

27<sup>th</sup> Sunday (C)

2<sup>nd</sup> October 2022

‘Lord, increase our faith!’

Hab 1–2: *Am I to cry for help while you will not listen?  
your hearts*

Ps 94: *Harden not*

2Tim 1: *fan into a flame the gift that God gave you ...*

Lk 17: 5–10: *The apostles said to the Lord: “Increase our faith.”*

“*The apostles said to the Lord, ‘Increase our faith’.*” As we begin a new academic year here at Newman House, what better Gospel line to begin with than that? “Lord, increase our faith!” It’s what this Chaplaincy is here for: for you, that you can ask that of the Lord, pray, and be with others on the journey of faith here as students, throughout these crucial and precious years.

I want, today, to use this homily time to lay out for you some of the dimensions of what I hope will be a rich and enjoyable involvement here at Newman House in this academic year, and in all your years ahead at university. You will receive when you leave Mass today a full-colour brochure for the term ahead, which you can take away and read properly, and refer to, but here and now I want to share with you some of the highlights of what the Lord is offering you here at your Catholic Chaplaincy, your ‘student parish’ here in London.

**“Lord, increase our faith” ... in You!** The first element of a life of faith is, of course, our **devotion** to God Himself, our prayer and liturgy, our worship of a loving God. That’s of course where we begin today — here we are, at Mass, the greatest prayer of all, the most perfect offering to the Lord, the sacrifice of Jesus. It’s great that you are here, especially if you have found your way here *for the first time*, whether as a fresher or otherwise. To be here at the sacred liturgy, students reverently worshipping the Lord at Mass, is a great beginning, and is the centre of our Catholic life. The Mass will always be the centre of our life at Newman House, for it is the real and saving presence of Jesus Himself. We have Mass here at Newman House both Sunday morning and Sunday evening, and then every weekday evening at 5.30pm. I really encourage you, perhaps at least once a week, to come to an additional weekday Mass, as well as the Sunday Mass! In your colleges, many of you, there’ll be a weekday Mass organised by your CathSoc, but whether there or here, I invite you to give that extra half an hour to the Lord. It was when I was at university that I began giving weekday Mass a priority, urged by my university chaplains, and it reaps such spiritual rewards.

Alongside the celebration of Mass, we have an extended

period of quiet Adoration on Tuesday evenings, 6–9pm, ending with Benediction, and also for an hour on Sunday evenings, 6–7pm. Confession is regularly available in that same hour on Sunday evenings, or the same time, 6–7pm on Mondays after Mass, with a different priest, Fr Ivano. Then there are times in the week for faith sharing — a group starts this Wednesday 6pm — and for *lectio divina*, all listed in the booklet. And in just a few weeks we will also have some opportunities to travel out of London: one for a day-pilgrimage by coach to the Carmelite shrine of Aylesford; and then in mid-November for a w/e retreat at a Benedictine Abbey in Sussex. These Masses and prayer times, and retreats are there for you, so please use them in good numbers! Come by *regularly* to Newman House — that’s why we have a Receptionist on the door Monday–Friday 9am to 8pm, and on Sundays, morning and evening, so that this place, this chapel too, is open for you, so that it is your home, your place of prayer, your oasis of peace.

**“Lord, increase our faith” ... in Your Church.** A second, crucial dimension of our Catholic life at Newman House is **community**, building up the relations of friendship, love & care for one another, ... in other words, building up the unity of the Body of Christ. Here at Newman House we place a

great emphasis on giving you opportunities to meet one another, and form wholesome and supportive, prayerful, and often *lifelong*, friendships. This we initiate through all the chances of sharing time and talk together; so, we provide the chance to meet after every Sunday Mass, morning and evening, over coffee and cake; and the best bit is the meals we can share downstairs, Sunday lunches and Mon-Fri dinners throughout the year. You’re always welcome to join us, and feel a part of this family — sharing meals is a rich part of feeling welcomed and in communion with your brothers and sisters in Christ. Think of all the meals Our Blessed Lord shared in the Gospel, from the Wedding Feast at Cana, to the Last Supper, via meals with Pharisees, “tax-collectors and sinners,” and his dear friends Martha, Mary & Lazarus. I do hope that you will come to value and enjoy social time, refreshments and meals here, because these are all here to help you belong in the Church, the holy people of Christ, who care for one another, and want to be in living communion of faith and friendship.

