

A Guide to Programs & Curriculums

Evangelization & OCIA



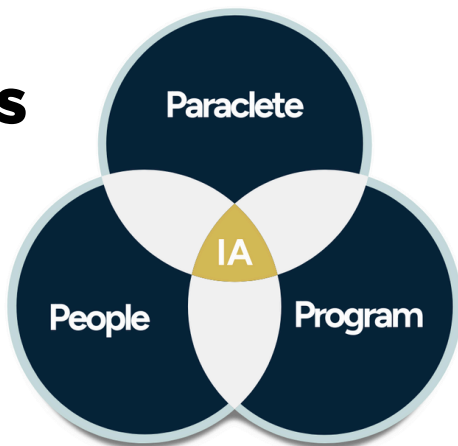
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The Three P's

Without taking the people into consideration, our ministry is nothing. Without the paraclete, it becomes fruitless. Without programs, it can quickly turn into wandering aimlessly. All three are necessary for intentional accompaniment.



How do we include “people”?

Human beings are created for relationship. Because of this, ministry should always be done in relationship with one another! In order to truly take the people into consideration in your parish, it is important to keep the person who is receiving at the forefront. If what you are doing isn't working for them, you need to have the confidence to pivot to something new!

How do we include the “paraclete”?

It sounds obvious-- we should pray when doing ministry. We should be aiming for more than inclusion, Evangelii Nuntianti says that “the Holy Spirit is the principle agent of evangelization” (75). The principle agent! We should be in conversation with the Holy Spirit during every single conversation with every single person at our parishes, and we should have great expectations that He will stir up curiosity and zeal when it needs to be!

So... what “programs” should we use and how should we incorporate them fruitfully?

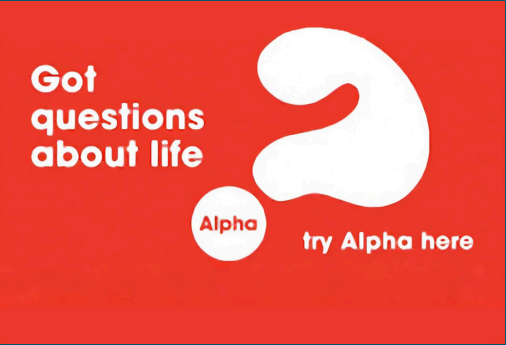
This is by no means an exhaustive list of evangelization tools for your parish to use. There are dozens more, far too many for us to cover in one booklet. However, the evangelization tools listed here are a sampling of different tools that have worked incredibly well in parishes around the Archdiocese of Denver. They have been vetted, put into practice, and parish leaders and clergy can testify to their usefulness, especially when incorporated thoughtfully into a community.

As previously mentioned, no program will be fruitful and successful without also incorporating the people and the Holy Spirit into it, so we have provided suggestions for usage alongside each program we have featured.

Note: The Archdiocese of Denver does not receive any kind of commission for parishes using them. However, we have contacts at each of them, and we are happy to connect you!



Evan Prog



angelization rams

Alpha- “the icebreaker”

Alpha helps create a space for honest conversation around some of life’s biggest questions. It is designed to provide guests an opportunity to connect with one another while providing the opportunity to share thoughts, ideas, and opinions in a safe and caring environment. Alpha helps bring people together while providing the chance to encounter Jesus. It is a non-denominational resource with a Catholic context supplementary guide.



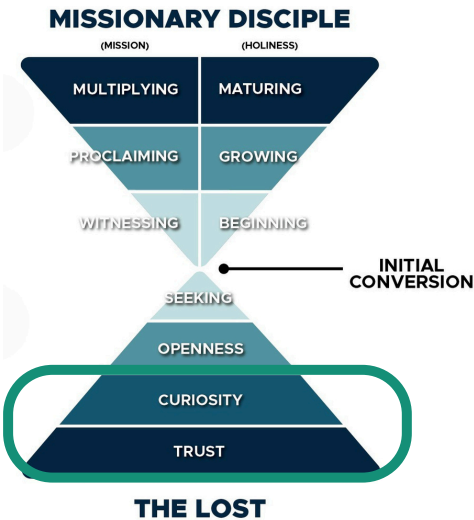
What group does Alpha serve?

