

# Mary Ward Week 2024



# Guide for our Prayer Week

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- o **Christa Parra IBVM** (from the United States and lives in Mexico)

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- o **Deirdre Browne IBVM** (from Australia and lives in Australia)

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# INTRODUCTION

Hello! We are Christa Parra, a Mexican-American from the United States Region, IBVM, and Mariana Ojeda, an Argentinian from the Amerindian Province - Latin America, CJ.



We met in Manresa, in October 2022, at the IBVM General Congregation. From the first moment we met, we felt like sisters from the same family. Fortunately, we both spoke Spanish and were able to share our stories and experiences during this historical moment for our Mary Ward family. We witnessed the loving presence and movement of the Holy Spirit throughout GC22, especially during the unanimous vote for *Becoming One*. We feel that the spirit continues to move and dance with us all over the world in this process.

We were surprised when our sisters, Estela Grignola CJ and Natalie Houlihan IBVM, asked us to coordinate Mary Ward Week 2024. With joy, we began to work together via Zoom and WhatsApp, Christa from the U.S./Mexico border and Mariana from Buenos Aires, Argentina.

We started from the richness of our own experience on the path to *Becoming One*, and then invited eight pairs, IBVM/CJ, from different parts of the world to meet via technology. At the heart of this proposal was our need to get to know each other, sharing our lives and mission. The question in our song, *"Who is this woman?"* resonated with us as an invitation to discover how we live the charism of Mary Ward in our different contexts, cultures, and languages.

From these meetings, reflections were born, illuminated, and guided in this dance by the song "Lead Us On Mary Ward" by Deirdre Browne, to whom we owe deep appreciation for her

work of art and final reflection. We also thank each member of the Mary Ward family, who generously said “yes” to this proposal to share, from their reality, the call to love and serve God *“bringing the gospel of peace”*.

We discovered that the reality of each context is different from what we knew or imagined. We realized that there were places where the video call connection was impossible to make and they needed to communicate in another way. We discovered that the richness of the nine languages that we now share is not so easy when it comes to connecting and understanding one another. We learned that international communication requires creativity, flexibility, attentiveness to the different realities of each country-culture, and the desire to listen to each other with our hearts. The process taught us that we truly are interconnected and that what impacts some of us also impacts all of us.

We invite you to pray with the reflections of each day and to share what resonates with you through our Padlet! Click on the link below or use the QR code and join our conversation where you can write, and upload images and/or videos. We hope this will be an easy way to interact with one another and get to know each other better!

<https://padlet.com/mcloughlinrachel/mary-ward-booklet-2024-q7kotwveok6phqr8>

Click on the link to hear our song! You will also find the lyrics on the following page. Thank you to Susan Daily for creating the video!

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AFNy4JrbRd2FNHaK2OgGuxS0aNTwzgZ6/view?usp=drivesdk>

Let us sing and dance our song with God, Mary Ward, and each other as we trust that *“all will be well for God is near!”*

*Lead us on, Mary Ward!*



# Lead Us On, Mary Ward

By Deirdre Browne IBVM

Lead us on, Mary Ward, lead us!  
Lead us on, Mary Ward, lead us!

Who is this woman?  
Where has she come from?  
What is she saying to us?  
Eyes fixed ahead, set on her goal  
Bearing her secret within.

How beautiful are the feet of those  
Who brings the gospel of peace.  
Step up to the challenge!  
Step up without fear  
All will be well, for God is near!

Lead us on, Mary Ward, lead us!  
Lead us on, Mary Ward, lead us!

Who is this woman?  
Where is she going?  
Why is she travelling so far?  
Striding out, spirited and strong  
Pursuing her dream to its end.

O take my hand and walk with me  
Come, and sing my song!

Lead us on, Mary Ward, lead us!  
Lead us on, Mary Ward, lead us!

Who is this woman?  
What is she thinking?  
What is leading her on?  
The strength of her spirit,  
The love of her Lord  
This is what keeps her going.



How beautiful are the feet of those  
Who brings the gospel of peace.  
Step up to the challenge!  
Step up without fear  
All will be well, for God is near!

Lead us on, Mary Ward, lead us!  
Lead us on, Mary Ward, lead us!

