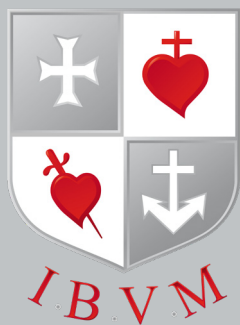


CONECTA 97

March 2022



Provincial Congregation 2022



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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Cover Picture:

The three members of the IBVM Provincial Council, Elena Cerdeiras, Blanca Bergareche and M^a Paz Herrera, talk during a break on the first day of the Provincial Congregation, about the working plan.

Provincial Congregation 2022

From the 25th to the 27th March, all the religious of the province who were able to travel, met in Madrid. In total there were 24 IBVMs and two CJ companions.



Photo of the group attending PC 2022 at the Provincial House of the Company of Mary in Madrid

During the course of these three days, among other things, the province's report and the economic report of the last eight years are shared and discussed. In this way, the members of the province see how far the province has come since the last congregation and what steps they want to take as a group for the future.

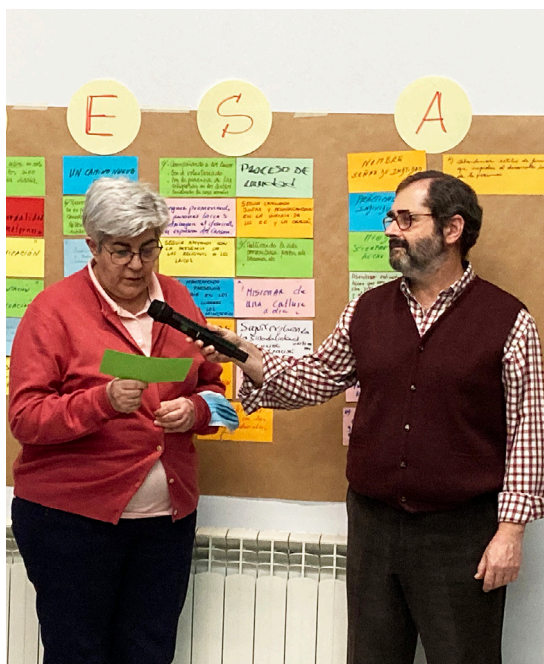
In these assembly meetings, the participants become aware of their way of being in the world, a world that is evolving and changing, and the evaluation every 8 years, almost a decade, allows them

to consider the path to follow for the near future, starting from the reality and the path taken eight years ago, with the calls of the GC 2014, which are still fully in force. "I feel that, in a way, we are creating the future. Creating how we are going to have, as a group, our small part in the emerging world," says Cecilia O'Dwyer.

Not only the 24 members who were able to attend the Congregation participate in these deliberations, those who stayed in the communities, for whatever reasons, also contribute to the congre-

gation with their prayer, and that is very important for all of them. "Going to the Provincial Congregation increases the sense of belonging to a body, because, although this sense is created with life itself day by day, these moments are important for us because we live it more intensely", explains María López de Haro.

On the last day, a closing ritual was celebrated in which they prayed for the reality of the world, the Church and the Institute with all its problems and at the same time its possibilities for the future.





IBVM Spain's Youth Representative, in New York

Carlota Gayo participated in the Change the World Model United Nations (CWMUN) session organised by the Italian group Associazione Diplomatici, at the United Nations headquarters in New York.

Carlota represented the Mozambican delegation at the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The theme was "Tackling vulnerabilities, building resilience: helping least developed countries (LDCs) to achieve structural economic progress". She participated with other international students representing other delegations who had to negotiate and draft a resolution.

Nuestra Youth Representative took the opportunity to visit the IBVM/CJ NGO office, where she met the representatives there, Janet Palafox IBVM and Cynthia Mathew CJ.



Cynthia Mathew CJ, Carlota Gayo and Janet Palafox IBVM

REFORESTA. Teresa Ball Bicentenary Project

The Institute has supported the organisation REFORESTA by financing the planting and maintenance for two years of 37 local trees in the Cañada Real de Madrid, as a provincial ecological project, one tree for each of the members of the province.

