

# Saint John Henry Newman Workshop notes



## INTRODUCTION

Anyone heard of the charity Missio or recognise our Red collection Box?

[Click to reveal Red Box](#)

Missio is Pope Francis' official charity for overseas mission.

- Can anybody explain what mission means?

All words have origins, they were started in a certain time and place. Finding out the origin of a word helps us to understand its meaning better.

Mission comes from the Latin word 'Mittere' which means 'to be sent'.

At the end of Jesus' ministry on earth, he sent his disciples out to share the message of God's love in the world. This was the mission Jesus left them. Today we are sent, as modern-day disciples (the word *disciple* means *student*), to share God's love with all people, everywhere.



## SLIDE TWO

Many of you will be familiar with the idea of mission from the famous prayer by St John Henry Newman (Cardinal Newman was canonised in October 2019).

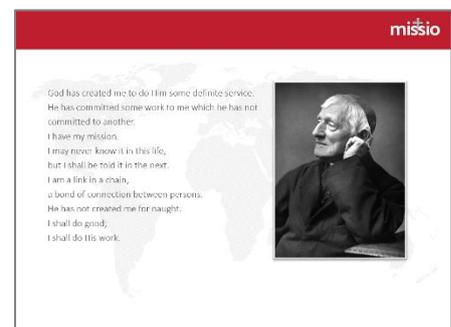
God has created me to do Him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which he has not committed to another. I have my mission. I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next. I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons. He has not created me for naught. I shall do good; I shall do His work.

This prayer inspires values that were important to Saint Newman and which we will be focusing on today. These values are:

**Compassion, forgiveness, truth, service.**

Living out these values enabled Saint Newman and enables us to fulfil the mission Jesus set all his followers – to make the world a better place, by sharing God's love with all.

This of course isn't easy - being compassionate, forgiving, truthful and ready to serve to everyone. That's why we call compassion, forgiveness, truthfulness and service, values.



The origin of the word *value*, is another Latin word *valēre*, which means ‘*be strong*’. Living out these values and living out our mission to share God’s love, requires us to be strong.

Saint Newman was a very strong man, although to look at him you’d think not! Which is a reminder never to judge a person by appearances.

Even though he suffered with periods of ill health throughout his life, St Newman possessed a very strong faith and consequentially, a very strong spirit.

Let’s see how Saint Newman, and the charity Missio can help us to live out the values of compassion, forgiveness, truth and service.

### SLIDE THREE

Saint John Henry Newman lived during the Victorian age, a time of great social inequality in England. But while the situation for the poor was bad here, in Ireland it was much worse.

When John Henry Newman was alive, the potato was the staple food in Ireland for poor people. And so disaster struck when for four years potatoes failed to grow there.

One million Irish people died from starvation or from sickness.

Many had no choice but to travel to new countries to find work, some travelled to England.

Sadly, when the Irish arrived in England, they faced great discrimination. They found it difficult to find work. When they did it was poorly paid. They were hungry, sick, weak and had to live in very poor conditions.

But unlike many who spurned the Irish, John was moved by compassion for them. He saw the Irish migrants as God’s children. He treated them with dignity and welcomed them into the community.

Saint Newman gave witness to the mission Jesus set, to share God’s love with all, even when this demands us to be strong and act differently to others.

#### **Click for question.**

*Ask students to discuss the following in small groups or pairs, before inviting them to share responses.*

- Who are the people discriminated against today?
- How can we show compassion to them and to others in need of support?

*Think of practical ways you could do this in school, in our town, in the wider world.*



## SLIDE FOUR

John Henry Newman understood what it felt like to be discriminated and rejected, because he too had experienced the same. These experiences developed in him the value of forgiveness.

As a boy John been raised as a Protestant, that is a member of the Church of England, and as a young man decided to become a vicar.

After training to be a vicar for several years, he was given a parish in Oxford and taught at the university there. By his twenties John was a well-respected vicar and teacher and had many important and influential friends.

At that time most of England's population was Protestant. There were very few Catholics. This was partly because in earlier centuries it was illegal for Catholics to practise their faith and because Catholics, even in Newman's day, were discriminated against and viewed with suspicion.

So, it came as a surprise and shock when John chose to leave the Church of England and become a Catholic – and then a priest! In time he was made a Cardinal, that is a senior leader in the Church.

Because of his decision to become a Catholic, John lost his job at the university, lost friends, and even family members turned against him. He faced personal attacks, betrayal and his good name was lost.

Fr John had good reason to feel resentful, but instead, he chose to forgive.

### **Click for question.**

Ask students to discuss the following in small groups or pairs, before inviting them to share responses.

- What do you think helped Saint Newman to forgive?  
*E.g. his faith, prayer, the example of Jesus, talking to loyal and supportive friends.*
- What could help us to forgive those who've hurt us, and what could help us ask for forgiveness from others.



## SLIDE FIVE

In time, Fr John regained his reputation. Many wanted to hear what he had to say, they valued his opinion and followed his example. This was largely down to his integrity.

- Can anyone tell us what integrity means?

A person with integrity has strong moral principles, they are honest and truthful.

When Fr John spoke, he spoke from his heart. He was well known for following his conscience – that means saying and doing what is right – even when it made him unpopular.



