

Involving Parents in Catechesis:

Have you considered Alpha for parents for the 2017-18 school year?



Four things to always do at sacramental meetings by Tom Quinlan

1. Require attendance
2. Provide a warm, hospitable experience
3. Make connection between life and Catholic faith
4. Stress the importance of their bringing the faith home for their family



How can Alpha help with non-churchgoing parents during sacramental-prep or faith formation night? Consider Alpha for the 2017-18 school year!

WHERE PEOPLE ARE AT

Communication and Media:

- Yesterday: reading book, reading newspaper, listening to the radio and watching television was a one-way street. The consumer was a passive recipient of a message. He or she had limited input about what was being received.
- Today: I-phones, I-pads, and computers allow for an immediate and interactive media on specific needs and desires.

Faith and Church:

- Yesterday: people came to faith by listening
- Today: they are coming to faith by talking; most notably, about themselves, their lives and their views on God. They want to be heard!
- And parish leaders have to earn that right to be heard in return.

THE DEPARTMENT OF NEW EVANGELIZATION, GBD

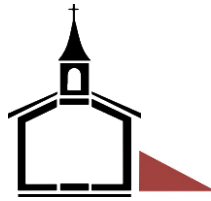
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ALPHA



Purpose of Alpha for Catholic Parishes:

- It is an *on-ramp* to parish life by introducing seekers, newcomers, and non-churchgoers to the person of Jesus Christ and to those who follow him. The Alpha recipe consist of the following:
 - Hospitality
 - Meals
 - Videos/talks
 - Discussion
 - Prayer ministry



Deep End of the Pool:

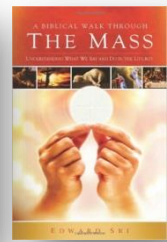
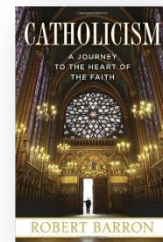
Most non-churchgoing parents have not developed an appetite for:

The Mass or spiritual devotions

Lectures on faith and morals

DVD Presentations:

- Catholicism by Bishop Robert Barron
- The Great Adventure Catholic Bible Study
- A Biblical Walk Through the Mass
- Epic



This is not where non-churchgoers are at!

The Four R's of Alpha:

- Relational
- Real
- Reliant
- Reproducible

**These four "R's" provide a solid foundation on which to begin accompanying parents towards their conversion on faith formation night.*

Question:

How Do These Four R's Play Out in the Alpha Recipe?

THE FOUR R's IN THE ALPHA RECIPE



Hospitality and Meals

- Hosting invariably consist of getting to know the guests by taking an interest in them as persons while, at the same time, serving their needs.
- A non-negotiable with Alpha is to provide a free meal. And during that meal the Alpha team or small group facilitators are purposely avoiding “churchy” topics. Why? Because good customer service is all about the customer.
- Keep in mind we live in a “selfie” media culture in which the world and the market place can accommodate the specific needs and preferences of individuals.
- By relying on the power of the Holy Spirit, parish leaders can accommodate the delivery of the Good News to those circumstances non-churchgoing parents find themselves in! But in order to do this, serving and listening on the part of the Alpha leaders are essential.

It's relational!

“But they said to him, ‘Why do the disciples of John fast frequently, and make supplications, and those of the Pharisees act similarly, while yours eat and drink?’” -Luke 5:33

Videos:

- Alpha has produced three tracks of videos for each session: 1. The Alpha Film Series 2. Nicky Gumbel Talks 3. Alpha for Youth
- Videos for each session possess the following strengths:
 - a) Highly kerygmatic: clearly proclaims the Gospel of Jesus Christ
 - b) The production value is excellent
 - c) Employs testimony and stories
 - d) Real and transparent: It acknowledges people’s difficulties with faith and religion
 - e) Makes reference to the world we live in by quoting celebrities and interviewing people on the streets

It's reproducible and relevant!

