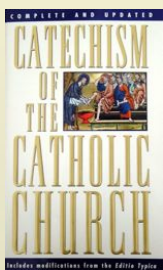
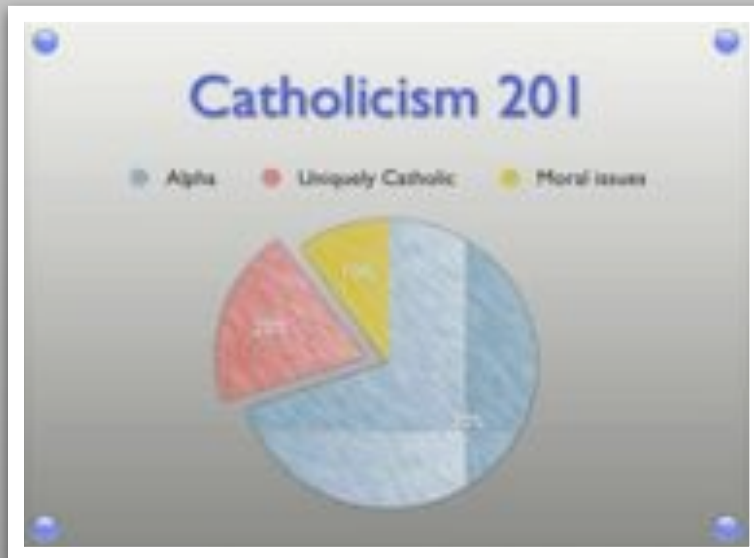


A CATHOLIC FOLLOW-UP TO THE ALPHA COURSE

# CATHOLICISM 201

## ✕ Course Guide ✕

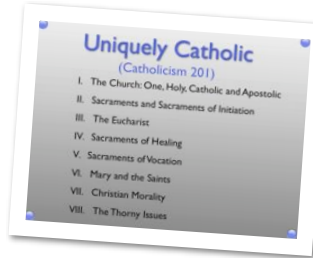


### *The Talks*

*Each talk is divided into two 30 min parts. Small group discussion questions and handouts are included on the DVD ROM.*

The Church  
Sacraments and Sacraments\* of Initiation  
The Eucharist  
Sacraments of Healing  
Sacraments of Vocation  
Mary and the Saints  
Introduction to Christian Morality  
The Thorny Issues





# Introduction to Catholicism 201

When I first started doing the Alpha Course in my parish I was quickly convinced that God had blessed this program through what I witnessed in the lives of the people who took our courses. Since that time I have had the grace to be exposed to what God has done and to what He is doing throughout the world and among Christians of many denominations with this program. More than ever I remain very committed to promoting the Alpha Course, especially in Catholic parishes. This remains an important reason for creating this series.

After our first experience of Alpha we looked around for an appropriate Catholic follow-up. There were several catechetical materials that were suggested but none seemed to really fit the experience that we had with the Alpha course. Catholicism 201 was created as this kind of program. It presumes Alpha, it presumes Alpha team training and, like Alpha, each evening includes a meal, a time of prayer and worship, a talk and small groups. Like Alpha it hopes to address the mind and the heart, the conscience and the will. Like Alpha it provides an opportunity not just for learning but for experiencing God, and His love made manifest in the person of Jesus Christ. It also provides an opportunity to build Christian Community. Catholicism 201 has no official ties to the Alpha course and makes no claim to be the definitive Catholic follow up.



## *The Production*

Three years ago after running Catholicism 201 for the second time someone who attended asked if the course would ever be videotaped. This planted a seed that came to fruition when Chalice [www.ccare.ca](http://www.ccare.ca), (formally Christian Childcare International) a local Halifax-Based Catholic Sponsorship Program offered to fund the production. Working with a small budget we used volunteers during the Winter of 2005 to shoot the series. The John Paul II Media Institute has been responsible for all of the post-production work.

The JPIIMI is a non-profit organization that seeks to create digital media that will build up the Kingdom of God. You can find more about us at our web page [www.jp2mi.ca](http://www.jp2mi.ca)

# You Choose the Format

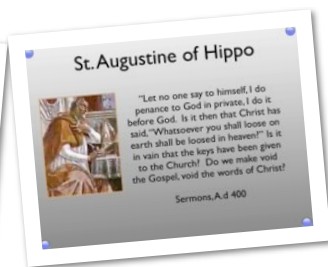
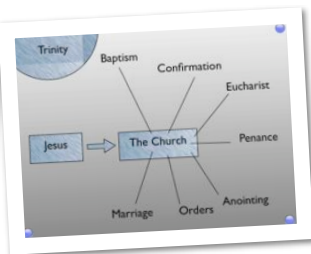
The talks are presented on DVD in such a way that they can be run as an eight session course or a sixteen session course over a determined number of weeks that also include a retreat day. The talks are more academically focused than Nicky Gumble's talks. Humour and stories are used but the talks tend to be a lot heavier. As the goal is to allow people to learn about their Catholic Faith and to experience God through their Catholic Faith, a retreat day is highly recommended during which the talk on the Eucharist is watched and then experienced.

