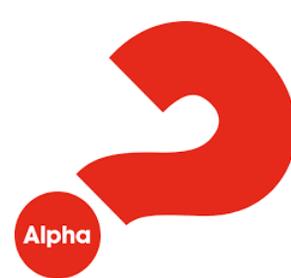




St Joseph's Catholic Church

Alpha Newsletter

Parish Priest: Fr Philip Conner. Deacon: Rev Stephen Pendlebury
St Joseph's Presbytery, Slyne Rd, Lancaster LA1 2HU.
Tel. 01524 32493. Email: st.josephslancaster@yahoo.co.uk
www.stjosephs-lancaster.co.uk. Find us on Facebook 'St Josephs Lancaster'
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An invitation from Fr Philip

In many parishes there is a resignation to the fact that church numbers are declining, that young people aren't interested in the faith, that vocations are drying up, and that the Church is irrelevant to people's lives. At St Joseph's we refuse to accept this, and placing our confidence once again in the mission that Christ gave to us, we believe that the Good News is ever old and ever new (Heb. 13:8), and that it has the power to transform our lives today. *Alpha* is the best tool that I have come across to bring that reality alive. It is not everything, but it acts as the spark plug, initiating and renewing faith, forming bonds of friendship and community, and helps to develop new ways of serving Christ's mission. Last year 50 people attended our Alpha courses. I'd like to invite you to be part of the renewal of this parish, and have confidence that this is something that you can invite all your friends too.

from 13 September **when?** **from 19 September**
on Fridays at 9.30am **on Thursdays at 7pm**

Who should consider going to Alpha?

The short answer is everyone! It's wonderful to have a group where we can invite our friends and family who have fallen away from the church or who have never experienced God and know they will be welcomed and loved. The environment won't be "churchy" and they will be able to ask any questions they have in a non judgemental space.

- *"Alpha changed my life. I didn't know what to expect but the friendships that I have made and over the course of the Alpha course something overwhelming happened and I experienced what can only be described as a miracle in my life."*

What about those of us who already come to church?

Getting back to basics of the Gospel message of God's love for us and the saving power of Jesus Christ allows us to grow in our relationship with Jesus and to help us to experience personal growth. Previous participants have especially appreciated the friendships that have developed. The Christian life is impossible without fellowship and community. It helps us to grow in confidence in talking about our faith with others, which is so important in the secular society in which we live.

- *"I was new in the parish and felt really tense the first time that I came to Alpha. But the warmth of welcome, the new friends I made, and the experience of the Holy Spirit has transformed me."*

Is it Catholic?

Alpha first came to the surface about 20 years ago as a response to the need to speak to an increasingly secular culture, a culture which had forgotten who God is and what Christ has done for us. *Alpha* has never simply been a course, but an event through which people are brought into an experience of community, of faith, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. With time the Catholic Church has realised that these are all things that we need in our Church; in fact, without them, as Pope John Paul II said, 'our Church becomes a soulless religious traditionalism'. If you go to France, the Catholic Church has been using *Alpha* as its primary tool of renewing the Church there, and in this country, *Alpha* has been taken on by many Catholic churches up and down the country, and the fruit is there to be seen: a deeper sense of community, transformed lives, a renewed desire for prayer, parishes that begin to live for others and not just for themselves, parishes that are alive. Pope Benedict spoke often about the importance of a 'personal encounter with Christ which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction' and Pope Francis is strongly supportive of *Alpha* as a way to raise up 'missionary disciples'. *Alpha* is a gift given to the whole Church to bring people into a deeper relationship with Christ and to empower them to live out their baptismal calling to the full.

- *"Alpha brought me back to church for the first time for a very long time and helped me to rediscover what has always been there."*

What about people juggling multiple commitments and very little time?

We are running a day and evening Alpha. If this doesn't suit, please get in touch and we can try and adjust things for you. We really don't want anyone to miss out.

How can we help?

Please pray for Alpha. Consider inviting friends and family to come along. Personal invites are the best way for new people to find out about Alpha. It has been shown that for every five invites, one person comes to Alpha so ask widely. There is no need to make it scary or intense. People can come for one session, no obligation to stay or come back.

How to contact us?

Please contact alphalancs@gmail.com or any of the Alpha team: Amy, Vicky, Molly or Sam.