Anyone who is curious about the faith! This program excels at being a great “first exposure” to God or the parish. We would situate this program in the very beginning of the Thresholds of Conversion.

Alpha also has a youth program and a marriage enrichment version!

What components does it include?

- 11 week experience
- weekly dinner
- weekly video
- small group discussion
- 1 day retreat w/ prayer ministry
- testimony night



What does a parish need in order to execute Alpha well?

A parish needs a dedicated leadership team-- Alpha provides training materials, but people to serve as hospitality, table leaders, praise and worship leaders, and an MC is a must! Creating a warm, welcoming environment with good food, comfortable space, and a spirit of hospitality is essential. Personal invitations are the most effective way to bring people in, supported by parish-wide promotion. Pastor support can be incredibly helpful here in spreading the word at mass and by word of mouth. Many successful Alpha programs also advertise outside the parish building with a sign to invite others in. Most importantly, the entire effort must be grounded in prayer, and followed by a clear path to deeper parish involvement and spiritual growth.



“Alpha is not a silver bullet; it’s a tool. When used as part of a larger pastoral strategy, it is the best tool that I’ve found for jump-starting and sustaining parish renewal.”

**-Fr James Mallon,
Divine Renovation**

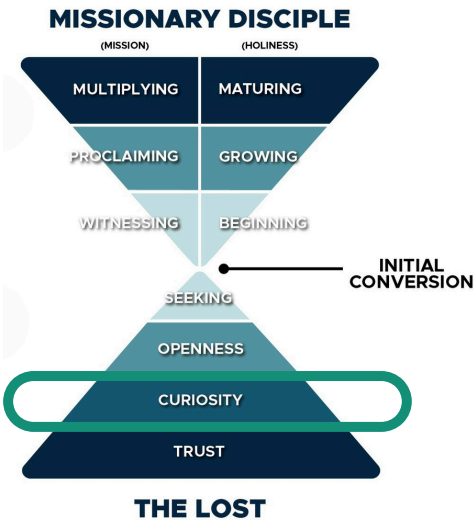
What other ministries can Alpha feed into or collaborate with?

- Marriage Prep
- Marriage Enrichment (Alpha Marriage Course)
- Youth Group (Alpha Youth)
- Early non-Catholic Seekers

The Search- “the probe”



The Search is an innovative video series that tackles the key questions of every human heart. In seven beautifully filmed episodes, Chris Stefanick and experts from multiple fields of science, medicine, psychology, art, and religion examine our place in the larger story of existence. It was created by Chris Stefanik within the Augustine Institute, and it is available on Formed.org, along with participant and leader guides.



What group does the Search serve?

This program is particularly good at creating and stoking the flames of curiosity in an individual.

What components does it include?

7 week experience

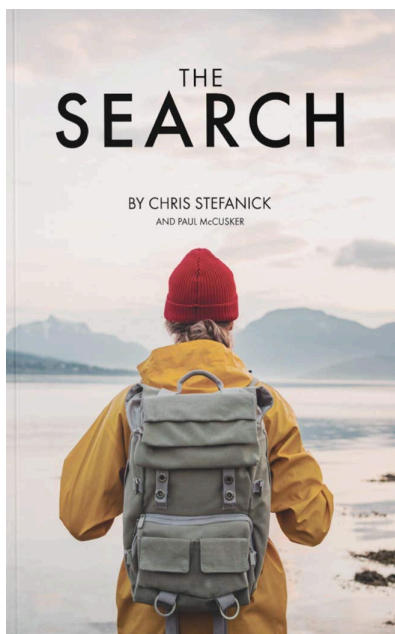
- weekly video
- weekly discussion questions

34 follow-up episodes

- Q&A series with Chris Stefanik & Augustine Institute professors that answer common questions about the Catholic Faith

