

THE Newman

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75th Birthday Celebrations

Newman
David McLoughlin

The Challenge of Pope Francis to the Laity

Association
Rev Scott McKenna

Eucharistic Traditions

75th
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My Personal Ecumenical Journey

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On Being Gay and Catholic

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Cover picture: *Newman Association anniversary cake*

Comment

Newman members celebrated the 75th anniversary of the Association with a party on June 10th, held at lunchtime in the Plough & Harrow Hotel situated next to Birmingham Oratory where the formal business of the meeting was conducted. After a hearty meal a large anniversary cake was cut for distribution to those attending.

As part of the celebration of this milestone in the Newman's history Council has commissioned a paper on the early days of the Association, culled from the archives which are now preserved in Ushaw, County Durham. This will be published soon, but it is possible to say a few things in advance on how, and why, the Association sprang to life in the darkest days of World War II.

Important details are to be found in the private memoirs of Hugh O'Neill, a professor of metallurgy who was President of the Newman in 1944. Although younger people were preoccupied with the war there were many older Catholics who found time, as the bombs rained down, to pursue more constructive objectives. Such people had often been involved in Pax Romana, the Catholic international lay organisation, and although Pax Romana had at the time largely retreated to Washington some of its activists were looking for opportunities, and indeed responsibilities.

A key event was a conference of the University Catholic Societies' Federation held at Torquay in August 1941. An International Committee was formed, focused to

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THE USE OF GIFTS

75th

ANNIVERSARY

Promoting open
discussion
and greater
understanding
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begin with on aiding refugees, especially Poles. At the Federation's next AGM, in Birmingham in April 1942, a graduate body was spun off and given the name of the Newman Association. Through contacts with the Brenninkmeijer family, a wealthy Dutch Catholic dynasty who owned the C & A retailing group, access was given in October 1942 to a suite of rooms in Hereford House near Marble Arch in London which for more than five years functioned as the "Newman Centre".

Enormous support at this period came from Catholics in academia. A summer school at Ampleforth in August 1944 attracted 230 participants and a year later a conference at Windsor, celebrating the centenary of Newman's conversion, drew nearly 500. Local circles were founded across the country. In 1945, moreover, 400 delegates arrived in London for the first Pax Romana Regional Congress in Europe since 1938.

There was a scale of participation and enthusiasm of which today, unfortunately, we can only dream. At the AGM this June the agenda was dominated by the struggles of Council to attract new support while trimming the Association's structure to fit in with the Newman's modest circumstances and declining membership.

Barry Riley

A report on the 2017 AGM

By John Potts and Barry Riley

As a fitting celebration of the 75th Anniversary of the founding of the Newman Association in 1942, the Association chose to hold the 2017 Annual General Meeting at the Birmingham Oratory. This was where the Blessed John Henry Newman lived for most of the second half of his life, from 1849 until his death in 1890.

In addition to the formal business of the AGM, members had the opportunity to view the majestic, if somewhat sombre, Oratory church, as well as take time to pray at the shrine dedicated to John Henry. Thirty-six Members and Associate Members of the Association then convened for the AGM, which was opened by Acting President Tony Holland, who read out a warm letter of welcome from Archbishop Longley of Birmingham (the text of which is printed separately at the end of this report).

The 2016 AGM had been informed of progress on the Hinsley Hall initiatives, and so it was not surprising that an update on current progress was on the agenda this time. A paper outlining a policy for taking the Association forward had been circulated with the papers for the AGM, and John Sibbald, the author, commented on its contents. Formal proposals will be put to the 2018 AGM for adoption and implementation covering, amongst other matters, the redrafting of the Constitution, and the Memorandum and Articles of Association, to reflect current Charities Commission requirements. Tony Holland asked that any queries be addressed to him via the Secretary, Brian Hamill.

Tony Holland moved the business briskly forward, but worth noting is information from the Treasurer, Kevin Ryan, that Circles can now claim Small Donations Gift Aid on donations income received (but not on admission charges). Kevin will be writing to Circles to specify how they should proceed, and what records they will



need to keep.

Otherwise, he lamented the further fall in interest receivable on the Association's reserves, with Secure Trust's rate down to 1.25 per cent and Virgin Bank's being cut from 1.00 to 0.75 per cent. In the circumstances £50,000 of the Newman's funds was being transferred to COIF, a Common Investment Fund, or charity fund managed by the Church Commissioners. This uses an ethical investment strategy and should pay over 3 per cent annually, producing an increase in the Association's investment income of about £1,100, although with some exposure to capital risk.

Brian Hamill, the Secretary, welcomed the formation of a new Circle in Swansea. Then he said he had represented the Association at the Benefactors' meeting in Durham and he was currently looking to refresh the relationship with the Centre for Catholic Studies in Durham.

He was less positive about the results of his work in establishing links with student bodies and representatives. The relationship with York Catholic Society had not developed as hoped. He commented that the modern Catholic student was being brought up on a different theological diet compared with the preoccupations of the typical Newman member: the students today had no real appetite for intellectual discussion but might be more interested in activity related to Catholic Social Teaching.

The young, he concluded, want to do something active. Brian had put considerable personal effort into promoting talks to students; two events had been arranged, the subjects being The Trinity and Exorcism, but only five students turned up.

The major cause for concern that arose during the AGM, and this is perhaps symptomatic of the situation in which the Association finds itself, came at the Election of Officers. Tony Holland lamented that no Member had presented



John Sibbald, Kevin Ryan, Tony Holland, Brian Hamill & John Potts

himself or herself for the office of President. He asked for volunteers from the floor, but nobody was willing to stand. Tony concluded the elections by asking all present to consider over lunch whether they might be willing to take on the role. The meeting concluded with a vote of thanks from Anthony Baker on behalf of the Association to Birmingham Circle and to Tony Holland. Lunch was then held at the Plough & Harrow.



This was a lunch to celebrate the 75th birthday of the Association and it was attended by just under 40 people. We thank members of the Birmingham Circle for organising this event, and putting in place the large yellow poster which proclaimed the anniversary at the AGM. Members enjoyed a substantial three-course meal.

In particular we are grateful to Winifred Flanagan for providing the lavish birthday cake and also for subsidising the wine served during the meal. Her generosity was greatly appreciated. After the meal the cake was cut into individual portions and distributed to members, to their great enjoyment.

Winifred Flanagan

The programme continued in the afternoon with a talk by David McLoughlin, Senior Lecturer in Theology at Newman University, Birmingham (see page 6 of this issue of *The Newman*). Unfortunately a final Mass could not be celebrated as usual at this year's AGM because of the unavoidable absence of our National Chaplain, Father Fabian Radcliffe.



75th Anniversary of the Newman Association



It gives me great pleasure to offer a few words of greeting as you gather in celebration at the Birmingham Oratory to mark the founding of the Newman Association in 1942, 75 years ago at Birmingham University. I know there are members here from all over England, Wales and Scotland and you are most welcome in Birmingham, the city in which Blessed John Henry Cardinal Newman made his home.

Within the Archdiocese of Birmingham, I am always grateful to learn of the many activities that are organised locally by the various Newman Circles during the course of the year and to see the wide range of topics discussed. Looking through the latest newsletter of the Newman Association, I know that these meetings are replicated throughout the dioceses of England, Wales and Scotland, which demonstrates the important contribution the association makes to the life of the Church nationally and beyond.

In his poem *The Pillar of the Cloud*, which people will know more familiarly as the hymn *Lead kindly Light*, Blessed John Henry shares with us his deeply held belief in the Lord who illuminates the path before us as the light of the world. I do wish to encourage and thank all those involved with the Newman Association over these past 75 years. I pray for its continued work in the future as it provides an important opportunity for clergy and lay faithful to engage together about matters of faith, encouraged by the example of Blessed John Henry Newman.

With the assurances of my prayers and kindest wishes.

Yours faithfully in Christ

+ Bernard Longley

✠ Bernard Longley
Archbishop of Birmingham

Talk after Newman AGM 2017

The Challenge of Pope Francis' Teaching and Preaching to Newman's "Intelligent, Well-Instructed Laity"

By David McLoughlin

Extracts from *The Guardian's* Editorial: September 1st, 2016:

In August "the International Geological Conference declared that we should recognise that we entered a new geological epoch, *The Anthropocene*, in around 1950. The changes we have made to the planet are now irreversible and their effects will continue for millennia to come. None the less, this may prove to be the shortest of all geological epochs, since there is no guarantee that humans, who made it, will survive the results of their own activity."

Climate change is a global problem, and it can only be countered by some kind of global consciousness and a sense of the common good that embraces the whole of humanity. This is where the efforts of the world religions become important. Perhaps, then, we need the help of people who are clear about the distinction between humans and gods.

Enter Pope Francis, who has swung the weight of his papacy behind the environmental movement in an unprecedented way. He is not alone. All of the organised world religions now have a strong environmental consciousness. As the Pope puts it: "Human beings are deeply connected with all of Creation. When we mistreat Nature we also mistreat human beings." The difficulty is to link such sentiments with practical action, and this is what his latest initiative imaginatively suggests.

Care for the environment is henceforth to be considered by faithful Catholics as a "work of mercy" – what the outside world would call a charitable act. They are called to "a grateful contemplation of God's world" as a spiritual discipline, but also to the small, slightly inconvenient gestures like recycling, using public transport, or even just turning off unneeded lights. All of these, he says, are to be understood as "simple daily gestures which break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness"; and while the world undoubtedly needs huge and dramatic actions to break the cycle of exploitation and climate change, it also needs ordinary people to play their part with just such simple acts."

It is a good editorial because it recognises implicitly the methodology of Pope Francis which is inductive, bottom up and interdisciplinary. It is an inclusive method which draws on the approach of See, Judge and Act familiar to many of us from the Cardijn¹ movements and adopted by the Church since John XXIII embraced and promoted it in *Mater et Magister* (1959, 236). This is a shift from seeing things "in terms of the eternal, the immutable, the unchanging" instead of

embracing an historical consciousness that “gives more importance to the particular, the contingent, the historical and the individual”². It is Newman’s approach in his “On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine”.

