

# Dowry

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*“O Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God and our most gentle Queen and Mother, look down in mercy upon England thy Dowry.”*



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## **Holy Mass outdoors during the 1944 Warsaw Uprising** (polishclub.org).

Westerners in 2022 can learn from the heroic fidelity demonstrated by Catholic Poland during WWII and later. Hoping against hope, a generation of young Catholic men and women stood up for their faith and country both at home and abroad.

We British and Irish Catholics must love deeper Christ, Our Lady, Holy Church and the saints; and gather together in order to save our souls in the present and forthcoming trials. At the heart of the current battle is the education of our little ones as God’s children.

With us, come and stand in the breach.

# Editorial: It Is Happening – St Mary’s Academy

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A year ago we announced plans for opening a branch of Regina Caeli Academy (RCA) in Warrington. It was successfully launched last September. We are now in the middle of our second trimester. Children, parents and staff are very pleased with RCA Warrington. It is a valued component in our wider undertaking to provide a strong Catholic hub in the North West of England.

Many of you supported our vision in our Priory Campaign (2018-2020). We explained at the time the need for Catholics to regroup in order to survive. We advocated the ‘village option’ as the safest in our troubled times. Four years later, this has become even more necessary. We must come and dwell close to each other as in a village. Families draw a lot of strength from the geographical proximity with other like-minded families. This network of relationships has the church as its centre, that is, the actual building where families and individuals meet every Sunday and feast days, and even every day for Low Masses and devotions. Read the full article *The Village Option* in our magazine *Dowry* ([fssp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/dowry36.pdf](http://fssp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/dowry36.pdf)), and in the *Catholic Herald* issue of 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2018: ([catholicherald.co.uk/a-nazareth/](http://catholicherald.co.uk/a-nazareth/)). A key feature of this plan is Catholic education, as now provided at RCA Warrington and RCA Bedford.

A great bonus of RCA Warrington is its location within the premises of St

Mary’s Shrine, legally owned by the Priestly Fraternity of St Peter. It provides a secure and welcoming setting for children and families. Parents can safely park within our private car parks with off-street access to Priory Court where the classroom is and to St Mary’s Church. The staff can conveniently walk the children to the beautiful St Mary’s Church next door for Holy Masses, prayers or sacramentals such

opportunities. More families are willing to follow.



The Academy is an essential part of our educational mission. Some of our families have children in ordinary schools. Others are home educators. A growing number of parents nationwide are realising that the Catholic faith is not successfully passed on to their children at school. In no few cases, relativism and even immorality are inculcated to the little ones. Unsurprisingly, only a tiny minority of children still practice their Catholic faith in teenage and after. How then can parents better fulfil their duties as primary educators of their children, they wonder? In conscience, most find that they should no longer send their children in such schools. For various reasons however, many parents rule out homeschooling as beyond their capabilities. The Academy offers a viable solution: two full days taught by qualified teachers in the classroom, and another two days taught by parents at home following the RCA curriculum and material all laid out for them in advance. This leaves time to the mother for work or other activities, while children benefit from learning as part of a social group two days a week (Mondays and Thursdays). Extracurricular activities are being envisaged at St Mary’s if we have enough children interested, such as dance and football. In addition, parents who so wish can attend our

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*Welcome to the  
RCA Open Day  
in Warrington  
on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> March,  
11am-2pm*

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as the St Blaise Blessing of Throats. In addition, parents can rely on the ministry of the several FSSP priests who live on site: including daily Confessions, Holy Mass and Holy Rosary; Eucharistic adoration; devotions; adult formation; spiritual direction, etc. Over the past year, already half a dozen families have moved to or near Warrington to benefit from our liturgical, devotional and educational



Wednesday Home Education Group. The latter includes shared lunch after our daily 12:10pm Holy Mass, classes taught by a priest and by parents, junior Choir, recreations and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. Some mums also enjoy our Monday morning Toddlers' Group.

Whether or not you have children to send now, we would be very glad to meet you at our RCA Warrington Open Day on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> March next. We welcome new children, parents, staff and benefactors. Come and meet our staff, parents, children and chaplain.

- 11am: Presentation;
- 12:10pm: Holy Mass with homily on education by Academy Chaplain Fr de Malleray;

- 1pm: Shared lunch and further Q&As.

Please register at [www.rcahybrid.org.uk/info](http://www.rcahybrid.org.uk/info).

Even though you might not be present here on 5<sup>th</sup> March, please sponsor Academy children, making a donation to our St Mary's Warrington Education Fund – email [st.m.ed.trust@gmail.com](mailto:st.m.ed.trust@gmail.com).

Let us increase our prayer to God, to Our Blessed Lady and to the Venerable Elizabeth Prout (whose teaching order of nuns founded our original St Mary's School) for the happy growth of RCA Warrington.

Please tell your friends and bring families along who might be interested to join RCA Warrington in the next two years, or simply to support us.

This issue of our magazine *Dowry* includes several articles about second generations Poles in Britain whose forebears stood up for freedom. Their witness can still inspire us in 2022 as we battle for the survival of Catholic values, starting with the right to Catholic education. Please God, in a few decades, today's children will remember what our generation will have done for theirs.

My confreres and I assure you of our prayer for a fruitful Septuagesima and Lent. God bless you.

*Malleray*

Fr Armand de Malleray, FSSP – Superior of the English FSSP Apostolate

Warrington, 4<sup>th</sup> February 2022 □

RCA staff and children attend Holy Mass at St Mary's Shrine church.



# Educating the Saints of Tomorrow

*Justin Bozzino, trustee of Regina Caeli Academy UK, presents the Regina Caeli Academies*

## Solution for Catholic education?

**R**egina Caeli UK is a centre for home educators enjoying pastoral support from the Fraternity of St. Peter. We meet on Mondays and Thursdays to offer a Classical curriculum to children, delivered by professional teachers in a classroom setting. On the other days of the week, parents receive lesson plans, supply lists and help from the tutors so all the children complete the same curriculum. In that way, we offer a hybrid solution to parents who are attracted to the flexibility of homeschooling but appreciate the community, support and accountability that comes from the academy days.

