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Conecta

EL BOLETÍN DE LAS DOS PROVINCIAS DE LA CJ DE ESPAÑA

Congregación de Jesús | España

In this Issue

3 GRATITUDE FOR THE JOURNEY
Elena Cerdeiras reflects on the past and the future.

4 VERONICA'S VISIT
We have enjoyed the General Leader's visit to Spain.

5 HUMANISM EMBODIMENT
Josefina de Miguel analyses the *Magnifica Humanitatis*.

9 NEWS IN BRIEF
Castilleja (Seville) kicks off the new academic year.

10 THE CJ AT THE UN. VIENNA
Marta Santos and Adina Balan at UNTOC COP13.

12 FROM THE FINANCE DEPT.
Myriam and Cristina welcome CJ Spain.

14 EU AGAINST TRAFFICKING
Celebration of European Anti-Trafficking Day.

16 ELDERS FOR THE PLANET
The elders network hosts a webinar on COP13.

18 KAMBIA FOUNDATION
An education that changes the world: Huaycán.

20 YOUTH REP. CJ SPAIN
Meet Julia Perucho, the new representative.

21 EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION
5th Leaders' Meeting
'In the spirit of Mary Ward'

23 SAFEGUARDING TRAINING
Amparo Martínez attended this meeting in Seoul.

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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COVER IMAGES::

1. Amparo Matínez CJ, with participants at the Safeguarding training seminar in Seoul (Korea).
2. The General Leader, Veronica Fuhrmann, in the chapel at Castilleja de la Cuesta, during a celebratory Mass.

c Gratitude for the journey made, hope for the future

On 4 November 2026, one year after the congregation's merger, we will become a single province of the Congregation of Jesus in Spain. I have been fortunate to be part of the leadership team for the past nine years, and I look back on this time with deep gratitude.

Experiencing the process leading to the merger of the IBVM into the Congregation of Jesus, as well as the unification of the two CJ provinces, has been a challenge in terms of leadership. It has involved a process of personal transformation and, at the same time, accompanying the members of the province and all those involved in our mission.

Over these years, we have had to face situations of decline and accept the reality that we could not continue as before. We have discerned the necessary decisions, keeping the whole in mind and seeking to make sense of choices that were difficult and painful, but always from a place of gratitude for the journey we have travelled. At the same time, we have opened up new pathways that continue to bring life to the Church and society.

We are bringing a chapter in our life as a province to a close: almost 140 years as IBVM and one year as CJ Centre. It is a story full of life, one that has continued to evolve since 1889, sustained by the lives of women devoted to the mission, with whom we have shared Mary Ward's charism with lay people. Over the years, religious life has gradually moved beyond its former enclosure to embrace a mission shared with others. Today, we are the Mary Ward Family.

I am deeply grateful to be able to acknowledge and honour lives dedicated to the mission, as well as the continuity of what we have sown, thanks to the commitment of so many lay people who accompany us. I am convinced that the Spirit will continue to guide them as they keep Mary Ward's legacy alive and contribute to building a better world.

I am grateful for this time of change and transformation. Grateful for every person with whom I have shared the mission and our work. Grateful for so much goodness received.

We are beginning a new chapter in our history. It is the continuation of the same story, now with new challenges that we will face together.

Elena Cerdeiras
CJ Centre Spain

Visit by Veronica Fuhrmann CJ

The CJ's general leader, Veronica Fuhrmann, has visited every community in the CJ Centre and spent a few days in San Sebastián, CJ North.

Veronica Fuhrmann CJ, General Leader of the Congregatio Jesu, has visited every community in the CJ Centro province and spent a few days relaxing at Mary Ward Etxea in San Sebastián, CJ Norte. She was in Spain from late September until mid-October.

Each of us in CJ Centre had the opportunity to speak with her one-to-one, which allowed us to get to know her better – and for her to get to know us. Our sisters in the north already knew her well, but for those of us in the centre, this was our first time meeting her. It was a lovely and heart-warming experience for everyone. Amongst other languages, she speaks Spanish, which made things very relaxed for many of us who aren't very confident in English.

