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Tarnów Newman Center

Report on the International Scientific Conference — St. John Henry Newman: A Guide on the Paths of Truth

doi <https://doi.org/10.15633/pch.16116>

On 17–18 April 2026, the international scientific conference entitled *St. John Henry Newman: A Guide on the Paths of Truth* was held in Tarnów. The conference formed part of a broader initiative known as the Tarnów Newman Days. The event was organised by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Tarnów; Tarnów Section the Faculty of Theology of the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Kraków; the Major Seminary in Tarnów; and the Congregation of St Philip Neri in Tarnów. The organising committee consisted of three members: Fathers Piotr Cebula, Mateusz Bugno, and Grzegorz Baran. The event was conceived as a response to Pope Leo XIV's proclamation of Newman as a Doctor of the Church and co-patron of the Church's educational mission on 1 November 2025. The aim of the Tarnów Newman Days was to promote Newman's theology, philosophy, and spirituality and to consolidate a scholarly community, as well as a wider circle of persons interested in his thought and legacy.

The conference and the Tarnów Newman Days were officially opened on 17 April by Fr Piotr Cebula, the originator and initiator of the event. The opening ceremony took place at the Oratory of St Philip Neri in Tarnów. All events on that day were held at the Oratory and in the church of the religious congregation that John Henry Newman joined after his conversion. The choice of venue for the first thematic session was therefore motivated by this historical connection.

The first three conference lectures were delivered by speakers from the National Institute for Newman Studies in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (United States). Christopher Cimorelli, PhD, Director of the Institute, presented a lecture entitled “Some Definite Service”: NINS and Newman’s “Medicine’ for Our Times”, in which he highlighted the institute’s role and the work of its scholars in collecting materials and preparing documentation for the process of proclaiming Newman a Doctor of the Church. The second lecture, ‘Researching John Henry Newman: Opportunities at the National Institute for Newman Studies’, was delivered by Elizabeth Huddleston, PhD, Head of Research and Publications at the institute, who outlined the broad range of research opportunities related to Newman’s thought made possible by the Institute’s resources. The third lecture, “*Cor ad cor loquitur*: Groundbreaking, Interoperable Technology that Connects Us, Heart to Heart”, was presented by Daniel Michaels, PhD, Chief Technology Officer. He demonstrated a modern interactive digital tool that provides access to Newman’s original texts and key themes through interconnected archival resources.

The fourth speaker was Fr George Bowen, CO^r, from the Brompton Oratory in London. As the principal coordinator of the process leading to Newman’s recognition as a Doctor of the Church, he addressed the rationale behind Pope Leo XIV’s decision to designate Newman as co-patron of the Church’s educational mission. After these lectures, a book presentation was held for Fr Piotr Cebula’s publication *St. John Henry Newman: Doctor of the Church*. The book is an introduction to Newman’s thought and functions as a concise guide to his ideas, writings, and life. It also includes a litany to St. John Henry Newman that has received the *nihil obstat* and *imprimatur* as well as photographs of significant places associated with Newman’s life.

The first day concluded with a Eucharistic celebration at the Oratorian church in Tarnów, presided over by Fr Piotr Cebula. The homily was delivered by Fr Mateusz Kiwior, CO^r, who emphasised Newman’s pastoral engagement within the Oratory in Birmingham.

The second day of the Tarnów Newman Days and the conference took place in the assembly hall of the Major Seminary in Tarnów. Introductory remarks were delivered by Fr Dr Hab Grzegorz Baran, Dean of the Faculty of Theology, Tarnów Section, of the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Kraków.

This was followed by a message from Andrzej Jeż, Bishop of Tarnów, read by Fr Piotr Cebula. In his address, the bishop emphasised the significance of Newman’s teaching and person for the contemporary Church and for the mission and vision of universities. Subsequently, Fr Prof. Robert Tyrała, Rector

of the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow, expressed his appreciation for the initiative and acknowledged the efforts of the organisers while also underlining the contemporary relevance and inspirational character of Newman's thought. The introductory session concluded with Fr Dr. Piotr Bajor from the Dicastery for Culture and Education, who read a letter from Cardinal José Tolentino de Mendonça, Prefect of the Dicastery, addressed to the conference participants.

Following the opening session, the conference continued with lectures organised into two thematic panels: *Newman as a Philosopher* and *Newman as a Theologian and Patron of Education*. The first panel began with a lecture by Dr Hab Paweł Kłoczowski, Professor of the University of the National Education Commission, Kraków, entitled "Philosophical Inspirations of Newman's Thought", in which he presented the philosophical sources of Newman's ideas, with particular emphasis on British philosophy.

The next speaker, Dr. hab. Sebastian Gałęcki, Professor of the Jan Długosz University in Częstochowa, delivered a lecture titled "Newman's Argument from Conscience for the Existence of God", reconstructing Newman's argument by integrating various elements of his teaching on conscience. Meanwhile, Fr Dr Piotr Cebula of the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Kraków presented the lecture "Newman's Metaphysics", offering an account of Newman's metaphysical framework, particularly the development of ideas, criteria for evaluating such development, and the process of arriving at the essence of ideas.

The final speaker in this panel was Prof Jan Kłos (John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin), whose lecture "The Contemporary Relevance of the 'Grammar of Assent'" highlighted the enduring significance of Newman's epistemology and his concept of assent as presented in his major philosophical work *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*. The philosophical panel concluded with a discussion moderated by Fr Piotr Cebula.

The second panel focused on *Newman as a Theologian and Patron of Education*. The first speaker, Fr Philip Geister, SJ, PhD, Rector of the Newman Institute in Uppsala, Sweden, delivered a lecture entitled "'God's Noiseless Work': How John Henry Newman Brought Catholic Higher Education to Sweden", presenting the history, development, and current activities of the Institute, all deeply inspired by Newman's thought. The next lecture, "The Development of the Understanding of the Mystery of the Eucharist in J. H. Newman", was delivered by Fr Mateusz Bugno (University of Navarra, Spain), who traced Newman's evolving understanding of the Eucharist from his early reflections to his mature

articulation of the doctrine of the Real Presence in accordance with Roman Catholic teaching.

The third contribution, submitted by Ryan Marr, PhD (Mercy College of Health Sciences, United States), entitled “Restoring the Architectonic Philosophy: Newman’s Response to the Crisis of the University”, emphasised the significance of Newman’s educational philosophy and its relevance for renewing university education understood as an integrated system of interrelated disciplines. This panel also concluded with a discussion moderated by Fr Mateusz Bugno.

The Tarnów Newman Days and the International Scientific Conference were formally concluded by Fr Piotr Cebula, who summarised the proceedings. A publication of the conference papers is planned, and the organisers have announced that the next edition of the Tarnów Newman Days will take place in two years’ time, extending an open invitation to future participants.