

**KNOCKING AT THE DOOR**  
**(7.2.2019 – J.F.M.H.)**

**"I stand at the door and knock", says the Lord. "If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and sit down to supper with him and he with me." (Rev. 3:14-22)**

In his book *'Apologia pro vita sua'*, Cardinal John Henry Newman gave an account of his own conversion from the Anglican to the Roman Catholic Church. He was an immensely respected University man, tutor of Oriel, at first the Curate of St. Clement's Oxford, later the Vicar of St. Mary's, (the University church), a man of high intelligence, a great thinker and writer. Although that undoubtedly helped many others with whom he had contact to come into the Catholic Church, it did not make his own conversion any less protracted or easier. As an Anglican he was certain that God loved him, and knew he loved God. He believed that the Anglican Church was part of the one, holy catholic, apostolic church of the creeds. However, as he studied church history and the various groups that had split from the ancient church, contrasting them with the marks of the true church (one, holy, catholic and apostolic), he became less certain that the church he was in was the church founded by Christ. He made great efforts via the 'Oxford Movement', the 'Tracts to *The Times*', the 'Via Media', his sermons and writings to reintroduce back into it, the Catholic principles and ideas he thought it had lost since the 'Reformation'. Realising that the bishops did not welcome this and his efforts had failed, he came to suspect that perhaps his church was in schism, and that his own salvation depended on his joining the Church of Rome.

Towards the end of his time as an Anglican there remained his attachment for his congregation, his friends, his students, and the thought that any change on his part would be unsettling for them. He described this time as like a terminal illness with periods of fading and rallying. It was a state that could not last forever in one who so yearned for his God and felt the compelling need to be in His church. In February 1843 he made a formal retraction of all the hard things he had said against the Church of Rome. In September of the same year he resigned the Living of St. Mary's, Littlemore. However his intellectual journey to Rome was not over yet. Towards the end of 1844 he determined to test his doubts by writing a treatise on Doctrinal Development; and then at the end of it, if his convictions in favour of the Roman Church were not weaker, to take the necessary steps for admission into her fold. In October 1845 he was received into the Catholic Church. Afterwards he said that in the Catholic Church ... *"I recognised at once a reality which was quite a new thing with me. Then I was sensible that I was not making for myself a Church by an effort of thought: I needed not to make an act of faith in her; I had not painfully to force myself into a position, but my mind fell back upon itself in relaxation and peace, and I gazed at her almost passively as a great objective fact. I looked at her - at her rites, her ceremonial and her precepts, and I said, 'This is a religion.'" He had arrived home in the Church founded by Christ. Christ had stood at the door and knocked, Newman had heard His voice and opened, and Christ had entered to sit down to supper with him.*

Others have different roads to Rome, in the case of Saul (St. Paul) unlike Newman's it was an almost instantaneous conversion. It is described in Acts Chapter 9. On his way to Damascus breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, He had a blinding vision which made him fall off his horse. He heard a voice saying: - *"Saul, Saul why do you persecute Me? ... I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting, but rise go into the city, and you will be told what you are to do."* His companions, who had not heard the voice but saw he was blind, led him by the hand into the city. Once there he neither ate nor drank for three days. Then Ananias was sent by the Lord to lay hands on him, restore his sight, and baptise him, filling him with the Holy Spirit. This was because he was to be: - *"My chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel, for I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name."* Saul was baptised, his sight restored, and he took food and was strengthened. He became Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, and as he told the Colossians (1:24): - *"in his flesh complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions*

for the sake of his body, that is the church." In other words it led him to become a victim soul of substitution.

Whatever accounts you read of various conversions to the Catholic Church they all have one thing in common. God knocks, they hear His voice, respond, and open up for Him to enter. It is primarily about receptivity to God's love for the convert. St. Thomas Aquinas explains this point very well. *"Our Heavenly Father is at home in our hearts, no stranger in the halls of our mind; to Him we are known, known as completely as even His infinite love could demand. And we are amazed at the generosity of His love that could endure in spite of such knowledge. But, loving us, He would also be known by us, by us who cannot even penetrate to the soul of a man let alone to the depth of divinity. So, as lovers always do, He tells us His secrets, truths that we can have in no other way than by our faith in His divine Lover's words. He can indeed tell us of Himself, for He knows Himself as we can never know ourselves."* (God and His Creatures. Chap. 3 by St. Thomas Aquinas) Thinking about the members of this Tabernacle of St. Francis quite a number are converts. The knocking included the call to take up their cross and follow Him, obeying the precept of St. Paul to the Romans (12:1) *"Offer up your bodies, a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God."*

Our Lord is reported to have told Sister Mary of the Trinity, ***"I desire an army of apostolic souls consecrated to Me by the vow of victim, not to expiate the sins of others by extraordinary trials; no, that is not My desire. I desire a great army of victim souls who will join Me in the Apostolate of My Eucharistic Life, who bind themselves by the vow of victim to choose the methods which I chose Silence, immolation, radiating the triumph of the life of the Spirit. So that My Spirit may spread and so that they may reveal something of My Kingdom, where every soul is called and awaited. "***  
***"Listen to My silence: it is thus that one worthily adores God. Look well at the Host, how frail it is! So is My grace. I am living there, an invisible but real Presence. So does your soul live in your body. I live in a state of obedience, of patience, of dependence, so should all souls live who are vowed to religion, and all victim souls. Tirelessly day and night I intercede before the Father and I attract souls; so should you live in the tabernacle which is your convent."*** Jesus also told her: that these souls carry a special place in His heart. ***And the most favoured souls? Oh, these are many! They are those whom I call to join Me in the Apostolate of My Eucharistic Life. They are the richest in grace because I give them the strength they need to respond to what I ask of them. And it is as if I hide them in the deepest depths of My Heart; their life is all in Me."***