CONGAR SPEAKS

Overflow Crowd For Chapel Talk

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Along with the Roman Catholic movement toward more use of Biblical sources, there is a wide Protestant movement that violates the doctrine of the “Formal Sufficiency of Scripture” as developed during the Reformation. According to Fr. Yves Congar, Protestants are rediscovering the Catholic tradition.

In his first lecture in the Western Hemisphere, Fr. Congar stressed the importance of both scripture and tradition in the development of Church doctrine.

While the Church of the Middle Ages knew nothing of scripture and tradition, it was devoted to the maintenance of ecclesiastical “traditions.” Yet, the Council of Trent defended only those traditions being tested by the Reformation.

Disagreements Noted

The speaker noted that disagreements among Protestants would not have existed if the doctrine of the Formal Sufficiency of Scripture were complete. For Fr. Congar, it is “evident” that “scripture must be read in the light of tradition.”

In last Thursday’s Chapel talk, Fr. Congar gave several examples to show that Roman Catholic dogma is not founded on tradition alone. He noted that the principal of Canon Law is scriptural, although the dogma developed in tradition.

Not Limited

Also, the number of the Sacraments is not limited in the scriptures, but Church tradition sets the number at seven. However, there is scriptural basis for each of the Sacraments.

Following the Reformation, Roman Catholics were told that “it was Protestant doctrine to read the scriptures.” Until recently, this led to a belief that it was wrong to read the Bible.

Laymen Learn

In the last four decades, laymen and priests alike have been learning of the importance of the scriptures.

Fr. Congar, a Dominican priest from Strasbourg, France, went on to note the connection between scripture and tradition. Tradition, as in the liturgy, not only transmits the faith, but aids in the interpretation of the written scripture.

Interpretation of the scriptures is difficult even after they have been set down in writing because of the different editions of the Gospels. Tradition transmitted through the Church helps the understanding of the “deposit of faith.”

Reason With Facts

“What strikes me is that it is often necessary to reason with a third term, the facts.” Although scripture is the first witness of fact and tradition is the continued understanding of fact, the fact is superior to both.

Fr. Congar said that liturgy, “the great teacher of the Church,” approaches scripture from within. It is a simple witness to the realities which the Church seeks, “the realities which must dominate the whole question of scripture and tradition.”