

CONNECTA



60 years
of Mary Ward
Badalona



KAMBIA BRINGS INDIA CLOSER TO SCHOOLS

Kambia Foundation organised a touring exhibition on cultural diversity in India

CULTIVATING PEACE IN THE STORM

The team entrusted with the task of deepening the two General Congregations tells us about its work



Conecta was the internal bulletin of the Spanish Province of the IBVM, but from its 100th issue, it adapts to the new times in which the IBVM and the CJ have decided to become ONE by Canonical Merger. It is now the Bulletin of the Spanish Province of the IBVM and CJ. The two existing branches of the Institute founded by Mary Ward.

They are two religious communities inspired by Mary Ward, who want to live their spirituality and share it with the people they live and work with.

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Cover photos:

Old images of the beginnings of the Mary Ward School in Badalona, Catalonia.

Cultivating peace in the storm



Commitments for a more harmonious world

In these turbulent times we are going through, we feel deeply moved by the violence and wars that seem to spread

like threatening shadows over our communities and the world at large. The lack of tolerance towards different ideas and the tension that permeates

both in the family sphere and in the political arena only adds fuel to the fire, making the task of finding peaceful solutions an even greater challenge.



We value and embrace differences as opportunities for growth.

We are all affected by these realities. We strive to be peaceful women, but we want to contribute to peace wherever possible. It is in moments like these when reflection and action become moral imperatives. That is why we have dedicated time over the past few months to reflect on what is needed to foster harmony and coexistence in society and the community.

The focus of our reflection on the concept of mutuality, understood as an agreement of mutual support and understanding between people, is a powerful reminder of our interconnectedness and the importance of reaching out to others in times of need. Mutuality reminds us that, despite our differences, humans share

the same path in this life. This perspective urges us to seek common ground even in the midst of conflicts and disagreements, recognizing that each person is a vital piece in the fabric of society.

Recently, we gathered to share what we try to put into practice in life to address the challenges of situations of conflict and dialogue with significant differences:

We do our best to cultivate empathy and mutuality in our interactions, deeply respecting the ideas and perspectives of those around us, basing trust on open communication.

We value and accept differences as opportunities for growth, maintaining relationships based on open communication and accepting our own

reactions to build authentic and peaceful relationships.

With these ideas and commitments integrated into our own lives, we want to sow seeds of peace and hope in a field marked by discord and distrust. Our willingness to build bridges and foster mutual understanding is a beacon of light in the darkness, reminding us that even in the darkest moments, there is always room for dialogue, empathy, and love.

Team responsible for delving into the conclusions of the CG:
ESTHER VILLAHOZ, CJ
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El Soto welcomes Nieves Arteta with joy



On Monday 6th May, Nieves Arteta arrived in the community of El Soto, from Castilleja de la Cuesta, where she had been for 21 years.

In Castilleja, Nieves has lately dedicated herself to the Health Pastoral. Visiting the sick and the lonely, bringing communion... always with a smile on her face. Nieves has been an example of dedication and devotion. She took care of the sacristy, the chapel and the cloister of the school. Taking care of the

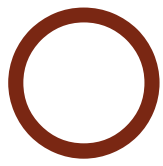
plants or opening and closing the windows are little big things that make everything work.

She will be greatly missed by the community, the school and the village. Always sociable and cheerful, Nieves has always been willing to help anyone who needs it. She leaves a great memory in Castilleja de la Cuesta, where her dedication and joy are highly valued. Several tributes have been paid to her in the Hermandad de Santiago, La

Plaza, in the Hermandad de la Calle Real and in the parish church. They have celebrated with her and given her gifts.

In the Community of El Soto, however, they are happy to welcome Nieves. It was all demonstrations of joy and affection. A good group of those who spent many years in Peru, like her, who was there for 20 years, will get together. Surely they will have a good time remembering those years of intense work, joy, adventure and friendship.

