

CONECTA 91

October 2020



We reap what was sown



M. Stanislaus Murphy
1888-1919



M. Baptist Gibney
1919-1937



M. Teresa Walsh
1937-1949



M. Aloysius Murphy
1949-1961



M. Gertrude O'Gorman
1961-1967



M. F. Xavier O'Rourke
1967-1979



M. Myriam Ybarra
1979-1984



M. Consiglo Diez
1985-1991



S. ANA GARRIGUES
1991-1996



M^{re} Teresa Vorcy
1999 - 2005



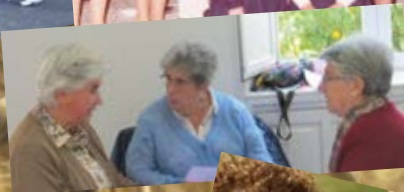
Cecilia O'Dwyer
2005 - 2011



Isabel Gortázar
2011 - 2017



Elena Cerdeiras
2017 - 2020





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.

More information at:
www.ibvm.es

Or on social networks:



C/ Los Mesejo, 10-12.
Portal 1. 3º A.
28007 Madrid
Telephone +34 91 552 7544
Email: comunicacion@ibvm.es

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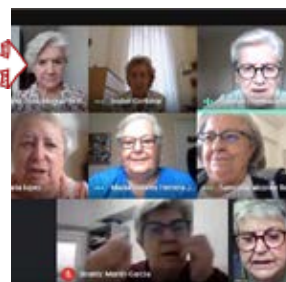
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Front Page Picture:

The Spanish Province of the IBVM is renewed and moves towards a more participative leadership. Every step we take forward is driven by God, Mary Ward and all our ancestors, as well as ourselves. We are reaping what was sown.

A more participative leadership



In the Institute we are living several processes that will mean a big change. On the one hand, you know that the union with the Congregation of Jesus is a dream of all that is not far away. The CJ General Congregation has had to be postponed to the summer of 2021, closer to the one of the IBVM, which will be in the autumn of 2022. The general congregation is the highest decision-making body of our congregations, so it seems that the union already has dates where both congregations can make important decisions. In the meantime, we are having the opportunity for concrete actions that will help us to get to know each other.

Another process in which we have been involved is the reflection on leadership and our structures as an Institu-

te, thus, we are called to go beyond the limits of provinces towards an Institute for mission. During this time, some provinces of the Institute have become regions and the appointment of the provincial and her council has been replaced by a leadership team in which responsibilities are distributed. In Spain, during these months, the general leadership team is going to consult on the appointment of the provincial leadership, since at the end of this year we will finish the current team. In this context, since July 1, the communities have not had a local superior appointed, which is a great novelty. Given the number of people that we are in each community, and wanting to advance to a more participative leadership, we want to advance

to simpler structures, where the participation of all and the consensus at the time of taking decisions, become our way of proceeding. We continue to explore our spirituality, where we have sometimes confused our vow of obedience, which refers to mission and being part of an apostolic body, with organizational and daily issues. This is new for all of us and also for all the people and groups with whom we are in contact.

In this time, in which we are living uncertainty at all levels, we are becoming aware of the things that are fundamental and those that can change. What was known, now takes other forms that challenge us to discover and live responding to the present and building a new future.

ELENA CERDEIRAS, IBVM

CONCHA BONET

«We must leave aside that look of superiority»



A pediatrician with extensive experience as an aid worker, Concha Bonet has a powerful discourse on what cooperation should be and how to change the often paternalistic and still colonizing outlook that we launch from Europe to other countries. She rebels against the “white savior” narrative and highlights the value of local staff. A former student of the BVM School, Bonet denies the hero’s halo of someone who is going to “save lives”.

We learned about you through a video in which you tell your experience during the arrival of refugees on the Greek coast in Lesbos. How was it?

The work itself was complicated because the refugees and migrants entered through different areas of the island and the reception was very disorganized. On the one hand, there were many organizations and many young people who wanted to help; their enthusiasm and availability was moving, but at the same time, it was difficult to coordinate everything.

But being there you realize that any of the people who arrived could be your child. Anyone. When you are there, and you see them all coming off the boat, so fragile, it is overwhelming. In Lesbos I was working with Doctors of the World and from the organization we have made a lot of emphasis on understanding that it is a question of ri-

ghts: the right to be received, to be cared for in dignified conditions, is something that must always be remembered.