Over the past decades, IBVM has been committed to contributing to the fight against the climate crisis. With this overall objective in mind, the Mary Ward family, through the joint JPIC office, launched the 7-year Laudato Si ecological action plan in 2021. Within this JPIC scope of reference, with the objectives of Laudato Si and on a

broader level, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Spanish province joins the spirit of integral ecology of these global frameworks that give cohesion to the development of the human family.

After deliberation, the Spanish Province chose to commemorate the Bicentenary of the founding of the Irish

branch of the IBVM (from which the Spanish Province originates) by Teresa Ball, by contributing to a forest care project of an association called Reforesta.

Founded in 1991, Reforesta is dedicated to the promotion of sustainable development in broad terms and more specifically to the conservation of terrestrial ecosystems by



These are the trees and shrubs planted in January, including 37 of the IBVM Spain



On the organisation's website www.reforesta.es you can see all its projects

prioritising the recovery of vegetation and the fight against desertification. They have a project to recover the forests of holm oaks, cork oaks, melojos and other native species that once populated the Iberian Peninsula and they invite individuals and groups to collaborate in this initiative, either by volunteering, financing or in other ways that can be seen on their website.

Another goal of Reforesta is to facilitate the employment of people at risk of exclusion in the environmental sector. They have developed several training programmes in areas such as the restoration of natural spaces, ecotourism, forest plant production or the interpretation of natural and cultural heritage for this purpose.

IBVM Spain's contribution went towards the planting of 37 trees in an area on the outskirts of Madrid,



IBVM's contribution is a small gesture to help conserve forests and biodiversity and mitigate the climate emergency, while commemorating Teresa Ball.

including their maintenance for 2 years. These and other trees were planted in January 2022 and include kermes oak, cornicabra, hawthorn, jasmine and other species of trees and shrubs.

A total of 74 trees were planted. The decision to plant 37 trees was made thinking on one tree for each of the members of the Province at the time the project was chosen.

The economic collaboration with this project is a small gesture to support the conservation of forests and biodiversity and in the mitigation of the climate emergency and at the same time to commemorate the Bicentenary of a woman who has been a lynchpin on the way to where we are today.

MARIFRAN SÁNCHEZ

«There is a great indifference to human trafficking, especially sexual exploitation»

On the occasion of the Day of Prayer against Human Trafficking on 8 February, St Bakhita's Day, the Church is mobilising in its fight against human trafficking, far beyond prayer.

Marifran Sánchez has been the head of the human trafficking department at the Episcopal Conference for more than five years. With a degree in economics, she worked for 12 years in her field in private sector companies, until one day she decided that she needed to feel useful to people and to society. She started working first with young people at risk of exclusion and then in the reintegration of people who had been in prison, until she arrived at the Episcopal Conference in March 2015 and at the head of the Department of Trafficking a year later.

"I believe that human trafficking, although we hear more and more about it, continues to be a very invisible reality and our commitment is not to stop talking about this crime and above all to give a voice to the victims, to make them visible," she says. Marifran confesses that what

she likes most about her work is that "at the centre are always the people and specifically those whose dignity is being violated and whose rights are being violated" and adds: "Being able to make visible the "face" of those who are suffering from trafficking, in a society that makes them invisible, where only economic profit is sought, is very important to me since I became aware of the indifference that exists towards this problem, especially when we talk about sexual exploitation".

Resources

In the Bishops' Conference the Pastoral Ministries are divided into Commissions. The Trafficking Department in particular is integrated into the Commission for Social Pastoral and Human Promotion and within the Sub-Commission for Migration and Human Mobility. One of the fundamental tasks of this de-

partment is the creation of materials and resources so that dioceses can carry out the objective of making the reality of trafficking visible and raising awareness.

Among the materials that the Department is disseminating, and which are available on its website (www.social.conferenciaepiscopal.es), there are didactic units aimed at working with young people, focused from a preventive point of view, "because we believe that in order to put an end to trafficking we have to work with the youngest people".