We've had meetings with her at community level; she visited each community and in every one we enjoyed pleasant get-togethers chatting with her. On the final day, we held a celebratory dinner at the community for older sisters in El Soto, Madrid.

Veronica also wanted to meet the Mary Ward Circles in Seville, the leaders of the Mary Ward Educational Foundation and the provincial office in Madrid.

Veronica is an understanding and friendly woman who has adapted to the specific circumstances of every place she has visited.

The General Leader's schedule has been packed throughout her stay in Spain. She has also visited the Mary Ward Etxea retirement home in San Sebastián.

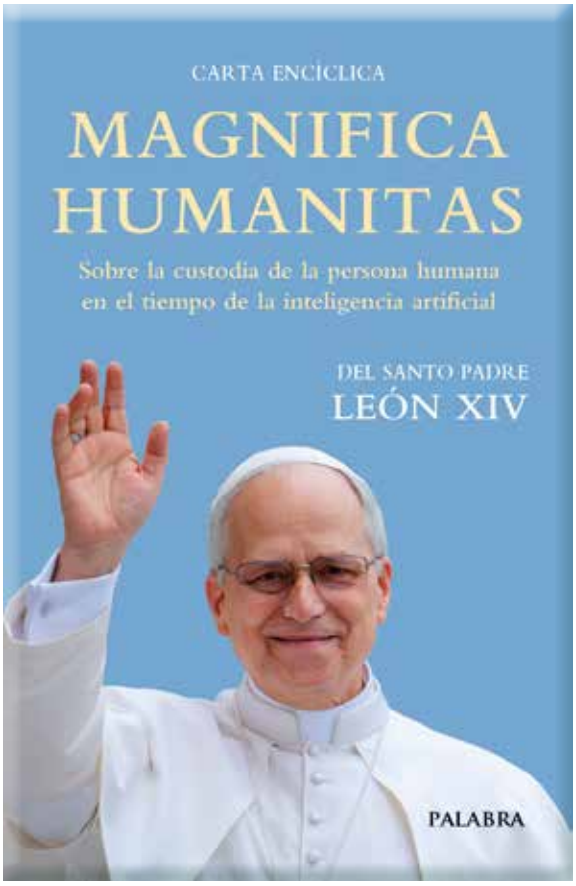
Humanism in action, inner freedom and discernment:

A comparative analysis of Pope Leo XIV's encyclical Magnifica Humanitas in the light of Mary Ward's charism

The human person at the heart of 'epoch-making changes'

The publication of Pope Leo XIV's encyclical Magnifica Humanitas marks a milestone in the Church's social teaching by addressing the safeguarding and preservation of human dignity in the face of the transformations brought about by the age of artificial intelligence. At first glance, a document on contemporary technological ethics might seem far removed from the sources of 17th-century Ignatian spirituality. However, when we examine the encyclical through the lens of the roots of Mary Ward's charism, fundamental points of theological and pedagogical convergence become apparent.

Both Magnifica Humanitas and Mary Ward's charism respond to an inescapable commitment: to reject dehumanisation when dominant structures threaten the integrity of the person and of human society as a whole.



Points of spiritual and theological convergence

1. 'Incarnate existence' versus depersonalisation

- **The Encyclical** Magnifica Humanitas warns of the danger of reducing the person to a mere piece of data, an algorithm or a function within a technologised system. The Pope emphasises the need to defend 'incarnate existence' and the inviolability of human dignity.
- **Mary Ward**: At a time when women were relegated in ecclesial and social life to cloistered existence or secondary roles, she championed the active dignity of women. Her central conviction was that women have the capacity and vocation to achieve great things in history without submitting to rigid, patriarchal norms; this conviction stems from the recognition of the intrinsic dignity of the person created in the image and likeness of God.

2. Inner freedom and active discernment

- **The Encyclical**: highlights the unbridgeable gap between 'data analysis' and spiritual discernment. It calls on the Church to cultivate a reflective and independent stance in the face of technological dominance.
- **Mary Ward:** In delving into the heart of what are known as the 'Visions of Mary Ward' – specifically the Vision of the Righteous Soul in 1615 – she emphasises that those who follow Christ must act out of freedom of spirit, justice and truth. In our spirituality, inner freedom is not arbitrariness, but the discerning capacity to respond to God and to the signs of the times without being constrained by fear or institutional rigidity.