60 years of Mary Ward Badalona



In June 1st, the Maria Ward

School in Badalona celebrates its 60th anniversary. For this reason, it is good to remember how those moments began and recognize the great vision of the future by Mother Bernardette Auth.

It was the year 1960. The "German Nuns," as they were known in the city of Barcelona, responded to the call of Archbishop Dr. Gregorio Modrego of Barcelona to religious institutions to open schools in the peripheral neighborhoods. After much searching for land to build a school, thanks to an initiative from the City Council of Badalona, they obtained a plot for 174,000 pesetas in the Llefia neighborhood of Badalona, mainly populated by immigrant families from Andalusia, Galicia, and Extremadura.

Throughout this history, the spirit and courage, along with the foresight, of Mother Bernardette Auth stand out. In a letter dated November 6, 1961, Archbishop Dr. Modrego writes seeking assistance from the charitable work of Germany's



In the 1960s, Barrio Llefia was a humble neighbourhood of immigrant families

"Misereor" to sponsor the school:

"The work includes not only a primary school but also a nursery for the children of working mothers; a dining hall for the workers' children; a clinic run by doctors who are parents of students and former students of the school in the city of Barcelona; night classes for illiterate female workers; cooking and home economics courses; premarital courses; a consulting office staffed by a social worker; and two vocational training courses for women... It is a Catholic social

enterprise called to carry out an important, necessary, and urgent task among the working families of the Llefia neighborhood in the Municipality of Badalona..."

And in one of Mother Bernardette's letters to the community dated December 28, 1982, she wrote:

"May the Lord protect His work in the future as well. With my prayers, I remain with you, and my sacrifice of not seeing it anymore... Good mission with your collaborators..."

And in a message from Mother Bernardette, which she



Construction work begins on the Mary Ward School in the Llefia neighbourhood, Badalona



The foundations and review of the site on which the school was to be located



will convey through a former student in the summer of 1990, she says:

“I have loved these students with all my heart; may they remain faithful to God, to their family, and to the Virgin Mary:
The April Rose Brunette from the mountains of Montserrat, star...
... towards heaven: this is the main thing, you must go towards God.”

We thank Mother Bernardette and all the Sisters who have passed through this school, along with all those who have been part of the staff of the center over these 60 years, who with their dedication and good work have made the School what it is today. Also, our remembrance to Mr. Bonnet, who initially supported the establishment of this school. And we thank all those who have contributed in one way or another.

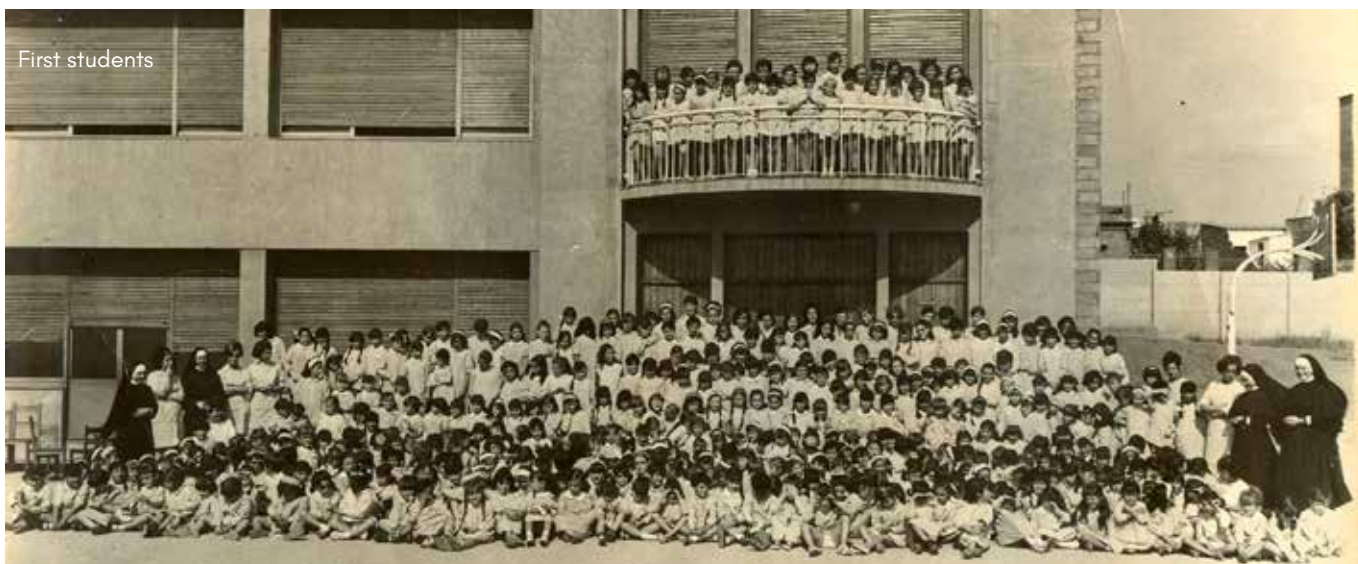
Last but not least, our gratitude to the families of the Barcelona school who, with their financial contribution, material and human resources, made the construction and financing of this School possible in its early days.

