



Spirituality for Today

Newman and Your New Year Resolutions by Father John Catoir

When you begin to think about your New Year resolutions try to make Jesus Christ the centerpiece. To accomplish this, I'd like to share some thoughts with you, taken from the greatest theologian of the nineteenth century, Cardinal John Henry Newman (Feb. 21, 1801-Aug. 11, 1890.)

Newman was born in England, and became an Episcopal priest 1825. He led the Oxford movement, which emphasized the Church Fathers as an important source of spiritual truth. His sermons were controversial because he preached in favor of Church tradition against the idea that scripture is the sole source of truth and wisdom. Luther proclaimed: "sola scriptura" at the beginning of the Reformation.

In 1841, Newman began doubting the claims of the Anglican Church, and eventually resigned his post at St. Mary's parish in the village of Littlemore, England. On Oct. 9, 1845, he was received into the Roman Catholic Church. This was a courageous move, which brought him a great deal of grief, but he attributed his strength through it all to Jesus, whom he proclaimed as his Lord and Master.

One of Newman's main contributions was in the field of psychological analysis, rather than in theology 'per se'. He saw doctrine as a living thing, and compared it to the idea of human development. It's very important to understand him in the context of his devotion to the historical Jesus. Newman believed that the Incarnation, God becoming man, was the central truth of Christianity, and that Jesus constitutes the source of all spiritual power.

He died 125 years ago, and was beatified by Pope Benedict XVI in 2010. Another miracle is needed before he will be numbered among the canonized saints. Newman wrote the following prayer; which is a beautiful expression of his total dependence on Jesus. Perhaps it will inspire you in making some New Year resolutions, as it did for me.

*Teach me Lord to be sweet and gentle in the events of life,
in disappointments, in the thoughtlessness of others,
in the insincerity of those I trusted,
in the unfaithfulness of those on whom I relied.*

*Let me put myself aside,
to think of the happiness of others,
to hide my little pains and heartaches,
so that I may be the only one to suffer from them.*

*Teach me to profit by the suffering that comes across my path;
let me use it that it may mellow me, not harden and embitter me,
that it may make me patient, not irritable,
that it may make me broad in my forgiveness,
not narrow, haughty or overbearing.*

*May no one be less good for having come within my influence;
no one less pure, less true, less kind, less noble
for having been a fellow traveler in our journey
toward eternal life.*

*As I go my rounds from one distraction to another,
let me whisper, from time to time, a word of love to You.*

*May my life be lived in the supernatural,
full of power for good, and strong in its purpose of sanctity.*

*Dear Jesus, help me to spread your fragrance everywhere.
Flood my soul with your spirit and life.*

*Penetrate and possess my whole being so completely
that my life may be only a radiance of Yours.*

Shine through me and be so in me that every soul

I come in contact with may feel your presence in my soul.

Let them look up and see me no longer, but only Jesus