

1 "Illuminating Grace"  
2 *Discourses to Mixed Congregations* sermon 9  
3 St. John Henry Newman  
4 1849

5 WHEN man was created, he was endowed with gifts above his own nature, by  
6 means of which that nature was perfected. As some potent stimulant which is not  
7 nourishment, a scent or a draught, rouses, invigorates, concentrates our animal powers,  
8 gives keenness to our perceptions, and intensity to our efforts, so, or rather in some far  
9 higher sense, and in more diversified ways, did the supernatural grace of God give a  
10 meaning, and an aim, and a sufficiency, and a consistency, and a certainty, to the many  
11 faculties of that compound of soul and body, which constitutes man. And when man fell,  
12 he lost this divine, unmerited gift, and, instead of soaring heavenwards, fell down feeble  
13 to the earth, in a state of exhaustion and collapse. And, again, when God, for Christ's  
14 sake, is about to restore any one to His favour, His first act of mercy is to impart to him  
15 a portion of this grace; the first-fruits of that sovereign, energetic power, which forms  
16 and harmonises his whole nature, and enables it to fulfil its own end, while it fulfils one  
17 higher than its own.

18 Now, one of the defects which man incurred on the fall was ignorance, or spiritual  
19 blindness; and one of the gifts received on his restoration is a perception of things  
20 spiritual; so that, before he is brought under the grace of Christ, he can but inquire,  
21 reason, argue, and conclude, about religious truth; but afterwards he sees it. "Blessed  
22 art Thou, Simon, Son of Jona," said our Lord to St. Peter, when he confessed the  
23 Incarnation, "for flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but My Father, which is in  
24 heaven." Again: "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast  
25 hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hath revealed them unto little ones ...  
26 No one knoweth the Father, save the Son, and no one knoweth the Son but the Father,  
27 and he to whom it shall please the Son to reveal Him." In like manner St. Paul says,  
28 "The natural" or natural "man perceiveth not the things of the Spirit of God;" and  
29 elsewhere, "No one can say the Lord Jesus, but in the Holy Ghost". And St. John, "Ye  
30 have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things". The Prophets had  
31 promised the same gift before Christ came;—"I will make all thy sons taught of the  
32 Lord," says Isaias, "and the multitude of peace upon thy sons;" "No more," says  
33 Jeremias, "shall man teach his neighbour, and man his brother, saying, Know the Lord,  
34 for all shall know Me from the least of them even to the greatest of them".

35 Now here you may say, my brethren, "What is the meaning of this? are we men, or are  
36 we not? have we lost part of our nature by the fall, or have we not? is not the Reason a  
37 part of man's nature? does not the Reason see, as the eye does? cannot we, by the  
38 natural power of our Reason, understand all kinds of truths, about this earth, about  
39 human society, about the realms of space, about matter, about the soul? why should  
40 religion be an exception? Why, then, cannot we understand by our natural reason about  
41 Almighty God and heaven?—if we can inquire into one thing, we can inquire into  
42 another; if we can imagine one thing, we can imagine another; how then is it that we  
43 cannot arrive at the truths of religion without the supernatural aid of grace?" This is a

44 question which may give rise to some profitable reflections, and I shall now attempt to  
45 answer it.

46 You ask, what it is you need, besides eyes, in order to see the truths of revelation: I will  
47 tell you at once; you need light. Not the keenest eyes can see in the dark. Now, though  
48 your mind be the eye, the grace of God is the light; and you will as easily exercise your  
49 eyes in this sensible world without the sun, as you will be able to exercise your mind in  
50 the spiritual world without a parallel gift from without. Now, you are born under a  
51 privation of this blessed spiritual light; and, while it remains, you will not, cannot, really  
52 see God. I do not say you will have no thought at all about God, nor be able to talk  
53 about Him. True, but you will not be able to do more than reason about Him. Your  
54 thoughts and your words will not get beyond a mere reasoning. I grant then what you  
55 claim; you claim to be able by your mental powers to reason about God; doubtless you  
56 can, but to infer a thing is not to see it in respect to the physical world, nor is it in the  
57 spiritual.