Regina Caeli UK is an affiliate of Regina Caeli in the USA, which

has grown rapidly since its launch in the United States in 2003, and is now operating in 23 locations across the country, with thousands of children educated. The management of Regina Caeli have been extremely generous with their time and resources, and we are able to draw on a great deal of experience, which continues to prove invaluable. In particular, their curriculum, which is designed for the hybrid model, is excellent, and covers not just arts but the sciences too. Thanks to



local expertise, we have been able to make the relevant parts more UK focused (think Thomas More rather than Thomas Jefferson).

## RCA in the U.K.

A group of parents opened a centre in Bedfordshire in September 2019 and, thanks to the efforts of local laypeople and the FSSP, we opened another in Warrington in September 2021. By the grace of God, both centres are growing and thriving, attracting interest from potential families and tutors alike. In addition many families have moved to both Warrington and Bedfordshire because of the communities building up there, often basing themselves around the FSSP chaplaincies. That provides an ideal “ecosystem” for children, and also their parents, to grow and develop in the Faith.





## Catholic chaplaincy

The FSSP provide chaplaincy to both the Bedford and Warrington centres. In Bedford, that means parent formation days, and monthly centre Mass, with altar server training and confessions for children and parents. In Warrington, being located at St. Mary's shrine, the opportunity for daily prayer is open to RCA pupils, staff and prayer as well as daily Mass once the children are old enough. More generally, the Catholic ethos of the curriculum and all staff mean that children are given an ideal environment in which to flourish.



## Qualifications

The Regina Caeli curriculum, along with every other Classical curriculum, follows the American system of examination. So, at the age of 18, pupils will gain a High School diploma and take the SAT tests – both a SAT Reasoning test and, if they wish, one or more Advanced Placement (AP) subject exams. Both SATs and APs are accepted by all major U.K. universities, but there is nothing stopping pupils from also taking UK qualifications should they so wish.

## What parents say

Parents say that we give them a community of like-minded educators, providing practical and moral support to equip our children for the world of tomorrow using “the best that has been thought and said.” The children, moreover, appreciate the chance to have “class mates” with whom they can act in plays, play sports,

and perform recitals of poetry and music.

## What next

We continue to welcome applications to our Bedford and Warrington centres from those who would like to join as parents or as tutors; **the deadline for those is 1<sup>st</sup> May**. Should you wish to know more, please get in touch or

sign up via the website, [www.rcahybrid.org.uk](http://www.rcahybrid.org.uk), or follow us on Facebook, where you can see some wonderful videos by the talented Peter Jones of “One of Nine.”

Meanwhile, please do keep the families, staff and trustees in your prayers as we attempt to give these children the very best education possible. □



All pictures are from RCA Warrington.

# Heroic Poles in the Battle of Britain

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By Richard Kornicki

Poland was invaded by Germany on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 1939, and by Soviet Russia on the 17<sup>th</sup>. No help came from British and French allies, and the bulk of the Polish Air Force evacuated through Romania to France via the Black Sea. From France designs for a new Polish Air Force Standard were sent to Wilno (now Vilnius) where it was embroidered in secret. On one side is an image of Wilno's miraculous icon of Our Lady of the Dawn Gate (still venerated in the chapel above the Gate) and the words 'God, Honour, Fatherland'; on the other side is St Thérèse of Lisieux with the inscription 'Love demands sacrifice'.

By the time the Standard was completed, France had long since fallen and the Standard was smuggled to Stockholm in the Japanese diplomatic bag, and thence to Britain where, in July 1941, General Sikorski presented it to 300 Squadron, one of the four bomber and ten fighter Squadrons that constituted the Polish Air Force in the west, and among which the Standard rotated throughout the war.<sup>i</sup>

Unlike every other country in Europe invaded and occupied by Germany, Poland never surrendered. The Polish Government and its armed forces had evacuated to France, and then to Britain, which for them became 'the island of the last hope'. Polish airmen flew

alongside the Royal Air Force, but they flew as members of the *Polish* Air Force, owing their loyalty to the President-in-Exile.

British doubts about these foreign airmen evaporated during the Battle of Britain. At a time when the Battle hung in the balance, 147 combat-experienced Polish Air Force pilots were deployed with extraordinary effect. Most celebrated now is 303 Kościuszko Squadron, flying from RAF Northolt. Operational for only half the battle period, they became the top scoring squadron credited with 126 victories – ably supported by superb Polish ground crew.

From 1941, RAF Northolt<sup>ii</sup> became home to three Polish fighter squadrons; it was the only RAF Station whose Officers' Mess Bar ever needed a sign proclaiming 'English Spoken'. And with their language the Polish Air Force brought their faith. The first Mass for Polish Airmen evacuated from France to Liverpool was in a field. Thereafter, altars were set up in hangars or gymnasiums on RAF Stations. The fitter and rigger who looked after my father's Spitfire in 315 Sqn each wired a crucifix into his cockpit, and when he was posted to another Squadron, quietly gave them to him for his next aircraft.

Fighter Squadrons rotated between tours at Northolt and 'quieter' sectors. They took part in every major operation, served in North Africa, and supported the Normandy

Invasion. The Bomber Squadrons attacked the German invasion barges in 1940, participated in the Bomber Command offensive over Germany, and suffered terrible losses in flights from Brindisi to support the Warsaw rising in 1944. The last mission of 300 Squadron was as part of a force of Lancasters which destroyed Hitler's mountain retreat at Berchtesgaden. Their war ended dropping food to the starving Dutch under Operation Manna.

Of my father's 1937 officer cadet intake, 50% were dead by 1945. Poland as a whole lost 6 million. Warsaw alone lost more than the combined British and American military casualties in the entire war. And at the end of the war Poland itself was handed over to the same Stalin who had invaded in 1939, deported countless Poles to death in Siberia, and murdered thousands of captured Polish officers at Katyń. As was said of the Polish soldiers who fell at Monte Cassino: they gave their souls to God, their bodies to the ground, and their hearts to Poland.

Love does indeed demand sacrifice.

□

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<sup>i</sup> After the war, Poland remaining under effective Soviet occupation, the Standard remained in Britain and was only returned to Poland in 1992 after the first free elections.

<sup>ii</sup> Now the only remaining RAF Station which was operational during the Battle of Britain.





Holy Masses offered for Polish airmen during the Battle of Britain.  
Photographs sourced through Polish Air Force Memorial Committee.



