

Faith Tidbits..

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

June 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.

Has the Catholic Church ever condemned anyone to hell?

The Catholic Church has no authority to send people to hell or even name people in hell, and it never has. Each person has been given the freedom to accept or refuse God. A person can refuse the saving presence of God in life and death. Hell begins on earth in the refusal to believe. People are made for God, and if a person freely rejects God, then they would live now and after their death in the pain of loss and separation from God. The images of hell fire we find in the Bible express that pain. Each of us has the freedom to choose God and his salvation or to belong only to our own desires and ourselves. Hell is a state of being where one is alone with oneself and absent are all those things of God—love, compassion, beauty, truth, mercy and the company of others who chose God's salvation. The Catholic Church does not condemn people to hell. We condemn ourselves by our rejections of God.

What is an "ecumenical council"?

An ecumenical council is an assembly of the college of Bishops with and under the presidency of the Pope, which has supreme authority over the Church in matters pertaining to faith, morals, worship and discipline. The councils of the Church have played a highly significant role in the history of the Church. The Council of Nicea in 325, the first of our 21 councils, condemned Arianism, a heresy which denied the divinity of Christ and contributed to the formation of the Nicene Creed. It also fixed the date for Easter. Councils are named for the place where they are held. Pope John XXIII called our last ecumenical council in 1959. The sessions of this Council, Vatican II, ran from October, 1962, to December, 1965. A total of 2,860 Bishops participated in this council. For various reasons, including the denial of exit from Communist-dominated countries, 274 Bishops could not attend. This council formulated and promulgated 16 documents—2 dogmatic constitutions and 2 pastoral constitutions, 9 decrees and 3 declarations—that brought about renewal and reform in the Church. To date, the documents with the most visible effects are those on the liturgy, the Church and the Church in the world, as well as ecumenism, the renewal of religious life, the life and ministry of priests, and the role of the laity within the Church.

How is a new Bishop chosen for a diocese?

In the United States bishops periodically submit the names of candidates to the Archbishop of their province. For the province of Ohio, the nominations would be submitted to the archbishop of Cincinnati. The names are then considered at a meeting of the bishops of the province, and those receiving a favorable vote are forwarded to the papal representative in this country for review and transmission to the Holy See. Bishops are free to seek the counsel of priests, religious and lay persons with respect to nominees.