

The New Oxford Movement

Mount Calvary was the first parish in the United States to follow the principles of the Oxford Movement led by Saint John Henry Newman. Now, Mount Calvary is becoming a leader in what we can call a *new* Oxford Movement. This is a movement based on Cardinal Newman's vision for the Church—a movement at the heart of the Catholic Church that God is using for growth and healing among the people of God.

Newman's Oxford Movement first addressed apostasy in the modern world by attempting to revive the spiritual authority of the Church of England. The Anglicanism of his day had become dry and ineffective in a society rife with both poverty and the indifference of the elite. His vision was that if the Church of England can be revived through Catholic doctrine and worship, then we can change the world. There would be no compromise.

Today, the Catholic Church faces new kinds of apostasy that are analogous to what Newman faced in his time. The Christian consensus of the West has disappeared, leaving a spiritual void as we face new kinds of poverty and social division. Our Christian witness is compromised because of divisions among believers. This calls for a new Oxford Movement.

A New Oxford Movement will bring forward the roots of the faith with newness and vitality with an uncompromising commitment to evangelization. The Ordinariate is a gift to this end.

A refreshing perspective on tradition and reform

Now, perhaps more than ever, Catholics are divided in relation to tradition and reform. The Church continues to reel from the aftermath of Vatican II, with headlines about the Pope mandating change while increasing numbers of Catholics attempt to abandon all change whatsoever in the way they promote the Latin Mass. Still others push for a reform of the reform with little or no mediating effect. Suggestions like bringing *ad orientem* worship back to the modern liturgy have become deeply divisive.

Mount Calvary and the Ordinariate can transcend these polemics because the basic form of our worship preceded the Second Vatican Council. Our Divine Worship Missal (2015) harvests the mature fruit of the Council in a manner that respects the tradition and experience of the faithful. The way we do things is accepted on all sides because we have continuity. Our worship is not threatened, so we do not react out of fear.

The original Oxford Movement gives us a model for how to transcend debates about worship and ecclesiology. Saint John Henry Newman faced opposition to his high church beliefs, and, at the same time, similar attacks were directed against Mount Calvary. The Oxford Movement succeeded not by retreating to a spiritual ghetto but by becoming a winsome example of spiritual health. Eventually, the entire Church of England was changed while Newman's influence extended to the Vatican.

Many people consider Saint John Henry Newman to be the “father” of Vatican II, in part because he embraced patristic theology and articulated a development of doctrine. Yet as one who sought to recover what is ancient and eternal, he is a check against the liturgical and doctrinal abuses that followed. Newman challenged a modern world not with accommodation, but by recovering spiritual authority in the Church that no individual or institution can change.

A New Oxford Movement can help the Church recover Newman's vision in a way that does not deny Vatican II but puts it more clearly in the context of the roots of our faith. We can do so by our example. We do not have to take sides. Rather, we can be an alternative and an inspiration—a gift, and a Balm of Gilead in the current debate.

Here at Mount Calvary, we bring forward the roots of the faith with newness and vitality by emphasizing beauty and truth in a way that many Catholics have not experienced before. We offer a refreshing alternative to the status quo while remaining a full participant in the life of the Universal Church.

A New Oxford Movement will bring social justice and doctrinal orthodoxy together

Catholics tend to emphasize social justice or orthodox doctrine—one or the other. Why don't they go together? All Catholics are called to care about both, and many do, but a theological and cultural divide persists within the Church. It is a perplexing phenomenon that has no place in any full expression of the gospel, and it certainly does not represent the fullness of our Church.

But the Oxford Movement brought forward both emphases without compromise. As Professor Hannah Mattis observes:

The immediate practical workings-out of the theology and liturgy of the movement beyond the dreaming spires of Oxford happened in the slums. High-Church liturgy and a commitment to serve the (often Roman Catholic) poor went inextricably together. . . . This was not a vague aspiration toward "justice" broadly defined or vaguely synonymous with a progressive political agenda, but the combating of the very present ills of industrialization: the lack of workers' rights, outbreaks of cholera, lack of education, alongside the pastoral work of marrying, baptizing, burying the dead, serving the poor, and being present.

A theology that emphasized the spiritual authority of the Church brought forth an equal commitment to serve and evangelize, giving moral authority to a movement that would eventually transform the Church of England and change the English-speaking world.

At Mount Calvary, we lift up Christ in the beauty of holiness through reverent worship, and that holiness extends beyond our doors to transform *our* world. This is part of Newman's Oxford Movement DNA in our parish, which has always been on the vanguard of Catholic revival and evangelical service. The social ills are different in our time, but we will combat the present darkness—the addiction and dissipation—that plagues our city and our streets.

A way forward

At Mount Calvary we have *work* to do. God has given us a vision, and he will provide for it if we but stand up and say, "here I am, Lord, send me." O God, Give each of us the grace and the commitment to stand up and follow through in your name. May Christ be seen in us as we lift him up in the beauty of holiness, as we proclaim him in the fullness of Catholic truth, and as we build his Kingdom in this corner of Baltimore. O God, turn us inside out as we give all for the glory of your holy name. Through Christ our Lord, Amen. +

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