# Young Women reflect on the Warsaw Uprising

Dowry asks two Polish young women settled in England how they relate to the heroism of a late fellow-Pole

In her autobiography *When the Summer Ended* (written in collaboration with Joanna Bogle), young Polish woman Cecylia Wolkowinska describes her youth in free Poland after WWI, until the Nazi invasion of her country and the heroic uprising against the occupier in 1944. Cecylia Wolkowinska moved in the UK where she settled and passed away.

**Dowry:** As a young Polish woman in 2022 England, how does the story of Cecylia Wolkowinska resonate in you?

**Maria:** We live in a time when we have to fight for our faith and our freedom, so it is very similar.

**Ola:** I found her story inspiring but perhaps not from a perspective that I expected. I have no doubt she wanted to change the course of history and defend her homeland but one has to consider the length of time she simply waited with patience and obedience to the generals in charge. From the beginning of the German invasion she was helping others with the ordinary tasks, especially in the military hospital where she was taking food and news to the wounded soldiers and entertaining them with conversation or providing shelter for educational purposes in her sister's house.

Oftentimes I feel that I also want to change the world and get frustrated with the wait. It was a great

reminder of the beauty in the idea of this ordinary, everyday help she provided to others and the need to do something, when it must have been so easy to concentrate all efforts on planning and waiting for the big moment of the uprising to come.

**D:** Are you proud of her stance and of her fellow-fighters?

**M:** Yes of course.

**O:** There is certainly a sense of honour to know that people of your motherland stand up for what is right in its true sense. When thinking about what I would do in the same position, I would like to think I could follow her example. In particular, I found her understanding that not everyone was made to fight with the same vigour as her admirable. When it came to her sister-in-law she said, *'poor woman, she was living in fear that was only*



*to increase.'* There was no anger in her due to that, but a firm stance which she took and stood by.

**D:** Although there was very little hope of success, for years the young people in that generation trained for battle in secret until the moment would come. What do you think you

(Pictures: Book front cover; Nearly-razed Warsaw after the 1944 Uprising – Public Domain Wikipedia.)



would have done in their situation?

**M:** It is hard to say, we don't know what the real situation was. Poles could be deliberately called for action in order to weaken young Polish opposition.

**O:** Throughout her autobiography Wolkowinska comes back to the same theme: fear and hope. The fear comes from all angles, her family, betrayal, torture and death. Numerous times she talks of almost losing hope but at that moment something happens which reignites it, and, again her and her fellow fighters are ready to go. I would like to think that in the same situation I would also be ready for whatever may come; that I would not be fearful and, with prayer, would be full of hope that the dignity of human life will be upheld and freedom will come.

**D:** Do you think that the Catholic faith of these heroes was important to them?

**M:** I think it was very important.

**O:** The sign of the Cross on one's forehead as a blessing for what lays ahead is continuously mentioned throughout the autobiography. My own family follow this Polish tradition and this really resonated with me. Wolkowinska mentions moments when her family could not put their feelings properly into words but it was the sign of the Cross that replaced all the words. The Cross was at the forefront of her motivation to fight. Germany and Russia both attempted to enforce savage systems of government with an atheistic base. This is exactly what these heroes were opposing.

**D:** Do you think Poland would imitate their example if a similar situation occurred nowadays?



**M:** I doubt it. We are living in very difficult times and I can't see Europe rising to fight for freedom.

**O:** I believe that Poland continues to be under the protection of Our Lady as it is solemnly consecrated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. As the Catholic faith continues to flourish there, so does the sense of duty and honour, which sadly, in our era of globalisation, seems to be disappearing from other, historically Christian nations.

**D:** As a Polish young woman, would you risk your life for your faith in 2022?

**M:** Definitely.

**O:** Living in England where so many martyrs have given up their lives for the faith it is almost impossible not to wonder whether I would do the same. I would like to say yes, absolutely. However, when considering the lives of, for example, St Thomas More, I ask myself how many of us would think, 'I will just take the oath, say the

*words, but I will not mean them.'* Many have done this before. These situations are often unexpected and I hope that if the time ever came, I would be able to stand firm and risk my life for Christ and His Church.

**D:** Or would you say that the situation in 2022 is very different?

**M:** It is different in a sense that we don't have to take part in an active war; however we are also trying to fight for our freedom.

**O:** In today's society the word 'freedom' seems to have lost its true meaning, which changes the situation to some degree. Our generation, at least in Europe, has not been faced with an international war. However, there are many other ways in which our basic freedoms and absolute rights are being undermined. A great example of this is the enforcement of mandatory vaccinations for the NHS staff in the UK. Many are giving in for various reasons (such as job losses) whilst disagreeing with this notion. I

wonder what Cecylia Wolkowinska and others like her would do.

D: Do you feel patriotic? What does the word mean to you?

M: I certainly can't speak about myself as a patriotic person. I have emigrated from Poland when I was quite young and never had strong connection to the homeland.

O: Although I was quite young when we moved to the UK and I grew up here, I would say that there always is a sense of patriotism within me when it comes to Poland. I have a sense of pride and attachment to it. This is likely to stem from the fact that I am well aware that people have risked and lost their lives for the country where I was born, my motherland. I see the preservation of culture and traditions as a duty to so many who, with true faith in Christ, have fallen.

Having said that, I also feel a strong sense of duty to Britain, a nation which formed me. I continuously pray for its conversion, its leaders and lawmakers.

D: As a young Catholic woman in the UK, what are your aspirations: for yourself, for your family and

loved ones, for the country?

M: I hope this country one day will convert to the Catholic faith.

O: We live in times where almost everything seems to be within our reach, yet often, we can see people doing what they desire with a deep sense of dissatisfaction.

Family values within society are almost non-existent; the dignity of women is constantly undermined and insulted; and freedom of speech applies only to speeches which fulfil the agenda of those in power. My aspiration is, amid all of this, to remain faithful to the teachings of the Church and to build a family which is well grounded in the true faith. I believe that by being witnesses to Christ we can evangelise and convert the whole nation.

D: What should be done?

M: We need to do whatever is possible to educate and demonstrate our faith to others by our actions.

O: We have plenty of work to do. The rosary is key. There are plenty of initiatives by



Catholics including UK Prays.

Wolkowinska also talks of the 'supreme confidence of youth.' Unfortunately, many in my generation feel that Our Mother the Church has not provided us with the formation and catechism we so desperately need. We have to ensure that firstly we are well formed. This should not ordinarily fall on each individual's shoulders; but those are the times we live in and we must accept it. Secondly, we should get involved in ensuring that the next generation is well formed. There are plenty of programmes ran by devout Catholic men and women with which we can help, and, if anyone cannot find one in their area, they need to start one.