## A TYPICAL EVENING

At my parish we always begin our Alpha evenings with supper at 6:30 pm. As with Alpha, Catholicism 201 is meant to foster community and so sharing a meal together is an integral part of the experience. We have the first night catered or the food is provided by the team after which we rotate small groups to provide a pot-luck supper. Team arrives by 6:10 pm we gather for a time of prayer and to discuss any concerns about small group dynamics or the topic for that evening. Supper begins at 6:30 pm. At around 7:10 pm we call people to gather for a time of prayer. As most participants have already done the Alpha Course most are familiar with contemporary Christian music and so we use the same music and the same style of worship we use on the Alpha Course.

At 7:20 the episode is started on the DVD. The Intro. sequence each evening is 2 minutes long and begins immediately at the end of prayer. Participants can use this time to get settled or grab a cup of coffee. The intro sequence can be skipped by pressing the advance chapter button on your DVD controller. Each segment is approximately 30 minutes. Check this guide (pp. 7-10) for exact times. Should you be watching the entire talk the DVD player will automatically move into a five minute break with background music, a message from our sponsor Chalice, and countdowns and audio and visual alerts to return to one's seat.

The talk is then followed by small group discussions and starter discussion questions are provided on disc 3 or in the course manual. Participant handouts are also available in both places. As with the Alpha course, small groups are not primarily a time for teaching, but a time for listening and discussion. Leaders should review the Alpha team training talk on small groups. At least 30 min are recommended for small groups and the evening can conclude with a large group wrap up.



## EIGHT PRESENTATIONS

### A POSSIBLE SCHEDULE

6:30 pm	Supper Begins
7:05 pm	Supper Wraps Up
7:10 pm	Prayer Begins
7:20 pm	Talk Begins: Part 1
7:55 pm	Break
8:00 pm	Talk Resumes: Part II
8:35 pm	Talk Concludes
8:40 pm	Small Groups Begin
9:15 pm	Small Groups End
9:20 pm	Large Group Wrap Up
9:30 pm	Home

This format is probably the easiest to put on in a parish. The ideal method is to offer seven evenings and an all day retreat. People are more likely to sign up for a course that is shorter in length. In addition, the talks are experienced in the same context as they were delivered. With this format the course could take place either over seven weeks or eight weeks depending on whether the retreat was immediately followed by a session the next week.

The disadvantage to this would be that the amount of information each evening is a lot to process. It also means later evenings. Each parish should feel free to adapt the course as they see fit, but it should always include and shared meal, prayer, small group discussions and an opportunity to experience God.

## SIXTEEN PRESENTATIONS

### A POSSIBLE SCHEDULE

6:30 pm	Supper Begins
7:05 pm	Supper Wraps Up
7:10 pm	Prayer Begins
7:20 pm	Talk Begins: Part 1
7:55 pm	Break
8:00 pm	Small Groups Begin
8:40 pm	Small Group Ends
8:45 pm	Large Group Wrap Up
9:00 pm	Home

With the retreat day this format could take place over the course of fourteen weeks.

Advantages are that participants have more time to absorb the presentations, the evenings can be more relaxed and guests can spend more time in small groups.

A major disadvantage, of course, is that people are less likely to sign up for the longer program (although most Alpha grads are not scared off by the longer time frame).

# The Retreat

Without the prayer, small groups and retreat to bring balance, Catholicism 201 will be a very heady experience. While we make no apologies for this we ask those that present this course to remember that our call is to know God not just intellectually but also experientially. The retreat, which focuses on the Eucharist ought to be considered an essential part of the course.

## CONTENT

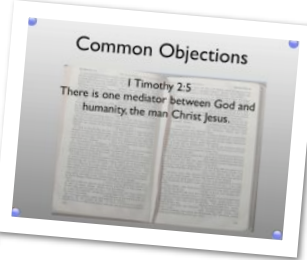
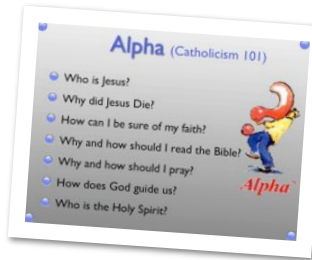
In our experience a one day retreat going from 9 am until approximately 4 pm is most likely to be well attended. As with the Alpha retreat, parishes are encouraged to get away for the day to a new or, at least, different place. The focus of the morning is the the full talk on the Eucharist and a celebration of the Eucharist. The celebration should be a kind of “explanatory Mass” that takes care to draw out the meaning of the liturgy and provide people with a renewed experience of the Eucharist. Guests can be invited to come forward and gather around the altar so that they can have a new perspective. Care should be given to the music ministry and this should be anything but a “regular Mass.”