Suggestions for Implementation:

Risen Christ, who has been running The Search since the beginning five years ago, has had great success with two deviations: starting with a meal, like Alpha or Rescue Project, to bring participants together and break the ice, and showing an episode of The Chosen halfway through the Search videos. Specifically, they have been showing the episode that features Nicodemus's call by Christ and his anguish. This has been an excellent way to introduce participants to another context of these existential questions that The Search presents, and it also gives them somewhere to go if they want to learn more about the Bible. It can be done a few times a year right after major points that bring non-catechized people back to Church, such as Christmas and Easter.



What does a parish need in order to execute the Search well?

A core team that is trained in how to ask questions rather than dominating the conversation is a must have! Other resources include discussion questions (there are some included in the teen version!) and a hospitality and invitation group to bring people there and provide the meals.

What other ministries can the Search feed into or collaborate with?

- Family movie nights
- Youth Group (the youth version is called The Search Begins)
- Inquiry & Evangelization
- book clubs*

***The Search is also available as a book for parishes that would prefer it to be a book club experience instead!**

The Rescue Project- “the activator”



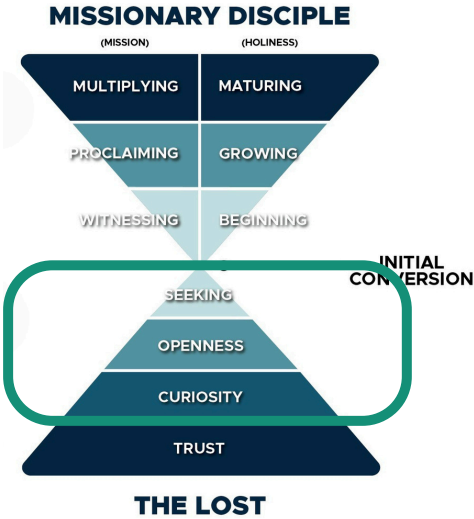
The Rescue Project seeks to proclaim the gospel in a compelling and attractive way over eight weeks in a small group format. The goal of The Rescue Project is to create an opportunity for people to be overwhelmed and be brought to a decision to surrender their lives to Jesus and be mobilized for mission. The Rescue Project appeals to those who have been walking with Jesus for years, as well as those for whom Jesus is only a figure in ancient history. In other words, The Rescue Project is for everyone, everywhere, whether inside or outside of the Church.

What group does the Rescue Project serve?

This program is intended for a wide range, but it is best suited for those open to learning more about Jesus and those seeking him, as well as cradel and fallen away Catholics.

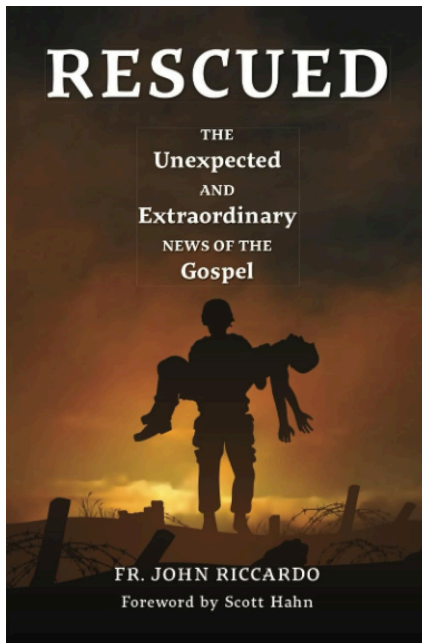
What components does it include?

- 8 week experience
- shared meal
 - weekly video
 - weekly discussion groups
 - prayer & reflection
 - (optional) retreat day at the end



Suggestions for Implementation:

Don't be afraid to go "off book" to make it work for your parish! Groups have had shorter meeting times than Acts XXIX recommends and a shorter retreat if that is going to present a barrier to participants. To truly integrate Rescue Project into a parish, start with ministry leaders to bring it into their own ministries as they see fit, and then open it to the parish as well. Rescue Project at a parish can bring greater community connection, more parishioners understanding the kerygma and answering the call that God has on their life, parishioners speaking a common language (created, captured, rescued, response) which allows for more focused discussion during bible studies and ministry meetings.



