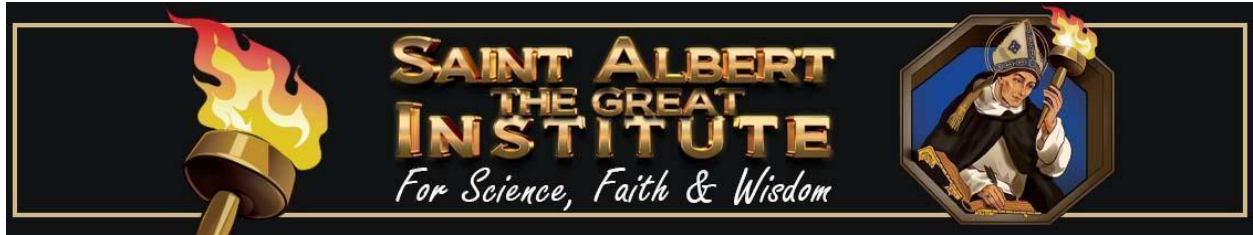




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Thematic Issue (Inspiring Faith)

SAGI: The Greatest Experiment

St John Henry Newman To Be Declared a Doctor of the Church

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Words of Wisdom: On 31 July 2025 Pope Leo XVI announced that soon St John Henry Newman (1801-1890) would be declared a Doctor of the Church. The Pope did not indicate a specific date for the official proclamation. Nevertheless, the declaration is significant for various reasons.

The Church does not bestow the title of “Doctor of the Church” lightly or indiscriminately. The title of “Doctor” obviously implies that the bearer had engaged in teaching the mysteries of the Christian Faith in an admirable way. Yet far more that this is implied in the encomium of “Doctor of the Church.” Four criteria have been established for recognizing a given saint as a “Doctor of the Church.”

First, the saint – and one must indeed be a saint canonized by the Church before the title of Doctor is conferred – must have exhibited **outstanding holiness even among the saints**. In other words, the *heroic degree* of holiness recognized by the canonization process must have been excelled and even surpassed by the candidate. Such a prospect surely is daunting, given the impressive, even awe-inspiring honour roll of holy men and women admitted to the Church’s canon of holiness. Newman, for decades after his 1845 conversion, displayed heroic patience in enduring countless professional setbacks and bore the cross of being misunderstood and resented by his fellow Catholics, especially among the clergy and hierarchy. Newman engaged in vigorous debates, but his driving force was always that relentless pursuit of the truth and its transformative power in one’s life.

Second, the candidate must have demonstrated **depth of doctrinal penetration**. In other words, the saint must have plumbed deeply the vast richness of some branch of theology, whether systematic (dogmatic), fundamental (apologetic), moral, historical, ascetical, or mystical.

Third, the saint must have produced a **sufficiently extensive body of writings capable of being recommended as a summary of the authentic, life-giving tradition of the Catholic Church**. With Newman's remarkable contribution of forty books and 21,000 letters (published in 36 volumes), both the second and third criteria would seem to be eminently satisfied. This is so, particularly when one considers works like *The Arians of the Fourth Century* (1833), his first book to be published - and indeed it was a best-seller that accelerated his meteoric rise in the academy - or *The Development of Christian Doctrine* (1845), at the completion of which he was compelled to seek admission to the Catholic Church on 9 October 1845, or *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (1870) in which he lays out his views on the nature of faith and personal conviction. In addition to weighty books of philosophy and theology, Newman also wrote countless sermons, two novels (*Loss and Gain*, 1848; *Callista*, 1855), and various poems, some of which were set to music as timeless hymns (*Lead Kindly Light*, 1833; *Praise to the Holiest in the Height*, 1865). His major poem *The Dream of Gerontius* (1865) explores the area of eschatology, as Newman traces the progress of an old man's soul from death through Purgatory and judgment to his admission to Paradise. Sir Edward Elgar, who did not know Newman but was quite inspired by his legacy, set *The Dream of Gerontius* to music and premiered it as an oratorio in 1900.

The fourth criterion remains **the official designation by the Apostolic See as a "Doctor of the Church."** This final hurdle will have been surmounted before the conclusion of the Jubilee Year of Hope 2025.

Newman will be the first Doctor of the Church whose writings were composed in English.