58 Consider the case of a man without eyes talking about forms and colours, and you will  
59 understand what I mean. A blind man may pick up a good deal of information of various  
60 kinds, and be very conversant with the objects of sight, though he does not see. He may  
61 be able to talk about them fluently, and may be fond of doing so; he may even talk of  
62 seeing as if he really saw, till he almost seems to pretend to the faculty of sight. He  
63 speaks of heights and distances and directions, and the dispositions of places, and  
64 shapes, and appearances, as naturally as other men; and he is not duly aware of his  
65 own extreme privation; and, if you ask how this comes about, it is partly because he  
66 hears what other men say about these things, and he is able to imitate them, and partly  
67 because he cannot help reasoning upon the things he hears, and drawing conclusions  
68 from them; and thus he comes to think he knows what he does not know at all.

69 He hears men converse; he may have books read to him; he gains vague ideas of  
70 objects of sight, and when he begins to speak, his words are tolerably correct, and do  
71 not at once betray how little he knows what he is talking about. He infers one thing from  
72 another, and thus is able to speak of many things which he does not see, but only  
73 perceives must be so, granting other things are so. For instance, if he knows that blue  
74 and yellow make green, he may pronounce, without a chance of mistake, that green is  
75 more like blue than yellow is; if he happens to know that one man is under six feet in  
76 height, and another is full six feet, he may, when they are both before him, boldly  
77 declare, as if he saw, that the latter is the taller of the two. It is not that he judges by  
78 sight, but that reason takes the place of it. There was much talk in the world some little  
79 time since of a man of science, who was said to have found out a new planet; how did  
80 he do it? Did he watch night after night, wearily and perseveringly, in the chill air,  
81 through the tedious course of the starry heavens, for what he might possibly find there,  
82 till at length, by means of some powerful glass, he discovered in the dim distance this  
83 unexpected addition to our planetary system? Far from it; it is said that he sat at his  
84 ease in his library, and made calculations on paper in the daytime, and thus, without  
85 looking once up at the sky, he determined, from what was already known of the sun and  
86 the planets, of their number, their positions, their motions, and their influences, that, in

87 addition to them all, there must be some other body in that very place where he said it  
88 would be found, if astronomers did but turn their instruments upon it. Here was a man  
89 reading the heavens, not with eyes, but by reason. Reason, then, is a sort of substitute  
90 for sight; and so in many respects are the other senses, as is obvious. You know how  
91 quick the blind are often found to be in discovering the presence of friends, and the  
92 feelings of strangers, by the voice, and the tone, and the tread; so that they seem to  
93 understand looks, and gestures, and dumb show, as if they saw, to the surprise of those  
94 who wish to keep their meaning secret from them.

