

The purpose of this folder is to make an overt transition to Catholic beliefs and practice by discussing the purpose and need for prayer.

Pointers for Folder 5

This and the subsequent seven folders presuppose that the man has gone over the first four and is interested in learning more about the Catholic faith. He may wish to return to the practice of his faith, to make his first Communion or merely to begin investigating Catholic beliefs and practices. The facilitator will need patience if he is to encourage the man to be open in expressing his feelings and thoughts about the Church.

Inquire about the man's reasons for wanting to know more about the Faith. The man in the picture is beginning a race. He knows how far it is and how long it will take him. These talks are a beginning, but the length of time needed to finish is uncertain. Do not set a date for First Communion or penance or even for being received into the Church. Carefully go over what the man is expected to do during the time he is with you. Inquire about the man's practice of prayer and his feelings about it. Stress that prayer is a way of reaching out to God in order to foster a personal friendly relationship. There may be questions about certain forms of prayer such as the rosary. They are not magical formulas. They are means to deepen our realization of our dependence on God.

Gestures, such as the Sign of the Cross, are a form of prayer often more expressive than words. As such they need to be done slowly and reverently not in a jerky, quick, thoughtless manner. The Sign of the Cross, as well as the crucifix, has a powerful message for us. It is the sign of love and hope because Jesus gave up his life out of love for us and he will not abandon us. It is also a powerful reminder that love, not violence or anger is the new "Way" we walk the talk.

Finally, the Sign of the Cross is a short and concise expression of our fundamental belief about the nature of the God Catholics and many other Christians believe in. We believe that God is three persons in one nature; namely, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Theologians have struggled for ages trying to explain how this can be. Simply keep to the formula of three persons in one nature, one God.

At the end of the session ask the man to make the Sign of the Cross with you. Tell him that, if he wishes, you will pray with him before and after each session, but keep the prayer SHORT. Often a devout Sign of the Cross and a simple request or expression of thanks will do. For your own better understanding of prayer you may wish to read "Section One, Prayer in the Christian Life," in the section on prayer in the Catechism of the Catholic Faith numbers 2558 to 2578.