

Frequently Asked Questions

Question: "I have no formal training in theology or catechesis. How can I help others understand and appreciate what I do not fully understand myself?"

Answer: "You can rely on highly qualified, trusted, world-renowned Catholic theologians of good standing (such as Fr. Robert Barron and Dr. Scott Hahn) to give the talks for you. They have made available to you excellent DVD-recorded versions of their best presentations for this purpose".

Question: "I am afraid the group discussion that follows the DVD presentation might take on a life of its own and go off in the wrong direction and that people will unwittingly come away with some heresy or other in their heads".

Answer: "This is probably the biggest danger with group discussion. Your group discussion must remain focussed on the subject of the talk and when questions arise that are not covered in the talk or in the student workbook the group must refer to the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) for the answers. Each group needs a strong group facilitator appointed to it who will insist on keeping the discussion focussed and who will always refer to the CCC for answers (see the group facilitator questions below). The response to uncertainty and doubt must always be 'what does the Catechism say?'. The CCC is essential for every discussion in every group during every session. The purpose of the discussion part of the course is to explore what the Church actually teaches and answer the questions and doubts of the course participants - it is not to tell others what I myself think the Church teaches. Your parish priest should also be present to answer difficult questions and steer the discussion back towards orthodoxy".

Question: "Where can I get a copy of the Catechism of the Catholic Church?"

Answer: "In any good book store. You can check out an electronic version online at www.scborromeo.org Also, there are now downloadable apps available for both Apple and Android smartphones. Search your app store for the Laudate or the Learn the Faith apps".

Question: "I'm thinking of organizing a course. In addition to a copy of the Catechism is there anything else I should ask the participants to bring with them?"

Answer: "In addition to the Catechism of the Catholic Church participants at these courses should also bring a Catholic Bible. Catholic translations include among others the Revised Standard Version which is a more literal translation for serious scripture study, the Jerusalem Bible used in the liturgy in Europe and the New American Bible used in the liturgy in North America both of which are easier to read and the New Jerusalem Bible which has more contemporary language but is still true to the original meaning. Note that Catholic Bibles have all 73 canonical books; 46 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New. If there is a Student Course Book for the course and you are not supplying it you might like to ask the participants to get

one and advise them on where it can be obtained well in advance of the start date".

Question: "What sort of person makes a good Group Facilitator?"

Answer: "A good Group Facilitator is a patient well balanced prayerful person who can take charge of a group without imposing themselves upon it. They do not focus attention on themselves or on their own opinions but focus on the needs of others. They have a gentle approachable welcoming personality and are careful to put others at their ease. They are humble enough to admit they do not know the answers (and are not expected to) and yet firm enough to insist the group refer to the CCC for the answers. They are mindful of the feelings of others. They are careful to give everyone an opportunity to speak and diplomatically skilful enough not to allow any one person to hog the discussion for too long.

Question: "What does a Group Facilitator need to do?"

Answer: "The Group Facilitator is not a teacher but someone who facilitates discussion while at the same time keeping the group focussed on the subject of the talk. He/she is like a chairperson who uses the subject of the DVD talk, the Course Book questions and the Answer Key to guide the group in discovering what the Church teaches. The Group Facilitator encourages each person to say something, especially the quieter less talkative members of the group, with open ended prompts like "any thoughts on this John?" but does not insist that everyone makes a contribution to the discussion. They never put anyone on the spot with specific questions nor ask anyone to read anything.

When questions arise that are not covered in the talk or in the student workbook the Group Facilitator will gently but firmly insist the group refer to the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) for the answers. The Group Facilitator is humble enough to admit they do not know the answers (even when they think they might know) and always responds to such situations with something like "well, lets see what the Catechism says on that" and thus invites the group to discover together what the Church really teaches. The Group Facilitator never attempts to 'wing it' or guess the answer nor do they agree with anyone without reference to the CCC."

Question: "Do you have a downloadable version of the Step-by-Step guide that I can print out?"

Answer: "Yes. A downloadable PDF version of the Step-by-Step guide is available from the Courses4Catholics website.

Question: "Do you have a downloadable version of these Frequently Asked Questions?"

Answer: "Yes. A downloadable PDF version of these Frequently Asked Questions is available from the Courses4Catholics website.