You have been doing cooperation work all your life, where does this vocation come from?

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The idea of kindness and sacrifice of the Aid worker is hypertrophied and not entirely true. Those of us who go out there are helping ourselves.

The truth is that since I was a child I liked very much. I was always interested and curious about anything. In addition, personally, I always had the goal of going abroad, thinking about studying medicine, going to Africa, tra-

veling, living alone... But all this came to a grief because... I fell madly in love! I thought it would pass, but it didn’t. The boy, who is now my husband, also wanted to study medicine, so we studied together and in 84-85 we spent a month volunteering in Mozambique, and another summer we went to Liberia, just before the civil war began. And seeing everything we saw there, I realized how unfair it all was. But, in addition, I began to have many ethical doubts.

I am referring to the paternalistic vision with which cooperation is often carried out. There is a feeling that we are the white people with power who are going to save “the poor” by imposing our vision and not listening to their own arguments. This is another form of colonialism. In today’s society there is a hypertrophy of goodness, the idea of sacrifice of the Aid worker. And it is not entirely

true. Those of us who go out there are helping ourselves.

Have you learned much in other countries?

Of course, this world is global, everything is connected. We can bring materials that they don't have there, but they have much more holistic knowledge; our knowledge is much more compartmentalized, we depend on testing to make any diagnosis. I have met very good doctors. On many occasions, I would have been unable to do anything without them... There are things I have never seen, and on those occasions, you are like a zero on the left until you have the support of the local staff. You have to be more honest and vindicate their work and their courage. And it makes me angry because they are always anonymous. The story is told when the foreign staff gets there, without telling everything that has been done before, without telling that they are the ones who take you by the hand. Not to mention the importance of knowing the local languages and dialects; without that, there is nothing for a doctor to do.

What should organizations do to improve?

A lot is already being done. First of all, they need to have a strong component of reporting and awareness raising. It is also important to have good protocols for action and, again, a lot of training. Experience makes you more humble. There are times when, with



the best of intentions, you can end up making things worse. For example, there are treatments that are not indicated in a certain country, the conservation of medicines is not always optimal... Even on a global level, big mistakes can be made. In Haiti, for example, after the earthquake, so much humanitarian aid arrived that the fragile local economy of the island was completely destroyed.

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It's very generous.**

And, of course, you have to put aside the look of superiority and admire what they are capable of doing on the ground. Midwives in many countries do incredible things with hardly any resources;

techniques that even gynecologists would not dare to do here.

How was your experience in Haiti?

It was the first big emergency I've experienced and the feeling is that it was like an actor, you go out on a stage and act with a lot of hands that are holding you down. Invisible and anonymous hands. Hands that are those of my family, my husband, my colleagues who sometimes bend me, my children, the manager, the medical director... So many people that make you go away. No one remembers or acknowledges it, you take all the credit. Without all those hands you would never have gotten out. The one who cooperates is the one who stays here, taking care of the things in the house, the children, that has a lot of merit. It's very generous. Because you go, you learn, you have an enriching experience and you want to come back. But it is not a trait of kindness, but of curiosity. / **A. MORENO**

Mary Ward Family Union, how are we advancing?

«We recognize to the great cloud of witnesses of the Mary Ward family, that is, our ancestors, on whose shoulders we ride, all their fidelity and work of centuries to become ONE.»

This is a small statement to show how the process of the Union of the Religious Family founded by Mary Ward is advancing: that congregation she started with the first companions at St. Omer in the early 17th century, in 1609. We will not go back to those dates because it would be too long and complex. Just to say that that early Institute was suppressed by Pope Urban VIII in 1631 through a terrible and destructive Papal Bull. Mary's projects were too advanced for those times. Thanks to the constancy and fidelity of her companions, the Institute (suspended but active) continued to move forward because they did not cease to ask the Holy See for its approval. This finally arrived in 1877, but by then there were many branches of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary dis-

tributed throughout the different continents, with the same spirit, but even with different Constitutions and Generalates, not to mention that many houses depended on the Bishops of the place.