3. Truth, justice and shared responsibility

- **The Encyclical:** The papal document draws on the biblical image of the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem to symbolise a community founded on shared responsibility and shared truth, as opposed to imposed uniformity.
- **Mary Ward:** For years she faced suspicion, persecution and the suppression of her Institute for daring to dream of adapting the apostolic structure to the real needs of the world, drawing on the Ignatian model. Her life embodied fidelity to the truth and a sense of communal responsibility, even in adverse situations and contexts, anticipating the modern concept of subsidiarity and ecclesial participation.

Subtle differences

Dimension	Magnifica Humanitatis	The Charism of Mary Ward
Main context	Ethical and anthropological responses to the rise of technology and AI.	Church reform, women's education and itinerant apostolic mission in the 17th century.
Analytical approach	Theoretical framework of the Church's Social Teaching for global society.	Apostolic mysticism lived out through everyday experience and pastoral work.
Integrating axis	Protection of the individual in the face of instrumental efficiency.	'To entrust everything to God' with freedom, justice and joy.

A brief summary of the first three chapters

Chapter 1 – 'A dynamic thought faithful to the Gospel': this chapter presents the Church's social teaching as a communal discernment in constant dialogue with history, tracing its development from Leo XIII to the present day.

Chapter 2 – Fundamentals and principles: reaffirms that all coexistence is founded on the dignity of the person, which is neither acquired nor needs to be demonstrated, but is rather a gift that precedes it, and applies principles such as the common good, subsidiarity and solidarity in the face of the risk of new data monopolies that exclude the most vulnerable.

Chapter 3 – "Technique and Mastery": It analyses the risks of the technocratic paradigm, in which efficiency and control become the sole criteria of value, stripping individuals of their freedom in the face of the promises of AI.

Having read these three chapters, I feel compelled to highlight the following points, which should give every believer – and religious congregations in particular – pause for thought.

Nº 87 *"Subsidiarity becomes a guiding principle for pastoral life, recognising and upholding the responsibility of the faithful and of intermediate bodies, whilst valuing charisms and skills."*

Nº 89 *"Living out justice within the Church means ridding relationships and structures of those distortions that give rise to inequalities, a lack of charity and abuses."*

Nº 95 *"When power on such a scale is concentrated in the hands of a few, it tends to become opaque…. There is a growing risk of distorted development that gives rise to new forms of dependency, exclusion, manipulation and inequality."*

N.º 116 His approach to the underlying narratives of 'Transhumanism and Posthumanism' is very interesting

N.º 126 *"to help the technique flourish without losing heart"*

N.º 139 *"In an age when the truth is often subordinated to vested interests and communication strategies, the world of education takes on crucial importance. However, rapid technological change highlights just how ill-prepared we are in this area"*

The whole of Chapter 4 It reinforces the message that, in the face of AI, we must protect three human pillars: truth in the face of digital manipulation, the dignity of work, and individual freedom as a prerequisite for technology to serve humanity rather than subjugate it. It emphasises that schools are called upon to offer what the digital world alone cannot provide for our young people:

Nº 147 *"Shared learning time and relationships built on trust"*

N.º 176 León XIV expressly asks for forgiveness due to the Church's complicity, over the course of centuries, in what at the time was a manifestation of human slavery; and in a series of subsequent statements, it warns of the challenges we face as a society in ensuring we do not become complicit in the new forms of slavery associated with technological advances, within the framework of shared responsibility.

Chapter 5: "The Culture of Power and the Civilisation of Love"

It has an appealing and inspiring title, focusing on war. In this document, Leo XIV warns that the digital revolution is changing the grammar of conflicts and that, without an ethical approach, decisions about people's lives and deaths will become increasingly impersonal, while the use of force is being normalised and a culture of rearmament is growing.

