
GANZ - #16 - REWILDING THE WORD (NOVEMBER 2025)

John Foley, SJ - "Come Weal, Come Woe" (1996)¹ -

Come rain, come shine, come weal, come woe
Come shepherd's sign in friend or foe
Still yet it shines, this Light of Life
That now we find in weal or woe

A Story

In Rome, on the solemnity feast of All Saints, Pope Leo XIV proclaimed St. John Henry Newman² a *Doctor of the Church*. (Pope Francis had canonized Newman a saint in October 2019.)

The Latin noun *doctor* refers to one who is a teacher, an instructor. In current English, we acknowledge a person who has earned his or her *doctorate*, meaning, literally, a person *capable of teaching* one specific subject, or perhaps only a tiny part of that one subject.

But in the case of our greatest Teachers, we esteem not only his or her ability *to teach us* but also his or her ability *to heal us* as they teach us – that other meaning of “doctor”, as in a medical doctor.

For us to read St. John Henry Newman is, I suggest, to experience an exorcism³ of our ill-thought convictions; a setting free of our suffocated affections; a dramatic expansion of our conscience. To read a great Teacher such as this, or any of the thirty-eight Doctors

¹ One of John Foley's best: <https://music.apple.com/us/album/come-weal-come-woe/466796634?i=466796661>.

² A short but reliable biography of St. John Henry Newman:
<https://www.franciscanmedia.org/saint-of-the-day/saint-john-henry-newman/>.

³ The *Oxford English Dictionary* at “**to exorcise**” - 2. - 1645 - To clear (a person or place) of evil spirits; to purify or set free from malignant influences.

of the Church,⁴ is to gain an insight into the power of Jesus' own voice, both in His prayer and then what comes from that into His mighty word – the greatest of Teachers:

John 11 (NJB):

⁴⁰ Jesus replied, 'Have I not told you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?'* ⁴¹ So they took the stone away. Then Jesus lifted up his eyes and said:

Father, I thank you for hearing my prayer.*

⁴² I myself knew that you hear me always,
but I speak
for the sake of all these who are standing around me,
so that they may believe it was you who sent me.*

⁴³ When he had said this, he cried in a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!'* ⁴⁴ The dead man came out, his feet and hands bound with strips of material, and a cloth over his face. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, let him go free.'* ⁵

O to be such a Teacher as this and to such effect!

A British journalist and novelist remarked this about what happened in Rome on 1 November 2025:

⁴ For a complete list of all of them arranged chronologically:
<https://www.crossroadsinitiative.com/media/articles/doctors-of-the-catholic-church/>.

* 1:14n; 2:11f

* 17:1+ Mt 14:19par.

* 12:30; 1:1a

* 5:27–29; Is 49:9

* 19:40; 20:5–7

⁵ [*The New Jerusalem Bible*](#) (New York; London; Toronto; Sydney; Auckland: Doubleday, 1990), Jn 11:40–44.

Simon Caldwell⁶, *The Catholic Herald*⁷ (3 November 2025) – “On Saturday [1 November 2025, on the Solemnity of All Saints] the teachings of [St. John Henry] Newman (1801-1890) were elevated to the status of universal significance when Pope Leo XIV made Newman a *Doctor of the Church*. There is no higher honour. This status is reserved for those few saints whose teachings are of vast importance to all people of all times and in all places. It is so rare an accolade that Newman is only the 38th Doctor of the Church in history and only the second Englishman after St Bede [the Venerable – 672/3 - 735 CE]⁸ to join their ranks.⁹ It places the former vicar of St Mary the Virgin, Oxford, on a par with such luminaries as Ambrose, Basil, Athanasius, Gregory, Jerome, John of the Cross, Teresa of Ávila and Catherine of Siena. From a Catholic perspective, it makes Newman into England’s diamond, one of the most important Englishmen who have ever lived.”¹⁰

A Text

Newman was a brilliant Latinist too. As one of his regular “devotions”, he translated ancient Latin hymns or medieval chants into elegant¹¹ English verse. We will explore

⁶ **Simon Caldwell** - Concerning this British journalist (*The Daily Mail*) and novelist, Joseph Pearce wrote in his review of Caldwell’s novel: *Lady Mabel’s Gold*: “Caldwell’s ability to suggest the presence of grace in disgraceful situations is a rare gift indeed. He takes us into the dark to lead us to the merest suggestion of the light. Rarely have I found myself so excited by the emergence of a new literary talent.”

