

## **England's Re-dedication as "Mary's Dowry" in Face of the Current Pandemic**

Today, Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March 2020, England was once again dedicated to Our Lady as the 'Dowry of Mary'. The Bishops of England and Wales decided in 2017 that the time was right for England to be rededicated to the Mother of God, renewing the first dedication made by King Richard II in 1381 at Westminster Abbey as he asked for Our Lady's protection during a period of great political turmoil

You could say that we are once again in need of protection during the current pandemic which is sweeping across the world. In a very short time our lives have been drastically changed leaving us all feeling very strange. There is an eerie feeling in the streets of Solihull as we go for shopping or exercise. It's as if we are living in anticipation of something terrible about to happen without really knowing quite what. All the familiar aspects of our lives as Catholics have disappeared, at least for the time being. No public Mass, no confession available, no Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and a closed church. Some parishioners have reported feeling quite bereft and sad, like when someone close to us dies and we walk around in a daze.

It would be quite wrong to think that God has sent this trial upon us to punish us but, because he is in charge of everything in the universe He has created, nothing happens without his permission. God doesn't want to see His children suffer and die but He sometimes He allows it as part of His permissive will. If this is the case then there must be a reason why this virus has taken such a hold on the world. It's up to us to work out, through prayer and reading the scriptures, what this might mean for us. It might be time for a good examination of conscience to discover what has gone wrong in our lives, a time to stop and think, a time to reconnect with our faith.

Sometimes by being deprived of something we want it even more. Perhaps God thinks we have taken our faith for granted and gone a bit lukewarm. Maybe our faith has weakened in recent years as a result of the onslaught of the secular culture in which we are living. It might be

time for us to rededicate ourselves and our families to the protection of Our Lady.

In the Middle Ages, England was one of the most Marian countries in Europe. We hope that today's re-dedication will rekindle love for Mary in England and encourage many people to seek her protection in their hour of need. This is all the more important in this time of crisis where it has become clear that as human beings we cannot control everything.

There is no doubt that in the years following the Council during the 1960s devotion to Our Lady greatly reduced among the Catholic faithful and in many churches statues and altars dedicated to Mary were removed or downgraded. This was a tragedy at the time and has contributed to the lack of faith and devotion among Catholics right up to the present day. The rededication of England to Mary will foster the resurgence of Marian piety and hopefully reverse decades of neglect of devotions to Our Lady following the Council, when there was a concerted effort to suppress popular devotions.

Bishop Mark Davies of Shrewsbury has expressed his hope that the rededication will save England from “the rapid de-Christianisation of British society” and will lead to “the bright hope of a new evangelization. I have asked the faithful to make use of the daily Angelus to entrust our families and our nation once more to Our Lady who invites us to share her ‘yes’ to God’s plan — in the face of the many challenges and opportunities of this moment in our history,” he said.

Deacon Kevin