

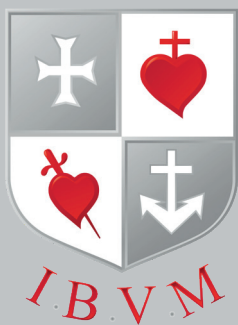
# CONECTA 94

June 2021



Life in pandemic





**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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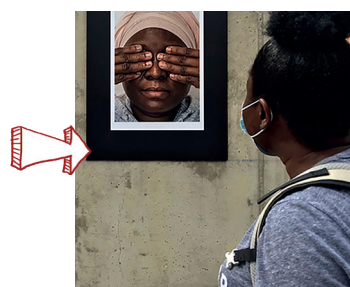
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## Front Page Picture:

Even a pandemic has a positive side to discover. This difficult year has allowed us to learn about the high level of commitment to the well-being of elderly sisters and the great vocation of the workers at El Soto nursing home, in centre of Spain.

# «We are very well cared for»

## WE INTRODUCE THE EMPLOYEES OF THE EL SOTO RESIDENCE

During the lockdown in Spain, the daily news about the deaths of elderly people in residential homes was devastating and worrying. When we spoke to the elderly sisters living in the residence of El Soto, in the Madrid region, they always said “We are well, thanks to God”, “We are very well cared for, thanks to God”.



**I**n Spain, the state of emergency and the lock-down ordered by the government triggered great uncertainty (the most used word), fear and generalised stress, but not everyone had the same bad experience; not all people reacted in the same way and not all people were faced with the same challenges. There were people who had to keep going while most of us remained at home, trying to stay safe from the virus.

We spoke to the workers at the IBVM Spain nursing home. We wanted to meet

those people for whom the religious were so grateful and thanked God. They have been a team of 11, as in football, and as in this sport, success lies in their individual effort, enormous vocation and teamwork.

### **The organisation of the house**

**Rosa Palla** is the director of the house. She has been in this job for 6 years and says she is delighted. “I do everything, the accounts, workshops such as occupational or leisure therapy, sho-

pping, managing supplies, maintenance of the cars, the house...”, she adds, “José, the school’s handyman, is an extraordinary support in this! I’m also in charge of the food and the catering; before ordering or buying it, I design the menus for each week, they are reviewed by Elisa, who is an expert in menus and also knows better than anyone the tastes of each sister; Diana, the nurse, also tells me what diet each sister needs every week”, her responsibilities are a bit like those of a mother, they have no limits.



Rosa lives in Madrid with her husband and three children, an 18-year-old, a 16-year-old and a 13-year-old. Her husband and two daughters have passed the Covid, but she and her youngest son have not, “although I have had to be confined several times, once for a nephew and the other time I can’t remember, but for the sisters, we didn’t put ourselves in confinement, we just couldn’t!”.

In confinement, “all of a sudden it was very strange. The street was deserted and obviously, the sisters had to be assisted. I thought to myself, ‘Oh my God! If we run out of workers, at first it was a terrible burden”.

According to Rosa, “it was incredibly lucky to have such a good house, because there were four sick nuns and we had space to isolate them”, “and the workers behaved amazing, amazing...”.

At the beginning of the whole thing, Diana the nurse got the Covid, “Imagine with the scenario we had, suddenly, the nurse was ill, very ill! it was a miracle she wasn’t hospitalised! A month of sick leave. The poor thing, she worked on the phone on the days she could, because some days she couldn’t, I called her to ask her a lot of things”.

At the beginning there was

no PPE [personal protective equipment], no masks, no tests, and no one knew what the appropriate protocol was. “We used to make the PPE with rubbish bags, the masks with sanitary pads...”, they were able to save the situation together with more determination than knowledge, but above all, with a lot of imagination or professional intuition.

**Diana**, the nurse, is surprised to hear that it is thought they did a great job, “Good job? Well, I didn’t have the feeling that we were doing a good job, it was crazy, all we did was fight off all the fires as they arose! We were very lucky”, and after such an attack of equani-

working at El Soto, from organising the staff timetables to payroll and selection of workers.

