

Tract 3:
**Corporate Sanctity in the Thought
of John Henry Newman**

“It is not good for man to be alone.” (Gen 2:18)

John Henry Newman is recognized as a forerunner of the Second Vatican Council. His work on conscience informs contemporary Catholicism’s understanding of the teaching and governing authority of the pope and the Church, and his insistence on the futility of religious compulsion is a precursor to magisterial pronouncements on religious freedom. Here I shall address how Newman contributes—and hopefully will continue to contribute—to the retrieval of sanctification as deification, specifically in its corporate dimension. As he says, “man is a social being and can hardly exist without society,”¹ and “Christians should live together in a visible society here on earth, not as a confused unconnected multitude, but united and organized one with another, by an established order, so as evidently to appear and to act as one.”² Christians’ divinely desired unity is to exist both in the Church’s visible order and its corporate action. Newman therefore sees life in Christ as both individual and communal, and investigating his meaning is a profitable enterprise for the Church in the twenty-first century.

¹ John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University*, ed. Martin J. Svaglic (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982), 188.

² John Henry Newman, “The Unity of the Church,” in *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. 7 (London: Longman and Green, 1891), 234.

Individual Sanctity

Before investigating corporate sanctity, I shall first note some marks about Newman's vision of individual sanctity, particularly in how he understands the laity.

Newman has famously written: "We can believe what we choose. We are answerable for what we choose to believe."³ And he notes that "a man *is* responsible for his faith," in part because the individual is responsible for "his likings and dislikings, his hopes and his opinions, on all of which his faith depends."⁴ Taking this responsibility seriously, Newman urges the laity not to be comfortable in ignorance, but to continue their doctrinal formation as their ability and duties allow. To this end, he proposes lay theology as part of Catholic university education. He says, "I would have students apply their minds to such religious topics as laymen actually do treat, and are thought praiseworthy in treating,"⁵ and he views ignorance of sacred doctrine as generally to be avoided, and as shameful in educated Christians.

Knowledge of sacred doctrine is important for the layman's pursuit of a consistent life of faith and also for his apostolate. "He fills a station of importance" in the life of the Church and needs to be able to respond to comments, criticisms, or queries as they come "in conversation between friends, in social intercourse, or in the business of life"; it is gravely inadequate for him to be unable even to state his beliefs and instead retreat, saying, "I leave it to theologians," or "I will ask my priest."⁶ The province of Newman's laity is not, as the cliché goes, merely to pray, pay, and obey, nor is it, as one Victorian cleric protested, "to hunt, to shoot, to entertain."⁷ Newman's desire for laymen doctrinally informed, personally devout, and evangelically active in the world heralds the Second Vatican Council's desire that "many of the laity will receive a sufficient formation in the

³ John Henry Newman, *Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman*, vol. 12 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978), 228.

⁴ John Henry Newman, "Faith and Reason, Contrasted as Habits of Mind," in *Fifteen Sermons Preached before the University of Oxford*, vol. 12 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1909), 192.

⁵ Newman, *Idea of a University*, 282.

⁶ Newman, *Idea of a University*, 283–4.

⁷ Letter of Monsignor George Talbot to Archbishop Henry Edward Manning, April 25, 1867, after Newman proposed that the laity be consulted on matters in their fields of expertise that were relevant to Church policy (W. Ward, *The Life of John Henry Cardinal Newman*, vol. 2 [London, 1913], 147).

sacred sciences”⁸ and its recognition that “what specifically characterizes the laity is their secular nature,” a statement which defines the lay state not negatively (as the lack of a clerical or religious character), but positively: as contributing to the Kingdom of God principally “by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God.”⁹ Newman is therefore a champion of a personal and vibrant faith for every member of the Church. And balancing this strong advocacy for the individual, his rights, and his responsibilities is a perspicacious appreciation for the corporate character of Christian life. Thus, I shall introduce Newman’s conception of corporate sanctity by considering a theme perhaps more explicit in his work, particularly that of corporate genius.

