



## Churches Together in Alresford May 2019 Newsletter

### **The Basics of our faith**

I'm a cradle Catholic; one of those brought up in the faith, rode the sacramental waves at various ages and stages; and for whatever reason stayed the course and continued to practise according to the Church's teaching, enjoying immensely the friendship and regularity associated with Sunday Worship, and doing my bit out of a sense of duty to an organisation, a club if you like, of which I have been a part these seven decades (and apart from family, I cannot say that about ANY other organisation).

And enjoying, too, the increasing number of occasions when I get together with Christians of other traditions.

And yet, of late, I have this feeling of incompleteness, of non-fulfilment in respect of my Christian Journey: that being or feeling just a member of a great club is not enough.

Until – BOOM! – Alpha: well not quite, but sort of. I had known about Alpha for many years, and had long resisted its magnetism, engaged, as it seemed to me, solely on an evangelical numbers-of-souls mission. To be sure, I didn't read much about it, but someone whose view I respected had said that it was not too hot on the sacraments; and so I put it out of my mind, not so much on the back burner, more on the pilot light, i.e. not dismissive, but dubious.

Until, that is, Fr Mark, Parish Priest at St Peter and the Winchester Martyrs, introduced the idea; and as he thought it was worth doing, that was good enough an impetus to give it a try, given my current lack of fulfilment on the Christian Journey front. The experience, I have to admit, while not totally mind-blowing, had so much good and well-explained stuff for a waverer like me. I guess it may be called Alpha because it begins at the beginning: "Is there more to Life than This? And "Who is Jesus"; and that was what I needed.

Afficionados will know the Alpha format: you gather in groups of twelve (maximum) as many groups as your venue can take (ours took five groups) for eleven successive weekly sessions, with ten sessions lasting up to two and a half hours and one all day: there's a group meal, then a talk on the topic of the session, and then in the confidence of your group, and led by your group host, you consider the issues that arise from the talk.

The level of discussion in the group is wherever the group dynamic sets it; but for those looking for basic spiritual rejuvenation there is much, much to be gained. And if I have taken away one key idea from my Alpha experience it is the need to build a relationship with God. Now why did I not think of that before? It's simple really, and right up the Churches Together Street. Google Alpha.

**Piers Armstrong**