

"Faith and Private Judgment"
Discourses to Mixed Congregations sermon 10
St. John Henry Newman
1849

1 WHEN we consider the beauty, the majesty, the completeness, the resources, the
2 consolations, of the Catholic Religion, it may strike us with wonder, my brethren, that it
3 does not convert the multitude of those who come in its way. Perhaps you have felt this
4 surprise yourselves; especially those of you who have been recently converted, and can
5 compare it, from experience, with those religions which the millions of this country
6 choose instead of it. You know from experience how barren, unmeaning, and baseless
7 those religions are; what poor attractions they have, and how little they have to say for
8 themselves. Multitudes, indeed, are of no religion at all; and you may not be surprised
9 that those who cannot even bear the thought of God, should not feel drawn to His
10 Church; numbers, too, hear very little about Catholicism, or a great deal of abuse and
11 calumny against it, and you may not be surprised that they do not all at once become
12 Catholics; but what may fairly surprise those who enjoy the fulness of Catholic blessings
13 is, that those who see the Church ever so distantly, who see even gleams or the faint
14 lustre of her majesty, nevertheless should not be so far attracted by what they see as to
15 seek to see more,—should not at least put themselves in the way to be led on to the
16 Truth, which of course is not ordinarily recognised in its Divine authority except by
17 degrees. Moses, when he saw the burning bush, turned aside to see "that great sight";
18 Nathaniel, though he thought no good could come out of Nazareth, at least followed
19 Philip to Christ, when Philip said to him, "Come and see"; but the multitudes about us
20 see and hear, in some measure, surely,—many in ample measure,—and yet are not
21 persuaded thereby to see and hear more, are not moved to act upon their knowledge.
22 Seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not; they are contented to remain as they
23 are; they are not drawn to inquire, or at least not drawn on to embrace.

24 Many explanations may be given of this difficulty; I will proceed to suggest to you one,
25 which will sound like a truism, but yet has a meaning in it. Men do not become
26 Catholics, because they have not faith. Now you may ask me, how this is saying more
27 than that men do not believe the Catholic Church *because* they do not believe it; which
28 is saying nothing at all. Our Lord, for instance, says, "He who cometh to Me shall not
29 hunger, and he who believeth in Me shall never thirst";—to believe then and to come
30 are the same thing. If they had faith, of course they would join the Church, for the very
31 meaning, the very exercise of faith, is joining the Church. But I mean something more
32 than this: faith is a state of mind, it is a particular mode of thinking and acting, which is
33 exercised, always indeed towards God, but in very various ways. Now I mean to say,
34 that the multitude of men in this country have not this habit or character of mind. We
35 could conceive, for instance, their believing in their own religions, even if they did not
36 believe in the Church; this would be faith, though a faith improperly directed; but they do
37 not believe even their own religions; they do not believe in anything at all. It is a definite
38 defect in their minds: as we might say that a person had not the virtue of meekness, or
39 of liberality, or of prudence, quite independently of this or that exercise of the virtue, so
40 there is such a religious virtue as faith, and there is such a defect as the absence of it.
41 Now I mean to say that the great mass of men in this country have not this particular

42 virtue called faith, have not this virtue at all. As a man might be without eyes or without
43 hands, so they are without faith; it is a distinct want or fault in their soul; and what I say
44 is, that *since* they have not this faculty of religious belief, no wonder they do not
45 embrace that, which cannot really be embraced without it. They do not believe any
46 teaching at all in any true sense; and therefore they do not believe the Church in
47 particular.