In response to this situation, he proposes five paths towards responsibility: disarming words, justice, the perspective of victims, healthy realism and dialogue. He also calls for a renewed commitment to diplomacy and multilateralism as a path towards a "civilisation of love", a concept first articulated by Paul VI and further developed by John Paul II throughout his pontificate.

I conclude my reflection and study by highlighting how Magnifica Humanitas, the charism of Mary Ward and the work that has developed over the past 417 years, reaching across all five continents through a variety of ministries, all remind us that true progress can never come at the expense of human dignity. While the papal document offers moral and ethical guidelines for navigating the digital age, Mary Ward provides a historical example of how to live out this inner freedom with authenticity and courage in any era of social transformation.

Josefina de Miguel Cruz
CJ Centre Spain

A shared new beginning in Seville

On 28 September, the visit of our Superior General, Veronica Fuhrmann CJ, coincided with the Eucharist and the celebration marking the start of the various activities taking place in Castilleja de la Cuesta (Seville):

- **Mary Ward Circles**. Coordinated by M.ª Teresa Vorcy CJ, these groups continue to grow in their understanding and experience of the spirituality of Mary Ward and Ignatius of Loyola, which we share as a spiritual family.
- **A Solas con Dios (Alone with God)**. Ignatian prayer gatherings held one Saturday each month, open to the local community, the Mary Ward Circles, and friends and others close to us.
- **Mary Ward Centre**. A welcoming project for migrant women, supported by a network of volunteers committed to this mission.

Both during the Eucharist and at the gathering afterwards in the courtyard, we celebrated the beginning of a new year of activities and renewed our commitment to the charism. It is a journey we are increasingly sharing with lay women and men who embrace our spirituality and play an active part in our life and mission.

The CJ in Vienna: a voice for human dignity

From 19 to 23 October, Vienna hosted the 13th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (UNTOC COP13), an international meeting at which governments, United Nations agencies and civil society organisations came together to assess progress and challenges in the fight against transnational organised crime.

We had the opportunity to represent the **Congregatio Jesu** at the Conference and to share our experience and commitment as a network combating human trafficking within this international forum for dialogue and decision-making.

This Convention (UNTOC), known as the **Palermo Treaty,** is one of the main international instruments for cooperation between countries in the fight against criminal networks operating across borders. The conferences, which regularly bring together the 195 signatory countries, provide an opportunity to review the implementation of the treaty and also to address new challenges.

On this occasion, it was emphasised throughout the debate that phenomena such as **human trafficking**, drug trafficking and the illegal exploitation of natural resources are increasingly interconnected and cannot be tackled in isolation.

It is urgent and necessary to strengthen international cooperation, trace the flow of money derived from criminal activities, and ensure that political and legal responses translate into effective protection for the people and communities affected.

The voice of civil society: putting people at the centre

During the general debate, civil society organisations had the opportunity to speak and share our concerns and proposals with the delegations from the countries party to the Convention.

Among the organisations present was the Congregation of Jesus. In our statement, we emphasised the fundamental principle underpinning the global work of the anti-trafficking network: the need **to place the dignity, rights, safety and decision-making capacity of victims and survivors at the centre**. We also put forward five priorities: to address new forms of recruitment and exploitation facilitated by technology; to strengthen international cooperation; to protect women and girls from the structural factors that increase their vulnerability; to ensure the identification of victims, legal assistance and the principle of non-criminalisation; and to recognise survivors and civil society organisations as key partners.

Building networks to move forward together

One of the particularly significant aspects of this experience was being able to share it with other members of RENATE, the European network against human trafficking to which our organisation belongs. Among them were Brian O'Toole, from Ireland, and Adina Balan-CJ, from Romania.

Following her time in Rome, where she coordinated the JPIC Office of the Congregation of Jesus, Adina has returned to Romania and resumed her involvement with RENATE. Meeting in this international forum has been an opportunity to recognise the value of the collaborative networks that link our work and strengthen a shared response to human trafficking.

Taking part in the conference has helped us to reinforce our international commitments and to remember that these only take on true meaning when they translate into concrete changes in people's lives. From the Congregation of Jesus, we wish to continue contributing our experience, listening to those who live through these realities, and advocating for policies that protect people and leave no one behind.

