

# Conecta

NEWSLETTER FROM THE TWO  
PROVINCES OF THE CJ IN SPAIN



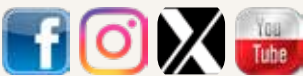
Congregación  
de Jesús | España



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**Conecta** is the newsletter of the two provinces of the Congregation of Jesus that currently exist in Spain: CJ North and CJ Centre (formerly IBVM).



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# We are so in need of one another!

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Testimony by Teresa Piquer, Cj. Published in the parish newsletter on February 15, 2026.

**M**y name is Teresa; I am a member of the María Ward community in Badalona, northeast of Spain, and part of the parish community.

I would like to share my experience with the illness I recently went through.

I was admitted to hospital. I realized just how fragile and limited we are, and how much we depend on others. I underwent several tests. The latest ones came back negative. The doctors plan to run more

tests to determine the source of the fluid in my lungs.

Throughout this time, I have felt a deep sense of peace and trust in the doctors, who have been very attentive and explained everything I needed to do. The nurses have also taken excellent care of me. I deeply appreciate their work and dedication to the sick.

I am very grateful to the parish community for their prayers and for the concern they showed by asking about me. Some have visited me. I have

felt very loved and supported by my community and the parish family.

My prayer to the Lord was: Lord, help me; I cannot face so much pain and suffering on my own. I felt within me: "Do not be afraid; trust. I am by your side. Take heart. Live today with joy and gratitude."

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**Teresa Piquer**  
*CJ North Spain*

# “The New Us”... or Life Goes On as Usual?

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It may not have been announced with fireworks, yet I felt it just as intensely. There is a sense of living through a moment in which something is stirring within, even if its direction is not yet clear. That is how I feel on hearing the words “The New Us.”

They do not sound like mere reorganization, a schedule adjustment, or a new cycle marked on the calendar. They point to something more.

There are titles that already contain a question. “The New Us” sounds to me like a beginning, like fresh air. But in some corner of my inner world another phrase also emerges, one that is more cautious, perhaps more comfortable: “Well... there’s no need to exaggerate. Life goes on as usual.” And I find myself right there, in the middle, between the longing for something new and the comfort of what is familiar.

It is true that, with age, my outward mobility has changed. I manage my energy be-

tter, listen more closely to my body, and prefer serenity over excess. But I also recognize that my inner world does not age at the same pace as my knees. My capacity to understand more deeply, to reconcile, to look at life with new eyes, remains alive. And that too is movement, even if it cannot be seen.

Newness, at this stage of life, does not need to be noisy; it can be quiet and profound. A small inner shift can transform the entire atmosphere when shared with others. But I also recognize something more: I do not want this stage to be reduced solely to my inner world. It does not feel like the time to withdraw and observe life from a distance. I still wish to be involved, to contribute, to offer what has been learned and lived. The longing for depth does not cancel out my desire for action; on the contrary, each is meant to nourish the other.

I still feel the impulse to con-

tribute actively to our world, to participate, to build, to sustain processes and people. Perhaps no longer from haste or the need to prove anything, but from a more conscious and free presence. Rather than disappear into contemplation, I want my renewed inner life to be translated into concrete gestures, real commitments, into a living way of being and serving.

For me, “The New Us” means asking myself what can continue to be born within me now. What new way of seeing might emerge. What way of being together can I now help create—as a congregation and as a human family.

So, I ask myself again, sincerely: the “New Us”... or simply that “Life goes on as usual”?

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**Cecilia O’Dwyer**  
*CJ Centre Spain*



## M<sup>a</sup> Paz Herrera and spaces for women

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Since moving to Madrid from Seville, I have been volunteering to help coordinate two Caritas (Vicariate V) projects focused on women in two disadvantaged neighborhoods of the city: one in the Lavapiés neighborhood and the other in Villaverde Bajo. Both share the same goal: to provide women with a space where they can socialize while being themselves and build mutual support networks. At the same time,

they are provided with tools to help them face daily life with greater confidence and independence.

The participants are mostly Spanish-speaking immigrant women, although the project is open to women of any nationality who need it.

The projects are led by Caritas social workers, but it is we volunteers—both laypeople and religious sisters—who meet with them weekly, sharing a cup of coffee and crea-

ting a space of closeness and trust.

