

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

January 2010

*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. What is "Grace"? Is there an official definition for "Grace"?***

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines grace in several ways: "favor, the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God" (1996); "participation in the life of God" (1997); and "the gift of the Spirit who justifies and sanctifies us" (2003). Grace has never had a single meaning in Catholic theology or doctrine. Richard McBrien in his book *Catholicism* defines *Grace* in several ways: the abiding presence of God"; "the help God gives us to live holy lives"; "the goodwill of God." We cannot free ourselves from sin no matter how many prayers we say or good deeds we perform. God pours out his love, his *Grace*, on us. All we have to do is open our hearts, our lives and be transformed by it. One theologian and psychologist has said that *Grace* is the most powerful force in the universe. With God's *Grace* we can overcome anything!

***2. How can I better understand the Holy Spirit so I can explain the Third Person of the Trinity to my children?***

There are many images of the Holy Spirit that help us better understand the Spirit of God at work in the world. The Spirit is like the wind that blows where it will—the will that we cannot see, but whose effects are easily know. Without the Spirit we are like a balloon without air, without the breath of God within us. The Holy Spirit is also like the fire that transforms, just as the iron is put in the blazing hot furnace and is shaped and reshaped for its purpose. The Spirit is like the first that glows in the darkness and unites people around its warmth. Water is another image for the Holy Spirit, for water is absolutely essential for life. We see the Holy Spirit at work in the world when we see people reaching out to help others....when we see someone standing up for what is right—against bullying or drugs or driving drunk. The Spirit helps us to pray and draws us to God. The Holy Spirit is the dynamic power of God within our hearts and within our lives. All we have to do is open ourselves up to the Spirit, and we will do things we never even imagined!

***3. What does "Amen" mean?***

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, "Amen" in Hebrew comes from the same root as the word "believe." There are 52 *Amens* in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) and 25 *Amens* in John. Jesus uses the word to underscore the important of what he is saying (which has no parallel in Jewish practice: "Amen, Amen, I say to you....."Jesus Christ himself is the definitive *AMEN* of the Father's love for us. All the promises of God find their YES in him. The assembly to conclude the prayers offered by the priest at Mass utters "Amen". At the end of the Eucharistic Prayer, when Father proclaims the Doxology "Through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, almighty Father, forever and ever." This *AMEN* is called the Great Amen, for the entire assembly utters it together, proclaiming our belief in the Body and Blood of Christ. Then when each of us comes forward to receive the Body and Blood of Christ, we say our personal "Amen".