We need to stop hiding, and be proud of our faith. We need Catholics at the top of their professions and in particular, we need Catholics to be involved in politics. If we want to live in a Catholic nation, we need them to advocate for us, our faith and our values in Parliament and beyond. □



Clandestine wedding during the Warsaw Uprising, photographed by Eugeniusz Lokajski, Warsaw Uprising Museum. The young couple survived the war and settled abroad.



# A Polish Army liberates Monte Cassino

By Mark Kudlowski

This article is dedicated to the memory of my uncle, Stefan Aniol, who was a corporal in the Polish Second Corps in the 5<sup>th</sup> Artillery Air Support Regiment at the Battle of Monte Cassino.

Of all the contributions to the Allied war effort made by the Polish military-in-exile, the most famous was that of 303 Squadron of Fighter Command, who distinguished themselves in the Battle of Britain.

This article however concentrates on another fighting unit, the Polish Second Corps, who played a large part in the Italian war campaign, especially in the battle of Monte Cassino. The Corps even had a “soldier bear”, Wojtek (pronounced Voy-tek) as a helper and a mascot, and whose story would be worthy of a separate article.

The Second Corps, also known as Anders’ Army, was formed in 1943 from Polish army units who had fought alongside the Allies in other theatres of war, particularly in North Africa. Their numbers were swelled by former prisoners who were freed from the gulags after Nazi Germany declared war on Soviet Russia in the summer of 1941. These groups merged to form the 3<sup>rd</sup> Carpathian Rifle Division and were stationed in Egypt and British-controlled Palestine. They were led by General Wladyslaw Anders, who himself had been freed from Moscow’s Lubyanka prison in 1940. The Corps itself was made up of many divisions, and by 1944 it had grown to over 50,000 combatants.

By late 1942, the tide of war was turning firmly against Germany. The Allies were planning to invade Hitler’s ‘Fortress Europe’, but they were divided in their opinions as to where the invasion should take place. The British favoured an invasion from the south through the ‘soft underbelly’ of Italy, but the Americans preferred an assault from the English Channel through Northern France. In the end a compromise was reached, so the invasion of Italy began with an invasion of Sicily, and the subsequent landings on the Italian mainland. The southernmost part of Italy was conquered with relative ease, especially after Mussolini fell from power and his troops

surrendered *en masse*, but thereafter, the Duce’s German allies decided that enough was enough, so General Kesselring set up the defensive Gustav line to thwart further Allied progress. The Gustav Line ran west to east across the Italian peninsula, passing just south of the town of Cassino and the monastery of Monte Cassino itself. The monastery’s hilltop location made it an ideal lookout post, and the Allies wrongly believed it to have been used by the Germans for reconnaissance.

The battle took several phases, beginning with a ferocious aerial bombardment on the monastery in January 1944, which unintentionally allowed the German army divisions



to hide away in the ruins. One month later, the Second Corps was transferred from the Middle East to Italy, where, under the overall control of Lt. Gen. Oliver Rees, they became an independent unit of the British 8<sup>th</sup> army. The next four months were to become a battle of attrition which harked back to the trench warfare of the First World War. It was in the fourth and final phase of the battle when the Polish II Corps excelled itself, fighting alongside units from Canada, New Zealand and other nations. The Polish unit was the first of the Allied units to plant its flag on the site of the ruined monastery, but their losses had been high. A total of 2,300 men were killed in action during the campaign, and 9,000 wounded or missing, with the battle for Monte Cassino accounting for half of the death toll.

After the battle for Monte Cassino had been won, the Allied advance continued north, with American General Mark Clark marching his troops into Rome on June 4, 1944. The Italian campaign was to become

a sideshow as, two days later on 'D-Day', Allied troops landed on the beaches of Normandy and the focus of the invasion of Europe moved to France. The Polish Second Corps still continued to fight in the Italian theatre afterwards, notably at the battles for Ancona and Bologna.

The monastery at Monte Cassino was completely restored in 1964. Most of the members of the Polish II Corps did not return to Communist Poland after the war, but emigrated to Italy, the U.K, Canada and other western countries, with General

Anders living in exile in London until his death in 1970. Wojtek, the soldier bear, was transferred to Edinburgh Zoo and remained its most illustrious resident until his death in 1962 at 21 years. □



Ruins of Monte Cassino; a Polish bugler plays the *Hejnal* tune to announce victory on 18<sup>th</sup> May 1944 – both pictures Public Domain Wikipedia. Below, Monte Cassino restored – gov.pl.





# Elizabeth Prout, *Mother Teresa of Manchester*

Rosalind Starkie reviews Edna Hamer's book: Elizabeth Prout 1820–1864: A Religious Life for Industrial England, *Leominster: Gracewing, 2011*; and Sister Dominic Savio Hamer CP, *With Christ in His Passion: Elizabeth Prout (1820–1864), Foundress of the Sisters of the Cross and Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Leominster: Gracewing, 2008. (Review originally published in The Portal Magazine, reproduced in Dowry with the author's kind permission.)*

Since the martyrs of the Reformation era the English have only had one of their number raised to the position of saint by the Catholic Church – Saint John Henry Newman, a convert from Anglicanism. Now another two English Anglican converts are making their way toward sainthood – Elizabeth Prout and Ignatius Spencer. They have both been recognised recently as Venerable by the Holy See. Their lives were connected, as Elizabeth Prout knew Ignatius Spencer and ended up under his mentorship.

From 1977 Edna Hamer, known in religion as Sister Dominic Savio, has steered the process of putting Elizabeth Prout forward to be acknowledged by the Church as a saint. Her laborious task of investigating the life and background of Elizabeth Prout led to her completing her doctoral thesis in 1992 on which her book, *Elizabeth Prout 1820–1864: A Religious Life for Industrial England*, is based. First published in 1994 by Downside Abbey and then revised and published in 2011 by Gracewing, the book gives a very detailed insight into the life, times, work and spirituality of Elizabeth Prout.