In Lavapiés, the project is called “El Manantial de la Mujer,” and in Villaverde, “Espacio Mujer Villaverde.” El Manantial meetings are held on Tuesdays from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m., and those in Villaverde on Thursdays at the same time.

Each quarter, we work with them to create a calendar in which we plan the topics they wish to address in the talks



and workshops, as well as the visits and activities we will carry out. We strive to ensure that this calendar always includes training, opportunities for conversation, cultural outings, and hands-on workshops.

The training sessions are led by professionals—including a psychologist, a lawyer, and a doctor—and we strive to ensure that each specialty is represented at least once per quarter. The remaining sessions are dedicated to work-

shops on Spanish cuisine and the cuisines of the participants' home countries, basic sewing (sewing on buttons, hemming, making buttonholes, etc.), and opportunities for conversation and socializing over coffee. In addition, we organize a cultural outing every quarter, which usually concludes with a shared snack at a café.

Personally, I lead the Spanish cooking and sewing workshops and accompany the women on the cultural outings.

It is a wonderful and deeply rewarding project. It is heartening to see how much good it does for them and the enthusiasm with which they attend each session.

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**M<sup>a</sup> Paz Herrera**  
*CJ Centre Spain*

# A Virtual Delegation for CSW 70: Participation, Training, and Advocacy

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Promoting gender equality is one of the priorities of the Congregatio Jesu (CJ), including through its presence at the United Nations.



Every year, we closely follow the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), participating in both its official sessions and the civil society forum. This process is one of the international forums where, as the Mary Ward Family, we want to be present and make our voices heard.

The CSW is the United Nations' main body dedicated to promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women. But it is not merely a diplomatic

forum: it is a place where commitments are reviewed, progress is assessed, and collective responsibility is renewed in the face of the challenges that continue to affect millions of women and girls. Among these are gendered poverty, structural violence, educational and digital divides, job insecurity, and exclusion from decision-making spaces.

The 70th session of the CSW, held from March 9 to 19, had as its central theme: "Ensuring and strengthening

access to justice for all women and girls." Throughout those days, participants reflected on how legal inequality impacts daily life and proposed concrete measures to close the gaps that still persist.

We at the CJ's JPIC Office in Spain didn't want to miss this event. That's why we organized a Virtual Delegation, which allowed those of us who couldn't be physically present to actively participate in the official sessions and side events.

In one of our online ses-



sions, we had the opportunity to hear from two outstanding speakers:

María Naredo, who provided a clear analysis of the international and Spanish legal frameworks regarding sexual violence. She highlighted significant advances, such as the Law on Sexual Freedom and the Istanbul Convention, but also the challenges that remain in their practical application.

And Hayat Traspas, an activist against female genital mutilation, who spoke with great empathy about the emotional and cultural barriers many women face when trying to access justice. She emphasized the importance of support, specialized training, and a more humane approach to the application of laws.

In the final session of the Virtual Delegation, we shared the key reflections that have shaped this 70th session of the

CSW and are included in its [final document](#). This document was approved by an overwhelming majority, despite the unilateral stance of the U.S. delegation, which took a strongly opposing position:

- End impunity: close legal loopholes, enforce laws, and hold perpetrators accountable.
- Review and amend discriminatory laws: eliminate those that permit or tolerate inequality and violence.
- Fund justice: ensure sufficient resources, including free legal aid and victim-centered services.
- Invest in change: support women’s organizations, which are on the front lines accompanying, defending, and transforming reality.
- Put technology at the service of the common good:

combat bias, digital violence, and misinformation, and reduce the gender digital divide.

We also had the opportunity to share initiatives already underway in our own projects and contexts, from an inclusive perspective committed to equality.

From our NGO’s office at the United Nations, Sarah Rudolph encourages us to keep moving forward: to share our experiences and lessons learned, and translate them into concrete actions in our own communities.

Because being present in these spaces is not just about participating—it’s about educating ourselves, strengthening our perspective, and renewing our commitment to justice and dignity for all women and girls.

