

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

*December 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.*

***1. We know that Peter was given a special role of leadership in the Christian community, but when was the papacy fully established in the Church?***

In the first several hundred years of Christianity, the Bishop of Rome exercised more authority than Bishops of other Christian strongholds. Richard McBrien, in his book *Catholicism*, contends that the Church of Rome "intervened in the life of distant churches, took sides in theological controversies, and was consulted by other bishops on doctrinal and moral issues." It was also the focal point of unity for all Churches. It was not until the Middle Ages that the pope, as sole religious leader became evident. By 800 AD the title "papa" came into use. Popes were usually selected by the emperor, but at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, the College of Cardinals was established as the body which selected the Pope. To trace the history of the papacy is to study Western civilization, for history has been affected by the popes. Popes made and enforced laws, waged wars, fought heresies, led Crusades, canonized saints, owned lands, and fought for the throne.

***2. What is "contemplation" as a form of prayer? Can anyone pray this way?***

Most people, when they think of prayer, usually think of our talking to God and God listening. Contemplative prayer reflects the meaning of the psalmist who advises, "Be still and know that I am God." It is a prayer of quiet, being still in the presence of the Lord. It is like sitting with an old friend where words aren't needed. Contemplative prayer calls us to simply bask in God's love, no words, no actions, just quiet. It requires discipline, along with time and patience. Today this type of prayer is being practiced in centering prayer. We have a dedicated group of women who gather on Wednesday morning to practice centering prayer.

***3. The Church has so many terms that the lay person struggles to understand. Can you define some of them for me?***

Here are some terms and their definitions: (more will follow next month)

**anathema:** an official condemnation by the Church of a doctrinal or moral position

**apocrypha:** Old Testament books written in Greek that are included in the Catholic canon of the Bible, but are often omitted in Protestant Bibles (Judith, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Sirach, Tobit, Wisdom, Baruch)

**apostasy:** the deliberate and complete abandonment of the faith by a baptized Christian

**historical criticism:** A method of biblical study employed to uncover the first layer of tradition in the composition of the Gospels, namely, the original words and deeds of Jesus.

**deposit of faith:** the content of Christian faith given by Christ and the Apostles and preserved as a treasury by the Church ever since.

**ecclesial:** pertaining to the Church as mystery, the Body of Christ, and the People of God

**encyclical:** a letter written by the Pope and "circulated" throughout the whole Church and beyond

**eschatology:** literally, the study of the last things. That area of theology which focuses on the Kingdom of God, judgment, heaven, hell, purgatory, the resurrection of the body, and the Second Coming of Christ.