⁷ *Wikipedia* notes: “**The Catholic Herald** is a London-based Roman Catholic monthly magazine, founded in 1888 and a sister organization to the non-profit Catholic Herald Institute, based in New York. After 126 years as a weekly newspaper, it became a magazine in 2014.”

⁸ See for a short biography of **St. Bede the Venerable (672/3 – 735 CE)**: <https://www.franciscanmedia.org/saint-of-the-day/saint-bede-the-venerable/>. For example, about Bede: “Bede the Venerable is one of the few saints honored as such even during his lifetime. His writings were filled with such faith and learning that even while he was still alive, a Church council ordered them to be read publicly in the churches.” He is the patron saint of **Scholars**.

⁹ **St. Anselm of Canterbury (1033/4 – 1109 CE)**, considered the greatest mind (theological and philosophical) of western Christianity between St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430 CE) and St. Thomas Aquinas, OP (1225-1274 CE). He is the other English (though born in Italy) Doctor of the Church, who served as Archbishop of Canterbury in England (1093-1109 CE), but he was Italian by birth.

¹⁰ By the way, the United States of America, in its 249 years of existence, has not yet had a Doctor of the Church.

¹¹ The *Oxford English Dictionary* at “**elegant**” – **1. - c1475** – “Characterized by grace or simple beauty, combined with good taste; tastefully ornamental. Also: characterized by refined luxury.” But especially as characterizing Newman’s English style: **2.a. - c1475** – Of language, literature, or literary style: characterized by harmonious simplicity in the choice and arrangement of words; free from awkwardness, coarseness, or clumsiness; graceful, refined.

one of these, a 5th century hymn, sung in monastic choirs throughout Christendom in the season of Advent. Our close reading will be of Newman's translation – his choice of words – not of the Latin original.

“En Clara Vox Redarguit” translated from the Latin¹² by St. John Henry Newman (1801-1890)¹³

Hark, a joyful voice is thrilling (Latin, *redarguit*),
And each dim and winding way
Of the ancient Temple filling;
Dreams, depart! for it is day.

Christ is coming! - from thy bed,
Earth-bound soul, awake and spring, -
With the sun new-risen to shed
Health on human suffering.

Lo! to grant a pardon free,
Comes a willing Lamb from Heaven;
Sad and tearful, hasten we,
One and all, to be forgiven.

Once again He comes in light,
Girding each with fear and woe:
Lord! be Thou our loving Might,
From our guilt and ghostly foe.

To the Father, and the Son,
And the Spirit, who in Heaven
Ever witness, Three and One,
Praise on earth be ever given.

¹² **Source:** Rev. Matthew Britt, O.S.B., *Hymns from the Breviary and Missal* (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne Ltd., 1922), Hymn 37, pp. 99-100.

¹³ Newman, John Henry. *The Essential Cardinal Newman Collection: Prayers, Meditations, and Other Spiritual Writings* (pp. 26-27). Kindle Edition. But also:
https://www.hymnsandcarolsofchristmas.com/Hymns_and_Carols/hark_a_joyful_voice_is_thrilling.htm.

A Close Reading

Hark, a joyful voice is thrilling –

We know that we are in eternity (i.e., outside Time) when this famous “voice in the wilderness” of John the Baptist, opening access in human hearts to the coming of Christ, is announcing, in the opening stanza, the Christ who has not yet been born!

