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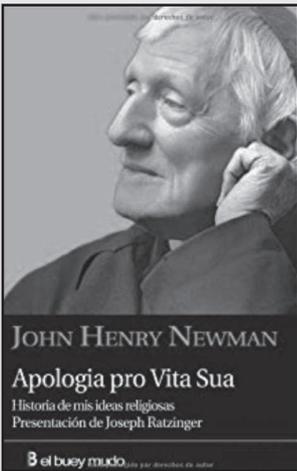
CATHOLIC  
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*Following Jesus in Healthcare*  
*4th May*  
*Hull University Catholic Chaplaincy*

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The Annual Conference of the  
CMA, Hull University Chaplaincy  
4th May 2019
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Apologia Pro Vita Sua is a defence of Newman’s religious belief. It details how his theological thought developed but is also immensely personal and honest. Newman’s relationship with Jesus Christ is always apparent; as highlighted by his motto *cor ad cor loquitur* or heart speaks to heart. Above all I was most touched by Newman’s search for the Truth. This search, which led to his reception into the Catholic Church in 1845, was slow and methodical. Apologia Pro Vita Sua is a genuine account of someone wanting to know God more fully. I was amazed at how Newman’s faith in God persisted amid his questions and doubts: “Of all points of faith, the being of a God is, to my own apprehension, encompassed with most difficulty, and borne in upon our minds with most power.” (Part VII: page 150)

There is much confusion in today’s society and the secular world has influenced medical practice in many ways. Today’s young doctors and healthcare professionals ought to take much encouragement from Newman’s resolve to choose the Truth above all else simply because it is the Truth. After all “truth cannot contradict truth” (Pope Leo XIII).

## FAITH IN MEDICINE

### WORK AS PRAYER

#### FR. GERARD MARY TOMAN



My name is Fr. Gerard Mary Toman, and it is a real privilege for me to be here today; it is wonderful to see so many of Christ’s faithful seeking excellence in their professional lives by seeking first the Kingdom of God and cultivating the sanctity proper to His Holy People. An especial thank you to Dr. Joseph Nunan for the kind invitation he extended to me, so that I might be here with you today and give a reflection on *Work as Prayer*.

To begin my reflection on Work as Prayer, I would like to say that, as part of my preparation for Holy Orders, over a number of summers, I worked as a volunteer hospital chaplain in Guys and St. Thomas’, undertaking the necessary training required for that role. Although not yet a priest, I found myself, at times, on both day and night duty; the idea being that patients and their families could at least be prayed with and comforted, while a Catholic priest was found. The many experiences I had over those long weeks left a lasting impression on me, and I look back on those days with much gratitude to God, Who, in His goodness, placed me under the guidance of a faithful, generous and loving Catholic chaplain, Fr. Jake Dicto.

I am a Franciscan Conventual priest – a Greyfriar, and I was ordained to the Sacred Priesthood in July of this year. I now live in our recently erected Friary in Walsingham – where I minister as a priest at The National Shrine of Our Lady, for Roman Catholics in England. As part of the regeneration and renewal of the Shrine, the current rector, Mgr. John Armitage, recently invited our friars back to Walsingham, 480 years after our original friary – much of which still stands – had been dissolved on Henry VIII’s orders, in 1538.

St. Maximilian Mary Kolbe was also a Conventual Franciscan. As well as having been honoured by the now Pope St. John Paul II as, ‘the Patron saint of our difficult times’, St. Maximilian Mary is also one of the patron saints of families and the pro-life movement, and given the manner of his martyrdom, namely, having been killed by lethal injection, administered by a doctor, after having first been starved for ten days, St. Maximilian Kolbe is also venerated as the patron saint of those suffering from drug addictions. We should certainly call upon the intercession of St. Maximilian Mary Kolbe in our fight against assisted suicide and in the Godly work of ending the culture of death. Following the example left to us by St. Maximilian Kolbe, I dedicate this reflection to Mary Immaculate, the-Mother-of-God-and-our-Mother, and to St. Joseph, her spouse most chaste, faithful patron of workers and Guardian Protector of the Universal Church.

Very early on in my hospital volunteering, it became quite apparent – both in my own life and in the life of the doctors and nurses I spoke with – just how thin the line can become, in a healthcare environment, between one’s life and one’s work; it was as if the hospital – and all the things associated with it – had become, in a manner, part of who I was. In almost every other job I had ever done, there were certain boundaries that helped delineate: work from rest, activity from prayer, yet in the hospital, these

parameters often crumbled away. My days were no longer 9 to 5, weekends were no longer for resting, my evenings no longer went undisturbed, and whenever I closed my laptop at the end of the day, the urgent needs of people remained.



