

#### **4: A SHORT ROAD TO PERFECTION**

FROM BLESSED JOHN HENRY NEWMAN 27<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 1856

{285} IT is the saying of holy men that, if we wish to be perfect, we have nothing more to do than to perform the ordinary duties of the day well. **A short road to perfection - short, not because easy, but because pertinent and intelligible. There are no short ways to perfection, but there are sure ones.**

I think this is an instruction which may be of great practical use to persons like ourselves. It is easy to have vague ideas what perfection is, which serve well enough to talk about, when we do not intend to aim at it; but as soon as a person really desires and sets about seeking it himself, he is dissatisfied with anything but what is tangible and clear, and constitutes some sort of direction towards the practice of it.

We must bear in mind what is meant by perfection. It does not mean any extraordinary service, anything out of the way, or especially heroic - not all have the opportunity of heroic acts, of sufferings - but it means what the word perfection ordinarily means. By perfect we mean that which has no flaw in it, that which is complete, that which is consistent, that which is sound - we mean the opposite to imperfect. As we know well what *imperfection* in {286} religious service means, we know by the contrast what is meant by perfection.

He, then, is perfect who does the work of the day perfectly, and we need not go beyond this to seek for perfection. You need not go out of the *round* of the day.

I insist on this because I think it will simplify our views, and fix our exertions on a definite aim. If you ask me what you are to do in order to be perfect, I say, first -

**Do not lie in bed beyond the due time of rising;  
give your first thoughts to God;  
make a good visit to the Blessed Sacrament;  
say the Angelus devoutly;  
eat and drink to God's glory;  
say the Rosary well;  
be recollected;  
keep out bad thoughts;  
make your evening meditation well;  
examine yourself daily;  
go to bed in good time,**

**and - you are already perfect.**

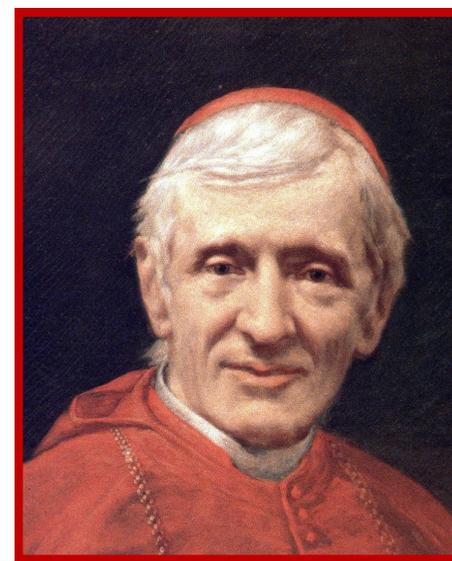
[A Supplement to the weekly Newsletter of St Mary of the Crays, Crayford, 19th July 2020](#)

#### **1: DESIRES FOR THE LAITY - JOHN HENRY NEWMAN**

As troubles and trials circle round you, He will give you what you want at present - **"a mouth, and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to resist and gainsay."** **"There is a time for silence, and a time to speak;"** the time for speaking is come. **What I desiderate in Catholics is the gift of bringing out what their religion is; it is one of those "better gifts," of which the Apostle bids you be "zealous."** You must not hide your talent in a napkin, or your light under a bushel. **I want a laity, not arrogant, not rash in speech, not disputatious, but men who know their religion, who enter into it, who know just where they stand, who know what they hold, and what they do not, who know their creed so well, that they can give an account of it, who know so much of history that they can defend it. I want an intelligent, well-instructed laity;** I am not denying you are such already: but I mean to be severe, and, as some would say, exorbitant in my demands, **I wish you to enlarge your knowledge, to cultivate your reason, to get an insight into the relation of truth to truth, to learn to view things as they are, to understand how faith and reason stand to each other, what are the bases and principles of Catholicism,** and where lie the main inconsistencies and absurdities of the Protestant theory. I have

no apprehension you will be the worse Catholics for familiarity with these subjects, provided you **cherish a vivid sense of God above,** and keep in mind that **you have souls to be judged and to be saved.**

In all times the laity have been the measure of the Catholic spirit; they saved the Irish Church three centuries ago, and they betrayed the {391} Church in England.



### 3: CARDINAL NEWMAN'S PRAYER

May He support us all the day long, till the shades lengthen  
and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed,  
and the fever of life is over, and our work is done.  
Then in His mercy may He give us a safe lodging  
and a holy rest and peace at the last.

**3b:** Oh my Lord and Saviour, support me in that hour  
in the strong arms of Your Sacraments,  
and by the fresh fragrance of Your consolations.

Let the absolving words be said over me, and the holy oil sign and seal me,  
and Your own Body be my food, and Your Blood my sprinkling;  
and let my sweet Mother, Mary, breathe on me, and my Angel whisper  
peace to me, and my glorious Saints smile upon me; that in them all,  
and through them all, **I may receive the gift of perseverance,**  
and die, as I desire to live, in Your faith,  
in Your Church, in Your service, and in Your love. Amen.

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**4: "A cloud of incense was rising  
on high; the people suddenly all  
bowed low; what could it mean?"**

**The truth flashed on him,  
fearfully yet sweetly; it was  
the Blessed Sacrament  
- it was the Lord Incarnate**

**Who was on the altar,  
Who had come to visit  
and bless His people.**

**It was the Great Presence,  
which makes a Catholic Church  
different from every other  
place in the world;  
which makes it,  
as no other place can be - holy."**

*~ John Henry Cardinal Newman:  
excerpt from Loss and Gain:  
The Story of a Convert ~*

**4b: "Come,  
Adore this  
Wondrous  
Presence,  
bow to  
Christ,  
the Source  
of Grace.  
Here is kept  
the Ancient  
Promise  
of God's  
earthly  
dwelling-  
place.  
Sight is blind  
before God's  
Glory,  
faith alone  
may see  
His Face."**



**Benediction with  
The Most Blessed  
Sacrament:  
the Most Holy Eucharist**

### **5: WE ARE ALL {301} CREATED TO HIS GLORY - WE ARE CREATED TO DO HIS WILL.**

I am created to do something or to be something for which no one else is created; I have a place in God's counsels, in God's world, which no one else has; whether I be rich or poor, despised or esteemed by man, God knows me and calls me by my name.

2. God has created me to do Him some definite service; He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission—I never may know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next. Somehow I am necessary for His purposes, as necessary in my place as an Archangel in his—if, indeed, I fail, He can raise another, as He could make the stones children of Abraham. **Yet I have a part in this great work; I am a link in a chain, a bond of connexion between persons.** He has not created me for naught. I shall do good, I shall do His work; I shall be an angel of peace, a preacher of truth in my own place, while not intending it, if I do but keep His commandments and serve Him in my calling.

3. Therefore I will trust Him. Whatever, wherever I am, I can never be thrown away. 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. My sickness, or perplexity, or sorrow may be necessary causes of some great end, which is quite beyond us. He does nothing in vain; He may prolong my life, He may shorten it; He knows what He is about. He may take away my friends, He may throw me among strangers, He {302} may make me feel desolate, make my spirits sink, hide the future from me - **still He knows what He is about.**

### 6: A prayer after Holy Communion?

**Dear Jesus**

Help me to spread Your fragrance everywhere I go. Flood my soul with Your spirit and life. Penetrate and possess my whole being so utterly,

**that my life may only be a radiance of Yours.**

Shine through me, and be so in me that every soul I come in contact with may feel Your presence in my soul. Let them look up and see no longer me but only Jesus! Stay with me and then I shall begin to shine as You