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**Marta Santos Romero**

*JPIC Coordinator, CJ Spain*

# Mary Ward's legacy continues Inspiring Lives

Seville hosted a gathering in honor of Mary Ward Week 2026, organized by the Irish Alumni Association. The event provided an opportunity to reflect on the enduring relevance of Mary Ward's legacy today. It took place at the Valentín de Madariaga Foundation and brought together former students of the three city's *Irlandesas* schools.

During the event, participants such as Elena Fernández Oliva, Teresa Gordillo, and sisters Elena and Ceci-

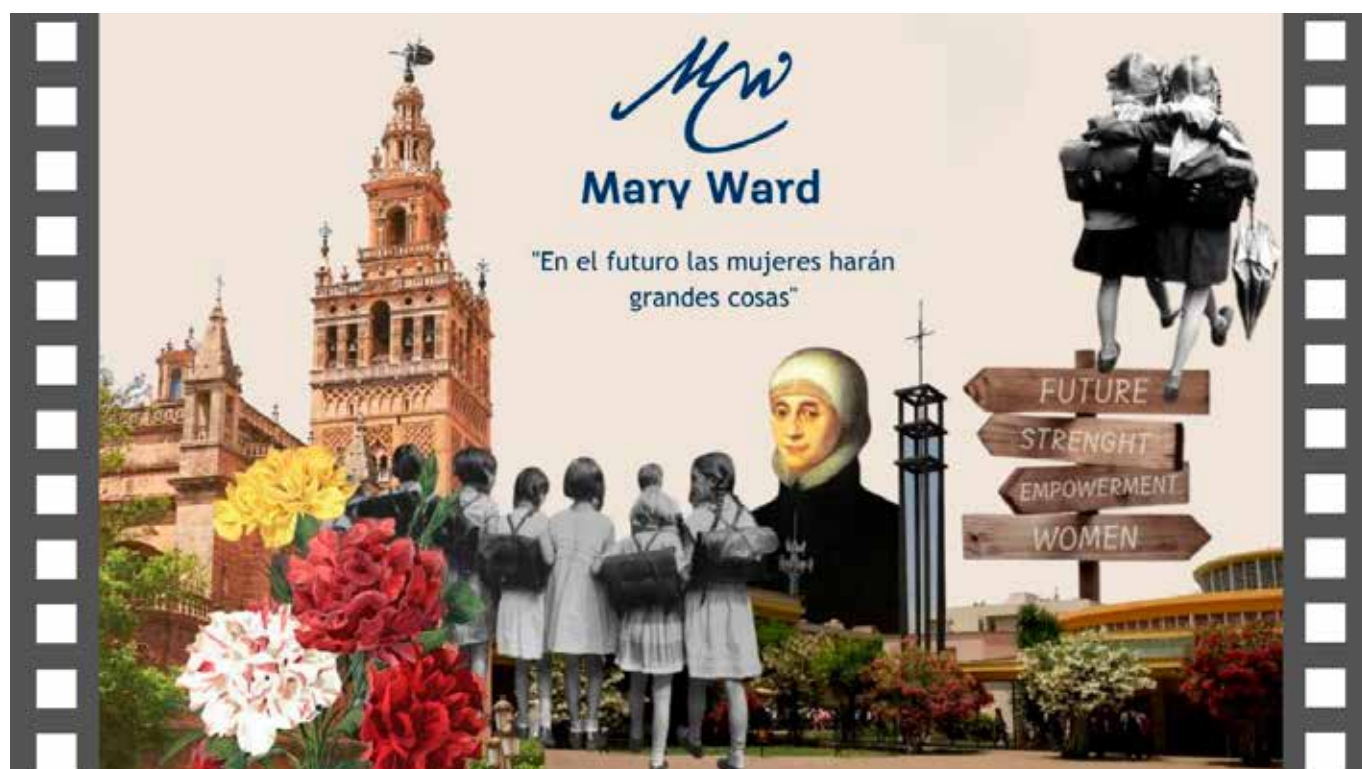
lia Pacheco shared personal testimonies about how the values they learned during their school years—such as freedom, justice, and commitment—have influenced their lives. The session was presented and moderated by Patricia Cadaval.