Bringing our voice to the United Nations also means working towards a world in which every person can live with dignity, freedom and hope.

Marta Santos Romero
JPIC Coordinator, CJ Spain

«We are here to support all of you»

We spoke to the managers of the Finance department, Myriam Benito and Cristina Cruz.

Behind the smooth running of any institution lies constant, often unassuming work that is essential to keeping everything moving forward. The merger of the Congregation of Jesus' two Spanish provinces into a single one, which will be completed on 4 November, is also being made possible thanks to the dedication of many people, which is not always visible.

The Finance Department of CJ Centro will become the Finance Department of CJ España. Within this department, Myriam Benito and Cristina Cruz work as a team, each in complementary roles, to meet the financial and administrative needs of the Congregation. Cristina is responsible for day-to-day management, ranging from bookkeeping and resolving issues to providing daily support to the sisters. Myriam, as Director of Finance, focuses her work on institutional management and relations with banks, solicitors, etc.

We spoke to them to gain a better understanding of the work behind the merger and how they are approaching this new phase.

The merger is now just around the corner. You've been working for some time on many issues that may not be immediately apparent, but which are essential to ensuring that everything is ready. Tell us about this work.

The canonical part of the merger was completed in Rome last year. We are now working to formalise it at a civil and administrative level. This involves coordinating and updating numerous practical matters, such as suppliers, bank accounts, property and other issues relating to the management of both provinces.

One of the key steps is to register the merger with the relevant register at the Ministry of the Presidency, Justice and Relations with the Courts, in order to legally formalise the incorporation of the IBVM into the Congregation of Jesus. We are currently carrying out the preliminary formalities and, once this process is complete, we will be able to pro-

Cristina Cruz, on the left, and Myriam Benito, on the right, are in charge of the Finance department at CJ Spain

ceed with the necessary steps to finalise the change.

What are the main challenges facing the Finance department in this process of merging?

The main challenge is to standardise accounting criteria, methods and working procedures. We need to have a thorough understanding of the realities of the two current provinces, CJ Centro and CJ Norte, as well as their specific characteristics and needs, in order to manage the accounts and all other financial matters effectively.

How do you envisage the future of your work from 4 November onwards?

At first, it will no doubt be a more demanding phase, as we will have to adapt to new ways of working and face different challenges. But we are approaching this with great enthusiasm. We are delighted to have the opportunity to meet more nuns, gain an insight into their lives and learn from their experiences and ways of doing things.

Rather than a challenge that worries us, we see it as an opportunity for mutual enrichment. We are convinced that this encounter will help us to grow and improve.

What message would you like to convey to all the nuns in the Spanish province of the CJ?