We are this woman  
When we have courage  
To stand up for what we believe  
Speaking the truth, trusting in God,  
Acting for freedom and justice.  
O take my hand and walk with me  
Come, and sing my song!

How beautiful are the feet of those  
Who brings the gospel of peace.  
Step up to the challenge!  
Step up without fear  
All will be well, for God is near!

Lead us on, Mary Ward, lead us!  
Lead us on, Mary Ward, lead us!

Video with the song:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AFNy4JrbRd2FNHaK2OgGuxS0aNTwzgZ6/view?usp=drivesdk>

“Who is this woman?” This woman, from a young age, in a hostile environment, goes about discovering the secret of her heart. She cannot hold it within. She crosses mountains and seas, breaking borders, because she heard, as did Moses, God speaking in the bush: “I have heard the groaning of my people...” I have felt the sad situation of England... As years go by, she keeps searching for new paths for women in the Church; she opens her eyes and with a clear vision and full of tenderness, she listens again to the cry of the world...



What about us? As we intend to travel with Mary Ward through this world, to which God called us, in Morocco, where for the last 25 years the IBVM has been present in this place which has a Muslim majority... Victoria and María currently share a mission and experience - *in advance* - the grace of BEING ONE.

Another religion, another culture where women do not count: poverty, resignation, unemployment, illiteracy, abuse, and male domination are part of their daily lives. There is a hunger for culture, but above all for dignity. Our commitment to the Kingdom is about responding to the situation God sees as being in need of redemption: Happy women of different ages come to our literacy and promotion classes for their training, promotion, and access to a job.

Women's poverty entails the poverty of their homes, family brokenness... children suffering the consequences, and health problems. Vulnerable families... hunger for bread, health, and accompaniment in their different needs. There is also an attempt to alleviate these problems. All this is very important, but above all welcoming is a paramount issue.



And what about communication? Without knowing their language, communication is possible with the fruit of the language that comes from the personal encounter with Jesus; He makes us live in the language of the heart. A compassionate look, a hug, a caress. Listening beyond words, and being side by side with the suffering ones, are highly important and most necessary in a dehumanized unjust world. Beyond suffering and poverty, and in the face of helplessness and injustice, our call is about sowing peace and joy while trying to give a little help.

From the religious aspect, there are differences, although there are common aspects as well. They believe in a unique, clement, and merciful God. The name of God in the mouth of a Muslim person is something habitual. (“If God wants” is the translation of our word “hopefully” in Spanish “Ojalá” or in Arabic “Inshallah”). There are no problems with living each one’s faith together; on the contrary, this helps and stimulates us to live the gospel with joy. Their sense of God’s presence in their lives is amazing. Mutual respect and appreciation are essential.



The song “Lead us on, Mary Ward”, like Mary Ward’s life, carries a progressive and challenging dynamic. Her determination and energy stand out in the midst of the invitation to walk together with hope and optimism *for God is near*. Like her, with the strength of the Spirit and the love of the Lord, we are encouraged to keep going.

Wherever we are we need to discover and reinforce God’s plan to “make redemption”. “*Lead us on, Mary Ward!*” Let us live and learn that the Spirit is alive in us and in the world of Morocco, in the small Church that lives here, and in the people to whom we are sent.

### *For Reflection*

How do you relate your current ministry to the faith and enthusiasm of Mary Ward?

To what extent is my usual language the “language of the heart”?

Share your reflection on the **Padlet** by clicking on the link or through the **QR Code**.

<https://padlet.com/mcloughlinrachel/mary-ward-booklet-2024-q7kotwweok6phqr8>





I am Sr. Aleta Dube from Zimbabwe, studying in Rome. Isn't it ironic that every year we commemorate the death of Mary Ward, yet we feel her presence within and among us? I have no doubt that Mary Ward is alive among us and the people we serve in Zimbabwe. Although she never set foot in Zimbabwe, yet her desire to help the needy is fulfilled in us. The majority of us did not physically encounter Mary Ward, yet her legacy, desires, and commitment to serve lives on in us. The fact that her influence lives on today makes our foundress exceptional. In Zimbabwe, we are few in numbers and yet our service is paramount. We are like a well spring of water in the desert. Many people flock to our two clinics from distant places to seek medical attention. The distance they walk makes us feel inadequate. Our Children's Home, the feeding scheme and schools are the living testimonies of what Mary Ward desired: to bring the gospel of love to the poor and vulnerable. Economic hardships prevent us from doing all that we could do and yet with the gratitude, joy and resilience like that of Mary Ward, we endure and soldier on with even greater desire and focus. Our Becoming One gives me consolation from within as we fulfill Mary Ward's desire.



