

## **Christian Unity Week 2012**

Cardinal Newman wrote: *In a higher world it is otherwise, but here below to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often.*

It seems that some of us find change difficult. We like being stuck in a rut: what you might call the *security* of familiarity. Others seem to need constant new experiences and are easily bored: what you might call the *boredom* of familiarity. Security vs boredom. Both these conditions are examples of greed, even lust: the first lust for routine, the second lust for new sensation. They are addictions, cravings that distract us from living in the present and enjoying every moment.

Somewhere between these two extremes is the place of poise, of balance, of recognizing the forces that surround us and that influence where we are—that is, of living in the moment, out of time—ec-stasy.

Living in the present is where we need to be in our journeys as individuals, and as church members. We are all the products of place, time and circumstance. I am the product of having been born in northern England in 1950 and living in Cambridge, London, Nottingham, Kilmacanogue, Dublin, Derbyshire and now Portlaoise. I am no longer the person I was in, say, 1970—though I carry him around in me. I have been changed. The world in which we live has changed. Because the world changes, we need to change in order to live the message of Jesus in the changing world. I think that what Newman was getting at is not that we have to change to become different, but that because the world is changing, we have to change to be the same. We must ensure that we never prevent growth and development by clinging to the fashions and practices of our upbringing, or indeed of any particular era. We must not hold the grievances of the past to be signposts for the future. We need to read the signs of the here and now in order to plan for a healthy future. We need to be sharp and sassy, rather than dull and dozy.

This is not an easy time to be a Christian. And that is no bad thing. I think that Christianity needs to be brought down a peg or two. For too long it has hidden behind the trappings of power and the privileges of state. It has been tarnished by association with political corruption. That it is being cleansed is a wonderful thing. Yes, the journey is painful and difficult, but in it we need constantly to ask ourselves why we come to church. Is it only as a badge of tribal identity? or is there some other message that draws us? For me, it is this: Jesus said, *I come that all may have life, and have it in abundance*, so to waste our lives squabbling in playground name-calling is truly a sin.

In the Eucharist we bring the past into the present and have the means to project it into a transformed future. We are the body of Christ. Let us honour one another as we make all things new.

From living in the past, deliver us, good Lord.  
From worrying about the future, deliver us, good Lord.  
From desire of being esteemed, deliver us, good Lord.  
From fear of being humiliated, deliver us, good Lord.  
From arrogance of certainty, deliver us, good Lord.

Heavenly Father, you call us as the Body of your Son to continue his work in the world: forgive us the sins which separate us; and give us the courage to overcome our fears and to seek that unity which is your will; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**