

Sermon Preached at Pusey House on the Anniversary of Edward Bouverie Pusey, 16 September 2026.

I shall take as my text this evening the Third verse of the Second chapter of the book of Haggai.

Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?

In the name of the Father

Dr Pusey was a man of robust character. His first rule of contentedness was this: Allow thyself to complain of nothing, not even of the weather.

There was much to despair about in his time, as he sought to rebuild the house, the Church of God. There is much, aside from the weather, which we might reasonably complain about today. Despair is tempting.

And yet we must not give into it. Despair is a sin, because true, total despair leaves no room for God. The task of the Christian is to have faith in the good provenances of God and in the ultimate triumph of Christ and to live his life in light of that faith. Dr Pusey's life was marked by three characteristics that made it possible for him not to despair: loyalty, integrity and devotion.

In our age there is much which might tempt us to despair. What we would give now for even the laziest or most worldly Georgian bishop! Let us take then Dr Pusey as our example, in loyalty, in integrity and in devotion.

I think loyalty is perhaps Dr Pusey's most attractive characteristic. He was loyal to family, to friends and to his church in an age when many were not and even at times when he was given great provocation not to be so. He saw the Church diminished and defamed from without and within, her rights taken from her, her position constantly undermined. And yet he stayed loyal.

Then he saw those who claimed to wish to save the Church from her indignity, abandon her and then defame her. They then by extension, sought to discredit and depress those who stayed. Yet through this, with its intense personal pain, Dr Pusey stayed loyal.

And even when that Church treated him badly, when it used his name as a slanderous insult, when it sought to persecute and discredit his theology, when it gave preferment to much lesser men, still Dr Pusey stayed loyal, and died in her embrace.

I need not detail to you the startling exact parallels in our own day. To point you to Westminster or Rome or Lambeth for comparisons. All we must do is to take heart from his loyalty and to remind ourselves that if we would see again the rebuilding of the house of God, then we must remain within it.

Secondly, we might learn to imitate Dr Pusey's integrity and efforts. He took seriously the study of theology, believed wholeheartedly in the importance of his studies as showing the centrality of God in the academy. Dr Westhaver often reminds us of the fact that Pusey was the

only man in history whose work ethic was thought too intense by the Germans. Dr Pusey contended for what was right not with show but with intensity and integrity.

In Dr Pusey's age, the Jowetts and the Colensos were contending for the idea that a man could not be a serious scholar of Christianity without abandoning orthodox belief in the creeds and in Scripture. Dr Pusey kept his integrity, and demonstrated by his scholarship that this was not true. And time proved him right. For it now is the writing of the 19th Century modernists which seems hidebound by the cares and folly of their age. It was not Dr Pusey's gentle orthodoxy which became corrupted and co-opted in the even darker days of the 20th century. Once again the promise made by Haggai to Zerubbabel played out in its own way in the life of Dr Pusey.

In our age, the integrity of theology is once again undermined. We are told that the teaching of the Fathers is optional, that a knowledge of the history of Christ's Church is optional, that even the study of the basic languages that comprise Holy Scripture are optional. We are told that theology is just another subject, to be swept into a big black man made box marked 'humanities', as if it is just that, an academic subject of human creation and fundamentally a study of humans. The task of our age is to set a different way- to imitate the humility and the uncomplaining diligence of Dr Pusey to show that the study of those things which are holy, is a study unlike any other, which can- indeed which must- sit alongside worship and prayer.

Finally and perhaps most importantly, Dr Pusey knew that the house can only be rebuilt by devotion. Devotion to Christ is what undergirded his loyalty and what inspired his integrity. It is because he knew Christ to be Alpha and Omega, the Lord of all time that he had faith in his time the Church could be rebuilt. The only cure for despair in the present is the hope of eternity- and the only one who can give hope in eternity is Christ.

Devotion to Christ in his holy incarnation, devotion to the wood of his most holy cross, devotion to Christ in the death conquering joy of his Resurrection and devotion to Christ in his glorious ascension. Devotion to his most holy word and to his presence with us through the most blessed sacrament of the altar. These are the things that enabled Dr Pusey to not even complain about the weather, these are the devotions which made his personal piety possible, which in turn gave him the resolve to play his role in the rebuilding of Christ's own Church.

Without devotion to Christ we can be as loyal as we want, as clever as we want, as brave as we want, but we still will not succeed. It is only with devotion to Christ as our foundation and cornerstone that the true spiritual house that is the Church can and will be rebuilt.

Having begun with the words of Dr Pusey I shall end with some by the man to whom he made his first confession and whom he revered as a spiritual guide. Keble said these words in the Assize sermon which began the restoration of the Church of England's house then. Mark and inwardly digest them now, and think how you might play your part in the restoration of her house now.

I do not see how any person can devote himself too entirely to the cause of the Apostolical Church in these realms. There may be, as far as he knows, but a very few to sympathize with him. He may have to wait long, and very likely pass out of this world before he see any abatement in the triumph of disorder and irreligion. But, if he be consistent, he possesses, to the utmost, the personal consolations of a good Christian : and as a true Churchman, he has that encouragement, which no other cause in the world can impart in the same degree: he is calmly, soberly, demonstrably, SURE, that, sooner or later, HIS WILL BE THE WINNING SIDE, and that the victory will be complete, universal, eternal.

