



# CATHOLIC NATIONAL SHRINE AND BASILICA OF OUR LADY

*Walsingham - "England's Nazareth"*

Dear Father

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  
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Conference of England and Wales  
WESTMINSTER