**“Lord, increase our faith” ... through good formation.** Alongside good Christian friendship, comes good Christian **formation**. We want to provide you with opportunities to explore, challenge, deepen, and increase in the

knowledge and understanding of your faith. So, an important part of our college CathSocs, and Newman House programme, is the chance to hear talks about the faith, and learn and discuss the teaching of the Church. That doesn't need to presume any great prior knowledge — in fact, I remember that a great deal of my knowledge of the Catholic faith came from when I attended my Catholic chaplaincy as a student. University, and university chaplaincy, is an ideal time and place to discover the riches of Catholic truth. So, just this term, for example, we have different series on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings: Tuesdays on the great female mystics, St Teresa of Avila and St Julian of Norwich; Wednesdays is our special video series, *Sycamore*, for explorers in the faith, including non-Catholics and non-Christians (a chance to bring your non-Catholic friends here); and Thursday I will lead on a series of topics on the Catholic faith, starting this Thursday with the important question of science & faith, are they in conflict? (All these are listed in great detail in the brochure you'll get after Mass.) As Catholic students at university, it's only right that we devote time and effort into understanding our Catholic faith, revealed to us by Jesus Christ and transmitted to us down the centuries by great Catholic thinkers of Church history. It would be silly if

we were to have a Master's in bio-engineering or a PhD in Assyriology, if we have only a 10-yr-old's grasp of our Catholic beliefs. We need to be fully conversant with what the Church believes, and why, so as to be equipped to defend and spread the beauty of Christian teaching. Now is the time to do that; now, whilst you have the time and the opportunity to do so. It's so important, and you'll never regret coming to know your faith better!

**“Lord, increase our faith” ... in Your vocation for me!** These years at university are also an important time to explore your **vocation**, the calling that God gives you to a particular path in life. As well as the opportunity simply to be part of a praying community, and the chance to interact with priests and religious across our various parts of the Chaplaincy, here and in the Colleges — all of which helps enormously in the discernment of vocation — there'll also be times in the year when we specifically talk about vocations to married life, priesthood, and religious life. We'll make a special focus on marriage and chastity next term, in the early spring, helping you to navigate the joys, and challenges, of dating and discerning marriage. Allowing yourself to hear the call that God gives you, to orient your life into that path that He has in Mind for you, is a

special and beautiful task of your student years. Pray that your being at Newman House will help you do that!

**“Lord, increase our faith” ... in the mission.** A final dimension, which I can’t speak of at length here today, but which we will hear much more about in due course, is the mission, outreach, of the Church, to which we are also called. Our faith in Christ is not to be an insular, inward-looking thing, confined to this Chapel, this building, or our hearts. Our Gospel faith in Jesus sends us out into the world. First, then, we can think of our volunteering, outreach, and charity — that’s a big focus for next Sunday morning, when we’ll have our volunteering fair, very exciting! (Sr Carolyn.) But also we must ask the Lord, to open up our hearts to being ambassadors for Christ’s Word, too, as we move on from here. Please God, in your involvement at Newman House, you will be equipped to be good, faithful, active Catholics — bringers of the Gospel to many, throughout your life ahead.

What does St Paul say to us this Sunday, as he writes again to his companion and missionary colleague, St Timothy? He is, as always, offering a vibrant and encouraging message: *“I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands;*

*for God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power and love and self-control.”* ... not a spirit of ‘timidity,’ but a spirit of ‘power’ and ‘love’ and ‘self-control.’ I love these words from St Paul, as he mentors this young protégé who was bishop of the community at Ephesus. We are not called in our Catholic life to be timid in our faith, but to live it fully, robustly, kindly, daily ... with “power and love and self-control.” May the Lord “fan into a flame” your Catholic Christian faith here at Newman House. **“Lord, increase our faith!”**