Corporate Genius

Newman keenly perceives that institutions frequently have a unity of organization and action that is distinct from the integrity and activity of their particular members. This unity can be observed, he says, in “the action of bodies politic and associations, which is often so different from that of the individuals who compose them,” and thus one discerns variety among “the character and the instinct of states and governments, of religious communities and communions.”¹⁰ This corporate spirit is an animating principle, a soul, so to speak, that quickens the various parts and organs of an institution or a people.

It is important that certain institutions do have this principle. Thus the university community constitutes a whole which, when it comes to maturity, “will take the shape of a self-perpetuating tradition, or a *genius loci*, . . . which haunts the home where it has been born, and which imbues and forms, more or less, and one by one, every individual who is successively brought under its shadow.”¹¹ Tradition thus is not a lifeless hand-me-down persisting through time, but an activity with its proper internal principle. Tradition is an act of the living.

By speaking of a *genius loci* Newman highlights that the soul of an institution is partly constituted by time and place; thus, he was probably doomed to think that it is the nature of universities to be “composed of men, not women; of the young rather than the old; and of persons either

⁸ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, §62.

⁹ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, §31.

¹⁰ John Henry Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, ed. Ian Ker (London: Penguin Classics, 1994), 45.

¹¹ Newman, *Idea of a University*, 111.

highly educated or under education,”¹² while today we see things rather differently. Similarly, the soul of the University of Oxford would be different from that of Leuven, Paris, or Berkeley, California, just as the spirits animating the Great Books programs at St. John’s College and Thomas Aquinas College live and move and have their being differently. And it is not just universities: we may expect colleges within a university to be inspired by different daemons; hence it was said in Newman’s day that “the Oriel Common Room stank of logic,”¹³ while mid-twentieth-century Balliol was informally christened the People’s Republic, given its devotion to a radical political muse quite distant from the College’s official patroness, Saint Katherine of Alexandria.¹⁴

Significantly, the corporate genius of a community not only shapes individuals but can also find its expression in them. It is along these lines that Newman conceives classical literature. As he puts it, “every great people has a character of its own, which it manifests and perpetuates in a variety of ways.”¹⁵ And in a people’s great literature we find “the voice of a particular nation.”¹⁶ From this vantage, he adds, “as the exploits of Scipio or Pompey are the expression of [Rome’s] greatness in deed, so the language of Cicero is the expression of it in word”; therefore, “neither Livy, nor Tacitus, nor Terence, nor Seneca, nor Pliny, nor Quintilian, is an adequate spokesman for the Imperial City. They write Latin; Cicero writes Roman.”¹⁷ The capacity to capture or instantiate the corporate genius of one’s people is, consequently, an excellence, and another important signal that corporate genius matters for Newman. But does a theory of corporate genius legitimately develop into one of corporate sanctity?

Corporate Sanctity

The link appears, since for Newman Christianity is the joining and surpassing of two, perhaps three, different corporate spirits. Before Leo Strauss could conceive of the notion, Newman, echoing the Alexandrian Fathers,

¹² Newman, *Idea of a University*, 312.

¹³ Newman, *Apologia*, 159.

¹⁴ Also famous is the enmity between the spirits of progressive Balliol and traditional Trinity. In Dorothy Sayers’s *Murder Must Advertise* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1933), for example, a Trinity man remarks: “If there is one thing more repulsive than another it is Balliolity” (7).

¹⁵ Newman, *Idea of a University*, 230.

¹⁶ Newman, *Idea of a University*, 232.