I am Sr. Basilisa Mmbone Materu, a Kenyan working in Tanzania. I love my work as a teacher. I am humbled to say that I am following in the footsteps of Mary Ward. I serve, with love, the people of God whom I encounter with gratitude to God for the success of our mission in Tanzania. The school girls, the people and the community give me joy to carry on in spite of the challenges in my service. It gives me great joy when I hear the voices of Loreto Girls Secondary School with almost 800 girls. I further delight in the voices of little children at Loreto Convent School, seeking to learn. Many parents look for the chance to get a place for their children in our already full schools. This makes the presence of Mary Ward in Tanzania real and, without a doubt, her voice is real. As I reflect on the love of God keeping the steps of Mary Ward from faltering, I realize how it influences my life. This makes me hopeful, optimistic and helps me to remain focused on God who called me. I strongly believe that I am going in the right direction, focusing on Christ with His people in Tanzania. The loving teachers and students bring joy to everyone and this has kept me soaring on and on in my service to the school.

## For Reflection

Where is Mary Ward leading **me** today? Where is she leading **us** today? What keeps me focused and moving on even when I am faced with challenges in life?

What makes you (us) different from other workers in our apostolates? Do people wonder: *“Who are these women?”* when they encounter us?

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<https://padlet.com/mcloughlinrachel/mary-ward-booklet-2024-q7kotwveok6phqr8>



*"O take my hand and walk with me. Come and sing my song."*

The words gently urge us to join Mary Ward and continue her journey of determination that God had set for her and her company for some greater thing and for God's greater glory.

This determination was like the "fire burning" (Jer 20:9) in her heart that the prophet Jeremiah experienced, which was impossible to shut out. Her actions were bold and loud. She set out with boundless faith and unwavering hope on her ventures to give God glory. She was quiet and reflective when hardships came her way. She turned to Jesus in prayer and talked to Him while she moved about doing good, constantly consulting Him as a 'friend of friends.' She quietly strode over many years without paying too much attention to all the challenges that were hindering her footsteps. Deirdre Browne, IBVM, in her masterpiece, reminds us to challenge ourselves to move beyond our comfort zone and reach out. If Mary Ward were here physically with us, she would be praying with her feet to reach out to the peripheries and make those there, the center of her life and service. She is inviting us today to do the same!

We were paired with other sisters to write this reflection together, me in South Sudan and two sisters from a CJ community in the Ukraine. Two countries in two hemispheres sharing a hope of peace. Communication had been a challenge, not so unlike in the time of our early sisters. Unfortunately, modern internet servers were not able to serve well in these two zones, and made it impossible for us to express our feelings collectively. The reality in both these countries still remains raw and rough. We are stunned into silence and shock to see how human life is least valued, human dignity is not respected. Women and children are the most vulnerable in all situations in these countries. Every single day is a struggle for the people and Mary Ward women in these communities are constantly challenged by unjust practices embedded within our societies. Besides doing our share to eradicate these injustices, we continue to be a presence among our community and to be one with them in their sufferings. With all our fragility and vulnerability, with dependent faith in Jesus and following the courage of Mary Ward, we let *"the strength of her spirit, the love of our Lord.."* keep us going to spread the gospel of justice and peace.

## *For Reflection*

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In 'Lead Us On Mary Ward' there is a strong invitation to move mentally and physically:  
Where would my feet take me if I were inspired by the spirit of Mary Ward?

What could boost my courage to set out like Mary Ward with unwavering determination?

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Mary Ward, defined by Pope John Paul II as the "perfect woman", has always been on the move. She has been on both a physical and spiritual journey, searching, discerning what is right, and *"pursuing her dream to its end"*.

