



# The Holy See

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BENEDICT XVI

**GENERAL AUDIENCE**

*Saint Peter's Square*

*Wednesday, 22 September 2010*

*Apostolic Journey to the United Kingdom*

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

Today I would like to say more about my Apostolic Journey to the United Kingdom which God granted me to make a few days ago. It was an official Visit and at the same time a Pilgrimage to the heart of the past and of the present of a people rich in culture and faith, as is the British people. It was an historic event that marked a new and important phase in the long and complex relations between those peoples and the Holy See. The main purpose of the Visit was to proclaim blessed Cardinal John Henry Newman, one of the greatest Englishmen in recent times, an outstanding theologian and man of the Church. In fact, the beatification ceremony was the culmination of the Apostolic Journey, whose theme was inspired by the motto Blessed Newman chose on being created a Cardinal: "Heart speaks unto heart". And in the four busy and very beautiful days I spent in this noble land I had the great joy of speaking to the hearts of the inhabitants of the United Kingdom and they spoke to mine, especially with their presence and with the testimony of their faith. Indeed I could see how strong the Christian heritage still is and how active it still is in social life at every level. British hearts and British lives are open to the reality of God and there are numerous expressions of religious feeling that my Visit has made even more visible.

From the very first day of my stay in the United Kingdom and throughout my Visit I met with a

warm welcome from the Authorities, from the representatives of the various social realities and of the different religious confessions and, especially, from the common people. I am thinking in particular of the faithful of the Catholic Community and their Pastors who, in spite of being a minority in the country, are widely appreciated, esteemed and committed to the joyous proclamation of Jesus Christ, making the Lord shine out and making themselves his voice, especially among the lowliest. To all I renew the expression of my deep gratitude for the enthusiasm shown and for the praiseworthy diligence with which they strove for the success of my Visit, whose memory I shall always cherish in my heart.

The first Meeting was in Edinburgh with Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, who, together with her Consort, the Duke of Edinburgh, welcomed me with great courtesy on behalf of the entire British people. It was a very cordial meeting, characterized by the sharing of several profound concerns for the well-being of the world's peoples and for the role of the Christian values in society. In Scotland's historic capital I was able to admire the beauties of art, the testimony of a rich tradition with profound Christian roots. I referred to this in my Discourse to Her Majesty and to the Authorities present, recalling that the Christian message has become an integral part of the language, thought and culture of the peoples of those Islands. I also spoke of the role that Great Britain has had and has on the international scene, mentioning the importance of the steps taken for a just and lasting peace in Northern Ireland.

The joyful, festive atmosphere created by the young people and children gladdened the visit to Edinburgh. Then, having gone on to Glasgow, a city embellished with enchanting parks, I presided at the first Holy Mass of the Journey in Bellahouston Park. It was an immensely spiritual moment, very important for the Catholics of the country, given also that the Feast of St Ninian, the first evangelizer of Scotland, was celebrated on that day. At this liturgical assembly, gathered in attentive and participatory prayer, whose solemnity was deepened by the traditional melodies and involving hymns, I mentioned the importance of the evangelization of culture, especially in our epoch in which a pervasive relativism threatens to cloud the unchangeable truth about the nature of the human being.

On the second day, I began my Visit in London. Here I met first the world of Catholic education which plays an important role in the country's educational system. In an authentic family atmosphere I spoke to the teachers, recalling the importance of faith in the formation of mature and responsible citizens. To the numerous adolescents and young people, who greeted me with pleasure and enthusiasm, I proposed that they should not follow limited objectives contenting themselves with accommodating decisions but to aim for something higher, in other words the quest for true happiness which is found only in God. At the next Meeting this time with the leaders of other religions most widely represented in the United Kingdom, I recalled the inevitable need for sincere dialogue which, if it is to be totally fruitful, requires respect for the principle of reciprocity. At the same time, I highlighted the search for the sacred as the ground common to all religions on which to consolidate friendship, trust and collaboration.

The fraternal Visit to the Archbishop of Canterbury afforded the opportunity to reaffirm the common commitment to bear witness to the Christian message that unites Catholics and Anglicans. One of the most significant moments of the Apostolic Journey followed the meeting in the Great Hall of the British Parliament with institutional, political, diplomatic, academic and religious figures, and exponents of the worlds of culture and business. In that most prestigious place, I emphasized that legislators, must never consider religion be a problem to be solved, but on the contrary a factor that makes a vital contribution to the progress of history and to the public debate of the nation, in particular by recalling the essential importance of an ethical foundation for taking decisions in the various social milieus.

In that same solemn atmosphere, I then went to Westminster Abbey. It was the first time that a Successor of Peter has entered that place of worship which symbolizes the very ancient Christian roots of the country. The recitation of Evening Prayer, together with the different Christian communities of the United Kingdom, was an important moment in relations between the Catholic Community and the Anglican Communion. When we venerated St Edward the Confessor together at his tomb, while the choir sang "*Congregavit nos in unum Christi amor*", we all praised God who is leading us on the path to full unity.

