



**Visit by Pope Benedict XVI
to the United Kingdom,
16 – 19 September**

**A selection of the Pope's words
concerning Vocation**

Dear priests of Scotland, you are called to holiness and to serve God's people by modelling your lives on the mystery of the Lord's cross. Preach the Gospel with a pure heart and a clear conscience. Dedicate yourselves to God alone and you will become shining examples to young men of a holy, simple and joyful life: they, in their turn, will surely wish to join you in your single-minded service of God's people. May the example of Saint John Ogilvie, dedicated, selfless and brave, inspire all of you. Similarly, let me encourage you, the monks, nuns and religious of Scotland to be a light on a hilltop, living an authentic Christian life of prayer and action that witnesses in a luminous way to the power of the Gospel.

Finally, I would like to say a word to you, my dear young Catholics of Scotland. I urge you to lead lives worthy of our Lord (cf. Eph 4:1) and of yourselves. There are many temptations placed before you every day - drugs, money, sex, pornography, alcohol - which the world tells you will bring you happiness, yet these things are destructive and divisive. There is only one thing which lasts: the love of Jesus Christ personally for each one of you. Search for him, know him and love him, and he will set you free from slavery to the glittering but superficial existence frequently proposed by today's society. Put aside what is worthless and learn of your own dignity as children of God. In today's Gospel, Jesus asks us to pray for vocations: I pray that many of you will know and love Jesus Christ and, through that encounter, will dedicate yourselves completely to God, especially those of you who are called to the priesthood and religious life. This is the challenge the Lord gives to you today: the Church now belongs to you!

Bellahouston Park, Scotland, Thursday 16th September 2010

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I hope that among those of you listening to me today there are some of the future saints of the twenty-first century. What God wants most of all for each one of you is that you should become holy. He loves you much more than you could ever begin to imagine, and he wants the very best for you. And by far the best thing for you is to grow in holiness.

Perhaps some of you have never thought about this before. Perhaps some of you think being a saint is not for you. Let me explain what I mean. When we are young, we can usually think of people that we look up to, people we admire, people we want to be like. It could be someone we meet in our daily lives that we hold in great esteem. Or it could be someone famous. We live in a celebrity culture, and young people are often encouraged to model themselves on figures from the world of sport or entertainment. My question for you is this: what are the qualities you see in others that you would most like to have yourselves? What kind of person would you really like to be?

When I invite you to become saints, I am asking you not to be content with second best. I am asking you not to pursue one limited goal and ignore all the others. Having money makes it possible to be generous and to do good in the world, but on its own, it is not enough to make us happy. Being highly skilled in some activity or profession is good, but it will not satisfy us unless we aim for something greater still. It might

make us famous, but it will not make us happy. Happiness is something we all want, but one of the great tragedies in this world is that so many people never find it, because they look for it in the wrong places. The key to it is very simple – true happiness is to be found in God. We need to have the courage to place our deepest hopes in God alone, not in money, in a career, in worldly success, or in our relationships with others, but in God. Only he can satisfy the deepest needs of our hearts.

Not only does God love us with a depth and an intensity that we can scarcely begin to comprehend, but he invites us to respond to that love.

God wants your friendship. And once you enter into friendship with God, everything in your life begins to change. As you come to know him better, you find you want to reflect something of his infinite goodness in your own life. You are attracted to the practice of virtue. ... You begin to feel compassion for people in difficulties and you are eager to do something to help them. You want to come to the aid of the poor and the hungry, you want to comfort the sorrowful, you want to be kind and generous. And once these things begin to matter to you, you are well on the way to becoming saints.

St Mary's, "The Big Assembly", Twickenham, 17th September 2010

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Religion, in other words, is not a problem for legislators to solve, but a vital contributor to the national conversation. In this light, I cannot but voice my concern at the increasing marginalization of religion, particularly of Christianity, that is taking place in some quarters, even in nations which place a great emphasis on tolerance. There are those who would advocate that the voice of religion be silenced, or at least relegated to the purely private sphere. There are those who argue that the public celebration of festivals such as Christmas should be discouraged, in the questionable belief that it might somehow offend those of other religions or none. And there are those who argue – paradoxically with the intention of eliminating discrimination – that Christians in public roles should be required at times to act against their conscience. These are worrying signs of a failure to appreciate not only the rights of believers to freedom of conscience and freedom of religion, but also the legitimate role of religion in the public square. I would invite all of you, therefore, within your respective spheres of influence, to seek ways of promoting and encouraging dialogue between faith and reason at every level of national life.

