

Impressions and experiences

By Deacon Jack Sullivan

My wife Carol and myself are very grateful to Archbishop Vincent Nichols for his hosting our trip to this beautiful country, with its resourceful and thoughtful people. We also wish to thank Peter Jennings and his daughter Sarah for making all the arrangements, and Fr Paul Chavasse (Provost of the Birmingham Oratory and Actor of the Newman Cause), our host while we were in Birmingham.

Captivated by Cardinal Newman's life and works, my understanding of this holy priest took on a greater dimension while visiting the Oratories he founded in Birmingham and London. Visiting his private chapel, study and library in Birmingham afforded me a clearer dimension of Cardinal Newman, the man.

Praying in his chapel at Littlemore brought me closer to my faithful friend and dearest intercessor. Sitting in the Common Rooms at Trinity College and Oriel College in Oxford, where Newman debated and exchanged insights with his closest friends, clarified my image of a man who sought the kindly light of truth regardless of the personal cost to himself.

Preaching where he preached at the various Oratories and visiting St Mary's Church in Oxford enhanced the quality of my own vocation, the reality of God's love best reflected "in the ordinary matters of the day."

I knew something of Cardinal Newman the writer, but gained many meaningful insights regarding Newman, the holy priest and servant of God.

Finally, I was most impressed with our meeting with Cherie Blair, the Provost of Oriel College, Sir Derek Morris and the President of Trinity College, Sir Ivor Roberts and members of staff; as by the bishops we met, as well as the priests of the Birmingham, London and Oxford Oratories.

I thank Archbishop Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster, for the many kindnesses he extended to Carol and me.

Our special trip ended with a wonderful performance of Cardinal Newman's *The Dream of Gerontius* at The Oratory School which he founded 150 years ago.

This is a trip that we will always remember.

November 2009