Hamer, herself a Cross and Passion Sister, helps the reader to see that Elizabeth Prout, influenced by the spirituality of St Paul of the Cross, and guided by different Passionist priests, took the major part in founding what was to become the Sisters of the Most Holy Cross and Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Elizabeth Prout was born on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1820, the only child of Edward, a lapsed Catholic, and Ann, a committed member of the Church of England. When Elizabeth was a fortnight old she was baptised in St Julian's Anglican Church in Shrewsbury. Her father was a

journeyman cooper, a skilled craftsman. Hamer, despite thorough investigation, has found it impossible to reconstruct Elizabeth's childhood, but by 1841, when Elizabeth was 21, the family can be tracked to Stone where Elizabeth's father worked for Joule's Brewery. It was less than two miles down the road, at Aston Hall, that Father Dominic Barberi founded the first Passionist monastery in England in 1842. Like the founder of the Passionist Congregation, St Paul of the Cross, he had a deep desire for the conversion of England, and was fervent in his mission. Elizabeth became a Catholic at some point after this and may even have been received into the Catholic Church, like Saint John Henry Newman, by Blessed Dominic Barberi.

Another Italian priest, Father Gaudentius Rossi joined Father Barberi, and, after he had given a mission to Northampton, returned and told Elizabeth about the Sisters of the Infant Jesus that he had met there. Elizabeth joined these Sisters in 1848, but by January 1849 she was diagnosed with tuberculosis of the knee and told she might never walk again. She returned home to

Stone where her mother nursed her back to health.

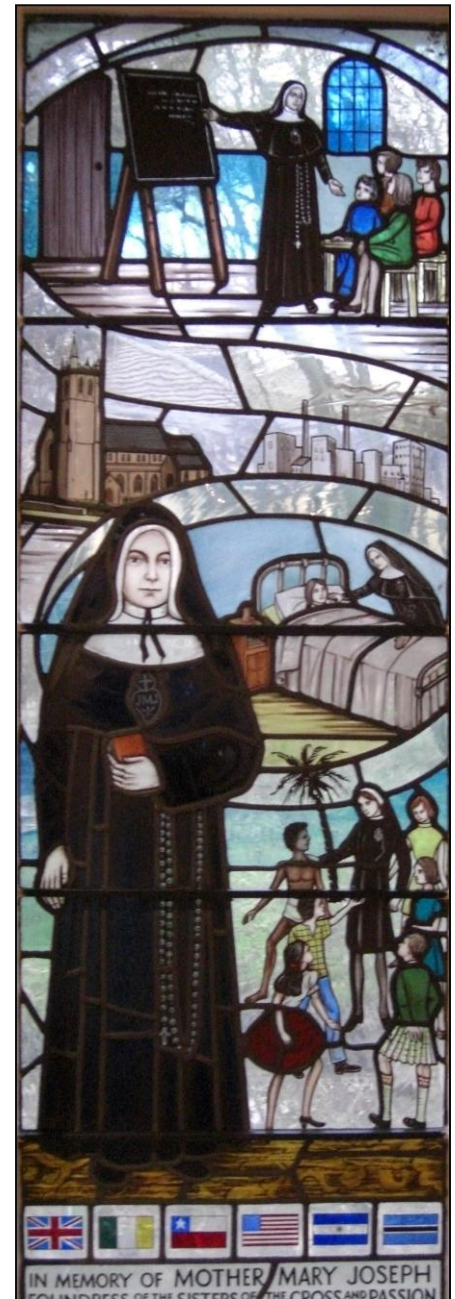
Despite careful nursing, her mother was not happy that Elizabeth had become a Catholic, reacting adversely when her daughter went to Mass. Happily though, her mother died a Catholic; and her father was reconciled to the Church just before his death. It was hard for Elizabeth to remain at home and after Father Gaudentius had given a mission in St Chad's, Manchester, he arranged with the parish priest, Father Robert Croskell, for Elizabeth to teach at St Chad's school. The two priests also had recognised the need for a religious order specifically for lower-class women who could not afford the dowry required by the existing orders. They invited Elizabeth to co-operate in founding this new type of order and she accepted.

Hamer not only tells the life story of Elizabeth Prout, but paints a vivid picture of the life in mid-nineteenth century Manchester which Elizabeth Prout experienced. Damp Manchester with its 'smoke, noise, smells and fog' was in the grip of industrial growth. Thousands of Irish immigrants fleeing the potato famine had added to the rapid increase in population. Many lived in filthy overcrowded slums with very little sanitation. Cholera and typhoid were rife. It was here that Elizabeth was offering herself 'in union with the sacrifice of Calvary'.

Hamer shows that although it may have been Father Croskell's and Father Gaudentius' vision to found a new order, and one immersed in the Passionist spirit of embracing Christ crucified, it was Elizabeth Prout's vocation to discover how best to live out that vision and adapt it to the

actual conditions that faced her. Some orders had been founded to work amongst the poor, but Elizabeth's congregation was 'to offer religious life to the poor', those who could not afford a dowry or did not have enough education to join a different order. Father Gaudentius wanted the institute to be both contemplative and active, forming Mary and Martha in each sister. As no dowry was required and the order began with no benefactors, Elizabeth and her sisters would have to support themselves by teaching, sewing or continuing to work in the cotton mills. It was Father Gaudentius who decided to call the institute the 'Sisters of the Holy Family' as St Paul of the Cross had had a particular devotion to the Divine Nativity 'amid such lack of comfort and in such poverty'. Elizabeth not only worked as a teacher but played a vital part in the Catholic struggle for schools bringing Catholic education to the poorest.

Hamer takes the reader step by step through the difficulties encountered in the poverty-stricken community. She emphasises how through her many sufferings Elizabeth took up her cross and followed Christ. After the first seven sisters received the religious habit in 1852, six of them almost died of fever in 1853. This caused Elizabeth to move her foundation out of the notorious areas of Angel Meadow, Ancoats and Deansgate, initially to recover in Newton Heath, but then on to Levenshulme in 1854 on the



instruction of His Excellency William Turner, the first bishop of Salford. From here Elizabeth was able to make further foundations in Ashton-under-Lyne, in Sutton, and Blackbrook near St Helens. Hamer calls her 'an apostle of education' setting up schools where there were the neediest.

It was at this point that internal problems occurred, as Elizabeth had to leave the convent at Levenshulme in another sister's hands resulting in



the order being plunged into debt and a number of sisters leaving. Rumours abounded and Elizabeth had to face a canonical investigation in 1858. She was cleared of all charges.

