

Answers lie ahead in Why Catholic? Program

Even though he serves as the director of religious education at St. Patrick in Cumberland, Deacon Loren Mooney is always looking for ways to spark interest in the adult faith program, Why Catholic?

Sometimes, a parishioner inspires him.

During a fall 2008 meeting of Why Catholic?, a participant advised those gathered that God's grace is like a rainstorm. If people open an umbrella, the man said, they won't get wet.

Deacon Mooney is hoping that many will let the spring session of Why Catholic?, which starts in March, wash over them.

"I find that I've gotten to another level of excitement in continuing to grow in my faith," Deacon Mooney said.

The four-year adult faith formation process typically is implemented in parishes as a small-group model. Deacon Mooney, however, discovered that many at St. Patrick desired to gather in larger settings.

Two groups of nearly 30 adults meet separately each week at St. Patrick. Speakers with backgrounds in education help shine a light on the faith with the goal of deepening knowledge of Catholic teachings for parishioners.

Sharon Bogusz, coordinator of the archdiocese's evangelization and adult catechesis efforts, said that Why Catholic? "is generating a lot of energy and discussion around the beliefs and practices of our Catholic faith tradition."

Each year, Ms. Bogusz said, 12 faith topics are explored through study, discussion, prayer and action with the goal of encouraging reflection upon the significance of God's presence in each day.

There will be a strong focus, she said, on refining "morality pillars" of the church.

Ms. Bogusz said the faith-sharing process is the cornerstone of evangelization efforts. She added that some parishes break off in small groups of 5 to 10, while others have potluck dinners featuring presenters, similar to St. Patrick.

The flexibility of the program is something Deacon Mooney finds refreshing. After learning about what parishioners believe and how they express God in previous sessions, Deacon Mooney said they have challenging questions ahead for the spring.

“How,” he said, “are they going to live their lives?”

Want to join a Why Catholic? group? Go to your local parish, or call the archdiocesan Office of Evangelization and Catechesis at 410-547-5406.