In 1900 a Congress was held to seek the Union. Unfortunately, it ended in failure for historical and political reasons fundamentally. However, those attempts led to a return of certain communities to their former founding house. Therefore, throughout the twentieth century these returns to the union followed one another, with the result that at the beginning of the twenty-first century only three major branches remained. After the reunification of the North American Branch with the Irish Branch in 2003, we arrive at the present moment in which the Loreto Branch (former-

ly the Irish Branch) and the Congregation of Jesus seek to make the desire of our Foundress a reality.

Varios factores han contribuido al momento en que Several factors have contributed to the moment in which we now find ourselves: the greater communication and relationships between people, the meetings, the shared meetings of provincial and regional superiors with the members of the two generalates in Rome, the work in common... Obviously, we cannot forget the action of the Holy Spirit and Mary Ward's desire to become one Family. Since one loves only what one knows, for the past few months we had been praying every 30th day about "Pills on Union" (by St. Mary Wright) about the history of the Institute in this process. In addition, in Rome the members of





the two Generalates had as a rule: Never do alone what we can do better together.

Mary Ward said that we must know how to wait for God's time and not get ahead of him. We can say that this time has already arrived and it is manifested in what we could call the 'moments of grace'. In the Pentecost Letter of 2019 the members of the two General Leadership Teams, after discernment, called all of us in the Congregation of Jesus and the Institute of the B.V. Mary to share, to ask ourselves and each other, whether was now the right time to look again at the question of union in a concrete way. They shared with us their sense that the Holy Spirit and Mary Ward were calling these two branches, remaining from Mary Ward's foundation in 1609, to take steps beyond the growing co-

llaboration that has been the hallmark of recent decades.

By involving us in their discernment they wanted to involve us all in this task and encourage a process of study, prayer and reflection. Now they were inviting each of us to be part of the journey of discovering, through

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Never do alone
what we can do
better together

personal and communal discernment, if this really is a “kairos” moment for our two congregations. Therefore, we began a process along these lines and in the Mary Ward Week of 2020 each sent her personal response to the Rome offices.

The result was announced on February 3, 2020, and we were told that over 90% of the members of the two branches were in favor of beginning a formal process of union. It was a joyful announcement on the feast day of St. Blaise, as the bishop who had so favored Mary Ward and her first companions in the early days of St. Omer.

This letter said that, once this great step had been taken, for which we had to be very happy, there were others that would take longer, practical and technical steps no less complex by experts and that would be announced to us in due course.

Therefore, this letter was to cheer us up, to show our gratitude to the great cloud of witnesses of the Mary Ward family, that is, to thank our ancestors, on whose shoulders we were riding, for all



their fidelity and work of centuries to become ONE. Moreover, our joy now was to be the generation that can tell Mary Ward that, God willing, her wish before she died that they all be here would be truly fulfilled. And they concluded by saying that Mary Ward had surely 'rejoiced in her heart' from heaven!

In March came the pandemic, the confinement and all that we have experienced. But this has not prevented us from continuing to take steps to work together and to get to know each other better:

- Creation of a joint CJ/IBVM JPIC Office based in Rome, on via Nomentana, which deals with Justice and Peace and Integrity of Creation issues for the Mary Ward Family worldwide.

- Creation of a joint CJ/IBVM Communications Office based in Rome, at Casa Loreto.

- Consultation with members of both branches on the future location of Mary Ward's heritage currently in Germany (Painted Life and

We are the generation that can tell Mary Ward that, God willing, her wish before she died that they all be here, will be truly fulfilled.

other valuable legacies from the Founder's time) to ensure its future.

- In September, the Superiors General communicate two important pieces of news:

- Meeting with the Dicastery of Religious Life in the Vatican to discuss the Union.

