



Juan R. Vélez | Thursday, 9 September 2010

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## NEWMAN IN THE 21ST CENTURY

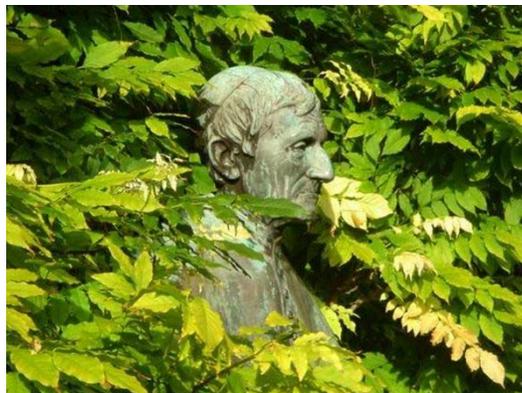
### Heart speaks to heart

The scholar and churchman was also a model of deep and enduring friendship.

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*Next Thursday Pope Benedict XVI arrives in the United Kingdom for a three day visit that will culminate, on the 19th September, in the beatification of Cardinal John Henry Newman. In this and two companion articles MercatorNet surveys the controversies surrounding these events and pays its own tribute to the great Englishman.*



John Henry Newman will soon be officially recognised by the Catholic Church as a blessed in heaven. One of his many outstanding qualities was his capacity for friendship. Our society needs to evoke once more the worth and beauty of this type of friendship. Cicero wrote, "a friend is, as it were, a second self." This is possible when a person gives himself to another, first out of common mutual interests, but eventually in a selfless manner, for the good of the other. Jesus Christ radicalized that idea by teaching that a friend is one who would lay down his life for another.

Newman had numerous male and female friends whom we know from his copious correspondence. He visited them when they were ill, encouraged them in difficulties and advised them on all types of matters. He understood that a friend offers his life for his friends and, in so doing, becomes a better self. The love of benevolence (friendship) can develop into the highest form of love, the self-giving love called agape, rooted in the virtue of charity.

For Newman, friendship was not forced. He got to know people by spending time with them. As a university student, he had long conversations over meals with his friends. He went on long walks and horse rides with them. He corresponded with them when they were apart. In these natural activities, he built lasting friendships. One fast friend was William Bowden, whose family also grew to love Newman. At first their relationship was based on mutual interests, such as writing on the same school publication, but it deepened through common religious concerns.

Another close friend was Richard Hurrell Froude, the son of a landed clergyman and a future reformer. Richard was an outgoing, intelligent young man, as well as a good rider and hunter. Richard inspired Newman to learn about the catholic truths of the Anglican Church which led Newman to an appreciation for the richness of tradition in the Church.

Just because a friendship is close doesn't mean there is always full agreement. Newman and Froude debated on various issues but still learned from one another. It was from Froude, who died prematurely, that Newman began to have devotion to Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. He also inherited a Roman Catholic breviary used by Froude to pray the Liturgy of the Hours.

Through Froude, Newman became acquainted with John Keble, who was a few years their senior. Keble, like Froude, came from a wealthy family with strong religious and charitable practices. Newman sought Keble's advice on many matters. Over the years, in an interesting turn of events, Keble, a married Anglican clergyman, would seek Newman's advice on doctrinal and pastoral questions. Such is the nature of true friendship. Both Keble's friendship and his writings, such as the famous *Christian Year*, were an inspiration for Newman and Newman's family.

Friendship grows through a sincere interest in others and a desire to serve them. When Newman was at Oriel College, at Oxford University, he was a fellow, or mentor, to many undergraduates. One of these, Henry Wilberforce, the son of the famous abolitionist William Wilberforce, became life-long friend of Newman. Like Froude, Wilberforce was an early member of the Oxford Movement. Even with the age difference, an unconditional friendship developed between them based on mutual respect and affection. A few years after Newman's conversion to Roman Catholicism, Wilberforce and his family followed suit. As in the case of Bowden, Froude, Keble and others, Newman became a good friend of Wilberforce's family as well.

One of the hallmarks of friendship is warmth born from affection. Newman, a shy, retiring man in person (especially in large groups) was able to convey affection in his letters. He addressed his closest friends as *carissime*, a Latin term meaning "dearest." These private expressions of friendship used by Newman, although no longer common, were common in Victorian times.