Once she got over the Covid she went straight back to work and her presence has been fundamental. “I had the bad luck to fall ill very early on, in March, I felt terrible because it was the worst time for all of us”, “we didn’t know what to hold on to, because every day they told us something different about the virus... The girls were very scared, logically, I don’t have children, but they all have children, some of them very young”.

She comments that these were days of enormous stress, “We wanted negative PCR tests to come to work, But there were times when there was no PCR tests for anyone!” It was clear to them at all times that; they had to take great care of the workers, so that they would not bring the virus with them to this house.

As a nurse, she is always looking after everything related to the sisters’ health, from attending to emergencies, to managing medical appointments, accompanying them to consultations and examinations, scheduling analyses, and a fundamental task of prevention, monitoring those who are

admitted to the hospital and looking for assistants to be with them at all times. Preparing the medication for each one on a weekly basis, the diets and supplements that some of them may need... a great responsibility that must be added to being the workers liaison with the San Camilo Foundation.

When there was a shortage of PCR tests, Diana says that fortu-



mity, she concludes more calmly, “although I’m glad to hear that...”

She came to Spain with her parents from Russia when she was very young, now is 38 years old and has been working at El Soto since the end of 2018. In fact, she and the whole team of carers work for the San Camilo Foundation and Diana is responsible for everything concerning the staff





**Ana J. Calero**

Nursing assistant. She has been working in El Soto for 8 years.



**Diana Antoci**

Nurse. She has been working in El Soto since the end of 2018.



**Fani Calero**

Nursing assistant. She has been working in El Soto for 4 years.



**Jaqueline Vargas**

Nursing assistant. She has been working here since 2010.



**Mª Ángeles Cabrero**

In charge of cleaning and laundry for 6 years.



**María Leo**

Nursing assistant. She has been working in El Soto for 7 years.



**Niuka Hernández**

Nursing assistant. She has been working in El Soto for 8 years.



**Pilar Martínez**

Nursing assistant. She has been working in El Soto for 5 years.



**Rosa Palla**

Manager of the residence. She has been here for 6 years.



👉 **Tamara García**  
Geroculturist. She has been here for almost 3 years.

**Yolanda Fernández** 👉  
Geroculturist. She has been here for two and a half years.





nately they had no cases of suspected Covid: “It has happened the other way around, going to the hospital with a sister because she was ill for something else, and the doctors thought she had covid, and I assured them she did not. For example, there are patients with heart problems -two sisters have these problems-, when they suffer decompensation, the lung works worse and the oxygen saturation drops, but it’s not because of the lung, it’s the heart! My advantage is that I know the sisters so well, that I could guess better what was wrong”. She jokes, insisting on taking no credit for it, “We were very lucky, of course they have a good connection up there...”

The nights are rotated between **Niuka Hernández** and **Jaqueline Vargas**. Jaqueline, the oldest worker in the house, had travelled to her native Peru to visit the family when all this happened. She was unable to return until the borders were opened in April. When she joined, the initial distress was not so great, but there was still a lot of pandemic ahead of them. Niuka, a native of Cuba, has been working in the house for eight years, and she has experienced all the stress of the first moments. She remembers a lot of tension “Here at night we work more than it seems, we

them”, recalls **M<sup>a</sup> Ángeles**, whose son worked in a supermarket, “at home and here, there have been a lot of nerves and a lot of worry, my son has had a lot of anxiety too”. In the end, the family got the Covid in January 2021, “my youngest son was infected, and he infected his father, although he was asymptomatic. My older son and I tested negative.

“We counted the days”, says **María Leo**, counting on her fingers, “when we were falling one by one, to see if you had been in contact and could have been infected”, “having to leave the house every day with two small



### The team

Taking turns between them, in the mornings there are three nursing assistants and a cleaning one, in the afternoons there are two assistants and in the evenings there is one assistant. Both Rosa and Diana consider that, during the worst of the pandemic, they have been indispensable in dealing with the most difficult situations.

do a lot of ironing or cleaning the fridges and corridors, for example”, taking advantage of the lack of activity, “but imagine, suddenly we had to clean a lot more, it was twice as much work, because disinfection was very important”.