The process of Newman's canonization is worth a quick review. In 1991, the Vatican's Congregation of the Causes of the Saints declared Newman "Venerable." On 19 September 2010 Pope Benedict XVI beatified Newman in an open-air ceremony at Cotton Park, Birmingham on his state visit to the United

Kingdom. On 13 October 2019 Pope Francis canonized St John Henry Newman in St Peter's Square.

In preparation for the forthcoming declaration of Newman as a Doctor of the Church, King Charles III visited the Oratory of St Philip Neri at Birmingham on 3 September 2025. The link below highlights the King's tour of Newman's foundation, exploring the church, Newman's library, his private rooms, and the Oratorians' chapel, now converted into St John Henry Newman's Shrine. See it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=57unX6lCQDY&t=4s>

38 Doctors of the Church (as of 2025)

(arranged according to their respective regions and eras)

Criteria: (1) outstanding holiness even among saints; (2) depth of doctrinal penetration; (3) sufficiently extensive body of writings capable of being recommended as a summary of the authentic and life-giving tradition of the Catholic Church; (4) official designation by the Apostolic See as a "doctor of the Church."

"Golden Age" of the Fathers (300-600)

The Eight Great Ecumenical Doctors of the Church

The Four Great Western Doctors

Feast Day

St Ambrose	340-397	Hammer of Arianism	7 December (4 April)
St Jerome	345-420	<i>Doctor Maximus</i>	30 September
St Augustine	354-430	Doctor of Grace	28 August
St Gregory I (the Great)	540-604	The Dialoguer	3 September (12 March)

The Four Great Eastern Doctors

St Athanasius	295-373		2 May
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St Basil the Great	330-379	2 January (14 June)
St Gregory Nazianzenus	330-390	2 January (9 May)
St John Chrysostom	345-407	13 September (27 January)

Eight other Doctors of the Church from the Patristic Era

St Irenaeus of Lyons	120-200	28 June (3 July)
St Ephrem the Deacon (Syriac)	306-373	9 June
St Hilary of Poitiers (Latin)	315-387	13 January
St Cyril of Jerusalem (Greek)	315-387	18 March
St Cyril of Alexandria (Greek)	315-444	27 June
St Leo I – the Great (Latin)	390-461	10 November
St Peter Chrysologus (Greek)	400-450	30 July
St Isidore of Seville (last Latin Fr)	560-636	Egregious Doctor 4 April
St John Damascene (last Greek Fr)	676-749	4 December

Nine Doctors of the Church during the Latin Middle Ages

St Bede the Venerable	673-735		25 May
St Gregory of Narek	950-1011		27 February
St Peter Damian	1007-1072		21 February
St Anselm	1033-1109	Marian Doctor	21 April
St Bernard of Clairvaux	1090-1153	Mellifluous Doctor	20 August
St Hildegard of Bingen	1098-1179	Sybil of the Rhine	17 September
St Anthony of Padua	1195-1231	Evangelical Doctor	13 July
St Albert the Great	1200-1274	Expert Doctor	15 November
St Bonaventure	1217-1274	Seraphic Doctor	15 July
St Thomas Aquinas	1225-1274	Angelic Doctor	28 January (7 Mar)
St Catherine of Siena	1347-1379		29 April

Six Doctors of the Sixteenth-Century Reformation, all of the Latin Church

St John of Avila	1499-1569	10 May
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St Theresa of Avila	1515-1582		15 October
St Peter Canisius	1521-1597	2nd Apostle of Germany	21 December
St John of the Cross	1542-1591		14 December
St Robert Bellarmine	1542-1621		17 September
St Lawrence of Brindisi	1559-1619		21 July
St Francis de Sales	1567-1622	Gentle Doctor	24 January

Three Doctors of the Church in the Modern Era, all of the Latin Church

St Alphonsus Liguori	1696-1787	Moral Doctor	1 August
St John Henry Newman	1801-1890		9 October
St Thérèse of Lisieux	1873-1897		1 October

Currently the Church recognizes as doctors of the Church:

- 28 Westerners and 10 Easterners;**
- 14 secular priests and 19 regulars;**
- 2 popes, 19 bishops, 1 deacon;**
- 4 women;**
- 1 martyr (St Irenaeus of Lyons)**
- 1 Englishman – St JHN was the *only* Doctor who wrote in English**