

Thought for the Week
3rd November 2019
31st Sunday in Ordinary time

I hope that you forgive my using our weekly thought to share with you a most wonderful experience I was lucky enough to have a couple of weeks ago. When I would normally be sat playing the organ in our lovely little church in Sonning Common I was sat amongst tens of thousands of pilgrims in the centre of St Peter's Square witnessing the canonisation of the founder of our school (now) Saint John Henry Newman.

This had great significance to me both personally and professionally. Back in my student days at Birmingham University my student 'job' was singing in the Oratory choir- for me a wonderful insight and introduction to the Oratory family. Later Newman called again as sixteen years ago I moved from my hometown of Leicester to this corner of Oxfordshire to begin teaching at the preparatory part of 'his school' – affectionately known as the 'Little O'.

After many years of teaching about his life and instructing our 'Little Oratorians' in the ways of our founder I was invited, alongside representatives from both our schools, to attend this momentous occasion. As we queued to find our seats amongst the throngs of pilgrims the mood was joyous and expectant, the bringing together of the Oratorian family from around the world. There were representatives from communities in Australia, Canada, America and Europe, who all played a part in the celebrations. Four women were also canonised at the same time - from India, Switzerland, Rome itself and Brazil (the Brazilian contingent certainly brought the carnival atmosphere to the proceedings!) making it a truly International affair.

With the magnificent dome of St. Peter's in the background, Deacon Jack Sullivan deep in animated conversation with Melissa Villalobos (the two recipients of the miracles attributed to Newman) in the queue just next to us we felt truly part of history in the making.

The service itself, bathed in the beautiful Italian autumn sunshine, seemed a far cry from Father Newman's home both in Oxfordshire and the West Midlands and yet when all the differences are forgotten between background, tradition or culture what you are left with is the essence of what brought us all there in the first place; faith and love for one another. Our community back home and our families and friends in the various churches in our diocese may have been a very long way away geographically but were certainly central to our thoughts and prayers.

We live in a sometimes pessimistic and sceptical age and yet to be in such a huge group of people, together in Christ, able to look around and see such happiness and faces filled with joy will be a memory that will stay with me forever. Our school motto is based on Newman's motto and reads 'Cor ad cor loquitur' and I'm sure it gladdens Saint John Henry's heart to know that nearly 130 years after his death hearts still speak to hearts today.

Saint John Henry Newman- Pray for us!

A Parishioner