May everything be for the Glory and praise of the Lord and for the good of Humanity, as desired by Mary Ward.

ESTHER VILLAHOZ, CJ



Blessing of the first classrooms



First students



Girls in the playground



First classes



Girls playing in the school playground



Tree Festival



former playground

Women in Asilah

During Mary Ward Week in January 2024, the Alumnae of the schools of Seville organised the 8th meeting on the personality of Mary Ward and her work at the Valentín de Madariaga Foundation. There was a colloquium and a photographic exhibition entitled “Taskare trata”, by the photographer and journalist Gonzalo Botet.

María López de Haro, IBVM, spoke about her work in ASilah, Morocco. We remember her words, in response to questions from the moderator of the Seville event, Victoria Cabrera.

How do you imagine MW would address the current situation of women today?

First and foremost, we must consider her personality, what her life’s ideal was, from her focus on God throughout her existence, to her fidelity and coherence. Born in the midst of the Renaissance of arts and culture, of scientific discoveries, and explorations and voyages of discovery, Mary Ward lives centered in her faith to respond to the needs of the weakest of her time from God. The care of faith leads her to focus on the liberation of women through education and empowerment. In her time in England, she realizes the importance of the women in her family who uphold and sustain the faith of their relatives and household staff with strength and wisdom, hence her focus on girls’ education. How would she address the current situa-



tion of women in the church, in society?... We need to delve into a dual perspective, Mary Ward’s view of the world of her time, but also the perspective of those today who wish to follow her ideal in the broad Mary Ward Family in our current world. Women at the heart of the Church with an open spirit of service.

¿How could you help us to eliminate the stereotypes we have about Arab culture and the Muslim religion? How can your experience in Asilah inspire us to build coexistence?

Since my arrival in Asilah, back in August 2016, I myself experienced the difference be-



tween what was then received in Spain through the media, news of wars and terrorism at the time, and the contrast with the encounters with the people for whom, and with whom, we worked on the social projects that the Institute had been carrying out since its presence there since 1997. It is the lived reality that makes you change your perspective.

The Moroccan society with which I interact is tremendously simple, pleasant, and grateful for what is done for them. People who need promotion, work, dignity, education, and training. Our work with them, especially women and children, involves social and promotional projects, as there is no room for other religious activities; all proselytism is prohibited. The relationship with them is fluid, pleasant, goes beyond language comprehension. They love us, and we love them. Our task is to be witnesses of Jesus, of his gospel in friendship and coexistence.

Can you tell us some stories of women who

have crossed this path and come out on top?

Our project is called Kanisa (church in Arabic), referring to the parish of San Bartolomé in Asilah. There, the community lives, and we have premises where two types of workshops for women are carried out:

One is Arabic literacy workshops, as many women are illiterate in their own language. They also learn general culture, home economics, etc. These are adult women who did not have access to formal education in their childhood. Three native teachers teach about 100 women in morning and afternoon sessions.

