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Q & A: Catherine Pepinster

Michael Sean Winters | Sep. 7, 2010 Distinctly Catholic

In anticipation of the Pope's visit to the UK next week, *The Tablet* [1] has been running a series in which they asked prominent British Catholics the question: If you had five minutes with Pope Bendict, what would you say to him?

Here at Q & A, we decided to turn that question around and ask four editors at *The Tablet* what they think Pope Benedict needs to say while he is in Britain. For those who do not subscribe to *The Tablet*, you should. In addition to being available online to subscribers, the print edition, which is published on Thursdays, arrives in the mail every Monday here in Washington. Like *NCR*, *The Tablet* is committed to strong writing, solid reporting and incisive analysis.

Our first submission comes from Catherine Pepinster who is the editor of *The Tablet*.

The question: What is the most important thing Pope benedict must say or do while he is in the UK?

Catherine Pepinster:This is a hard time to be a Catholic. Perhaps it always has been; perhaps it is rightly a difficult challenge. After all, aren?t we called to pick up our cross and follow Christ?

But ordinary Catholics at the moment are stuck between a rock and a hard place. They love their Church but are dismayed by the way it has handled child abuse, by the way clerical culture dominates, particularly at the most senior levels of the Church. But although they themselves are critical of the Church, they are also horrified by the extent to which it is so harshly judged by critics outside the institution; by secularists who trash everything it does. They know some criticisms are justified but they find the wholesale attacks on their community deeply wounding.

So when the Pope comes to Britain, we want to hear words of encouragement from Benedict. We want him to offer a message to Catholics and to the rest of Britain about the good news of Christ. We want people to recognise that the Catholic Church has much to offer the world, through its work with the poor and the dispossessed; that it is engaged with the great issues of our time, such as the fulfillment of the Millennium Development Goals and the problem of climate change. The British government has worked that out, which is why the Pope is coming to Britain on a state visit. But most people in Britain don?t know this. So let us hear from the Pope words of wisdom, words about Christ, and words of compassion.

Stories in this series on the papal visit to Scotland and England:

- Hijacking or setting him free, Benedict loves Newman [2], by John L. Allen, Jr.
- Benedict finds unlikely ally in British PM [3], by John L. Allen, Jr.
- Polarized opinion on pope fills London streets [4], by John L. Allen, Jr.
- Trying to solve the church's communications problem [5], by John L. Allen, Jr.
- Pope meets with sex abuse victims [6], by John L. Allen, Jr.
- Analysis: Benedict's in a box in talking about the crisis [7], by John L. Allen, Jr.
- Pope apologizes for 'unspeakable crimes' of sex abuse [8], by John L. Allen, Jr.
- Joint statement on meeting between Pope and Archbishop of Canterbury [9]
- Benedict in Britain: We get it, we've got it, let's share it [10], by John L. Allen, Jr.
- Pope calls on religions to defend environment, human life [11], by John L. Allen, Jr.
- Full text of pope's comments on the crisis [12], by John L. Allen, Jr.
- Of all people, Cardinal Kasper? [13], by John L. Allen, Jr.
- Benedict battles the 'dictatorship of relativism' [14], by John L. Allen, Jr.
- Pope on crisis: 'We weren't fast enough' [15], by John L. Allen, Jr.
- Benedict to step into buzz saw of dissent during upcoming UK visit [16], by John L. Allen, Jr.
- Newman still commands our attention [17], an NCR editorial
- He even prayed 'with a pen in his hand' [18], a book review by Peter L?Estrange
- Hijacking Newman [19], by Dennis Coday
- Newman: the 'sense' and 'consent' of the faithful [20], a viewpoint by Robert McClory

All this week in his Distinctly Catholic blog, Michael Sean Winters is interviewing a variety of Newman scholars:

- Fr. Joseph Komonchak, taught ecclesiology at Catholic University, wrote his dissertation on Newman [21]
- Christopher Pramuk, Assistant professor of Theology at Xavier University in Cincinnati [22]
- Ian Ker, Professor at Oxford University and author of a Newman biography [23]
- The Very Reverend Richard Duffield, the Provost of the Birmingham Oratory [24]
- Archbishop Vincent Nichols, the Archbishop of Westminster and Primate of England [25]

Related items in Distinctly Catholic:

- When Benedict Meets With Victims [26]
- Letters between Newman and the Rev. Charles Kingsley [27]
- James Roberts, assistant editor of the British Catholic weekly The Tablet [28]
- Christopher Lamb, news editor of the British Catholic weekly The Tablet [29]
- Elena Curti, the deputy editor of the British Catholic weekly The Tablet [30]
- Catherine Pepinster, editor of the British Catholic weekly The Tablet [31]

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