

Sermons of St John Henry Newman: (2) Peace in Believing

This is the second in this series of articles which try to convey the tenor of some Newman sermons (1). As is the case with all these articles, what follows is my summary of his sermon with the above title, knowing that any summary can only be a glimpse into its profundity.

The sermon was delivered in 1839 on Trinity Sunday, the day, Newman said, which is especially sacred to peace. Newman continued saying that Christ left His peace with us when He went away: *“My peace I give unto you....”* (2). In giving us peace, God, being the God of peace, does but give us Himself, a peace that the world cannot give. God’s peace is His presence, His everlasting state. God created the world in 6 days, then God rested. The whole of redemption is a series of great and continued works, but these works all tend to rest and peace, as from the beginning. The Son was, from eternity, the Father’s dearly-beloved and Only-begotten: *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.”* In this unity was the Spirit also, the Spirit of Father and Son, not separate from Them, yet distinct, so that they were Three Persons, One God, from everlasting.

Yet why in His eternal state of rest and perfection did God create external objects to know and love, He who was all-sufficient in Himself? Why should He make man in His own Image and, when man fell, not abandon him, but in due course send His Eternal Son to renew man’s union with God? What exceeding exuberance of goodness this was by the Almighty!

Thus, as God created man, he also redeemed him and, as celebrated at Pentecost, sent the Holy Spirit, the Almighty Comforter, to remain with us. We know that at the end of time will be the return of the everlasting reign of God, the infinite peace and blissful perfection of the Trinity. In scripture the promises of eternity and security go together. Moses said: *“The Eternal God is thy refuge..”* (2); Isaiah prophesied Our Lord as being: *“The Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace..”* and, speaking of what He has done for us, said: *“The work of righteousness shall be peace and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever”* (3).

From Christmastide, through Eastertide and Pentecost we celebrate Christ’s works on earth. From Trinity Sunday onwards, and for the remainder of the ecclesiastical year, we enter into our rest, by entering in with Him who, having wrought and suffered, has opened the kingdom of heaven to all who believe in Him. After restlessness comes rest, peace, joy – our eternal portion, if we be worthy – the sight the Blessed Three, the Holy One, in glory without spot or blemish. Let us then use with thankfulness the sacred mystery of the Trinity, the faith expressed in the Creed, as a means of peace, till we may be blessed by seeing the face of God in heaven. The Blessed Trinity brings peace to those who humbly receive it and who seek, with God’s blessing, to use it rightly in worship, and in unity and in love. And when our hour comes, we shall then be able meekly to surrender our souls in firm faith, in cheerful hope and in calm love, to the Three Persons in One God.

Stephen S.

(1) Realizations: Newman’s own selection of his sermons: Ed. Ferrer Blehl (2009); (2) John 14:27;

(2) Deuteronomy 31:27; (3) Isaiah 9:6; 32:17