

# Theologian Discusses Authority vs. Conscience

Ithaca—Father Anthony Padovano, theologian, lecturer, and professor of dogmatic theology at Immaculate Conception Seminary in Darlington, N.J., was the guest speaker at the Sage Chapel Convocation at Cornell on Sunday, Feb. 27. His address, "Authority and Conscience," focused on two questions: why the conflict between authority and conscience is so great in the modern world, and how this conflict might be solved or at least eased.

He suggested four reasons for the increased tension between authority and conscience. First, he pointed to the modern understanding of "personhood" with its emphasis on man's creative nature, and its tendency to define man in terms of his self-determining freedom, rather than as a completely rational being of reason and will.

Secondly, he cited a shift in the manner of understanding human relationships. Prior to Vatican II, he said, Catholics were "trapped" in structured, societal relationships rather than freely gathering in a community. The trend now is toward community where divergent views abound and conscience is important, and away from established societal relationships where loyalty tended in the direction of goals, leaders, and authority.

Thirdly, he spoke of an apparent awakening need in men to explore other modes of living rather than those rooted in tradition. Men are now conserving those things basic to their style of life, but are not fixed in accepting particular forms of relationships found at any one moment in time, he said.



He noted the impact of personalism on all our lives, pointing out that man now is looking more to his conscience and somewhat less to Church rules in his search for salvation.

Resolving the conflict of authority versus conscience will not occur easily in Father Padovano's opinion, but he suggested a couple of thoughts to help at least understand their relationship. Authority, he said, speaks to peoples' failures and expresses a minimum standard with which they must comply. On the other hand, the individual conscience hopefully expresses an ideal rather than just a minimum. If man is to

realize his dignity fully, he cannot be expected to think only in terms of minimum standards for his life. For this reason, Father Padovano continued, the Beatitudes with their expression of ideals are gaining importance relative to the Ten Commandments and their minimum standards.

He expressed the hope that man will deemphasize the rational as absolutely normative. If we are to improve rather than just survive, we must look beyond absolute rational authority and not be afraid of our emotions and feelings. We cannot let our future simply recreate our past, which has



FATHER PADOVANO

been heavily weighted in authority. We must, however, be grateful for the past and those worthwhile elements it has provided for the future.

The hope for the future, he concluded, is that community can to some extent replace authority and pluraliformity replace uniformity.

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### Ithaca Area Notes

Watkins Glen — Adult religious education classes will continue on the remaining Monday evenings in Lent at St. Mary on the Lake parish center. Topics discussed include scripture, liturgy, moral and sacramental theology.

Ithaca — The Women's Council Day of Inspiration at St. Catherine of Siena will begin tomorrow March 9, at 8 p.m. and continue Friday, March 10, from 9:30 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. in the parish center. Father Tom Faase will moderate a discussion on "The Adventure and Security of Today's Catholicism." All women, not just those of the parish, are invited.

Dryden — Holy Cross will sponsor the 21st annual McGiligan's Ball on Friday evening, March 17, at The Assembly on West Road, South Cortland. A buffet dinner will be provided from 7-9 p.m. with dancing until 1 a.m. Music will be provided by the Misty Blues. Tickets, at \$5 per couple, may be purchased at Dryden Hardware or by calling the Holy Cross Rectory, 844-3122.

Ithaca — Saturday night, March 18, the Immaculate Conception Home and School Association will sponsor a St. Patrick's celebration. Tickets and information may be obtained by calling the rectory, 273-6121.

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

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