

CONECTA 89

March 2020



**Walking
by the wetlands
of River Guadalquivir**



Conecta is the internal newsletter of the Blessed Virgin Mary Institute, IBVM, Spanish Province.

A religious community inspired by Mary Ward, who wants to live its spirituality and share it with the people with whom it lives and works.

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Front Page Picture:

A moment of the visit to Seville's Isla Mayor municipality that Noelle Corscadden and Judy Nekesa enjoyed together with Castilleja's companions.

Generalate's visit to Spain

They arrived on 5 February and have travelled around the province, Madrid, Seville, Bilbao and Asilah, until their departure on 26 February. Today it seems to us that it was a long time ago because our life has changed since then, due to the coronavirus pandemic.

We cannot forget the time we have lived. The visit of Noelle Corscaden and Judy Nekesa to the province of Spain has been a time of grace for all of us and has fulfilled its objectives of strengthening the union of hearts and minds; providing an understanding of the mission and ministries; and reviewing whether we in our province are faithful to the Gospel and our Constitutions, something that may seem more complicated to evaluate, but it may be perceived that we are sure that this is what inspires and moves us, and we want to commit ourselves to it.

All the members of the Mary Ward Family have felt connected to something bigger than us, that gives meaning to what we do and what we are. There is no doubt that we have been able to transmit this to Noelle and Judy, who have left very happy, our commitment to what we are doing in Spain, inspired by the charism we share.

It has been a time of meeting, of sharing experiences, of seeing that we are doing well, that there is a lot of life in the province, that there are many people who are committed to this project, that the charism that God inspired in Mary Ward and

the Gospel continues to have meaning.

Many thanks to all the Mary Ward Family in Spain and Morocco who have made this visit a blessing for all of us, to empower us and give us energy to move forward.

ELENA CERDEIRAS, IBVM



Noelle and Judy visited, with the community of Castilleja, Isla Mayor, Seville



Noelle and Judy with Elena Cerdeiras and the Council members



General Counselor Judy Nekesa visited all the schools of the Irlandesas, among other ministries that IBVM carries out in Spain. Both the IBVMs of the corresponding communities in each city, as well as the teachers and students of the schools, gave her a warm welcome, which she herself noted as “memorable”. Upon her arrival in Rome, Judy wrote these words about her trip: *“My visit in Spain was one of the best and memorable experience. It was exciting and energy giving for me meeting with the staff, students and the sisters in the different places. The warmth and the joy i experienced was a clear testimony of Mary Wards values being fully alive among all. I came back with a deep sense of gratitude. Gracias a todas.”*

They also visited the communities and other ministries such as Social Integration Housing, where Blanca Bergareche lives and works. Noelle met with our companions in each community and was able to learn about their various ministries. In addition, she enjoyed walks around the beautiful cities of Bilbao, Seville, Madrid and Asilah, with the companions of IBVM Spain.



Mary Ward week 2020

As every year, during the week of January 23-30 the communities and other friends of Mary Ward commemorated our foundress with prayers and celebrations.



The community of Castilleja de la Cuesta celebrated the closing of our foundress' week by inviting a lot of Mary Ward's friends to a prayerful reflection in the chapel and a delicious snack. A large group of people attended, according to Isabel Gortázar, Ibvm, *"people with whom we work in the village, (Cáritas, health pastoral, social work, older brothers of Calle Real and of the Plaza, people who tell us that their grandmothers worked with the nuns...), the Former Students of the Loreto Sisters of Seville. Also from Mary Ward circles, members of the Schools Board of Management, heads of schools and friends, the parish priest..."*



In the community of Asilah, Morocco, it has become a tradition to celebrate Mary Ward week with a gathering and meal together with all the friends, teachers and collaborators of the mission, in honour of the Venerable Mary Ward.



On the 24th the community of Castilleja celebrated a Eucharist with the all the school's staff and then a cocktail lunch. At the end everyone received a personalised gift: a glass water bottle with the name of each person. A good ecological initiative.

Maria Bierer, a life to celebrate

Maria Bierer, Ibvm, died on December 29, 2019, at the Mary Ward House in Naperville, USA, at the age of 86 and 67 years of religious life.



Maria Bierer was the Superior General of the North American branch of IBVM at the time of the

reunification with the Irish branch. She moved to Rome and was a member of the General Council until 2006.

Of her many talents and interests, music and teaching were paramount. While working in teaching, she studied theology and applied music.

Maria produced numerous musicals and plays of professional level that are fondly remembered.