The presentations highlighted the strong sense of community among former students and the continuity of a shared identity, extending beyond their school years. Likewise, the relevance of Mary Ward's thinking was emphasized, par-

ticularly in areas such as education, social engagement, and the role of women in society.

The gathering concluded by underscoring that the founder's legacy remains alive and continues to inspire new generations.

A brief summary of what was shared that day can be viewed on [our YouTube channel](#): The Legacy of Mary Ward: A Heritage That Continues to Inspire Lives.



# March News in Brief



On March 2, an enriching educational afternoon focused on the charism of Mary Ward took place in the auditorium of the Bami School in Seville. The event was organized by the Association of Alumni of the Irish Sisters of Seville, which once again fostered a space for reflection, learning, and community.

The session was led by Isabel Gortázar, who guided attendees through an in-depth and intimate exploration of the figure of Mary Ward and her spiritual legacy.

It was a day dedicated to discovering how Mary Ward's charism naturally intertwines with Ignatian spirituality, highlighting aspects such as discernment, commitment to reality, and the search for God in all things. This connection allowed participants to delve deeper into a way of living the faith that is active, committed, and in constant dialogue with the world.



The community - infirmary in El Soto, Alcobendas, Madrid, wanted to express its deep affection and gratitude to José Galán, who is retiring after nearly 40 years of dedicated service. Over the years, José has become like a member of the family to them.

José Galán is bringing to a close a career that began in 1987, nearly four decades of service to the school *Irlandesas El Soto* and the community of sisters. His work in maintenance has been essential to the smooth operation of both spaces, but his contribution goes far beyond the professional realm.

Always available, approachable, and committed, José has been a role model for generations of students, teachers, and sisters.

His colleagues highlight not only his work ethic but also his humanity: "A hard worker and a good colleague who has never had a bad word for anyone." A sincere tribute that sums up the sentiment of the entire community.

# The fruit of a seed sown: My gratitude to Mary Ward

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A former student of Mary Ward School in Barcelona writes a thank-you letter to the sisters.

**M**y name is Carla Adame Rius, and I was part of the Mary Ward Barcelona school family from 2007 to 2014. During my time there, the school was still called Bienaventurada Virgen María, and although we were affectionately known in the neighborhood as “Las Alemanas,” I now understand that what that building housed was, in reality, an oasis of transcendence. I write these lines after immersing myself in an in-dep-

th study of our founder, driven by a desire to understand the values that shaped my childhood. This process has led me to reconnect with the Maters to tell them, with my heart on my sleeve, that their work was not in vain: **the seed they planted with such care bore fruit.**

While researching the life of Mary Ward, I have discovered that the ‘invisible faith’ I received as a child – that silent seed waiting for the Lord’s perfect timing to sprout – was

the reflection of a woman who defied her era to teach us that true freedom springs from integrity and from ‘referring everything to God’. Today, in a world marked by a heart-wrenching spiritual drought and by ‘low-cost’ happiness that leaves us thirsty, I feel that the upbringing I received is my most valuable compass. Through milestones on my journey, such as the Effetá retreat, that faith became light, and I understood that prayer is the



Recuerdo de mi etapa escolar a los 4 años (2008)



Cuadro Mary Ward hecho con imágenes de los alumnos del colegio

oxygen that allows me to maintain peace amidst the noise. I wish to share with my former teachers and the whole community that today I am a truly happy woman thanks to the Lord and to all those who were instruments of His love in my life. My spiritual journey has matured and grown stronger; I am currently living out my faith with joy through the Franciscan Tertiary studies and the youth group “TAU JOVE” at the Capuchin convent in Arenys

de Mar. There, by uniting the charisma of St Francis with the seed of Mary Ward, I find the strength for my vocation to marriage, bringing the presence of the Lord into the simplicity of family life.

I look back with immense gratitude because, even though the building has closed, the mission of the Maters lives on within me. Thank you for teaching me that trust in God’s plans is the only path to true freedom. Your example and

your dedication have made me who I am today: proof that **education in the faith not only lives on, but is capable of transforming the world, one heart at a time.**

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**Carla Adame Rius**

*Antigua alumna de Barcelona*



## RENATE Work Board meets in Madrid

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**T**he Working Board of the European Network of Religious Against Trafficking in Persons (RENATE) held its annual meeting in Spain, specifically in Madrid, from March 24 to 27. The Congregation of Jesus has been a member of RENATE since its inception, as Imelda Poole (CJ) was one of its founders, through the

Mary Ward Loreto Foundation, in Albania.