95 Now this will explain the way in which the natural man is able partly to understand, and  
96 still more to speak upon, supernatural subjects. There is a large floating body of  
97 Catholic truth in the world; it comes down by tradition from age to age; it is carried  
98 forward by preaching and profession from one generation to another, and is poured  
99 about into all quarters of the world. It is found in fulness and purity in the Church alone,  
100 but portions of it, larger or smaller, escape far and wide, and penetrate into places  
101 which have never been blest with her presence and ministration. Now men may take up  
102 and profess these scattered truths, merely because they fall in with them; these  
103 fragments of Revelation, such as the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, or the Atonement, are  
104 the religion which they have been taught in their childhood; and therefore they may  
105 retain them, and profess them, and repeat them, without really seeing them, as the  
106 Catholic sees them, but as receiving them merely by word of mouth, from imitation of  
107 others. And in this way it often happens that a man external to the Catholic Church  
108 writes sermons and instructions, draws up and arranges devotions, or composes  
109 hymns, which are faultless, or nearly so; which are the fruit, not of his own illuminated  
110 mind, but of his careful study, sometimes of his accurate translation, of Catholic  
111 originals. Then, again, Catholic truths and rites are so beautiful, so great, so  
112 consolatory, that they draw one on to love and admire them with a natural love, as a  
113 prospect might attract us, or a skilful piece of mechanism. Hence men of lively  
114 imagination may profess this doctrine or that, or adopt this or that ceremony or usage,  
115 for its very beauty sake, not asking themselves whether it be true, and having no real  
116 perception or mental hold of it. Thus, too, they will decorate their churches, stretch and  
117 strain their ritual, introduce candles, vestments, flowers, incense, and processions, not  
118 from faith, but from poetical feeling. And, moreover, the Catholic Creed, as coming from  
119 God, is so harmonious, so consistent with itself, holds together so perfectly, so  
120 corresponds part to part, that an acute mind, knowing one portion of it, would often infer  
121 another portion, merely as a matter of just reasoning. Thus a correct thinker might be  
122 sure, that if God is infinite and man finite, there must be mysteries in religion. It is not  
123 that he really feels the mysteriousness of religion, but he infers it; he is led to it as a  
124 matter of necessity, and from mere clearness of mind and love of consistency, he  
125 maintains it. Again, a man may say, "Since this or that doctrine has so much historical  
126 evidence in its favour, I must accept it;" he has no real sight or direct perception of it, but  
127 he takes up the profession of it, because he feels it would be absurd, under the  
128 conditions with which he starts, to do otherwise. He does no more than load himself with  
129 a form of words instead of contemplating, with the eye of the soul, God Himself, the  
130 source of all truth, and this doctrine as proceeding from His mouth. A keen, sagacious  
131 intellect will carry a man a great way in anticipating doctrines which he has never been

132 told;—thus, before it knew what Scripture said on the subject, it might argue; "Sin is an  
133 offence against God beyond conception great, and involving vast evils on the sinner,  
134 for, if it were not so, why should Christ have suffered?" that is, he sees that it is  
135 necessary for the Christian system of doctrine that sin should be a great evil, without  
136 necessarily feeling in his conscience that it is so. Nay, I can fancy a man conjecturing  
137 that our bodies would rise again, as arguing it out from the fact that the Eternal God has  
138 so honoured our mortal flesh as to take it upon Him as part of Himself. Thus he would  
139 be receiving the resurrection, nay, eternal punishment, merely as truths which follow  
140 from what he knew already. And in like manner learned men, outside the Church, may  
141 compose most useful works on the Evidences of religion, or in defence of particular  
142 doctrines, or in explanation of the whole scheme of Catholicity; in these cases reason  
143 becomes the handmaid of faith: still it is not faith; it does not rise above an intellectual  
144 view or notion; it affirms, not as grasping the truth, not as seeing, but as "being of  
145 opinion," as "judging," as "coming to a conclusion".

146 Here, then, you see what the natural man can do; he can feel, he can imagine, he can  
147 admire, he can reason, he can infer; in all these ways he may proceed to receive the  
148 whole or part of Catholic truth; but he cannot see, he cannot love. Yet he will perplex  
149 religious persons who do not understand the secret by which he is able to make so  
150 imposing a display; for they will be at a loss to understand how it is that he is able to  
151 speak so well, except he speak, though he be out of the Church, by the Spirit of God.  
152 Thus it is with the writing of some of the ancient heretics, who wrote upon the  
153 Incarnation; so it is with heretics of modern times who have written on the doctrine of  
154 grace; they write sometimes with such beauty and depth, that one cannot help admiring  
155 what they say on those very subjects, as to which we know withal that at the bottom  
156 they are unsound. But, my brethren, the sentiments may be right and good in  
157 themselves, but not in those men; these are the solitary truths which they have  
158 happened to infer in a range of matters about which they see and know nothing, and  
159 their heresy on other points, which are close upon the acceptance of these truths, is a  
160 proof that they do not see what they speak of. A blind man, discoursing upon form and  
161 colour, might say some things truly, and some things falsely; but even one mistake  
162 which he happened to make, though only one, would be enough to betray that he had  
163 no real possession of the truths which he enunciated, though they were many; for, had  
164 he had eyes, he not only would have been correct in many, but would have been  
165 mistaken in none. For instance, supposing that he knew that two buildings were the  
166 same in height, he might perhaps be led boldly to pronounce that their appearance was  
167 the same when he looked at them, not knowing that the greater distance of the one of  
168 them from us might reduce it to the eye to half or a fourth of the other. And thus men  
169 who are not in the Church and who have no practical experience of Catholic devotion to  
170 the Blessed Mother of God, when they read our prayers and litanies, and observe the  
171 strength of their language, and the length to which they go, confidently assert that she  
172 is, in every sense and way, the object of our worship, to the exclusion, or in rivalry, of  
173 the Supreme God; not understanding that He "in whom we live, and move and are,"  
174 who new-creates us with His grace, and who feeds us with His own Body and Blood, is  
175 closer to us and more intimately with us than any creature; that Saints and Angels, and  
176 the Blessed Virgin herself, are necessarily at a distance from us, compared with Him,