¹⁷ Newman, *Idea of a University*, 212.

already discussed the intellectual tradition of the West as “the lineal descendant, or rather the continuation, *mutatis mutandis*, of the civilization which began in Palestine and Greece.”¹⁸ Put another way, “Jerusalem is the fountain-head of religious knowledge, as Athens is of secular,” and so “in the ancient world we see two centres of illumination,” which “are made over and concentrated in Rome,” the inheritor of “both sacred and profane learning.”¹⁹ This is true not just of intellectual culture, but of Christianity as a civilization. Thus, “the Greek poets and sages were in a certain sense prophets,” and of course, “there had been a directly divine dispensation granted to the Jews,” but “in the fulness of time both Judaism and Paganism had come to nought” with the coming of Christ and his Church, which united the best of Athens, Jerusalem, and Rome.²⁰ And so, Newman says, “Christianity . . . is at once a philosophy, a political power, and a religious rite”;²¹ it is visibly united in creed, code, and cult.

The legacies of Greek philosophy and Hebrew religion are relevant for their conceptions of sanctification, understood in terms of deification or divinization. The model of Greek philosophy—separate from Greek mythology—is individual: the philosopher pursues likeness to God²² principally in his own person. The ancient practice of philosophy as a way of life is elite and reliably anti-democratic: wisdom and psychic purification are pursued *not* in the life of the many. As Pierre Hadot notices of the ancient schools: “Each . . . will elaborate its rational depiction of this state of perfection in *the person* of the sage, and each will make an effort to portray *him*. . . . In [the] transcendent norm established by reason, each school will express its own vision of the world, its own style of life, and its idea of *the perfect man*.”²³ And again: “Each school had its own therapeutic method, but all of them linked their therapeutics to a profound transformation of *the individual’s* mode of seeing and being.”²⁴

Sanctification for Jews, on the other hand, is sought through the community, precisely because they constitute a holy people, chosen by God, whose Law—necessarily a communal good—constituted their way

¹⁸ Newman, *Idea of a University*, 190.

¹⁹ Newman, *Idea of a University*, 199.

²⁰ Newman, *Apologia*, 44.

²¹ John Henry Newman, *The Via Media of the Anglican Church*, vol. 1 (London: Longmans and Green, 1888), xl.

²² See, for example, Plato’s *Theaetetus* 176b.

²³ Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 57 (emphasis added).

²⁴ Hadot, *Philosophy*, 83 (emphasis added).

of perfection. Newman observes: "When even a fallen servant of God and his satellites entered the company of prophets under the Old Law, and saw them prophesying, . . . the Spirit of God came upon the intruders, and they too began to prophesy."²⁵ There is among the Hebrews a holiness proper to the community that is prior to that of its individual members.

The Christian Church, through all its history, has maintained both forms of sanctity, individual and corporate. Hence the insistence on sanctity for members and the institution. Speaking of the latter, Newman reports: "When even an unbeliever came into the assemblies of the infant Church, . . . he was overcome and transformed by the harmony of her worship. Her very presence and action was the sufficient note of her divinity."²⁶ The holiness of the whole is again distinct from that of the parts.

It is worthwhile to contrast this view with recent remarks of Gregory Floyd, who emphasizes: "Groups are not saints, individuals are."²⁷ In the anglophone mouth, these words possess an almost self-evident flavor, but rendered into the ancient tongues of Christianity, they are impossible to swallow: the *sancti* or *hagioi* of Christianity comprise far more than mere individuals. As early as the apostolic era, the Church is referred to as "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation" (1 Pet 2:9), and at every solemnity the faithful worshipping in the Roman Rite for centuries have confessed faith in *Sancta Ecclesia*, the holy or saintly assembly of God's people.²⁸ In late antiquity Augustine's *Rule* begins by exhorting members to a harmonious common life, envisioning a community living a shared holy life, united in God with one heart and one soul.²⁹ Likewise, Dominic O'Meara explains that Pseudo-Dionysius's neo-Platonic ecclesiology envisioned bishops along the lines of Plato's philosopher-kings, in a structure where the ecclesiastical hierarchy of embodied intelligences (i.e., humans) is part of "a larger system of divinization" or "divine assimilation" through imitation of and assimilation to the celestial hierarchy of pure intelligences (i.e., the ranks of angels).³⁰ As for Newman himself, he sees the Church as "that one elect, holy, and highly-favoured Mother, of which individuals are

²⁵ John Henry Newman, "Order, the Witness and Instrument of Unity," in *Sermons Preached on Various Occasions* (London: Longmans and Green, 1904), 198.