Developing a nourishing, fulfilling and grace-filled life of prayer always requires attentiveness, patience and care. However, given the heavy responsibilities placed upon those working in healthcare, given the long and varied hours, and very the nature of the work itself, living a life of prayer as a doctor or nurse can prove especially challenging. However, a challenge, and an impossibility are two very different things – and even the busiest of medics can, by placing simple things in the right order, come to live a devout life of intimacy with God, turning everything they do – including their work – into prayer.

Seeing as the subject of prayer in the Judeo-Christian tradition is enormous, in preparation for giving this talk, I decided that, for today, I would not focus upon the many *types* of prayer witnessed to in Sacred Scripture and Tradition: for example, the prayer of thanksgiving, the prayer of intercession, the prayer of petition, the prayer of worship etc. Our Lord even taught His disciples the Perfect Prayer – the Our Father, which would merit a talk in its own right. Instead, it is my hope that this talk will help to bring a little light to the subject of prayer, by setting the context in which one can begin to see *work as prayer*; simple teachings that will help to ensure that all of you, no matter what role you have in healthcare, are able to stay close to God, allowing your lives to reverberate with His love. When you enjoy this unceasing intimacy with God, both the people you work alongside and those you minister to, will really glimpse and experience the healing and joyful presence of God in everything you do. Today, therefore, we will look at prayer, not in its more narrow sense of asking seemly things from God,<sup>[1]</sup> but in its wider theological sense, as an act of religion – namely, the life of prayer.

One of the most helpful Scriptural texts on how we Christians should live, comes from St. Paul's *First Letter to the Thessalonians*<sup>[2]</sup> Here, the Apostle urges us to '*Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you*'. So, how is it possible for us to pray constantly? How can something such as work, become prayer?

In the Fathers of the Church, we find two helpful definitions of prayer in its broadest significance. Here, prayer is, according to St. Augustine, the soul's affectionate quest of God,<sup>[3]</sup> and in a similar vein, St. John Damascene, holds that prayer is 'an elevation of the soul to God'<sup>[4]</sup>. Using these definitions of prayer in its broader sense, let us look again at the life that St. Paul proclaims should be ours as Christians: 'Rejoice always, allow your souls to seek and rise to God, and give thanks in all circumstances'. This is the Godly perspective that allows us to see *work as prayer*. Rejoicing for all the many wonders God has done, seeking God throughout the day, having a purposeful awareness that you are in His presence at all times and, giving Him thanks for His abundant blessings.

However, all too often in life, we find ourselves with many noble ambitions concerning living a prayerful and graced life, but we struggle when translating these holy sentiments into practice. More often than not, this is because we haven't first put down the right foundations, foundations which will then allow the Lord's grace to help us to build the house. So here is a short list of things that must be in place for us to begin to see *work as prayer*.

*Firstly:* know who it is you are. This is essential if you are to live a peace-filled, ordered and prayerful life. You are a child of a loving, gentle, heavenly Father. Through your baptism, you were truly adopted by Him and were incorporated into the Body of Christ. Your soul became a dwelling place for the Triune God Himself, and when you are in a state of grace, God can live and work in you; your good actions subsequently take on a meritorious character, allowing all the good you do, through the generosity of God, to store up treasure for yourself in heaven. Through the shedding of His Most Precious Blood, the gates of heaven were opened to you, and as a child of God, you are called to reign with Him, forever.



No job, no promotion or award, and no failure or mistake can ever define you otherwise. You must never allow your profession to either establish or determine your essential worth – you are already of inestimable value in the eyes of our Merciful Father, and although we must always strive for excellence in our professional lives, there will come a time when old age or poor health or some other circumstance signals the end of your working days. If you don't really believe that it was God Who loved you into existence, and Who, through this same love, has kept you in existence, you won't be able to truly love your colleagues, or to bring God's peace and comfort to those you are caring for. So, the first *key* to seeing *work as prayer*, is knowing and loving God for Who He is, and knowing and loving yourself in that true light.

Secondly, as Christians, we are called to live holy and grace-filled lives; and by living thus, we are, in effect, praying at all times because we are honouring the will of Our Father in Heaven. There are the three principals, upon which, the Godly work of the sanctification of our lives is founded.