Church teaching

The advantage is that it puts peoples’ experience at the heart of Church teaching. So rather than starting from documents and principles it starts from the experience of the poor and their oppression and need for liberation. It has been used consistently by the Latin American bishops since the great conferences of CELAM³ at Medellin 1968, Puebla 1979 and Aparecida in 2007 where (curiously) the editor of the final statement was none other than Jorge Mario Bergoglio. In it he encouraged, as he does in *Evangelii Gaudium*, the way or path of discipleship. Disciples of Christ are influenced by the values and vision of the Kingdom of God which they are called to realise in historical and cultural contexts in which they (we) live (Aparecida 20-32).

The Aparecida document has three main sections:

Part One: The Life of Our People Today

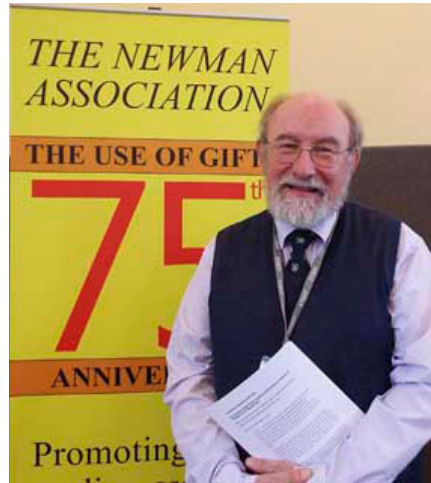
Part Two: The Life of Jesus Christ in Missionary Disciples

Part Three: The Life of Jesus Christ for Our Peoples.

This is a way of engagement with contemporary realities: with the sciences, with local cultures and with economic, political and social systems. But at the heart is the call to a *preferential option for the poor*, for the liberation and promotion of the poor and “for enabling them to be fully part of society”⁴.

In *Evangelii Gaudium* he has argued that the option for the poor is fundamental to the life of each Christian and of the whole Church – he would call it the criterion of Christian authenticity – but he argues it is also fundamental for human development in general (EG 193-216). So for Francis spiritual conversion implies seeking social justice and concrete solutions in the political and economic sphere where Christians need to be involved with some urgency in fruitful dialogue with all who are concerned in the future of our planet. That isn’t quite what Sister Gabriel taught me at primary school! *Why did God make you? God made me to know him, love him and serve him in this world, and to be happy with him forever in the next!*

In *Evangelii Gaudium* his underlying concern was for the poor and poverty (EG 52, 60-67 and chapter 4). He was called back to this by his weekly visits to the *Villas Miserias*, the slum towns around Buenos Aires and by what he learned from



David McLoughlin

the *Curas Villeros*, the slum priests who work there. And what he learned was of the depth of faith of such people and the importance of *religiosidad popular* – the pilgrimages, processions and devotions to the saints, and of the quality of generosity of those who lived in little, open, homes with open tables – all rather different to the locked and gated apartments of the big city.

In *Laudato Si'* he returns to the poor but here, **by extension, to the poor or hurting, planet**. He has personal experience of the appalling scale of poverty in the Southern hemisphere, and while acknowledging the positive consequences of globalisation from the perspective of the periphery of our world he can see better than we its sometimes devastating consequences for millions of people. He describes the **globalisation of indifference** which can reduce whole populations to trash and garbage (EG 53) and he calls this into question so that we might better hear the cry of the poor.

His programme of a poor church for the poor is primarily an ecclesial, pastoral and spiritual programme; but already in EG and, more specifically, in *Laudato Si'* he points out that massive poverty and degradation is not simply inevitable but is the result of an economic approach that tends to focus only on the individual and a myth of continuous progress and meanwhile ignores social and cultural bonds (EG 67).

Planetary degradation

The social crisis we face of extreme mass poverty and planetary degradation is an anthropological crisis. The human person no longer stands at its centre, but rather the focus is on money and an unbridled consumerism which reduces all of us to producers and consumers. We are what we can make or buy. If we can't do either we have no value. In both teachings he wants us to join him in saying “no” to unbridled consumerism; “no” to social inequality which incites violence; and “no” to the widespread indifference to the consequences for our planet, our fellow-creatures and life-forms of industry; and “no” to work driven solely to meet such narrow, market-driven forces. He speaks of this as **an economy that kills, that kills life in so many forms**.

Pope Francis is particularly critical of the trickle-down theory of economics which can be traced back to Adam Smith (1723-1790) but during the Reagan administration developed via the theoretical writings of Milton Friedman. Then came monetarism, the approach adopted by the USA and by Mrs Thatcher's government in the UK, leading to the deregulation of markets internationally. Francis has recognised that the alleviation of poverty cannot come simply through charity. There are structural causes of poverty that require more holistic approaches. Drawing on Catholic Social Teaching, Francis believes that the goods of the world belong to all human beings (EG 190, 192). He cites St John Chrysostom: “*Not to share one's wealth with the poor is to steal from them and to take away their livelihood*” (EG 57). All have a right to share in the fruits of the earth; through their work all are called to be active co-creators. Often we have much to learn from the poorest of our brothers and sisters who have learned

to walk lightly on the earth and to use its gifts sparingly and with respect. The destruction of such cultures is a loss to the planet and a loss of their identity.

From the angle of solidarity he addresses migration, the flight and the reception of refugees: hospitality to the stranger, the powerless and the persecuted is at the core of revelation from Genesis to the Gospels and the Acts. Francis's first trip as Pope was to Lampedusa on July 8th, 2013, where the wretchedness of refugees and the failure of the European Community was writ large.

Of course, he is not proposing a simple, alternative economics but he is calling us to construct a new culture of life and a new lifestyle which is defined not by having but by giving and sharing (EG 57). He is calling us to decide what is truly essential and necessary for all, for the Common Good. Except that the common good must now include our planet and the life forms that share it with us. We require a culture of life which includes a new attitude – caring and reverent – to creation, and so an active concern alongside all those others who are facing the ecological crisis of our time.

Our Common Home

The subtitle of *Laudato Si'* is *On care for our common home*. *Oikos* is the Greek for home, *oikonomia* is the way we organise the home, *oikologia* is about the logos or life that inhabits the home, and *oikumene* is the whole world in which we live and flourish. Our common home, which Pope Francis says is "*burdened and laid waste and is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor so that it groans in travail*" (LS), needs good administration (economics), fruitful connections between the various webs of life (ecology) and dialogue and respect among its inhabitants (ecumenism).

He calls for a new politics that "must not be subject to the economy" (LS 189). In order to overcome the myth of progress (LS 60) and find "new models of global development" (LS 194) able to produce wealth – while not destroying the world – we need creative business people but also politicians who are:

- capable of reforming and co-ordinating institutions, promoting best practice and overcoming bureaucratic inertia (LS 181)
- farsighted to see beyond immediate needs (LS 197)
- wise enough to understand global and local issue (LS 180)
- brave enough to challenge economic forces and efficiency-driven technology
- honest enough to promote transparent processes to all stakeholders involved in political/economic matters that affect people and the planet
- determined enough to break the logic of corruption
- open enough to seek honest dialogue and international enforceable agreements

All of this, but especially the inductive, bottom-up methodology, underpins and structures the whole of *Laudato Si'*. His approach has certain novel contributions – for instance, the appeal to a scientific consensus. The seeing is informed by the best science available. It is done in dialogue with other churches, especially

with his friend Patriarch Bartholomew of the Orthodox Church; so it is ecumenical, and it draws on the revelation of God's vision in the Scriptures, which opens up dialogue with the Jews, and with other Christian groups and denominations.

The seeing focuses on the growing inequality and extremes of poverty, on the millions who have no access to sufficient food or clean water, or to safe and sustainable shelter, or to dignified work. It focuses on the huge planetary waves of migration and the prospect, with global warming and the shortages of water, that these will grow exponentially. It sees that climate change inevitably hits the poorest hardest, through extreme floods, storms or droughts.



David McLoughlin

Underpinning all of this is a renewed Christian spirituality based on *“an alternative understanding of the quality of life, capable of deep enjoyment free of the obsession with consumption”* and so encouraging a *“prophetic and contemplative lifestyle”* (LS 222). Such a spirituality holds together personal and social love (LS 231) favouring *“sobriety and humility”* and the personal level (LS 224), while enabling the capacity for living together in communion (LS 228). There are elements of Thérèse of Lisieux's *“little way of love”*, starting from the love of individual relationships expressed in *“any small gestures which sow peace and friendship”* and so countering violence, exploitation and selfishness (LS 231).

But this spirituality also extends to civic and political love to build a better world and so influencing, for the better, the macro-relationships: the social, economic and political relationships for the sake of building the common good and a culture of care which would permeate all of society (LS 231). Francis says social love is part of our spirituality. It is an exercise of charity that sanctifies us.

At the heart of this spirituality is the encounter with Jesus Christ as redeemer of humanity and of Creation. The poor, and indeed the world, cry out for help. What is required is an ecological conversion (LS 216) recognising our errors, sins, faults and failures leading to true repentance and to a desire to change, so as to be truly reconciled with others, with creation, and with the Creator.

Loving awareness

This will involve a conversion of attitude, from indifference to loving awareness, from utilitarianism to gratuitousness, from selfishness to generosity, from self-advantage to solidarity (LS 220). Isolated individual conversion is not enough: *“Social problems must be addressed by community networks and not simply by the sum of individual good deeds”* (LS 219).

An unresolved issue, however, is gender. Although Francis challenges ideas of

dominion over creation and over the poor and the frail, and the dominion of technocratic structures over communities and individuals, he does not engage with the dominion of men over women. Despite inviting every single person on the planet to revisit the idea of progress, with reference to the option for the poor, he omits the idea of gender equality.

