



BRIEFING NOTES ON THE RE-DEDICATION OF ENGLAND AS THE DOWRY OF MARY

- What will happen and how we will prepare?
- Historical Background.
- Artistic Representations of the Dowry.
- Does this title have Papal Recognition?
- What is the significance of Walsingham in this?
- Background reading: *Our Lady's Dowry: Fr Bridgett CSSR*
(Available from Amazon)
- Attachments:
 - *Pastoral Letter of the Bishops of England and Wales 1893*
 - *The Dowry Exhibition*

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WHAT WILL HAPPEN IN 2020 AND HOW WILL WE PREPARE?

Support of the Bishops

In their November 2017 meeting the Bishops agreed to the re-dedication of England as the Dowry of Mary on or around the Solemnity of the Annunciation 2020.

A modern-day dedication

The re-dedication in 2020, unlike the dedication of King Richard II in 1381, will not be the gift of the country of England, but the personal gift of the faith of the people of England to the Mother of God, to seek her help in building a strong spiritual foundation for the New Evangelisation. We call upon Our Lady to guide and protect our country in the years to come that the people of our country may work together to build a Common Good, as we seek to embrace the truth of the Gospel, that inspires us to create a culture that respects life, embraces the great



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diversity of our people, and inspires all to a greatness of heart that will serve our community, seeking the good of others before ourselves, especially the poor and the marginalised of our world.

A two-year spiritual preparation

This will be launched on the Solemnity of the Annunciation 2018.

- Part of the Spiritual preparations will be the Dowry Tour, where the statue of Our Lady of Walsingham from the Slipper Chapel will visit every Cathedral in England over the next two years. An exhibition explaining the Dowry of Mary will be on show, along with a programme of prayer and talks. For details see the website www.dowrytour.org.uk. The first Cathedral visit will be Liverpool 21st - 23rd June 2018, other dates are published on the website.
- A new prayer based on the Angelus, called the Angelus Promise will be promoted to assist individuals in their preparation for the Re-dedication. It is to help people follow the example of Our Lady, in being open to the Word of God, to enable us to seek and do the will of God, as we take to heart her words at Cana, "*Do whatever he tells you.*"
- The message of Our Lady at Walsingham in 1061 asks us to share in her joy of the Annunciation. The 14 C Walsingham (Pynson) Ballad reminds us:

*“Walsingham, ‘in thee is built New Nazareth’
Where shall be held in a memorial
The great joy of my salutation,
You are called in every realm and region
The Holy Land, Our Lady’s Dowry.
In you is built new Nazareth,
A house to the honour of the Queen of Heaven
And her most glorious Salutation
When Gabriel said at Old Nazareth,
Ave, this same joy shall here be daily and for ever remembered.*

In order that we may share with Our Lady “The great joy of my salutation” the recitation of the Angelus will be promoted in homes, parishes, schools and communities, and the ringing of the Angelus bell three times a day.



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The Day of Re-Dedication

This will take place on the nearest Sunday to the Solemnity of the Annunciation 2020 at 12 Noon. An order of Service will be prepared and distributed in due course.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The word "dowry" (from the Latin *dos*, meaning "donation") is sometimes understood as the donation accompanying a bride. In medieval English law, however, the meaning is reversed—a husband would set apart a portion of his estate designated for the maintenance of his wife, should she become a widow. The historical understanding of England as "Mary's Dowry" is understood in this sense—that, England has been "set apart" for Mary.

The title is believed to originate in the time of St Edward the Confessor (1042 - 1066) in whose reign the Holy House was built, though its precise origin is unknown. It had become widespread by the middle of the fourteenth century, and around the year 1350, a mendicant preacher stated in a sermon that "*it is commonly said that the land of England is the Virgin's dowry*", reflecting the origin of the title, in the deep devotion of the English people to the Mother of God that existed in medieval England.