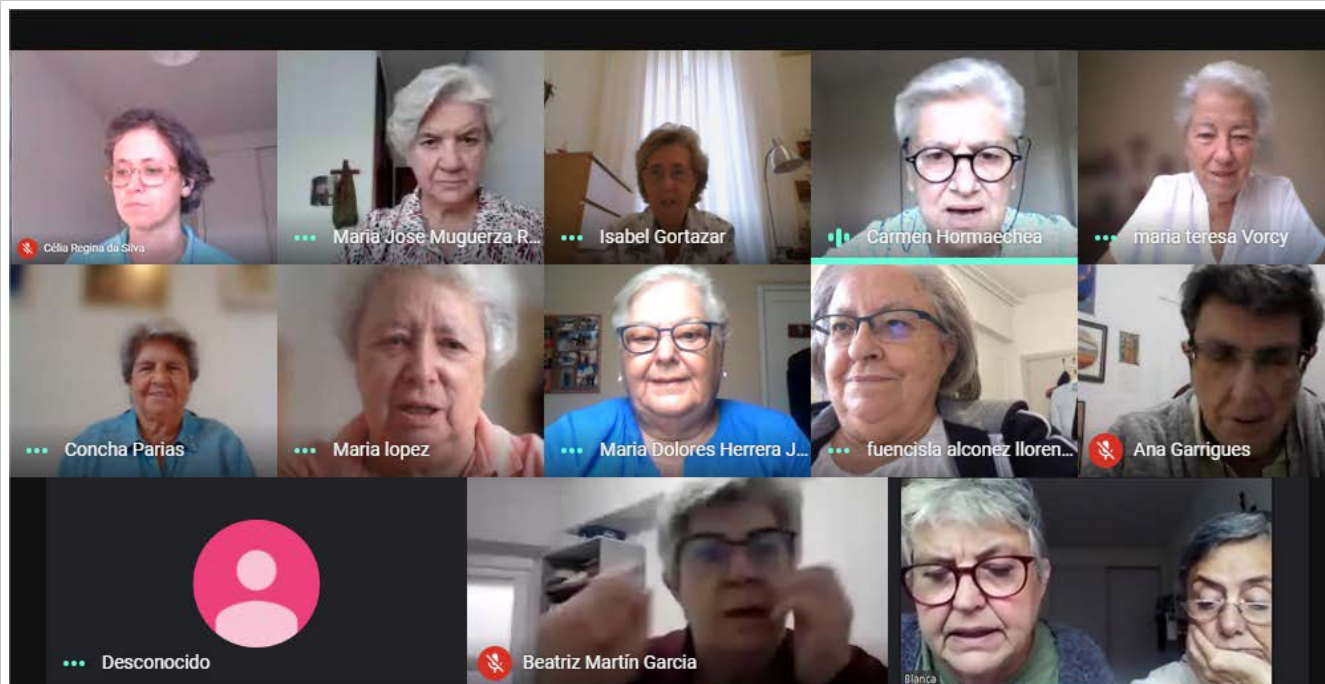
The Holy See considers it favorably, taking into account that it is a shared charism and, even more, a common foundress.

After the meeting and common discernment of the two leadership teams, a chronogram of the process is made, with important milestones such as the GC CJ of 2021 and the GC IBVM of 2022. Some next steps in the short and medium term are also decided, such as finding a way for members of the two branches to get to know each other and to learn more about the history and realities of the other branch, especially in those parts of the world where they do not currently coexist. This next step will begin in October of this year and more details will be sent in a letter.

We're here right now!

M^a LÓPEZ DE HARO, IBVM

We want to stay together



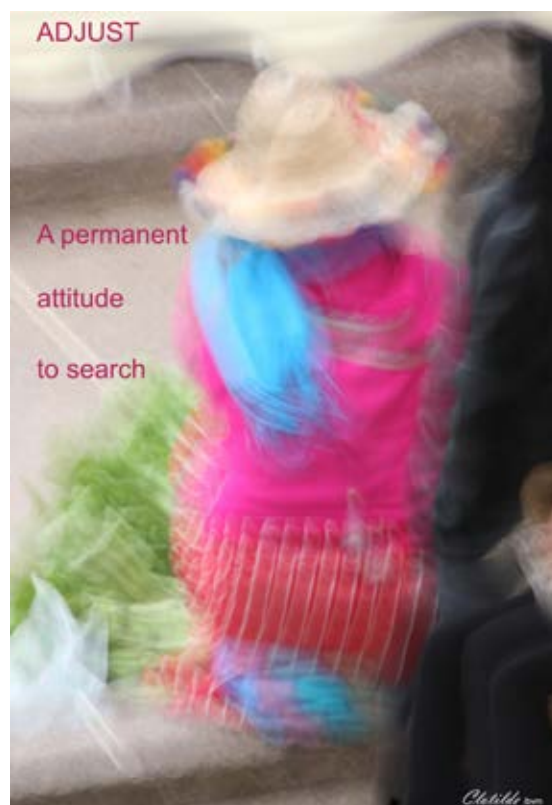
Since the end of September, we have set out to learn how to handle online meeting and working tools with ease, as it seems that the new times of restriction of human contact that we need and enjoy so much have come to stay for a long time.