What does a parish need in order to execute the Rescue Project well?

A team of volunteers for hospitality, a team of volunteers for meals, a team of volunteers for small groups, an intercessory prayer team, space with room for a meal, weekly meetings for 8 weeks plus time/space for a 4 hour retreat.

What other ministries can the Rescue Project feed into or collaborate with?

- Family Faith Formation
- use it in mystagogy with OCIA (or even in inquiry)
- marriage formation

***Rescued is a book version for parishes that would prefer it to be a book club experience instead!**

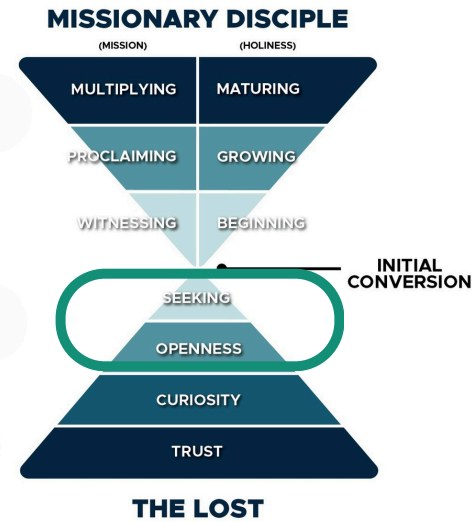
CCO Faith Studies- “the backbone”

Catholic Christian Outreach (CCO) Bible studies are dynamic, evangelization-focused small group studies designed to form missionary disciples—Catholics who know and live the Gospel and are equipped to share it with others. Their bible studies are best used in conjunction with CCO’s structure of Intentional Accompaniment (4-3-2-1) and have the dual use of training accompaniers by leading them and bringing individuals to conversion by participating in them. The studies can be used a la carte or in sequence with one another.



What does a CCO study look like?

Each study is a 6 week experience. The leader guides the participants through a set of scripture verses and discussion questions, and then meets with a coach weekly to pray about and discuss the participants’ reactions to the content.



CCO Movements vs CCO Studies

CCO studies can be used a la carte for specific groups, such as Discovery before starting OCIA or Commission for a leadership team. However, they can be strung together to form a significant parish experience called a “movement”. Movements incorporate Intentional Accompaniment layered with leaders who are being coached by coaches, and then coaches are being accompanied by the Movement Leader.



What does a parish need in order to execute a CCO movement well?

A parish needs someone who will be referred to as the “Movement Leader” that oversees and coaches the study leaders through the different elements. Given the intricacies of the CCO structure, please reach out to the EFLM office to discuss strategy and implementation. Our office is very familiar with these resources and can talk through the best direction to start.

Who should participate in a CCO study or lead a CCO study?

CCO studies are a helpful context for anyone that you are desiring to bring to an initial conversion, confirm an initial conversion, or dive deeper into their conversion. The experience of leading a CCO study is an excellent training in how to intentionally accompany a seeker, whether they are new to the faith or just coming back to it. Anyone who leads a study should have had an experience of going through it as a participant first!



What are the different studies?

Discovery- a walk through the Kerygma, focusing on personal relationship with Christ and invites an initial conversion

Source- focused on the Holy Spirit and stirring up the gifts received at confirmation

Growth- a practical look at growing in Christian community, prayer, and the Sacraments