²⁶ Newman, "Order," 198.

²⁷ Gregory P. Floyd, "Desanitizing Christianity after St. Benedict and *After Virtue*," *Church Life Journal: A Journal of the McGrath Institute for Church Life*, July 16, 2018, churchlifejournal.nd.edu/articles/dsanitizing-christianity-after-st-benedict-and-after-virtue/.

²⁸ See the Nicene Creed.

²⁹ Augustine of Hippo, *Rule of Augustine* 1.3. See Acts 4:32.

³⁰ Dominic O'Meara, *Platonopolis* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2003), 161–73.

but the children favoured through her as a channel.”³¹ In the words of Ian Ker, “Newman never saw the individual sacraments of the Church apart from the *primordial* sacrament, the Church herself.”³²

This corporate sanctity is found not only in the universal Church, where it is indefectible,³³ but also in subsidiary Christian societies. Newman observes that the Roman Church outdoes the Anglican in vigor and beauty in part because the former has a greater abundance of “confraternities, . . . monastic houses, . . . and institutions”³⁴ that are expressions of divine life, and explicitly references, in particular, a certain “holy sisterhood of mercy” found within her.³⁵

Newman takes the growth and development of communities to be like to that of individuals,³⁶ and so we may infer that, just as the sanctity of individual saints diversely discloses the plenitude of God’s nature,³⁷ so too do the different charisms of Christian communities. For example, one of the ancient names of the Dominicans is “the Holy Preaching”: they were not just a collection of preachers, but rather their communal way of life was itself, as a whole, a sanctified proclamation of the Divine Word. Similarly, there is a stress on holy poverty among the Franciscans and, arguably, holy subtlety for the Jesuits.

Newman himself embodies part of the corporate genius of the Church of England, with its congenital inclination to navigate and negotiate between apparent extremes. To his mind, one ought not to be too individualist or corporatist. Thus, polemically, he identifies in Protestantism a narrow focus on private judgment, a “bondage to their feelings”³⁸ or individualism parasitic on corporate sanctity, and criticizes the Greek Church for preserving “its doctrine, and its ritual and devotional system” while being diminished in the life-giving principle that is to animate the whole and the members.³⁹ Newman’s experience of the Eastern Churches is very limited, and his meaning is not entirely clear, but it would seem he is

³¹ Newman, “Unity of the Church,” 233.

³² Ian Ker, *Newman on Vatican II* (New York: Oxford University Press), 61 (emphasis original).

³³ See Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §39.

³⁴ Newman, *Apologia*, 156–57.

³⁵ John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (London: James Toovey, 1845), 138.

³⁶ Newman, *Idea of a University*, 232.

³⁷ Newman, *Idea of a University*, 300.

³⁸ John Henry Newman, “On Preaching the Gospel,” in *Lectures on Justification*, 2nd ed. (London: Longmans and Green, 1840), 386; Newman, *Apologia*, 225.

³⁹ Newman, *Via Media*, lxxx; Newman, *Essay on the Development of Doctrine*, 72.

commenting on the more Hebraic qualities of the oriental churches insofar as they tend to have an ethnic character that has entangled them with secular powers and to possess less energy and enthusiasm for proselytism and missionary work as compared to Protestants and Catholics.