Another difficulty that Hamer reveals to us is the complicated relationship between Father Gaudentius and Elizabeth Prout. Elizabeth was anxious to please, but Father Gaudentius was often highly critical of her in his letters for not living up to his ideals. His direct influence over her between 1849 and 1855, and his changing his mind about how he wanted the institute run, was something that Elizabeth suffered silently. The contents of his letters were not known until they were found after Elizabeth had died. Things changed though, for in 1855 Father Gaudentius was sent to America, and Father Ignatius Spencer took over as Elizabeth's mentor. The two converts had a shared understanding.

In 1862-3 Father Ignatius Spencer and Elizabeth Prout applied themselves to revising the rule that Father Gaudentius had written in 1852. Elizabeth was able to bring her experience to the fore to make the rule more realistic and give the Congregation a more Passionist identity. Also the much needed new active apostolate of opening houses of refuge for working class girls was added.

Once the governance of the Institute had been set in order and Father Ignatius Spencer had taken the revised rule to Rome, Elizabeth was at peace. On 17<sup>th</sup> August 1863 Bishop Turner, with Rome's approbation, canonically established her



congregation. Elizabeth succumbed to tuberculosis and died on 11<sup>th</sup> January 1864. Father Ignatius Spencer was able to be there five minutes before she died and to give her final absolution.

It was only in the summer after her death that Father Peter Paul Cayro, the first Passionist General to visit England, on meeting the sisters at Sutton, expressed a desire that the order should be aggregated to the Passionist Congregation. Ten years later, in 1874, Elizabeth Prout's Congregation finally attained its true



identity as the Sisters of the Cross and Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and gained the permission to wear the full Passionist sign 'JESU XPI PASSIO', the Passion of Jesus Christ.

Hamer's book is a fascinating insight into the short but fruitful life of a courageous follower of Christ who partook in the mission of St Paul of the Cross and later Blessed Dominic Barberi to convert England. It is an in-depth tome and not an easy read. However in 2008 Gracewing brought out a much shorter, simpler and compact volume entitled *With Christ in His Passion* and subtitled *Elizabeth Prout (1820-1864), Foundress of the Sisters of the Cross and Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ*.

In this slender book we are shown the life of someone who suffered poverty and illness, jealousy and accusations while living out her 'penitential contemplative lifestyle and her demanding active apostolate'. *With Christ in His Passion* covers the same material and is by the same author but is a much easier read for those who want to learn about the Venerable Elizabeth Prout. Hamer's painstaking work has led the Holy See to pronounce that Elizabeth Prout lived a heroically virtuous life and we can be encouraged that another convert is amongst those whose sanctity is being recognised. □

All pictures Public Domain Wikipedia; Ven. Ignatius Spencer, cf [passionisten.de](http://passionisten.de).

# A Bigger God

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By James Gillick

God reveals himself to us in history with forensic precision. At very rare intervals, without an ounce of error in His timing and with the tender heart of a strong and loving Father, He grants to human endeavour the energy needed to extend a long arm towards the veil that hides Him. And He allows it to be lifted a little.

One hundred years ago one such moment culminated in a discovery that blew to smithereens our understanding of the scale of God's creation. A group of astronomers working in different countries, sought to settle a question about a smudge of light called the Andromeda Nebula that lay within our own Milky Way Galaxy. Andromeda had been reckoned as a nebula since its first recorded mention in 964 by the Persian astronomer Abd al-Rahman al-Sufi. Using a sequence of improving mirrors and lenses over several decades, measurements drew into focus the fact that Andromeda first had a spiral form, then had nebula within it, then that it was immensely distant. Using the brand-new Hooker Telescope in 1924, Edwin Hubble finally confirmed that the Andromeda Nebula was not a cluster of stars and gas within our own galaxy, but an entirely separate galaxy located a significant distance from the Milky Way. Since that time, we have arrived at the

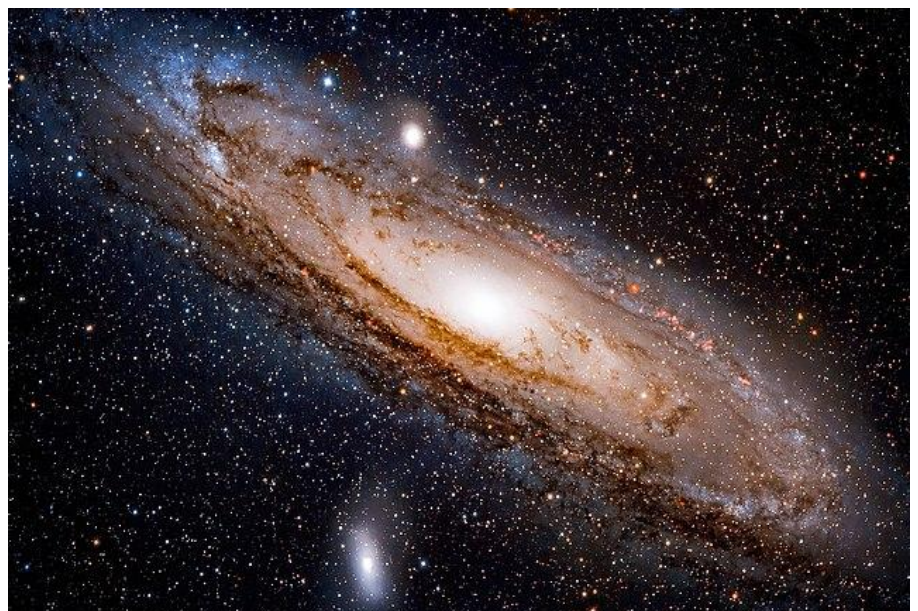
knowledge that there are an immeasurable number of galaxies in an incalculably large Cosmos, each galaxy containing more than 100 billion stars. We are no longer in the same relationship with a Creator that we once imagined we were.

After the Edict of Milan (in 313 A.D.) when state sponsored patronage aided bright men across Europe to examine the novel texts of the Bible for the first time, the conclusion that was arrived at was that the Universe was a box with a domed lid to which the lights of heaven were attached like paintings on a ceiling and above which God sat. Our Churches still reflect this concept in stone. The pocket-sized version of Creation is deeply embedded into the common man's understanding of God as a slightly grander, grand old man with slightly

more pure sight and whose Son did a cool thing, but it wasn't much more of a climb-down than what many people do for their friends in a serious scrape.