They all remember fear, tension, “a lot of anxiety, not only because we could be infected, but also because we could bring the disease to

children... I even had tachycardia”, she now recalls calmly. In the end, neither she nor her family were infected.

At first, the sisters gathered them together to inform them that if they did not want to go to work, for the safety of themselves and their families, the sisters would understand, “but we all chose to keep working. They thanked us with compensation, but



that's not why we did it, it's that 'How can you stay at home? I mean, who does the work? It's our job!', Maria exclaimed. Her companions M<sup>a</sup> Ángeles and Ana nodded in agreement, all showed great gratitude to the religious, as well as a firm commitment. "We did what we had to do. This work is a vocation. We came because this work is our vocation, that is it," said **Yolanda**, who did get the coronavirus. "I got it in April, I was at home for 35 days, I had a very, very bad time".

Her inseparable companion in the afternoons, **Tamara**, commented, "Always keeping calm. The main thing is that there was no panic, that's what we tried to do". Tamara was not infected, "my daughter and her father got it, not me. But I had to confine myself with my daughter because she is only two years old".

**Ana Calero**, from Colombia, of her 32 years old she has been in Spain 21. She says she suffered in a different way, "I came back from maternity leave in March last year, and 15 days later, I got Covid, so I lasted very little time here in the worst moments. With the little girl, I think she had it too because she got a bit sick". Her husband and little brother didn't get it. "After a month on sick leave, when I came back I assimilated it in a different way".

Another who was infected was **Pilar Martínez**. Her three daughters are ex-students of the El Soto school,

and one of them is now a teacher there. She lives with her husband and her mother, who is elderly.

The confinement was ordered on 14 March, but on 12 March the doctors diagnosed Pilar with the virus. "I was the first to be infected, I was very ill, I should have gone to hospital, but as I knew what I had, I thought it would be better to die at home". Pilar spent 30 days in isolation, although in the end everyone in the house ended up being infected too. "The worst thing was the incorporation, because after so many days in isolation, with practically no food, when I went out, it seemed like I was in another world". Probably due to her lack of strength, shortly after her return, she slipped at the door and hurt her coccyx, "between one thing and another, when I came back, they - her companions - were already confident enough to deal with the situation".

**Fani**, who came to Spain from Colombia when she was 6 years old, is now 28 and has been working with the sisters for 4 years. She has a 9-year-old son and is five months pregnant. "I am already very nervous by nature, so, with all this pandemic, I had a terrible time. We didn't know how it was transmitted, I couldn't even kiss my child, and I have an aunt who lives with me who has Alzheimer's! Having to be so careful all the time... it was very hard time to me", although in the end no one in her family has passed the Covid.

## And then Filomena arrived



Once a pandemic had been overcome day by day for a whole year, with or without a connection up there, a cold storm arrived which once again isolated the sisters, as it did the entire country, another forced confinement!

Some of them laughed heartily when they remembered the Filomena story. Rosa, holding her hands to her head, "my goodness, it was all so intense! I had forgotten about it!"

Tamara and Yolanda burst out laughing, remembering the snowstorm that once again tested them as humans, their vocation and their commitment to the religious. They were two of the group of workers who had to stay overnight in the house. They laughed out loud and said: "That was really like doing shifts all the time, mornings, afternoons and evenings! We did everything, apart from looking after the sisters, fetching food as if you were on an expedition, clearing the snow from the door with whatever we had at hand... even swimming in the snow!", Yolanda points to herself still enjoying the fun of jumping into the snow to "swim" as if she were a child.

"Ay" they shake their heads, remembering with laughter "what fun we had!"



# Asilah mission will receive Victoria Ripa, CJ



Recently, through a letter from the two provincials, Elena Cerdeiras of the IBVM and Pilar Urretavizcaya of the CJs, we received the news that Victoria Ripa, CJ, is going to join the mission in Asilah, in September, together with María López de Haro, Ibvm.