And we see Newman’s devotional involvement in the words of this hymn when he translates the Latin verb *redarguo* as “thrilling”, as in a voice that “thrills” us who hear it. What *redarguo* means literally is “to refute, to contradict, to prove someone wrong.” How could Newman interpret the penetrating, perhaps sometimes frightening, contradicting frankness of John the Baptist’s words as *thrilling*? We might think, rather, that the Baptist’s words are unsettling or irritating or impolite. Why thrilling?

The *Oxford English Dictionary* at “to thrill” – **I.1.a.** - c1330–1661 - *transitive*. To pierce, bore, penetrate. **I.1.b.** - 1470–87 - † To break or penetrate through (an enemy's line). **II.5.b.** - 1599 - *intransitive*. To produce a thrill, as an emotion, or anything causing emotion; to pass with a thrill *through*.

Because when we are addressed by such a voice, a voice bright with Holy Spirit, it “finds” us. But though this “finding” can startle us, even sting us, that voice comes into us and gives us, at the same time, the capacity *to let it enter*. The truth of the matter is that all of us **want to be found, to be found out**. But we need for the one who finds us to be one who loves us. And when we are “found”, it is thrilling. We exclaim, “Finally! I can come home.” This “thrill” is what the author of the Letter to the Hebrews is trying to get us to understand when he writes:

Hebrews 4 (NJB): ¹² The word of God is something alive and active: it cuts more incisively than any two-edged sword: it can seek out the place where soul is divided from spirit, or joints from marrow; it can pass judgement on secret emotions and thoughts.* ¹³ No created thing is hidden from him; everything is uncovered and stretched fully open to the eyes of the one to whom we must give account of ourselves.* ¹⁴

* 1 P 1:23

* Is 49:2; Ep 6:17; Rv 1:16; Jn 12:48; Rm 1:9e; 1 Co 15:44w; Jb 34:21–22; Ps 33:13–15+ Ws 1:6

¹⁴ [*The New Jerusalem Bible*](#) (New York; London; Toronto; Sydney; Auckland: Doubleday, 1990), Heb 4:12–13.

John the Baptist's voice is penetrating, discerning, accurate, unambiguous, but also unmistakably *joyful*. Upon hearing that voice, we *want* to repent. I recall how St. Ignatius of Loyola describes a grace that he wants us to experience upon "being found out" by an "amazing grace":

St. Ignatius of Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises* {60} - 1 The Fifth Point. This is *an exclamation of wonder and surging emotion*, uttered as I reflect on all creatures and wonder how they have allowed me to live and have preserved me in life. 2 The angels: How is it that, although they are the swords of God's justice, they have borne with me, protected me, and prayed for me? 3 The saints: How is it that they have interceded and prayed for me? Likewise, the heavens, the sun, the moon, the stars, and the elements; the fruits, birds, fishes, and animals. 4 And the earth: How is it that it has not opened up and swallowed me, creating new hells for me to suffer in forever?

Notice that "exclamation of wonder and surging emotion"? This is what Newman means by "thrilling." And this is also why one of the weeks of Advent typically concentrates on the work of John the Baptist.

And notice also how the rhyming of "thrilling" with "filling" instructs us that this thrilling voice fills, echoes throughout, the "ancient Temple". What Newman means is that this compelling "voice" could exist only because of the ancient Religion, while at the same time it radically challenges Religion's staleness, its rote-ness of rituals, its deflated fierceness, its dreary conventionalism, demanding that it become alive again, and joyfully.