177 and, that whatever language we use towards them, though it be the same as that which  
178 we use to our Maker, it only carries with it a sense which is due and proportionate to the  
179 object we address. And thus these objectors are detected, as Catholics feel, by their  
180 objection itself, as really knowing and seeing nothing of what they dispute about.

181 And now I have explained sufficiently what is meant by saying that the natural man  
182 holds divine truths merely as an opinion, and not as a point of faith; grace believes,  
183 reason does but opine; grace gives certainty, reason is never decided. Now it is  
184 remarkable that this characteristic of reason is so clearly understood by the persons  
185 themselves of whom I am speaking, that, in spite of the confidence which they have in  
186 their own opinions, whatever that be, still, conscious that they have no grounds for real  
187 and fixed conviction about revealed truth, they boldly face the difficulty, and consider it a  
188 fault to be certain about revealed truth, and a merit to doubt. For instance, "the Holy  
189 Catholic Church" is a point of faith, as being one of the articles of the Apostles' Creed;  
190 yet they think it an impatience to be dissatisfied with uncertainty as to where the  
191 Catholic Church is, and what she says. They are well aware that no man alive of fair  
192 abilities would put undoubting faith and reliance in the Church Established, except by  
193 doing violence to his reason; they know that the great mass of its members in no sense  
194 believe in it, and that of the remainder no one could say more than that it indirectly  
195 comes from God, and that it is safest to remain in it. There is, in these persons, no faith,  
196 only a mere opinion, about this article of the Creed. Accordingly they are obliged to say,  
197 in mere defence of their own position, that faith is not necessary, and a state of doubt is  
198 sufficient, and all that is expected of us. In consequence they attribute it to mere  
199 restlessness, when one of their own members seeks to exercise faith in the Holy  
200 Catholic Church as a revealed truth, as they themselves profess to exercise it in the  
201 Holy Trinity or our Lord's resurrection, and when in consequence he hunts about, and  
202 asks on all sides, how he is to do so. Nay, they go so far as to impute it to a Catholic as  
203 a fault, when he manifests a simple trust in the Church and her teaching. It sometimes  
204 happens that those who join the Catholic Church from some Protestant communion, are  
205 observed to change the uncertainty and hesitation of mind on religious subjects, which  
206 they showed before their conversion, into a clear and fearless confidence; they doubted  
207 about their old communion, they have no doubt about their new. They have no fears, no  
208 anxieties, no difficulties, no scruples. They speak, accordingly, as they feel; and the  
209 world, not understanding that this is the effect of the grace which (as we may humbly  
210 trust) these happy souls have received,—not understanding that, though it has full  
211 experience of the region of the shadow of death in which it lies, it has none at all of that  
212 city, whereof the Lord God and the Lamb is the light,—measuring what Catholics have  
213 by what itself has not, the world, I say, cries out, "How forward, how unnatural, how  
214 excited, how extravagant"; and it considers that such a change is a change for the  
215 worse, and is proved to be a mistake and a fault, because it produces precisely that  
216 effect, which it would produce were it a change for the better.

