

## Scripture Reflection: Feast of Our Lady of Walsingham: "England's Nazareth".



Our Lady of Walsingham

"She is not only the mother of Jesus but the spiritual mother of all believers" John Henry Newman

*September 24 is the feast day of Our Lady of Walsingham.*

The vision of Our Lady to a devout Saxon woman in 1061 showed her the home in Nazareth where the Holy family lived. She was asked to build a replica of the house in Walsingham, which was a simple workman's home made of wood. The visions which took place at Walsingham was at a time of national crisis: shortly before the Norman invasion in 1066. The vision of Our Lady which this feast day celebrates, is important for two main reasons:

- It was to teach people the significance of the home as a place where Christian values and love are developed. Mary wanted the shrine to be dedicated to the place where the angel Gabriel told her she would give birth to Jesus, the Annunciation. This in effect was the beginning of her family life.
- And that God, through Mary's intervention and guidance, is still caring for his people.

The development of Walsingham as a great site of medieval Christian pilgrimage encouraged the people in their faith during the political and economic upheavals of the times.

The original shrine was destroyed by Henry V111 (1538 A.D.)

Many visions of Our Lady seem to appear before great political or social events: they give guidance and hope.

*Our Lady of Fatima* occurred in 1917 at the time of the First World War. It is recognised as a devotion of protection and hope for those suffering especially in times of uncertainty.

*Our Lady of Guadalupe* in 1531: when there was a crisis of religions and culture between the indigenous peoples of Latin America and the Christian European conquerors. Our Lady appeared as a pregnant indigenous woman and was surrounded by symbols of Aztec culture. She identified herself as "Mother of the very true deity". She is venerated as a great symbol of reconciliation between peoples.

*Our Lady of Lourdes* 1858. Our Lady appeared to Bernadette and in a series of visions asked for prayer for the conversion of sinners. Her particular message is one of hope, faith and maternal love. It came as a response to the French Enlightenment movement, which led many people to challenge the teachings of the Church. She emphasised God's love especially for those ill and suffering.

"Mary is the Mediatrix of the grace that flows always and only through Jesus Christ, by the action of the Holy Spirit" Pope Francis.