King Richard II, in 1381, dedicated England to Mary in a ceremony at Westminster Abbey, on the feast of Corpus Christi in thanksgiving for his Kingdom being saved at the time of the Peasants revolt. (See Wilton Diptych below: National Gallery - London) He made a pilgrimage to Walsingham two years later.

In 1399, Thomas Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury, wrote to his suffragan bishops:

"The contemplation of the great mystery of the Incarnation has drawn all Christian nations to venerate her, from whom came the first beginnings of our redemption. But we English, being the servants of her special inheritance and her own dowry, as we are commonly called, ought to surpass others in the fervour of our praises and devotions."



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So, the title of England as 'The Dowry of Mary' was in use by the end of the fourteenth century, but Archbishop Arundel's letter further indicates that at the time of his writing it was already in common use, indicating an earlier origin.

The title denotes that England belongs in some special way to Mary who is the country's "protectress", defender or guardian, by her prayers of intercession. It is a title of England, established by an act of the King, and proclaimed by Archbishop Arundel, which has never been rescinded by Monarch or Parliament. In the reign of Henry V, (1386 -1422) the title was being applied to England in various Latin texts. According to the monastic chronicler, Thomas Elmham, English priests sought the intercession of "the Virgin, protectress of her dower" on the eve of the Battle of Agincourt in 1415.

ARTISTIC REPRESENTATIONS OF THE DOWRY

The first known artistic evidence for the title is found in a manuscript in the British Museum written during the reign of James I (1) It describes a painting which once hung in the English Hospice of St Thomas in Rome, now the Venerable English College, which showed St Edmund, Martyr (869) kneeling before Our Lady and offering England to her. He holds a parchment with a Latin inscription: "*Dos tua Virgo pia Haec est quare rege, Maria*" 'This is your dowry, O pious Virgin'.

The Wilton Diptych, in the National Gallery in London was completed around 1395, and depicts Richard II kneeling before the Virgin and Child. The painting portrays the acts of devotions of the King as he presented England to Our Lady as her Dowry in Westminster Abbey on the feast of Corpus Christi 1381. Carried by a nearby angel is the Cross of St George, the staff of which is surmounted by an orb featuring a minuscule map of England.



Dos tua Virgo pia haec est, "This is thy dowry, O Holy Virgin".



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The Palace of Westminster is so called because it served that purpose for the Kings of England before it became the seat of Parliament. Beside the palace was the royal chapel of St Stephen to which was annexed a smaller chapel called Our Lady of the Pew. These chapels were converted into the Parliament by Edward VI and the paintings on the wall were covered over with oaken panels. In 1800, when the Act of Union united the English and Irish Parliaments, some alterations had to be made to the chamber. When the panelling was taken off the wall, paintings were revealed in the interstices, which were as fresh and clear as the day they had been covered up, owing to their being protected from the air. According to the parliamentary reports of the time, behind the Speaker's chair was a picture of the Virgin and Child with St Joseph bending over them, and King Edward III and his Queen and his sons and daughters making an offering to Our Lady.