Today Mary Ward walks with me (*taking my hand*) if I am willing not to be afraid to bear witness to Christ in everyday life. Mary Ward walks with me as I go forth with courage, *"Speaking the truth, trusting in God, acting for freedom and justice"*.



Mary Ward teaches us in her letters the way of synodality with which she has carried out the new role of women in the Catholic Church: no longer cloistered monasteries but on a journey around the world to evangelize and educate!

As a layman, husband, father of four children, lawyer, I, with Mary Ward, who takes my hand and walks with me, in my ordinary life, try to *"do good and do it well"*. However, it is difficult and a continuous struggle. *"In fact I do not do the good that I want, but the evil that I do not want."* (Rom 7, 18-20).

I need the sacraments, an intense spiritual and prayer life, and the sisters of Mary Ward to help me in discernment, in formation and by their example to encourage me to be a witness to Christ.

Even today Mary Ward tells us laymen that *"God gives each one the grace required by the state to which God calls each person"* (Alloc. F. 128 u. f. 47, Fridl II, nr. 479, p. 87).

Walking with Mary Ward, the CJ and IBVM sisters are now Becoming One!

I would like, as a layman, to also join Mary Ward, who takes my hand, as we Become One.

I truly believe that, if Mary Ward's transcendental challenge was wanting to recognize the role of women within the Catholic Church, today Mary Ward would fight to incorporate the laity into the congregation that she founded and evangelize Europe. Together with the laity to continue to create schools, many schools, because schools are today what monasteries were in the Middle Ages: the place where the truth is transmitted to subsequent generations, by example, teaching truth and beauty.

Maurizio Borra

Inspired by a deep calling to work for the greater glory of God, beyond the confines of a convent, Mary Ward set out to pursue her dream of offering a new vision to the young girls of her era. Overcoming obstacles, Mary Ward believed that "Women in time will come to do much". It is this certainty that lives within me as a teacher in a Loreto college in Mauritius.

*"O take my hand and walk with me"*, Mary Ward, as I accomplish my mission with these young girls entrusted to me. Inspired by Mary Ward's strength of spirit and her love of the Lord I walk like her, spirited and strong, offering to these young girls coming from different cultures, beliefs and socioeconomic backgrounds an education with Christian values. These values transform our Loreto girls and empower them to be seekers of truth and doers of justice, to stand up for what they believe, but most importantly to do all things for the greater glory of God.

Mary Ward's strength and faith in bringing God's love beyond borders paved the way for the young women of yesterday, today and tomorrow. Even today we can be that woman who fights for what she believes. When the teaching profession becomes difficult with today's realities, when the challenges of everyday life overwhelm me, I think of this woman who steps up to face life's challenges. Like her *I step up without fear* because I know that *all will be well, for God is near!*

Julia Charles

## For Reflection

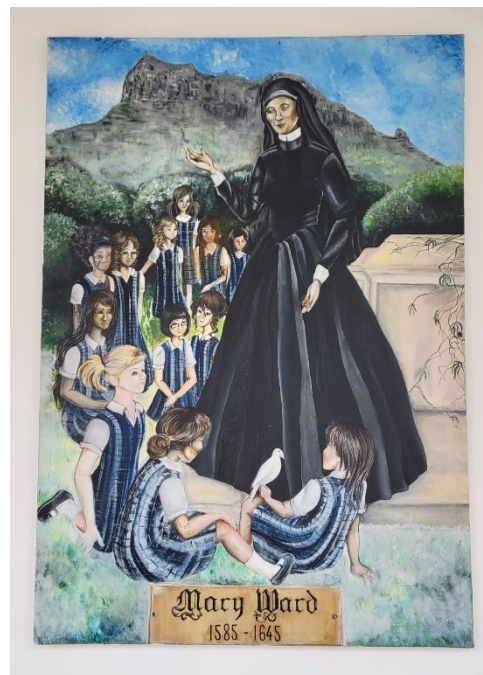
What does it mean in your life and context when Mary Ward says,  
*"take my hand and walk with me"?*

With whom are you walking in your everyday life?

Who else is encouraging you on the journey?

