

## **Alpha Course – How to bring seekers to God and Church**

**FAQ – I've heard of the Alpha Course, which is running all over the world. How can it help people know more about the Holy Spirit and what is involved in using it?**

Where your parish is in Canada or any other country in the world, and what the particular circumstances and conditions of your local faith community are, could inform how I could better answer your question, but while awaiting to get those details, I can say the following.

Alpha has become manifest as a gift of the Holy Spirit to the universal Church, and I'm not exaggerating. What began as a local (Holy Trinity Brompton) Anglican parish's equivalent of our Catholic RCIA process for the initiation of adults to the Anglican faith in London, England, became as of 1992 - when it was updated and repackaged by Nicky Gumbel, a young Anglican priest, who had been a barrister - the Holy Spirit took and burst into flame, a fire of enthusiasm for God which is now blazing in almost every Christian denomination all over the planet.

Alpha was designed to bring seekers into contact both with God through a direct personal experience of God and with the Church, through the team offering the Alpha Course and the local church hosting it. The Alpha Course itself runs for 10 consecutive weeks with a Holy Spirit weekend retreat after week 6, but it is only the first of six terms of a three year formation process bringing people from no faith or knowledge of God at all to an experience of God, lively faith, prayer life, and involvement in a local church faith community.

Obviously, before offering an Alpha Course, one must assure there is the support of a local Church faith community. Then there is the matter of developing a team. Then there is the question of follow up, since the Alpha Course was not meant to stand alone. Finally, there is the development of the course itself and of the team of people who will accompany the seekers who will come to it.

In order to discern whether or not a particular local church would do well to make use of the Alpha Course, careful consideration should be given to understand what is Alpha and what it requires in order to not only be well developed and carried out, but also to respect what God is doing through the Holy Spirit with this instrument of evangelization. We need to understand what God is doing and then cooperate with Him, rather than try to squeeze his works of grace into our usually narrower parameters.

Secondly, we need to have a clear understanding of what it is that we are seeking when we turn our attention to something like the Alpha Course. What is it that we want or need? Who are the people that we intend to be the beneficiaries of whatever it is that we in the end decide to offer? What are their circumstances, and what is it that they seek, that they know they need?

Who are those who feel called or drawn to get involved in this, what are their qualifications or experience of God and of evangelization? Is there someone who at least for the initial period who is able and willing to carry the ball and start the fire?

Christ is risen! Alleluia!