217 It tells us that certainty, and confidence, and boldness in speech are unchristian; is this  
218 pleading a cause, or a judgment from facts? Was it confidence or doubt, was it zeal or  
219 coldness, was it keenness or irresolution in action, which distinguished the Martyrs in  
220 the first ages of the Church? Was the religion of Christ propagated by the vehemence of

221 faith and love, or by a philosophical balance of arguments? Look back at the early  
222 Martyrs, my brethren, what were they? why, they were very commonly youths and  
223 maidens, soldiers and slaves;—a set of hot-headed young men, who would have lived  
224 to be wise, had they not been obstinately set on dying first; who tore down imperial  
225 manifestoes, broke the peace, challenged the judges to dispute, would not rest till they  
226 got into the same den with a lion, and who, if chased out of one city, began preaching in  
227 another! So said the blind world about those who saw the Unseen. Yes! it was the  
228 spiritual sight of God which made them what they were. No one is a Martyr for a  
229 conclusion, no one is a Martyr for an opinion; it is faith that makes Martyrs. He who  
230 knows and loves the things of God has no power to deny them; he may have a natural  
231 shrinking from torture and death, but such terror is incommensurate with faith, and as  
232 little acts upon it as dust and mire touch the sun's light, or scents or voices could stop a  
233 wheel in motion. The Martyrs saw, and how could they but speak what they had seen?  
234 They might shudder at the pain, but they had not the power not to see; if threats could  
235 undo the heavenly truths, then might pain silence their confession of them. O my  
236 brethren, the world is inquiring, and large-minded, and knows many things; it talks well  
237 and profoundly; but is there one among its Babel of religious opinions which it would be  
238 a Martyr for? Some of them may be true, and some false; let it choose any one of them  
239 to die for. Its children talk loudly, they declaim angrily against the doctrine that God is an  
240 avenger; would they die rather than confess it? They talk eloquently of the infinite  
241 indulgence of God; would they die rather than deny it? If not, they have not even  
242 enthusiasm, they have not even obstinacy, they have not even bigotry, they have not  
243 even party spirit to sustain them,—much less have they grace; they speak upon opinion  
244 only, and by an inference. Again, there are those who call on men to trust the  
245 Established Communion, as considering it to be a branch of the Catholic Church; they  
246 may urge that this opinion can be cogently defended, but an opinion it is; for say, O ye  
247 who hold it, how many of you would die rather than admit a doubt about it? Do you now  
248 hold it sinful to doubt it? or rather, as I have said, do you not think it allowable, natural,  
249 necessary, becoming, humble-minded and sober-minded to doubt it? do you not almost  
250 think better of a man for doubting it, provided he does not follow his doubts out, and end  
251 in disbelieving it?

252 Hence these very same persons, who speak so severely of any one who leaves the  
253 communion in which he was born, doubting of it themselves, are in consequence led to  
254 view his act as an affront done to their body, rather than as an evil to himself. They  
255 consider it as a personal affront to a party and an injury to a cause, and the affront is  
256 greater or less according to the mischief which it does them in the particular case. It is  
257 not his loss but their inconvenience, which is the real measure of his sin. If a person is  
258 in any way important or useful to them, they will protest against his act; if he is  
259 troublesome to them, if he goes (as they say) too far, if he is a scandal, or a centre of  
260 perverse influence, or in any way disturbs the order and welfare of their body, they are  
261 easily reconciled to his leaving them; the more courteous of them congratulate him on  
262 his honesty, and the more bitter congratulate themselves on being rid of him. Is such  
263 the feeling of a mother and of kinsmen towards a son and a brother? "can a woman  
264 forget her babe, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?" Did a  
265 man leave the Catholic Church, our first feeling, my brethren, as you know so well,

