

- A Description of my Icon of BL. John H. Newman -

I attempted to paint this portrait of Bl. J.H. Newman from my perspective as a grateful beneficiary of his divine intercession and the insights derived from our continuing prayerful communion. It takes the form of an icon, and each image has its own meaning. I chose to paint Newman's portrait within the backdrop of an icon because he advanced in faith in his passionate pursuit of truth while reflecting on the writings of the early Church fathers. It also describes, from my perspective and impressions, the significant moments of his life as follows: the oratory in Birmingham, (upper left) St. Peter's Basilica, and the seal of the Archdiocese of Boston, (lower left) where the miracle occurred leading to his beatification.

Newman's study lies within the framework of cloistered arches directing us to consider his life of heroic virtue and holiness. The books on the shelf represent his remarkable intellect and writings, which are his monumental theological gifts to the Church. For he is that spiritual light shining in the darkness of our troubled world. Newman is also depicted seated with pen in hand leading us to consider his voluminous sermons, letters, and other unparalleled literary works.

Most importantly are my impressions of his face. On the one hand I tried to paint the face of a kindly, wise, and weather-beaten old man, frayed and weary in his life-long journey of service to God amid unrelenting opposition; much like an old sea captain, who after years battling stormy seas and punishing gales, has now found true peace and anchorage, sailing comfortably on calm and tranquil waters into home port. I painted the face of a priest, buffeted by life's turbulent trials and afflictions in his passionate quest for truth. And yet, superimposed thereon, I also attempted to paint this unique man of God, achieving a level of almost perfect spiritual serenity - ultimately victorious over his life long series of trials and afflictions. Please note also that I have prayed over and touched your print with my relic of Newman's hair, which now makes it a third class relic.

Thank you for all your kindnesses.

*Dean Jack*