

PROVIDENCE VISITOR
PROVIDENCE, RI.
W. 40,228

AUG 11 1977

New
England
Magazine

Visits Rhode Island

PAGE ONE

Pope's theologian says Church must address social issues

BY FATHER BARRY R. L.
CONNERTON

"The Catholic Church has a moral obligation and a right to speak out on social issues regardless of the political consequences," said Luigi Cardinal Ciappi, O.P., who for 22 years has served as personal theologian to three popes.

The Dominican priest, a native of Florence, was elevated to cardinal on June 27. He was in Rhode Island to receive an honorary Doctor of Laws degree on August 4 from Providence College.

In a personal interview with the Visitor, Cardinal Ciappi related the Church's involvement in social issues to President Carter's appointment of a papal envoy to the Vatican: "The Catholic Church cannot and should not renounce its contacts with governments of the world, be they non-Catholic or even Communist governments. The motive of the Catholic Church in seeking or accepting diplomatic relations with various governments is a moral imperative for peace and justice in the world. It is not a political motive. We must never allow the Communists to be the only



CARDINAL CIAPPI

ones concerned about social reform." Cardinal Ciappi was critical of American Protestants who opposed the appointment.

"The Church," he continued, "has almost two thousand years of experi-

ence to share with various governments of the world. The Church has a right and an obligation to intervene, to praise, to counsel, to condemn or to illumine governments of the world, so that peace, equality and justice may reign."

The sixty-eight-year old prelate who reads and writes English, but speaks it haltingly, spoke through an interpreter, Father Richard Bucci, a Providence priest.

In speaking of the theological currents within the Church, Cardinal Ciappi expressed concern over the difficulty of reconciling the traditional theologians and the more progressive theologians. "Most often," he said, "these two groups of theologians are not only different in their approaches, but actually opposed."

He voiced praise for Karl Rahner, Henri DeLubac, Ives Congar, Edward Schillebeeckx and Bernard Haering — all progressive theologians, and urged that attention also be given to the more traditional theologians such as Rene Latourelle, and Edward Dahnis.

When asked his opinion on liberal

See CARDINAL — Page 10

Cardinal

Continued from Page 1

theologian, Hans Kung, Cardinal Ciappi said: "Father Kung is too progressive. His theology is more Protestant than Catholic."

The controversial book, *Human Sexuality*, recently published by members of the Catholic Theological Society of America, was strongly attacked by the Cardinal. "I have read the book, and while it contains many true observations about sexuality and marriage, the authors presume to interpret the teaching of the Church. But their opinions are not Catholic opinions. When they quote the Church's teaching, the quotes are partial quotes which are taken out of context. These authors are speaking in their own names, and are not faithful to the authoritative teachings of the Magisterium, which is, and must always remain, the primary teaching office of the Church."

The greatest crisis in contemporary Catholicism, according to the theologian, is the crisis of authority. "The greatest danger in the Church today is a tendency to lose respect for the teaching authority of the Pope. When we lose respect for his authority, the consequence is a great lack of charity within the Church. People begin to attack those who disagree with their opinions. From this lack of charity flows a crisis of faith, a crisis of peace, and a crisis of joy within the Church."

The soft-spoken theologian who is in constant communication with Pope Paul on theological issues and writes daily opinions for the Holy Father, spoke of the Church's teaching on birth control and its relation to a fall-off in church attendance.

"The Church must not be so concerned with numbers. It is the quality of its members that is important. We can never compromise the teachings of Christ. Remember that Christ himself had some of his followers leave him because they disagreed with his teachings. The Church's teaching on birth control compels people to sacrifice for a higher value, namely the moral teaching of God."

In the area of non-practicing Catholics who want their children baptised, Cardinal Ciappi said: "The child has a right and a need for the sacraments. Such children should be baptised. The parish community will supply what is lacking in the parents' faith."

As a priest who has served the last three popes as their personal theologian, Cardinal Ciappi cited Pope Pius XII as the best theologian. "Pius XII's theological formation was much deeper. He was both a philosopher and a theologian."

Cardinal Ciappi was slow and very deliberate in his overview of the Church: "Some segments of the

Church are dangerously close to heresy in matters of the Incarnation, the Trinity, priestly celibacy, and questions of sexual morality. All theologians, all Catholics, must strive for complete unity and total communion with the Holy Father in matters of faith and morals. We must never lose respect for the teaching authority of the Holy Father."

In accepting his honorary degree from Providence College, Cardinal Ciappi told the group: "it is difficult to resolve completely the harmony between revelation and science, faith and reason, the loyalty to the Church Magisterium and the necessary liberty in the search for truth."

He said that "in recent times an anthropological orientation has become predominant in philosophy and theology. There is no doubt," he continued, "that the Church wants university teaching to be open to all modern philosophic, scientific and cultural issues. But this opening should not signify revolution or substitution of traditional theology."

The prelate concluded his remarks by quoting the late Cardinal John Henry Newman: "The great Cardinal Newman who was outstanding in his writings on Catholic dogma, liberty of the human mind, and the relationship of both to the Magisterium, once said: 'If I had the opportunity to present a toast, I would offer a toast first to the Church Magisterium, then to freedom of conscience, and finally to the Church Magisterium once again.' My sentiments exactly," said the Cardinal.

Before being named papal theologian by Pope Pius XII in 1955, Cardinal Ciappi was dean of the theological faculty of the University of St. Thomas in Rome.

As papal theologian, he is also counselor to the Secretary of State for the Holy See, and a consultant to the Doctrinal Congregation in Rome.

From Rhode Island, Cardinal Ciappi will travel to Dominican houses in Dubuque, Milwaukee, Detroit and Chicago and will return to Rhode Island on August 14 to vacation with friends.