The letter says: “It is a joy for us to inform you that we have taken another step forward. In September, Victoria Ripa, CJ, will join the Asilah mission. We thank Victoria for her availability and generosity, we believe it is something very significant in this process we are living”.

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## Dignity for migrants

IBVM Spain, as part of the Africa-Europe Faith and Justice Network (Madrid antenna), participates in the Africa Day Coordination, which has organised several events to denounce that Europe has created a real legal and political system based on the insecurity of its borders. A system that criminalises people in mobility and we denounce the legal framework that protects it. Irregularity is a serious violation of human

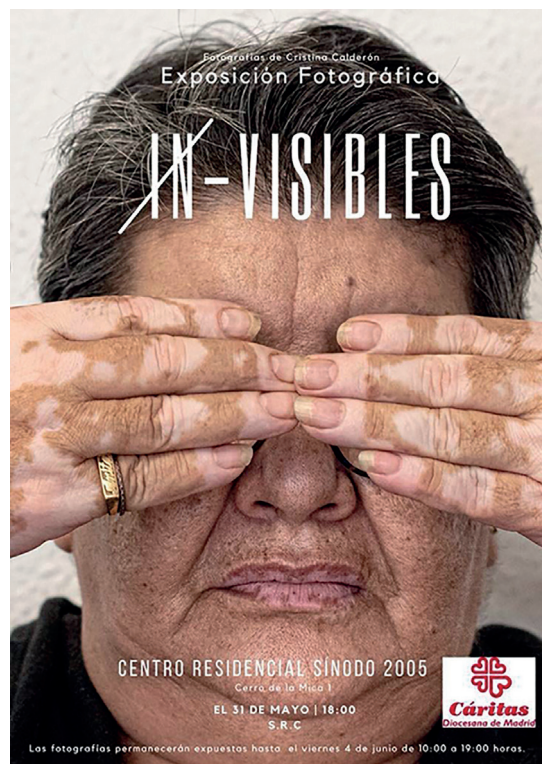


rights and places migrants in even more extreme levels of precariousness that directly threaten their health, their integrity and their lives. In addition to legislative

change, we propose to promote a culture of encounter and hospitality in neighbourhoods, villages and neighbourhood relations that fosters mutual enrichment.



# In-Visibles, an exhibition about strong women



At the beginning of June, the photographic exhibition 'In-Visibles' was shown at the Centro Residencial Sínodo 2005 of Cáritas Madrid where the Institute's members Blanca Bergareche and Celia Da Silva live as part of the life team.

The protagonist of this exhibition was not its photographer, Cristina Calderón,

but the women who live in the Residencial, and its aim was to give visibility to these fighters who have overcome many barriers every day, but who feel strong and protagonists of their lives.

Cristina Calderón has captured the life marks and emotional scars of this group of women, who show themselves in their natural, unabashed