Yet we know from the latest United Nations statistics⁵ that the majority of the world's 1 billion poorest people are women and girls. Among illiterate people over 15 years old 65 per cent are women⁶. One in three women on the planet suffer from violence or abuse: they are the ones who suffer the most in armed conflicts and natural disasters. Also, *Laudato Si'* unprecedentedly quotes from bishops' conferences around the world on issues around ecology and development but it omits the 1991 document from the *Zambian Bishops' Conference You Shall be My Witnesses* which highlights that women in Zambia are not only the backbone of their families but play major roles in the economy, especially in rural areas. However, in both family life and the economy the same women are exploited and oppressed – an injustice which the bishops say “cries out to our Creator”.

Equal representation

And so the bishops called on the government to take stronger action and promote the rightful development of women, in particular for them to be equally represented at decision-making levels. The bishops further argued that the Church must also take action to redress injustices suffered by women in Church, state and family life. So why has Pope Francis not linked the cry of women witnessed by the *Zambian bishops* to the cry of the poor and the cry of the Earth?

Laudato Si' appeals for a redefinition of our relationships with each other, with the planet and with God. In LS 240: “*The human person grows more, matures more and is sanctified more to the extent that he or she enters into relationships, going out to live in communion with God, with others and with all creatures. In this way, they make their own that Trinitarian dynamism which God imprinted in them when they were created.*” In the end Pope Francis speaks to what we could be, and not what we have been or are.

The encyclical ends uniquely with two prayers, one of which can be said by Christians and another which could be said by all those who believe that God is the all-powerful creator.

This is a partial text of the talk delivered to Newman members after the annual general meeting in Birmingham Oratory on June 10th. David McLoughlin is a Senior Lecturer in Theology at the Newman University, Birmingham.

Notes

1 Cardinal Joseph Cardijn, a Belgian, was the founder of the Young Christian Workers in 1924.

2 Curran, C. *Theology Today* 1988, 427.

3 The *Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano*, or the Conference of Latin American Bishops.

4 EG 193-216

5 *The World's Women*, 2015

6 *UNESCO International Literacy Data*, 2014

Eucharistic Traditions

by Rev Scott McKenna

Scott McKenna is a Church of Scotland minister at Mayfield Salisbury Parish in Edinburgh.

I am delighted to address the Newman Association tonight: thank you for your invitation. I am delighted because it is good and right that Christians from across denominations engage, share and co-operate with one another to the greatest extent possible. I am delighted because I already know some members of the Association and have a true and warm affection and respect for them. It says a good deal about this local Association that a minister of the Kirk is asked to offer a reflection on Eucharistic Traditions: the Eucharist, the Mass, the Sacrament of Holy Communion or the Liturgy of the Upper Room.



I have here a number of artefacts which we use at Mayfield Salisbury at our Services of Holy Communion and which have come down to us from one of the many churches which make up our history. I have also placed here a selection of Communion tokens. In the past, though not nowadays, members of the Church of Scotland required a tiny token before they were permitted to receive the Sacrament. In faith, our forebears sought to honour and protect the Sacrament: the fear that the Sacrament might be cheapened or sacrilegiously polluted by people who were unworthy to receive the Body and Blood of Christ was very real: only the worthy, the truly penitent and the morally upright were awarded a token! There is a story from the late 18th century that a Kirk Session in the Highlands decided to hold a Service of Holy Communion. Before it could do so, the Elders needed to satisfy themselves that the people of the parish were worthy to receive the Elements. It took several visits to church members over a period of eighteen months before finally the people were deemed good enough. In part, the visiting Elders needed to assure themselves that the people knew their Bible and key articles of the Protestant Faith. As far as I know, the Elders at Mayfield Salisbury no longer catechise our members!

No more Communion tokens

In time, Communion tokens have given way to Communion Cards but today in many churches in the Church of Scotland, including this one, cards too are outmoded.

It is extraordinarily painful to most, if not all, Christians that our respective institutions lack the desire, imagination or love to scale the heights of Eucharistic doctrinal walls built centuries ago. I hope you do not feel that this is a simplistic statement but, in my view, if we the Christian churches loved one another enough, we would have found a way forward together by now. Until our peoples cry out

for change, it will not happen. We are unlikely to resolve the doctrinal disputes of the past (square the circles): so we need to find a new way forward. Let me be clear because this is a sensitive subject: I respect the spiritual paths and wisdom of each Christian tradition and respect that the views are treasured and deeply held. The old battles cannot be won; it is now as fellow pilgrims that we need to journey together to a new place.

In Scotland, as well as elsewhere, our history is raw. As a student, past and present, of the University of St Andrews I am acutely aware of the martyrdom of the Lutheran Patrick Hamilton. In February 1528 he was burned at the stake from noon until 6.00pm, while on 10 March, 1615 the Jesuit John Ogilvie was hanged and drawn at Glasgow Cross. There was and is division between the Roman Catholic Church and Protestants on the place of sacrifice in the Mass and transubstantiation. Among Protestants, there remains division: Luther and Zwingli argued about the physical presence of Christ in the bread and wine. For Zwingli, the Sacrament – from the Latin *sacramentum* – had much to do with oath, community and interdependence.

Calvin's spiritual dream

Of all the Reformers, Calvin alone desired that the Sacrament of Holy Communion be celebrated every week. For Calvin the weekly celebration was foundational to faith, though the church leaders in Geneva did not share his spiritual insight. In so far as he could, he arranged for the Sacrament to be offered in at least one of the churches in Geneva each Sunday. The Church of Scotland – a child of Calvin – still has a long way to go before it realises his spiritual dream. If the Church of Scotland is serious about ecumenism, about walking alongside our sisters and brothers in the Roman Catholic, Anglican and Orthodox churches, our sacramental practice is one area that could be open for discussion.

However, tonight I shall not revisit and rehearse in any detail the philosophical arguments about the meaning of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the mechanism involved in the *epiclesis* or transformation of the Elements, or any of the theological disputes from the Reformation period. Brexit, Donald Trump and Indyref2 are more likely to elicit agreement from us than any discussion on the arguments of 16th century sacramental theology!

What I offer tonight is a personal view. I am huge admirer of Pope Francis and greatly appreciate his words on the Sacrament: "The Eucharist is not a prize for the perfect, but a medicine for the weak and broken". Those who know me well will know that my approach to Scripture, theology and spirituality is largely drawn from the mystical tradition within Christianity. Tonight I shall draw upon that broad perspective.

The mystics crave union with the Divine and, in some sense at least, claim to achieve it. The greatest of the mystics, Meister Eckhart, said "Eternity is now". It is possible for each of us to be at one with the One, to be absorbed in the life of the Absolute and be saturated in the Sacred. Mystical theology guides our interpretation of Scripture. The Bible is a rich tapestry of spirituality, liturgy,

mythology and fragments of history, woven together in prose and poetry. It is not a book to be read by the metaphorically challenged! Judaism explores theology through story-telling.

I like Jewish humour. The late Lionel Blue told the story of the Nazi and the Jew. Nazi to Jew: "You Jews are the cause of all the trouble". Jew to Nazi: "Yes, Jews and bicycle riders". Nazi: "Why bicycle riders?" Jew: "Why Jews?" The local Orthodox Rabbi David Rose spoke at Mayfield Salisbury a year ago. In one of his talks, he spoke about the ghastly suffering of the Jewish people at the hands of the Russians in the late nineteenth century. David told us the story of four rabbis who discussed the suffering of the people. Broken by all that they shared, they asked God, "Are we your chosen people?" God replied, "You are *My* chosen people". The rabbis said, "Do you think you could choose someone else?"

Jesus walking on water

Over the years, I have become more and more persuaded by the way Judaism handles Scripture. Their method calls for imaginative engagement with the text: words and phrases are woven into stories in order to suggest an older story thus importing meaning from the earlier story into the new story. On Sunday, I mentioned to my congregation that in the Resurrection account in the Gospel of St John, the spiritual gospel, the two angels seated where the dead Christ had lain, one at the head and one at the foot, is suggestive of the cherubim seated on the lid of the ark of the covenant, the seat of mercy. In so doing, the author has relocated the site of the *Shekinah*, the Divine Presence. Similarly, the Candlemas story of Anna and Simeon is replete with connection to the story of Samuel and the story of Jacob wrestling at Phaniel. And again, Jesus walking on water is a reworking of Wisdom walking on water in the Book of Sirach.

The Gospels are Jewish *midrash*, or interpretive literature. Scripture is best read as a means of facilitating encounter with the Divine, with the Holy One. Ignatian

spiritual practice has much to commend it: the practice helps place us in the scene, and the scene in us. Jesus becomes very real, very present. My experience is that Scripture is most powerful when the stories of the Gospels become part of our soul, our consciousness. The Spirit in Scripture is one with the Spirit in our soul. In the Celtic tradition, John so-called, the disciple whom Jesus loved especially, leant against Jesus at the Last Supper. In the Celtic tradition, it is said that he heard the heartbeat of God.

This is the point of the Sacrament: intimate union with the Sacred, that within our soul and spiritual experience we may hear the heartbeat of God. In our mystical tradition,



Sister Wendy Beckett

union with the Sacred is everything, and it is possible now. In iconography, Sister Wendy Beckett says that "Jesus is present, body and soul, under the appearance of bread and wine, and He is also present under the appearance of an icon". Sister Wendy has widened what we mean by sacrament: the Eternal is present in and through the temporal; the Infinite in and through the material.

Jesus said: "Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life....for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink."

On first hearing, it is difficult not to be revolted by the words of Jesus with their cannibalistic overtones. In the Anglican tradition, in the Book of Common Prayer, the Prayer of Humble Access reads:

Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of thy dear son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood, and that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us.

In most of the liturgies of the Upper Room, we hear the words, "Eat the flesh.... drink his blood". What are we to make of this? Within this sanctuary, the Holy Table is the focal point. The table sits beneath the stars: the breaking of the Bread and the sharing of the Wine is the still centre around which the entire cosmos revolves. How are we to understand the teaching of Jesus?