48 Now, in the first place, what is faith? it is assenting to a doctrine as true, which we do
49 not see, which we cannot prove, because God says it is true, who cannot lie. And
50 further than this, since God says it is true, not with His own voice, but by the voice of His
51 messengers, it is assenting to what man says, not simply viewed as a man, but to what
52 he is commissioned to declare, as a messenger, prophet, or ambassador from God. In
53 the ordinary course of this world we account things true either because we see them, or
54 because we can perceive that they follow and are deducible from what we do see; that
55 is, we gain truth by sight or by reason, not by faith. You will say indeed, that we accept a
56 number of things which we cannot prove or see, on the word of others; certainly, but
57 then we accept what they say only as the word of man; and we have not commonly that
58 absolute and unreserved confidence in them, which nothing can shake. We know that
59 man is open to mistake, and we are always glad to find some confirmation of what he
60 says, from other quarters, in any important matter; or we receive his information with
61 negligence and unconcern, as something of little consequence, as a matter of opinion;
62 or, if we act upon it, it is as a matter of prudence, thinking it best and safest to do so.
63 We take his word for what it is worth, and we use it either according to our necessity, or
64 its probability. We keep the decision in our own hands, and reserve to ourselves the
65 right of reopening the question whenever we please. This is very different from Divine
66 faith; he who believes that God is true, and that this is His word, which He has
67 committed to man, has no doubt at all. He is as certain that the doctrine taught is true,
68 as that God is true; and he is certain, *because* God is true, *because* God has spoken,
69 not because he sees its truth or can prove its truth. That is, faith has two peculiarities;—
70 it is most certain, decided, positive, immovable in its assent, and it gives this assent not
71 because it sees with eye, or sees with the reason, but because it receives the tidings
72 from one who comes from God.

73 This is what faith was in the time of the Apostles, as no one can deny; and what it was
74 then, it must be now, else it ceases to be the same thing. I say, it certainly was this in
75 the Apostles' time, for you know they preached to the world that Christ was the Son of
76 God, that He was born of a Virgin, that He had ascended on high, that He would come
77 again to judge all, the living and the dead. Could the world see all this? could it prove it?
78 how then were men to receive it? why did so many embrace it? on the word of the
79 Apostles, who were, as their powers showed, messengers from God. Men were told to
80 submit their reason to a living authority. Moreover, whatever an Apostle said, his
81 converts were bound to believe; when they entered the Church, they entered it in order
82 to learn. The Church was their teacher; they did not come to argue, to examine, to pick
83 and choose, but to accept whatever was put before them. No one doubts, no one can
84 doubt this, of those primitive times. A Christian was bound to take without doubting all
85 that the Apostles declared to be revealed; if the Apostles spoke, he had to yield an

86 internal assent of his mind; it would not be enough to keep silence, it would not be
87 enough not to oppose: it was not allowable to credit in a measure; it was not allowable
88 to doubt. No; if a convert had his own private thoughts of what was said, and only kept
89 them to himself, if he made some secret opposition to the teaching, if he waited for
90 further proof before he believed it, this would be a proof that he did not think the
91 Apostles were sent from God to reveal His will; it would be a proof that he did not in any
92 true sense believe at all. Immediate, implicit submission of the mind was, in the lifetime
93 of the Apostles, the only, the necessary token of faith; then there was no room whatever
94 for what is now called private judgment. No one could say: "I will choose my religion for
95 myself, I will believe this, I will not believe that; I will pledge myself to nothing; I will
96 believe just as long as I please, and no longer; what I believe today I will reject
97 tomorrow, if I choose. I will believe what the Apostles have as yet said, but I will not
98 believe what they shall say in time to come." No; either the Apostles were from God, or
99 they were not; if they were, everything that they preached was to be believed by their
100 hearers; if they were not, there was nothing for their hearers to believe. To believe a
101 little, to believe more or less, was impossible; it contradicted the very notion of believing:
102 if one part was to be believed, every part was to be believed; it was an absurdity to
103 believe one thing and not another; for the word of the Apostles, which made the one
104 true, made the other true too; they were nothing in themselves, they were all things,
105 they were an infallible authority, as coming from God. The world had either to become
106 Christian, or to let it alone; there was no room for private tastes and fancies, no room for
107 private judgment.