Within the Catholic Church, Newman foresees the vulnerability of the contemporary papacy: individualism in the Petrine Office. As Avery Dulles argues, Newman had misgivings about “attributing infallibility to the pope as an isolated individual,” seeing the seat of infallibility as being primarily in the Church herself, even if the pope has special authority.⁴⁰ In this he was opposed to infallibilists such as W. G. Ward, whose saying “I should like a new Papal Bull every morning with my *Times* at breakfast,” is a precursor to Thomas Rosica’s ultramontanist panegyric, which gushed: “Our Church has indeed entered a new phase. With the advent of its first Jesuit pope, it is openly ruled by an individual rather than by the authority of Scripture alone or even its own dictates of tradition plus Scripture.”⁴¹ For Rosica, the pope is essentially the only Catholic allowed to live as a Protestant, to live by private judgment. Newman’s view of a moderate papacy, on the other hand, was espoused by Benedict XVI, when the newly elected Pontiff preached: “The Pope is not an absolute monarch whose thoughts and desires are law. On the contrary: the Pope’s ministry is a guarantee of obedience to Christ and to his Word. He must not proclaim his own ideas, but rather constantly bind himself and the Church to obedience to God’s Word.”⁴² The present condition of hypersensitivity to and from the papacy, then, is a predicament born of the First Vatican Council, and made more intense, as Marshall McLuhan would have predicted, by life in the age of electronic media. Newman had no desire for a proliferation of papal bulls, nor would he think it healthy how much of the Church fixates, for example, on papal in-flight interviews. The faithful should not be analyzing every vocalized opinion of the pope; nor should the papal court attempt to control what appears in parish bulletins. For too many of us, the pope, not Christ, is the head of the Church. Our crises and confusions about authority are not a mark of the Church’s sanctity, but a departure from her

⁴⁰ Avery Dulles, S.J., “Newman on Infallibility,” *Theological Studies* 51 (1990): 434–49, at 441 and 447.

⁴¹ Of course, the tragic irony of the Rosica affair was that he was plagiarizing an anti-Catholic writer.

⁴² Benedict XVI, Homily at the Mass of the Possession of the Chair of the Bishop of Rome, May 7, 2005 (see the homilies section of Benedict’s page on the Vatican website).

historic balance between the individual and the common, the common which binds also the pope.

The Second Vatican Council

Newman's thought on corporate sanctity foreshadows the Second Vatican Council's reiteration of the universal call to sanctity. The Council fathers stressed that the sanctity of God and of his Church is manifest "in individuals, who in their walk of life, tend toward the perfection of charity," and in a special way by the living out of evangelical counsels, "under the impulsion of the Holy Spirit, . . . either privately or in a Church-approved condition or state of life."⁴³ The universal call to sanctity, then, is addressed not just to individuals but also to the various communities in the Church, such as the college of bishops, the fraternity of the priesthood, married couples, and Christian families;⁴⁴ indeed, reflecting, on the Church's history, *Lumen Gentium* explains that "[religious life] has come about, that, as if on a tree which has grown in the field of the Lord, various forms of solidarity and community life, as well as various religious families have branched out in a marvelous and multiple way from [the] divinely given seed."⁴⁵ A principal aspiration of the Council was the renewal of personal sanctity in both its individual and communal forms.

But Newman is acutely aware that institutions, like individuals, are at risk of inconsistency and decline. As he sees it, "when the seductions of the world and the lusts of the flesh have eaten out [its] divine inward life, what is the outward Church but a hollowness and a mockery?"⁴⁶ So, despite the hopes of the Council, the story of twentieth-century Catholicism is one of dramatic corporate collapse. Infidelities have ravaged the authority and morale of priests and bishops; too many religious abandoned their vows, and whole orders (and perhaps even national episcopal conferences) have entered into rebellion, open or no, against the magisterium; Catholic universities and medical institutions are cautionary tales of institutional apostasy; parishes survive in ghostly communal life; and proselytism is seen, contrary to the witness of the saints, as morally and psychologically suspicious, caricatured as a kind of inferiority complex, an obsession with

⁴³ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §39.

⁴⁴ Vatican II, §§39–42.

⁴⁵ Vatican II, §43.

