

WELCOME TO *PILGRIM*

Welcome to this course of exploration into the truth of the Christian faith as it has been revealed in Jesus Christ and lived out in his Church down through the centuries.

The aim of this course is to help people explore what it means to become disciples of Jesus Christ. From the very beginning of his ministry, Jesus called people to follow him and become his disciples. The Church in every generation shares in the task of helping others hear Christ's call to them and follow him.

We hope the course will help you to understand this faith and to see how it can be lived out each day, and that it will equip you to make a decision about whether to be part of this Church. This will either happen by being baptized and confirmed, if this has not happened to you before, or by a renewal of baptismal vows.

You won't be able to find out everything about the Christian faith in any one course. But through the *Pilgrim* course material you will be able to reflect on some of the great texts that have been particularly significant to Christian people from the earliest days of the Church:

- The Creeds
- The Lord's Prayer
- The Beatitudes
- The Commandments

There is one book based on each of these texts in the "Follow" stage of *Pilgrim* (designed for absolute beginners) and one that goes further in the "Grow" (discipleship) stage.

By learning these texts, reflecting upon them, and seeing what they mean for your life, you will make a journey through the great story of

the Christian faith. And you will do this in the company of a small group of fellow travelers: people like you who want to find out more about the Christian faith and are considering its claims and challenges.

In other words, this course is for people who are *not yet Christians*, but who are open to finding out more and *for those who are just beginning the journey*. People who want some sort of *refresher course* are also very welcome. In walking with you on this journey we are not assuming that you necessarily share the beliefs that are being explored, just that you want to find out about them.

This course will approach the great issues of faith not by trying to persuade you to believe, but by encouraging you to practice the ancient disciplines of biblical reflection and prayer which have always been at the heart of the living out of Christian faith.

We don't think these are things that should only be practiced once you have come to faith. Rather, they can be the means by which faith is received and then strengthened within us.

Each book has six or seven sessions, and in each session you will find:

- a **theme**
- some **opening prayers**
- a “**conversation-starter**”
- an opportunity to **reflect** on a **reading** from Scripture (the Bible)
- a short **article** from a contemporary Christian writer on the theme
- some **questions** to address
- a further time of **prayer**
- finally, a “**sending out**” section, with suggestions for further reflection and selected quotations from the great tradition of Christian writing to help you do so.

This pattern of contemplation and discussion will, we believe, help you to decide whether you wish to respond to Christ and be part of his Church. Remember that the Church is not a group of men and women who are, themselves, certain about all these things, but who “believe, with God’s help” (this is what you are asked at baptism) and then go on following Jesus Christ and continuing the journey of faith.

We all learn in different ways, and there is a variety of material here to support you. Different people will receive something from the different parts of the session according to their own learning style.

At the end of this course, we hope you will have made some new friends and explored quite a lot of areas of Christian faith. Just as importantly, you will have been given confidence to read the Bible prayerfully and critically, and you will have, if you wish, established a pattern for prayer. We hope that *Pilgrim* will help you lay a foundation for a lifetime of learning more about God’s love revealed in Jesus Christ and what it means to be his disciple.

This little book gives you all you need to begin this great journey. You are standing where millions of men and women have stood: you have caught a glimpse of who God is, and you are puzzled and curious to know whether the claims of the Christian faith can be trusted and whether they actually make any difference to life.

This book and this course can help you. You will need the book for each session, but outside of the sessions you may want to look each week at the material you are about to study together. As the course goes on, you may want to take time each week to look back at what you have already covered as you move forward on your own pilgrimage.