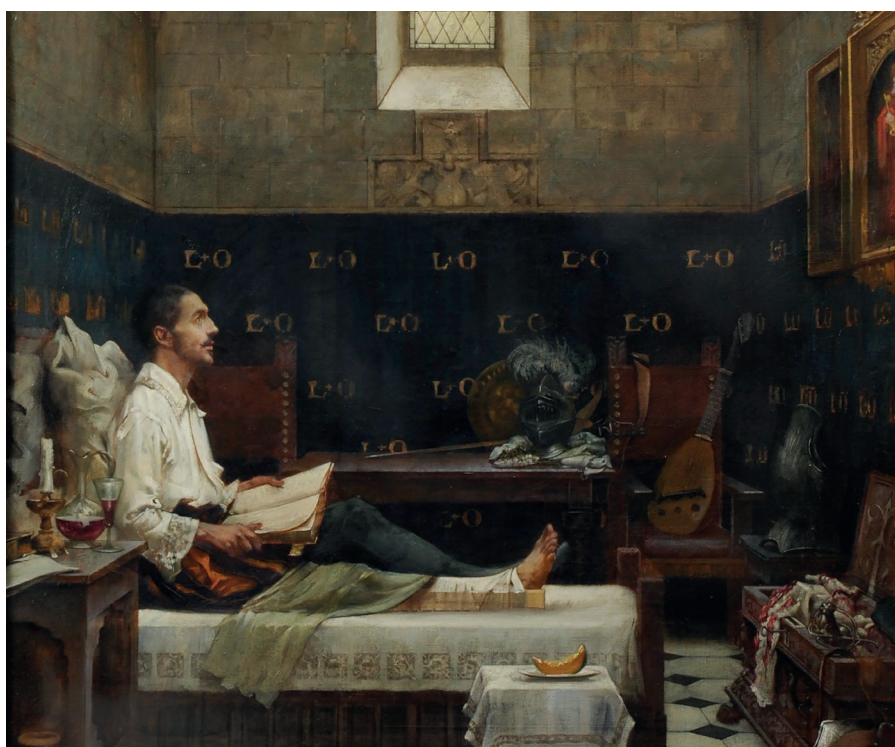
way. "Our life has not been an easy one. Since we were little we have lived through different situations and experiences, some beautiful and joyful and others more difficult and complex, which have left us with wounds and scars on our bodies and souls", said the woman who gave the welcome address.

**B. BERGARECHE, IBVM**



# Some points to follow the Ignatian and Wardian way

St. Ignatius places at the beginning of his Constitutions for the Society of Jesus (and therefore for us IBVM-CJ) no. 4 of the Institutum or Formula Institutum, at the beginning of the formative journey and thus for every Christian since baptism.



”

**The one who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple**

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cernment (EE.24 Daily Examen). Every motion should lead us to these 4 paths or ways of good, as Cabarrus tells us: to works of justice in solidarity, to joyful mercy, to misunderstanding and persecution, and to self-love with nurturing spaces.

The last part of the Principle and Foundation “Only desiring what MOST Glory gives God...”, and brings us closer to Mary Ward’s desires, she is a woman of great desires. She sought the Most above all, loving and seeking the Truth (three discourses on Truth). Here is the holiness of St. Ignatius: To seek and find the will of God in everything and in everyone is the Ignatian Magis.

**I**n The Principle and Foundation (EE no. 23), the whole Ignatian spirituality, and therefore that of Mary Ward, is condensed. Above all, a call to Freedom, to letting go of all that is earthly. We have been created to Praise God and to give Him Glory.

The second part of the Principle and Foundation: “All other things have been created for us”, so that we must use them “in so far as they lead us to God”. Here our connection leads us to

Laudato Sì (no. 66...ff) and Justice in Mary Ward “to return to the original state in harmony with God” referring everything to HIM. People and things (nature, etc.)

Continuing with the Principle and Foundation: “From which it follows that I must take what leads me to God and leave what leads me away from Him”: DISCERNMENT, as a tool to get our decisions right. And here the comparative with: Mary Ward’s determination, she is a woman of continual dis-





“Faith that does justice” is the phrase of St Ignatius and Mary Ward’s commitment to humanity. Connecting with the third chapter of F.T.: Thinking and creating an open world.

We could be inspired by Mary Ward’s tombstone as her legacy to humanity: “To love the poor, to live, die and rise again with them” here the book “Ignatian Tradition and solidarity with the poor” in one of its chapters: “The pilgrim with the poor” J.M. Rambla, highlights above all the attitude of “feeling with”, the situation of the poor who come to appropriate it and therefore are moved to affective solidarity.

Following Mary Ward’s tombstone, to form according to St. Ignatius in the school of the poor in the same book Ignatian Tradition and solidarity with the poor: the article by G. Buelta: Forming for faith and justice. According

to F.T. “He who loves is sure that none of his work done with love is lost, none of his sincere concern for others is lost, none of his generous fatigue is lost...”.

**What kind of world are we passing through?**

**What can the Ignatian and Wardian charism say to this world?**

From the Gospel: MW “Seek first the Kingdom and its justice and the rest will follow” which is found in Life in Painting, related to her religious vocation. In Saint Ignatius in front of El Cardener where he “sees all things new” from God’s point of view. And this Ignatian year we especially want to allow ourselves to be touched by this grace, all of us who are part of the great Ignatian family.