This is now inadmissible. Inserted right into the heart of the bloodiest century in human history, the discovery of the beautiful grandeur of God's attainments held up against our own savagery forces us to run away in fear or to contemplate ourselves and Him in a right relationship. This relationship is a terrifying, unsustainable and an irreconcilable scandal or it is a beautiful, sustaining new relationship that will gradually carry God and us closer to each other for centuries.

This new sense of scale, which extends fully from 'macro' to





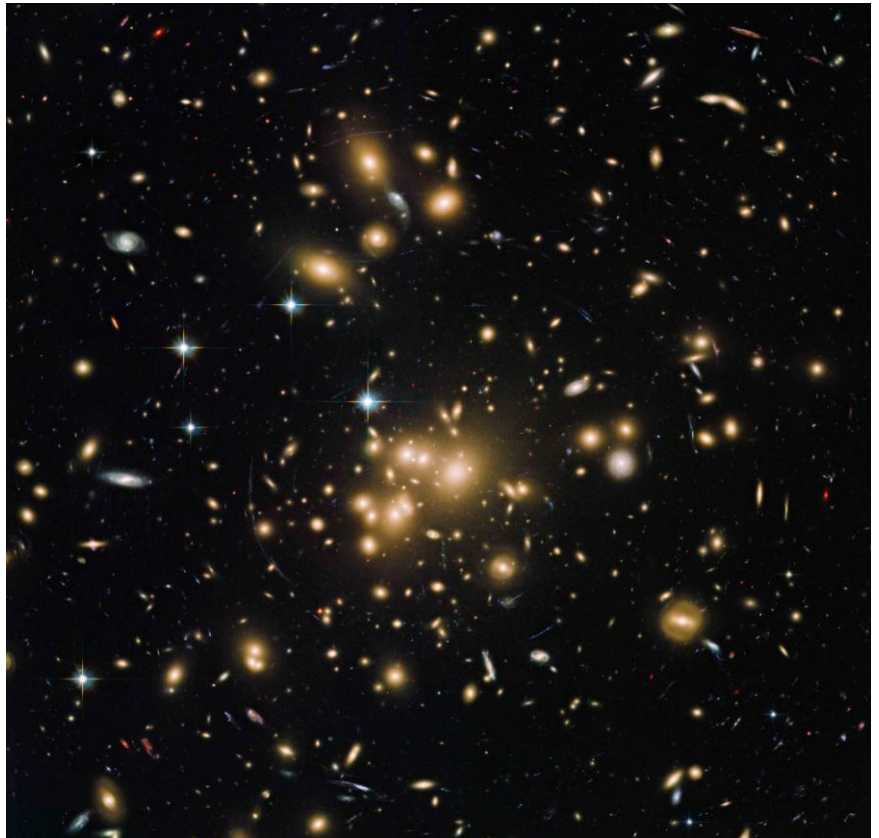
‘micro’, truly is a point of inflexion for humankind. The immediate reaction has been very obvious – we aren’t dealing with it well! The Semitic-speaking peoples have descended into violent iconoclasm, bringing a wrecking ball to the imagery of Western man and smashing their own culture to pieces. This is an historical and instinctive retrenched position that they have retreated to many times before.

Western Christians have scattered before God, reverting to all the ancient terrors that lie just under our skin. Earth as our “Mother” has returned; our cults around beasts and bestial behaviour have returned; our bogeymen have returned to snatch us away without warning; the impossibility of death in the minds of the living has returned; the fear of the sky has returned. Pan has re-emerged as the Genius Loci of the European peoples and the pagan, flip-side of spiritual ecstasy have returned, too, namely panic and anxiety.

When God draws close to mankind like this, chaos ensues until Christians become storytellers and set all things in context. Without our narration, societies will proceed to the fullest expression of a life hiding from God’s face – growing in violence, shrinking in complexity and wandering, lost.

Christians must begin to describe with joy the fact that a bigger God makes for a bigger human being.

Right now, in this panic, the Christian arts are not being used as they might. We must re-examine all the essential elements of our liturgical spaces, working out how to add more beauty to the beauty we



Left: The Andromeda Galaxy captured with a Celestron cpc1100 from the Israeli Desert by Deddy Dayag; [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Andromeda\\_Galaxy\\_560mm\\_FL.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Andromeda_Galaxy_560mm_FL.jpg).

Above: New Hubble view of galaxy cluster Abell 1689; heic1317a,e; Observation; 12 September 2013, 17:00; Related releases: heic1317; Size: 4002 x 3863 px; <https://esahubble.org/images/heic1317a/>; Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license.

have already discovered. We need to develop a more permanent offering of more beautiful patternmaking, more beautiful lighting in air more beautifully scented. Our arts must explain more clearly defined ideas about God and us, apposite to this time and our needs. Icon painters need to develop new hieroglyphs and hierographics acceptable to the iconoclastic peoples and their diaspora. Western painters need to make sublime work in concert with this nature we love so much, dignifying it with our labour. Most of all we desperately need majestic images of Jesus Incarnate, images that, should they come to life and

step off the wall, would make us fall on our knees.

Insights, such as we were afforded 100 years ago, happen rarely. Man is surprised by God, then digests what he has been shown for hundreds of years at a time. We have time, but we must soon begin to rediscover a joy and excitement in God that is currently smothered by fear of Him. Patronage will come forward to a people who joyfully extend their arms before God and praise Him with a lasting delight.

*James Gillick is a figurative painter living and working in Lincolnshire.*  
[www.gillick-artist.com](http://www.gillick-artist.com)