- The first of these principles is this: we believe our ultimate end is God Himself, meaning that, in all our actions, we must direct ourselves towards God and give Him glory. As St. Paul would write, in his First Letter to the Corinthians, 'so...whatever you do, do all to the glory of God'.<sup>[5]</sup> Clearly, it is not necessary for us to expressly and explicitly intend the glory of God in all of our actions. Rather, it is sufficient that we elicit an act of charity when we do things, and thus, we virtually direct our actions towards God. When we take prayer in its wider sense, as any pious movement of the soul towards God, to elicit an act of faith, hope or charity is to pray. So, when, in our homes or places of work, we do ordinary, everyday things that are inspired by true love for neighbour, such hidden acts of charity are done for the glory of God. This is what St Therese of Lisieux, meant when she said: 'To pick up a pin for love, can convert a soul.' And, Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who was profoundly inspired by the little flower and her little way, was known to say likewise: 'Do ordinary things with extraordinary love.' To do this, is to turn work into prayer.

- The second principle of sanctifying our lives is this: that we find our happiness in the attainment of God, our ultimate end, and that the more perfectly we attain this end, the greater the happiness that will be ours – for we do not, and cannot, find happiness in anything else. For work to become prayer, requires that we do not see work as an end in itself, but as a means of leading us to Heaven. In short, work must become for us, part of what sanctifies us; work becomes the arena in which we proclaim, principally through our chaste words and example, the Good News of Jesus Christ to others.

This is precisely why, what sort of work we do, is of critical importance in determining our spiritual and moral health. If we are ever involved in procedures which are intrinsically evil or if we undertake an action with an evil intent, clearly, such work can never have a role in sanctifying us, and such work can never be seen as prayer. Indeed, the doing of such evil things will only serve to expel the Divine life within us. So, the second principle of sanctifying our lives, is that our true happiness is found in God alone, and we can only really be happy in our work if we are able to find God in our work. Working in a healthcare environment provides no shortage of opportunities to find God in other people, and to love God precisely through caring for others. When we do this, work becomes prayer.

- The third and final principle of sanctifying our lives is this: that our ultimate end – perfect happiness with God – cannot be attained without supernatural grace, which is given in sufficient degree to every person through the redemption of Christ. My dear brothers and sisters, if our work is to be prayer, and if this prayer

is to convert hearts and minds to Christ, we all must live truly sacramental lives.

Our Lord instituted the seven sacraments precisely to be instruments...to be channels of His grace: the Sacraments sanctify every stage of human life. If we are to bring God into our workplace, He first has to be in our hearts and souls, and He is only in our heart and soul when we are in a state of grace. Never become so busy that you can't receive the grace and mercy and forgiveness of our Lord in the Sacraments. In the confessional, the Good Shepherd not only forgives and cleanses, but He gives each of us the grace we need to be faithful and strong in love – allowing fidelity, chastity and charity to be the hallmarks of our lives: turning all we do, work included, into prayer.

Our Lord also waits for us in the Most Holy Eucharist, where He work wonders in the soul who receives Him in a state of grace, and where He pours all His Goodness – the very Goodness of God – into the hearts and lives of those who adore Him in this Blessed Sacrament. Further, private prayer, the reading of Sacred Scripture, the praying of the Most Holy Rosary are all ways in which we can daily receive the grace of God, once our souls have first been sanctified through the Sacraments. We should try to consecrate the stages of each day to God, through such things. Although life on the ward may be non-stop, never underestimate the power of sending up to Heaven: heartfelt short prayers: '*Loving Father give me patience*', or 'Jesus, be my Strength', or '*Mary and Joseph, pray for me this very moment!*' Here, work becomes prayer thorough prayer itself.

So, to bring all these together then. To allow our work to become prayer, we first need to get God right. We need to know that He is our Father and that He loves us, and that our worth, in His eyes, comes not from anything we might do, but from who we are to Him – we have been purchased and redeemed by the Precious Blood of His Only Begotten Son.

Once we have come to accept this beautiful and foundational Christian truth, we can then move onwards to the sanctification of our lives, thorough God's grace. We must understand, in first place, that everything we do must be done for the glory of God, and that one of the surest ways that we can give God glory, is to elicit an act of charity. Love, is what we are called to, and love must be our life, for nothing passes the eyes of God unseen, and even the smallest act of love, as we have heard from the lips of the saints, can convert hearts and lives. Never give up on love, and never give up loving.

Then, we must remember that our happiness lies in God alone, and that our work must never become an end in itself, but rather, it must be something which, through God's grace, helps to sanctify and ennoble us. Finally, we must come to understand the profound truth that we will never make it to Heaven if God's grace isn't working in us, so, we must stay close to Our Lord in the Sacraments, and then beautify and sustain our lives of faith through prayer, the reading of Scripture and through the praying of the Rosary and other devotions which foster the love

of God and neighbour in our hearts.

