

## **Church Moral Teaching**

Parishioners Jill Ballard and Deb Schmalen are among ninety-eight men and women currently in the diocesan Ministry Formation Program (MFP). The MFP is a two year series of classes and retreats funded by Diocesan Stewardship. Tuition is minimal, and candidates donate a large amount of personal time and talent. These people return to their parishes with tools that enhance their ministries. St. Catherine and St Mary Mission have alumni of the MFP.

I facilitate an all day Morals class. I have already been to Dixon and Crystal Lake. I will travel to Rockford and Aurora for the next two Saturdays (d.v.). Participants read from the Catechism ahead of time, Part III on morality. Our six-hour session covers fundamental moral and ethical principles, then addresses cases. The adult learning model includes time for Q & A which I truly enjoy.

What do I contribute to the class? I bring education and experience – post-graduate degrees and thirty-two years of ministry. I continue as the diocesan ethicist for health care issues. (I mention these things, brothers and sisters, because they belong to you as much as to me.) “Grace spotting” is the first role of this theologian, then gratitude. Then pastoral wisdom. As a cabinet maker can make hammers and saws sing, I am adept at demonstrating the tools of moral discernment. Participants write an evaluation of each session.

Catholic morality is about positive things, about our “yes” to God. I teach what the Church teaches. We all need some help in appreciating what is good, and true, and beautiful – in Christ, his Church, ourselves and in other people.

Moral teaching also helps to name and avoid evils. As with some mushrooms in the forest preserve, just because something is natural (or organic!) does not mean that it is good for us.

Participants will ask about darn near anything. We name some headline issues, but kitchen conversations provide vexing challenges; what parish and household life are all about. There is more to moral living than picking good over evil. The toughest choices are often between two or more goods.