

INFORMED

THE FORMED NEWSLETTER FOR PASTORS AND PARISH LEADERS

HOW CAN I FEED MY SCATTERED FLOCK?

Join the dioceses and parishes around the country participating in *The Search* by visiting thesearchbegins.org



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FROM THE DESK OF THE DIRECTOR

Dr. Ben Akers

Serving you and your parishioners is the number-one priority of our FORMED team. Each month we send you this newsletter to offer practical tips on how FORMED can support you in your apostolic work. As February marks the launch of the holy season of Lent, this is a great opportunity to remind your parishioners about their FORMED membership. We have a special schedule of programs lined up to enrich their spiritual life and formation. We also have an entire website dedicated to ideas and resources to help your parish make the most of FORMED this Lent: <https://leaders.formed.org/lent/>. You will find email copy, bulletin inserts, announcements, bookmarks, postcards, Lenten graphics, and more to share with your parishioners (many in English and Spanish). Along with these resources is information on several programs well-suited for the season, including *Forgiven: The Transforming Power of Confession* (English and Spanish). A new series you will find on FORMED is a weekly book discussion, on one of the \$1.50 books highlighted this Lent, entitled *I Thirst: 40 Days with Mother Teresa*. The author is Fr. Joseph Langford, who was an intimate friend of the saint from Calcutta and a co-founder with her of the Missionaries of Charity Fathers. The program will help readers and viewers mine the theological and spiritual riches of this text, which will be released on FORMED each Monday in Lent. I am happy to hear ideas of what we can do to help improve the FORMED experience for your parish. My email is ben.akers@augustineinstitute.org. God bless you and your work in building up God's Kingdom.

As our parishes grapple with closed doors and attendance limitations—as we look for ways to reach those searching for the answers to life's big questions of happiness, purpose, meaning, and faith—there is a program to help those feeling isolated, those away from the Church, and even those who have never had faith in their lives.

That program is *The Search*.

What is *The Search*?

The Search is a new, seven-part Augustine Institute Original Series with the goal of lighting that first fire in those who don't yet know the Faith, or reigniting the fire in those who need a primer on the foundational questions of life.

The Search is hosted by Chris Stefanick, the internationally acclaimed author, speaker, and television host who has devoted his life to inspiring people to live a bold, contagious faith.

The Search features scientists, authors, artists, and other searchers who answer, in faith, life's big questions.

How is *The Search* being used?

Right now, there are twelve dioceses around the country implementing *The Search* throughout the entire diocese. Over 200 parishes are leading their parishioners through *The Search*, either in-person or virtually. And over 1,500 small groups have been launched around the country using *The Search*.

Why have bishops and pastors introduced *The Search* to their flocks and prioritized it in their sacramental preparation programs and regular studies?

The Search can help awaken or reawaken in every person the desire to go to or return to church, encounter Christ in the sacraments, and remember the depth of God's love that is revealed inside the walls of every parish.

How can you use *The Search* in your parish?

- Visit thesearchbegins.org for step-by-step instructions on how to launch *The Search* in your parish.
- Identify a parish coordinator for *The Search*.
- Invite five to ten key staff members and involved parishioners to start a pilot group.
- Order *The Search* guides for the pilot group by visiting catholic.market/programs/the-search.
- Ask pilot leaders to form additional discussion groups with parishioners.

"I've used many tools over the years, and hands down, The Search is one of the BEST tools out there to bring people together. It makes it so easy to gather people together in small groups for meaningful discussions because the content does just that—it's a deep dive into the true meaning of life."

—Chris Stefanick



HIGHLIGHTS ON FORMED

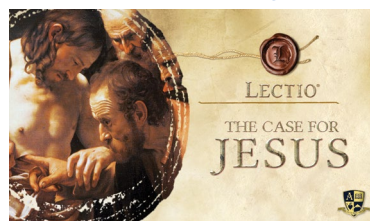


The Augustine Institute Show with Dr. Tim Gray

The Augustine Institute Show with Dr. Tim Gray is a weekly Catholic talk show that brings the truth and beauty of the Gospel to Catholics all over the world. Dr. Tim Gray invites guests from all over the Catholic world to engage in conversation on current topics and those that speak to the spiritual lives of the faithful.

