

Scripture Reflection: October. Doctors of the Church and the Gospel message.

St John Henry Newman 1808-1890



"God has created me (each of us) to do Him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which he has not committed to another" John Henry Newman. **Reflection:** *What is your particular, definite service for which you were created by God to do?*

St. John Henry Newman is shortly to be formally declared a Doctor of the Church, but he is also one of the greatest saints of the English Catholic Church whose writings and work for the poor have spread world-wide. He has had a great influence for the modern day and was called the Father of the Second Vatican Council.

One of his outstanding contributions has been his teaching on the importance of having an *informed* conscience which overrides all laws. This is very much in the Spirit of Jesus, who when asked what was the most important law he said "Love the Lord your God with your heart... and love your neighbour as you love yourself" (Matthew 22:37-40). Sometimes a particular law may conflict with the law of love. John Henry Newman says we must always act from an informed conscience and do what is right according to our *informed* conscience and act in true love. It is love which draws us close to God who is pure love.

During October we celebrate 3 Doctors of the Church. This is someone who is recognised by the Church for their outstanding contribution to theology and doctrine through their holiness, learning and writings. It is someone who has benefited not only their own era but continue to illuminate instruct and inspire the Church today.

October 1 St Therese of Lisieux
October 9 St John Henry Newman
October 15 St Teresa of Avila

Doctors of the church usually highlight a particular message of the teaching of Jesus in the Gospels e.g. St Therese of Lisieux who was a contemplative nun, teaches us the virtue of simplicity and love of God which can be experienced in small everyday activities of life which she called "The Little Way".

The second saint honoured as a Doctor of the Church is an English saint, Cardinal John Henry Newman. He too illustrates through his life and work (particularly his love of the poor of Birmingham,) the power of the gospels to speak to us today. Jesus had great love for everyone including the poor and also used his intellect to give the power of knowledge and reason to help people come to know and feel God's love for them. He was a teacher who reached out to everyone to come to God's love. St. John Henry Newman through *his* writings and work, exemplifies the gospel message of love in the modern age.

Thirdly, St Theresa of Avila who was also a contemplative nun, emphasises the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount "Be holy as your heavenly father is holy" (Mt 5:48) She tells us all to be holy. Holiness is not just the privilege of a few. She says that this path is through prayer: "We must have a determined determination to never give up prayer".