



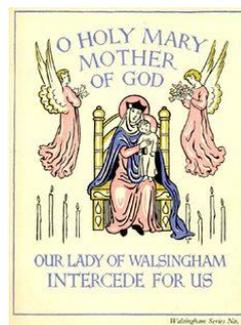
Dear parishioners,

Once again, our regular update on parish life in these strange and unsettling times.

### 1. Masses at Holy Ghost

As you will be aware, following the Prime Minister's address on Monday night, all places of worship are closed for the time being – including, therefore, our church.

Fr Tom continues to say Mass privately in the church each day, and these Masses are being live streamed. Daily Mass is at 9.30, Monday to Saturday, and on Sundays there will be two Masses – at 11.00 am and 6.00 pm. You can access them via the links on the separate email we are sending all those on our mailing list. Fr Richard is also saying Mass every day, in his 'house chapel' at the Presbytery. The whole parish is remembered in our prayers each day. We remember too all those most effected by this pandemic, and all those key workers – especially our medical staff – who are working courageously and tirelessly to bring help where it is needed.



### 2. The re-dedication of England to Our Lady

This Sunday – 29<sup>th</sup> March – sees the 'Re-dedication of England to Our Lady'. This was to have been observed with some solemnity, in every Cathedral and Parish in the country. Now, it will have to be done more simply – but it is still important that it is done.

#### What is this 're-dedication'?

For many centuries, especially during the medieval period, England was well known for its devotion to Mary, the Mother of God. This devotion was especially associated with the shrine at Walsingham in Norfolk, where, in 1061 Our Lady appeared to a woman named Richeldis, and asked her to build there a replica of the 'Holy House' in Nazareth, where the Archangel Gabriel had appeared to Mary at the Annunciation. All those who visited the Holy House, Our Lady promised, would have a share in her joy. Walsingham became one of the most important pilgrimage sites in Europe, and England grew to regard itself as being in some way under Our Lady's special care and protection.

This situation was formalised by King Richard II in 1381. King Richard lived at a chaotic time in English history. The country was only just recovering from the terrible plague known as the 'Black Death' (which came to and end about 1351). In the aftermath of this terrible pestilence – in which anything up to 50% of the population may have perished – there was much social unrest. This culminated in the 'Peasants' Revolt' of 1381. Feeling ill-used and oppressed by their landlords, an army of poor folk from Kent and Essex gathered at Blackheath, and then marched on London. They may indeed have had legitimate grievances – but their revolt threatened to unleash anarchy. Royal officials were put to death, and the Archbishop of Canterbury (who was also Lord Chancellor) was murdered. In this situation, King Richard decided to ride out and confront the rebels himself. Before doing so, he stopped to pray at the shrine of Our Lady at Westminster Abbey, entrusting his kingdom to her. He then proceeded to Smithfield, where he was able to calm the situation, saying to the mob 'I am your leader, follow me'. The King's brave intervention defused the tension, and by the end of the day the moment of crisis had passed.

From this time onwards England became known as 'Mary's Dowry' (in medieval parlance, a 'dowry' was a piece of property which a man put aside for his mother – so England was now seen as 'belonging' to Mary in a very particular way). This term continued to be used throughout the medieval period – it dropped out of use at the Reformation – and then was revived among Catholics in the Nineteenth Century, and up to the present day.

The re-dedication of England this coming Sunday has been planned for several years, and no one could have imagined we would be celebrating it at such a time as we are now living through. But it is certainly very timely! We do need Our Lady's protection today more than ever – and in our prayers this Sunday we ask her prayers, not for ourselves only, but for our whole country in this time of crisis.

Fr Tom will make the re-dedication 'publicly' at Mass on Sunday, as will bishops and priests up and down the country. We invite you to join with them by praying to Our Lady with your family. You can use any Marian prayer you choose – the Rosary, the Litany of Our Lady, the 'Hail Holy Queen' or just a 'Hail Mary'. The important thing is to remember Our Lady this Sunday – and once again place ourselves under her special protection.

### **3. Final thoughts**

At this time when we cannot meet together as a parish, it is more important than ever that we think of each other and pray for each other. Be assured that you are remembered every day by your priests.

With our blessing,

Fr Richard and Fr Tom