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I share this image where you can see the students who are in their school uniform surrounding Mary Ward. In this painting, we see Mary Ward with one hand towards the girls and the other raised. This shows that Mary Ward is offering a hand to lift the girls up. The white bird represents the Holy Spirit. The blue sky shows the sky of Mauritius and the trees shows the beauty of nature in Mauritius.

*The love of the Lord, this is what keeps us going*

While we see the image of Mary Ward we see ourselves as itinerants (a Romanian sister missionary in Cuba and another returning from Romania to Peru after her apostolic experience as a tertian). The words of Mary Ward resonate with us “The path of virtue does not allow stops, whoever does not advance goes backwards”. We have felt challenged by the Lord of life to overcome the fear of the unknown and new. We have accepted the invitation to leave our comfort zones, overcome geographical and cultural barriers, a new language, and we have crossed the Atlantic in both directions. This movement has allowed us to let go in order to embrace newness: new ideas, new vision, new hope and possibility. To our surprise, on the other side we have found sisters who live with and are energized by the same charism and spirituality. Mary Ward and Ignatius of Loyola have welcomed us in each place and we have felt the Spirit of God flowing in life and in the mission here and there.



To put ourselves on the move we touch our humanity and abandon ourselves to God and his project of love for the world. We welcome our fragility, we become aware of our fear; we take charge of our thoughts, feelings and emotions, we name and stammer with words that overwhelm and surpass us. In this way, we let God, who planted this deep desire in our hearts, teach us and show us step by step the route in our interior and exterior journey.

Leaving our land has allowed us to discover that the world is bigger than the familiar and well-known little piece of heaven, to learn from other cultures, to know and to enrich ourselves by meeting other sisters and people. We discover that we are invited to break the vicious circle of turning around in the same old and familiar place, looking up and looking at the horizon together with all creation to create a common vision and project of peaceful coexistence for everyone.

The departures have introduced us to new dynamics of meeting, welcoming, familiarity, communion, the shared table, hospitality, caring for life, praying from the everyday, living simply, recognizing our fragility and interdependence. Dynamics lived in community, with the people we work with, with other religious congregations, with people from other institutions and organizations.

Looking at our journey so far, we discover that we feel freer and more available. Nothing that we have experienced and that has happened to us has been by chance, we welcome everything as followers of an itinerant God who called Mary Ward to itinerancy and to the tireless search for God's will. Like Mary Ward we too accept the challenge! *We step up without fear. All will be well, for God is near!... The love of our Lord is what keeps us going.* (Taken from the Song of Mary Ward and put in the plural).

## *For Reflection*

Everything is in motion and as sisters of Mary Ward we are all invited to move.  
What prevents me from moving? Where do I feel resistance that prevents me from being free and available for the mission?

When we say the prayer for the beatification of Mary Ward we say  
"Mary Ward pray for us and give us your spirit".  
What aspects of her spirit do we ask for the Body of the Congregation?

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I am Cecilia and I live in Myanmar as a missionary. My life in Myanmar as a missionary is a big challenge for me. As the political situation is becoming worse, the economy is going from bad to worse with no end in sight. Many people are starving and are suffering since the coup in 2021. Although I want to do more for the poor, it is hard to be active in public. The military government is very reluctant to support poor local residents because it believes that many of the anti-government forces are among the poor. I worry about my safety when I distribute rice and oil to the poor and when I provide educational opportunities for children. I have to be careful when I visit such areas. Should I just live peacefully in this situation? I work with children and youth in slum areas and I frequently think of Mary Ward - if she lived here what would she do? I compare my current situation with Mary Ward's situation.



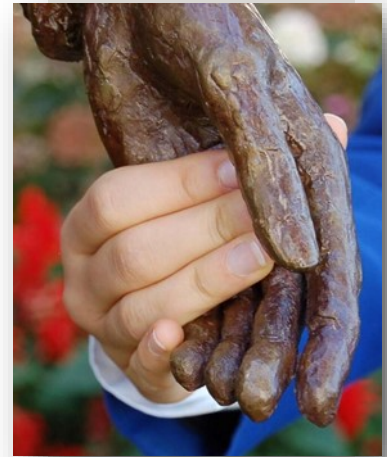
The song “Lead Us On, Mary Ward” gives me a clear answer. “*What is she saying to us?*” Listening to the song, I am deeply comforted and happy because I feel what I am doing is in keeping with Mary Ward's dream. And the song tells us “*How beautiful are the feet of those who bring the gospel of peace*”. I know that this is a place of great challenge and danger, but it is also a deeper place to which Jesus calls us. Therefore, *I will step up to the challenge!* I will walk with Jesus and Mary Ward in this dark situation. “*All will be well, for God is near.*”