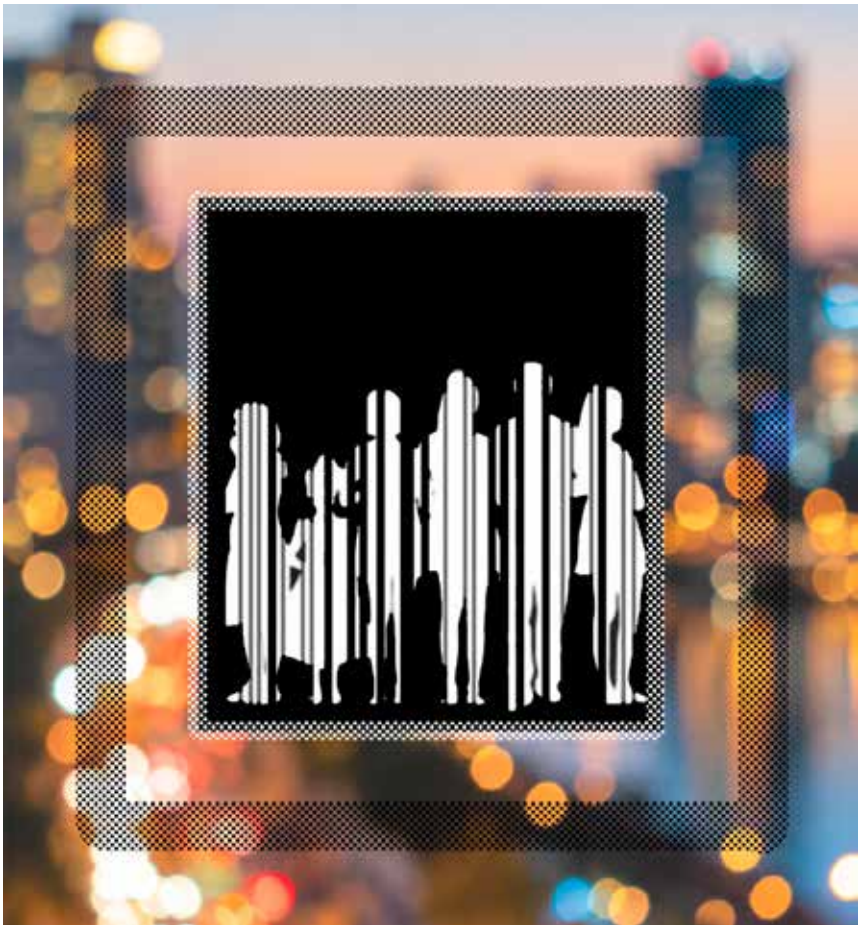
We would like to convey to you that changes also bring opportunities to learn, to adopt new tools and to grow together. We are confident that this new phase will help us feel more united in every way.

We want you to know that we are here to help you with whatever you need regarding financial and administrative matters. We have been working for the Sisters of the IBVM for over 16 years and are delighted to continue this work, now supporting you all.

From the Finance and Administration Department, a warm welcome to you all! We are here to help with whatever you need.

European Day Against Trafficking in Human Beings

European Anti-Trafficking Day is observed every 18 October, ever since it was established by the European Commission in 2007. As in Vienna, the CJ's JPIC network seizes every opportunity to raise awareness amongst the public, institutions and public authorities about the violation of rights – as well as the attack on human dignity – that this crime entails, and thereby to strengthen prevention and protection measures.



Statistics show that in 2025, 10,793 victims of human trafficking were identified in the European Union, representing an increase in the number of cases compared with previous years.

Around 75% of victims are women and girls, and approximately 25% are minors. Almost two out of every three victims come from outside the European Union.

According to the latest reports from the Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) and the European Union, new trends are emerging in this crime:

- There is an increase in trafficking for the purpose of criminal exploitation, in which victims are forced by criminal networks to commit offences. In many cases, they are prosecuted for crimes they were coerced into committing because they have not been identified as victims.
- The growing number of criminal networks exploiting children and adolescents is a cause for concern. They are exploited through begging, illicit activities and sexual exploitation. In many cases, they are not identified as victims and, instead of receiving protection and support for their integration, they are penalised as offenders.
- Although trafficking for sexual exploitation remains the most common form, labour exploitation is also increasing, particularly affecting migrant workers in sectors such as agriculture, construction, hospitality and logistics. It is therefore essential to strengthen labour inspections and ensure effective protection of the rights of vulnerable workers.
- Criminal networks make extensive use of digital platforms, social media and online tools to target, recruit and control victims.

In 2024, the EU adopted a new European Directive that strengthens the response to these emerging forms of trafficking. Member States had until 15 July 2026 to transpose the Directive into their respective national legislation. Spain has not yet done so, nor have several other EU countries. Furthermore, the draft Comprehensive Law against Human Trafficking was not debated in the Spanish Congress of Deputies during the previous parliamentary term.

This remains an outstanding responsibility towards vulnerable people in our society who are at risk of becoming victims of this crime, which violates their dignity and most fundamental rights.

Through its United Nations Office and its participation in the RENATE network, the Congregation of Jesus carries out information and awareness-raising activities to bring the reality of human trafficking to light and highlight the need to implement legislative measures that enable a comprehensive response. This response must encompass every stage, from prevention, detection and identification to protection, support, reparation and recovery.