108 Now surely this is quite clear from the nature of the case; but is also clear from the
109 words of Scripture. "We give thanks to God," says St. Paul, "without ceasing, because
110 when ye had received from us the word of hearing, which is of God, ye received it, not
111 as the word of men, but (as it is indeed) the Word of God." Here you see St. Paul
112 expresses what I have said above; that the Word comes from God, that it is spoken by
113 men, that it must be received, not as man's word, but as God's word. So in another
114 place he says: "He who despiseth these things, despiseth not man, but God, who hath
115 also given in us His Holy Spirit". Our Saviour had made a like declaration already: "He
116 that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me; and he that
117 despiseth Me, despiseth Him that sent Me". Accordingly, St. Peter on the day of
118 Pentecost said: "Men of Israel, *hear* these words, God hath raised up this Jesus,
119 whereof *we* are *witnesses*. Let all the house of Israel *know most certainly* that God hath
120 made this Jesus, whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ." At another time he
121 said: "We ought to obey God, rather than man; we are *witnesses* of these things, and
122 so *is the Holy Ghost*, whom God has given to all who obey Him". And again: "He
123 commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He (Jesus) who hath
124 been appointed by God to be the Judge of the living and of the dead". And you know
125 that the persistent declaration of the first preachers was: "Believe and thou shalt be
126 saved": they do not say, "prove our doctrine by your own reason," nor "wait till you see
127 before you believe"; but, "believe without seeing and without proving, because our word
128 is not our own, but God's word". Men might indeed use their reason in inquiring into the
129 pretensions of the Apostles; they might inquire whether or not they did miracles; they
130 might inquire whether they were predicted in the Old Testament as coming from God;

131 but when they had ascertained this fairly in whatever way, they were to take all the
132 Apostles said for granted without proof; they were to exercise their faith, they were to be
133 saved by hearing. Hence, as you perhaps observed, St. Paul significantly calls the
134 revealed doctrine "the word of hearing," in the passage I quoted; men came to hear, to
135 accept, to obey, not to criticise what was said; and in accordance with this he asks
136 elsewhere: "How shall they believe Him, whom they have not heard? and how shall they
137 hear without a preacher? Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ."

138 Now, my dear brethren, consider, are not these two states or acts of mind quite distinct
139 from each other;—to believe simply what a living authority tells you, and to take a book,
140 such as Scripture, and to use it as you please, to master it, that is, to make yourself the
141 master of it, to interpret it for yourself, and to admit just what you choose to see in it,
142 and nothing more? Are not these two procedures distinct in this, that in the former you
143 submit, in the latter you judge? At this moment I am not asking you which is the better, I
144 am not asking whether this or that is practicable now, but are they not two ways of
145 taking up a doctrine, and not one? is not submission quite contrary to judging? Now, is it
146 not certain that faith in the time of the Apostles consisted in submitting? and is it not
147 certain that it did not consist in judging for one's self. It is in vain to say that the man
148 who judges from the Apostles' writings, does submit to those writings in the first
149 instance, and therefore has faith in them; else why should he refer to them at all? There
150 is, I repeat, an essential difference between the act of submitting to a living oracle, and
151 to his written words; in the former case there is no appeal from the speaker, in the latter
152 the final decision remains with the reader. Consider how different is the confidence with
153 which you report another's words in his presence and in his absence. If he be absent,
154 you boldly say that he holds so and so, or said so and so; but let him come into the
155 room in the midst of the conversation, and your tone is immediately changed. It is then,
156 "I *think* I have heard you say something *like* this, or what I *took* to be this"; or you modify
157 considerably the statement or the fact to which you originally pledged him, dropping
158 one-half of it for safety sake, or retrenching the most startling portions of it; and then
159 after all you wait with some anxiety to see whether he will accept any portion of it at all.
160 The same sort of process takes place in the case of the written document of a person
161 now dead. I can fancy a man magisterially expounding St. Paul's Epistle to the
162 Galatians or to the Ephesians, who would be better content with the writer's absence
163 than his sudden reappearance among us; lest the Apostle should take his own meaning
164 out of his commentator's hands and explain it for himself. In a word, though he says he
165 has faith in St. Paul's writings, he confessedly has no faith in St. Paul; and though he
166 may speak much about truth as found in Scripture, he has no wish at all to be like one
167 of these Christians whose names and deeds occur in it.

168 I think I may assume that this virtue, which was exercised by the first Christians, is not
169 known at all among Protestants now; or at least if there are instances of it, it is
170 exercised towards those, I mean their own teachers and divines, who expressly disclaim
171 that they are fit objects of it, and who exhort their people to judge for themselves.
172 Protestants, generally speaking, have not faith, in the primitive meaning of that word;
173 this is clear from what I have been saying, and here is a confirmation of it. If men
174 believed now as they did in the times of the Apostles, they could not doubt nor change.