Cecilia Lee CJ

Moving to Australia to study theology, my current ministry is to cultivate knowledge and insights in academia. I study and live an ordinary life, finding myself sharing the hidden life of Jesus in the small village of Nazareth. For thirty years, he lived and worked quietly among his family and neighbors, being remembered not for his greatness but by his ordinariness. Reflecting on this mystery, I have affirmed the importance of ordinary life and the importance of family and community - those whom God sent to me to take my hand and walk with me.

When I listened to *“Lead Us on Mary Ward”*, the phrase *“take my hand and walk with me”* stayed with me for days. It is an invitation to overcome the notion of strangers: “I” versus “you” and “we” versus “they” to build a circle of friends. And yet, the unity in companionship does not necessarily mean “a drop dissolves into the ocean” but rather the simultaneous realization of deeper individuality. As Teilhard de Chardin asserted: “True union differentiates”. Joining this circle of friends and following Mary Ward’s footsteps in bringing the gospel of peace, I felt the call to be not merely a messenger but a channel of peace, starting with being at peace with who I am and where I am. And I believe that genuine peace from within is one of the most vivid, contagious, and powerful witnesses of the gospel of peace.

Tran Tuyet Trinh IBVM



### *For Reflection*

What is challenging you in your place? Where is Jesus calling you?

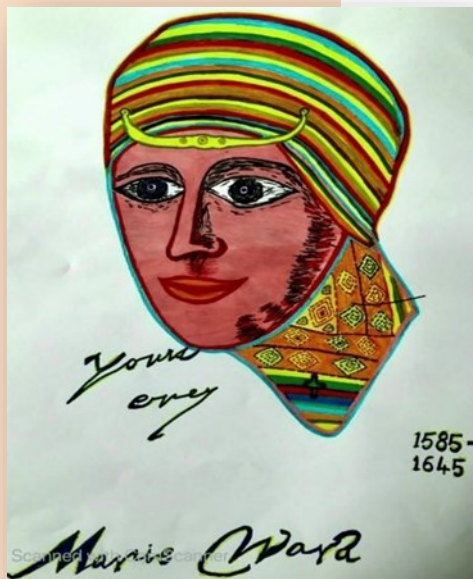
What would Mary Ward do if she were in your situation?

How do you experience Jesus' presence in the sacred space that he invites you to be?

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Journeying with Mary Ward in Timor-Leste is very real for me. I see so many sparks of her spirit in the life stories, beliefs, culture, mysticism and hopes of the Timorese people. I also feel so blessed to witness the way her spirit speaks deeply to the hearts of many young women, inspiring and empowering them to believe that they too can bring the gospel of peace to Timor-Leste.

Here is Mary Ward with Timorese traditional clothing colors with a (kaibauk) crown.

I was born in India, but after living in Australia for a number of years, I entered Loreto and was soon missioned to Timor-Leste where I have now lived for the last seven years. I feel truly blessed to experience the way the spirit of Mary Ward has a profound impact on many young women and particularly those who are journeying with us.

Rosalina Belo, our first Timorese sister who grew up in a mountain district of Timor-Leste, drew this picture to express the way Mary Ward speaks to her of freedom, strength and faith. She hopes our way of life opens up ways for many young women to “do great things”.



Young women who are journeying with us say:

- I love Mary Ward.
- She inspires me to talk to God as I talk to my friends.
- She speaks of freedom, justice, confidence and truth.
- She encourages women to be leaders equal to men.

May we continue to keep alive the vision of Mary Ward and walk in her graced footsteps.