⁴⁶ John Henry Newman, "Unreal Words," in *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. 5 (London: Longmans and Green, 1891), 41.

increasing the mere number of people on “our” side.⁴⁷ Contemporary crises about admitting non-Catholics as well as Catholics “obstinately persevering in manifest grave sin”⁴⁸ to Holy Communion, and even the contest for Newman’s legacy, where controversialists paint him as “a famous opponent of papal infallibility,”⁴⁹ indicate that a mind for the corporate sanctity of the Church has been eclipsed and that a spirit of private judgment is ascendant or regnant. And this is even without commenting on the more and more frequent antinomian pronouncements of prelates, where law is childishly presented as an obstacle to the pastoral care of souls,⁵⁰ or the remarkably idiosyncratic ways in which the sacraments are celebrated.

Newman offers, in contrast, a Catholic *via media* that does not have us choose between the inspirations of individuals and communities, but instead insists on the sanctity of both. As a partly Platonizing theologian, he conceives the visible world as bespeaking the invisible, in just about every aspect⁵¹—even in our communal life. Thus, he thinks that nations are vivified by lower spirits, and, following patristic authors, believes that there are guardian angels not just for individuals but also for peoples and local churches.⁵² On this theme, his motto is simply “the more we can enlarge our view of the next world, the better.”⁵³

The project of the Second Vatican Council has stalled, and its relevance in daily life is less and less obvious. That said, heeding Newman could help us recover the healthy aspirations of the Council fathers. A better appreciation of the holy seasons of the Christian year would remind us, for instance, of the rogation days, ember days, and other traditional rites, disciplines, and devotions made holy by their long cultivation and use in the heart of the Church, and therefore of a shared Christian life. Likewise, the office of readings and public liturgies such as vespers afford occasions for

⁴⁷ On the other hand, Hans Urs von Balthasar reminds us: “The Church doesn’t dispense the Sacrament of Baptism in order to acquire for herself an increase in membership, but in order to consecrate a human being to God and to communicate to that person the divine gift of birth from God” (*Unless You Become Like this Child* [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991], 42). The Church and the world need the baptized faithful.

⁴⁸ *Code of Canon Law* (1983), can. 915

⁴⁹ Austen Ivereigh, Twitter, July 1, 2019, later quoted approvingly by James Martin, S.J. (July 1, 2019 on the Facebook page of Fr. James Martin, S.J.).

⁵⁰ Surely a grim irony in the shadow of the various abuse crises.

⁵¹ See John Henry Newman, “The Invisible World,” in *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. 4 (London: Longmans and Green, 1909).

⁵² Newman, *Apologia*, 45–6; cf. Rev 2:1 through 3:22.

⁵³ John Henry Newman, “The Powers of Nature,” in *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. 2 (London: Longmans and Green, 1909), 366.

Christians to read and interpret the Scriptures corporately. The restoration of such tried and tested devotions and disciplines is to be preferred over the bureaucratic inventions of committees, curial or parochial. It is no surprise that the religious orders now experiencing renewal are typically those recalling their founding charisms, those performing corporate *anamnesis*.

Newman's principles might even be profitable for liturgical restoration. Critiquing those who can achieve only an inadequate imitation of classical Latin, he has a fictional professor pronounce: "Every word is classical, every construction grammatical: yet Latinity it simply has none."⁵⁴ Of many contemporary celebrations in the Roman rite, we may analogously say that many a word is licit, most actions valid, yet *Romanitas* too often they have none. Newman could help us investigate and discern what is and is not proper to the corporate geniuses of the Latin Church and her sisters.

And still, beyond recovery and reform, Newman opens for us ways forward. At the local level, the field of theology on holy matrimony is still largely untilled soil, and the sanctity of the Christian household, which has its pattern in the Holy Family of Nazareth, also waits to be explored—may we speak of guardian angels of domestic churches? Or delve deeper into the image of the domestic monastery?⁵⁵ Beyond the family, Ker believes that Newman's insights into communal charisms "can . . . be applied to our own situation where an increasingly atomized and individualistic society, afflicted by the breakdown of marriage and family life, leads to much isolation and loneliness and loss of faith among Catholics whose needs the parish structure cannot meet but which can be met by new ecclesial communities and movements."⁵⁶ In the case of the diocese, would that our shepherds spoke more often about seeking the sanctity of their local Churches, using the sacral language of the Scriptures and our theological traditions, and talked less like managerial consultants with their focus-grouped best practices and often materialist key performance indicators. Pope Francis's extraordinary *Urbi et Orbi* blessing during the dark depths of the COVID-19 pandemic, in the hauntingly empty Saint Peter's Square, was an eloquent, luminous reminder that the Church has corporate treasures—unparalleled in the world—that the bishops employ too infrequently. As for the global Church, the holiness

⁵⁴ Newman, *Idea of a University*, 272.