It is in the Gospel of St John that we hear Jesus say, "Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life..." John is by far the most spiritual of the Gospels. The insight which it offers goes far deeper, is more profound, than that of the other three, Matthew, Mark and Luke. More than the others, John's Gospel captures the mystical nature of faith and the mystical teaching of Jesus. To His disciples, Jesus said, "Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them". *This* is the treasure we are being offered. Later in the Gospel we hear Him say, "Abide in me as I abide in you.....As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be one in us".

Jesus invites us

Jesus speaks of a mutual indwelling. In a sense, with friends or a partner, we live in and through one another. Jesus invites us to live in and through Him, and let Him live in and through us. Jean Vanier writes:

Communion at the table of the Lord.....is a gift of his love and a sign of his desire to dwell in us all the time. The sacrament of his word and the sacrament of his presence in the poor and the weak [and the broken] are...signs of his desire to live in a heart-to-heart relationship with each one of us. The sacraments are like doors that open us up to this friendship, reveal it and deepen it.

The giants of the faith, the mystics, return to this theme again and again. One wrote: "I am a hole in a flute that the Christ's breath moves through". Julian of

Norwich said: "The human soul is so glorious that God Himself chooses it as His dwelling-place". In Judaism there is a story of a rabbi who is asked: "Where is God?" The rabbi replies: "God is wherever He is let in". Metaphor is not incidental to religion: it is the language of religion. There is not a single word we can use of God that is God; every word is a metaphor.

The words of Jesus, "Eat my flesh....and drink my blood", are best understood as rich imagery of union, intimacy and communion. It is metaphorical language which has nothing to do with cannibalism; the literal interpretation of Scripture is a terrible disease! We are to ingest the Holy, feed on the Sacred, and let the Spirit of God nourish, transfigure and raise us spiritually to eternal life. George Herbert, the priest-poet, said: "Love is that liquor sweet and most divine, Which my God feels as blood but I as wine". The Sacrament is a liturgical means to filling our soul with the Spirit, the Presence, the Body, the Being of God. For me, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is an act of love; again, it is not for nothing that the reformer, John Calvin, believed that God's people should receive the Bread and Wine each and every week.

Becoming Christ-filled

We are to practise the Presence, invite Jesus in daily and let our consciousness, however fleetingly, become a Christ-filled consciousness. The mystics tell us that an experience of union moves us towards compassion, justice and inclusivity: we begin to love the world, love others, as God loves them. This sense of union, experienced in a sanctuary, a garden or in the high street, alone or in the company of others, does not protect us from the dangers of the world, but it does offer us strength in those times. The spiritual writer, James Finley, speaks of being grounded in the absolute love of God. We are lovers of the Divine with limbs entwined. He says:

If we are absolutely grounded in the absolute love of God that protects us from nothing even as it sustains us in all things, then we can face all things with courage and tenderness and touch the hurting places in others and in ourselves with love.

About 25 years ago, together with 5 other candidates for the ministry, I went on a short retreat to Pluscarden Abbey, near Elgin in Moray. One of the books I took with me was a book of prayers by the Celtic writer, David Adam. Sitting



Rev McKenna with mothers and children

on a bench in a garden in the grounds of the Abbey, with the graves of previous generations of monks just ahead of me, I soaked up the stillness of the sacred place, a thin place, allowed myself to become aware of the saints all around, and carefully, sensitively read through the prayers prepared by David Adam. I remember the experience as though it were last week:

*I weave a silence on to my lips
I weave a silence into my mind
I weave a silence within my heart
I close my ears to distractions
I close my eyes to attractions
I close my heart to temptations.
Calm me, O Lord, as you stilled the storm
Still me, O Lord, keep me from harm
Let all the tumult within me cease
Enfold me Lord in your peace.*

The Celtic prayers reinforced my sense of Christ within me; they brought Jesus into focus. In his most recent book, *The Awesome Journey*, David Adam tells us that life is meant to be a “journey of delight...a journey of love: a journey with God and into God”. Quoting Shakespeare, he says, “journeys end in lovers meeting”. The Communion of Saints is also a doctrine of oneness. This morning I was reminded of a story about a man who, some time after his wife had died, spent some time in a monastery living with the monks. Among other things, he was struck by the warm familiarity they shared with the monks of previous generations. Walking among the headstones, the monks would speak of their friends who had died.

True pilgrimage

For many years, Adam was the vicar at St Mary’s Church on Holy Island, Lindisfarne. At the end of each chapter of his book, he calls us to pause, pray and practise presence: be present to the Presence. “True pilgrimage” he says, “is about the opening of our eyes, our ears and our hearts, not simply about travelling..... It involves seeing the world as God’s world.....Pilgrimage is more about the heart than the soles of the feet.” The most important journey we make in life is the inner journey, moving beyond material pursuits, which never satisfy anyway, into moments of quiet, sensitising us to the Spirit within: the Spirit within all life, in others – God-bearers, *theotokoi* – and within us. The incredible revelation of Genesis 1, 2 and 3 is that we are all God-bearers, made in the image of the Holy; each of us filled with the breath of God, the very life and essence of God.

After the mythology of the creation narratives – the first eleven chapters of Genesis – a new and distinct section of the book begins. We read:

Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you..... in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed”. So Abram

went, as the Lord had told him.

It was after Abraham's father died that Abraham encountered God. Abraham's encounter began with the word "Go", which in Hebrew is *lekh lekha*. "Go from your country" God told Abraham. *Lekh lekha* had never appeared in Genesis before this point. God's relationship with Abraham is intensely personal: "I will show you, I will make of you, I will bless you". Abraham sets out for a land that God will show him, a land he had never seen. What is most striking about what God said to Abraham is the first word used – "go": *lekh lekha*. It means "Go towards yourself". It is an invitation to journey to a new land, a piece of physical land surely, but it is also and more deeply an invitation to journey within. After the creation narratives and long before the appearance of Moses or Joseph, God's first word is to Abraham, to the father of Judaism, Christianity and Islam is "Go towards yourself". The Divine dwells within us.

In the life of Moses, the place or dwelling-place of God was in the impenetrable cloud of Mount Sinai and later in the tent of the LORD's presence, a place alight with the luminous splendour of God's Presence. In the life of Joshua, the place of God, the tent, was at Shiloh. For King David it was in Jerusalem and for Solomon in the temple at Jerusalem. In Hebrew, the word *Shekinah* meaning Divine presence; it comes from the word *shakan* meaning to pitch a tent.

The home of the Shekinah

In Luke's Gospel Mary is the site or home of the *Shekinah*: the Holy Spirit overshadowed her as the Spirit had overshadowed the tent of the LORD's presence. In John's Gospel, Jesus is the Word made flesh: the home of the *Shekinah*. In the letters of St Paul, the apostle tells the people of Corinth that they are God's temple: we are the temple of the Living God. We are one with Christ. Jesus said, "Abide in Me as I abide in you".

Dutch Roman Catholic priest and professor, the late Henri Nouwen, said:

*The Psalms are filled with a yearning to dwell in the house of God, to take refuge under God's wings, and to find protection in God's holy temple; they praise God's holy place, God's wonderful tent, God's firm refuge.....
Jesus gradually reveals himself [as] the new temple. Jesus Reveals himself as our true home: "Make your home in Me, as I make mine in you".*

Nouwen said: "By entering into the intimacy of our innermost self he offers us the opportunity to enter into His own intimacy with God".

The *Shekinah* dwells within us; the soul is the dwelling-place of God. The Pharisee Nicodemus is told that no one can see the Kingdom of God without being born from above. The Spirit, the *Shekinah*, needs to be born within us. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper, perhaps the supreme means of grace, is not an isolated means of grace. To the mystic the entire universe, the cosmos, is filled with God's glory.

The divine assails us

The palaeontologist, philosopher and Jesuit priest, the late Pierre Teilhard de Chardin said:

All around us, to right and left, in front and behind, above and below, we have only to go a little beyond the frontier of sensible appearances in order to see the divine welling up and showing through.....the divine assails us, penetrates us, moulds us.

In his book *Writings in Time of War* de Chardin celebrated the Sacrament without bread and wine. He said:

Since today, Lord, I your Priest have neither bread nor wine nor altar, I shall spread my hands over the whole universe and take its immensity as the matter of my sacrifice.....

The seething cauldron in which the activities of all living and Cosmic substance are brewed together – is not that the bitter cup that you seek to sanctify?.....

You, my God, have given me the gift of discerning, beneath this surface incoherence, the living and deep-rooted unity that your grace has mercifully imposed on – instilled breath – our hopeless plurality. Let creation repeat to itself again today, and tomorrow, and until the end of time, so long as the transformation has not run its full course, the divine saying: "This is my body".

Along with others, de Chardin develops the theme of the Cosmic Christ. We describe Christ as the Word made flesh. It is that same Word which gives birth to the whole of creation. The Belgian priest and astronomer Georges Lemaître first proposed the theory we know as the "Big Bang", what he more sensibly called the "Cosmic Egg". The "Big Bang" or "Cosmic Egg" is the Word made matter. God is incarnate in matter, in flesh, in all creation, in the cosmos. De Chardin said that "All matter is incarnate....God is incarnate in the world". He saw that everything around us "is the body and blood of the Word". De Chardin said that the universe was the fullest extension of Christ and that the world was the "glorious living crucible in which everything melts away in order to be born anew...."

In Scripture, St Paul wrote of Christ:

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible.....He Himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together.....

Light and darkness

Those among us of a more Presbyterian disposition may be feeling that all this mysticism is fine but it is not for us; it is not part of our tradition. In fact, there are a number of examples of mystics within the Church of Scotland, not least the blind poet-preacher of Innellan, George Matheson. Let me quote to you a passage from Matheson in which he reflects light and darkness:

We pray, "Enlighten our eyes!" but often we can only get our

inner eye enlightened by having the outer eye shaded. Is the soul never to get moments for repose – for meditation, self-reflection! Is it never to have an hour all to itself – an hour when its doors are shut, when its windows are covered, when its outside voices are hushed, when it is untouched by the heat of the day! God says, “Yes, it shall have such moments”; and He prepares a place for it in the wilderness. He stops me midway in the race. He lays His hand upon me, and I fall. He bears me into the silence, into the solitude. He puts the multitude all out, and locks the door. He closes the shutters of the casement. He interrupts the music in the street; He forbids the dancing in the hall. He says, “Your nerves are weary with excitement; in this desert place you shall rest awhile”.