Selvi Adaikala IBVM



I was born in South Korea. I am a chaplain in one of the Mission Stations in the Kalookan Diocese in the Philippines. When I was given this mission, I was confident and eager to begin my ministry because I had good experiences living in intercultural communities in different countries. However, I began to feel uncomfortable since I heard the community is in a very impoverished area. Also, in this area quite often we face

power outages and water scarcity. Honestly, it is not easy to manage life in this uncomfortable condition. Additionally, I was not familiar with their traditional activities related to faith practices in the church.

One day, as I was reflecting on the life of Mary Ward, I got inspiration. She met thousands of challenges in her life, but depended only on Almighty God without ceasing prayer. I came to realize that God's power strengthens me, and I believe, *all will be well, for God is near*. I am following in the footsteps of Mary Ward.

I would like to say I am still in the process of "looking into others' garden." I am walking on the bridge of assimilation to be with and accept different cultures with love as I meet people here. Now my life at Kalookan is thankfully filled with many graces and I feel "I am blessed."

Catharina Yim CJ



### *For Reflection*

What is the message your feet are bringing to those you meet?

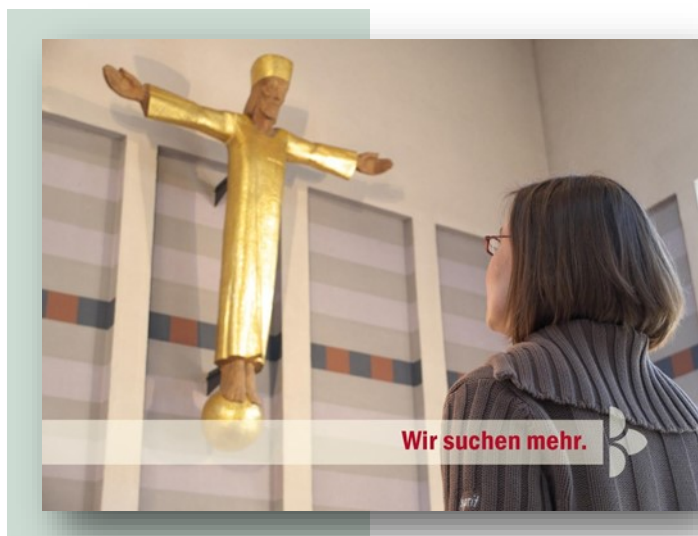
What is Mary Ward saying to you, deep in your heart?

Whom do I depend on when I meet challenges?

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Mary Ward had the courage to opt for the selfless Jesus way on her life's journey. "To proceed as Christ did... was all the happiness I wished for in this life" she wrote. Like Jesus, her sole purpose was to fulfill God's will regardless of personal cost. She was willing "to suffer with love and gladness whatsoever trouble or contrariety should happen" in pursuing this. There was no shortage of difficulties,

disappointments, and setbacks for her as she attempted to carve out a new way for women religious. She was willing to "bear well all such difficulties as shall happen" in the carrying out of God's will for her.

For many years I worked in Germany as a social worker for Caritas in refugee work. During this time, I got to know many very committed staff members who worked with heart and soul and passion for freedom, justice and peace, often much more committed than us women religious. Therefore, I was moved by the question: What distinguishes us as women religious? What is the essence of our way of life?

Mary Ward's whole life was centered on God. For me, "relating everything to God" is the essence of our way of life. As Mary Ward women we relate our whole lives to God. This is our *raison d'être* and what we radiate with our lives - that God is the center of our lives and that through God life is complete. In our western world, where faith is dwindling, centering our lives on God as Mary Ward women seems to me especially important. I believe that our Ignatian spirituality gives us the best foundation for this.

As one of the increasingly fewer members in the active apostolic ministry in my home province of Ireland, I am indebted to our older members who model for me those qualities so dear to our foundress. I am inspired by their closeness to God, and their lives of self-sacrifice. They gave their all for the mission of the Institute at home and abroad.



In their later years and with their “*eyes fixed ahead,*” these wonderful women continue to offer prayerful support to younger members and leadership teams in their apostolic endeavors. I have also been privileged to live and work with international groups of IBVM and CJ women from other continents.



Their commitment and passion in contextualizing and reimagining Mary Ward’s charism for our 21<sup>st</sup> century world fills me with great hope for our future.

### *For Reflection*

Are my eyes fixed ahead? If so, what do I see?

