



Institut
Catholique
de Rennes



Association
Francophone des
Amis de Newman

24 and 25 April 2025

Friendship according to John Henry Newman

Interdisciplinary university conference

Rennes Catholic Institute

Call for papers

Presentation:

John Henry Newman (1801-1890) was a man of friendships as much as a man of friendship in that he held it in high esteem and took it very seriously.

In the course of his very long life, Newman had the opportunity to nurture loyal and tested friendships; his deep and sincere friendship with Ambrose St. John was the most exemplary model of this. But these friendships were also sometimes abused or even interrupted when Newman chose his freedom of conscience at the cost of the affections he had maintained (Oxford Movement). Because of his radical choice in 1845 - his conversion to Catholicism - which was an uproar and sounded the death knell for several friendships, the subject cannot be treated without mentioning the break-up. Talking about Newman's friendships and his intellectual affinities with other great figures of 19th century England also means following the history of the Oxford Movement and the different faces of English Catholicism, right up to the Catholic Renewal, for Newman's influence obviously continued after his death.

Nevertheless, Newman took care to cultivate his art of friendship by giving it a profound spirituality that reflected, as he believed, the love that Christ shows to his creatures. Very early on, at the age of 15, he experienced this divine love, coming face to face with his Creator. This encounter, which bound him forever to God, not only shaped his thinking, but also contributed to the kind of relationships he developed with others. Friendship, according to Newman, implies a face-to-face relationship with one's neighbour, in the image of Jesus and John, that is to say, a relationship that is authentically true "out of the shadows and images into truth¹".

Friendship according to Newman was also the daily practice of the virtues of the Christian model: charity, fidelity and obedience. Friendship must not be an empty word, drowned in good intentions; it must take shape and exist in reality. So Newman was wary of grand declarations of affection, preferring to express them during visits to his parishioners but also in his correspondence collected in the 32 volumes of *Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman* (more than 20,000 letters). His attachment to those closest to him was expressed in the care he

¹ "Ex umbris et imaginibus in veritatem" : epitaph engraved on J.H. Newman's tombstone.

took of them. Healing the wounds of the soul, dispensing advice to lost spirits, these were the missions to which Newman was attached.

The personal commitment he showed to those he came into contact with in the religious and academic communities can also help us to question his relationship to the individual. The principle of the relationship between self and other seems to be based on a form of otherness, a complementarity that respects the individuality of each person and also manifests itself in the communion of hearts and minds. Being a man of communion and community, Newman was not a man of worldliness though; he saw friendship as the expression of the gift of self to the other. It is still necessary to consider the path that leads to this self-giving. This inner journey seems to be characterised by moments of solitude and silence, interludes necessary to the maintenance of lasting and authentic friendships. A great master of introspection, Newman considered these suspended moments conducive to reflection on what he thought friendship should be and how it should be exercised.

We can therefore ask how the spirit of friendship developed by Newman has been perpetuated over the centuries. How has it been received and passed on in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries? Does this spirit of friendship ultimately form part of something greater and more immutable than our own individualities? These are the questions we must ask ourselves in order to shed a little more light on the personality and thought of John Henry Newman.

Aim of the conference:

By drawing on the friendships maintained by John Henry Newman, this conference aims to shed light on his intimate personality and his relationship with others. Is there a 'Newmanian' *modus operandi* for friendship, i.e. an idiosyncratic turn of mind and being developed by this man of faith? And if so, would this 'Newmanian' model be universal?

Methodology :

Our approach will be essentially empirical. It will be based on reality, i.e. Newman's friendly encounters and the different forms they may have taken, in order to attempt a 'Newmanian' definition of friendship.

The proposed areas for reflection will be as follows:

AXIS 1: Is Newman a 'Victorian' friend?

Suggested themes:

1. The Victorian concept of friendship
2. Newman's 'ladies': female friendships
3. Newman's friendships and mondanities
4. Newman's friendships and the spirit of communion/community (Oxford, Dublin, Birmingham...)
5. Friends of the Oxford Movement: continuity and rupture

AXIS 2: Towards a definition of friendship according to J.H. Newman?

Suggested themes:

1. "Cor ad cor loquitur": the dialogical relationship of friendship
2. The Word as a mode of mediation
3. Encounter with the Other and solitude of the self: complementarity and necessity
4. Friendships/enmities and freedom of conscience: existing to realize oneself
5. Friendship and truth: unveiling the person

AXIS 3: NEWMANIAN LEGACY: recipients and transmitters of the Newmanian spirit

Suggested themes :

1. Entering into friendship: a pedagogical and spiritual practice (testimonials)
2. Intellectual filiation between Newman and authors and thinkers of later centuries
3. The "Newmanian" model of friendship: a universal model?

Bibliography:

Bouyer Louis, *Newman, Sa Vie, Sa Spiritualité*, Paris : Les Editions du Cerf, 1952.

Chadwick Owen, *Newman: A Short Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Gauthier Pierre, « Un témoin de la personne : John Henry Newman (1801-1890) », *Revue des Sciences religieuses*, 1989.

Honoré Jean, *Newman : un homme de Dieu*, Paris : Les Editions du Cerf, 2003.

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Newman J.H., *Apologia Pro Vita Sua ou Histoire de mes opinions religieuses*, Paris : Bloud and Gay, 1939.

Newman J.H., *Letters and Diaries*, 32 vols, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Newman J.H., *Autobiographical Writings*, edited by Henry Tristram, London, New York: Sheed and Ward, 1956.

Newman J.H., *Plain and Parochial Sermons 1834-42*, 8 vols, Longmans: Green & Co.

Newman J.H., *Correspondence of John Henry Newman with John Keble and others 1839-1845*, Longmans and Green, 1917.

Sugg Joyce, *Ever Yours Affectionately, Newman and His Female Circle*, Leominster: Gracewing, 1996.

Trevor Meriol, Newman, *The Pillar of the Cloud*, Macmillan, 1962.

Trevor Meriol, Newman, *Light in Winter*, Macmillan, 1962.

Ward Wilfrid, *The Life of John Henry Cardinal Newman*, 2 vols, London, Longmans, Green & Co, 1912.

Each paper proposal will include a presentation of the paper of approximately 300 words and a CV of the author.

Proposals must be sent electronically no later than **15 November 2024**. The scientific committee will make a selection and the authors of the selected proposals will be informed by **1 December 2024** at the latest.

Selected authors must send the text of their paper to the conference organising committee by **14 March 2025** at the latest. Papers in English will be summarised in French for the public.

Rennes Catholic Institute will cover the accommodation costs of contributors to this conference. The organising committee also asks speakers to contact their research laboratory.

The conference proceedings will be published. The scientific committee may, if necessary, request adjustments to the texts presented at the conference.

Proposals for papers should be sent to the following e-mail address:
colloqueneuman@icrennes.org

General information :

Conference dates: Thursday 24 and Friday 25 April 2025

Venue: Institut Catholique de Rennes, 16 rue Blaise Pascal, Campus de Ker Lann, 35170 BRUZ (France)

Presentation format: 30 minutes per presentation in person (or possibly by videoconference for international guests).

Languages: French and English

Conference websites :

<https://www.icrennes.org>

<https://www.amisdeneuman.fr>

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