Her continued service led her to various leadership positions. She was elected General Councilor for North

America and General Superior there.

When the unification of the Irish and North American Generalates took place, Mary went to Rome as General Councilor to help with the transition. She also accepted the very important task of coordinating the revision of the Constitutions of the Institute, a task that was begun in 2004 and continued in 2009 when its two volumes were approved.

We are grateful for his life and service to the Institute.

The work of Isabel Peche and Louise Latin with confined immigrants, on National TV

On February 16th, the program of La 2 of Spanish National Television called ‘El día del señor’ (The Lord’s Day), which broadcasts the Sunday mass, each time recorded in a different church, was broadcasted from the parish of San Hilario de Poitiers, in Madrid.

Isabel Peche and Louise Latin belong to that parish where they are very active. Through it, they are part of a project to visit the people confined in the CIE (Center of Internment of Foreigners) of their neighborhood.

Before the Eucharist, the program broadcasts a brief



report on the most significant work of the parish. On this occasion, among other activities and values, they showed the interview that they had with our companions of the IBVM explaining their work.

Unfortunately, the unpredictable and flickering world of television meant that they could only show a few minutes of the interview, but a few minutes that were very well used.

Mabel Ybáñez, volunteer and Coordi

With this interview, we begin a series we have called “Women Working for Justice”. These are people who, in one way or another, were inspired by Mary Ward. Whether as former students or because of their close relationship to the Institute, these are people who from their daily lives work to change and improve our world.

We spoke to Mabel in her office at the NGO Manos Unidas, where she coordinates the team of projects in Africa, which supports about 400 projects a year. Since her early retirement in 2008, she has dedicated her days to working to “eradicate hunger and poverty in the world”, as Manos Unidas’s motto states. A task that has led her to spend three weeks touring the Democratic Republic of the Congo as well as many office hours, assessing projects and coordinating a team of 70 people - mostly volunteers - and getting them to “all look in the same direction”.

You are a former Loreto student, where did you study?

I studied first in Madrid, at the Velázquez school, and I have wonderful memories. It was a school where the sisters were more open, more tolerant and closer than other institutions. Then I continued my studies in Ireland, at Loreto Abbey Rathfarnham, where I still have great friends. Now I value very much things that at the time I perhaps did not give importance to, such as the fact that we were really edu-



cated to work and live an independent life.

When did you start volunteering?

In 2008 I had the possibility of taking early retirement. I took the opportunity with the idea of having more free time and enjoy; but what was intended to be a sabbatical year became just a few months.

To be honest, it was unexpected. That first summer of “retirement”, Mamen Lacalle, who is now responsible

for the Ivory Coast and Togo regions, proposed that I collaborate with Manos Unidas. I had not had any previous contact with this organization, but the truth is that, as I was used to being busy, having so much free time suddenly became rather boring. So I sent my CV to propose myself as a volunteer and they offered me to work in the co-financing department, as that is where I had experience. I was there for about a year and then the opportunity arose to move to the projects team, supporting the person in charge in Con-

Coordinator for Africa at Manos Unidas

go. It was then that I made my first trip to the Congo. It was 25 days, an initiatory trip where I became aware and had real contact with Africa. After four years, I was offered to be the Coordinator for Africa's projects.

Certainly, it was a challenge. The biggest difficulty is to coordinate people, to get everyone to look in the same direction. Because it is normal that everyone has their own opinions, but we must not lose sight of the fact that we are all working towards the same end. We have a great team, with very capable people, and my goal is to get the best out of each person.

What is the process for financing a project ?

First of all, we don't approve any project that we haven't visited. On each trip, we have a very strict plan: visit the projects that are asking for

funding; visit those that are already underway to see how they are evolving and those that have already been completed, to assess the impact.

At the same time, in each country we analyse the situation from the point of view of health, education, agriculture, equality towards women... The objective is to get to know the needs well and to discern the areas of action in which our intervention can be most useful.

The projects are mainly educational and then related to food security. We believe that these two aspects are basic for the development of everything else.

How to communicate what we see?

We are aware that figures are worthless, but it is not always easy to face the media. I think it is important to tell what we know well.

In 2018 I was in Kanzenze, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, starting a water and sanitation project for a hospital that serves 140,000 people and had no running water. On that trip, I tried to carry one of those jerry cans that

«We believe that education and food security are two basic aspects for the development of everything else»

girls carry on their heads as if it was something easy. Obviously, I wasn't able to move with it. That's the way to put ourselves in their shoes and be aware that we're not talking about numbers, we're talking about girls, in developmental age, spending most of their time carrying water.



