



Pastoral Letter
to be read at all Masses
on
12/13 October 2019

My dear friends in Jesus Christ,

The words “thank you” are central to everything we do at Mass today. The Mass, the Eucharist, is our great prayer of thanksgiving and praise to God. In this way when we gather for Mass we are a people formed by thanksgiving.

The Gospel today is an example of thanks unexpectedly given. The Samaritan, who was one of the ten cured, returns and says thank you; he is the only one.

I want to say thank you today to all those who have taken part in our Synod listening. It is remarkable that over 20,000 people have been part of this journey so far. This is encouraging and fills me with hope as does every act of thanksgiving.

But today I also want to say thank you to God for the gift of a new saint. On Sunday 13 October, Pope Francis will declare John Henry Newman a saint of the Church. That means we can all learn from his example, from his holiness, from his teaching, writing and praying. We can ask Saint John Henry Newman to intercede for us with God.

He was associated with Blessed Dominic Barberi whose mortal remains were laid to rest at Sutton Monastery, within our Archdiocese. He became intellectually convinced of the truth of Catholicism but yearned to meet a person imbued with the

holiness it promised. He found this in Blessed Dominic who received his declaration of faith and prayed with him at the time of his conversion. Newman was a man of the Spirit who yearned to encounter true sanctity, he discerned this holiness in Blessed Dominic and discerned the presence of the Holy Spirit in his own life and the life of others. He said: 'Heart speaks unto heart'.

God has given each of us a calling, to use John Henry Newman's words "an invitation to a definite service". The Synod invites us to use the gifts that God has given to us to be truly missionary disciples for and in the world today. We must use our gifts in growing and strengthening our parish communities and taking our Faith out to the wider community in service of all, particularly the marginalised and the poor just as John Henry Newman did.

In one of his many writings our new saint wrote:

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

This is something that Pope Francis is very aware of as he encourages us to be the Church that listens. Over these last months we have listened together. We have journeyed along the road towards our Synod. I would encourage you to have a look at the report from the listening that can be accessed through our Synod website. Even a quick glance will give you an idea of the riches that have been shared by so many who have participated. As you read through you may notice some ideas that you think might make good proposals to be considered at the Synod itself next October. You may also notice some ideas that lie outside of what can be considered at a diocesan Synod.

From all the listening that has taken place 4 themes have emerged:

These are:

- *All called and gifted by God*

In this Synod Theme we reflect on the vocation that God gives to each of us.

- *Sharing the mission of Jesus*

Here we reflect on how we are sent out into the world to proclaim the Good News to the whole of creation.

- How we pray together

In our third theme we reflect on the place of prayer and worship in our life as Church.

- Building community, nurturing belonging

In our final Synod Theme, we reflect on what it means to be a Church of welcome and discipleship.

Please take the Synod Sunday leaflet with you today and be ready to play your part in shaping proposals.

We do all this led by the kindly light of God's love. Those words are part of St John Henry Newman's great hymn – *Lead kindly light*. In the midst of what can sometimes seem to be dark times we are confident of that light. Our Synod listening has shone a light, a bright light which with God's help will lead us on the path we should choose. It will not always be an easy path – but we walk it together, on the road – becoming the Church God is calling us to be.

St John Henry Newman lived during a period of tremendous changes: social, cultural, technological, intellectual and spiritual. He tried to assimilate all this into his traditional Christian life of faith. He said: 'To live is to change and to be perfect is to have changed often'.

With courage and great faith and with thanksgiving in our hearts we commit the next steps in our Synod to his intercession as we journey together to become the Church God is calling us to be.

St John Henry Newman, pray for us.

I wish you and your families every blessing in the months ahead.

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Archbishop of Liverpool