

Introductory Remarks (webcast version)

1st Session of 2018-2019 Basic Catholicism Course

Welcome to our Basic Catholicism Course in St John the Evangelist parish for the year 2018-2019. My name is Samuel Edwards. Our priest, Fr Richard Sutter and I will be sharing the task of guiding you on this adventure, which could be described as an exploration of the glorious generosity of God.

Certainly, my most vivid impression in my own experience of coming into the full communion of the Church was the utter generosity shown me by everyone at every level, which led to the realization that this is the effect that a living faith has on those who not only *profess* it, but actually *confess* it. This ought not be at all surprising when one considers that the fundamental biblical meaning of sonship is “the clear reflection of the character of one’s father.” The eternal Father’s plan for *us* is to form us – who he has made in His *image* – into the true *likeness* of His eternal Son by conferring on us the same eternal Spirit of Sonship Who caused His Son to be formed in our likeness in the womb of His Immaculate Virgin Mother.

There will be a great deal about that – and all that flows from it – as we continue over the next few months. Right now, we will be giving you a general overview of what we will cover during the next few months.

Now, a word about the name of the course: We’re calling it “Basic Catholicism” because it is intended for a broader audience than that envisioned by a strict concept of RCIA, though if you want to call it “RCIA” that’s perfectly fine. The

Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults as originally conceived was for adults who were not yet baptized. It is an adaptation of the ancient process of the catechumenate to contemporary conditions. (In its classical form the catechumenate was a process lasting on average around three years, during which the aspiring Christian first learned to live a disciplined life of Christian prayer and practice, and only during the last third was given more systematic and detailed instruction in the content of the Faith.)

Basic Catholicism *includes* RCIA but has generous space for those who are already among the community of the baptized. Because of this, there are likely to be as many reasons why any participant would be here as there would be people participating, but behind each particular and personal answer to the question, “why are you here” is one common answer, and that is, “because God wanted me to be here.”

People seek to participate in this kind of instruction for a variety of reasons. This course is intended to serve all these needs and aspirations. It is for ...

- people who are not yet Christian and are answering a call to be baptized, confirmed, and admitted to Communion with the one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic Church.
- It is also for people who already have been baptized in the Catholic Church and want to complete their full incorporation into the Church by receiving the Sacraments of Confirmation and Holy Communion.

- It is for people who have already been baptized and have received First Communion as children, but for some reason (often one beyond their control) ceased to be active in the Church before being confirmed and now want to complete sacramental initiation by receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation.
- It is for people who have received all the sacraments of initiation, but have not been actively practicing the faith for some time and now wish to renew their participation in her life.
- It is for people who are practicing Catholics and want to refresh and deepen their understanding of the faith and life of the Church.
- It is even for people who are not currently interested in becoming Catholic, but have family members who are Catholic, and want to understand their faith better.
- And it is for people who are not currently interested in becoming Catholic themselves, but are interested in better understanding what the Church *actually* teaches, as opposed to what the culture wrongly *claims* the Church teaches.

If are not yet Catholic and you do decide to become Catholic, you will be asked to publicly profess that you believe all that the Church teaches as revealed by God, so your getting accurate information from us is very important. After all, in the long run the only thing more dangerous to the Church than an ignorant Catholic is an ignorant *and unconverted* Catholic – as the present distress in the worldwide Church starkly illustrates.

We will be looking at the critical teachings of the Church, not just as a recital of historical facts, but as they touch on contemporary issues of personal and social life. When we're done, you should be able to understand the reasons why the Church often seems not to be going with the flow of contemporary attitudes about such things as marriage, contraception, abortion, human sexuality, politics, government, and so forth.

Our principal audio-visual resource will be the Augustine Institute's superb series called *Symbolon*. We are also providing you with a very basic list of resources that you can use to supplement, reinforce, and double-check what you learn here.

However, it is important to understand – and our *Symbolon* episodes will underline this – that intellectual assent is only part – and for most people not the most important part – of a decision to come into full communion with the Church. What you enter into when you come into full communion with the Catholic Church is not simply an institution, but a way of life. The best way to begin to appreciate what that entails is to participate with us in the worship of God in Christ through the Holy Spirit in the company of St Mary the Virgin, St Joseph, St John the Evangelist, the angels and archangels, and all the saints-in-training in the pews around you to the degree that you are able.

Once again, welcome to Basic Catholicism. We're glad you're here.