The Church of Ignatius’ time, and once again the “fe-

eling with” the Church (Rules). In Mary Ward the condemnation of a sexist Church was manifested and in spite of her love for it, she was condemned as heretic, schismatic and rebellious to the Holy Mother Church, which today wants to break with vitiated patterns. Woman of today (Bull of Suppression of Mary Ward’s Institute)

Holiness in both: The Values of the Kingdom: for Mary Ward, daily holiness and prophetism in both. Gratuitousness as a basic evangelical disposition, summons us today before both figures to refresh our spirit and to be able to go through these difficult years of pandemic, in a confidence made prayer, like St. Ignatius while convalescing in Loyola and Mary Ward inspiring her Institute in this inexhaustible source which is the Ignatian charism.

**LILIANA CASTRO, CJ**





Every morning, when the school door opens, each one of our pupils' eyes look up at us with a smile on their face, and they are so excited to continue coming to school!

It seemed impossible but it has been transformed into desire, commitment, attitude and responsibility. And together, teachers and pupils, we have changed our snorting when wearing our masks for feelings of gratitude, for continuing to enjoy unforgettable moments: Christmas performances, Sports, school excursions... We finish a school year that has made us better people and in which we can shout with great joy: The world is for me!



Obviously, at the beginning of the co... has dissipated as the academic year h... enthusiasm and excitement were abo... still alive! We have seen that eyes exp... a simple look. We have revealed a ser... sions, was hidden. We have supported... understandable, we have been more... distance... and, above all, we have no... away our desire to celebrate, to work... day.

Thanks to all of this we have made th... Buplauso, Mary Ward, Sports... specia... been days of great effort and collabor... and it has been worth it. THANK YOU



It's all nerves and excitement to live again the Sports 2021 in our school. Taking care of ourselves and in safety, 4th ESO celebrate their Eucharist in the Chapel while it is broadcast in the classrooms for the rest of the students. Next, the Salute of Flags tickles our stomachs and the tricolour show of the Marching begins. The dancing of our Infant boys and girls, the Primary and Secondary Games and the 3rd Grade Relays culminate in the 4th Grade Pyramids. A teamwork victory allowed us to celebrate and broadcast it in its entirety to our families through our Youtube channel and our website, inviting them to participate in our motto "Un Canto a la Vida" (A Song to Life).



This year has been an obstacle cour... work of our entire educational com... overcome successfully.

In addition to all the changes we ha... ks, gels, distances, open windows... nes to keep learning in our classroo... the open air, such as with our schoo... done our best not to miss any of th... with excitement and have celebrat... together - but at a distance.



# A school year in pandemic



course we were afraid, but this has progressed, as the desire, above all else because we are press much more than just sensitivity that, on many occasions each other, we have been united, despite the necessary not let anything or anyone take us, to come with a smile every

this school year unforgettable; celebrations, they have participation from the whole school!



use that, thanks to the good community, we have managed to have all had to get used to (masks...) we have modified our routines and to take advantage of the school garden project. We have also organized events that fill our course and we have adapted them online, interacting



At the Leioa school our 1st Primary students have continued to enjoy this special and atypical year at Ortu Txiki (mini vegetable garden). A beautiful natural space where they have been able to grow tomatoes, courgettes and chilli peppers among other goodies. What is hidden behind the masks are smiles of happiness, and there is nothing that could make us happier too. Let's keep on learning and enjoying, girls and boys!



At El Soto school we have continued to work with our students to keep the school running at full capacity despite the pandemic. It has not been easy, as quarantines, bubble groups and confinements have forced us to reinvent ourselves, the educational community has once again proved to be up to the task. Moreover, our learning this year has allowed us to celebrate events that were unthinkable not so long ago, such as first communions, Baccalaureate graduation, Sports, tournaments with our former pupils, the return of extracurricular activities... not forgetting the opening of our kindergarten.



# 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.



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