

heretical. He felt perplexed. Should he remain an Anglican or join the Church of Rome? He agonised for six years until in 1845 he became a Catholic.



SUNDAY BULLETIN

Canonising John Henry Newman



To mark the first anniversary of the canonisation of St John Henry Newman this month, Mgr Roderick Strange reflects on the life and teachings of the saint.



4 OCTOBER 2020

27TH SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME

YEAR A

DIVINE OFFICE WEEK III

A SNAPSHOT OF HIS LIFE

John Henry Newman died aged eighty-nine in 1890. Three years after his death, Father William Neville, who was an Oratorian priest and member of the Birmingham Oratory that Newman had founded, published a book called *Meditations and Devotions*. The book was a collection of prayers and reflections that Newman had composed as a Catholic, hoping to shape it into a volume that could accompany people throughout the liturgical year. But he never managed to complete it.

All the same, one passage is perhaps familiar. It has often been printed on prayer cards. As early as 1848, Newman had written: "God has created me to do him some definite service... Therefore I will trust him. If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve him; in perplexity, my perplexity may serve him; if I am in sorrow, my sorrow may serve him. He knows what he is about." What makes these words remarkable is the way they tell the tale of Newman's life.

His early years were marked by sickness on three occasions. In 1816, when he was only fifteen, he had to stay at school throughout the long summer vacation because he was seriously unwell. During that time he had an experience of conversion that he later declared made him come to "rest in the thought of two and two only absolute and luminously self-evident beings, myself and my Creator". He was saying that, if he knew nothing else, he knew that he existed and he believed in the existence of God. Then in November 1827, as a young don at Oxford, he fell ill again, not too seriously, but seriously enough for him to consider what his priorities should be. He realised that he was perhaps becoming seduced by intellectual excellence at the expense of moral excellence. And he resolved to change course. And then again, five years later in Sicily, he became seriously ill once more, but had a sense that God had a work for him to do in England. On his return he threw himself into the Oxford Movement which sought to reinvigorate the catholic tradition within the Anglican Church.

That work was more successful than he had dared imagine. But in 1839 he started to have doubts about his understanding of the Church of England. He had believed it to be charting a middle course between what he saw as Protestant error and Roman excess, doctrines like Purgatory that he then thought the Church of Rome had added to the deposit of faith. But reading the Fathers of the Church made him realise that previous middle ways had not been a golden path between error and excess, but ways that had rather colluded with error. Semi-Arianism, for example, may not have been as extreme as Arianism, but it was nevertheless

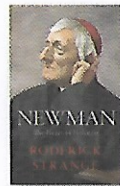
LIVING THROUGH SORROW AND PERPLEXITY

The Catholic Church, however, had no idea what to do with this gifted man. There were even those who were suspicious of him. And so he found he was invited to undertake various projects, such as becoming Rector of the new Catholic University in Dublin, overseeing a new translation of the Bible, and editing a distinguished but controversial periodical, *The Rambler*. None of these projects succeeded, however, because Newman was never given the support or the resources that he needed. For many years as a Catholic, he saw himself as a failure. He was in sorrow.

When Newman was an old man in 1879, Pope Leo XIII made him a cardinal and the cloud of suspicion was lifted from him. But it is intriguing to recognise the way those words about sickness, perplexity and sorrow offer a snapshot of his long, demanding, but faithful life.

Praise to the Holiest in the height. It is a moment engraved on my memory for ever.

Mgr Roderick Strange's book *Newman The Heart of Holiness* is available from Redemptorist Publications. Visit www.rpbooks.co.uk to order. CODE: 103585 ISBN:9780852362619 Price: £14.99



Mass text

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

**Within your will, O Lord, all things are established,
and there is none that can resist your will.
For you have made all things, the heaven and the earth,
and all that is held within the circle of heaven;
you are the Lord of all.**

FIRST READING Isaiah 5:1-7

PSALM Psalm 79

RESPONSE The vineyard of the Lord is the House of Israel.

1. You brought a vine out of Egypt;
to plant it you drove out the nations.
It stretched out its branches to the sea,
to the Great River it stretched out its shoots. **R.**
2. Then why have you broken down its walls?
It is plucked by all who pass by.
It is ravaged by the boar of the forest,
devoured by the beasts of the field. **R.**
3. God of hosts, turn again, we implore,
look down from heaven and see.
Visit this vine and protect it,
the vine your right hand has planted. **R.**

4. And we shall never forsake you again:
give us life that we may call upon your name.
God of hosts, bring us back;
let your face shine on us and we shall be saved. **R.**

SECOND READING Philippians 4:6-9

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

**Alleluia, alleluia!
I call you friends, says the Lord,
because I have made known to you
everything I have learnt from my Father.
Alleluia!**

GOSPEL Matthew 21:33-43

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

**Though many, we are one bread, one body,
for we all partake of the one Bread and one Chalice.**

Next Sunday's Readings:
Isaiah 25:6-10
Philippians 4:12-14. 19-20
Matthew 22:1-14



www.rpbooks.co.uk
rp@rpbooks.co.uk
@redemptorist