What are we to make of this picture? Fr Bridgett answers,

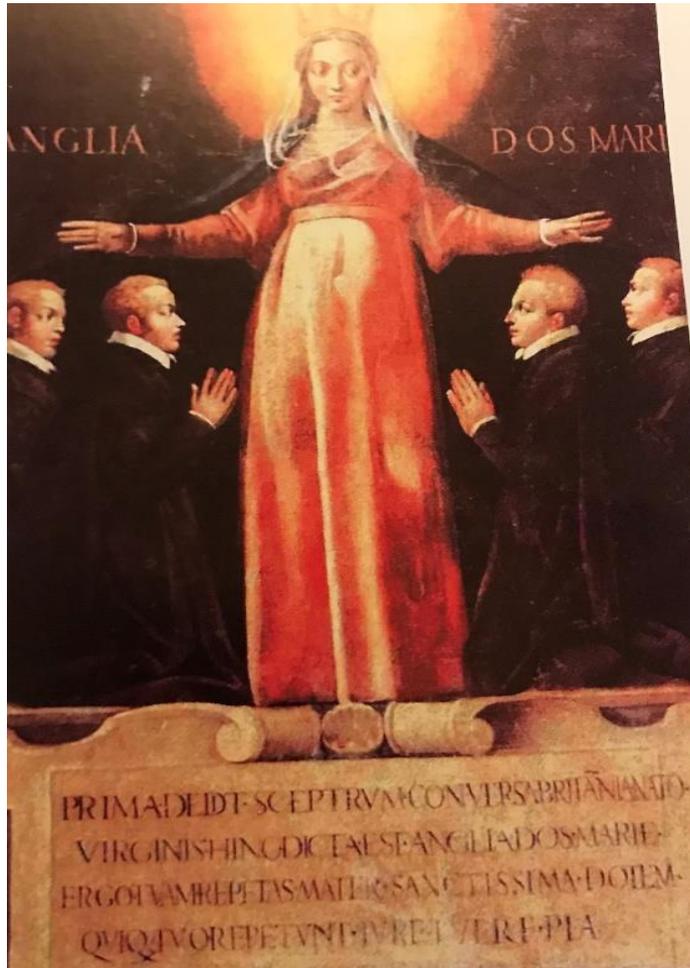
"It may either have commemorated an historical event, or its execution may be considered an historical event in itself. It is not, nor does it record an act of private devotion... Acolytes were holding lighted tapers and two angels were represented as taking part in a solemnity. It is the consecration of England, through its Sovereign to the Blessed Virgin. It was before the eyes of every King and noble until hidden by Edward VI "

In the wake of the Reformation, the notion of England enjoying a special association or relationship with Mary became an important aspect of recusant Catholic spirituality. St Gregory's Seminary in Seville, had a painting of Our Lady with arms outstretched over the heads of English seminarians with the inscription, "Anglia Dos Maria" England is the Dowry of Mary. At the base of the picture there is a further Latin inscription that reads;

"Britain, once converted, was the first one to give the scepter to Our Lady's Son, and from then on England has been known as the Dowry of Mary. Thus, we give back the gift, Holy Mother, and pray you to defend, mercifully and with justice all those who are trying to recover it."



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This painting now hangs in the Royal Academy of Medicine in Seville.

DOES THIS TITLE HAVE PAPAL RECOGNITION?

On the 20th May 1983 the Bishops of England and Wales issued a Pastoral Letter on "The Consecration of the England to the Mother of God and to the Prince of the Apostles." (See below)

On the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, 1893, the Bishops of England and Wales, in response to the wishes of the Pope Leo XIII, consecrated England to the Mother of God and St Peter in the Oratory Church in London. The action was a direct result of an audience with Pope Leo XIII in which he recalled that this country had



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long been known as Our Lady's Dowry, thereby giving papal approval to what had been a hallowed tradition. The Holy Father spoke of:

"the 'wonderful filial love which burnt within the hearts 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 title of Mary's Dowry."

He also recalled the special devotion paid to St Peter as the principal patron of the country. He desired that this devotion to these "two patrons of the faith" and 'guardians of all virtue" be revived and a new consecration made by a solemn rite. He foresaw it bringing great benefit on the people at that time which marked a new beginning for the Catholic Faith in England.

*"To sum up all, it may be said that, in the mind of the Holy Father, and in our mind, the object and purpose of this solemn consecration of England to the great Mother of God and to Blessed Peter is to obtain an abundant outpouring of blessings upon the whole country and people of England the blessing of unity in Faith, Hope and Charity the blessing of such temporal plenty and prosperity as may redound to the glory of God and the salvation of souls." **Bishops of England and Wales***

This Dedication to Our Lady was to be remembered each year on the Feast of the Holy Rosary and to St Peter on the Sunday after the 29th June.

