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Q & A: Christopher Lamb

by Michael Sean Winters

Distinctly Catholic

This week at Q & A, we are hearing from editors at the British Catholic weekly *The Tablet* about Pope Benedict's visit to the UK next week. Today, we hear from *Tablet* news editor Christopher Lamb.

The question: What is the most important thing Pope Benedict must say or do while he is in the UK?

Christopher Lamb: While many describe Britain as secular there is also clear evidence of a hunger for spirituality. On one level this is seen at the popularity in 'new age' phenomenon such as horoscopes, astrology and crystal readings. But there is also interest in the Church's contemplative tradition. The popularity of the BBC's *The Monastery* which filmed five men who spent 40 days at Worth Abbey, West Sussex is one such example.

The Pope would do well to focus on how the Catholic faith can respond to people's deepest spiritual needs, particularly through prayer and meditation.

It would be a great help to hear about the Pope's own experience of prayer and his suggestions to those who find it time to find a time for silence in busy lives.

He will have to take on the assumption, common among so many, epitomised in the statement 'I am spiritual but not religious.' The Pope will need to turn the argument on its head and show: 'I am religious in order to be spiritual.'

Recognising the importance of religious in Britain will be important. Are many of the British public aware of the hundreds of monks, friars and nuns who spend their lives serving others, living in community and devoting their time to a spiritual search for God? Benedict XVI could hold them up as a model and a guide for all those with a spiritual thirst.

In contemporary Britain, it is not that people have lost their desire for faith, rather that their attention is

being captured by a more competitive religious market place. The Pope needs to show people that Church does not offer a ?spiritual quick fix? but actually something much more.

Stories in this series on the papal visit to Scotland and England:

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- Hijacking Newman, by Dennis Coday
- Newman: the 'sense' and 'consent' of the faithful, a viewpoint by Robert McClory

All this week in his Distinctly Catholic blog, Michael Sean Winters is interviewing a variety of Newman scholars:

- Fr. Joseph Komonchak, taught ecclesiology at Catholic University, wrote his dissertation on Newman
- Christopher Pramuk, Assistant professor of Theology at Xavier University in Cincinnati
- Ian Ker, Professor at Oxford University and author of a Newman biography
- The Very Reverend Richard Duffield, the Provost of the Birmingham Oratory
- Archbishop Vincent Nichols, the Archbishop of Westminster and Primate of England

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