

## FATHER JOHN WRITES

My dear brothers and sisters,

I well remember that in my homily on the first Sunday of Lent I said that just as Jesus was tempted, so would we be tempted. That we should stand firm because 1.8 billion Catholics throughout the world, plus the Eastern Orthodox, the Anglicans, Methodists were seeking to identify with Jesus in His fast, that we could draw strength from that knowledge.

I of course had no idea just how much havoc coronavirus would bring to our world. This virus is truly evil. Fear, bereavement, loneliness as well as the physical effects of the symptoms of Covid 19 are catastrophic. To make matters worse we are unable to use our normal support structures; our churches are locked, our friends and family members must keep their distance. Normally when we are sad or worried we can go into church, light a candle, attend mass. We turn to our loved ones for hug or a hand on a shoulder. Not this time. I was particularly mindful last Sunday of the thousands of mothers and their families who were unable to come together to enjoy each other's fellowship. The cost to businesses large and small will be immeasurable.

Enough of the negativity, we are Catholic Christians. We know that evil never has the last word – God does. We those 1.8 billion together with our separated brothers and sisters must continue to stand firm. So we cannot go to mass, but can attend mass virtually on the internet or by television or radio. We can pray:- the Rosary, Stations of the Cross, the Liturgy of the Hours. We can spend more time in intercession, goodness knows we have no shortage of intentions! We can talk to each other on the telephone or text or email, especially with those who are in greatest need of our loving attention. Those able to can reach out to the elderly and those not able to leave their home at all. My mum used to say “it's no good worrying about the things you can't do, celebrate the things you can”.

This coming Sunday our bishops have asked us to join them in rededicating our nation to Our Lady as Her Dowry. We can participate by the use of the live streaming on internet and television, or if that's not possible then using the prayers of entrustment ourselves.

God bless you in your endeavours to remain close to Him and may Our Lady of Walsingham intercede for you and yours.

Fr. John

## A MESSAGE FROM THE RECTOR OF WALSINGHAM

I take this opportunity to write to you before the Re-dedication of England as the Dowry of Mary on the 29th March 2020 from Our Lady's Shrine at Walsingham.

I am delighted to be able to share with you a message from Pope Francis which has been sent to Cardinal Nichols. The Holy Father "prays that the act of re-dedication will inspire all to persevere in the urgent task of sharing the joy of the Gospel with the men and women of our time". The Holy Father once more entrusts "Mary's Dowry" to her maternal protection and willingly imparts his Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of grace and peace in the Lord.

In 1893 Pope Leo XIII wrote about "the love which burnt within the heart of your forefathers towards the great Mother of God ... to whose service they consecrated themselves with such abundant proofs of devotion, that the kingdom itself acquired the singular and highly honourable title of 'Mary's Dowry". Later he prophesied that "When England returns to Walsingham, Our Lady will return to England".

I realise that in the light of the restrictions under which we now operate the Re-dedication will now not take place at the Sunday Mass, but it is a prayer that can take place anywhere and indeed anytime. I invite you to encourage your people to take part in whatever way they can, whenever they can. A range of resources, including the livestream and prayers for the Re-dedication, are all available from [www.behold2020.com](http://www.behold2020.com).

Walsingham Live will be streaming from the Basilica 24/7, with a timetable of prayers, devotions, and Mass available. This means that those who are isolating can make their own pilgrimage at home. This stream, along with more content, can be found at [www.LentInIsolation.com](http://www.LentInIsolation.com).

In the midst of such current turmoil and fear, we once again turn to the one that God called Mother, seeking her guidance and protection. The Re-dedication is a timely moment, where we will join with our brothers and sisters in prayer from all over the world, confident that Mary our Mother leads us to do the will of Her Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.

I believe the message of Our Lady at Walsingham, which is to "Share my Joy in the Annunciation", can bring much comfort to our people. Mary rejoices because "he who is mighty has done great things for me" and we can, even in the present difficulties, draw

strength from that.

I would like to reflect on the story of the Annunciation which I believe will be a great source of strength and comfort for us and our people at this moment in time. Our Lady was faced with a challenge that caused her to be “greatly troubled” at the prospect of being God’s Mother, asking ‘How can this be?’. Gabriel reassures her, “Do not be afraid, Mary”, and explains that “the power of the Most High will cover you for nothing is impossible for God”.

At this moment in history, our people are indeed “greatly troubled”: many are afraid and wondering what the future will hold. Gabriel responded to Mary’s anxieties with a message that gave her hope because it was “Good News”. This News is not simply the account of what is happening in the world – like a TV bulletin - but is an insight and wisdom that strengthened Mary, and enabled her to respond to God’s will. When we open ourselves to God’s Spirit, we find that all things are possible for God. In the midst of the turmoil of her times and the anxiety of her heart, this message sets Mary free and gives her the confidence to say, “Let it be done to me according to Your Word”. This is Mary’s Joy, and she wishes to share it with us!