The other type of workshop is for vocational training in sewing and industrial machines. Here, I could name these women of different ages, starting from 13 years old, who are preparing for work in factories in Tangier and/or Asilah, or in their own homes making clothing, alone or with a partner: Farida, Fusya, Munya Amina, Nashwa, Fusya, Samira, Malika... Others have

set up a cosmetics workshop, argan oil production, and have their own website. This academic year 23-24, we have 46 women.

Many of the sewing and literacy teachers were previously students at Kanisa.

We also have the Attadamoun Project, "Solidarity" in Arabic. It is a Moroccan association, although funded by the IBVM Spain NGO, the Kambia Foundation, equivalent to a parish Caritas that helps vulnerable women: scholarships for machine training, school support, social relief, distribution of food, medicine, clothing, obtaining documentation, etc. There is also a literacy school in another area of the city. 131 families received assistance this past academic year.

The name of Kanisa, the Women's Center in Asilah, is well known in the city. Under the name "the NUNS," the people of Asilah greatly value the sewing and literacy diplomas that are provided. They are grateful and trust the education that women receive.

Elena Cerdeiras and María Llinás, in Asilah



Last February, Elena Cerdeiras Checa, Provincial of IBVM Spain, and María Llinás, Director of the Kambia Foundation, visited the community of Asilah in Morocco.

During their stay, they met with María López de Haro and the Moroccan women who work with IBVM and its NGO, the Kambia Foundation, in the various training and capacity building projects for women and girls that they carry out in the neighbouring country.



Fuencisla

Today Castro de Fuentidueñas
has both sorrow and joy,
for Fuencisla is leaving us,
Woman of Faith and Courage.

In Religious Life, was happy,
JESUS, the Center and the Union,
leads us to Communion
So we can Share.

Sister Martin loved her,
the kitchen she taught.
Then in Nursing
responsibly she cared for us.

To Ireland to learn English
and there she connected affection
from Castilian towards the children,
which she does faithfully.

Then to Kenya!
She valued the immigrants
who were stationed.
She helped them... and onward!
She promoted well in Cullera,
teaching the women
of Caritas, in the workshops
Doing it First Class!

Taking care of the house
and with her hands, art.
We all admired her blankets
and in the face of her Pain, STRENGTH.

Thank you, dear Family,
Together we have shared
Those moments of Glory
that Fuencisla has lived.

Yesterday, she left us with God,
the Father who gave her strength
and gave her Integrity
To live LOVE.

Perhaps, the VIRGIN MARY
impelled her with MARY WARD
what she engraved in her ring:
"To serve you with joy"!

By VICTORIA LASSALETTA, IBVM

***After many days of
striving to be alive,
God called her into
His arms on February
24, 2024. Hers was
a life of faith, pain,
great service and
strength.***

Newsletters from the world



Since IBVM and the Congregation of Jesus committed to advancing mutual understanding as much as possible, on the path to our canonical merger, in Spain we decided to share the newsletters that each congregation received from other provinces for this purpose.

These newsletters, received in English, are a window to the world. A world where Mary Ward women, both from IBVM and the Congregatio Jesu, work on the front lines for the most vulnerable people. This work has been and continues to be essential for many communities, especially women, girls, and children, who join these missions of education,

healthcare, economic and social development, poverty alleviation, discrimination and trafficking, and much more.

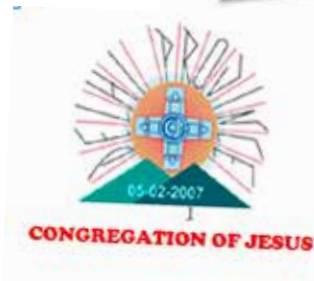
Depending on the country from which each newsletter comes, we can find in its pages stories of resilience, support, struggle, but all connected to the same commitments made by Mary Ward women worldwide: combating



NAVA SPURTHI

Bangalore Region

" Be convinced that God will always give you what is best for you " - Ven. Mary Ward



impoverishment and injustice, reducing gender inequality, to care for and restore beauty and dignity to the planet and all its creatures.