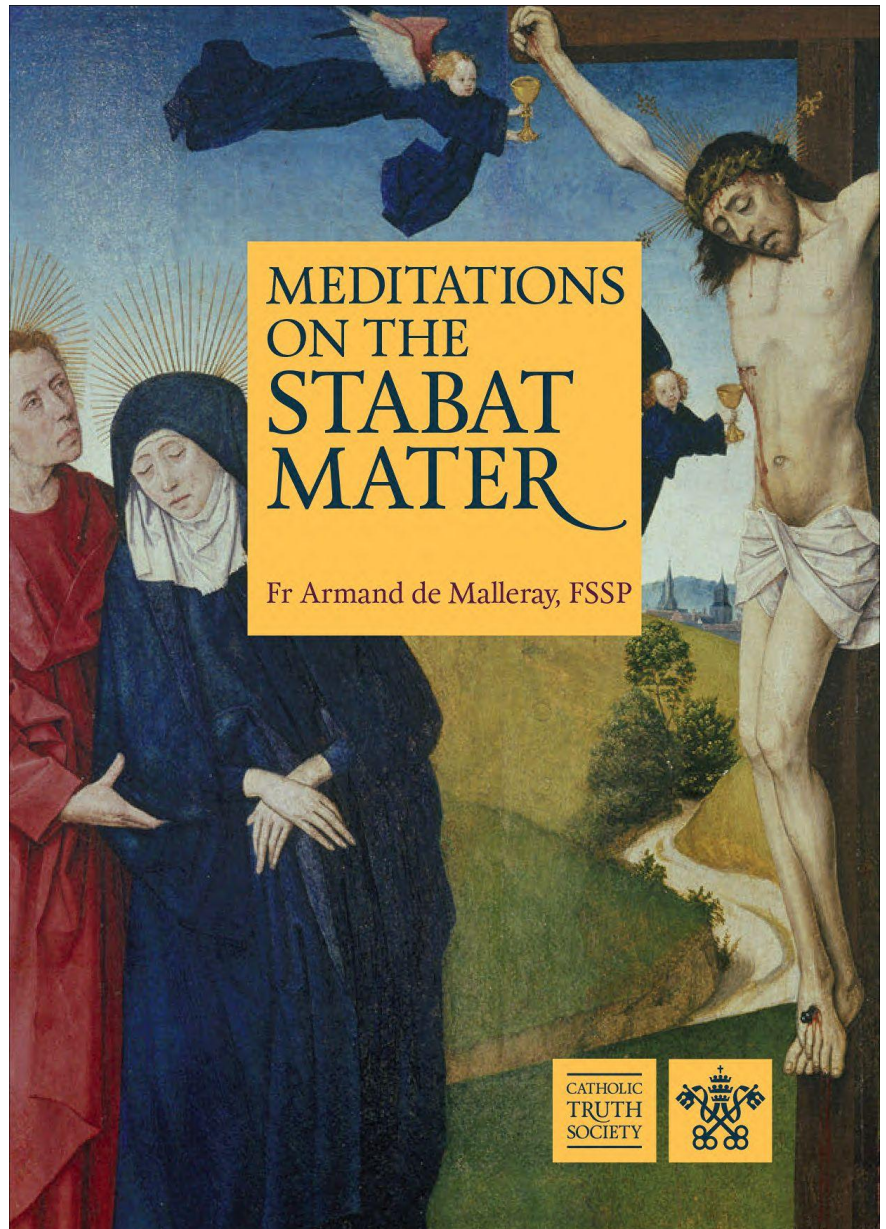
# Meditations on the *Stabat Mater*

CTS released this booklet by Fr Armand de Malleray just in time for Lent. The author and publisher are grateful to the consecrated persons below for their gracious acknowledgments.

“If you truly wish to be transformed by Christ, go to the Cross and contemplate His Passion. If you truly desire to plumb the depths of knowledge of Christ’s Passion, go to His Blessed Mother. There is no other created being in Heaven or on Earth that understands the sufferings of Our Lord better than the one who had a sword pierce her own heart. If you want to know some of what the Blessed Virgin Mary teaches about her Son’s Passion, read this book. With great wisdom, the author has chosen the hymn which best expresses the profound sorrow of Our Lady, a sorrow filled with hope – the *Stabat Mater*. This hymn forms the landscape in which he skilfully illustrates the mystery of Calvary and the journey of the soul from fall to rise.”

*Mother Marilla OSB, Superior General of the Tyburn Nuns, London*

“A Desert Father of the fifth Century commenting on a vision he had of Saint Mary, the Mother of God, weeping by the Cross of the Saviour, famously declared, ‘I wish I could always weep like that.’ The medieval meditation, *Stabat Mater*, responds to this wish of the Christian soul. Who would not feel moved to comfort the sorrowful Mother of our crucified



Saviour? Who would not desire to be taught by her the tears of authentic compunction? The author’s fine and sober commentary leads us ‘to better appreciate [Mary’s] grief so as to be shaped by

it, her sorrowful heart becoming the matrix of our souls as they learn contrition.’ A luminous and profound exposition of one of the most powerful and consoling prayers of the Catholic tradition.”



Dom Xavier Perrin, OSB, Abbot of Quarr (Isle of Wight), author of *The Radiance of Her Face*

“One could be forgiven for thinking, that as ‘*She stood*’ beneath the Cross, the sufferings endured by the Blessed Virgin Mary, were in actuality, an ‘*event*’ in themselves. In a most delicate and imperceptible way, the author, with adept contemplative precision, offers to us these reflections. His Commentary on the *Stabat Mater* is not for the faint hearted, it is an invitation offered to us all, of ‘*standing with*’ Mary on Calvary. Alike to that of the Crucifixion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Mary is depicted, comparable with her Son, as a figure pierced to the spot, not by nails, but by a sword of sorrow. This moving Commentary on the *Stabat Mater*, discloses for us, in a simple, yet most piteous way, at what cost we were redeemed.”

Mother Bernadette of the Heart of Mary OCD, Prioress of the Carmelite Monastery in Birkenhead, England

“True devotion to Blessed Mary Ever-Virgin is the simplest, safest, and straightest way to loving union with Christ, and contemplation of the compassionate heart of ‘the Lady of fair weeping’ leads us directly to the Heart of her divine Son, pierced by our sins; it has the power to move us to contrition, to the desire to make reparation, and to a greater assurance of Our Lord’s merciful love. This conviction of faith inspired Jacopone da Todi’s writing of his hymn, the *Stabat Mater*, and animates the author’s new commentary, so clear and sound in its doctrine and lyrical in its language. This beautiful little book, born of prayer, is just what I need, what every Catholic needs, for the fruitful praying of the Stations of the Cross.”

Fr John Saward, Blackfriars Hall, Oxford, author of *Redeemer in the Womb: Jesus Living in Mary*

105 × 148 mm; 80 pages. Orders and further information: <https://www.ctsbooks.org/product/meditations-on-the-stabat-mater/> □

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VI

S Ta-bat Ma-ter do-lo- ró-sa Juxta cru-cem lacri-  
 mó-sa, Dum pendé-bat Fí-li- us. 2. Cu-jus á-nimam gemén-  
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