## SUGGESTED RETREAT DAY SCHEDULE

9:00 am	Guests Arrive, Coffee & Fellowship
9:20 am	Welcome, Introduction & Prayer
9:45 am	Talk on the Eucharist Part I (use Play All)
10:25 am	Break
10:50 am	Talk Resumes: Part 1
10:45 am	Small Groups
11:15 am	Break
11:30 am	Eucharist
1:00 pm	Lunch
2:00 pm	Eucharistic Adoration
3:15 pm	Break
3:30 pm	Large Group or Small Group sharing
4:00 pm	Home

In the afternoon we highly recommend a time of Eucharistic Adoration. As this will be a first experience for many participants it should be fairly structured yet relaxed. We recommend a mix of contemplative contemporary music, guided meditation, Scripture and silence. The music ministry should be prepared to provide appropriate music during this time. At the conclusion of this time of prayer the Blessed Sacrament should be reposed. When this has concluded there can also be a time for team members to pray with guests who may not yet have given their lives over to Christ, or to pray with them to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

We recommend a break after this experience and a time of large group discussion and sharing before finishing for the day.



# Week by Week



## Week 1 *The Church, One Holy Catholic and Apostolic*

Total Time: 63 min, disc 1

Part 1: 31 min

Part 2: 32 min

This talk picks up from where Nicky Gumble finished on the last Alpha talk. It begins with an eight minute course introduction.

This talk is based on the four “marks” of the Church taken from the Nicene Creed: “One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic.” It deals

with the Catholic Church’s self-understanding in the midst of the broader “Church of Christ,” the problem of sinfulness of members of the Church, the universal nature of the Church and the role of the Magisterium in the Church. Part one ends after 31 min. The article on the Church from the disc 3 or the manual is recommended reading for this week.

## Week 2 *Sacraments and Sacraments of Initiation*

Total Time: 59 min, disc 1

Part 1: 32 min

Part 2: 27 min

The first half of this talk deals with the notion of Sacramentality, the experience of ritual, and the definition of sacraments. Part 2

deals with the Sacraments of Initiation, but only Baptism and Confirmation. All the sacraments are presented according to the four part definition: 1) An outward sign, 2) Instituted by Christ, 3) to give Grace, and 4) within the Church. This section also discusses the concept of original sin. An article on Infant Baptism is provided on disc 3 or the manual as additional reading.





## *Week 3 The Eucharist*

Total Time: 63 min, disc 1

Part 1: 40 min

Part 2: 23 min

This presentation continues the teaching on the Sacraments of Initiation and follows the four part definition of a sacrament. Under the section Instituted by Christ, particular attention is given to the setting of the Passover and how the Eucharist is simultaneously a meal, memorial and sacrifice. Part one actually

ends after 34 minutes with a 6 min music video featuring footage from the film "Jesus of Nazareth" to the song "Everything I Do" by Bryan Adams. The group leader may want to advise the group of this (and of the extra length) before the session begins. It is presumed that this talk will be watched during the retreat day. An article on Inter-Communion can be found on disc 3 or in the manual as additional reading. This talk ought to be followed by a celebration of the Eucharist and later by a time of Eucharistic Adoration. Questions for small group discussion are also provided for this week for small group discussion during the retreat day.

## *Week 4 The Sacraments of Healing*

Total Time: 65 min, disc 2

Part 1: 35 min

Part 2: 30 min

The Sacraments of Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick are covered by this talk. 48 minutes of this presentation focuses on the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Both Sacraments are surveyed according to the four-part definition already used. Particular attention is given to the Biblical notion of confessing sins and the historical development of the Sacrament in the Church. A fun and then serious top ten list of reasons to go to Confession are provided. The last 17 minutes of this talk are dedicated to the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick. The additional reading for this week is an article on the historical development of the Sacrament of Anointing (found on disc 3 or the manual). After this talk, participants should be provided with a copy of an examination of conscience. A version is included in the materials on disc 3 for your convenience. One option for this evening is to arrange to experience one of these sacraments instead of having small group discussion. We recommend a communal experience of the Sacrament of the Sick.