Recently, we have received several newsletters in January, February, March and April from the CJ's Delhi Disha, Bangalore, Patna and Tarang, and the IBVM's Canada, South Asia and South Sudan newsletter. Amid festivities and moments

of reflection, educational and religious communities come together to celebrate anniversaries, farewells, academic and spiritual achievements, and to strengthen bonds of friendship and collaboration. The importance of comprehensive education, service to others, prayer, and reflection is emphasized as fundamental pillars on the path of personal and communal growth.

Through cultural events, religious celebrations, and educational activities, a nurturing learning environment and mutual support among students, teachers, and support staff are fostered, inspiring to move forward with hope and determination.

Any occasion is a good opportunity for reflection on the legacy of inspiring figures like Mary Ward.

Touring exhibition about India



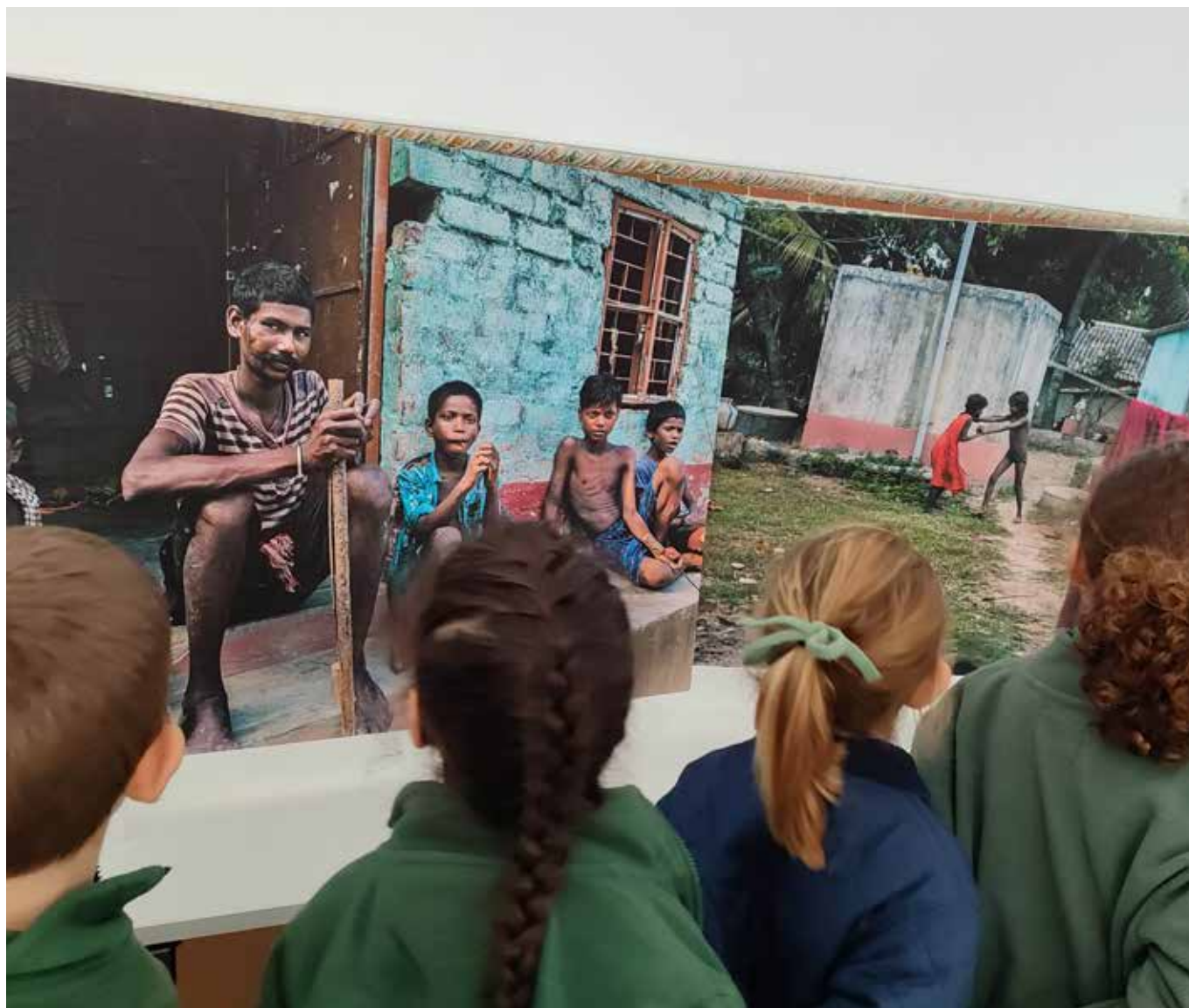
From cultures that enrich our planet. With this goal in mind, the Kambia Foundation has carried out a traveling exhibition in the schools of the Mary Ward Educational Foundation.