175 No one can doubt whether a word spoken by God is to be believed; of course it is;
176 whereas any one, who is modest and humble, may easily be brought to doubt of his
177 own inferences and deductions. Since men now-a-days deduce from Scripture, instead
178 of believing a teacher, you may expect to see them waver about; they will feel the force
179 of their own deductions more strongly at one time than at another, they will change their
180 minds about them, or perhaps deny them altogether; whereas this cannot be, while a
181 man has faith, that is, belief that what a preacher says to him comes from God. This is
182 what St. Paul especially insists on, telling us that Apostles, prophets, evangelists,
183 pastors, and teachers, are given us that "we may all attain to unity of faith," and, on the
184 contrary, in order "that we be *not* as children tossed to and fro, and carried about by
185 every gale of doctrine". Now, in matter of fact, do not men in this day change about in
186 their religious opinions without any limit? Is not this, then, a proof that they have not that
187 faith which the Apostles demanded of their converts? If they had faith, they would not
188 change. Once believe that God has spoken, and you are sure He cannot unsay what He
189 has already said; He cannot deceive; He cannot change; you have received it once for
190 all; you will believe it ever.

191 Such is the only rational, consistent account of faith; but so far are Protestants from
192 professing it, that they laugh at the very notion of it. They laugh at the notion itself of
193 men pinning their faith (as they express themselves) upon Pope or Council; they think it
194 simply superstitious and narrow-minded, to profess to believe just what the Church
195 believes, and to assent to whatever she will say in time to come on matters of doctrine.
196 That is, they laugh at the bare notion of doing what Christians undeniably did in the time
197 of the Apostles. Observe, they do not merely ask whether the Catholic Church has a
198 claim to teach, has authority, has the gifts;—this is a reasonable question;—no, they
199 think that the very state of mind which such a claim involves in those who admit it,
200 namely, the disposition to accept without reserve or question, that *this* is slavish. They
201 call it priestcraft to insist on this surrender of the reason, and superstition to make it.
202 That is, they quarrel with the very state of mind which all Christians had in the age of the
203 Apostles; nor is there any doubt (who will deny it?) that those who thus boast of not
204 being led blindfold, of judging for themselves, of believing just as much and just as little
205 as they please, of hating dictation, and so forth, would have found it an extreme
206 difficulty to hang on the lips of the Apostles, had they lived at their date, or rather would
207 have simply resisted the sacrifice of their own liberty of thought, would have thought life
208 eternal too dearly purchased at such a price, and would have died in their unbelief. And
209 they would have defended themselves on the plea that it was absurd and childish to ask
210 them to believe without proof, to bid them give up their education, and their intelligence,
211 and their science, and in spite of all those difficulties which reason and sense find in the
212 Christian doctrine, in spite of its mysteriousness, its obscurity, its strangeness, its
213 unacceptableness, its severity, to require them to surrender themselves to the teaching
214 of a few unlettered Galilæans, or a learned indeed but fanatical Pharisee. This is what
215 they would have said then; and if so, is it wonderful they do not become Catholics now?
216 The simple account of their remaining as they are, is, that they lack one thing,—they
217 have not faith; it is a state of mind, it is a virtue, which they do not recognise to be
218 praiseworthy, which they do not aim at possessing.

219 What they feel now, my brethren, is just what both Jew and Greek felt before them in
220 the time of the Apostles, and what the natural man has felt ever since. The great and
221 wise men of the day looked down upon faith, then as now, as if it were unworthy the
222 dignity of human nature: "See your vocation, brethren, that there are not," among you,
223 "many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but the foolish
224 things of the world hath God chosen to confound the strong, and the mean things of the
225 world, and the things that are contemptible, hath God chosen, and things that are not,
226 that He might destroy the things that are, that no flesh might glory in His sight". Hence
227 the same Apostle speaks of "the foolishness of preaching". Similar to this is what our
228 Lord had said in His prayer to the Father: "I thank Thee, Father, Lord of heaven and
229 earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed
230 them unto little ones". Now, is it not plain that men of this day have just inherited the
231 feelings and traditions of these falsely wise and fatally prudent persons in our Lord's
232 day? They have the same obstruction in their hearts to entering the Catholic Church,
233 which Pharisees and Sophists had before them; it goes against them to believe her
234 doctrine, not so much for want of evidence that she is from God, as because, if so, they
235 shall have to submit their minds to living men, who have not their own cultivation or
236 depth of intellect, and because they must receive a number of doctrines, whether they
237 will or no, which are strange to their imagination and difficult to their reason. The very
238 characteristic of the Catholic teaching and of the Catholic teacher is to them a
239 preliminary objection to their becoming Catholics, so great, as to throw into the shade
240 any argument however strong, which is producible in behalf of the mission of those
241 teachers and the origin of that teaching. In short, they have not faith.

