

THE ALPHA COURSE IN A CATHOLIC CONTEXT

answering the call to evangelisation



It was Pope John Paul II who said: "For the disciple of Christ to evangelise is an obligation of love"

What is Alpha?

The Alpha course is a local parish tool for evangelisation that is being used by thousands of Catholic parishes in over 65 countries across the world, including Brazil, France, USA and here in the UK. The Alpha course is also being used by churches from many other denominations to introduce people to the life-changing message of Jesus Christ. In particular Alpha is attracting many who are asking the question 'Is there more to life than this?' This quest has now led 15 million people to do an Alpha course somewhere in the world.

How does Alpha work in a Catholic context?

The Alpha Course that is run in a Catholic context is therefore exactly the same course in content and style as an Alpha Course run in any other context. Alpha is a very effective initial presentation of the core of the Gospel, 'the kerygma'. It is wholly compatible with Catholic teaching, but it does not address specific Catholic teachings and ecclesiology. It does not seek to be a substitute for catechetical programmes. Rather, it works best as part of an overall parish programme of evangelisation or catechesis (details about follow-up material can be found in the Alpha in a Catholic context Introductory Guide, which can be requested through the email address below).

What happens on an Alpha course?

The course is normally run over a period of ten weeks, with a Weekend or Day Away halfway through. Some courses are held during the day, but most are evening courses. At the evening events, there is a light meal followed by a talk on a subject central to the Christian faith e.g. Why did Jesus die? Why and how do I pray? How does God guide us? After the talk, guests are divided into pre-arranged groups to discuss the talk in an environment where each person should feel free to ask or express whatever they wish. Each group has a 'host' and 'helper' from the host church.



Get in touch!

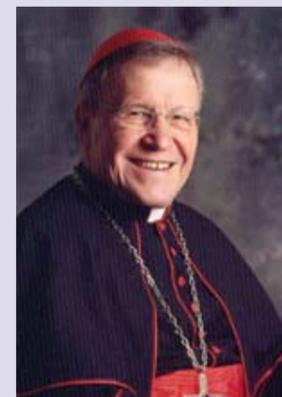
If you are interested in starting an Alpha course or would like to receive more information on anything you have read then please visit uk.alpha.org/catholics or email catholics@alpha.org.

WHAT CHURCH LEADERS, COURSE LEADERS AND GUEST SAY

The Alpha course has received the support of many Catholic Bishops, priests and lay people around the world who are seeking to respond to the call to a new evangelisation. Here is what some of them are saying about the course:

The Rt. Revd Thomas McMahon, Bishop of Brentwood:
"Alpha is the most marvellous tool for evangelisation.

Alpha serves to bring faith alive and to me that is the most important thing in the world, because if a person's faith and belief in Jesus becomes 'real' as opposed to 'noticeable' then you see the whole of life differently."



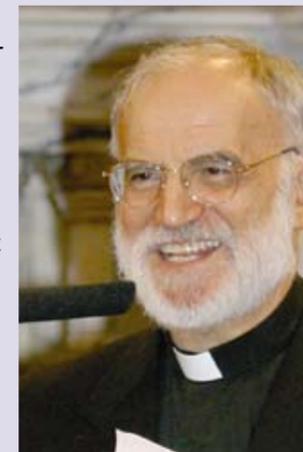
Walter Cardinal Kasper, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity:

"Alpha courses, which came originally from an Anglican background, are ... opportunities to strengthen ecumenical togetherness among Christians and a joint proclamation of faith in Christ in today's world."

Fr Raniero Cantalamessa, International Alpha Conference, 2005:

Alpha presents the 'Kerygma' / a tool for primary evangelisation:

"The apostolic proclamation – announcing the good news to those who have not heard it with the explicit intention of forming new Christians and furthering the Kingdom of God. This outreach is fundamental to the identity of the Church and is the purpose of the Church... This shows how urgently we need a new evangelization which, while being open to all the fullness of the truth and the Christian life, will yet be simple and basic. The Alpha course seems to answer precisely to this need of ours... The very name shows this. It is not called the 'Alpha and Omega' course (as Revelation 1:9 might have suggested) but simply the 'Alpha' course, because it doesn't claim to lead people from the beginning to end in faith; only to help them get acquainted with it, to foster a personal encounter with Jesus, leaving it to other Church departments to develop the newly rekindled faith..."



Jacky Faria, of St. Joseph's parish in South Oxhey, London, did the Alpha course in her parish 12 years ago. Jacky had been brought up as a Catholic and was invited on an Alpha course by a friend at work. Jacky says: "The Alpha course gave me the opportunity to examine the faith my mother and father brought me up in (something I didn't really truly understand) and gave me the opportunity to feel comfortable in an environment where I could ask questions." Jacky now leads an Alpha course in her parish, with support from her parish priest. Here she shares the impact that is having on her and others in her parish: "Alpha has the ability to communicate to all sorts of different people; in different walks of life and different age groups. It enables me to share the amazing gift of faith that I have."



Suffering from depression, *Richard Harrison, 23, of Otley, West Yorkshire, was in a desperate situation when he was invited to an Alpha course at a local Catholic church, St Peter and St Paul, Yeadon, by a friend. He decided to attend the course. "On the Weekend Away", he said, "I decided to pray a prayer to invite Jesus into my life. As I said the prayer, I felt different on the inside. As the days went by I had a profound sense that God loved me. The depression lifted. Now I feel completely free."*



Visit alphafriends.org/story/alpha-catholic-context-northern-ireland-dvd-exclusive to view more testimonies from Catholics who have done an Alpha course. Email catholics@alpha.org to request a copy of the new Alpha in a Catholic Introductory DVD, which includes interviews with Fr Raniero Cantalamessa, Preacher to the Papal Household and Marc de Leyritz, Founder of Alpha France.