think in terms of an opposition between institutional and charismatic elements in the community. There are some who appear to move in the direction of “every man his own priest” — a kind of paraclericalism that would have a “free” Spirit operating in a flattened-out community devoid of structure.

Only head-counts and opinion polls remain to turn the community into a congregation and the church into a meeting-house. The initial mistake is to forget that there is a diversity of charisms — institutional charisms as well as personal charisms and that it is the one Spirit whom we obey working in all of them.

Just as Christ did not come to free us from the body but to save us through His Body, so also He sent the Spirit to transform us through the structure of the Church not to save us from it.

Abhorrence of institutional structure is another form of the old Manichean rejection of the body and incarnation. Aiming at pure spirit, it falls back into the invertebrate community — a lower form of organization. We need backbone to stand erect as a people, free in the Spirit.

10 MAN AND WOMAN

Our effort to expand the theme of reconciliation and renewal has led us to consider our temporal life in the world and our trans-temporal life in the church.

Money, sex and power were taken as symbolizing the first. Word, sacrament and community were seen as characterizing the second. In each case we dwelt on the need for reconciling the symbolic elements with the gospel spirit of poverty, chastity and

obedience. Such a reconciliation should lead to the renewal of spirit.

Casting about for a way in which to gather our considerations back into a unity, it occurs to us that a common denominator running through them all is the need to reconcile man and woman, to integrate the male and the female elements in faith and culture.

For it surely seems as if a major source of our discontents — economic, domestic, political, doctrinal, liturgical and communal is to be found in the loss of balance between the manly and the womanly.

A young girl will hug her doll affectionately. Her small brother will pull it apart. She loves the doll. He wants to know what it is made of inside — the synthetic versus the analytic!

The inquisitiveness of men in the face of things stands in contrast to the reverence of women for them. Man impatiently forces things to surrender their secrets. Woman waits for them to yield up their riches. He has a greater passion for science. She takes more kindly to wisdom. No question need arise of choosing between the two. Both are needed, each moderating the other.

We seem to be living in an age that is dominated by the male spirit. Science and curiosity are “in,” wisdom and reverence are “out.”

We are conquering and devouring the physical universe with an impatience that is terribly male. We are devoted to mastery and plunder, armed to the teeth. The spirit of wisdom and reverence seems powerless to stop the onrush. From impatience with things we move to violence with persons. Women, too, become infected with violence. It’s a man’s world and there lies our trouble.

No wonder, then, that in God's plan of salvation an essential role should have been played by a Woman in whom the spirit of Wisdom had come to rest. Our Lady is a seat of wisdom, a tower of ivory, a house of Gold. She is an army in battle array, a woman clothed with the sun.

She is there to be a living embodiment of the wisdom and patience with which every man must make his approach, first through created things, then through persons and so to the Word Incarnate, if he is to gaze at last on the Father.

At the same time, as Vatican II's document on the Church tells us, Mary "is a mother to us in the order of grace. . . . By her maternal charity, Mary cares for the brethren of her Son who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and difficulties, until they are led to their happy fatherland. Therefore the Blessed Virgin is invoked by the Church under the titles of Advocate, Auxiliatrix, Adjutrix, and Mediatrix. These, however, are to be so understood that they neither take away from nor add anything to the dignity and efficacy of Christ the one Mediator. . . . The Church does not hesitate to profess this subordinate role of Mary. She experiences it continuously and commends it to the hearts of the faithful, so that encouraged by this maternal help they may more closely adhere to the Mediator and Redeemer." (nos. 61–62).

Pope Paul VI reiterated this doctrine of the Church recently in *Marialis Cultus*, February 2, 1974: "The Blessed Virgin's role as Mother leads the people of God to turn with filial confidence to her who is every ready to listen with a mother's affection and efficacious assistance. Thus the people of God have learned to call on her as the Consoler of the Afflicted, the Health of the Sick, the Refuge of Sinners, that they may

find comfort in tribulation, relief in sickness, and liberating strength in guilt."

A reconciliation of man and woman, of the male with the female elements in faith and culture is central to our observance of the Holy Year of 1975. Let it stem from a renewed devotion to Mary, the Mother of God and the Mother of Men, — a devotion penetrated by doctrine and purged of sentimentality but not sentiment, — a manly as well as a womanly devotion to the Woman!