## *Week 5 Sacraments of Vocation*

Total Time: 63 min, disc 2

Part 1: 36 min

Part 2: 27 min

Part one deals with the Sacrament of Holy Orders, again under the four categories of the definition of a Sacrament. Some attention is given to the issues of women priests and priestly celibacy, but is not at the heart of the talk. Part 2 deals with marriage in a similar way. As the priest was presented as an icon of

Christ, married couples are called to be an icon of the Holy Trinity. The additional reading, an article on priestly celibacy, can be found on disc 3 or on the manual.

## *Week 6 Mary and the Saints*

Total Time: 66 min, disc 2

Part 1: 35 min

Part 2: 31 min

This talk begins with the Saints. It looks at the use of the term “saint”, the history of the devotion to the martyrs and saints, and how saints can be our models, intercessors, teachers and friends. At the end of part one there is a kind of “Name that Saint” quiz.

It can be best to keep this as a surprise for the group but encourage them to really participate and not just watch. Some kind of prize can be awarded the person with the highest score (a prayer card or book). Part two begins by looking at Mary in the new Testament, and how she is our model, our Intercessor and our Mother. This section also discusses the Perpetual Virginity of Mary, the doctrines of the Assumption and the Immaculate Conception, Marian Apparitions and private revelation. An article on Marian devotion vs “worship” is found on disc 3 or in the manual.



## *Week 7 Introduction to Christian Morality*

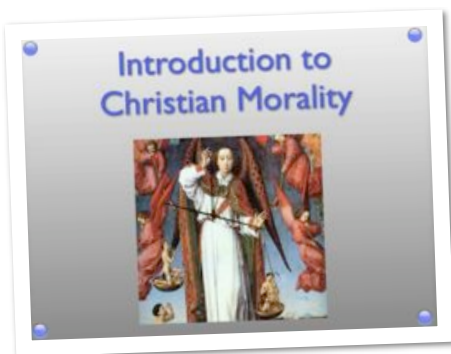
Total Time: 63 min, disc 3

Part 1: 33 min

Part 2: 30 min

This is probably the most compact (and dry) talk of the series. The presentation is based on the question, “How Should we Live?”

The first section of the talk deals with the question of “We”: Christian Anthropology. the concept of moral action, and the notion of virtue and vice. The second part of the talk deals with



the question of “How.” It looks at how natural law and revelation work together to inform us. The notion of conscience, sin and moral culpability is also covered. Lastly, several basic moral principles are examined. For additional reading there is an article on relativism on disc 3 or in the manual.

## *Week 8 The Thorny Issues*

Total Time: 69 min, disc 3

Part 1: 39 min

Part 2: 30 min

There’s no getting around this one. It is thorny! The issues are broken into two categories: sexuality and life issues. The issue of artificial birth control is used to demonstrate the principles that underly the Catholic understanding of human sexuality. The issue of abortion is used to demonstrate the principles related to other life issues (embryonic stem cell research, euthanasia, the death penalty, Just War theory). The presentation on abortion does include a slide show to music that includes several disturbing images. An advisory is given by the presenter. No small group questions are included with this presentation. It is recommended that a priest or someone knowledgeable in these issues be present afterwards to facilitate a large group discussion. It is important that this person be especially pastorally sensitive to participants, but at the same time, clear and faithful with regard to the teaching of the Church. Additional reading for this week is found on disc 3 or in the course manual.



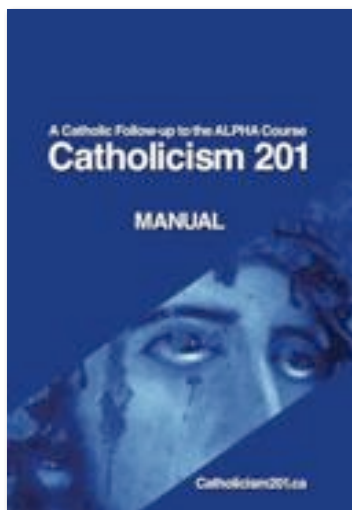
Opening Sequence 2 min

Closing Sequence 2 min

Break 5 min

## *The Text and Readings*

The real text for this course, if we can call it that, is the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Course leaders should have copies of this during the first weeks of the course for participants to purchase. The course manual, published in 2009, is an ideal companion to the course and facilitates the learning process. Visit our web page at [www.catholicism201.ca](http://www.catholicism201.ca) to find out more about this resource.



Extras on Disc three:

Course Trailer

PDF files: Course Guide, discussion questions, additional readings, examination of conscience, course brochures, posters, Chalice Sponsorship Form.