For me, what matters most about the Eucharist is spiritual presence. *How* the Divine is present in matter is speculation; *that* the Divine is present in matter is not. In the 21st century part of the future of theological growth will be to see Christ in all things: that creation itself is a sacrament and that the Divine may be found in paths other than Christianity. Christianity is so much more than a closed system of doctrine and tradition: its core revelation is the Spiritual, a spiritual attitude towards ourselves, others, all living things and the earth beneath our feet. The Trappist monk, the late Thomas Merton, was overwhelmed with a sense of the Holy while seated in silence in a shopping mall.

In our holy space

At each and every Communion I aim to become still within, still to the point that I may become aware of Christ, that it is Jesus who speaks and Jesus who breaks the bread and shares the cup. In meditation, we can take ourselves to the Upper Room or in meditation we can envision Jesus with us here, in our holy space. I believe that the regular practice of meditation and contemplation can offer helpful paths in deepening our awareness of Jesus and our awareness of the *Shekinah*, the Divine Presence, in and through the bread and wine.

You will have noticed that I have cited many more Roman Catholic thinkers than Reformed ones. That is not because I am speaking to the Newman Association; it is because what they have said speaks to me. I may get into trouble from the Presbytery of Edinburgh for my views but mystics have always been persecuted by the churches. They have been persecuted largely because they have said that they already enjoyed communion with God and therefore had less need of the institution. Tonight I have offered a mystical view of the Eucharist: it is about union, intimacy and love and not the mechanics of how God works in the world. Thank you.

This talk was delivered to the Edinburgh Circle in March, 2017.

A reflection on my personal ecumenical journey given to the Newman Association

by Rev Geoffrey Barnard

I was born in a Norfolk village in 1937 where there were two Methodist churches. That was five years after Methodist Union in 1932 between two branches of Methodism – Wesleyan and Primitive as they were called. One of the chapels was ex-Prim and one ex-Wesleyan. There were those who would have closed both and built again but attitudes were too entrenched and nothing happened. It was the “over my dead body syndrome” and that is exactly what happened! The ex-Wesleyan Methodist chapel was at the end of our street and I was sent to the Sunday school because going to the Parish church would have involved crossing a main road. There was a Catholic Chapel on the edge of the village but we knew nothing about that at all.



All of that fed into a reluctance, as I got older, to place too much importance on denominational loyalty. Often the church tradition we belong to is a matter of chance and our affection for that tradition is often born of familiarity and being comfortable in the worship and practices we have grown used to. I'm happy to be a Methodist but I wouldn't go to the stake for it. The opportunity to share with different kinds of Christians was limited given the kind of community ours was and, in my case, probably limited too because my family were not churchgoers.

A conscientious objector

Leaving home at 18, I began to open my eyes a little. I had been influenced by a local Quaker group that a friend had linked up with and that made me aware of, and drawn to, Pacifist convictions. I registered as a conscientious objector to National Service and eventually, after two tribunals, was allowed to work for two years in a Geriatric Hospital as alternative service. That brought me into contact with, and working alongside, Catholics from Ireland, Italy and France; though I would have to say it was sharing music and dancing at the International Club in Maidenhead more than theological debates and insights that added to my broader view of the world. I simply enjoyed meeting people from different backgrounds. During that time I prepared for and moved on to theological training at the age of 20. The next four years didn't do much to broaden my outlook. I learned a little about Church history, which should have opened my eyes, but for the most part it was a Methodist diet I was fed and after four years I left our college in Leeds (since then it has been a Centre for the Little Sisters of the Poor and is now Hinsley Hall Conference Centre). I travelled almost immediately to Central Africa to work with our Methodist Missionary Society. It was there that things began to change.

Northern Rhodesia had many tribal languages, and the Protestant Missions had carved up the country between them. Our area was Methodist which only served to underline for me the denominational lottery that operated to determine which Christian label people had stamped on them. I was out in the bush and there was a Catholic Mission in the Province but I'm not sure of what Order – in N.R. there were Jesuits, White Fathers and Dominicans in different areas. Forty miles away there were Lutherans from the US and the Anglicans in the country were of the High Church tradition. The Universities Mission to Central Africa (UMCA) had been established many years earlier by Anglicans in the universities of Oxford, Cambridge, Durham and Dublin; it was firmly in the Anglo-Catholic tradition. Vatican 2 was significant in leading to a thaw in relationships between Catholic and Protestant Missionary personnel and certainly I found lots of good collegiality with Anglican and Catholic neighbours especially. By that time I had moved into a mining town called Kabwe (formerly known as Broken Hill) where lead and zinc were mined. (Kabwe featured in an article in *The Guardian* recently as the most polluted city in the world due to leakage into the water system, from lead and zinc slagheaps). There we made many friendships across the denominational lines.

Together we shared services, and celebrated the 50th anniversary of our local Anglican church with a visit from the great Bishop Trevor Huddleston, by then based in Tanzania. We participated in literacy and nutrition campaigns with the Cathedral in Lusaka and joined in religious broadcasting under the leadership of a White Father and a German Lutheran Pastor. In the local Catholic church I shared the celebration of a wedding with Father Pierre (a Canadian Jesuit) when Rosemary (a Canadian Catholic) married Johann (a Methodist from South Africa). Father La Fontein, a Canadian priest, came to our home several times for coffee while he was being treated in our local hospital. He had contracted leprosy while working on his mission which had a Leprosarium as part of its work. And of course the great difference came for us when we sank our separate Methodist identity with the creation of the United Church of Zambia in 1965. Essentially the UCZ came about as a result of the priority given to mission outreach and pastoral care.

A dilemma for the missions

Let me explain. As I have said, Zambia had been divided up between the missions by language areas. Then in the 1920s copper was discovered and exploited and copper mines and towns developed in a specific area which became known as The Copper Belt. African workers moved in from all over the country – many bringing their Bibles and hymn books with them. What were the missions to do? Were we each to follow our own flock and set up a church OR to work together in a united enterprise? Some Protestant churches chose the latter and were helped enormously by those who joined them from The United Church of Canada who shared their own experience of coming together across denominational boundaries. The United Church had been formed in Canada in 1925 through the merger of four Protestant denominations. So I went to Africa a Methodist and

came back a Methodist with an ecumenical coating that has never left me. I have to say that love of an ecumenical environment was enhanced by marrying a Northern Ireland Protestant whose family was scarred by the intransigence of her mother's Catholic family disowning her for marrying a Protestant. In our own experience we often feel the blight of denominational prejudice. Thank goodness that has diminished to some degree! And I can add that my brother joined us in Kabwe to teach in a government school; he met and married an Irish Catholic nurse and Father Pierre conducted the wedding service.

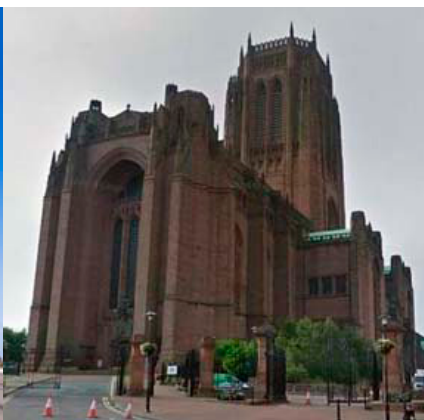
A divided city

But to move on: we returned from Zambia to the city of Liverpool and to Methodism. Liverpool had been for a long time a divided city – divided between Catholics and Protestants, between Evertonians and Liverpoolians. But two important players took to the field. No not at Goodison or Anfield but in the two cathedrals.

As the Spinners used to sing :

*In our Liverpool home,
In our Liverpool home,
We meet under a statue exceedingly bare;
If you want a cathedral we've got one to spare,
In our Liverpool home.*

Those two important players were Archbishop Derek Warlock and Bishop David Shepherd and their extraordinary friendship, and respect for each other, spoke to the people much more tellingly than any amount of sermons. They changed the climate in the city and we, like many others, benefited from that. We enjoyed warm ecumenical relationships and we worked together on projects like bringing children from Belfast for respite holidays. Marcea was born....she was The Merseyside and Region Churches Ecumenical Assembly. And that atmosphere of friendship and cooperation has lasted for many years.



Catholic Cathedral of Christ the King and Anglican Cathedral of Liverpool

(In a lovely moment a few years ago we met Bishop Tom Williams, the Catholic Auxiliary of Liverpool. He was officiating at my grand-daughter's confirmation in Formby where I had been the Methodist Minister for 11 years and where I enjoyed warm friendships with Catholic and Anglican colleagues. Tom Williams had often visited our home in South Liverpool when he was a curate at St Francis of Assisi parish in Garston. My daughter is currently the Head of St Jerome's Catholic primary school in Formby and she and her family have joined the Catholic Church.)

A return to Africa

In 1976 we went back to Africa to work with those who were tackling a different aspect of ecumenism because that word, from the Greek *oikumene*, has to do with the whole created world and involves us in the healing of the natural and political worlds as well. We went to work in a school to be involved in multi-racial education as opposed to the segregated form of education being imposed in South Africa at that time. Denominational loyalties were much lower on our scale of values.

When we returned to Merseyside we found the ecumenical atmosphere alive and well. I enjoyed a pulpit exchange on a monthly basis with the local vicar and Catholic priest. We worked with St Jerome's church for bringing Catholic and Protestant youngsters from Belfast every year and that continued for over 25 years. Our house fellowship had Catholic and Anglican members (it had sprung out of a Lenten group and the mixed gathering wanted it to be more than a one-off).

Those Merseyside experiences underlined two important aspects of our ecumenical journey – the importance of leadership and the expression of that in friendships as seen in the Warlock/Shepherd relationship and the importance of translating that into shared activity on the ground in house groups, joint activities and shared worship.

