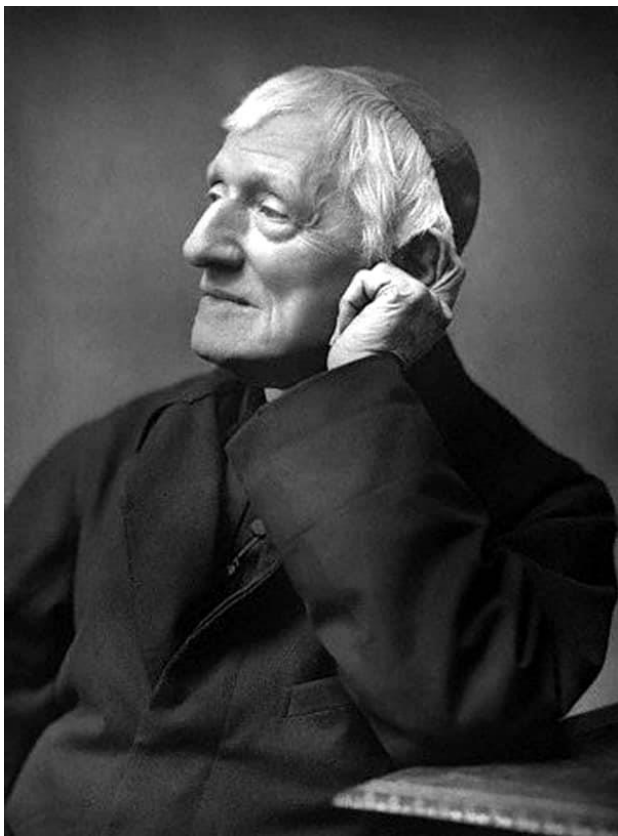


My Unificationist Memoirs Chapter 60

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John Henry Newman

John Henry Newman wrote that "To live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often." A correlative to Newman's insight is that change shifts our perspective and we often see as we have not seen before. While such revelations regarding self and others can be liberating and spiritually fruitful, they can also throw us into crisis and literally, knock the breath out of us. One of the most difficult transitions is from a highly organized and structured way of life back into an unstructured mode of existence in which personal agency and emotional intelligence are paramount. For this reason, the military now offers counseling to veterans as they leave the service, in order to ensure each person's transition to civilian life goes smoothly. These programs provide guidance in everything from resumes to interviews and dinner table manners but most importantly, they provide the space for a warrior to decompress and adjust once again to civilian life. The cultivation of external skill provides the medium to adjust a person's internal temperament and expectations, change within change.

Of course, I'm actually writing about MFT and our very active lives as missionaries. We spent years, many years, working on the front lines of God's Providence fundraising, serving on IOWC, pioneering, witnessing, lecturing, becoming foreign missionaries, working on campaigns, selling newspapers, building boats, fishing, starting and running businesses, and on and on and on. We performed nearly every possible job day and night, under both the sun and moon (with a few notable exceptions... such as the oldest profession). We took individual responsibility and left a sizable reservoir of remarkable accomplishment through daily experiences which changed us deeply. And yet, mostly our labors were offered in a highly organized and structured environment. Above and below, left and right, were clear to us. And though, like the military, we came away from our Unificationist training with profound growth, a wealth of experience, self-discipline, and practical skill, unlike the military, we often did not have the space to decompress and recalibrate ourselves before stepping into the civilian world of family and a secular job..





In many ways, this helped us. Aristotle's observation comes to mind, that "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence is not an act, but a habit." In light of this standard, what we brought to the world after our MFT and UC training are habits of excellence with incalculable value. We internalized these qualities and could carry ourselves with hard won confidence. After being trained and challenged by the Messiah, once I became a lawyer, deposing the president of a corporation just didn't seem that difficult.

On the other hand, calibrating my personal relationships as an employee, a spouse, and a father, proved more subtle. At times, my wife has said to me, "I'm not a member of one of your teams!" - a refrain that my children then picked up and would sometimes use to good effect. Returning to the analogy with the transition from military to civilian roles: when my father walked through the door in the evening and removed his uniform, there was an outward shift with subtle inward consequences. He was no longer the imposing and authoritative Marine Colonel, he was Dad. When he was a younger version of himself, that shift was

more difficult to make; once he matured as a parent, he got much better at it. In a sense, every night was practice for his military retirement.



In our case, we had no uniform to remove to signal a transformation of self, symbolizing surrendering one role for another. I suspect my children's rebellion against religion in fact was a rebellion against their authoritative father, whose stern admonitions felt a little draconian relative to our family circumstances. Over the years, I have learned to calibrate myself and my reactions, but not before I had more than a few experiences that knocked the breath out of me.

Though I have grown and changed, and done so often, "perfection" still seems to be a reach, and I have concluded, one dependent upon the recognition awarded by my spouse and children - a caveat we need to append to Newman's quote.