

St John Henry Newman

Feast Day – October 9

St John Henry Newman was first an Anglican priest and later a Catholic priest and cardinal. He was born on February 21 1801 in London, England and died on August 11 1890 at the age of 89 in Edgbaston, Birmingham, England.

We celebrate his feast day on [October 9](#) every year in the Catholic Church.

Saint John Henry Newman	
Date of Birth	February 21 1801
Place of Birth	London, England
Profession	Priest and Cardinal
Place of Work	England
Date of Death	August 11 1890
Place of Death	Edgbaston, Birmingham, England
Feast Day	October 9
Beatification	By Pope Benedict XVI on September 19 2010 at Cofton Park, Birmingham, England
Canonisation	By Pope Francis on October 13 2019 at St. Peter's Square, Vatican City

Saint John Henry Newman Life History

St John Henry Newman's father was called John Newman, a banker, and his mother was called Jemima. He was the firstborn in a family of three sons and three daughters. Henry Newman went to Great Ealing School at the age of seven and became a very avid reader of novels and literary works. During his last year in school, at the age of 15, he converted to Evangelical Christianity and became a staunch Calvinist, opposed to Roman Catholicism, and held the position that the Pope was the antichrist. He later went to Trinity College, Oxford.

Saint John Henry Newman was ordained as an Anglican deacon on June 13 1824 at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford and on May 29 1825, he was ordained a priest. Around 1828, Henry Newman was appointed vicar of St Mary's University Church and became the secretary of the Church Missionary Society. One time, he wrote a letter and anonymously circulated it. The letter highlighted how the Anglican clergy can oust Nonconformists from all control of society. As a result of this, Henry Newman was dismissed as the secretary and three months later he left the Bible Society. Around December 1832, Henry Newman went on tour to southern Europe and one of these places he visited was Rome. He said that Rome was the most wonderful place on Earth, but the Roman Catholic Church was polytheistic, degrading, and idolatrous. In December of 1832, Newman joined his friend, the Anglican priest, Hurrell Froude, for a tour of Southern Europe. The pair travelled by ship around the Mediterranean from Gibraltar to the Ionian Islands. While visiting Rome, Newman met Nicholas Wiseman a Catholic priest whose work would influence the Oxford Movement.

In 1833, a noted theologian called John Keble, preached his sermon, which is famously known as “National Apostasy.” This sermon prompted Henry Newman to start the Oxford Movement. He started, together with others, writing the “Tracts for the Times,” which in total were 90 theological publications. These contributors were known as Tractarians. Henry Newman started having some doubts about the teachings by the Anglican Church that personal feelings and faith alone can lead to salvation. Newman felt that the doctrine had introduced individualism to Christianity which would eventually lead to subjectivism. These doubts started drawing Newman towards the Catholic Church and were amplified when he read the writings of Saint Augustine of Hippo and about the Church fathers. Henry Newman and several followers retreated to Littlemore, Oxfordshire to live a monastic life in 1842. Newman named it “the house of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Littlemore”. This is where he published in form of an advertisement in the Oxford Conservative Journal, a formal but anonymous retraction of all the bad things he had said about the Roman Catholic Church. After two years, John Henry Newman was received into the Catholic Church on October 9 1845 by Dominic Barberi, a member of the Congregation of the Passion of Jesus Christ. His conversion came with consequences because he was abandoned by his family and friends, opinion about him in the Oxford Movement was polarised. In October 1846, John Henry Newman went to Rome and was ordained priest by Cardinal Giacomo Filippo Fransoni. **Pope Pius IX** awarded him the degree of Doctor of Divinity. In 1847, Newman returned to England as an Oratorian. He wrote and delivered several public lectures on Protestantism and Catholicism which were compiled into a book. The lectures motivated the Catholics a lot, but also angered Protestants in equal measure.

Pope Pius IX began to restore the Catholic Church in England by creating new Episcopal sees. Cardinal Nicholas Wiseman was appointed as the first Archbishop of Westminster. This triggered again the hostile Anti-Catholicism where Catholic priests were being attacked and the churches vandalised. Saint John Henry Newman encouraged the Catholics to speak up and defend themselves and the Church too. The Bishops of Ireland requested Newman to go to Dublin in 1854, to become the rector of the newly-established Catholic University of Ireland for four years and then retired. During this time he founded the Literary and Historical Society. Saint John Henry Newman started to write letters with justifications and explanations for his theological convictions. He fought a very literary and theological war with his opponents. Saint John Henry Newman believed in a middle way that would respect the rights of revelation as well as the rights of knowledge. This could be seen from his quest to establish a Catholic Universities where it was safe to educate the Catholic youth and where the teachings of the Catholic Church were respected and promoted.

John Henry Newman was made a cardinal on May 12 1879 by Pope Leo XIII even though he had not served as a bishop or in Rome. He reluctantly accepted but under two conditions, that he continues to live in Birmingham and that he is not ordained as a bishop. The pope agreed but assigned Newman to the Deaconry of San Giorgio al Velabro.

Saint John Henry Newman Death

In 1886, Saint John Henry Newman’s health began to deteriorate. He died of pneumonia on August 11 1890 in Birmingham, England, and was buried in the cemetery at Rednal Hill, Birmingham, at the country house of the oratory, alongside Ambrose St John, a fellow convert to Catholicism and an English Oratorian.

Beatification

Pope John Paul II declared John Henry Newman venerable in 1991. On September 19 2010, at Cofton Park, Birmingham, England, Pope Benedict XVI beatified him after a miracle attributed to his intercession was verified. Jack Sullivan, an American deacon from Marshfield in Massachusetts recovered from a spinal cord disorder after asking for Newman’s intercession in 2001.

Canonisation

John Henry Newman was canonized on October 13 2019 in St. Peter’s Square, Vatican City by Pope Francis after a second miracle was attributed to him. In November 2018, a pregnant woman suffering from a grave illness was healed after seeking Saint John Henry Newman’s intercessions.