



CONGREGAZIONE DELLA PASSIONE DI GESÙ CRISTO
P.ZA SS. GIOVANNI E PAOLO, 13
00184 ROMA – ITALIA

Il Superiore Generale

Prot.n.2010.013

BEATIFICATION OF CARDINAL JOHN HENRY NEWMAN

Dear brothers,

During this year 2010, probably in September, the great cardinal, John Henry Newman, will be declared “Blessed”. It is an event in which the entire Church will rejoice, well beyond the confines of our Congregation. Newman, while already a pastor and a well-known Anglican theologian and a professor at Oxford University, entered the Catholic Church in 1845 with the assistance of Blessed Dominic Barberi and, as a Catholic, he continued to be very active in various apostolic endeavors. The depth of his thought was not immediately understood; but he was certain about his faithfulness and conscious of the veracity of what he taught. He himself predicted that he would be appreciated only after his death. In fact, his fame has continued to increase and many find him a source of inspiration.



Our Congregation has had a great role to play in his conversion. Above all, Newman was struck by the prayer of St. Paul of the Cross for England. Humanly, he could not explain this inspiration; rather he believed that it was something supernatural. He knew that St. Paul of the Cross had predicted that his sons would arrive in England. The friendship between George Spencer, who would become Fr. Ignatius of St. Paul, and who was tireless in promoting a crusade of prayer for England, further encouraged Newman toward union with the Church of Rome.



However, it was Blessed Dominic who would overwhelmingly impress Newman by his sanctity, by his conviction that he had received a mission to evangelize England, by his fidelity to this mission, and by the love that he manifested toward the Anglicans. His *Letter to the Professors of Oxford* is a document that is characterized by respect, affection and total dedication even to the extreme of willingness to suffer martyrdom for the sake of England. He was known by Newman and he held him in great esteem.

Dominic, who was probably the first to use the expression “*separated brethren*” to refer to non-Catholic Christians, shared with Newman a great respect toward the other churches, which in turn inspired them to avoid disrespect, animosity, and the defamation which unfortunately was prevalent among the various Christian denominations until the Vatican Council II. In this sense, they are both precursors of the Ecumenical Movement and promoters of ecumenism that was based on harmony, listening and mutual respect. “*Cor ad cor loquitur*” (Heart speaks to heart), was the Episcopal motto of Newman, and Dominic was filled with love toward the separated brothers and sisters.

The General Council desires that on this occasion we recall the great importance of the apostolic activity of Dominic Barberi, of Ignatius Spencer and other Passionists during that period that Newman himself referred to as the “*Second Spring*”, a new springtime in English Christianity. A commission has been formed composed of Frs. Adolfo Lippi (PRAES), Fernando Taccone (PIET), Giuseppe Comparelli (DOL) and Benedict Lodge (IOS), together with the assistance of the Postulator General, Fr. Giovanni Zubi-ani. Their task will be to plan publications, meetings, and opportunities for study. Editorial houses have been contacted concerning the publication of the “*Letter to the Professors of Oxford*” and the other important works of Blessed Dominic. A study seminar is being planned with the involvement of specialists in the area of Newman. Various articles will be published in newspapers and magazines, news bulletins and elsewhere.

This is an auspicious occasion to re-propose the figure of Dominic Barberi, who is of great importance in the history of the Congregation and of the Church itself. His significance as a saint, as an apostle and as a scholar certainly merit that he be appreciated now, even more than ever before.

May St. Paul of the Cross, our Father and Founder, bless us, and may Blessed Dominic pray for us.

Fr. Ottaviano D'Egidio, CP
Superior General

Rome, 2nd February 2010
Feast of the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple