

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

*December 2009*

*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.*

*Here are some tidbits from our recent Canon Law for the Laity Course which was held recently at our parish, taught by Lynette Tait, canon lawyer and Judge on the Tribunal of our Diocese.*

1. In the first Code of Canon Law of 1917 there were over 2100 canons. One of the primary reasons the Church Council, Vatican II, was called in 1962-1965 was because the law of the Church needed to be updated. The documents of Vatican II served as the theology behind the new Code. Because translating theology into structure is not an easy task, the new Code of Canon Law took almost 20 years to complete. In 1983 the new Code was finalized, now containing 1752 canons, all directed to the renewal of Christian living and the salvation of souls.

2. Canon Law differs from common law in that common law is more black and white, and is based on case law. For example *Roe vs. Wade* was a specific case brought before the Supreme Court that led to a law that legalized abortion. Canon Law, on the other hand, is based on a value that has its roots in theology. Theologians are the agents of faith seeking understanding. Canon Lawyers are the agents of faith seeking action. Canon lawyers select the values present in the theology and doctrine of our faith, and then create suitable legislative action. The law of the Church is designed to prompt people to reach out for these faith values.

3. Canon Law is necessary for the following reasons:

1. the Church is a social and visible structure so it must have norms
2. the exercise of its functions, especially the sacred power and administration of the sacraments, must be organized
3. the mutual relations of the faithful must be regulated according to justice based on charity, with rights guaranteed and defined
4. common initiatives must be sustained, strengthened and fostered

4. In a discussion about marriage and annulments, Lynette stressed that a Catholic understanding of marriage is very different from our cultural understanding of marriage today. For Catholics, marriage is ***a partnership of the whole of life, between a man and a woman, which includes fidelity (that also includes emotional faithfulness), permanence ("until death do us part"), procreation and education of children and the good of the spouses (which means to help each other achieve salvation)***. It is so necessary for all our young people to understand the meaning of a Catholic marriage so that they enter into this sacramental bond with full knowledge and consent of both parties. Today too often young people enter into marriage with the attitude that "if it doesn't work we can always get a divorce" or "I can marry you but I will still have my girlfriends" or even "now you're my wife (or husband) and now you have to do what I tell you to do." Marriage preparation is so necessary and important as young couples prepare to marry within the Catholic Church.