242 They have not in them the principle of faith; and I repeat, it is nothing to the purpose to
243 urge that at least they firmly believe Scripture to be the Word of God. In truth, it is much
244 to be feared that their acceptance of Scripture itself is nothing better than a prejudice or
245 inveterate feeling impressed on them when they were children. A proof of it is this; that,
246 while they profess to be so shocked at Catholic miracles, and are not slow to call them
247 "lying wonders," they have no difficulty at all about Scripture narratives, which are quite
248 as difficult to the reason as any miracles recorded in the history of the Saints. I have
249 heard on the contrary of Catholics who have been startled at first reading in Scripture
250 the narratives of the ark in the deluge, of the tower of Babel, of Balaam and Balac, of
251 the Israelites' flight from Egypt and entrance into the promised land, and of Esau's and
252 Saul's rejection; which the bulk of Protestants receive without any effort of mind. How,
253 then, do these Catholics accept them? by faith. They say, "God is true, and every man a
254 liar". How come Protestants so easily to receive them? by faith? Nay, I conceive that in
255 most cases there is no submission of the reason at all; simply they are so familiar with
256 the passages in question, that the narrative presents no difficulties to their imagination;
257 they have nothing to overcome. If, however, they *are* led to contemplate these
258 passages in themselves, and to try them in the balance of probability, and to begin to
259 question about them, as will happen when their intellect is cultivated, then there is
260 nothing to bring them back to their former habitual or mechanical belief; they know
261 nothing of submitting to authority, that is, they know nothing of faith; for they have no
262 authority to submit to. They either remain in a state of doubt without any great trouble of
263 mind, or they go on to ripen into utter disbelief on the subjects in question, though they

264 may say nothing about it. Neither before they doubt, nor when they doubt, is there any
265 token of the presence in them of a power subjecting reason to the Word of God. No;
266 what looks like faith, is a mere hereditary persuasion, not a personal principle; it is a
267 habit which they have learned in the nursery, which has never changed into anything
268 higher, and which is scattered and disappears, like a mist, before the light, such as it is,
269 of reason. If, however, there are Protestants, who are not in one or other of these two
270 states, either of credulity or of doubt, but who firmly believe in spite of all difficulties,
271 they certainly have some claim to be considered under the influence of faith; but there is
272 nothing to show that such persons, where they are found, are not in the way to become
273 Catholics, and perhaps they are already called so by their friends, showing in their own
274 examples the logical, indisputable connexion which exists between possessing faith and
275 joining the Church.

276 If, then, faith be now the same faculty of mind, the same sort of habit or act, which it
277 was in the days of the Apostles, I have made good what I set about showing. But it must
278 be the same; it cannot mean two things; the Word cannot have changed its meaning.
279 Either say that faith is not necessary now at all, or take it to be what the Apostles meant
280 by it, but do not say that you have it, and then show me something quite different, which
281 you have put in the place of it. In the Apostles' days the peculiarity of faith was
282 submission to a living authority; this is what made it so distinctive; this is what made it
283 an act of submission at all; this is what destroyed private judgment in matters of religion.
284 If you will not look out for a living authority, and will bargain for private judgment, then
285 say at once that you have not Apostolic faith. And in fact you have it not; the bulk of this
286 nation has it not; confess you have it not; and then confess that this is the reason why
287 you are not Catholics. You are not Catholics because you have not faith. Why do not
288 blind men see the sun? because they have no eyes; in like manner it is vain to
289 discourse upon the beauty, the sanctity, the sublimity of the Catholic doctrine and
290 worship, where men have no faith to accept it as Divine. They may confess its beauty,
291 sublimity, and sanctity, without believing it; they may acknowledge that the Catholic
292 religion is noble and majestic; they may be struck with its wisdom, they may admire its
293 adaptation to human nature, they may be penetrated by its tender and winning bearing,
294 they may be awed by its consistency. But to commit themselves to it, that is another
295 matter; to choose it for their portion, to say with the favoured Moabitess, "Whithersoever
296 thou shalt go, I will go! and where thou shalt dwell, I will dwell; thy people shall be my
297 people, and thy God my God," this is the language of faith. A man may revere, a man
298 may extol, who has no tendency whatever to obey, no notion whatever of professing.
299 And this often happens in fact: men are respectful to the Catholic religion; they
300 acknowledge its services to mankind, they encourage it and its professors; they like to
301 know them, they are interested in hearing of their movements, but they are not, and
302 never will be Catholics. They will die as they have lived, out of the Church, because
303 they have not possessed themselves of that faculty by which the Church is to be
304 approached. Catholics who have not studied them or human nature, will wonder they
305 remain where they are; nay, they themselves, alas for them! will sometimes lament they
306 cannot become Catholics. They will feel so intimately the blessedness of being a
307 Catholic, that they will cry out, "Oh, what would I give to be a Catholic! Oh, that I could
308 believe what I admire! but I do not, and I can no more believe merely because I wish to