Building bridges

I acknowledge that I have been fortunate. My last appointment was to the ecumenical chaplaincy in Manchester where I was Free Church chaplain supported by our three Free Church denominations. Then, in retirement, I was able to work in the Corrymeela Community in Northern Ireland enjoying relationships with colleagues from Presbyterian, Methodist, Catholic, Anglican and Baptist traditions. There was a common calling – to heal divisions and build bridges between the faiths so that people could enjoy that “life in all its fullness” that Jesus came to bring.

I think I've said enough but I must finish by saying how much I have enjoyed coming to this Newman Circle. Your emphasis on exploring faith issues and being open to new thought is what attracts me to your meetings. Thank you, and may your exploration long continue.

Rev Geoffrey Barnard, a retired Methodist minister, gave this talk to the Manchester and North Cheshire Circle in June 2017

Gay and Catholic

By Mark Dowd

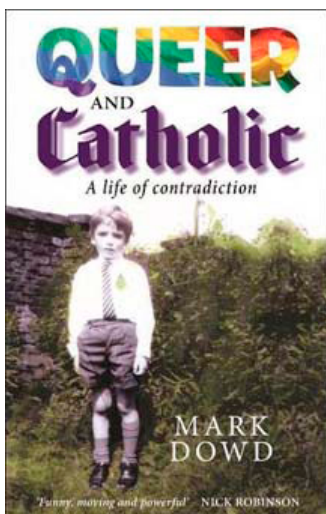
What a weird and contradictory relationship this is. It's like having a mother who feeds you delicious food one moment and then deftly slaps you the next – such are the dynamics of this gay man's relationship with the Roman Catholic Church. And, of course, we must distinguish between the narrow "Church" (hierarchy, Magisterium and source of much of that "slapping") and the wider Church: the people of God on pilgrimage, including all those friends and family down the years who have helped sustain and build me to the curious and life-affirming person I feel I am today aged fifty-four years old.

It was a religious order that provided the incubator for the coming-to-age of my sexual identity and awareness. Aged thirteen I was convinced God was calling me to be a teaching brother of St John the Baptist de la Salle and I was whisked off to a junior seminary in Berkshire. A post-puberty volcano erupted, so much so that my mother and father had to confront me one morning in the summer holidays with the fact that I had been "talking about Duncan" in my sleep. In 1974 I was sent off to a doctor, but neither he nor the incessant prayers of my parents delivered the cure.

I later became a Dominican friar for a couple of years, and when I came clean with the prior about my proclivities I was greeted with a warm and human smile. "Put it this way," he said. "I don't think you'll be the only one." He was right. Religious life was a safe and welcoming space to be who I was. My vocation as a preacher didn't last, but once more the official structures of the Church played a huge part in the next chapter of my life. Over dinner in the priory I met and fell in love with a former Dominican. Michael and I lived together for nine years. I can thank the

Catholic Church for this introduction and the fact that we are still very firm and dedicated friends.

The Church at the official level has been essentially reactive about same sex love. There was next to nothing from Rome until the 1970s when gay liberation and the Stonewall Riots in New York placed the whole LGBT identity under the spotlight. Then in the 1980s, when AIDS began devastating thousands of lives, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger published his now infamous pastoral letter, *Homosexualitatis Problema* (1986). There have been acres of newsprint written on this missive from the present Pope Emeritus, and one frequently finds an interpretation that gives the impression that the Church is wanting to "love the sinner and hate the sin" ...i.e *being gay* is OK as long



as you don't act on it. But a closer inspection of this text, still the longest and most detailed one on the subject from Rome, tells a different story.

Section Three spells out it clearly enough:

"Although the particular inclination of the homosexual person is not a sin, it is a more or less strong tendency ordered toward an intrinsic moral evil; and thus the inclination itself must be seen as an objective disorder."

The ranks of the clergy

So forget about all this business of loving the sinner and hating the sin, even *being gay* is a disordered inclination. For years that set me thinking. Priests, in the sacrifice of the Mass, are acting in *persona Christi*, yet I knew full well from my experiences that gay men were vastly over-represented among the ranks of the clergy. I found this to be hugely ironic. The very people whose sexuality the Vatican was setting its stall against were the people who were keeping the show on the road.

As I have often commented: if the Vegetarian Society found out more than half its members were bunking off for T-bone steak at lunchtimes it would have an identity crisis! As a broadcast journalist this struck me as a worthwhile area of inquiry, so in 2001 we transmitted *Queer and Catholic* on Channel Four TV, a ninety-minute investigation which, for the first time, contained seminary rectors speaking candidly about gay men in the priesthood.

The star interviewees were a couple of former students from the English College in Rome who had fallen in love with one another. They spoke candidly about a weird and twisted phenomenon: inverted homophobia. The very people who were the most condemnatory about same-sex attraction in college were the same ones that were known to be strolling around in Rome's parks and engaging in anonymous sexual liaisons. "This was not deemed to be breaking the promise of celibacy, as many students defined celibacy as 'not falling in love,'" one of them told me. It is shuddering to think that many of these young men would go on to be priests and bishops in the Church at a later point in their lives.

Goodness of folk

The very parents who had whisked me off for a magical cure, of course, had to bear witness to all this – and they came through it with flying colours. Their "cure," if you will, had been a simple thing: namely to be exposed to the simple humanity and goodness of folk. As my mother said to me: "Well, love, it's just like being left-handed isn't it?" When I reminded her that such people were once burned at the stake for being agents of the devil (ever stopped to think where the word "sinister" comes from? In Latin *sinistra* means "left" – and historically the Devil has been depicted as left-handed) it caused her to pause. "Yes but we've moved on."

My mother and father moved on by meeting my partners and, in my mother's case, attending conferences of Quest, a UK-based group for LGBT Catholics. "So much more fun than the Union of Catholic Mothers," she used to say. I do wish we had adopted that as a motto for our T-shirts.

So there is a strange paradox: the very agency which oppresses you with its fierce and insensitive language of “disorder” is also the one that has helped to fashion your own sexual identity, make you feel safe and secure about discussing same-sex attraction and has even fashioned you with a long lasting relationship. We’ve seen significant moves in the “mood music” of the Church since Pope Francis’ election. His now-famous remarks on the plane journey back from South America in 2013, “Who am I to judge a man if he is gay?”, have been heralded as a key development. A pope, for the first time in history, uses the “G” word and not the medical- and clinical-sounding “homosexual.” This is a man who answers letters from LGBT individuals and allows the fact to become part of the public discourse.

Divisions are rendered nonsense

All of this is welcome. But our standard as Christians must always be Jesus. One simply cannot imagine Our Lord singling out LGBT people for discriminatory treatment. Not a word was said on all four gospel accounts and St Paul tells us in Romans that in Jesus there can be no such thing as male and female, Jew and Greek, free man and slave. All divisions are rendered nonsense faced with the saving grace of his Death and Resurrection.

So I look forward to a world where talk of “disorder” and “doing violence to children” by same-sex couples engaging in adoption becomes an embarrassing anachronism. And that is why I stay and take my place at the altar, so that my presence can be counted and my story told. For how else can the rest of the Body of Christ in the church be transformed into healing acceptance and love unless they know who we are? There can be no pointing



of fingers and hectoring and such gains are not made by forcing placards down the throat. “They’ll know we are Christians by our love”, as we used to sing.

Slow but inevitable

Will they? If and when they do, the worm that has been turning, will continue its slow and inevitable process until the day that LGBT is about as relevant as the colour of one’s eyes. That day, sadly, is still some way away.

*Mark Dowd is a writer and broadcaster. He talked to the Manchester and North Cheshire Circle in July 2017. His book *Queer and Catholic* is to be published later this month (September) by Darton, Longman and Todd.*

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

Terry Egerton* raises several points for consideration in the May edition of the Journal.

Since the foundation of the Association in the 1940s, and its development in the 1950s and 1960s, society has undergone considerable change. Nonetheless there remains a need for Newman's "educated laity", even in the twenty-first century. Terry states that Newman members' joy is in ideas and learning. Certainly this is so, but it cannot be an end in itself.

As a Christian organisation the role of the Newman Association is to equip its members intellectually and spiritually to go out into the world to spread the "good news" in different ways, confident in their faith. This is a very different vision from the role of the U3A which Terry suggests as an example to the Newman. Whilst U3A may be an admirable organisation, it is largely concerned with personal interests and pastimes, which is reflected in its structures.

Terry offers an example of a local Circle and its relationship with the Central body; I offer my own Circle, Coventry, as another example. Since the Circle was founded in the 1950s there are records showing it has provided annual programmes of monthly talks, as well as regular spiritual and social events for its members. It has also contributed six Presidents to the Association, three Secretaries and an Editor for the Newman Association News. It has hosted Annual General Meetings and organised at least four national Conferences, the most recent in collaboration with the National Board of Catholic Women, when we worked together creatively to the benefit of both organisations.

Additionally one member has organised twelve pilgrimages for the Association which brought together members from all over the country. It would be fair to say that the Coventry Circle has made a significant contribution to the whole Association, but also that it has benefited considerably from its wider membership of a national body.

Certainly an examination of the finances of the National Association is appropriate and necessary at this time. We should remember however that the annual subscription has not kept pace with inflation over the years, whilst costs, mainly travel expenses, have rocketed. The number of Council members clearly does need to be reduced, and more advantage taken of the varied means of modern communication, email, the website and social media, without which the Association is bound to decline.

Education, learning and spiritual development are all intrinsic parts of belonging to the Newman Association. It is thus appropriate to continue to work together with other organisations with similar objectives: the Centre for Catholic Studies at Durham University is one example. But such links should not be exclusively intellectual. The consultative bodies to the Bishops' Conference, such as the

National Council for Lay Associations (NCLA) and the National Board of Catholic Women (NBCW), are intended to give a voice to lay people in the Church in England and Wales.