266 would be one of compassion and fear; we should consider that, though we were even  
267 losing one who was a scandal to us, still that our gain would be nothing in comparison  
268 of his loss. We know that a man cannot desert the Church without quenching an  
269 inestimable gift of grace; that he has already received a definite influence and effect  
270 upon his soul, such, that he cannot dispossess himself of it without the gravest sin; that,  
271 though he may have had many temptations to disbelieve, they are only like temptations  
272 to sensuality, harmless without his willing cooperation. This is why the Church cannot  
273 sanction him in his reconsidering the question of her own Divine mission; she holds that  
274 such inquiries, though the appointed means of entering her pale, are superseded on his  
275 entrance by the gift of a spiritual sight, a gift which consumes doubt so utterly, in any  
276 proper sense of the word, that henceforth it is not that he must not, but that he cannot  
277 entertain it; cannot entertain it except by his own great culpability; and therefore must  
278 not, because he cannot. This is what we hold and are conscious of, my brethren; and,  
279 as holding it, we never could feel satisfaction and relief, on first hearing of the defection  
280 of a brother, be he ever so unworthy, ever so scandalous; our first feeling would be  
281 sorrow. We are, in fact, often obliged to bear with scandalous members against our will  
282 from charity to them; but those, whose highest belief is but an inference, who are  
283 obliged to go over in their minds from time to time the reasons and the ground of their  
284 creed, lest they should suddenly find themselves left without their conclusion, these  
285 persons not having faith, have no opportunity for charity, and think that when a man  
286 leaves them who has given them any trouble, it is a double gain—to him, that he is  
287 where he is better fitted to be; to themselves, that they are at peace.

288 What I have been saying will account for another thing, which otherwise will surprise us.  
289 The world cannot believe that Catholics really hold what they profess to hold; and  
290 supposes that, if they are educated men, they are kept up to their profession by external  
291 influence, by superstitious fear, by pride, by interest, or other bad or unworthy motive.  
292 Men of the world have never believed in their whole life, never have had simple faith in  
293 things unseen, never have had more than an opinion about them, that they might be  
294 true and might be false, but probably were true, or doubtless were true; and in  
295 consequence they think an absolute, unhesitating faith in anything unseen to be simply  
296 an extravagance, and especially when it is exercised on objects which they do not  
297 believe themselves, or even reject with scorn or abhorrence. And hence they prophesy  
298 that the Catholic Church must lose, in proportion as men are directed to the sober  
299 examination of their own thoughts and feelings, and to the separation of what is real and  
300 true from what is a matter of words and pretence. They cannot understand how our faith  
301 in the Blessed Sacrament is a genuine, living portion of our minds; they think it a mere  
302 profession which we embrace with no inward assent, but only because we are told that  
303 we should be lost unless we profess it; or because, the Catholic Church having in dark  
304 ages committed herself to it, we cannot help ourselves, though we would if we could,  
305 and therefore receive it by constraint, from a sense of duty towards our cause, or in a  
306 spirit of party. They will not believe that we would not gladly get rid of the doctrine of  
307 transubstantiation, as a heavy stone about our necks, if we could. What shocking words  
308 to use! It would be wrong to use them, were they not necessary to make you  
309 understand, my brethren, the privilege which you have, and the world has not. Shocking  
310 indeed and most profane! a relief to rid ourselves of the doctrine that Jesus is on our