Another resource that is being widely disseminated is the photographic exhibition "Full stop and on we go. Life can do more", which they created together with some diocesan coordinators throughout 2018, taking photographs and talking to people who had been victims of trafficking. "When we do



Marifran Sánchez, during an interview in her office

any resource or material, we always rely on people who are survivors of trafficking”.

This exhibition connects ordinary people, who may not know that trafficking exists, with survivors “through their images, their phrases and their expressions”, she explains. Since it opened in March 2019 in Madrid, it has been touring all over Spain. There are even replicas of it in other dioceses of the country.

During the months of February and March 2022, the exhibition could be visited in Madrid, thanks to the fact that the Trafficking Table of the diocese of Madrid, to which Pilar González-Cano, Ibvm, belongs, together with representatives of other congregations, decided to organise the exhibition to celebrate Saint Bakhita’s Day, dedicated to prayer against human

trafficking. This year, the trafficking table centred the prayer around the theme “The power of care. Women, economy and human trafficking”, which highlights the relationship between the economic system and human trafficking. It also recalls the always unfavourable situation of women and girls in crisis contexts.

Networking

The recipients of all these actions and materials are usually the Christian community, schools, teaching delegations, catechesis delegations... “normally, the easiest for us to reach is the Christian community, they are more accessible and use the same language, because all our work has a common foundation for all believers”. But they also work with non-religious entities in civil society.



To be able to make visible the “face” of those who are suffering from trafficking, in a society that makes them invisible, where only economic benefit is sought, is very important to me.

“In this fight, -says Marifran-, it is very important to coordinate with other entities, ecclesial and non-ecclesial, and also with the organisations that accompany the victims in their recovery process”.



From left to right, Dominican Fray Xabier Gómez, director of the Department of Migrations of the Spanish Episcopal Conference; Marifran Sánchez; Begoña Iñarra, mnsa, and Pilar González-Cano, Ibvm, at the presentation of the exhibition in the Dominican space, O Lumen, in Madrid

In most dioceses there is a figure who is the diocesan coordinator of trafficking, delegates who usually have a working team, who together with Marifran form the Coordinators' Group, which meets three times a year and is in constant contact. "The group of coordinators has its own network and structure, with a protocol for action when we come across cases". Not all dioceses have resources for victims, so coordination is very important, for example, to know how to refer trafficking cases quickly, from dioceses where these resources are not available, to the resources of other dioceses. "We

try to involve in the teams and the group of coordinators all the congregations that in some way have to do with trafficking, either because they have accompaniment projects, or because their objective is simply to raise awareness about trafficking, which is also very important," she adds.

Undoubtedly, working with other organisations has a greater scope, so "for us it is essential to always work in a network and in coordination, together with other groups, whether from civil society, the public administration at local, regional or state level, the state security forces, and

other entities and groups in this same fight, we are always open to be counted on".

At the ecclesial level they work in a network with CONFER Nacional, with Cáritas Española and with Justicia y Paz, "we meet periodically and hold joint events and activities". "Sharing with so many people involved in this, the quality and warmth of the projects and programmes of welcome and accompaniment, reinsertion and inclusion of people who had been discarded. To feel that we are a united church going out and committed to those who suffer is one of the best experiences of my life," she says.

Seville MW Circles show solidarity with Ukraine

The war in Ukraine has unleashed a wave of solidarity in the wider Mary Ward Family, as well as in many other groups. The CJ companions, who live there and are working hard to help vulnerable people, and now the Mary Ward circles in Seville are joining in by adapting the flat where they used to meet to take in refugees from Ukraine.



The IBVM proposed to the Mary Ward Circles of Seville if they wanted to manage the assignment of the flat of the Institute where they met before the pandemic, in the neighbourhood of Bami, very close to the school, a third floor in the street Castillo de Alcalá de Guadaira, in Seville, to host refugees from Ukraine.