There is one final thing that I would like to say, and I will end my reflection on this point. In the Garden of Eden, the Sacred Writer recalls that, even before Adam had sinned, *'The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.'*<sup>[6]</sup> This short verse is of profound importance, for it reveals to us, that work is not a result of the Fall, but is something entirely in keeping with the dignity and vocation of humanity. Indeed, by undertaking work, Adam was ennobled because he was responding faithfully, obediently, to the voice of God. After the Fall, undertaking work became difficult, frustrating and tiresome. However, work itself never lost its power to contribute to our sanctification and our growth in virtue. After all, St. Joseph and our Lord were carpenters, and Jesus chose men as Apostles who were already engaged in their various professions.

Have courage and confidence therefore, that by staying close to Our Lord in the Sacraments, by remaining in a state of grace through daily heartfelt prayer and a life of

devotion, and by undertaking honest work faithfully and dutifully, all you do, can and will, become prayer. And you will be living the blessed life of the Gospels, exactly where God has placed you. After all, we Christians are called to live in the truth of Christ, and to love, faithfully, exactly in the situation and in the vocation in which we find ourselves. Everyone can give glory to God by doing the simplest things entrusted to us, *with* love, and *in* truth. God, Who stands in need of nothing, asks no more of us than that: and to do so, is to truly live the life St. Paul teaches us to lead, 'to Rejoice always, to pray constantly, and to give thanks in all circumstances'.

## REFERENCES

- [1] St John Damascene. De Fide Orthod., 1. III, c. 24, P. G., XCIV, 1090.
- [2] 1 Thes. 5:16-18
- [3] Serm. IX, n. 3.
- [4] De Fide Orthod., 1. III, c. 24, P. G., XCIV, 1090.
- [5] 1 Cor. 10:31
- [6] Gen. 2:15

## A JOURNEY THROUGH FAITH

**DR DONNA ROPMAY, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF FORENSIC MEDICINE**

*"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Hebrews 11:1*

In the wee hours of February 12th 2014, I went into a prolonged labour for the birth of our second child after a gap of eight long years. I experienced a normal delivery but the little baby girl did not cry at birth. She was resuscitated and closely monitored in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) of the mission hospital where I was admitted. She was put on oxygen and intravenous fluids to support her frail existence. One day, a junior doctor walked into my room on ward rounds and announced, "Your baby's collar bone is broken." I was too stunned to respond! When I got the chance to visit my little girl during her feed, I noticed that her right arm had been placed in a soft gauze sling on the advice of the orthopaedician who had seen her.

A week later, when my husband and I had hoped she would be discharged from NICU, we were devastated to learn from the treating paediatrician that she had developed neonatal sepsis with fever, abdominal distension and raised levels of C-reactive protein (CRP). She received combinations of antibiotics for about two weeks to treat her condition. On one occasion, when I had just breastfed her, I looked at the needles which pierced her tiny hands and feet and couldn't hold back the tears. Fortunately, my husband was by my side, sustaining me all along and assuring me that things would be alright. He read a verse from Psalm 139<sup>[1]</sup> which says,

*"For You formed my inward parts;  
You have covered me in my mother's womb.  
I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made."*

These words gave me hope as I realized that life and all its circumstances are in God's hands. All we need to do is trust Him to take care of our concerns.

As days went by, our little girl improved, but we were in for another shock when the paediatrician said, "I'd like to evaluate her cardiovascular system (CVS) and get an Echocardiogram (ECHO) done." The investigation was arranged and carried out by a cardiologist at the government hospital where I served as Faculty. Sure enough, the scan revealed a 3mm Atrial Septal Defect (ASD), Ostium secundum type, which is a less serious form of what is commonly known as a 'hole in the heart'. The specialist was of the opinion that it had a 95% chance of closing on its own in due course of time. Meanwhile, follow up visits would be required to observe the defect and its possible implications.

Our baby's oxygen saturation had picked up, and within a couple of days after the investigations she was fit to be discharged on the 28th of February.

The homecoming was special, more so for our elder daughter, *Wyona Grace*, as she welcomed her new sibling to the family. We had several visitors, including friends and relations we hadn't met for years. There were questions about what we were going to name our child. One day, as my sister-in-law and I were looking affectionately at the baby sleeping in her cot, she said, "How about naming her *Azania*, which in Hebrew means *God listens* or *The Lord hears*?" I instantly agreed – it was so touching. My husband and I mutually consented to naming her *Azania Faith*.

I had taken maternity leave for six months and during that period our baby's milestones developed normally. Her