Trust- growing in trust in all areas of life to live in greater freedom

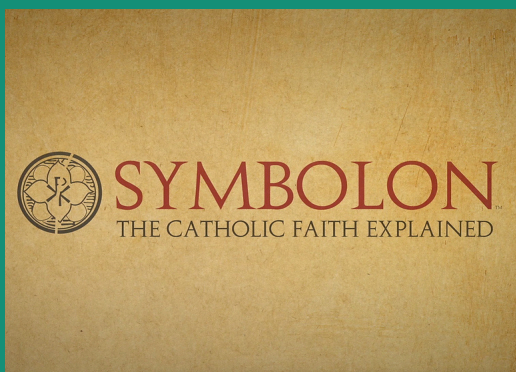
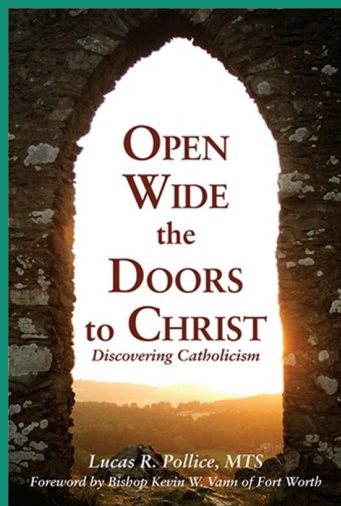
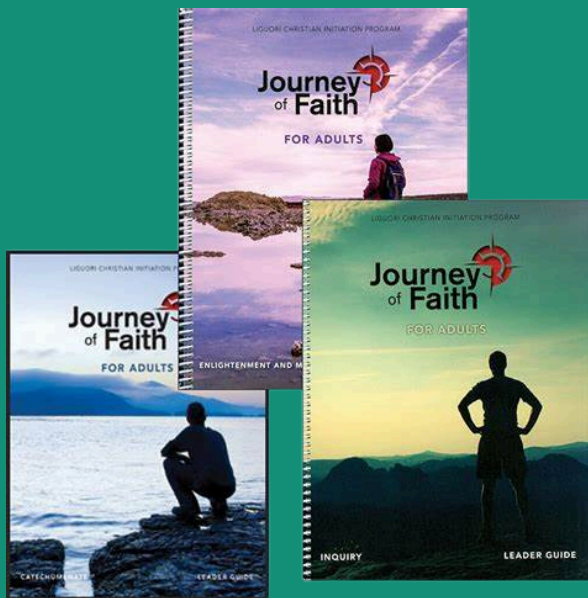
Commission- a dive into the Thresholds of Conversion and missional identity, ending with asking participants respond to the call to walk with individuals in their own life

Whereas Evangelization programs are the wild west in terms of content, execution, and length, OCIA textbooks are a much more tame playing field. Because of this, the following pages contain an evaluation of the most used resources in our Archdiocese, including where they excel, where they fall short, and recommendations for use in light of the proposed “Essentials for Catechumenate Formation”.

We will continue to encourage parishes to create their own lesson plans that take their parish’s unique context and demographics into account. We also hold in tension the reality that many parishes, especially towards the beginning of their OCIA transition, don’t have the bandwidth and manpower to make this happen, at least not right away. In those cases, the programs suggested here are a great jumping off point!



Sacra Prepa Progr



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Journey of Faith

Liguori Publications

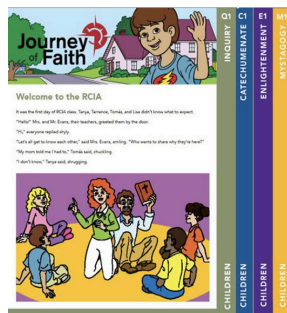
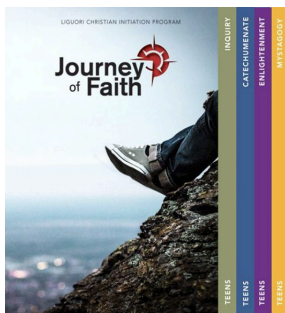
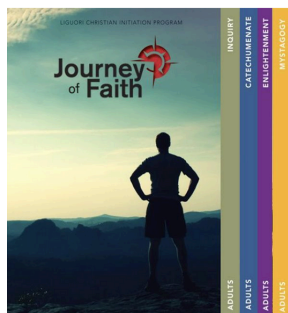
This publication has been around since 1993, though it was recently updated with new language and clarity with the OCIA retranslation. It is written with a clear and direct voice and gives a good amount of information that is presented in short and concise paragraphs. The content is almost exclusively intellectual formation.