The 8 prayer groups, totalling some 60 people, have accepted this challenge with great responsibility. At the moment they are preparing the flat to be inhabited, as it was previously used for pas-

toral work, and they need to install beds, certain electrical appliances, etc., so that it is suitable for living in. They are also working with Caritas and the Diocese of Seville, who will provide technical and professional support with social work and psychology staff.

The circles are carrying out a process of discernment in their meetings, considering the degree of commitment and responsibility that can and should be achieved, very much in line with Ignatian spirituality.

The CJ companions also

report from their community in the city of Uzhgorod, in eastern Ukraine, near the border with Slovakia, and Kristína, Marietta and Xénia tell us about their day-to-day work in the CJ social centre in Uzhgorod and in their house in Seredne.



Mary Ward playing her magic

A true story shared by Lola, a former student of Bami, in Seville, south of Spain, and member of a Mary Ward Circle, as well as one of the Rainbow Family volunteers.



Group of sari-clad Rainbow Family volunteers in Kolkata



A few weeks ago four American students came into my department to do their internships with the company I work for.

At the beginning of the week, they told me that the dean of their university would be coming to meet me on Friday to get to know the company and talk about the functions that their students were carrying out. On Friday, we had the scheduled meeting with the dean and her companion and at the end of the meeting, I accompanied them to the exit.

While they were waiting for a taxi to take them back to the city, it occurred to me to ask them where they were from, to make the wait more relaxed.

The dean of the university, whose name was Diya, tells me that she lives in a city near Boston, in the United States, but that she is from India.

This made me even more curious, so I asked her what part of India she was from, to which she replied that she studied at Delhi University, but that she was born and lived until then in Kolkata, where her mother still lives.

At that moment, my heart skipped a beat.

I needed to ask her: do you know the Loreto Sisters?

When I saw her expression, I knew the answer....

Diya is a former student of Loreto Day School Sealdah in Kolkata, the school where the first Rainbow Home was born by the hand of Sister Cyril, a birth she experienced

as a student of the school.

I explain to her that I am part of the Rainbow Family team, that I spent a summer there with the girls and that I am anxious to return.

With the feeling that I had known her all my life, I dared to ask her to tell me a little more about those beginnings, about Sister Cyril and about Kolkata in general.

With a huge smile that not even the mask could hide, she tells me that every Thursday they went to the slums (Kolkata's slums, where the poorest settlements of the city are located) to meet and teach the children there.

"Sister Cyril always rode his motorbike. Whenever the school bus had to pass a junction, she would get off, stop the traffic and, after passing the bus, get back on her motorbike and go back on her way".

Everything she says about this woman matches what I had heard before, a woman of character, hard-working and



Lola Picamill, en Loreto Day school Sealdah, Kolkata, India

with a huge heart. Always presenting education as a means of growth and liberation of people.

Meeting her in 2019 had been for me one of the most exciting moments of my life.

At her companion's puzzlement, Diya begins to give her the context. "Sister Cyril is a visionary, ahead of her time. She treated us with a lot of love, but with firmness, she made us see that with study, effort and discipline we could achieve everything".

She adds that it is thanks to her that she has got to where she is and that she let her know that.

"The Sisters of Loreto have schools all over the world, they are incredible women". And she adds the sentence that really touches me:

"They are women who, thanks to and despite their religion, achieve what they propose to achieve".

We give each other our emails with the certainty that we will get in touch, as she offers us her help at all times if necessary. Insistent and kind, she adds that hopefully we will meet there sometime.

Excited by the conversation we have had, and to the bemusement of my co-workers, we hug goodbye.



The Sisters of Loreto are women who, thanks to and in spite of their religion, achieve what they propose to achieve.

Many would call this a coincidence or fate, I would call it a whim of Mary Ward.

When you enter a Mary Ward school, without knowing it, you become part of a family. A bond is created between strangers.

It is a network that links many parts of the world, each one more different, but with something in common: people who, as my sister likes to say, "are cut from the same cloth".

