

## Our Lady of the Assumption, Warwick Street

10<sup>th</sup> October 2013

### Votive Mass in Honour of Blessed John Henry Newman

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***Jesus said to them, 'Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.'***

*Matthew*

13:52

WHEN I was a child I went to a Church, a Norman priory, where I was fascinated by the colour, the incense, the music, the vestments. High Mass at 6.30am on the morning of a weekday feast was a particular treat. The language rolled over me, and I grew to know it and love it. At boarding school, and in a cathedral choir, we had the same language, and better music, but little of the colour, and certainly no incense. My best friend in the holidays, a Catholic, attended a minor seminary. He seemed to have little or no interest in religion, however, but his parents were devout. His father had been a seminarian and they seemed to inhabit a different world. Instead of eating short, wet, spaghetti in tomato sauce from tins, as we did at home, they had packets of enormously long, dry sticks of spaghetti, wrapped in blue sugar paper, which they ingeniously combined with tins of tomatoes. This was the early 1960s and that kind of food was foreign and, indeed, Roman Catholic. When I told my friend's father about High Mass at the Priory, he treated it not as a fact but as a remote future possibility. 'Ah! High Mass in a church like that: that would be a wonderful thing, if it would ever happen!' And, in teenage puzzlement, I crept into the candle-lit darkness of Nottingham Catholic Cathedral and picked up CTS leaflets by such as Mother Mary Loyola on Purgatory or Sir Henry Slessor, on why Anglican Orders are null and void.

Since then there have been huge changes. The Second Vatican Council. The Mass in English. And, of course, the globalisation of cuisine. We all use dry sticks of spaghetti nowadays. And Anglicans and Roman Catholics in the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission have had nearly 50 years' discussion on whether, or how, that Communion Service in a Norman Priory, and in churches up and down the land, could be recognised as, or reconciled with, the Catholic Mass.

The Holy See's working party, *Anglicanæ traditiones*, on which it has been my privilege to serve, has had the task of the ***scribe...trained for the kingdom of heaven...the householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.*** We have had to examine just what it is in the Anglican liturgical books that can and should be brought fully into the life of the Catholic Church. When there is schism in the Church, there usually develops a separate and rich tradition. This is self-evidently true of the Orthodox churches, which, following the Great Schism of 1,000 years ago, have continued their liturgical and spiritual life. It is true too of the Reformation ecclesial communities: none of us would be content to dispense with the Lutheran collection of chorale, cantata, and passion, reaching glorious fulfilment in the music of J. S. Bach. The Anglican trajectory

too is indispensable. Myles Coverdale's psalms. Cranmer's prayers, many of them beautiful translations of mediæval collects, occasionally adapted polemically, but often not. Some fine seventeenth century additions, made for the 1662 Prayer Book. Translations of ancient office hymns and gems from the musical collections of Catholic Europe for the Tractarian hymn books, *Hymns Ancient and Modern* and the *English Hymnal*. The cathedral choral tradition. The evolving English Bible which accords with the translation principles of *Liturgiam authenticam* 2001, trying to find equivalent vocabulary and to capture the grammar and syntax of the original tongues, and finding fulfilment in the Revised Standard Version, the Common Bible of Catholics, Orthodox, and Protestants. It is this precious fragment, together with the rich writing captured in the spiritual tradition, represented by the readings in the *Customary of Our Lady of Walsingham*, which Pope Benedict wants to glue back on to the precious vase of Western Catholic devotion, from which it had broken off.

Seen in this way, it is small wonder that, rather than set up a rival modern vernacular – which we should have been doing had we used the modern language services of the Church of England's *Common Worship* as a major resource – or recreate the Use of Sarum, which was last used with any frequency in 1559, the death of Queen Mary I, we should edit and integrate the Anglican material of Coverdale, Cranmer, and John Cosin, John Mason Neale, and Eric Milner White. But we have to tread warily. Those from outside the Lutheran tradition, who listen to a Bach cantata, or study the words of the arias in his settings of the Passion, will be surprised by some of the Pietistic sentiments. We are mindful of the incident described, and moved by the music, but our feelings are not quite those described by the words. There is a necessary task of adaptation and interpretation.

I discovered the sheer power of Cranmer's Communion Service when once I heard it read on Radio Four. There was nothing to look at, nothing to sing, nothing but words to listen to. 'Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who of thy tender mercy didst give thine only Son Jesus Christ to suffer death upon the Cross for our redemption; who made there (by his one oblation of himself once offered) a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world'. But, like Lutheran Pietism, this careful statement of Reformation Atonement theology leads us towards a world of feelings, and indeed understanding of, Communion rather different from the Catholic Mass. So there has to be modification. We can no longer, as it were, say one thing whilst doing another, and meanwhile mean something else, as we did within the broad tent of Anglicanism. At the heart of the Mass there needs to be an agreed continuity of tradition of actions, spirituality, theology, and words. How else can we say that what we are doing is what the Church has always done, and is always doing? One is struck by the judgment of Blessed John Henry Newman, in whose honour we celebrate Mass tonight: 'the doctrine of Transubstantiation is difficult to believe; I did not believe the doctrine till I was a Catholic. I had no difficulty in believing it, as soon as I believed that the Catholic Roman Church was the oracle of God'.<sup>1</sup>

At the time of the Reformation, Luther and Cranmer, to borrow a phrase, created 'a hermeneutic of rupture'. They thought it necessary to break with the immediate past so as to recover what they thought was the ancient and original meaning. This is a dangerous thing to do, as some of the arguments in the Catholic Church since the Second Vatican Council have shown. But, to turn the

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<sup>1</sup> Newman Apologia, as found in Customary of the Our Lady of Walsingham, 9 October, p.625

question against ourselves, have we, in the Ordinariate, dreamed up our very own 'hermeneutic of rupture'? Certainly, we have broken away from the Church of England, in which most of us had spent most of our lives. We have broken away too from the trajectory of modern Anglican liturgical revision, and, for some of us, that too is a painful experience, having invested heavily in it. But, to borrow another phrase, we have most truly discovered in place of rupture 'a hermeneutic of continuity', that is we have found a way of joining together Cranmer's linguistic brilliance, and feel for translation, with the ancient Canon of the Mass, prayed everywhere in England from the time of St Augustine until the Reformation, that is, a thousand years. And that Canon continues to be prayed throughout the Universal Church. There's continuity for you. We may have had to step back a little, in terms of ceremonial and language, and that is not easy for many of us, because we are mostly neither conservatives nor traditionalists, but it has been necessary. We need, like the scribe in our text, to be **like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old**. In many of our groups, large and small, in the chaplaincies and parishes in which our clergy are working, as well as the congregations in which our laity are worshipping, there is an injection of something new, paradoxically as we bring out of the treasury what is old.

Don't think for a moment that every Ordinariate group, let alone every Ordinariate priest, will celebrate Mass according to this Ordinariate Use on every occasion. One of the vital pastoral gifts of clergy is discerning how to lead people in public worship. There are several contexts in which the Ordinariate Use will indeed be usual. There are others in which it will be celebrated seldom. But it is part of who we are, our Anglican DNA, and what we bring, and it will take its place, alongside Choral Evensong, and the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols, as something which was once merely Anglican and is now part of the treasure-store of the whole Universal Church.

**'Every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.'**      *Matthew 13:52*

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