Westminster City Hall, 17th September 2010

May the profound ideas of this great Englishman [John Henry Newman] continue to inspire all Christ's followers in this land to conform their every thought, word and action to Christ, and to work strenuously to defend those unchanging moral truths which, taken up, illuminated and confirmed by the Gospel, stand at the foundation of a truly humane, just and free society.

How much contemporary society needs this witness! How much we need, in the Church and in society, witnesses of the beauty of holiness, witnesses of the splendour of truth, witnesses of the joy and freedom born of a living relationship with Christ! One of the greatest challenges facing us today is how to speak convincingly of the wisdom and liberating power of God's word to a world which all too often sees the Gospel as a constriction of human freedom, instead of the truth which liberates our minds and enlightens our efforts to live wisely and well, both as individuals and as members of society.

Let us pray, then, that the Catholics of this land will become ever more conscious of their dignity as a priestly people, called to consecrate the world to God through lives of faith and holiness. And may this increase of apostolic zeal be accompanied by an outpouring of prayer for vocations to the ordained priesthood. For the more the lay apostolate grows, the more urgently the need for priests is felt; and the more the laity's own sense of vocation is deepened, the more what is proper to the priest stands out. May many young men in this land find the strength to answer the Master's call to the ministerial priesthood, devoting their lives, their energy and their talents to God, thus building up his people in unity and fidelity to the Gospel, especially through the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice.

Dear friends, in this Cathedral of the Most Precious Blood, I invite you once more to look to Christ, who leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection (cf. *Heb* 12:2). I ask you to unite yourselves ever more fully to the Lord, sharing in his sacrifice on the Cross and offering him that "spiritual worship" (*Rom* 12:1) which embraces every aspect of our lives and finds expression in our efforts to contribute to the coming of his Kingdom. I pray that, in doing so, you may join the ranks of faithful believers throughout the long Christian history of this land in building a society truly worthy of man, worthy of your nation's highest traditions.

Westminster Cathedral, 18th September 2010

I ask each of you, first and foremost, to look into your own heart. Think of all the love that your heart was made to receive, and all the love it is meant to give. After all, we were made for love. This is what the Bible means when it says that we are made in the image and likeness of God: we were made to know the God of love, the God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and to find our supreme fulfilment in that divine love that knows no beginning or end.

We were made to receive love, and we have. Every day we should thank God for the love we have already known, for the love that has made us who we are, the love that has shown us what is truly important in life. We need to thank the Lord for the love we have received from our families, our friends, our teachers, and all those people in our lives who have helped us to realize how precious we are, in their eyes and in the eyes of God.

We were also made to give love, to make love it the inspiration for all we do and the most enduring thing in our lives. At times this seems so natural, especially when we feel the exhilaration of love, when our hearts brim over with generosity, idealism, the desire to help others, to build a better world. But at other times we realize that it is difficult to love; our hearts can easily be hardened by selfishness, envy and pride. Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta, the great Missionary of Charity, reminded us that giving love, pure and generous love, is the fruit of a daily decision. Every day we have to choose to love, and this requires help, the help that comes from Christ, from prayer and from the wisdom found in his word, and from the grace which he bestows on us in the sacraments of his Church.

This is the message I want to share with you today. I ask you to look into your hearts each day to find the source of all true love. Jesus is always there, quietly waiting for us to be still with him and to hear his voice. Deep within your heart, he is calling you to spend time with him in prayer. But this kind of prayer, real prayer, requires discipline; it requires making time for moments of silence every day. Often it means waiting for the Lord to speak. Even amid the “busy-ness” and the stress of our daily lives, we need to make space for silence, because it is in silence that we find God, and in silence that we discover our true self. And in discovering our true self, we discover the particular vocation which God has given us for the building up of his Church and the redemption of our world.

Westminster Cathedral Piazza, words to youth, 18th September 2010

Newman's life also teaches us that passion for the truth, intellectual honesty and genuine conversion are costly. The truth that sets us free cannot be kept to ourselves; it calls for testimony, it begs to be heard, and in the end its convincing power comes from itself and not from the human eloquence or arguments in which it may be couched. Not far from here, at Tyburn, great numbers of our brothers and sisters died for the faith; the witness of their fidelity to the end was ever more powerful than the inspired words that so many of them spoke before surrendering everything to the Lord. In our own time, the price to be paid for fidelity to the Gospel is no longer being hanged, drawn and quartered but it often involves being dismissed out of hand, ridiculed or parodied. And yet, the Church cannot withdraw from the task of proclaiming Christ and his Gospel as saving truth, the source of our ultimate happiness as individuals and as the foundation of a just and humane society.