311 Altars! as well say a relief to rid ourselves of the belief that Jesus is God, to rid  
312 ourselves of the belief that there is a God. Yes, that I suppose is the true relief, to  
313 believe nothing at all, or, at least, not to be bound to believe anything; to believe first  
314 one thing, then another; to believe what we please for as long as we please; that is, not  
315 really to believe, but to have an opinion about everything, and let nothing sit close upon  
316 us, to commit ourselves to nothing, to keep the unseen world altogether at a distance.  
317 But if we are to believe anything at all, if we are to make any one heavenly doctrine our  
318 own, if we are to take some dogmas as true, why, in that case, it should be a burden to  
319 believe what is so gracious and what so concerns us, rather than what is less intimate  
320 and less winning,—why we must not believe that God is among us, if God there is, why  
321 we may not believe that God dwells on our Altars as well as that He dwells in the sky,  
322 certainly is not so self-evident, but that we have a claim to ask the reasons for it of  
323 those, who profess to be so rational and so natural in their determinations. O my  
324 brethren, how narrow-minded is this world at bottom after all, in spite of its pretences  
325 and in spite of appearances! Here you see, it cannot by a stretch of imagination  
326 conceive that anything exists, of which it has not cognisance in its own heart; it will not  
327 admit into its imagination the mere idea that we have faith, because it does not know  
328 what faith is from experience, and it will not admit that there is anything in the mind of  
329 man which it does not experience itself, for that would be all one with admitting after all  
330 that there is such a thing as a mystery. It must know, it must be the measure of all  
331 things; and so in self-defence it considers us hypocritical, as professing what we cannot  
332 believe, lest it should be forced to confess itself blind. "Behold what manner of love the  
333 Father had bestowed on us, that we should be named, and should be, the sons of God;  
334 therefore the world knoweth not us, because it knoweth not Him!"

335 It is for the same reason that inquirers, who are approaching the Church, find it difficult  
336 to persuade themselves that their doubts will not continue after they have entered it.  
337 This is the reason they assign for not becoming Catholics; for what is to become of  
338 them, they ask, if their present doubts continue after their conversion? they will have  
339 nothing to fall back upon. They do not reflect that their present difficulties are moral  
340 ones, not intellectual;—I mean, that it is not that they really doubt whether the  
341 conclusion at which they have arrived, that the Catholic Church comes from God, is  
342 true; this they do not doubt in their reason at all, but that they cannot rule their mind to  
343 grasp and keep hold of this truth. They recognise it dimly, though certainly, as the sun  
344 through mists and clouds, and they forget that it is the office of grace to clear up gloom  
345 and haziness, to steady that fitful vision, to perfect reason by faith, and to convert a  
346 logical conclusion into an object of intellectual sight. And thus they will not credit it as  
347 possible, when we assure them of what we have seen in so many instances, that all  
348 their trouble will go, when once they have entered the communion of Saints and the  
349 atmosphere of grace and light, and that they will be so full of peace and joy as not to  
350 know how to thank God enough, and from the very force of their feelings and the  
351 necessity of relieving them, they will set about converting others with a sudden zeal  
352 which contrasts strangely with their late vacillation.

353 Two remarks I must add in conclusion, in explanation of what I have been saying.



354 First, do not suppose I have been speaking in disparagement of human reason: it is the  
355 way to faith; its conclusions are often the very objects of faith. It precedes faith, when  
356 souls are converted to the Catholic Church; and it is the instrument which the Church  
357 herself is guided to make use of, when she is called upon to put forth those definitions  
358 of doctrine, in which, according to the promise and power of her Lord and Saviour, she  
359 is infallible; but still reason is one thing and faith is another, and reason can as little be  
360 made a substitute for faith, as faith can be made a substitute for reason.

361 Again, I have been speaking as if a state of nature were utterly destitute of the  
362 influences of grace, and as if those who are external to the Church acted simply from  
363 nature. Recollect, I have so spoken for the sake of distinctness, that grace and nature  
364 might clearly be contrasted with each other; but it is not the fact. God gives His grace to  
365 all men, and to those who profit by it He gives more grace, and even those who quench  
366 it still have the offer. Hence some men act simply from nature; some act from nature in  
367 some respects, not in others; others are yielding themselves to the guidance of the  
368 assistances given them; others, who have faithfully availed themselves of that guidance  
369 and are sincerely in search of the Church and her gifts, may even already be in a state  
370 of justification. Hence it is impossible to apply what has been said above to individuals,  
371 whose hearts are a secret with God. Many, I repeat, are under the influence partly of  
372 reason and partly of faith, believe some things firmly, and have but an opinion on  
373 others. Many are in conflict with themselves, and are advancing to a crisis, after which  
374 they embrace or recede from the truth. Many are using the assistances of grace so well,  
375 that they are in the way to receive its permanent indwelling in their hearts. Many, we  
376 may trust, are enjoying that permanent light, and are coming steadily and securely into  
377 the Church; some, alas! may have received it, and, as not advancing towards the Holy  
378 House in which it is stored, are losing it, and, though they know it not, are living only by  
379 the recollections of what was once present within them. These are secret things with  
380 God; but the great and general truths remain, that nature cannot see God, and that  
381 grace is the sole means of seeing Him; and that, while grace enables us to do so, it also  
382 brings us into His Church, and is never given us for our illumination, without being also  
383 given to make us Catholics.