Another friend from Newman's Oxford days was Edward Bouverie Pusey, a distinguished professor of Hebrew at Christ College. Pusey was older than Newman and a married man. Through discussion of doctrinal and spiritual matters, they became friends and collaborated in the Oxford Movement. Newman's eventual conversion, however, caused a rift. Pusey remained an Anglican all his life and their infrequent communication over the years was a nagging wound for both men. They had a deep affection for one other, but their divergent beliefs over what mattered most to both of them -- the Church -- had pushed them apart. Years later, after age had done its work, the two men, along with Keble, found themselves face to face once again. After this memorable reunion their communication was rekindled.

Newman's thoughts on friendship were beautifully shown in a sermon from his Anglican period preached to Oxford undergraduates, "[Personal Influence, the Means of Propagating Truth](#)." People are not won for Jesus Christ and his Church by means of argumentation alone, he said, but by credible witness. Newman believed that the truth of the Gospel, passed down through the centuries, "has been upheld not as a system, not by books, not by argument, nor by temporal power, but by the personal influence of such men... who are at once teachers and the patterns of it".

Newman understood that a friend is also a teacher, one who guides in truth. Like his patron saint St Philip Neri, Newman had a big heart. St Philip, the 16th century founder of the original Oratory, knew well how to lead others, guiding them gently to God, the greatest Love. Newman, following his patron, guided many friends along their paths to God. He firmly believed and taught that those who have the biggest impact on our lives are our friends. Friends, who help us to know and love God more, help us to become better persons. Both St Philip and John Henry lived long lives, leading many on the right path.

Another characteristic of Newman's friendships was loyalty. From his years at Oxford, Newman developed other close and lasting friendships with men such as Fredrick Rogers, James Robert Hope and Ambrose St John. Newman was an unconditional friend to all of them. Rogers, later an English Lord and Hope, a prominent barrister, were influential men who remained loyal to Newman in the times of hardship he endured after his conversion to Catholicism. Ambrose St John, a close collaborator in the Oxford Movement, converted at the same time as Newman. In the midst of trials at the Birmingham Oratory, he maintained an intimate friendship with Newman until the moment of his premature death.

Newman's friendships were not limited to men. He also shared close friendships with Maria Giberne, Mrs William Bowden, and Mrs Bowden's daughter Marianne, his godchild. All three looked to Newman for religious guidance and in time became Roman Catholics. Marianne eventually became a nun. As was the case with his male friends, Newman wrote many letters to Marianne. These were affectionate letters, as an uncle would write to a niece. Newman was sensitive to the expressions of affection of both male and female friends. The fact that he treasured these manifestations of friendship illustrates how indispensable friends are in life.

In 1879, Newman was raised to the dignity of Cardinal in the Roman Catholic Church by

Pope Leo XIII. He chose as a motto for his coat of arms, an expression coined by St Francis de Sales: *cor ad cor loquitur*, heart speaks to heart. In his writing about preaching, found in the Idea of the University, Newman quotes this expression from a letter by St Francis. Newman was of course familiar with St Francis, but it may have been Marianne who introduced him to this expression. In any case, the motto perfectly captures the idea of friendship, where people speak heart to heart, in a sincere, simple, and affectionate manner.

John Henry Newman is recognized for his theological works on many topics. He was and is an inspiration for converts to Roman Catholicism. Someday, however, he may well earn a new title, that of *Doctor amicitiae*: Doctor of the Church on Friendship. His biography is a treatise on the human and supernatural virtues that make up friendship.

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Javier Mora-Figueroa · 5 weeks ago

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Well done, Father. Thanks from Spain.  
Javier Mora-Figueroa

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Rickson · 4 weeks ago

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This is an amazing meditation in itself on Friendship. I showing my friends a copy of this. Cardinal Newman, I hope is St. Newman in my lifetime

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Lisa Kende · 4 weeks ago

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A powerful and moving explanation of the true meaning of friendship, Fr. Juan, revealing the essence of Newman's teachings and the way he led so many of his friends to Christ through his powerful witness. How poignant your words, Father, about our friends being those who have the biggest impact on our lives and what a challenge to each of us to be that person to others. Our world desperately needs more of the selfless and empowering sort of friendship Newman offered to others and so eloquently wrote about. Truly a saint of our times 'for' our times.

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Usochi Ilozumba · 2 weeks ago

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I have never known the new blessed John Henry Newman this way. This article opened my eyes to the real meaning of friendship. It's really amazing!