"I think everybody should get rich and famous and do everything they ever dreamed of so they can see that it's not the answer." -Comedian Jim Carrey

Discussions:

- After the Good News has been presented via the videos or talks, Alpha allows for people to talk about themselves and their own views about religion.
- People bring into the Alpha sessions many beliefs and lifestyle choices that are wholly inconsistent with Christian doctrine and morals. Many of us “church insiders” are uncomfortable with this.
- Yet, it is important that participants encounter the unconditional love of God through the Alpha hosts and small group facilitators. This is best occasioned by the Alpha leaders refrain from prematurely correcting their participants; especially during the first several sessions of Alpha. Fraternal correction presupposes that fraternal love already exists.
- Keep in mind: The Alpha recipe calls its leaders to trust that God is working in the hearts of the participants. When “church outsiders” experience the unconditional love of the “church insiders”- *regardless of what they believe or how they live* -then barriers begin to lower. The logic of new beliefs, new behaviors and a new life Christ that conversion so often inspires, appear on the horizon. And when curiosity and seeking are inspired among participants, then Christian moral living can be thoughtfully and strategically introduced.

Keeping it real!

"For you are like infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food. For you were not yet able. And indeed, even now, you are not able; for you are still carnal." -1 Cor. 3:1-2

St. Cyprian, a third century Christian, wrote how God gradually revealed to him that living the life of a Christian was possible:

"By the agency of the Spirit breathed from heaven, a second birth had restored me to a new man, then, in a wondrous manner, doubtful things at once began to assure themselves to me, hidden things to be revealed, dark things to be enlightened, what before had seemed difficult began to suggest a means of accomplishment, and what had been thought impossible, was capable of being achieved."

THE MOST IMPORTANT “R” OF ALPHA



RELIANT ON THE HOLY SPIRIT

Prayer Ministry:

- The best way to avoid what is often an impersonal assimilation into a big organization like the Church is to introduce newcomers and seekers to Jesus Christ; the *One* who knows each person by name and who loves each person before they were even born.
- But such an introduction can only be successful if it is carried out by disciples who know and love Jesus Christ.
- After all, joining a parish without a personal relationship with Jesus Christ often turns into an impersonal process. Moreover, the habit of people attending Mass anonymously and returning home without any contact with parishioners who know and love Jesus is an obstacle in building relationships.
- Alpha introduces the topic of prayer thoughtfully and strategically. The team/host/small group facilitators are challenged to not only pray for the participants but to pray with them as well.
- Throughout the whole Alpha process, the Holy Spirit is called upon to touch hearts with the love of Jesus Christ; especially during the retreat and sessions 5 & 10.

A prayer of intercession by a saintly priest who took his inactive small parish in France and turned into a pilgrimage site where tens of thousands of conversions took place:

“Relying on Your merciful promises, I come before You with great confidence, to implore for others the pity I so much need myself...Open their ears to the sound of that Almighty voice, which can raise the dead to life; soften the stubbornness of their hearts, that they may no longer resist Your grace.

Remember Your tender mercies; remember the precious blood of Jesus Christ; save the souls which have been purchased at so great a price. Hear our prayers, inspired by the Spirit of Your own love, and offered from the sole motive of pleasing and glorifying You. Amen”.

-St. John Vianney

Alpha Sessions:

- Session 1 Is There More to Life Than This?
- Session 2 Who is Jesus?
- Session 3 Why Did Jesus Die?
- Session 4 How Can I Have Faith?
- Session 5 Why and How Do I Pray?
- Session 6 Why and How Should I Read the Bible?
- Session 7 How Does God Guide Us?
 - After session 7:
 - Weekend/Day Away
- Session 8 How Can I Resist Evil?
- Session 9 Why and How Should I Tell Others?
- Session 10 Does God Heal Today?
- Session 11 What about the Church?

Weekend or Day Away:

- Session W1 Who is the Holy Spirit?
- Session W2 What Does the Holy Spirit Do?
- Session W3 How Can I Be Filled with the Holy Spirit?
- Session W4 How Can I Make the Most of the Rest of My Life?

The Book of Jeremiah

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you... For I know well the plans I have in mind for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare, not for woe! plans to give you a future full of hope.”

Pope Francis: Joy of the Gospel

“On the lips of the catechist the first proclamation must ring out over and over: ‘Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you.’ This first proclamation is called ‘first’ not because it exists at the beginning and can then be forgotten or replaced by other more important things.”