Unable to get the situation out of my head, I can't wait to share it with the rainbows, the sisters and everyone around me, I realise how lucky I am.

How lucky I am to belong to something so big and so beautiful. To the miracle of Mary Ward.

LOLA PICAMILL
Rainbow Family. Seville

History of IBVM Spain

The Zalla School

A researcher contacted the archives in Spain to ask for “information on the founding of the school in the Biscayan town of Zalla”, in northern Spain, as she was carrying out research on the town and the most important moments in its history.

Rosario de Lanzagorta wanted to know how the construction of the school building came about. “We know that when the sisters arrived in Zalla they settled, through Ramón Bergé Guardamino, in a house adjacent to the Baular mill. Later, they looked for a definitive location and built the current building”, she said. Her queries led me to carry out a search in the archives and this is a summary of what I was able to tell her.

About the school in Zalla

Mr Mariano de Villalonga Ybarra asked the sisters to

open a school in the Bilbao area. The Bishop did not give permission to found in Bilbao, as there were many religious schools there, but he did not put any impediment to found in Zalla, in the nearby province of Vizcaya.

The first two interneers were Elvira Bergé and Rosario Landecho. On 6th September 1900 the first group of nuns and the sisters Aurora, Elisa and Fernanda López arrived as pupils. The school began as a boarding school and the use of English was compulsory, both among pupils and between pupils and nuns. The subjects taught were: Re-

ligion, English, French, German, History, Geography, Conversation, Painting, Knitting and Sewing, Music, Dancing and Swedish Drill. Theatre was of great importance and plays were performed on special occasions.

The free school was soon started, financed by private donations and help from the Town Council. The sisters were not paid, only the salary of a teacher was paid. When there were not enough donations, the Institute paid for it. The initial number of pupils was 20 and the teacher in charge was Concepción Trotter. In gratitude, the people of Zalla brought them eggs, milk and flour.

The number of pupils increased and in 1901 a larger site was sought for the school. In November 1903, Dr Higgins, Bishop of Rochampton, Australia, M. Evangelie’s uncle, laid the foundation stone for the school. The cost was about £12,000 at the time. There was great difficulty in raising money and finance.

In 1905 they moved to the new college and in that year, the Countess of Kersenbroch





Zalla, 3 November 1903. With the Bishop of Rockhampton



Mission Day in the house of Zalla



Theatre performance by the pupils



First house in Zalla



Hijas de María durante el tiempo que M. Teresa was M. of Schools y

asked the college if it could take in the Empress Zita who needed “rest of body and soul” because of her delicate state of health. She arrived on 12 March and stayed until 4 April, with her children: the Emperor Otto, aged 12, Archduchess Adelaide (11), Robert (10), Felix (8), Carl Ludwig (7), Rudolf (5), Charlotte (4) and Elizabeth (2); her mother, the Duchess of Parma and her aunt, the Infanta Isabella of Borbon.

Republic and war

In 1931, with the proclamation of the Republic, it was decided that the school would become a private school under

the direction of a laywoman. Mrs. Pilar, widow of Goitia, took over the direction of the centre called “Colegio Inglés”, and the sisters had to wear secular clothing.

On 27 July 1936, the Consulate ordered that anyone with an English or Irish passport must leave the country, and the convent was placed under the supervision of the Spanish sisters.

The school became a children’s hospital and the nuns were “allowed” to remain there because of the esteem in which they were held by doctors and nurses. Later it became a military hospital, where the sick were cared