384 O my dear brethren, what joy and what thankfulness should be ours, that God has  
385 brought us into the Church of His Son! What gift is equal to it in the whole world in its  
386 preciousness and in its rarity? In this country in particular, where heresy ranges far and  
387 wide, where uncultivated nature has so undisputed a field all her own, where grace is  
388 given to great numbers only to be profaned and quenched, where baptisms only remain  
389 in their impress and character, and faith is ridiculed for its very firmness, for us to find  
390 ourselves here in the region of light, in the home of peace, in the presence of Saints, to  
391 find ourselves where we can use every faculty of the mind and affection of the heart in  
392 its perfection, because in its appointed place and office, to find ourselves in the  
393 possession of certainty, consistency, stability, on the highest and holiest subjects of  
394 human thought, to have hope here and heaven hereafter, to be on the Mount with  
395 Christ, while the poor world is guessing and quarrelling at its foot, who among us shall  
396 not wonder at his own blessedness? who shall not be awe-struck at the inscrutable  
397 grace of God, which has brought himself, not others, where he stands? As the Apostle

398 says, "Through our Lord Jesus Christ let us have by faith access into this grace wherein  
399 we stand, and glory in the hope of the glory of the sons of God. And hope confoundeth  
400 not; because the love of God is poured out into our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is  
401 given to us." And, as St. John says, still more exactly to our purpose, "Ye have an  
402 unction from the Holy One";—your eyes are anointed by Him who put clay on the eyes  
403 of the blind man; "from Him have you an unction, and ye know," not conjecture, or  
404 suppose, or opine, but "know," see, "all things". "So let the unction which you have  
405 received of Him abide in you. Nor need ye that any one teach you, but as His unction  
406 teaches you of all things, and is true and no lie, and hath taught you, so abide in Him."  
407 You can abide in nothing else; opinions change, conclusions are feeble, inquiries run  
408 their course, reason stops short, but faith alone reaches to the end, faith only endures.  
409 Faith and prayer alone will endure in that last dark hour, when Satan urges all his  
410 powers and resources against the sinking soul. What will it avail [Note] us then, to have  
411 devised some subtle argument, or to have led some brilliant attack, or to have mapped  
412 out the field of history, or to have numbered and sorted the weapons of controversy,  
413 and to have the homage of friends and the respect of the world for our successes,—  
414 what will it avail to have had a position, to have followed out a work, to have re-  
415 animated an idea, to have made a cause to triumph, if after all we have not the light of  
416 faith to guide us on from this world to the next? Oh, how fain shall we be in that day to  
417 exchange our place with the humblest, and dullest, and most ignorant of the sons of  
418 men, rather than to stand before the judgment-seat in the lot of him who has received  
419 great gifts from God, and used them for self and for man, who has shut his eyes, who  
420 has trifled with truth, who has repressed his misgivings, who has been led on by God's  
421 grace, but stopped short of its scope, who has neared the land of promise, yet not gone  
422 forward to take possession of it!

423 Note

424 Te maris et terræ, numeroque carentis arenæ  
425 Mensorem cohibent, Archyta,  
426 Pulveris exigui prope littus parva Matinum  
427 Munera; nec quicquam tibi prodest  
428 Aerios tentasse domos, animoque rotundum  
429 Percurrisse polum, morituro!