

## Faith Tidbits..

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

*November 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.*

### **More on Canon Law . . . .**

#### **1. May a priest celebrate Mass without the presence of at least one member of the Catholic faithful?**

Canon 906 states: "a priest may not celebrate the eucharistic Sacrifice without the participation of a least one of the faithful, unless there is a good and reasonable cause for doing so." The purpose of this canon is to remind the priest that Mass is not one of his private devotions, but rather the source and the summit of the Church's public prayer. To state "good and reasonable cause" leaves the discernment up to the priest. Some examples of special circumstances might be the desire to offer a Mass for a special intention when there is no Mass scheduled or being on retreat, where there is nobody to assist at the Mass. When there is no other Catholic directly present, it is commonly understood that the angels and saints participate in the priest's Mass.

#### **2. What is the role of the Chancellor in a diocese?**

Canon Law requires each diocese to have a chancellor. The 1917 Code of Canon Law required a priest for this role, but the 1983 Code allows the appointment of a layman and a laywoman to this office. The Chancellor for the Diocese of Cleveland is Sister Therese Guerin Sullivan. She has three Assistant Chancellors: Fr. Edward Estok, Fr. Paul Rosing and Sister Laura Bouhall, OSU. The Chancellor is the principal notary of the diocese. He or she prepares written records of the affairs of the diocese and ensures that decisions affecting various individuals or the diocese as a whole are made known to the people affected by such decisions. It is a great advantage if the chancellor knows canon law, since he or she must draft the decrees (that is, the written decisions) made by various authorities within the diocese. The chancellor must maintain the diocesan archives. There are three different types of archives in a diocese: general archive, an historical archive and a secret or confidential archive. The chancellor is responsible for the first two. Only the diocesan bishop manages the secret archive.

#### **3. Why do some bishops hold the title of cardinal, and what is their function?**

An individual becomes a cardinal only through appointment by the Pope. The world's cardinals form what is called the College of Cardinals. These individuals are given the function of cardinal because of their significant and noteworthy contributions to the Church. They are esteemed as extraordinary Church leaders. The College of Cardinals was created by the tradition of the Church. Its primary function is very simple: to elect a pope. The laws concerning the election of the Pope are not contained in Canon Law, but in a document that was issued by Pope John Paul II in 1996 called *Universi Dominici Gregis*. This document explains that at any given time the pope is to ensure that there are no more than 120 cardinals under the age of eighty who are available to elect the new Pope. Another function of the cardinals is to be available to the Pope when summoned together to deal with questions of major importance. They also can be summoned individually to assist the Pope in the daily care of the universal Church.