On Saturday morning, my Appointment with the Prime Minister introduced the series of my Meetings with the most important spokespeople of the British political world. It was followed by the Eucharistic celebration in Westminster Cathedral, dedicated to the Most Precious Blood of Our Lord. This was an extraordinary moment of faith and prayer that also highlighted the rich and precious tradition of "Roman" and "English" liturgical music in which the various ecclesial dignitaries took part, spiritually united to the multitude of believers in the course of the long Christian history of this land. I felt great joy in meeting a large number of young people who were taking part in Holy Mass outside the Cathedral. Their presence charged with enthusiasm and attentive expectation, showed at once their desire to be the protagonists of a new season of courageous witness, effective solidarity and generous commitment to the service of the Gospel.

At the Apostolic Nunciature I met with several of the victims of abuse by members of the clergy and by religious. It was an intensely emotional and also prayerful moment. Shortly afterwards, I also met with a group of professionals and volunteers who are responsible for the protection of children and young people in ecclesial contexts, a particularly important aspect that is part of the Church's pastoral commitment. I thanked them and encouraged them to continue their work that fits into the Church's long tradition of attention to respect, education and the formation of the new generations. Still in London, I then visited the home for the elderly run by the Little Sisters of the Poor with the invaluable contribution of many nurses and volunteers. This structure that takes in elderly people is a sign of the great esteem the Church has always had for the elderly, as well as an expression of British Catholics' commitment to respect any life without any reservation on account of age or condition.

As I was saying, the crowning point of my Visit to the United Kingdom was the [Beatification of Cardinal John Henry Newman](#), an outstanding son of England. It was preceded and prepared for by a special Prayer Vigil that took place on Saturday evening in Hyde Park, London, in an atmosphere of profound recollection. To the multitudes of the faithful, especially young people, I chose to present anew the luminous figure of Cardinal Newman, an intellectual and a believer, whose basic spiritual message testifies that the path to knowledge is not withdrawal into "self", but openness, conversion and obedience to the One who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. The rite of Beatification took place in Birmingham at the [solemn Eucharistic celebration](#) on Sunday, in the presence of a great throng from the whole of Great Britain and Ireland and from many other countries. This moving event brought even more into the limelight a scholar of great stature, an outstanding writer and poet, a wise man of God, whose thought illumined many consciences and still today exerts an extraordinary fascination. May believers and ecclesial communities in the United Kingdom in particular draw inspiration from him so that, in our day too, this noble land may continue to produce abundant fruits of gospel life.

The [Meetings with the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales and with that of Scotland](#) ended a day of great festivity and intense communion of hearts for the Catholic community in Great Britain.

Dear brothers and sisters, on this Visit to the United Kingdom, as always, I wanted first and foremost to support the Catholic Community, encouraging it to work strenuously to defend the immutable moral truths which, taken up, illuminated and strengthened by the Gospel are at the root of a truly human, just and free society. I also wished to speak to the hearts of all the inhabitants of the United Kingdom, excluding no one, of the true reality of man, of his deepest needs, of his ultimate destiny. In addressing the citizens of that country, a crossroads of culture and of the world economy, I kept in mind the entire West, conversing with the intellect of this civilization and communicating the unfading newness of the Gospel in which it is steeped. This Apostolic Journey strengthened a deep conviction within me: the ancient nations of Europe have a *Christian soul*, which is one with the "genius" and history of the respective peoples, and the Church never stops working to keep this spiritual and cultural tradition ceaselessly alive.

Blessed John Henry Newman, whose figure and writings still preserve a remarkable timeliness, deserves to be known by all. He supports the resolutions and efforts of Christians to spread everywhere they go the fragrance of Christ, so that their whole life and being may be only his radiance, as he wrote wisely in his booklet *Radiating Christ*.

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### **Appeal for ecumenical dialogue**

This week the Plenary Meeting of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church (as a whole) is taking place in Vienna. The

theme of the current phase of study is the role of the Bishop of Rome in the communion of the universal Church, with particular reference to the first millennium of Christian history. Obedience to the will of the Lord Jesus and consideration of the great challenges that confront Christianity today oblige us to work seriously for the cause of the re-establishment of full communion between the Churches. I urge everyone to pray intensely for the work of the Commission and for the continuous development and consolidation of peace and harmony between the baptized, so that we may present to the world an ever more authentic evangelical witness.

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### To Special Groups

With special affection I now extend my thoughts to the *young people* the *sick* and the *newlyweds*. May friendship with Jesus, dear *young people* be a source of joy for you and a reason to take demanding decisions. May this friendship, dear *sick people*, bring you comfort in difficult moments and imbue your body and spirit with serenity. Dear *newlyweds*, in the light of friendship with Jesus, strive to measure up to your vocation in reciprocal love, in openness to life and in Christian witness.

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