The exhibition, titled “Wild Paths,” is a visual journey that immerses students in the daily life and traditions of tribal

communities in India. Through a careful selection of photographs taken by documentary photographer Gonzalo Botet, the exhibition transports attendees to the most remote areas of Gangasagar Island, deep in the jungle, where these communities have lived in isolation for years.

This activity, which is part of

the Global Citizenship Education program “Caring for Our Common Home” developed by Kambia in educational centers, has been warmly welcomed by teachers and students. Some schools have even organized various complementary activities to further enrich the experience and promote interculturality and dialogue. This



Kambia Foundation brings the cultural diversity of communities in India to the schools of the Mary Ward Educational Foundation, Spain.

exhibition not only brings the beauty and diversity of tribal communities in India closer to a wider audience but also provides a unique opportunity for students to learn about life different from their own.

Behind this initiative is the commitment of the Kambia Foundation to promote respect for cultural diversity among

citizens. For over ten years, Kambia has supported the local team of the Kolkata Mary Ward Social Center in developing a project to ensure a dignified life for these tribal communities. It is a comprehensive community work project aimed at asserting their rights, enabling them to attend school, seek more sustainable

and secure income-generating alternatives, etc. In these times when globalization threatens to homogenize our cultures, we must remember and protect the diversity that makes these communities unique, preserving their culture and respecting differences.

ROCÍO AGUILAR-TABLADA

Doing good does us good



Following the wake of our motto “Doing good makes us feel good,” we spent this month learning more about the great good that Mary Ward did in the world.

We began with a video summary of the life of our founder to continue learning about her story.

The students from the 8 schools met online once again this year to demonstrate all they know about her through a contest called “Mary Talent.” In it, all schools joined by grades and competed online through a digital platform by answering questions prepared by the Pastoral Team.

The students enthusiastically engaged in this activity. It was very exciting to see how well they have internalized her entire life!

After an initial part of the contest, came the grand finale where the finalist team from each class met again with their classmates from the other schools. Everyone participated with great dedication and left us amazed!

The human teams of our schools also had the

opportunity to meet online with colleagues from other schools to continue getting to know each other and thus create a sense of family. We held a session in which nearly 100 workers participated.

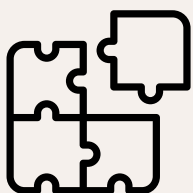
We closed the month with an exciting pilgrimage to the Sanctuary of the Virgin of Loreto, to which Mary was so devoted. We began at the Irlandesas Aljarafe school and walked 10km to the Sanctuary. After a Eucharist and a shared meal, we ended very happy to continue remembering our founder with joy and experiencing once again that doing good makes us feel good.

In addition to this, there have been many activities carried out in the schools: Eucharists, prayers, solidarity mornings, scavenger hunts, sports competitions... All of this to celebrate the life of our founder and celebrate this important month for the Mary Ward family.

ALEJANDRO DELGADO, COORDINATOR OF
INSTITUTIONAL COMMUNICATION MWEF




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, please contact us!



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