Yours sincerely in Christ,

Mgr John Armitage

Rector

[www.walsingham.org.uk](http://www.walsingham.org.uk)



His Eminence Cardinal Vincent Nichols  
Archbishop of Westminster  
President of the Bishops ' Conference of England and Wales

His Holiness Pope Francis sends prayerful good wishes to the faithful of England and Wales as they solemnly rededicate themselves in humble service to Almighty God under the patronage of Our Lady of Walsingham. Mindful of the longstanding devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and to the See of Peter that characterizes the Church in these lands, His Holiness prays that the act of rededication will inspire all to persevere in the urgent task of sharing the joy of the Gospel with the men and women of our time. As they strive to bear witness to the beauty of our Catholic faith, to promote unity between Christians and to proffer the merciful love of Jesus to the poorest of our brothers and sisters, he encourages them to draw wisdom and strength from the example and intercession of the country's many confessors and martyrs. With these sentiments, the Holy Father once more entrusts "Mary 's Dowry" to her maternal protection, and willingly imparts his Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of grace and peace in the Lord.

**Cardinal Pietro Parolin**  
**Secretary of State**

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His Eminence  
Cardinal Vincent G. Nichols  
Archbishop of Westminster  
President of the Bishops'  
Conference of England and Wales  
WESTMINSTER

## THE REDEDICATION IN 2020

On Sunday 29th March at 12noon, The Rededication will take place throughout the country.

In 1381, England was dedicated to Mary by King Richard II and was 'set apart for her among the nations. This year, the Christians of England are called to make a personal dedication to Mary, taking up her example as Christ's first disciple. History shows us that when the people pray a surrender to God's will for their lives, society is transformed. By taking up this personal dedication in 2020, you can be a part of the renewal of this nation, drawing ourselves closer to the will of our loving God, through Mary.

We respond to this invitation on the day of Rededication in two ways; by making a **personal promise** and a **communal entrustment**. Our personal promise brings us closer to Mary, the first disciple of Christ. In this we unite in her joy by following her openness to God's call. Our communal entrustment unites us together as the people of our country in prayer, by renewing the vows of dedication made to Mary by our ancestors.

### ACT OF ENTRUSTMENT OF ENGLAND TO THE VIRGIN MARY

Based on Prayer of Erasmus 1532, Dedication of England to the Mother of God 1893,  
Prayer for England, Cardinal Griffin's Act of Consecration 1948, Act of Consecration St John Paul 1982

**Prayer** O Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God and our most gentle Queen and Mother, look down in mercy upon England thy "Dowry" and upon us all who greatly hope and trust in thee.

**Response** We your faithful people assembled here offer you this country in which we live. Once it was yours, all its children were your children and you were honoured throughout England as its Protectress and its Queen. Again do we consecrate it as your Dowry, and entrust it to your maternal care.

**Prayer** By thee it was that Jesus our Saviour and our hope was given unto the world; and He has given thee to us that we might hope still more.

**Response** To you we entrust the Church, which invokes you as Mother. On earth you preceded her in the pilgrimage of faith. Comfort her in her difficulties and trials. Make her always the sign and instrument of intimate union with God and of the unity of the whole human race. To you, Mother of the human family, and of the nations, we confidently entrust the whole of humanity with its hopes and fears. Let it not lack the light of true wisdom. Guide it to seek freedom and justice for all. Direct its steps in the ways of peace. Enable all to meet Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life.

**Prayer** Plead for us thy children, whom thou didst receive and accept at the foot of the Cross, O sorrowful Mother.

**Response** Pray, O Holy Mother of God, for the conversion of heart of the people of England, restoration of the sick, consolation for the troubled, repentance of sinners, peace to the departed. Queen of Peace, pray for us and give to the world the peace for which all peoples are longing, peace in the truth, justice and charity of Christ. Give peace to the nations and to the souls of all, that in peace, the Kingdom of God may prevail.

**Prayer** Intercede for our separated brethren, that with us in the one true fold they may be united to the supreme Shepherd, the Vicar of thy Son.

**Response** May your prayers bring back this country to the fullness of its ancient faith. May your intercession lead us to a closer union with your divine Son. We offer you all the people of this land, especially those who know you so little or not at all. May all in our country know Christ, the light of the world and its only Saviour

**Prayer** Pray for us all, dear Mother, that by faith fruitful in good works we may all deserve to see and praise God, together with thee, in our heavenly home.

**Response** May we who follow your Son, be fruitful in the good work of building a culture of life in our world, where all human life is treasured and the gift of God's creation is respected and cared for, so that all may share the fruits of Gods generous love

V: Pray for us O Holy Mother of God

R: That we may be made worthy of the Promises of Christ.

V: Let us Pray:

R: O alone of all women, Mother and Virgin, Mother most happy, Virgin most pure, sinful as we are, we come to see you who are all pure, we salute you, we honour you as how we may with our humble offerings. May thy Son grant us, that imitating thy most holy manners, we also, by the grace of the Holy Spirit may deserve spiritually to conceive the Lord Jesus in our inmost soul, and once conceived never to lose Him. Amen.