

A Note from Father Bill

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Pace e Bene

Blessed be God!

Dear Friends:

It has been a few weeks since I last had the pleasant opportunity to write this essay. The last time this essay was produced it was after the neat celebrations in England and elsewhere for the 60th anniversary of the Queen of England's reign. I did mention at that time how wonderful the order and pomp and circumstance was. The prevailing memory I have is the huge crowd being led into Buckingham Palace by a line of beautiful horses. I felt this was a perfect example of western civilization: order, peaceful enjoyment, discipline and pageantry. Who could do it better than the English! But I also mentioned that the Queen was the head of the Church of England. We remember that Henry VIII separated himself from Rome over his desire to divorce his wife, Catherine of Aragon. Henry was a brilliant man and was given a title in the Roman Church of Defender of the Faith. How ironic that someone so celebrated within the Roman Church should be the one to separate himself from that very church and over the question of divorce. (How modern this issue is also!) I thought about the Anglican Church, with its beautiful churches and wonderful book of prayers. I also thought about the Roman Church and how some beautiful parish churches and monasteries were destroyed by kingly rage. The cathedral of Durham has a museum with a text that says that the wealth of the cathedral was kept intact because of a peaceful transition at the time of Henry VIII, that is, they took an oath of fidelity to Henry and abandoned their original Catholic heritage. Tintern Abbey was devastated and laid waste because they remained faithful to the Pope. With these thoughts, I also thought of two English scholars and men of wisdom who chose to leave the Anglican Church to return to their roots. John Henry Newman (1801-1890) was ordained as an Anglican priest but chose to return to his Catholic roots in 1845 a midlife crisis? He is known for his book *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* A Defense of His Own Life and for the beautiful poem: *Lead Kindly Light*. He was a parish priest and a teacher at Oxford. He started a movement called The Oxford Movement which attempted to delve into Anglican theology as well as its roots, which ultimately brought them to Catholicism. He is also the author of other books but is especially remembered by the Catholic organization in colleges called The Newman Club. It is named after John Henry Newman. He was honored by being named a Cardinal after he turned 80 as a specific honor. This is the highest rank in the Catholic Church outside of the papacy. He is presently Beatified and hope is that he will someday be a saint. The other person I thought of was Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812- 1852). He was a young man when he died but accomplished more than most mere mortals do in a full lifetime. He was an architect and was known for his architectural work on the Palace of Westminster as well as the Westminster Bell Tower- Big Ben. He was a professor of Ecclesiastical Antiquities and was a contemporary of John Henry Newman. They knew each other in Oxford. His specialty was gothic architecture and from his studies of gothic architecture he developed an attraction to the source of gothic architecture the Roman Catholic Church. He became a catholic in 1835. He singlehandedly rewired the British mentality about gothic architecture. He is said to have claimed that gothic architecture was the perfect expression of the Middle Ages and since it was a perfect expression of faith, that faith (the Roman Catholic faith) must be the perfect faith. He worked on beautiful chapels, churches, oratories in England, Ireland and Australia. He was prolific in tiles, wall covering, fabrics, wall paper, church plate, furniture, stained glass and metalwork. His drawings were done swiftly and beautifully. They are a treasure. He died exhausted and some say with a mental disorder. However, there is even today a Pugin Organization attempting to preserve his works. For further information on both of these creative and influential men, see their websites as well as the Catholic Encyclopedia. Especially check out Pugin as he is not well known here but truly a remarkable person.

Best wishes. Fr. Billpyby