What audience does the Journey of Faith speak to best?

Journey of Faith has a specific version for adults, teen, and youth, in both English and in Spanish. Since all of the content is the same across the versions, this makes it a great resource for entire families who are coming into the Church at the same time. It is written in everyday language and does a good job of explaining vocabulary.

What does the program include?

There is a participant leaflet (four pages total) for every lesson that introduces a topic. The leader guide is built around these leaflets and have additional questions and notes to pay attention to. The guide has tips and tricks for catechesis as well for anyone that may not have taught anything before!



Note: "Journey of Faith" has a set for adults, teens, and children-- all in both English and Spanish!



What areas does this program do well?

This program does a great job of giving just enough information about the topics that it presents-- not so overwhelming that people will check out, but not so basic that material isn't being covered. The handouts for each week are concise and give lots of reflection questions to provide a context for sponsors to dig in deeper with a further conversation. Overall, it is a great resource for parishes that need a cohesive and all-inclusive resource that is generally easy to follow!

Where does this program fall short?

One of the main qualms we have with Journey of Faith is their structure. They have an "inquiry" guide that is a classroom setting and covers many topics that should be covered in the catechumenate. The schedules that they give also lead to more confusion-- they offer a calendar year, a liturgical year, and a school year model, but none of their suggestions align with the current National Statutes for OCIA set forth by the USCCB. Their program considers Inquiry, Catechumenate, and Purification & Enlightenment as part of this year long requirement, but they don't label them as if they were all part of the catechumenate. They are also missing a few topics that have been proposed and will likely be included in the Archdiocese of Denver's Essential Catechumenal Formation list, such as evangelization, worldview realignment, and ecumenism.

What modifications do we suggest?

- ignore the calendars, the numbering, and the labels given
- use the "Inquiry" and "Catechumenate" lessons as the catechumenate together, and supplement with the topics requested by the Essential Catechumenal Formation that are not covered. If you do this, you will have anywhere from 32-38 lessons-- plenty to cover for a year-long process!
- make sure to include a robust plan for sponsor accompaniment so it doesn't feel like a school class.

Open Wide the Doors to Christ by Lucas Pollice

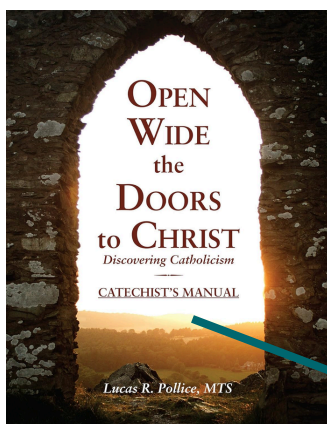
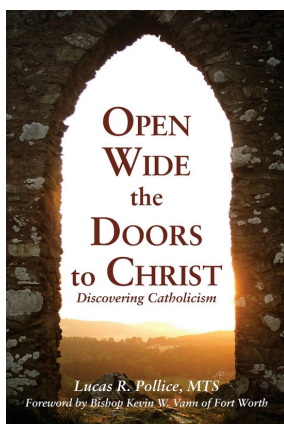
This book set--a leader's guide and a participant's guide-- was first published in 2013 and has stayed in the same format and content. It is written by Augustine Institute professor (and now the Director of the New Evangelization and Missionary Discipleship for the Diocese of Colorado Springs). It is rather robust academically, but it is a very trustworthy source of information about the Church.

What audience does Open Wide the Doors speak to best?

Open Wide the Doors to Christ is a deeply academic resource that doesn't leave many rocks unturned. It would be a fantastic fit for a group of academically-leaning catechumens or even candidates that were involved in deeper theology in their previous denominations.

What is included in Open Wide the Doors to Christ?