One of the Cardinal's best-loved meditations includes the words, "God has created me to do him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which he has not committed to another" (*Meditations on Christian Doctrine*). Here we see Newman's fine Christian realism, the point at which faith and life inevitably intersect. Faith is meant to bear fruit in the transformation of our world through the power of the Holy Spirit at work in the lives and activity of believers. No one who looks realistically at our world today could think that Christians can afford to go on with business as usual, ignoring the profound crisis of faith which has overtaken our society, or simply trusting that the patrimony of values handed down by the Christian centuries will continue to inspire and shape the future of our society. We know that in times of crisis and upheaval God has raised up great saints and prophets for the renewal of the Church and Christian society; we trust in his providence and we pray for his continued guidance. But each of us, in accordance with his or her state of life, is called to work for the advancement of God's Kingdom by imbuing temporal life with the values of the Gospel. Each of us has a mission, each of us is called to change the world, to work for a culture of life, a culture forged by love and respect for the dignity of each human person. As our Lord tells us in the Gospel we have just heard, our light must shine in the sight of all, so that, seeing our good works, they may give praise to our heavenly Father (cf. Mt 5:16).

Here I wish to say a special word to the many young people present. Dear young friends: only Jesus knows what "definite service" he has in mind for you. Be open to his voice resounding in the depths of your heart: even now his heart is speaking to your heart. Christ has need of families to remind the world of the dignity of human love and the beauty of family life. He needs men and women who devote their lives to the noble task of education, tending the young and forming them in the ways of the Gospel. He needs those who will consecrate their lives to the pursuit of perfect charity, following him in chastity, poverty and obedience, and serving him in the least of our brothers and sisters. He needs the powerful love of contemplative religious, who sustain the Church's witness and activity through their constant prayer. And he needs priests, good and holy priests, men who are willing to lay down their lives for their sheep. Ask our Lord what he has in mind for you! Ask him for the generosity to say "yes!" Do not be afraid to give yourself totally to Jesus. He will give you the grace you need to fulfil your vocation.

Hyde Park Vigil of Prayer, Saturday 18th September

The warmth and humanity underlying his [Newman's] appreciation of the pastoral ministry is beautifully expressed in another of his famous sermons: "Had Angels been your priests, my brethren, they could not have condoled with you, sympathized with you, have had compassion on you, felt tenderly for you, and made allowances for you, as we can; they could not have been your patterns and guides, and have led you on from your old selves into a new life, as they can who come from the midst of you" ("Men, not Angels: the Priests of the Gospel", *Discourses to Mixed Congregations*, 3). He lived out that profoundly human vision of priestly ministry in his devoted care for the people of Birmingham during the years that he spent at the Oratory he founded, visiting the sick and the poor, comforting the bereaved, caring for those in prison. No wonder that on his death so many thousands of people lined the local streets as his body was taken to its place of burial not half a mile from here. One hundred and twenty years later, great crowds have assembled once again to rejoice in the Church's solemn recognition of the outstanding holiness of this much-loved father of souls.

Beatification of John Henry Newman, Crofton Park, 19th September 2010

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In the course of my visit it has become clear to me how deep a thirst there is among the British people for the Good News of Jesus Christ. You have been chosen by God to offer them the living water of the Gospel, encouraging them to place their hopes, not in the vain enticements of this world, but in the firm assurances of the next. As you proclaim the coming of the Kingdom, with its promise of hope for the poor and the needy, the sick and the elderly, the unborn and the neglected, be sure to present in its fulness the life-giving message of the Gospel, including those elements which call into question the widespread assumptions of today's culture.

... if we are to be effective Christian leaders, we must live lives of the utmost integrity, humility and holiness. As Blessed John Henry Newman once wrote, "O that God would grant the clergy to feel their weakness as sinful men, and the people to sympathize with them and love them and pray for their increase in all good gifts of grace" (*Sermon*, 22 March 1829). I pray that among the graces of this visit will be a renewed dedication on the part of Christian leaders to the prophetic vocation they have received, and a new appreciation on the part of the people for the great gift of the ordained ministry. Prayer for vocations will then arise spontaneously, and we may be confident that the Lord will respond by sending labourers to bring in the plentiful harvest that he has prepared throughout the United Kingdom (cf. Mt 9:37-38).

Words to the Bishops at Oscott Seminary, September 19th 2010