The meeting brought together 35 participants, religious men and women from eight countries, thereby reinforcing the international and collaborative nature of this mission. During the gathering, the reality of human trafficking in the Spanish context was explored in depth, with contributions

from public institutions, church entities, and social organizations. The discussion addressed both strategies for prosecuting the crime and programs for prevention, support, and reintegration of victims.

Those were days of intense work and a pleasant gathering for all the participants, including: Judith Knab, CJ, who came from Hungary; Pi-



lar González-Cano, CJ, who belongs to Renate’s Awareness-Raising Working Group; Marta Santos, JPIC of the CJ in Spain, who is part of Renate’s Legislation Working Group; and Isabel Gortázar, CJ, who provided simultaneous translation during the event.

This gathering has streng-

thened our networking efforts, which are essential for bolstering hope in this work to combat human trafficking, as Bishop Javier Vilanova, head of the Human Trafficking Department of the Spanish Episcopal Conference, reminded us: “We must continue to build networks in synodality with other

organizations, with the hope that reality can be transformed and that God has a plan for new life for all humanity.”

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**Marta Santos Romero**  
*JPIC Coordinator, CJ Spain*



On March 8, 2026, we celebrated International Women’s Day under the theme: “Rights, justice, and action by and for all women and girls.” More than just a slogan, it is a call to actively engage in building true equality.

Today, women continue to face significant inequalities in fundamental areas such as work, the economy, protection from violence, decision-making, property, and freedom of movement. In many contexts, these gaps are exacerbated

by social norms and cultural practices that perpetuate injustice, and even by setbacks in rights already won.

On this journey, every action counts. The presence of the members of the Congregation of Jesus in educational, social, and support projects—especially those serving migrant women—is a concrete way to promote justice, leadership, and safe spaces.

This commitment is also evident in the participation of some sisters in the “Women’s Revolt in the Church” rallies in

cities such as Madrid and San Sebastián, joining their voices with those of so many women calling for greater equality within the Church.

The figure of Mary Ward, founder of the Congregation, remains a source of inspiration for this mobilization within the Church. Her courage in defending the place and mission of women in the Church reminds us that this journey of justice and transformation continues today through us.

# Rights, justice, and action: a commitment that drives us

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# New initiative by Youth Representative Laura Muñiz

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**E**very major change begins with a conversation. For us, that change began with training, online discussions, and a shared commitment: to become the generation that stepped up.

We've launched a new initiative: an informative magazine within Generation 2030. Each SDG Ambassador publishes articles related to their

field to make the SDGs more relatable.

You won't find boring theory in these pages. You'll find the voices of our SDG Ambassadors, each specializing in a global challenge, but all working toward the same goal.

At Generation 2030, each of us champions a Sustainable Development Goal. As Ambassadors, our mission is to break down the 2030 Agenda and

bring it to you here, at street level, in a clear and honest way.

This magazine is our platform to tell you what's happening and what has happened in the world—and, most importantly, what we can do together to change it.

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**Laura Muñiz**

*Youth Representative CJ Spain*



## *“A new together”*

The Badalona community has grown. We are Camino, Blanca, Teresa, M<sup>a</sup> Natividad, and M<sup>a</sup> Esther. And if you look closely, there’s someone else in the photo. Mary Ward is there too. She’s behind us, accompanying us on this new journey. And she’s not just accompanying us—she’s protecting and caring for each one of us. And through her name, she’s doing the same for all the sisters of the Congregatio Jesu.

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**Blanca Bergareche.** *CJ Centro España*

# Newsletters from the world

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In the newsletters from the last quarter of last year, several regions and provinces—such as Nava Spurthi in the Bangalore Region; Tarang in the Allahabad Province; and Glimpses from the Patna Province in India—highlighted, among other activities, the celebrations marking the merger of the IBVM and the CJ in numerous communities and dioceses. As they usually do, these provinces regularly organize activities to promote vocations, as well as school events related to sustainability and the environment in general. In India, apostolic and social activity is always intense. The sisters organize visits to prisons, promote education and vocational training for career guidance, distribute clothing, food, or other basic necessities to the most disad-

vantaged, and even carry out campaigns against drug addiction.