But he always based his opinions on truth. He didn't pay attention to gossip, or blindly follow everyone else's ideas. He researched his facts, turned to scripture for guidance, and reflected on what he heard and read.

This gave Fr John the confidence to speak truth to power, to call out things that were wrong or unfair.

**Click for question.**

Ask students to discuss the following in small groups or pairs, before inviting them to share responses.

- Can you think of other people who act with integrity? Who are not afraid to speak the truth, even if this means confronting injustice and wrongdoing?

*These can be people, alive or dead, in the public eye or those in the community e.g. Greta Thunberg, Nelson Mandela, Rosa Parks.*

- Who and what could help us to be people who seek the truth and speak the truth?

*E.g. good, supportive friends. Family members. Teachers who help us pursue truth and think critically. Our faith, scripture, prayer.*

**SLIDE SIX**

Throughout his time as a vicar and then a priest, Fr John looked after the poor and the sick. So determined was he to serve those in need that he chose not to live in grand houses in wealthy areas but chose instead to live alongside the poor.

During these years he took bags of coal to poor factory workers who were freezing to death; he regularly made private gifts of five pounds to those in need; he helped the unemployed find decent work, especially women; and during an outbreak of a fatal disease called cholera, he went at his own risk to pray with and help the sick.

Fr John was also a great believer in the importance of education, at a time when most children never went to school and so struggled to read and write. He made great efforts to ensure that everyone was given the opportunity to learn and to think for themselves.

He believed that if people can read, then they can read the Bible and discover more about God.

Fr John chose to serve those who couldn't repay him, other than in their prayers.

**Click for question.**

- How can you be of service to people who need support?

*Think of those around you who struggle and what you could do to help.*

*E.g. help someone in school who is struggling with their studies, help a younger sibling learn to read, support your parents by doing jobs at home, offer to do some gardening for an elderly relative or neighbour, offer to help at school liturgies, volunteer to help a local charity, fundraise for Missio.*



- What might your mission be?

## SLIDE SEVEN

Fr John was able to live out the values of compassion, forgiveness, truthfulness, and serve, because he was inspired and encouraged by someone in particular.

- Who do you think this person was?

*Click to reveal image of Jesus.*



It was Fr John's faith in Jesus, God made man, that enabled him to improve lives of many, by fulfilling his mission to share God's love with all.

Today, around the world, there are thousands of missionaries who are trying to do the same. Missionaries are people who have left their homes and families to bring God's love to people in very poor and remote parts of the world. The charity Missio supports these missionaries through prayer and through financial help.

*Click to reveal image of Sr Eulie.*

This is Sr Eulie. She is part of a missionary order based in Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia. Many people in Cambodia live in poverty, even those who have jobs. The short film we'll watch now explains more about Sr Eulie and the work she does serving the poor.

When you watch the film, I'd like you to imagine that you were not born in England, but in Cambodia, and live in the same situation as some of the people we'll meet on the film.

**Questions following the film:** Access the film *Red Box in Cambodia* via <https://missio.org.uk/films/>

*Ask students to discuss the following in small groups or pairs, before inviting them to share responses.*

- Ask the students which the parts of the film struck them the most and what reaction this caused e.g. sadness, disbelief, anger.

*Sr Eulie was also struck by what she saw in Phnom Penh and moved with compassion, she responded by doing something about it.*

- Thinking of the words in Saint Newman's prayer, what is Sr Eulie's 'definite service'? How has she used her knowledge and skills to help others?

*She established the school and began educating children in the community.*

- Can the students remember what scriptures give Sr Eulie strength for her work?

*From the Gospel of St Luke: 'God sent me to give the Good News to the poor.'*

*From the Gospel of St Matthew: 'Whatsoever you do to the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you do it to me.'*

*Click to reveal these scriptures on screen*

- Do the students think Saint Newman would have been strengthened by this reading too?  
What lines in particular would have inspired him?

- Who does Sr Eluie thank at the end of the film?

*“We are so grateful from the support we get from our brothers and sisters around the world.”*

- Who does she mean by brothers and sisters?

*As the Gospel reading on screen reminds us, Jesus taught us that all people are God’s children. Thus, we are to support one another, as members of God’s worldwide family, as links in a chain, with prayer and practical help.*

## SLIDE EIGHT

The charity Missio encourages us to work as brothers and sisters, fulfilling the mission Jesus left all his followers, to share God’s love through practical help and spiritual care.

We can all support the work of missionaries like Sr Eulie through our prayers, and by fundraising for Missio as a school.

Sr Eulie’s Lindalva centre is just one of hundreds of projects worldwide that support those living in poverty or conflict, whatever their background or belief. On screen are just a few images of people around the world supported by Misio and brave missionaries like Sr Eulie.



Let’s conclude our time today with Saint Newman’s prayer. Thinking about the mission we are called to perform and the links we can forge with others, so as to share God’s love with everyone, everywhere.

God has created me to do Him some definite service.

He has committed some work to me which he has not committed to another.

I have my mission.

I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next.

I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons.

He has not created me for nothing. I shall do good; I shall do His work.

I shall be an angel of peace, a preacher of truth in my own place,  
while not intending it if I do but keep His commandments.

Therefore, I will trust Him, whatever I am, I can never be thrown away. **Amen.**

Saint John Henry Newman – **pray for us**