The Bishops do listen to issues that are put forward. NBCW has an episcopal liaison, Bishop William Kenney, who frequently does take matters of concern to the attention of the Bishops at their bi-annual meetings. It therefore important that the Newman as an organisation uses these links effectively. There is also value in belonging to international organisations. We do belong to a wider Church than England and Wales: membership broadens our understanding, and displays solidarity with our often struggling brothers and sisters in other countries.

To withdraw from its international links because of “value for money” criteria would have a negative effect, limiting its vision to the detriment of the Newman Association as a whole. As an Association we should now look forward to an open future with realism, but without fear and with joyful hope. **Janet Ward**

*Terry Egerton’s letter **Going round in Circles** appeared on page 32 of the May issue of *The Newiman*.

The Way Forward: A timeline of events

October, 2015 A weekend Assembly was held at Hinsley Hall, Leeds, to discuss the Association’s challenges. It was titled **The Newman Association....Is It Worth Saving?**

It was subsequently agreed to set up four working groups to look at **finance**, **mission** (later retitled **development**), **communications** and **membership**.

Early 2016 Reports were produced by the finance, development and communications groups.

October 1st, 2016 The Development Group’s report, called A Strategic Plan for Growth 2017-20, was discussed by Council and subsequently distributed to circles. Responses were received from 16 out of 24 circles and also from several individuals.

March 2nd, 2017 Council commissioned a Way Forward Working Group of six to form proposals for discussion at the next AGM.

April 29th, 2017 Council received the Working Group report and prepared a document for discussion at the AGM.

June 10th, 2017 Annual General Meeting in Birmingham at which responses and questions were invited. John Sibbald, who wrote the paper The Way Forward, said that he envisaged the appointment of a dynamic Board of six Directors to engage properly with the members and pursue the development of the Association.

During 2017-18 The Working Group will consider how to ensure that the Constitution, and the Memorandum and Articles of Association, are harmonised to the requirements of current Charities’ Law. Legal advice will be required.

June, 2018 The proposals, after development into formal resolutions, will be put to the next AGM.

Book Review

A Reasonable Response: What Does It All Mean?

What Does It All Mean? A guide to being more faithful, hopeful and loving, by Richard Leonard SJ; Paulist Press 2017; £17.99 (hardback)

This Australian Jesuit and regular columnist to *The Tablet* has written three books addressing the current problems of belief and unbelief. His readers subsequently requested a combined work with a good index and this is his response; it is not a simple rehash, but a new format of short sections – it includes additional material.



The first book he wrote was inspired by a conversation on a long-haul flight with an honest ex-Catholic who exclaimed: “What on earth are we doing on earth, for Christ’s sake?”

The author engages with serious atheists and finds that such open, respectful dialogue is profitable for both sides. Any meeting of minds is impossible with fanatics who consider all believers to be irrational and deluded and think that the RC Church holds to a vengeful God who created the world in six days.

He does not claim to prove the existence of God so much as to make a reasonable case for believing in a loving Creator, despite David Attenborough’s parasitic worm, which he puts in context with other disasters like tsunamis and earthquakes, and counters with the loving, empathetic response such tragedies inspire in others. He also suggests that this compassion, together with other imponderables like love and our response to beauty, do not fit into the concept of an entirely rational universe.

In this very personal book we get to know the author and his family. When Richard



Leonard’s father died of a heart attack his mother was left as a young widow with three small children; her daughter became a quadriplegic and in her eighties Mrs Leonard was obliged to get up regularly in the night to turn Tracey. Her son Richard appears to have taken on her realistic approach to life and her sense of humour.

His attitude to the Church is loyal, open, clear-sighted and realistic, with no fudging of the facts and no prissy pieties, but plain-speaking – no “blessed” this and “holy” that. He remarks in passing that the reasons given for restricting the priesthood to celibate men do not hold water; he deplores the would-be consoling words offered to the bereaved, especially to parents of dead children. His honest reaction to the accident that made his beloved sister a quadriplegic – she who was spending her life in the service of others –

was, “where the Hell is God?”

Tracey never recovered physically (she recently died) but had rallied to write her story – with great difficulty before modern technology came to her aid. Her book touched many people to whom the famous Jesuit is known simply as Tracey’s brother. How many preachers would encourage us to thank God for the blessing of a functioning bladder and bowels and being capable of going to the toilet unaided? He gives an honest, not hagiographic account of his heroes, from Thomas More to Dorothy Day, and does not omit a period in Ignatius Loyola’s life when the future Jesuit founder was a complete mess – unkempt, unwashed and unfed – until obedience to his superior forced him to pull himself together, so that he went on to achieve great things. The revelation of clerical sexual abuse made Richard Leonard wonder for a moment how he could continue a member of the RC Church, but his sense of belonging to this Eucharistic community was strong: a membership which involves accepting the authority of the Pope.

Open acceptance of everyone

For this priest there is absolutely no distinction of persons: his open acceptance of everyone, including those deemed disreputable, can lead him into comic situations. Members of a gay troupe, “Les Girls”, turned up in the front pew at Midnight Mass, and he was persuaded to accept the invitation to their “show” in return at 3am on Christmas morning, where he found himself leading the assembled company in *O come all ye faithful*. This reciprocal acceptance meant that he could support these men in their subsequent troubles.

He was down-to-earth and had no truck with what was superficial and unreal, and unintentionally exemplified this by fainting dramatically in the middle of his priestly ordination (because of overwhelming heat). He apologised, especially to his fellow ordinands, for disrupting his special occasion, but people found that this had in fact rendered the ceremony more real and meaningful.

Richard Leonard is the kind of priest to whose door at four in the morning a homeless alcoholic can bring the distraught mother of a cot-death baby. He not only took her in, but found the people most able to help her and stayed in contact until his support was no longer needed. This manifestation of the Church as a “field hospital” is his most persuasive argument for Christianity.

Josephine Way

S.E. Circles Quiet Day

An **Advent Day of Recollection** has been arranged for Saturday, December 9th.

It will take place at Tyburn Convent, 8-9 Hyde Park Place, London W2 2LJ.

The Quiet Day, between 11.00am and 4.30pm, will be led by Fr Robin Burgess, one of the Parish Team from St Benedict’s, Ealing.

The day will conclude with Mass.

There will be no fee, but contributions to the Convent will be encouraged.



1517 and all that...

The Relevance of the Reformation today

Saturday 28th October

10.30am - 3.30pm

£30 (£10 for students) to include lunch

St Columba's College, St Albans, AL3 4AW



THE CATHEDRAL AND
ABBAY CHURCH OF
SAINT ALBAN

The Newman
Association

Original artwork by Fiona Pruden

The Protestant Reformation, in its noble aim of radically purifying Christian belief and practice, convulsed contemporary Europe and led to massive fragmentation and conflict.

But what has been the Reformation impact on the world of today?

Speakers:

Bishop Martin Lind

Bishop of the Lutheran Church in Great Britain

The Rev Canon Dr Charlotte Methuen

Anglican Priest, University of Glasgow

The Rev Professor John Morrill

Roman Catholic Deacon, University of Cambridge

The Rev Dr Patricia Took

Former President of the Baptist Union of Great Britain

For more details and how to book, go to:

www.stalbanscathedral.org/learning/study-centre/study-days/
or call the Box Office on 01727 890290

Booking closes on 21st October.

If you have any dietary requirements, please email studycentre@stalbanscathedral.org by this date.

If you are booking a student ticket,
please bring your student ID on the day.

If you have any queries, please email studycentre@stalbanscathedral.org

Spirituality Page

Rose Macaulay: The Towers of Trebizond

Dame Rose Macaulay was very well known in her lifetime as a novelist, essayist, travel writer and broadcaster but she seems to have faded from view in more recent times. It may then be appropriate to look on this page at her last and most famous novel, *The Towers of Trebizond*. The book is, to some extent, a satire on Cold War paranoia and colonial attitudes but it is also about guilt, remorse, estrangement and exile. It is also, in parts, ridiculously funny.

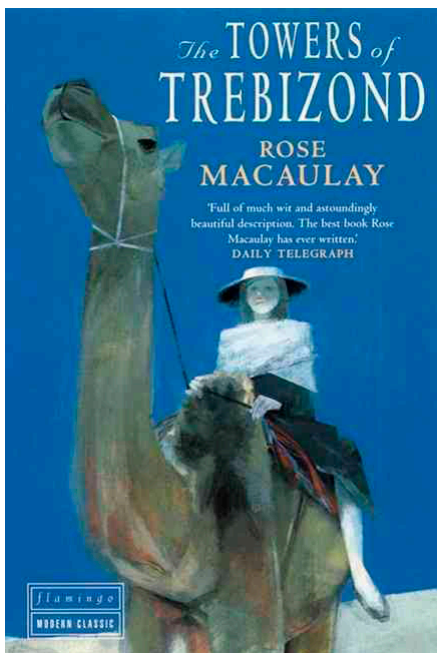
One of the characters is Laurie, who accompanies her Aunt Dot (who famously climbed down from her camel after High Mass) and a very High Anglican priest, Father Chantry Pigg, on a sea voyage through the Black Sea to the Turkish port of Trebizond, now often known as Trabzon. Laurie is in an adulterous relationship which she knows is wrong but cannot leave.

Trebizond actually stands for a vision:

Then, between sleeping and waking, there rose before me a vision of Trebizond: not Trebizond as I had seen it, but the Trebizond of the world's dreams, of my own dreams, shining towers and domes shimmering on a far horizon, yet close at hand, luminously enspelled in the most fantastic unreality, yet the only reality, a walled and gated city, magic and mystical, standing beyond my reach yet I had to be inside, an alien wanderer yet at home, held in the magical enchantment;

and at its heart, at the secret heart of the city and the legend and the glory in which I was caught and held, there was some pattern that I could not unravel, some hard core that I could not make my own, and, seeing the pattern and the hard core enshrined within the walls, I turned back from the city and stood outside it, expelled in mortal grief.


