

## LEAD KINDLY LIGHT

*Amid the encircling gloom, lead thou me on.*

People may say that I am a cradle catholic and I suppose I am but that does not mean that I have not questioned my beliefs. I have asked myself what is so special about the Catholic faith. I have known many good Christian people who are non-Catholics. It has been pointed out to me many times that being a Catholic does not make me a better person than someone who is faithful to another denomination. They point out that we all worship the same God and try hard to follow the same teaching that Jesus, our redeemer, taught us. We do not need to go to church every day or every week or even once a year to do that. We can say prayers and do good works at any time and at any place we please. Perhaps that is so for some but not for me. I recognise my own weakness and frailty and I know that I need the grace that the sacraments give me to help me to be a better person than I am.

One of my favourite saints is John Henry Newman. He was an English Theologist, Academic, Philosopher, Historian, Writer and Poet. He was brought up in the Anglican tradition and was educated at Oxford University. He became a priest in the Anglican church and lectured at Oxford University. Later, he resigned his position and two years after that he converted to Catholicism. He was made a Cardinal by Pope Leo XIII. He was canonised a saint in 2019 by pope Francis. One of his best-known hymns is "Lead kindly light". He became a Catholic because he believed that the Catholic church had the most direct line back to Jesus. He also believed in the "real presence of Jesus" in Holy Communion. I have many beautiful prayers written by him and use some of them regularly.

When I took my first communion, I can remember clearly the wonder and awe I felt. I still truly believe in the real presence, in transubstantiation. During the mass, the priest, as he prepares the bread and wine, prays silently, "By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity". The consecration of the bread and wine is not just a symbolic re-enactment of what Jesus did at the last supper. I believe, when the priest consecrates the bread and wine, a miracle occurs and they become the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ. There is no visible change but there is a change in substance. I know this is not easy to understand, especially for those who have grown up with little knowledge of God. I pray that I will always feel that wonder and awe. That is why I try to begin each day by attending mass and receiving the Blessed Sacrament. It sets me up to face the day ahead. I try to truly participate in the mass and make every prayer meaningful. When I go forward to receive the Blessed Sacrament, I pray that my approach will be with complete humility, gratitude, reverence and devotion. There is a prayer I say every day,

*O Jesus, stay with me and then I will begin to shine as you shine,  
so to shine as to be a light to others.*

*The light, O Jesus, will be all from you; none of it will be mine.  
It will be you, shining on others through me.*

*Let me thus praise you in the way which you love best,  
by shining on those around me.*

*Let me preach you without preaching, not by words but by example,  
by the catching force, the sympathetic influence of what I do,  
the evident fullness of the love my heart bears for you. Amen. (St. John Henry Newman)*

*Keep thou my feet; I do not ask to see the distant scene: one step enough for me*