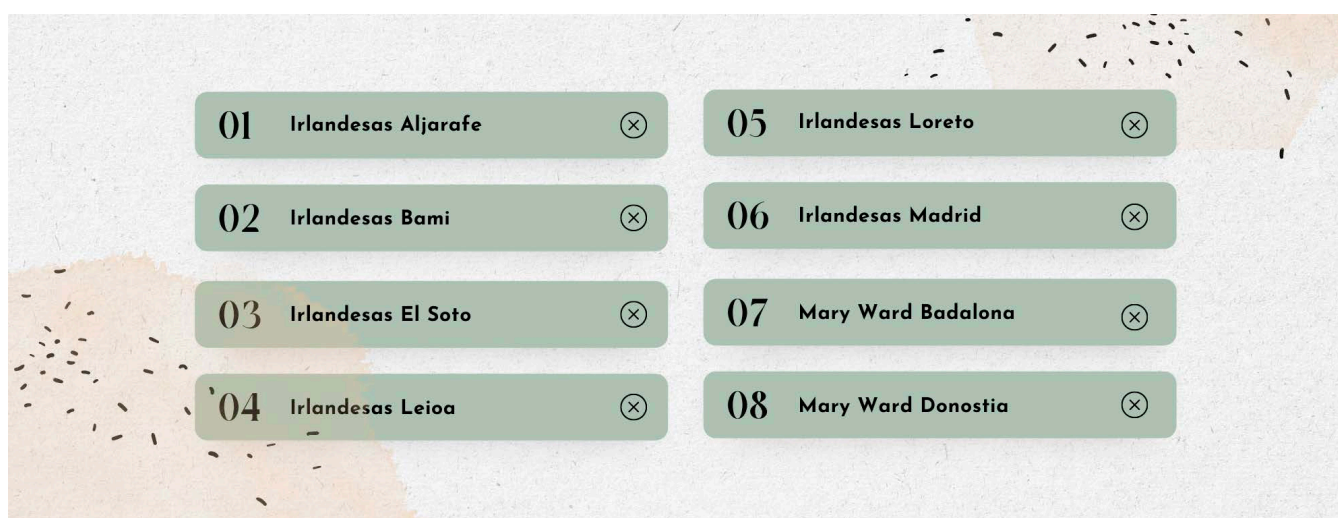
for regardless of which side they belonged to. During the war they were able to survive thanks to the sisters’ potato garden and rabbits. The students were transferred to a “Finishing School” in Habas, France, during the Civil War.

In 1956, a house was built next to the “Irlanda” (Ireland) railway station for the free school, which ceased to function after the Second Vatican Council, as the school and the college were merged without distinction. Later, in 1970, work was carried out on the main building.

MARÍA VELÁZQUEZ,
Archivist of IBVM Spain

Introducing the Mary Ward Educational Foundation

The Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Congregation of Jesus have begun the process of establishing a Foundation for their schools. This foundation will start in September this year and will be called the Mary Ward Educational Foundation. The Foundation is still in the process of being set up pending approval by the Bishops' Conference as a canonical foundation which, if all goes well, will happen in the next few months.



During the last year we have taken the following steps:

- The two Founding Entities have approved the Founding Charter and the Founding Statutes, and they have been notary certified.
- The necessary documentation for the establishment of the Foundation has been submitted to the Episcopal Conference, which must be approved at the next Plenary Assembly in April.
- Last 12th February, the Board of Trustees of the Foundation was notary certified, with the presence of religious of both congregations, as well as lay people close to the congregations, and where the different geographical areas where the schools are located are represented.
- The Management Team of the Foundation is already appointed and approved by the Board of Trustees.
- Once the Foundation has been approved by the EEC, it will proceed to the assumption of the ownership of the eight educational centres of both Congregations, which will have to be authorised by each of the educational administrations of the corresponding autonomous communities.
- Several meetings have already been held with the General Directorates, the Pastoral Teams and the Communication Teams of the eight schools, to explain the process and to start working together.

There are only a few months left for this project to become a reality.

We will be part of the great Mary Ward Educational Family in Spain.

ALEJANDRO DELGADO

Coordinator of Institutional Communication of the Irlandesas Schools



Group photo of the management teams



Group photo of pastoral and communication teams

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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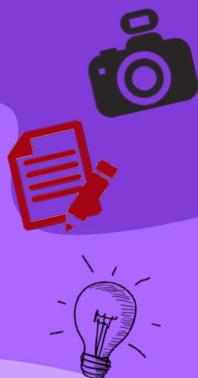


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