What is this "hard core?" What does it consist of? Aunt Dot supplies an answer when she tells Laurie: "I think my dear, that the Church used once to be an opiate to you, like that Trebizond enchanter's potion; a kind of euphoric drug". The pattern and the hard core is simply the everyday Christian life, in Aunt Dot's words: "do this this, do that, love your friends and like your neighbours".



Laurie is forever outside the city. As she says at the very end of the book, when contemplating Trebizond: *“But at the city’s heart lie the pattern and the hard core, and these I can never make my own: they are too far outside my own range”.*

It is tempting to think that we are not Laurie: that we are inside Trebizond. It is also tempting to think that we are not like her in viewing Christianity as a kind of escapism. But is there at least a touch of Laurie in most of us at times? If so, then reading this once-famous novel may jolt us out of our complacency.

Anne and John Duddington

	<p style="text-align: right;">Advance Notice</p> <h2 style="text-align: center;">London Newman Lecture 2018</h2> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px;"><p>The lecture will be given on May 18th, 2018, by Francis Campbell, Vice-Chancellor of St Mary’s University Twickenham and a former British Ambassador to the Holy See.</p><p>The place will be the Crypt of St Etheldreda’s Church, 14 Ely Place, London EC1N 6RY.</p><p>Details in the January issue of <i>The Newman</i></p></div>
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Concerning Circles

New Members

We welcome Mr Michael Burke, who has recently joined the Association and is attached to the North Merseyside Circle.

Requiescant in Pace

Your prayers are asked for the following members who have died recently:

Mr J. Ramswell (Hertfordshire), Mr H. J. Greenhalf (North Glos.), Sr. C. Hogden (North Glos.)

Subscriptions

There are just a few subscriptions outstanding for this year. The Membership Secretary will shortly send out reminder letters for these.

Bill White

Vacancies

Membership Secretary After sixteen years, the present Membership Secretary would now like to relinquish the position as soon as a successor can be appointed. The duties are not onerous and a full job description is available.

Webmaster We need a new person to keep the information on the web up to date. Full guidance on how to do this will be given.

Any volunteers should contact the Association secretary, Brian Hamill, at secretary@newman.org.uk.

Dr Francis Celoria

Newman member Dr Francis Celoria, from the North Staffordshire Circle, was discovered dead by a neighbour in April and had no family, but members of the Circle organised a funeral for an isolated but loved 90-year-old member. The following text is based on an address given by Fr Adrian MacNamara at the funeral in Stoke-on-Trent on May 2nd.

Some here may be from Keele and know him as a respected lecturer and archaeologist. Some may know him from his time as Director of the Gladstone Pottery Museum. Some will know him from his home life in Weston Coyney and some from his parish life and as a member of the Newman Association.

He was a private person who remained very independent to the end. A Londoner by birth, he served in the Royal Engineers and was in Palestine at the fraught time when the King David Hotel was bombed. From the internet we learn that he gained his PhD from the University of London on the History of Science, and also that he was a field officer for the London Museum.

From the Gladstone Pottery website we learn: "Francis Celoria has worked in North Staffordshire since 1965. Well-known as a ceramic historian and archaeologist Dr Celoria has previously worked in the London Museum, in publishing and as a lecturer in archaeology at Keele University. His special field of study is the history of ceramic technology, a field in which he is considered to be the leading authority".

Whilst Francis undoubtedly liked the solitary life he did enjoy the company of others to share his infectious enthusiasm for learning. He loved to tell stories about folklore and to share Greek legends. His excavations took him to many different archaeological digs, including the Outer Hebrides where he led an expedition to St Kilda in 1966.

Alongside the life of academia was his life of faith. He would regularly attend the Holy Trinity Church in Newcastle-under-Lyme and he had a great devotion to Cardinal Newman. For the Newman Association he gave a number of talks, showing himself as a true polymath. One he gave recently was on comparing the King James Bible and the Jerusalem Bible. He should have delivered one last September on C S Lewis, but it didn't happen.

A prayer by the Blessed John Henry Newman is appropriate: *In His mercy may He give us a safe lodging, and a holy rest and peace at the last.*

Circle Programmes

All Circles

- | | |
|------------|---|
| 7 October | Newman Reading Group: The book is <i>The Fathers of the Church. An Introduction to the First Christian Teachers</i> , 3rd edition, Mike Aquilina |
| 28 October | A day conference: 1517 and all that... The relevance of the Reformation today.
<i>Bishop Martin Lind, Revd Professor John Morrill, Revd Dr Charlotte Methuen, Revd Dr Patricia Took</i> |

SE Circles

9 December Advent Day of Recollection for London and SE Circles *Fr Robin Burgess*

Aberdeen

Contact: Margaret Smith, 01224 314566

Birmingham

Contact: Winifred Flanagan, winifredflanagan@gmail.com

10 September Celebrating our Faith Journeys Over 75 Years *Sr Anna O'Connor CSSP*

2 October Henry Vaughan & the Survival of the Anglican Church *Dr Robert Wilcher*

7 October The Newman Reading Group (see above)

4 December The Diaconate *Deacon Peter Middleton*

Cleveland

Contact: Judith Brown, 01642 814977, browns01@globalnet.co.uk

27 September John Henry Newman: an inspiration for us today? (A 75th Anniversary event) *Fr Fabian Radcliffe*

Coventry

Contact: Colin Roberts cjroberts08@talktalk.net

5 September The Autumn Mass and Party

26 September The Common Good as part of the Catholic Intellectual Heritage

Fr Patrick Riordan

18 October Morning Prayer, Coventry Cathedral

29 October The Annual Student Mass at Warwick University

7 November Contributions that faith groups can make in efforts to prevent violent conflict, particularly in the evolving area of faith-based conflict prevention
Laura Payne

28 November Markets and morals: how a market economy can serve humanity in the second period of globalisation (post 1980) *Prof Philip Booth*

2 December The Advent Mass

Croydon

Contact: Arthur Hughes, arthur.hughes116@gmail.com

20 September Sin and Mercy *Sr. Anne Griffiths*

Ealing

Contact: Kevin Clarke Kevin.Clarke@keme.co.uk

21 September Was the reformation necessary? - the state of the Universal Church in 1517 *Professor John Morill*

Eastbourne & Bexhill

Contact: John Carmody, 01323 726334, johnmh22@outlook.com

25 September The deacon and the servant church *Deacon Simon Kirkdale*

9 October Annual Mass followed by cold buffet and AGM *Father Neil Chatfield*

9 November Martin Luther's anniversary *Dr John De Waal*

Edinburgh

Contact: Lyn Cronin, lyncronin@btinternet.com

26 September Towards a new ecclesial relationship between ordained and lay people in the Roman Catholic Church *Dr Mary Cullen*

24 October Local Varieties of Christian Communities *panel discussion*

21 November Splits, schisms and seceders - the story of Presbyterian Church government in Scotland *Lord James Drummond Young*

5 December Nativity Scenes: tableaux vivants *Professor Stephano Cracolici*

Glasgow

Contact: Arthur McLay, mclay@btinternet.com

Hertfordshire

Contact: Priscilla O'Reilly, 01727 864404, peor738@gmail.com

17 September The Road to Emmaus *Canon Iain Lane*

13 October Circle Mass for Newman's Feast Day. To be followed by lunch.

8 November The Alison Grady Lecture in conjunction with the University of Hertfordshire – Street Pastors *The Ascension Trust*
25 November Musical Evening Pianists: *Claudio Di Meo and Federica Nardacci*

Hull & East Riding Contact: Andrew Carrick, 01482 500181
20 September AGM and Planning meeting

LLanelli Contact: M. Noot, 01554 774309, marianoot@hotmail.co.uk

London Contact: Patricia, 0208 504 2017

Manchester & N. Cheshire Contact: Chris Quirke, 0161 941 1707 dcq@mac.com
17 October "We don't do God" – they shouldn't do politics *Martin Miller*
14 November This is my God *Rabbi Fabian Sborovsky*
12 December Discussion - Our image of God *discussion introduced by Chris Quirke*

North Gloucestershire Contact: Stephanie Jamison, 01242 539810, sjamison@irlen-sw.com

North Merseyside Contact: John Potts, john_potts41@hotmail.com

North Staffordshire Contact: Vincent Owen, 01782 619698

Rainham Contact: Marie Casey, bmcasey@btinternet.com

London & SE Circles

Surrey Hills Contact: Gerald Williams, guillaume30@btinternet.com

Tyneside Contact: Ann Dunn, jadnew@btinternet.com
27 September A Vulnerable God?: Exploring a Theology of Disability Through the Lens of L'Arche Communities and the Life and Writings of Jean Vanier

29 November James 2nd *Fr Chris Hughes*
Prof. John Derry

Wimbledon Contact: Bill Russell, 0208 946 4265, william_russell@talktalk.net
21 September Ructions in Rome: Pope Francis tries to reform the Curia *Michael Walsh*
23 November On Being an Ordinatee Priest *Fr Scott Anderson*

Worcester Contact: Heather Down, 01905 21535, hcdown@gmail.com

Wrexham Contact: Maureen Thomas, maureenthomas@uwclub.net
29 September Unity a Divine Imperative: an Anglican perspective *Prebendary Ian Cook*
10 October Mass celebrated by Bishop Peter to mark the 75th Anniversary of the Newman Association. Followed by Lunch at a local hostelry.

27 October Reading at Mass – Why and What? *David Savage*
24 November HMP Berwyn- An Opportunity? *Fr Paul Glover*
Dec/Jan 2017 Christmas Social

York Contact: Judith Smeaton, 01904 704525, judith.smeaton@btinternet.com

2 September Visit to Stanbrook and Byland Abbeys
16 October "Poland, the test of sincerity": the Newman Association's aid to Polish intellectuals in Britain 1942-1962 *Dr. Jonathan Bush*

20 November What "Catholicism" meant to protestants in the Age of Reformation
Prof. Alec. Ryrrie

11 December Apparitions of Mary Today: Popular and official Theologies in Tension
Dr. Chris Maunder