With the communication office of the province, we have digitalization workshops, and we are learning a lot about Google Meet, Zoom and other applications that help us to talk and see each other, to pray together, to work together and to continue living with joy, despite any adversity.

Islamic-Christian dialogue from Asilah



The companions of the IBVM Mission in Asilah, north of Morocco, always invite us to the Islamic-Christian dialogue. From their Christian mission in a mostly Muslim country, they promote fraternity over religion.



Irlandesas Schools launch the school year with the motto «The world is for me»

This year 2020/21 our motto is “The world is for me”. After living the past school year “From within” and cultivating our being, the time has come to go out and discover the planet and conquer the world. To get to know other cultures, open our minds get excited about new experiences... to fill us with energy and optimism, become forward-thinking and make the world a better place once and for all. Because we know that God has given us the gift of the world. A world that “is for me”, and for which I am responsible.

In this year’s school diary, we prepare our students for this great journey:

We are going to live an unforgettable journey during these months. Are you ready?

Don’t worry about anything, you will have time to get everything ready. Besides, last year we were preparing ‘from within’ (remember?), taking care of our

interior, watering our roots and taking in air to make the planet spin.

So now, you just need to be willing to take the step, to feel like conquering the world.

Because, do you know? the world is for you. Although that means many things.

The world is for you, like when they tell you “this gift is for you” and you take care of it as if it were the most important thing in the universe.

The world is for you, as when you are told “this is your moment” and you make the most of it, wishing it would never end, savoring every second.

The world is for you, as when they tell you “that this is your moment” and you get so excited that you get nervous thinking how important is what you have in your hands.

The world is for you’, and you have the opportunity to use this gift and discover how

you will choose to be happy in it. Because the better you investigate it, the more accurate your decisions will be and the happier you will become.

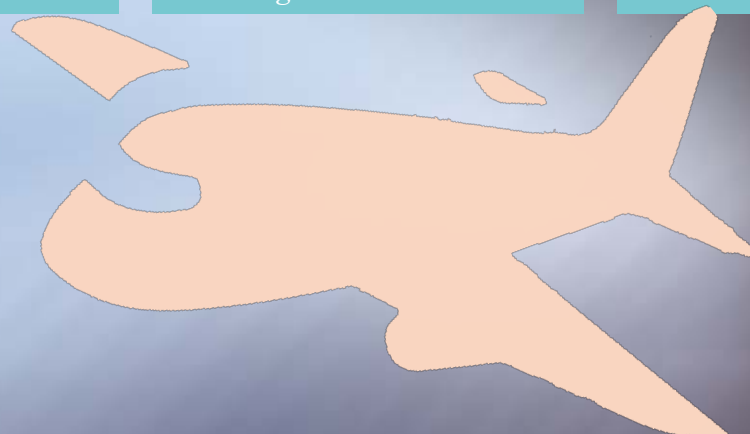
Mary Ward was very clear about her way of conquering the world: to live freely by working for justice with joy to find the truth. Therefore, she lived her life with courage, being where no one wanted to be, but where it was most needed, and always fighting for what God wanted.

What about you? What is your place? Do you know it already? Or are you still searching?

For our part, we want to offer you this journey so that you can enjoy it and get to know our world and those who live in it. It is the greatest gift we have. We hope you will discover things in it that will make you grow all your life.

Here we go!

ALEJANDRO DELGADO



El mundo, es para mí

CURSO 2020/21



IRLANDESAS
COLEGIOS DEL IBVM

Get connected to **Conecta**

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.

comunicacion@ibvm.es



aurora@ibvm.es

rosamoro@ibvm.es

aurora's Phone: +34 915 512 999



Rosa's Phone: +34 915 012 189



C/ Los Mesejo, 10-12.

Portal 1. 3º A

28007 Madrid

Telephone: +34 91 552 7544

Email: comunicacion@ibvm.es