Mabel Ybáñez with Congolese journalist Caddy Adzuba, *Principe de Asturias* Award for Concord 2014

Our school in Madrid, 50 years old

The *Irlandesas* (as we know the Loreto Schools in Spain) School, located on Cullera Street in a popular district of Madrid, is celebrating 50 years of life, and what an intense and shared life it is! On Friday, January 31st, there was a lovely opening ceremony in which many people related to the Centre gathered. Here we share some of the history of the arrival of the IBVM in the neighborhood and how a project was forged by the support of many people.

The IBVM is present in the Carabanchel neighbourhood because after the Second Vatican Council, the Church encouraged religious congregations to increase their presence in areas on the outskirts of cities.

At that time, we had a school in Calle Velázquez, and when the Archbishop of Madrid asked the congregations to establish schools in the new areas, the Institute decided to respond to that request.



Religious life has to respond to the signs of the times and go where there is a need. Our foundress, Mary Ward, was always clear about this.

In 1969, we arrived at

what was then known as Caño Roto, trying to respond to the challenges of the neighbourhood at that time at the religious, educational and social levels. The first



thing that began to function was the dispensary, then the Nuestra Señora de Lourdes nursery school.

The first sisters to go were Flora Magrro and Begoña Goyoaga. The following year the sisters' house was built, allowing our presence to be more continuous. Before, they had to travel from the city center to there every day and in those times it was not easy... So, little by little the school was put into operation.

The collaboration of the Association of Former Students of the school of Velazquez in the dispensary and the nursery, attending to the youngest girls in the dining room was very important in the beginning. Later, in 1971, they also created a Job Placement Office, which was closed in 2003, where many

young girls from the neighborhood got jobs.

It was not until 1984 that the neighborhood had its own parish. From the foundation of the school until that year, the gymnasium was the provisional parish, and the classrooms hosted the catechism and other parish groups. The parish priest was Julio. Many families in the neighborhood remember today the weddings, baptisms and First Communions they celebrated in the gymnasium. Finally, in 1984, the parish of the Crucifixion of the Lord was built. A large number of neighbors contributed their own money to the construction of the parish.

We religious have always felt part of the neighbourhood, in close friendship and collaboration with the families of the neighbourhood,

with the Parish and with the neighbours in general.

Different generations of grandfathers and grandmothers, parents, children, grandchildren have passed through. Religious who also came, went and returned. Together we have been seeing and living the challenges, the changes, the problems of the neighbourhood and its environment, trying together to give an answer according to the possibilities.

We have learned a lot and we have also felt loved and appreciated. It has been an honour for us to have a school in this neighbourhood, it was a blessing to arrive here in those days of 1969, and that is why it is so important for us to celebrate this 50 years of shared life.

ELENA CERDEIRAS, IBVM



The CJ / IBVM network discusses situation of women and girls around the world

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Women's Conference, a global meeting that marked a turning point in the global vision of the unequal situation of women and girls in the world.

To commemorate this milestone and in order to analyse the current situation, the CJ/IBVM network organised an online meeting on 28 February in which the various representatives of the network analysed the situation in their countries on the basis of official data from their own governments.

Each representative made a summary of their government's reports and, during

they pointed out the inequality that still exists in terms of responsibility towards unpaid care work (which falls mainly on women) and the situation of some groups, such as that of domestic workers, the majority of whom are women and who have different labour rights from the rest of the people employed by others.

All the representatives pointed out that, although in most countries the legislation has been putting women's rights on an equal footing with those of men, society still reproduces male chauvinist behaviors that we have to fight against.



the meeting, they answered questions about where most progress had been made and where much remained to be done.

In Europe, for example,

Islam-Christian dialogue

**Each one
will sow the
earth in his
own way**

Clotilde de Maroussem, Ibvm, shares these images that helped her reflect on the Islam-Christian dialogue, and to seek an understanding and rapprochement between the two religions.



Clotilde de Maroussem, Featured Artists at Anawim Arts blog

Each month, the [Anawim Arts](#) Gallery blog features the work of one artist. In February, the invited [artist was Clotilde de Maroussem, IBVM](#), who for the past year has been inviting us to reflect on inter-religiousness through her photographs in this bulletin.

Anawim Arts is a collaborative ministry sponsored by The Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary and grew out of the work of the Loretto Sisters in Wheaton.

Anawim is a Hebrew word from scripture referring to the People of God.

