

## ST JOHN HENRY NEWMAN

St John Henry Newman said that, "Catholicism is a deep matter, you cannot take it up in a teacup." Well, it took him a long time to 'take it up and he took the journey of filling his cup 'one step at a time.' He was led from liberal Protestantism to High Church Anglicanism to promoting the Tractarian or Oxford Movement that stressed the Catholic heritage in Anglicanism.

As the Tractarians grew closer to the 'Romish' doctrines of the sacraments and apostolic authority, the Anglican Church leadership became angry with these Oxford scholars. Newman's journey of one step at a time led to his writing the famous Tract 90 in which he said that the 39 Articles of the Church of England could and should be interpreted in a Catholic way.

Antagonism to Newman increased. The very bishops he and his confrères had supported turned against him and the university dons shunned him. Even so he could not swim the Tiber because he had not worked through his view that the Romish Church had corrupted the apostolic tradition. It took him a while to do this and his Essay on 'The Development of Doctrine' is the result of his wrestling with truth as Jacob wrested with the angel of God.

The Holy Spirit leads the Church into understanding God's truth and doctrine develops to reflect and express that revelation. Newman was received into the Catholic Church on October 9<sup>th</sup> 1845 and this, rather than the anniversary of his death is kept as his memorial day.

As a young man, Newman's motto was, "Holiness before peace," and on his epitaph are words he chose, "Out of shadows and images into the truth." Truth and holiness sum up Newman's life. He wrestled with and overcame what he described as the giants of "the passion and the pride of man." His humility was evident in his response to request from Msgr Talbot who asked him to leave Birmingham and preach in Rome to a more educated audience of Protestants and to make connections with the Roman Curia and even the Pope.

Newman acknowledged Talbot's letter but respectfully declined his offer because, "Birmingham people have souls." It is no wonder that Pope Benedict XVI recognised in Newman the heart of a great priest and pastor. Unsurprisingly Newman's motto was 'heart speaks to heart.'

"Lead kindly light amidst the encircling gloom,  
Lead Thou me on.  
The night is dark, and I am far from home,  
Lead Thou me on.  
Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see  
The distant scene, one step enough for me."

In 2007 in the church of St Agatha, Portsmouth, UK, the bishops of the Traditional Anglican Communion signed a copy of the Catechism of the Catholic Church together with a letter to

Pope Benedict asking what the next step might be in our journey to corporate union with the Holy See. It was an overcast day, but I remember that after the signing as we sang the hymn, 'Lead Kindly Light,' the bright rays of the sun flooded through the stained-glass windows of the church.

'Praise to the Holiest in the height  
And in the depth be praise.  
In all his words most wonderful  
Most sure in all his ways.

Today we thank God for St John Henry Newman and ask him to pray for us on our journey which he took before us, with Christ to Christ.

Msgr Harry Entwistle  
Oct 9<sup>th</sup> 2021