

## A Day to Remember – The Solemn Mass for the Beatification of Cardinal John Henry Newman Celebrated by Pope Benedict XVI on Sunday 19 September 2010

Early on Sunday 19 September a little band of parishioners from St Pius X of various ages (over half being young people) gathered to join with hundreds from all over the Diocese to wait at Mother of God Church, Leicester, for coaches which would depart at 3.45 am for Cofton Park, Birmingham. This marked the beginning of what was truly a pilgrim experience, certainly for myself and I think for many others.

The atmosphere from the beginning was warm, welcoming and joyful, with friendly conversations and no one seen as strangers although only just meeting perhaps for the first time.



*Mass begins*

On the coach I found the journey passed as if in a few minutes as I conversed with a fellow pilgrim from St Pius, both of us sharing enthusiastically about our faith. I found great encouragement for persevering in reading the Holy Word of God in the Bible from this conversation as my companion had grown to treasure this himself.

On reaching the coach car park, we disembarked into the still dark early hours (5.30 am) in lightly falling rain which continued for the next 4 hours or so, eventually penetrating the outer layers and, with an edge to the wind on the hillside, many would begin to feel rather chilled at times.



*The Priests process before Mass*

We walked a fair distance along the avenue of houses bordering Cofton Park, until we reached a checkpoint where we had to show our wristbands to be allowed to enter the park. We then walked onto the green and over to another checking point where our bags were checked, again for security purposes.

Afterwards our group from St Pius found a spot on the hillside where we could sit together amongst the thousands of other pilgrims there. I experienced that we found greater fellowship amongst ourselves through sharing, good humour and opportunities for conversations getting to become more acquainted with one another and felt we were also representing our Church and Parish at this important and historic occasion of the Papal Mass to Beatify Cardinal John Henry Newman as we all joined in the prayers together.

The stage on which the altar stood was beautiful with a canopy backdrop of a striking colourful geometric design resembling a modern stained glass window, part of which would fall away to reveal a huge portrait of Newman when Pope Benedict had declared him as Blessed.

Before the Mass there was a time of preparation with meditations on the life and thought of Cardinal Newman with songs sung by the popular young Catholic musicians, Stanley and Boyce, who are local to the Birmingham area. Just before the Pope arrived there had been a long procession of priests who would concelebrate Mass with him. When Pope Benedict arrived, quite fittingly the sun came out brightly and we began to dry out and warm up. Everyone cheered and many waved yellow and white flags. The love for him was palpable and very moving.



*Prayers after the Beatification of Cardinal John Henry Newman during Mass*

During the Mass the singing was wonderful, lead by a huge choir including many school aged children as well as older people. There were representatives of different cultures present and bidding prayers in various languages reflected some of the many cultures which make up our rich British culture today.

I think the highpoint of the day for me was participating in Holy Mass celebrated by the Holy Father and the sense of oneness with him and everyone else, those present and those who remained praying at home, praying as part of the Body of Christ. Among the pearls which I cherish from the day are thoughts from Bl Cardinal Newman - that we each and every one of us have a mission in life given to us by God and that private friendship is merely an introduction to having a universal love for everyone.