Anawim Arts offers art at the intersection of art and spirituality. In the blog, they explain: "Our purpose is to encourage people to discover and express their inner artist. Our belief is that we are all co-creators in our lives, and as we engage in the creative process, we deepen and express our connection to the Divine."

Featured Artists

IBVM from the island of Mauritius, Clotilde de Maroussem, made her final vows in 2010 and her motto is "May they all be one". She has been a member of the Asilah community in Morocco for three years, where she conducts sessions of silence and contemplation with Moroccan women.

Clotilde's statement for this exhibition is:

"Through my photos I like to create engaging experien-



1. Bhutia Busty Monastery, Darjeeling / India 2007
2. Mary with Jesus, Sculptor Colin Colahan, used with permission of Xavier College, Melbourne / Australia 2012
3. Prayer of Eid al-Fitr after Ramadan, Asilah / Morocco 2017
4. Puja, Ganga Talao / Mauritius 2013

ces with the viewer/reader of what touch and question me in life. In this vision when I take my camera I prefer to be alone and let the inspiration come from inside. It is a process where I need first to smell the area, feel the vibration and tune myself with all

these movements in me.

I agree with the Canadian photographer David Duchemin, when he says: «The challenge is how to create the illusion of depth (using colors, light and emotions) which will impact the hearts and minds of others.»

Mary Ward Week 2020



Leioa (Vizcaya)

Joy is one of Mary Ward's maxims. That is why, after starting the day with the traditional Eucharist which pays homage to our foundress, the students lived a January 30th full of happiness. Children's animation groups and some very original costumes made that on such a beautiful day the whole family of Irlandesas (Loreto) had a smile on their faces.



Irlandesas (Madrid)

We have been doing an Interdisciplinary Project on Mary Ward week for several years. In it, workshops and coordinated activities are carried out throughout the school so that the contents of all the subjects and the history of Mary Ward are worked on at the same time, all motivated by a contemporary theme, in this case, superheroes. Therefore, the theme chosen this year was "The WonderWard legacy", and we worked on the death of Mary Ward and the first actions of her followers. In this way, our students got to know our foundress in depth while learning and working cooperatively.



El Soto (Alcobendas)

The Infant and Primary students remembered the figure of Mary Ward by making a Multiple Intelligences palette under the slogan "Mary Ward gives us from the inside". The children began the day with a race, then celebrated a prayer, tasted the traditional chocolate drink and ended the day with a competition for courses and houses where they had a great time.

In Secondary and High School, a Eucharist was held in memory of Nuria, a high school student who recently passed away. For this reason, it was decided to cancel the partying activities initially proposed for this day.

Bami (Sevilla)

We celebrated Mary Ward week again with great enthusiasm at all levels.

As an example, we leave you with a photograph showing our Infant School students in costume recreating passages from the life of our foundress.

We also wanted to highlight this year the activity prepared for the ESO. A duathlon (bike and run) that was a great success among our students.

It was very gratifying to see the enthusiasm of those who participated and the help of Secondary School in the organization.

By the way, the plants that the Institute gave to the teachers... are still growing in our classes!



Aljarafe (Sevilla)

January is the month of Mary Ward, our foundress, whom we have kept in mind in our daily prayer and especially in our morning of solidarity.

On Friday 24th we began the day with a prayer in the chapel all together, highlighting the values Mary taught us. The ceremony ended with the presentation of the school flag to Lucia, a student who throughout her school life has carried the "truth, justice, sincerity and freedom" in her daily life.

Although the day was cloudy, our desire to participate in the games could not wait, so we enjoyed the different activities and the games organized by the Secondary School, the Primary School market and the delicious sweets from Parents Association, which made our day perfect.



Loreto (Sevilla)

We celebrated Mary Ward's day by embarking on an exciting journey with her. Going on a journey involves preparation, choosing a goal and charting a course knowing that unforeseen events may arise. Faith in a project makes it succeed.

Both Mary Ward and Magellan (a historical figure closely related to Seville) had that faith in what they were doing, and that is why their achievements have such an impact. Our students, on board the different ships of the Mary Ward and Magellan itineraries, travelled and sailed their routes - difficulties and achievements - through various activities that led to thoughts such as the ones contained in this logbook: "Dear Diary, With this journey I am learning to believe in what I feel. I am afraid because it is very long, but I

have the desire to continue. It's not long now. I'll write again when I get there!"



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If you would like to collaborate with the **Conecta** newsletter by writing, sending some photographs, suggesting a topic, or telling us something interesting to share so that we can write it, please contact us.



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