⁵⁵ In some ways, the vision of a domestic monastery (not original to me), invoking ideas of communal prayer, study, and work, may be more concrete and illuminating than that of a domestic church.

⁵⁶ Ker, *Newman on Vatican II*, 92.

of creation as whole, within a theology of Christian ecology, has little been developed—to wit, Newman considers the order of Nature to be an effect of angelic activity,⁵⁷ while the Roman Rite today still lacks a Solemnity of God the Father, Creator, and we are remarkably unruffled by this lacuna.⁵⁸ Contemporary piety might know something of Saint Francis's *Canticle of the Sun*, but is little aware that recognizing the whole cosmos at prayer is scriptural, as in the "Canticle of the Three Holy Children" (taken from Dan 3:28–68), and patristic, as in Tertullian's theology.⁵⁹ There is, indeed, already a cosmic character to corporate prayer: the liturgical year and seasons follow the solar cycle, the monthly praying of psalms and the weekly observance of the Lord's Day recall the lunar cycle, the liturgy of the hours and the angelus turn on the Earth's rotation, and the various devotions for practicing continual presence of God (e.g., the Jesus Prayer and other ejaculatory prayers) mimic rhythms of breath and pulses of blood in the body. We do not simply pray in the world; we are to join the universe in prayer. Our theology of individual sanctity, then, is not balanced by an equally sophisticated theology of communities. And yet it is the clear and consistent testimony of history—especially the martyrology, if we cared to recall it with more attention and devotion—that holy persons are often formed within holy unions and fellowships: marriages, families, friendships, religious communities, and so on.

Gregory of Nyssa names three aspects of Christian life: action, speech, and thought. This schema is helpful for summarizing and concluding this reflection. We can reflect on the corporate thought of the Church: how do we vivify our profession of faith, appreciation of sacred doctrine, and reading of Scripture as the Body of Christ and subsidiary Christian communities? On corporate speech: what are the forms of corporate preaching and evangelizing available to us, and sought by us? And on corporate action: do we appreciate the importance of shared disciplines and devotions, of liturgical continuity though space *and* time, of corporate charity—not reduced to donations—and works of mercy? Newman invites us to recover the beauty of common life for the Church and the various societies within her, for whom she is the model of sanctity. Striking the Gregorian note in a corporate key, he writes:

⁵⁷ Newman, "Powers of Nature," 362–33.

⁵⁸ Liturgies in the Byzantine Rite, on the other hand, do have several explicit, thematic references to the creative activity of God and the wonder of creation on the first day of their liturgical year, even if they have no explicit feast of the Creator.

⁵⁹ See Tertullian, *On Prayer*, chs. 28–29.

In the awful music of [the Church's] doctrines, in the deep wisdom of her precepts, in the majesty of her Hierarchy, in the beauty of her Ritual, in the dazzling lustre of her Saints, in the consistent march of her policy, and in the manifold richness of her long history—in all these we recognize the Hand of the God of order, luminously, illustriously displayed.⁶⁰

Newman draws us to remember once again that the Church *and* the communities under her need, as unities in the Holy Spirit, unifying wisdom and vision in governance, shared thirst for introducing souls to Christ, and holy integrity of corporate life and activity. Christianity is not about privatized holiness. And more than merely a remedy for old and contemporary ills, Newman's view of corporate sanctity is fertile ground for cultivating new, saintly growth. N.V.

⁶⁰ Newman, "Order," 189.