

Faith Tidbits..

*a little food for thought
and some knowledge
about your
Catholic faith*

January 2008

This monthly series will answer questions you always wondered about or questions you never even thought to ask... all about our Catholic Faith.

If you have a question you want answered, call Diane Hardick at 633-3672.

What is the difference between “Tradition” and what some people call “traditions?”

Tradition or Sacred Tradition refers to a specific body of unchanging divine revelation. It is the Word of God, both in written form in Scripture and as teachings passed on from the apostles and carried out in the life of the Church through the centuries. On the other hand, “traditions”, which include legends, customs, disciplines or practices, may change from time to time or place to place. Some traditions that have changed are the need for women to cover their head in Church; the ringing of the bells during points in the Eucharistic Prayer, and the refraining from meat on every Friday. Issues such as women in the priesthood and celibacy are also “traditions” that in the future can be change.

Is salvation a gift, or do I have to earn it?

We do not earn salvation. It is a gift won for us by Christ on the Cross. The gift we receive is the very life of God – Grace – at work in us. Our part is to open our life to that Grace—to God’s presence in our lives and our living. And when we are open to God’s Grace, we reach out in love to others. Our works or good deeds are rooted in our relationship with God. St. James tells us that if our faith does not bring about good deeds, then our faith is not saving faith. God wished that all be saved, but not everyone opens up their life to God’s gift.

Do Catholics still believe in purgatory?

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states: “All who die in God’s grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation, but after death they undergo purification so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven.” (CCC 1030) Purgatory is that temporary place, state or process after death where those in Christ are cleansed of their remaining blocks to holiness. St. Matthew records the words of Jesus: “Blessed are the pure of heart for they shall see God.” Purgatory is that state in which we become “pure of heart” so that we can then see God.

Do Catholics believe in angels?

Catholics most definitely believe in angels. Angels are incorporeal beings--, that is, they don’t have physical bodies. They are spirits and invisible. We know of angels through divine revelation, as well as the stories told by those who claim to have encountered them. There are many references to angels in the Scriptures: Daniel 12:1, Isaiah 6:2, Matthew 1:20 to name just a few. The story of the Annunciation tells of God sending an angel to Mary. As it was with the angel who appeared to Mary, “fear not” is the usual greeting of an angel. Despite the misconception we find in movies and books, human beings do not become angels. We are different species. On October 2 Catholics celebrate the Feast of the Guardian Angels because every individual has a guardian angel. The *Catechism* quotes St. Basil when it teaches: “Beside each believer stands an angel as protector and shepherd leading him to life.”