



***The Right Reverend D. Presley Hutchens, B.S., M.Th.***  
***Bishop Ordinary***  
***831 Second Street***  
***Post Office Box 1053***  
***Natchitoches, Louisiana 71458***

March 8, 2008

This Church and Diocese has no better tool for growth than a well planned and executed “Inquirer’s Class” and solid Bible based Confirmation training. However, growth at any level will depend on the personal and financial commitment your Parish makes toward this program. The best planned material results in minimal success if the instructor is not intentional and committed to the results it potentially can achieve. This material is not designed to replace the material in the Book of Common Prayer, but, to provide a supplement to it in such a way as to encourage student interaction with the BCP, Church and Parish. Intention, planning and commitment is very important in the making of committed and enthusiastic Disciples.

I am deeply indebted to Fr. Stephen Scarlett and the staff of St. Matthew’s for his gracious permission to use this material in the Diocese of New Orleans. St. Matthew’s is very likely the largest parish in this Church ranging close to 400 members and visitors in attendance on any given Sunday. They have put together a very exciting “Inquirer’s Class” training that also works very well for confirmation preparation. It is not uncommon for me to receive and confirm 20-30 on my visits there several times yearly. Obviously, there are many other activities that draw visitors and keep them as committed parishioners. However, it begins at this level. This program is their first real entrance into the parish life of St. Matthew’s, the Diocese and Church. This will be true for your Parish also.

I strongly encourage you to take this material, reproduce it into student books. Reproduce the CDs and DVD for each student so that they may listen to it and watch it at their leisure. This is the way most of us live and learn now. You will find the material easily reproduced and, if given to the student or inquirer to keep, it will become a resource for them over the years and a constant reminder of their choice to join your Parish, this Diocese and Church.

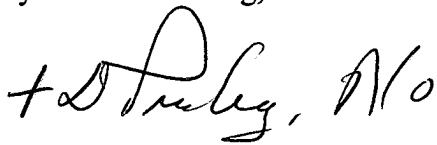
I ask the pastors and Vestries of this Diocese to choose wisely those who will instruct the course, to plan to meet for training of the leaders, to set dates and publicize them in an effort to attract inquirers or prepare confirmands. Do not wait until someone

expresses an interest in being confirmed or received. Be proactive with this program. Use it as a tool to bring them in, not just as a method of instruction for those seeking confirmation. I cannot emphasize this enough. Schedule several classes each year and invite friends to attend them.

WE HAVE AN EXCITING STORY TO TELL and this material makes telling it simple and enjoyable. I recommend that parishioners, even those with long years in this Church, take part in the class every so often. It is open to anyone and would be interesting to anyone. The presence of parishioners at this class has two advantages. 1.) it insures that the lone inquirer (which may sometimes happen) will not find himself or herself alone in the process, and, 2.) it will serve to energize everyone in discussions, offering parishioners the possibility to establish a deeper relationship with the inquirer. I see nothing by positive experiences and results emanating from this program when executed well.

It may require some personal and financial investment. Even so, this is the work that we do (or should be doing.) It is money well spent. It is taking what God has given us and truly using it for the glory of his Kingdom.

My Richest Blessing,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "D. Presley Hutchens".

(the Rt.) Reverend D. Presley Hutchens  
Bishop Ordinary  
Diocese of New Orleans

**Session One**  
The Creeds of the Church

**Session Two**  
The Moral Law and the Gospel

**Session Three**  
The Sacraments

**Session Four**  
The Church and its Symbolism

**Session Five**  
The Liturgy-Holy Communion

**Session Six**  
The Church Calendar

**Session Seven**  
The Life of Prayer

**Session Eight**  
The Duties of a Christian

## **An Introduction to the Inquirer's Class**

The Inquirers Class is designed to provide an accessible door of entry into the church. Most people who come to the liturgy on Sunday without any previous exposure or instruction will be lost. Even if they are able to follow the words they will not understand what it all means.

This has always been the case in the church. In the early church, people often went through a couple of years of instruction before they were even allowed to be present for the Eucharist. They would never see or hear the liturgy before they understood it.

In the modern world, people become Christians with far less instruction and preparation. Some people were raised in a church and assimilated to some degree the various practices and prayers of the church without ever being taught their essential meaning. For example, one can learn the mechanics of how to receive the Sacrament of the body and blood of Jesus without understanding what it means to live in communion with the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit. One can memorize the Creed without understanding the significance and implications of God as Trinity.

