

Reflection Saturday Week 27 St John Henry Newman 2021

Saint John Henry Newman (1801–1890) born on 21st February 1801 in London was an Anglican clergyman for over twenty year and a renowned preacher and theologian. A Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford, he was one of the leaders of the Oxford Movement and a prominent figure in the Church of England. On 9th October 1845 he was received into full communion with the Catholic Church by Blessed Dominic Barberi, a Passionist. After studying in Rome, he was ordained priest on 30th May 1847. Returning to England, he established the Oratory of Saint Philip Neri in Birmingham. His notable works include: the development of Christian doctrine; the true understanding of conscience; faith and reason; the role of the laity; and university education. In 1879 he was made Cardinal by Pope Leo XIII. He died in the Birmingham Oratory on 11th August 1890. Beatified by Pope Benedict XVI on 19th September 2010, he was canonised by Pope Francis on 13th October 2019.

Patron of our very successful secondary school in Stevenage, he was an inspiration in our thinking and understanding of doctrine. He understood change in terms of development not change in substance. Dogma, foundational beliefs do not change but our understanding of them evolve and develop with time. This kind of evolution and development enriches our understanding not diminishes it.

In his words:

"I sought to hear the voice of God and climbed the topmost steeple, but God declared: "Go down again - I dwell among the people."

"To live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often."

"God has created all things for good; all things for their greatest good; everything for its own good. What is the good of one is not the good of another; what makes one man happy would make another unhappy. God has determined, unless I interfere with His plan, that I should reach that which will be my greatest happiness. He looks on me individually, He calls me by my name, He knows what I can do, what I can best be, what is my greatest happiness, and He means to give it me."