



STONYHURST

1593 • **425** • 2018
YEARS

STEPHEN WITHNELL DIRECTOR OF STRATEGY

AMDG

THE BLESSING OF OUR LADY OF STONYHURST

Saturday, 25 May 2019 at 3PM

Dear Family and Friends of Stonyhurst,

As many of you may know, the Statue of Our Lady has been away from the College undergoing major restoration and conservation work. This work has been made possible through the generous donations of Stonyhurst alumni, specifically, **Lawrence Leong OS 82** and the **de St John-Pryce family**, family of **Lt. Col. James de St John-Pryce OS 96** and **Winton de St John-Pryce OS 99**. Her restoration has been a major undertaking of Stonyhurst's 425 Anniversary Year Celebrations and of the Genesis Gardens Appeal.

AT 3PM ON SATURDAY 25 MAY THERE WILL BE A CEREMONY FOR THE BLESSING OF THE STATUE OF OUR LADY OF STONYHURST – ALL ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND.

A Prayer service will begin in St Peter's Church followed by a procession on foot to The Lady statue for its rededication. Guests are invited to retire to St Peter's Catholic Club in Hurst Green for a celebratory drink after the ceremony.

All who wish to attend the Blessing of Our Lady are warmly invited to do so. In addition to the Blessing on 25 May there will be an additional 'Whole School Event' to mark the return of statue next term.

LDS



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A History of Our Lady Statue

The Statue of Our Lady, also known as 'Our Lady of the Avenue' was installed in 1882.

It was inspired by the statue on the 1857 *Colonna della Immacolata* in Rome, near the Piazza di Spagna which celebrated Pope Pius IX's declaration of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. It depicts Mary, as defined in the Book of Revelation 12:1 – '*And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.*' The figure stands on a globe which is decorated by the symbols of the Four Evangelists.

The Lady Statue and plinth were gifted to the College by Thomas Eyre, the brother of Stonyhurst Rector, Fr William Eyre (whose generosity had paid for the construction of the South Front of Stonyhurst). Thomas Eyre donated £200 for the monument as a thanksgiving for his preservation in a serious carriage accident. The statue was designed by Edward Hansom, the architect of the South Front, and cast in Paris. The first record of its presence at the College was on December 8th 1882, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

The Stonyhurst Lady Statue is made of cast-iron, not bronze. She is cast in two pieces, the globe and the figure, which are bolted together. The structure is supported by an internal iron armature, which gives strength to the rather brittle cast iron exterior.

Over a year ago, it became obvious that there were serious structural problems with the ageing armature, and it was essential to carry out urgent, specialist conservation. The task was undertaken by Rupert Harris, an international expert in sculpture conservation who works for the National Trust, and for museums and collectors all over the world. She was taken down to his studio and foundry in East London, where a new steel armature was made. The globe on which the statue stands was in very poor condition and required numerous internal braces to strengthen it. The figure of the angel on the front of the globe was missing, and a new figure was modelled and cast, based on the statue in Rome.

Traditionally, cast iron statues are painted to look like stone or marble, and the Lady Statue was given a fresh coat of paint as the last part of the conservation process. The paint is not only decorative, it protects the iron from the effects of rain, hail and snow. The paint used on our statue has been carefully toned to resemble white Italian marble. She will need a new coat every twenty years. The halo of twelve stars was newly made, as the Lady Statue's was missing, and gilded with 23 carat gold, which is far more durable than gold paint.



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BEFORE



AFTER



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