Am I fearful or hopeful when I look ahead?

Where do I see God’s invitation to me, to my Province/Region,  
to the worldwide CJ and IBVM families today?

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# Final Reflection

By Deirdre Browne, IBVM

Essentially, we have been on an 8-day retreat together. What a gift! Could Ignatius and Mary Ward in the 16<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> centuries ever have imagined that their daring dreams would be shared and enacted by men and women of the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Wonders never cease with an ever-faithful God! My final reflections are offered in gratitude for the project of MWW and in thanks to all who generously agreed to share their insights with us. Also, to honour Christa and Mariana whom at invitation and in friendship brought us all together in a fresh and exciting way.

The context in which I respond is post the funeral of a much-loved sister and close friend, Sr Toni Matha IBVM. A strong and striking woman of Lebanese Australian ancestry, her life was spent in education and social welfare. Her loving influence was felt by everyone who crossed her path. The funeral occurred in the very week the reflections were due. In the ensuing 8 days I found Toni popping up in Morocco, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Tanzania, and in all the other countries I reflected upon. Was that a distraction? No, for I could imagine Toni wearing the very same Mary Ward shoes as our sisters in those parts of the world. Though Parkinson's disease for 30+ years continued to restrict Toni's active ministry she never gave up on her mission of love, finding ever new ways of being present to need. Jesus was the centre of her life, Mary, the mother of God by her side, and Mary Ward the inspiration for the path she would take in her vocation of love. It seems to me that many sisters, like Toni, can no longer cross divides of land and sea in active ministry. They may have lost their stride, but like the sisters in Morocco they find themselves communicating daily with 'the language of the heart'. What solace and gift we might be to one another as equal engagers in the mission of the whole Mary Ward family, if we put our hearts and minds to loving, supporting and affirming one another beyond borders.

I began to think about 'WE are this woman' differently. From the youngest to the oldest, to the healthy and infirm, we CJ/IBVM are all on a common journey, a journey of love with a shared mission. But if we widened our tents in these synodal times who then might be the WE?

Maurizio and Julia's reflections from Italy and Mauritius respectively give us a clue. The WE are all of us, the circle of friends, religious, colleagues, strangers and people of any age, all who seek and desire the Mary Ward path to Jesus. As sisters and brothers attuned to the Spirit, we might then move confidently forward, model inclusivity, step up to the challenge and step out without fear. This is beautifully illustrated in the open hand sketch by Rosalina of East Timor and in the portrait of Mary Ward in Timorese cultural head-dress. So too in the arms and hands of Meliesa Judge's sculpture. The outstretched right arm suggests the energy of striding out on mission, the left arm and hand, close to the body, with rosary bracelet half hidden in the palm, symbolises the depth of her spiritual life within.

Leaving country, friends and family and the strength and security they give us; leaving comforts and what we take for granted; leaving the familiar and moving into the unknown: this story runs subtly throughout the reflections. However, I heard no whisperings of self-importance or self-pity. The mission is all about others. Some worked long days in schools offering the transformative freedom that education brings to women and young girls. Others faced bleak, fearful and dark times working in places of great poverty, violence and even war. To me what shone through was the courage and hope expressed by all. Mary Ward's 'after businesses I go to God' took on a very different meaning for me. Coming home after such a day, tired out and exhausted? If it's all for love where is our love nourished? Often it must be hard to keep the fire of the spirit alight. An image came to mind: When we experience the full solar eclipse all is total darkness. But ah, what of the brilliant glow that rims it?

Light immortal! Light divine!

Together we live the dream and the dance of our common mission in the wise Mary Ward/Ignatian way, but with difference 'according to circumstance, time and place'. It is always the Jesus story that is our reason for mission, but now and into the future we are called to walk our Mary Ward path of Becoming One, and to live that charism more deeply and widely in our beautiful and troubled world. The great thing is that we are following the Lord of the Dance, and that we are all in this dance together. To God be the glory! Jesus say, Amen.

*"Mission is at the heart of who we are, and love is the driving force that urges us on."*

*Const Vol11 2:2.1*

*"I have come to cast fire on the earth and how I long to see it kindled."*

*Luke 12:49*

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