Other people have had some experience of conversion to faith, but that experience of conversion was not followed by an extended season of instruction in the Christian life. A person may have faith in Jesus but not know "all other things which a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health" (BCP 277).

There is also today a significant number of evangelical Christians who are being drawn to the depth and beauty of the sacramental way. These Christians know the basic truths of the Bible but want to know more about theology, worship and the life of prayer.

Increasingly, there are people who had no significant exposure to the gospel. They need to learn about Christ from the beginning.

The Inquires Class is designed to provide an introduction to the major aspects of the belief and practice of the church. It has been beneficial to the people coming from all of the backgrounds mentioned above

### **What it means to be a Christian.**

A person becomes a Christian through a process of initiation that consists of two essential components: baptism and conversion of the heart. The great church father St. Augustine wrote, "The sacrament of baptism is one thing, the conversion of the heart is another; but the salvation of man in effected by these two" (On Baptism, Book 4, ch. 25).

For those baptized as infants, conversion of the heart occurs, ideally, as they are instructed in the faith when they come of age. However, we live in a time when many who are baptized as infants receive no instruction that brings about conversion. Thus, there is a large group of people who are "nominal" Christians. They bear the name Christian in some fashion, but they do not really know

or follow Christ. The Inquirer's Class can be the means of return to the church, providing the instruction that was not given to the baptized when they came of age.

For adults, the experience of conversion of the heart ought to precede baptism. Adult converts would come to know Christ through preaching, Bible study, prayer, the personal testimony of another Christian or some experience of the presence of Christ in their lives. Then they would receive baptism. The Inquirers Class can be a preparation for Baptism.

For those coming from evangelical or other churches that do not have bishops, the classes will provide an introduction the sacramental perspective on the faith and the points of commonality and contrast with cultural forms of evangelicalism. The classes can be a preparation for Confirmation for those already baptized.

For those who have been in the church for a long time, the classes provide a new or renewed understanding of what we believe and practice. One great danger of long time church attendance is that one might go through the motions of faith while losing sight of the essence of faith. It is never too late to learn the faith.

### **The Inquirer's Class and Bible Study**

The Inquirers Class is biblical in that the main biblical truth of the faith are the focus of the class. However, the class is not a Bible study or Bible introduction. If the class has its desired impact, all who take the class will begin the habit of daily Bible reading in the context of daily prayer. And it will be most profitable for every Christian to be involved in a Bible Study, in which one can grow in knowledge of Christ through the Bible.

The Inquirers class gives the foundation and framework for our practice of the faith. But one class can be no more than an introduction. The benefit of the class will be to introduce truths and themes that one will revisit again and again in Bible reading and study over the years.

### **The Anglican Perspective on the Faith**

To be an Anglican is to be a Christian who practices the faith according the tradition of the Church of England, with worship centered on the Book of Common Prayer. To be Anglican is to be catholic in that we believe the ancient and universal or "catholic" faith of the church. What is catholic, according an ancient writer, is "that which was believed everywhere, always and by all." Thus, in disputed matters, we are interested in what the church has always believed rather than the more recent, novel interpretations.

To be Anglican is also to be reformed. The Church of England went through a reformation in which it rejected beliefs and practices that departed from the ancient and catholic faith. The English reformation was marked by a renewed emphasis on Bible reading and teaching and by the testing of questionable doctrines and practices by the teaching of the Bible.

Thus, for an Anglican, the authentic ancient and universal tradition of the church gives us the right interpretation of the Bible. But the Bible, in turn, must be used to test questionable traditions that creep into the practice of the church from time to time.

We call ourselves Anglican Catholics because of modern developments in the church. The Anglican church in American, historically, was called the Episcopal Church. In the last generation, the Episcopal Church fell away from the true faith, requiring faithful Anglicans to continue to practice the faith outside of that church. The word Anglican refers to our English tradition. The word Catholic refers the ancient faith to which we hold.

The Anglican Catholic Church was formed in 1976 as a place where faithful Anglican can continue to believe and practice they faith they received.

The purpose of the Inquirer's Class is to focus on the central themes of the faith which all Christians anciently held in common. The specifically Anglican component of the class will be found in the sections that deal with the specifics of the Anglican liturgy and the Anglican approach to the life of prayer.