309 do so, than I can leap over a mountain. I should be much happier were I a Catholic; but
310 I am not; it is no use deceiving myself; I am what I am; I revere, I cannot accept."

311 Oh, deplorable state! deplorable because it is utterly and absolutely their own fault, and
312 because such great stress is laid in Scripture, as they know, on the necessity of faith for
313 salvation. Faith is there made the foundation and commencement of all acceptable
314 obedience. It is described as the "argument" or "proof of things not seen"; by faith men
315 have understood that God is, that He made the world, that He is a rewarder of those
316 who seek Him, that the flood was coming, that their Saviour was to be born. "Without
317 faith it is impossible to please God"; "by faith we stand"; "by faith we walk"; "by faith we
318 overcome the world". When our Lord gave to the Apostles their commission to preach
319 all over the world, He continued, "He that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved; but
320 he that believeth not, shall be condemned". And He declared to Nicodemus, "He that
321 believeth in the Son, is not judged; but he that doth not believe is already judged,
322 because he believeth not in the Name of the Only-begotten Son of God". He said to the
323 Pharisees, "If you believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins". To the Jews, "Ye
324 believe not, because ye are not of My sheep". And you may recollect that before His
325 miracles, He commonly demands faith of the supplicant: "All things are possible," He
326 says, "to him that believeth"; and we find in one place, "He could not do any miracle," on
327 account of the unbelief of the inhabitants.

328 Has faith changed its meaning, or is it less necessary now? Is it not still what it was in
329 the Apostles' day, the very characteristic of Christianity, the special instrument of
330 renovation, the first disposition for justification, one out of the three theological virtues?
331 God might have renewed us by other means, by sight, by reason, by love, but He has
332 chosen to "purify our hearts by faith"; it has been His will to select an instrument which
333 the world despises, but which is of immense power. He preferred it, in His infinite
334 wisdom, to every other; and if men have it not, they have not the very element and
335 rudiment, out of which are formed, on which are built, the Saints and Servants of God.
336 And they have it not; they are living, they are dying, without the hopes, without the aids
337 of the Gospel, because, in spite of so much that is good in them, in spite of their sense
338 of duty, their tenderness of conscience on many points, their benevolence, their
339 uprightness, their generosity, they are under the dominion (I must say it) of a proud
340 fiend; they have this stout spirit within them, they determine to be their own masters in
341 matters of thought, about which they know so little; they consider their own reason
342 better than any one's else; they will not admit that any one comes from God who
343 contradicts their own view of truth. What! is none their equal in wisdom anywhere? is
344 there none other whose word is to be taken on religion? is there none to wrest from
345 them their ultimate appeal to themselves? Have they in no possible way the occasion or
346 opportunity of faith? Is it a virtue, which, in consequence of their transcendent sagacity,
347 their prerogative of omniscience, they must give up hope of exercising? If the
348 pretensions of the Catholic Church do not satisfy them, let them go somewhere else, if
349 they can. If they are so fastidious that they cannot trust her as the oracle of God, let
350 them find another more certainly from Him than the House of His own institution, which
351 has ever been called by His name, has ever maintained the same claims, has ever
352 taught one substance of doctrine, and has triumphed over those who preached any

