

Behold 2020: The Re-Dedication of England.

We reflect on the ancient Marian title of England. Mary's Dowry.

The first dedication was made by King Richard II in Westminster Abbey as he sought the protection of Our Lady in the face of great political turmoil. At this point, England received the title 'Mary's Dowry'; meaning that England was 'set aside' as a gift, a dowry, for Our Lady under her guidance and protection.

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 good 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. There is a tradition that the title goes back to St Edward the Confessor (1042 – 1066).

Mary's Dowry, therefore, is a title of England, established by an act of the King, and proclaimed by Archbishop Thomas Arundel, which has never been rescinded by Monarch or Parliament. Our Bishops have, over the years, consecrated our country to the Mother of God for her prayers and protection, and in reparation for the sins of the past. The first being at the request of Pope Leo XIII in 1893 *"The wonderful love which burnt within the heart of your forefathers and mothers 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.'"* (Pope Leo XIII 1893)

On Sunday 29th March, the re-dedication will take place throughout our country. As King Richard II once gave England as a gift to Our Lady for her guidance, so we, too, seek Mary's protection and prayers, giving ourselves through this act of dedication. We respond to this invitation on the day of the re-dedication, in two ways:

A Personal Promise:

By praying The Angelus Promise, a prayer in which we say "yes" in union with Our Lady through the words of the Annunciation.

A Communal Entrustment:

As the people, we will, once again, renew the vows of dedication made to Mary by King Richard II, praying together the Act of Entrustment.

The prayer of the Feast of Our Lady of Walsingham:

Grant we pray, almighty God, that as in the mystery of the Incarnation, the blessed and ever Virgin Mary conceived your Son in her heart before she conceived Him in her womb, so we, your pilgrim people, rejoicing in her motherly care, may welcome him into our hearts, and become a holy house fit for his eternal dwelling. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.