

Second year of Why Catholic? begins

As the Archdiocese of Baltimore prepares to kick off its second year of Why Catholic? Sept. 30, coordinators for the evangelization and adult faith formation program held five regional training sessions last week and the nearly 50 participating parishes will hold Prayer Commitment Sunday Masses Sept. 23.

Three parishes - St. Rita, Dundalk, St. Edward, Baltimore, and St. Jane Frances de Chantal, Pasadena - have also joined the Why Catholic? program this year, bringing nearly a third of the 152 archdiocesan churches into the fold.

"During the month of September, the nearly 50 parishes participating in Why Catholic? have been promoting the start-up of year two of the adult faith formation program exploring the Catechism of the Catholic Church," said Sharon Bogusz, Coordinator for Evangelization and Adult Catechesis. "Many parish coordinators are calling parishioners directly, holding 'Sign up Sunday' events, speaking at the Sunday Masses - all in an effort to invite adult Catholics to come and see the difference Why Catholic? can make in their lives."

Launched last year at the request of Cardinal William H. Keeler, Why Catholic? is designed to bring together small communities of Catholics to share their faith and fellowship with one another and get to know each other as more than faces in a congregation, said Sister Kass Collins, S.S.C.C., the local Renew International representative for Why Catholic.

"Evangelization and adult faith formation are just two of the many works that have grown significantly under (Cardinal Keeler's) leadership," Ms. Bogusz said. "His motto, 'Do the work of an evangelist' attests to his commitment to the sharing of the good news of Jesus Christ and calls each Catholic to know their faith, share their faith and live their faith."

During last week's training sessions, small group leaders were taught basic adult education methodologies like faith sharing skills, group facilitation techniques, leading prayer, how to best utilize the Why Catholic? books, and were offered basic sacramental theology, she said.

"These trainings are designed to help last year's small group leaders assess last year's experience, share ideas and network with small group leaders in neighboring

parishes," Ms. Bogusz said.

During one of the training sessions, a gentleman from St. Peter, Westernport, told Sister Kass that last year's Why Catholic? program allowed him to personally get to know people he has seen in his church for years.

"He told me how close the members of the group grew as the year progressed," she said. "So when he goes to Mass now, he is not seeing 12 strangers. There is a connection. That is what this whole process is about. You see the impact of people gathering in small communities and it has an impact on the parishes."

During Prayer Commitment Sunday, pastors of participating parishes will either lead their congregations in a prayer for the success of Why Catholic?, or ask that they pray for its triumph at home, Sister Kass said.