This exciting new show broadcasts live on formed.org each Tuesday at 7:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time. Recordings are available on FORMED, show.augustineinstitute.org, and on the Augustine Institute YouTube channel each Friday following the live broadcast.

**Coming to FORMED
Ash Wednesday!**



Lectio: The Case for Jesus

In nine 40- to 60-minute sessions accessible to your parishioners on the FORMED website, Dr. Brant Pitre answers the key question of faith: Who is Jesus? Dr. Pitre presents evidence from early Christian and non-Christian writings that attest to the authenticity, authorship, and dating of the Gospels. Timed to lead up to the Triduum, Dr. Pitre looks in-depth at the gospel accounts of Jesus's Crucifixion and Resurrection and the proclamation of his divinity.

NEW ON FORMED



The Sanctuary Course for Catholics

One in four people will be affected by a mental health problem at some point in his or her life, yet the stigma surrounding mental health silences many and prevents faith communities from responding compassionately and effectively. This eight-session course—designed for use in small groups—explores the realities of mental health and illness, as well as the vital need for faith-based community conversations about these topics.



Finnian and the Seven Mountains Comic Book Series

Seeking to avenge the death of his parents at the hands of Viking marauders, a young man named Finnian leaves his monastic school in Ireland to find a legendary sword, rumored to have the extraordinary power to defeat evil.

Will Finnian find the mythical sword and lead the way to victory? Or will the Vikings continue to destroy innocent villagers? Find out what happens in this epic adventure series! *Available as PDF, EPUB, and MOBI.*

**Invite your flock to sign up
for Daily Lenten Reflections
at formed.org/lent**



40 DAYS TO GRACE AND GLORY

Give your parishioners an extra dose of spiritual encouragement and guidance this Lent with Daily Reflections by Dr. Tim Gray. Visit leaders.formed.org/lent for pre-made emails, graphics, and flyers to invite your flock today.

PARISH SPOTLIGHT

Forgiven opens the door for parents to God's merciful love



After ten years in religious education, Stacey Pinder decided “it was time to shake things up.”

Wanting to shift from classroom instruction to a family catechesis model, she ordered the *Signs of Grace* kit to preview from the Augustine Institute.

“I was blown away,” she said. “It was the Holy Spirit.”

Pinder adopted *Signs of Grace* for the twenty-five second graders who would be making their First Reconciliations and First Holy Communion at Christ the King Parish in Milwaukie, Oregon, that year.

Pinder switched the class time from Wednesday evening for children-only to a 40-minute meeting time for children and their parents between two of the Sunday Masses. Pinder delivered the first part of the lesson and then guided parents through what they would complete with their children during the week.

She also invited parents to watch *Forgiven: The Transforming Power of Confession* on formed.org.

Of the twenty-five families, she recognized only three who regularly attended Sunday Mass. She wondered, for many of them, if First Communion was more a rite of passage with dress-up clothes and a party than the sacrament of receiving Jesus—Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity.

Then, something happened.

“It felt very different from the first lesson,” Pinder said.

There was a difference, to be sure, in the children, but a powerful transformation began in the lives of their parents.

One couple called to say that they had scheduled a time for them both to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation after a long absence.

Another couple arranged to have their marriage blessed.

Three couples enrolled in RCIA to complete their sacraments.

One parent, after she had been to Reconciliation, told Pinder: “I’ve never felt so free.”

“All of my families,” Pinder said, “started going to Mass.”

Like the Parable of the Prodigal Son, these are “stories everyone knows,” Pinder said, “but they’re made new and real. The cinematography is high-quality.”



Viewers learn how “life is better” after Confession. “Parents have never heard it like that before,” Pinder said.

From scanning a roomful of unfamiliar faces at the first class meeting, Pinder said that they have become her friends. “I love these families,” Pinder said.