The newsletter from the Province of Ireland, also from late 2025, emphasizes the importance of mission, tradition, and adaptation to a new shared phase within the congregation.

In their March 2026 newsletter, the Loretto Sisters of Canada highlight the preparation of the Loretto archives for transfer to the Kelly Library, Sister Sarah Rudolph's work at the UN for CSW70 on the status of women, and the Mary Ward Centre's projects in Toronto regarding housing, human trafficking, and education.

The Allahabad Province publishes a dedicated JPIC (Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation) newsletter, which in itself demonstrates the im-

mense importance placed on this network within the province. The latest issue highlights various educational and social initiatives promoted by schools in the Allahabad Province under the JPIC approach. Notable activities include UN Model United Nations (MUN) conferences, awareness campaigns on the Sustainable Development Goals, food drives, health programs, and ecological projects, which foster values of empathy, social responsibility, and sustainability among students. In addition, the report emphasizes holistic education through experiences such as mock trials, solidarity visits, environmental activities, and community service, thereby strengthening young people's commitment to social justice and environmental stewardship.



# Educating from a place of hope

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**T**hese are difficult times, complicated times for teaching. Times when black swans invade many aspects of our daily lives, and all the messages we receive from the media lead us to foresee an uncertain and perhaps bleak future.

Amidst all this, our work, our mission, stands firm: education. The vocational educator forges a path through this maelstrom of uncertainty.

How?

Sowing joy, sowing hope, opening the minds of the children who fill our classrooms.

Teaching means reinventing ourselves every day.

Teaching means fighting against screens.

Teaching means inspiring and capturing the attention of these restless minds.

And so, we fill our classrooms with a variety of activities and engaging exercises.

We reflect on our daily lives and capture them in crosses; crosses that symbolize our difficulties, and at the same time, our pillars—that which sustains and nourishes us day by day.

Color and joy, hope and peace... that's why we fill the school with multicolored cranes.

We imagine traveling to London in our English class, and so we fill the school with the monuments we want to visit and tour the city on double-decker buses.

It's all about opening our minds, breaking free from the spiritual blindness in which the gray landscape has lulled us into lethargy.

Mary also faced gray and difficult times and reinvented herself... And she sowed...

Her harvest is here: in our schools, in our classrooms, and in all the dedicated teachers who share the same vision, the same way of doing things.

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**Pilar Fernández**  
*Pastoral Badalona*

# A Thousand Cranes for Peace

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Hiroshima Children's  
Peace Monument

**T**he Irlandesas de Loreto School has organized the “A Thousand Cranes for Peace” Project. This project stems from our commitment to promoting peace and harmonious coexistence in our schools and throughout society.

This initiative is inspired by the story of Sadako Sasaki, a Japanese girl who survived the 1945 bombing of Hiroshima. A decade later, when she was twelve years old, she developed leukemia due to the high levels of radiation she had been exposed to.

During her stay in the hospital, she began folding paper cranes following an ancient Japanese tradition that says whoever folds a thousand origami cranes will have one of

their wishes granted. Sadako thought it wouldn't be fair to make a wish just for herself, so she asked that her efforts be used to bring about peace.

Sadako died before she could finish folding that many. She managed to fold 644 cranes, and her school friends took it upon themselves to fold the rest.

Today, these cranes are a symbol of peace thanks to her.

## **Our Project**

We, too, wanted to express our desire for reconciliation and a society living in peaceful coexistence.

The initiative began on January 30, coinciding with the School Day of Non-Violence and Peace, and continued

over the following weeks. The rest of the Foundation's schools and other schools in Seville enthusiastically joined the project, sending in an astonishing number of paper cranes. Hundreds of hands brought to life countless cranes that flooded the Irlandesas de Loreto school. On Thursday, February 5, during a moving central ceremony, all these figures were hung, transforming the space into an impressive and colorful visual testament to our shared desire for peace.”

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**Luis Miguel Cuñado de Lamo**  
*FEMW Strategy and  
Communications Management*



## 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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