early two years ago, in October 2019, John Henry Newman was added to the Church’s canon of officially recognized saints. To celebrate the new saint and his great impact, Father Kevin Chalifoux and I hosted the first Newman Night on the very day of his canonization. About a hundred people showed up to pray evening prayer, have dinner and listen to talks highlighting the life and work of the saint. This year the second Newman Night celebration will take place on October 10 at Holy Family Parish hall in Essex Junction.

Who is St. John Henry Newman?

Like many saints, his life’s road included tumultuous turns. He rose to prominence as an Anglican in the Oxford movement in England, well-known for his preaching and writing. Compelled by conviction, however, he gave up his role to investigate questions concerning Anglicanism, which eventually led to his conversation to the Catholic Church. He was ordained a priest and became a member of the Oratorians of St. Philip Neri. By the time of his death in 1890, he had been named a cardinal. Such are the basic facts of his life. But the real question is whether his character, his preaching, his impact can be sketched.

Great men and women cannot be described without distortion. A sketch conceals as much as it reveals. John Henry Newman – convert, cardinal, priest, Oratorian, scholar, poet — is no exception. And the great temptation, as C.S. Lewis says, is to settle for a bog of superlatives. You’ve gushed, but your subject remains as nondescript as before.

I’ll try to avoid the swamp by triangulating Newman with the characteristics of other prominent figures. Newman wielded a laser-like literary accuracy akin to G.K. Chesterton’s finesse, (though not quite as quotable, because Newman is not infatuated with paradox or alliteration.) Newman’s tone is also different from Chesterton’s: much less playful, more serious and solemn. Jordan Peterson’s tone reminds me of Newman’s: insistent, grave, sincere, measured. His theological approach is patristic and biblical, not Thomistic. Think Benedict XVI or C.S. Lewis, as opposed to the distinctions and syllogisms of a scholastic. His depth matches St. Augustine’s, his effortless clarity equals Bishop Robert Barron’s, even amid Newman’s paragraph-length sentences (like reading Latin in English, one person said).

His sermons have two features for which no comparison suggests itself. The first is that they raise immense challenges of holiness, yet without being discouraging the reader. They warn and critique, yet somehow exhalate. Second, they are intellectually rigorous without being either intellectually laborious or emotionally dry. They drive through the head yet hammer on the heart.

Well, there’s the sketch; I hope it piques your interest enough to join us for a celebration in his honor at Newman Night 2021 in Holy Family Parish hall in Essex Junction. The evening will include solemn evening prayer, dinner and two presentations on the thought and impact of St. John Henry Newman. The cost is $10 per person, $15 for two and $5 for each additional guest. To RVSP or inquire, email vermontnewman@gmail.com.

— Father Matthew Rensch is the Administrator of the Catholic Communities of Waterbury, Waitsfield and Moretown
Upcoming Events

09|11 SATURDAY
Chicken Pie Supper
Our Lady of the Angels, Randolph • 5 - 6 pm
Drive-thru Take-Outs. Indoor seating at 5pm.
Reservations recommended. (802) 728-5251, $12, Kids $5.

09|19 SUNDAY
Outdoor Mass for Catechetical Sunday
Holy Family Church, Essex Jct. • 11am
Blessings on all as we begin a new religious education year.

09|15, 21, 10|13, 27, 11|10 WED
Living Joy Discussion Group
Online • 7 pm
Join us for Chris Stefanick’s Living Joy: 9 Rules to Help You Rediscover and Life Joy Every Day. This virtual event explores one rule every other week. Offered by members of the Diocesan Evangelization Committee. Contact ptumley@aol.com for more information.

09|18, 10|09 SATURDAYS
National Day of Remembrance for Aborted Babies
All Saints Cemetery, Richford • 9 am
Join us for a prayer service with scripture reading, hymns, and recitation of the Holy Rosary.

09|25 SATURDAY
Vermont Catholic Daughters of America Retreat
Our Lady of Angels, Randolph
9:30 am - 1:30 pm
Deacon Gesualdo Schneider will lead us in a retreat as we spend a day with “Jesus’ Family.” This event is free, will include lunch, and is open to all women aged 18 and over. There will be an opportunity for a goodwill donation to support the K of C’s purchase of an ultrasound machine for a mobile clinic in the Burlington area. Registration is required. Registration is open to all women 18 years of age and older. Please email: Deb, dgbrown264@gmail.com by Sept. 17.

10|02 SATURDAY
A Life Symposium
Doubletree, Burlington • 8 am - 3 pm
This day-long conference focuses on issues related to Proposal 5, a dangerous amendment aimed at enshrining the right to abortion in Vermont’s Constitution. MORE INFO: vrlc.net.

10|09 SATURDAY
Ordination Mass
Cathedral of St. Joseph, Burlington • 10 am
The Diocese of Burlington joyfully celebrates the ordination of two men to the diaconate. Mr. Michael Knowles will be ordained to the permanent diaconate and Mr. Brandon Schneider will be ordained to the transitional diaconate. This event is open for all who wish to attend. For those unable to be with us physically for the liturgy, the Mass will be live-streamed on the Diocesan website. A light reception will follow in the parish hall.

10|10 SUNDAY
Evening Honoring the Life and Teachings of St. John Henry Newman
Holy Family Church Hall, Essex Junction • 4 - 8 pm
Fr. Kevin Chalifoux and Fr. Matthew Rensch cordially invite you to celebrate the life and teachings of Saint John Henry Cardinal Newman. The evening will include Solemn Vespers, dinner and dessert, and two presentations on the life and thought of Cardinal Newman. $10 per person/$15 for two/$5 for each additional guest.
RSVP by October 3 to: VermontNewman@gmail.com

10|10 SUNDAY
Annual Women’s Retreat
St. Catherine of Sienna, Shelburne
8 am - 3:30 pm
Save the date! More information will be released soon.

DIOCESE OF BURLINGTON

CAREERS

Diocesan Central Offices: Development and Communication Coordinator

Diocesan Central Offices: Diocesan Catechetical Leader

Diocesan Central Offices: Diocesan Youth & Young Adult Minister

Diocesan Central Offices: Accountant

St. Joseph’s Residential Care Home, Burlington: Cook

St. Joseph’s Residential Care Home, Burlington: Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) — $1,000 Sign-On Bonus

St. Mark Parish, Burlington: Coordinator of Evangelization & Catechesis

vermontcatholic.org/careers

BISHOP’S ANNUAL APPEAL

2021 UPDATE

GOAL: $2,502,465

58%

As of Aug. 26, 2021: $1,452,388

To learn more or make a gift visit: vermontcatholic.org/giveonline

VERMONT CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF BURLINGTON

SEPTEMBER 5 – 11, 2021

CHALLENGES TO GROW YOUR MARRIAGE

COMMUNICATION

How well do you communicate with your spouse? This week take 25 minutes every day to share one thing you appreciate about each other. Sit next to each other, holding hands, and look into the eyes of this person you love. End with a prayer of thanksgiving to God.

vermontcatholic.org/marriagechallenge

L O V E one another

GOAL: $2,502,465

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