Cardinal Griffin Consecrated England to the Immaculate Heart in Walsingham in 1948.

In 1967, on the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul, Pope Paul VI referred to the Dowry at an ordination of some British priests:

"On this feast, at this Ordination performed by the Successor of the Prince of the Apostles, We turn confidently to Saints Peter and Paul, that they may intercede for these new Priests and secure every blessing upon their service to the people of God. We pray also to the Saints of England, Scotland and Wales, particularly to Saint Bede the Venerable, heavenly patron of your College. Above all, We claim the loving assistance of the Mother of God for these new shepherds from that land so long and affectionately known as "Mary's Dowry".

In more recent times, Cardinal Heenan, Archbishop of Westminster (1963-1975), acting on behalf of the Bishops of England & Wales, petitioned Pope Paul VI for permission for the Hail Mary to be recited at the conclusion of the Bidding Prayers in recognition of the special devotion of the people of England reflected in the



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unique title Dowry of Mary. At their meeting in October 1966 the Bishops directed that such inclusion of the Hail Mary was to be obligatory.

Pope St John Paul II spoke of England as Mary's Dowry in 1982, when he celebrated Mass at Wembley Stadium to where the statue of Our Lady of Walsingham had been taken from the Slipper Chapel, and at the pope's instructions, placed on the altar. In his homily the pope said,

"Our society needs to recover a sense of God's loving presence, and a renewed sense of respect for his will. Let us learn this from Mary our Mother. In England, the Dowry of Mary, the faithful, for centuries, have made pilgrimage to her shrine at Walsingham. for centuries. Today Walsingham comes to Wembley, and the statue of Our Lady of Walsingham, present here, reminds us it is Mary who will teach us how to be silent, how to listen to the voice of God in the midst of the busy and noisy world. We need to live as Mary did, in the presence of God, raising our minds and hearts to him in our daily activities and worries."

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WALSINGHAM IN THIS?

"When England returns to Walsingham, Our Lady will return to England"

These prophetic words of Pope Leo XIII seem to indicate that Walsingham is intimately associated with the spiritual health of England. Mary was the first disciple, she has guided and inspired the Church since the beginning. She was the one who accompanied her Son from the moment of his conception at the Annunciation, who stood at the foot of the Cross, and was present at the birth of the Church at Pentecost. This was the cause of Mary's Joy, that she witnessed the events of her son and saviour's life.

The events of 1061 in England arose out of the devotion of the Lady Richeldis, who had a great desire to honour the Mother of God. Walsingham is certainly not the oldest Marian shrine in England, but it is the place where Our Lady made herself known "in Spirit" and asked for the replica of the Holy House to be built so that *"all could share in the joy of my Annunciation"* The fruits of this manifestation of the Spirit, brought joy, comfort and hope to all who came and continue to come on pilgrimage

The Walsingham (Pynson) Ballad reflects the tradition that the title Dowry of Mary goes back to St Edward the Confessor, in whose reign the Holy House was built.



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Whether the title originated in Walsingham or not the title was certainly promoted there. The Holy House in Walsingham was erected as a replica of Mary's House in Nazareth, which led to England becoming known as the "Holy Land, Our Lady's Dowry", and Walsingham being called the "New Nazareth":

*O England great cause have you to be glad, to be
Compared to the land of promise, Sion.
You attain by grace to stand in that degree
Through this glorious Lady's support,
To be called in every realm and region
The Holy Land, Our Lady's Dowry;
Thus, are you named in old antiquity.*

*And this is the reason as it appears by a likeness,
For in you is built new Nazareth, a mansion,
To the honour of the heavenly empress
And of her most glorious annunciation,
Chief principal and ground of our salvation,
When Gabriel said at old Nazareth 'Ave',
This joy to be daily remembered here.*

(1) *Our Lady's Dowry* by Father Bridget - Page V, Burns & Oats, third edition