There is a general participant's guide and a catechist manual. The participant guide reads like a textbook, and the catechist manual includes full-fledged lesson plans and a lot of introductory writing about the different periods for RCIA (it has not been updated to OCIA) and a lot of theory. If you are an Augustine Institute grad, this will feel very philosophically aligned for you!



The Catechist Manual looks the exact same except for the subtitle. Keep this in mind when purchasing!



What areas does this program do well?

This program can be executed well with only one copy of the catechist manual and no guides for the catechumens or candidates, which makes it a great one-time purchase that has everything you need. It is set up in a classroom model, so it is easy to navigate and can be a really helpful format for someone with no teaching experience all the way up to an experienced educator.

Where does this program fall short?

Similar to many other programs, Open Wide the Doors has a separate section for Inquiry Period and the Catechumenate, though the content should all really be in the catechumenate. There are 7 lessons in the “Inquiry” and 28 lessons in the “Catechumenate”, and they are also missing a few topics that have been proposed and will likely be included in the Archdiocese of Denver’s Essential Catechumenal Formation list, like ecumenism, certain worldview topics, and intentional space on evangelization. There is also very little mention of the spiritual life or liturgical elements anywhere. The biggest concern to keep in mind is the accessibility of the content-- it is quite robust and reads very academically, which would likely turn off seekers who are not interested in getting a certificate worthy education in academic theology.

What modifications do we suggest?

- use the “Inquiry” and “Catechumenate” lessons as the catechumenate together, and supplement with the topics requested by the Essential Catechumenal Formation that are not covered.
- make sure to include a robust plan for sponsor accompaniment so it doesn’t feel like a school class.
- use these lesson plans as a reference in creating your own plan, do not use them word for word unless you have a group that is really desiring to go deep and won’t have trouble with the more intellectual lens!

Symbolon

The Augustine Institute

Symbolon has been around for ten years both on Formed.org through the Augustine Institute as well as in a DVD format. Last summer, they released an updated set of videos! They desire to present the beauty of the Church with stunning visuals, accredited speakers, and clear catechesis.

What audience does Symbolon speak to best?

Because of its 30–45-minute video format, it can speak well to a variety of audiences, almost feeling like a movie. It speaks clearly and employs a variety of examples to drive their points home and make the faith come alive.

What does the program include?

The “old” Symbolon was split into two parts-- 10 episodes on “Knowing the Faith” and 10 episodes on “Living the Faith”. The “new” Symbolon has 16 episodes all together that walk through each component of the Creed, which essentially covers the Profession of Faith minus a few components. There are also leader guides and participant guides for both versions available in the Augustine Institute website’s bookstore.





What areas does this program do well?

This program has a clear, concise presentation of the material. Because it is a video, anyone can “lead” the session, and the “learning” section of the evening stays within the time of the video. Their update to the material with the new OCIA took in a lot of feedback they have received over the years and a different approach than the first version-- so you know that the content is honed in! They also handle the inquiry vs catechumenate divide much better. This program claims to be only for the catechumenate, and they do it really well! For parishes struggling with summer attendance, these can be a great “view at home to discuss later” materlas as well.

Where does this program fall short?

This is by far the shortest program with the fewest lessons out there for OCIA-- 16 lessons versus the 30ish lessons many others contain. Because of that, there are a lot of topics missing that would be good to go into with your group, such as specific moral teachings, specificities on the different sacraments (this program covers all of them together in a 28-minute video), and spiritual and liturgical topics. Interestingly, the previous version of Symbolon did go into some of these topics with a little more depth, so it may be worth combining them. Finally, the video format it naturally a little impersonal, so there is a need for significant work outside showing the video to make the program more personal and communal.

What modifications do we suggest?

- heavy supplement with topics that will likely be included in the “Essential Catechumenal Formation” document
- in-person fellowship before, during, and after to make it personal
- accompaniment with a Sponsor
- make sure to touch the other areas of formation (spiritual and liturgical) that this program doesn’t give guidance for (to their credit-- they do not claim to!)

Notes



Notes