353 other. Since Apostolic faith was in the beginning reliance on man's word, as being God's
354 word, since what faith was then such it is now, since faith is necessary for salvation, let
355 them attempt to exercise it towards another, if they will not accept the Bride of the
356 Lamb. Let them, if they can, put faith in some of those religions which have lasted a
357 whole two or three centuries in a corner of the earth. Let them stake their eternal
358 prospects on kings and nobles and parliaments and soldiery, let them take some mere
359 fiction of the law, or abortion of the schools, or idol of a populace, or upstart of a crisis,
360 or oracle of lecture-rooms, as the prophet of God. Alas! they are hardly bested if they
361 must possess a virtue, which they have no means of exercising,—if they must make an
362 act of faith, they know not on whom, and know not why!

363 What thanks ought we to render to Almighty God, my dear brethren, that He has made
364 us what we are! It is a matter of grace. There are, to be sure, many cogent arguments to
365 lead one to join the Catholic Church, but they do not force the will. We may know them,
366 and not be moved to act upon them. We may be convinced without being persuaded.
367 The two things are quite distinct from each other, seeing you ought to believe, and
368 believing; reason, if left to itself, will bring you to the conclusion that you have sufficient
369 grounds for believing, but belief is the gift of grace. You are then what you are, not from
370 any excellence or merit of your own, but by the grace of God who has chosen you to
371 believe. You might have been as the barbarian of Africa, or the freethinker of Europe,
372 with grace sufficient to condemn you, because it had not furthered your salvation. You
373 might have had strong inspirations of grace and have resisted them, and then additional
374 grace might not have been given to overcome your resistance. God gives not the same
375 measure of grace to all. Has He not visited you with over-abundant grace? and was it
376 not necessary for your hard hearts to receive more than other people? Praise and bless
377 Him continually for the benefit; do not forget, as time goes on, that it is of grace; do not
378 pride yourselves upon it; pray ever not to lose it; and do your best to make others
379 partakers of it.

380 And you, my brethren, also, if such be present, who are not as yet Catholics, but who by
381 your coming hither seem to show your interest in our teaching, and you wish to know
382 more about it, you too remember, that though you may not yet have faith in the Church,
383 still God has brought you into the way of obtaining it. You are under the influence of His
384 grace; He has brought you a step on your journey; He wishes to bring you further, He
385 wishes to bestow on you the fulness of His blessings, and to make you Catholics. You
386 are still in your sins; probably you are laden with the guilt of many years, the
387 accumulated guilt of many a deep, mortal offence, which no contrition has washed
388 away, and to which no Sacrament has been applied. You at present are troubled with
389 an uneasy conscience, a dissatisfied reason, an unclean heart, and a divided will; you
390 need to be converted. Yet now the first suggestions of grace are working in your souls,
391 and are to issue in pardon for the past and sanctity for the future. God is moving you to
392 acts of faith, hope, love, hatred of sin, repentance; do not disappoint Him, do not thwart
393 Him, concur with Him, obey Him. You look up, and you see, as it were, a great mountain
394 to be scaled; you say, "How can I possibly find a path over these giant obstacles, which
395 I find in the way of my becoming Catholic? I do not comprehend this doctrine, and I am
396 pained at that; a third seems impossible; I never can be familiar with one practice, I am

397 afraid of another; it is one maze and discomfort to me, and I am led to sink down in
398 despair." Say not so, my dear brethren, look up in hope, trust in Him who calls you
399 forward. "Who art thou, O great mountain, before Zorobabel? but a plain." He will lead
400 you forward step by step, as He has led forward many a one before you. He will make
401 the crooked straight and the rough plain. He will turn the streams, and dry up the rivers,
402 which lie in your path. "He shall strengthen your feet like harts' feet, and set you up on
403 high places. He shall widen your steps under you, and your tread shall not be
404 weakened." "There is no God like the God of the righteous; He that mounts the heaven
405 is thy Helper; by His mighty working the clouds disperse. His dwelling is above, and
406 underneath are the everlasting arms; He shall cast out the enemy from before thee, and
407 shall say, Crumble away." "The young shall faint, and youths shall fall; but they that
408 hope in the Lord shall be new-fledged in strength, they shall take feathers like eagles,
409 they shall run and not labour, they shall walk and not faint."

410