

## THE IDEA OF A UNIVERSITY: FAITH AND REASON CO-EXISTING

Last Sunday, the Church celebrated the inscription of five new names on the Church's roll of saints, including **St. John Henry Newman**. My first introduction to him came from Fr. Ian Ker, a visiting professor from Oxford at the then College of St. Thomas. The English cleric is a world-renowned scholar who wrote the definitive biography of Newman. I was motivated to purchase Newman's *Parochial and Plain Sermons* (Ignatius Press), a compilation of his sermons from 1825 to 1843 while still an Anglican. The book runs 1753 pages and one other reason why it has collected dust is because it is printed in tiny font, straining my aging eyes. News flash—if you ever complain about the length of my homilies, check out some of his, as they average between **3000-4000 words!** Evidently, the Anglicans made a day of Church. Last Sunday's homily (Cathedral Dedication Anniversary) was **unusually long** for me, 1111 words in total. Do the math—Newman easily preached for 40 minutes. There was nothing “plain” about them!

They are so profound, rich and comprehensive; each sermon reads like a treatise on theology. Sadly, those volumes too often collect dust. As I perused my copy, I saw my handwritten notes (in pencil, of course!), including my notes for a sermon: “Wow”; “\*”; my word “lazy” next to the circled word “indolent” (I was trying to expand my vocabulary) in the text; or writing “Anglican theology” next to a phrase that I discerned reflected his theology at the time about the Blessed Virgin Mary. In short, these sermons were **formative** for me while in the college seminary and still remind me that the faith ought to **appeal** both to the **mind and the heart**. One ought not to be placed above the other; both are necessary and flow from our constitution as rational beings. Raising Newman to the dignity of the altar gives voice to this conviction that the Catholic faith engages us completely and totally.

In his seminal treaty on *The Idea of a University*, Newman wrote that “religious truth is not only a portion, but a condition of general knowledge.” (Discourse 3: Bearing of Theology on Other Branches of Knowledge). He explained: “I lay it down that all knowledge forms one whole, because its subject-matter is one; for the universe in its length and breadth is so intimately knit together, that we cannot separate off portion from portion, and operation from operation, except by a mental abstraction...” Newman **engaged the intellect**, uncovering the multi-faceted layers of the faith that speak to the heart. When he was created a Cardinal in 1879, Newman took as his motto *Cor ad Cor loquitur*, “**Heart Speaks to Heart.**” Newman did not invent the phrase—it came from a letter of St. Francis DeSales, in fact. Newman's Coat of Arms includes three red hearts, signifying the Father, Son and Holy Spirit speaking to us in love.

The heart of **God first speaks** to our heart; the **movement of divine grace** always begins from God, as Saint John reminds us (1 John 4:10): “In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins.” When people seek entrance into the Church, especially today, I remain in awe. Why? Because with all the pressures from society today, and amidst scandals and even doctrinal confusion, people are still drawn to the Catholic faith as the fullest expression of the teachings of Jesus in His Church. God's love touched them, it moved them, it drew them. Last week I noted that too many choose to leave the Church. But take heart—others are discovering it, sometimes at great personal cost, as did John Henry Newman. The attendance last Sunday of **Charles, Prince of Wales** at the Canonization, was itself a significant statement of esteem.

The Church established Catholic centers on secular universities across the country where students could be **accompanied in their faith** while studying. Its initial beginnings are traced to the University of Wisconsin in 1883 where a “Melvin Club” was formed for Catholic students. Ten years later, one of those members founded a Newman Club at the University of Pennsylvania, considered the country's first. Today, 1143 campuses are affiliated with the Newman Center Federation in some way. Other campus programs, while not affiliated with the Newman Federation, do outstanding evangelization. Increasingly, bishops are directing resources towards vibrant Campus Ministry programs on secular campuses, seeing the fruit they are bearing.

Traditionally, two miracles of intercession are needed for a cause to proceed towards canonization. In some ways, his canonization seems overdue, yet I am glad the full process played out. For Newman, both miracles

have **connections to the United States**. The first was a man studying for the diaconate in Boston MA, who was on the verge of complete paralysis in 2001. Any medical miracle cures need to persist for years before the Church approves—this one did. The other was the case of **Melissa Villalobos**, a Chicago woman suffering from a subchorionic hematoma, a blood clot between the placenta and the uterine wall that causes the placenta to be “partially ripped and detached from the uterine wall.” She survived and her daughter Gemma was born healthy. The Villalobos family—seven kids in tow—presented the gifts at Mass! (see sidebar)

- Being part of an ethnic and religious minority in China remains dangerous, not only for Christians. The **Uyghurs**, (pronounced “we-goor”) are Turkic-speaking Muslims in **Xinjiang** region, along the historic Silk Road. Women are not allowed to wear veils while men are forbidden from sporting “abnormal beards.” Hundreds of thousands have been subjected to government “re-education camps” (i.e. interment camps), calling it “free hospital treatment for the masses with sick thinking.”
- When Houston Rockets General Manager **Daryl Morey** tweeted out support for pro-democracy demonstrators in Hong Kong, the league office immediately distanced itself from it, heaping praise on the multi-layered NBA-China relationship. You see, China accounts for 10% of all NBA revenue! And yet, the **NBA runs a training camp** for 240 athletes ages 14-18 in the **very region of Xinjiang**. The socially conscious **NBA caved** in a heartbeat—the hypocrisy is staggering.
- Though **Beto O’Rourke** arguably has little to no chance to receive the Democrat party nomination, he is undeterred when attacking the Church. He audaciously opined that churches that do not embrace same-sex marriage, should lose their tax-exempt status. Fully endorse the LGBTQ agenda or suffer the scorn and punishment of the political elite. So much for religious pluralism and tolerance! It’s fading quickly in the face of “woke” progressivism.
- I was delighted (and surprised) to **run into seminarians** both from Saint John Vianney (college) and The Saint Paul Seminary last Monday. One approached and told me that they came to pray on the Feast of the Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral. I was blown away—thanks for remembering!

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. John L. Ubel  
Rector