Once again, He comes in light, Girding each with fear and woe –

Those adverbs "once again" now transport us from our anticipation of that first Christmas to the reality of the *second* Coming of Christ at the end of Time. It will be *magnificent* (as in "making greater" even the most glorious thing that we have ever witnessed in this world) – "He comes in light" –

Revelation 21 (NJB): ¹ Then I saw *a new heaven and a new earth*; the first heaven and the first earth had disappeared now, and there was no longer any sea.* ² I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride dressed for her husband. ³ Then I heard a loud voice call from the throne, 'Look, here God lives among human beings. He will make *his home among them; they will be his people*, and he will be their God, *God-with-them*.*

* Is 65:17; Rm 8:19–23; 2 P 3:13 • Jb 7:12f

* 19:7–8; 7:15–17 • Ezk 37:27

⁴ *He will wipe away all tears from their eyes; there will be no more death, and no more mourning or sadness or pain. The world of the past has gone.*^{* 15}

Notice how the rhyming of “in light” and “loving Might” are paired, the one explaining the nature of the other. However, the result in us, at least at first, is that we feel bound in both “fear and woe.”

The *Oxford English Dictionary* at “**woe**” – *As an interjection* - **1. - Old English** – Used to express grief, pity, regret, disappointment, or concern. *As a noun* – **4. - a1250** – Sorrow, grief, anguish (as a state of mind or feeling). As an adjective – **2.a. - 1572** – Of an event, situation, etc.: fraught with or causing sorrow, distress, or misfortune.

We are reminded of what Isaiah felt that day:

Isaiah 6 (NJB):

⁴ The doorposts shook at the sound of their shouting, and the Temple was full of smoke. ⁵ Then I said:

‘Woe is me! I am lost,
for I am a man of unclean lips
and I live among a people of unclean lips,
and my eyes have seen the King, Yahweh Sabaoth.’^{*}

⁶ Then one of the seraphs¹⁶ flew to me, holding in its hand a live coal which it had taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. ⁷ With this it touched my mouth and said:

‘Look, this has touched your lips,ⁱ
your guilt has been removed
and your sin forgiven.’^{*}

^{*} Is 7:14f • Is 25:8 • Is 35:10

¹⁵ [*The New Jerusalem Bible*](#) (New York; London; Toronto; Sydney; Auckland: Doubleday, 1990), Re 21:1–4.

^{*} Ex 19:16g; ►40:34–35 ►1 K 8:10–12 ►7Jn 12:41 ►7Rv 15:8; Ex 33:20i

¹⁶ “**seraph**” – the plural is *Seraphim*. “The presumed derivation of the word from a Hebrew root meaning ‘to burn’ (see above) led to the view that **the seraphim are specially distinguished by fervour of love** (while the cherubim excel in knowledge), and to the symbolic use of red as the colour appropriate to the seraphim in artistic representations.” Of the traditional “nine ranks” of Angels, the Seraphim serve at the highest rank, the Angels closest to the Triune God.

^{*} Jr 1:9; Dn 10:16

⁸ I then heard the voice of the Lord saying:

‘Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?’

⁹ And I said, ‘Here am I, send me.’ ¹⁷

An Action

In his homily preached on 1 November 2025, Pope Leo XIV, he said (in part):

The task of education is precisely **to offer this “Kindly Light”** [a reference to a famous poem/prayer of St. John Henry Newman] **to those who might otherwise remain imprisoned by the particularly insidious shadows of pessimism and fear. For this reason, I would like to say to you: let us disarm the false reasons for resignation and powerlessness and let us share the great reasons for hope in today’s world.** Let us reflect upon and point out to others those “constellations” that transmit light and guidance at this present time, which is darkened by so much injustice and uncertainty. I thus encourage you to ensure that schools, universities and every educational context, even those that are informal or street-based, are **always gateways to a civilization of dialogue and peace.**

As we approach Advent, but first all of us passing through American Thanksgiving Week, commit to refusing to stoke fear and pessimism in conversations. Instead, be a “kindly light” that helps people see the Blessing more clearly than our contemporary preference for acknowledging the Curse.

¹⁷ [*The New Jerusalem Bible*](#) (New York; London; Toronto; Sydney; Auckland: Doubleday, 1990), Is 6:4–9.