Marta Santos Romero
JPIC Coordinator, CJ Spain

Elders for the Planet: Taking Further Steps

Ahead of COP31 on climate change, Elders for the Planet, a JPIC initiative of our Congregation, is promoting actions to amplify the voices of older people and encourage their participation.

With early general elections having been called, we also want to call on political parties to make clear commitments to tackling climate change and other threats to our planet, which affect our lives and the future of generations to come.

1. Making Our Voices Heard

We have conducted the survey "Older People and COP31: Our Voice, Our Responsibility, Our Future" to gather our concerns about the climate crisis, which is particularly relevant in Spain, one of the most vulnerable regions in Europe. Based on the responses, we are preparing a statement outlining our concerns and proposals.

2. Understanding in Order to Act

On Wednesday, 28 October, we held the webinar "Spain and Climate Change: Progress, Challenges and Shared Responsibility". Our aim was to gain a better understanding of what was being done, what results were being

achieved and what remained to be done, in order to foster an informed, aware and active citizenry. Representatives from public administration, the private sector and civil society took part.

3. Taking Part in COP31

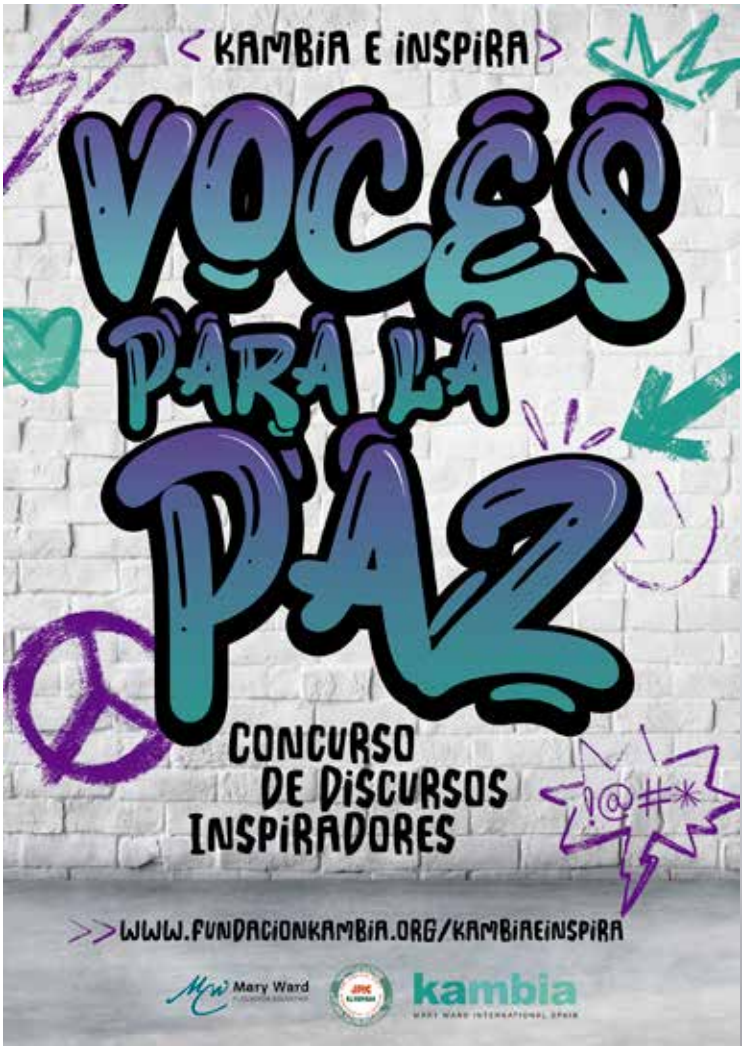
From 12 to 18 November, Elders for the Planet will participate in COP31 alongside the Mary Ward Family, represented by our NGO. This will be an opportunity to build relationships, foster collaboration and contribute, to the best of our ability, to addressing the climate crisis.

Older people have a voice, experience and a responsibility to help build a more sustainable future.

Cecilia O'Dwyer
CJ Centre Spain

Would you like to find out more or join our network?
Please write to us at
mayoresporelplaneta@gmail.com

kambia
MARY WARD INTERNATIONAL SPAIN

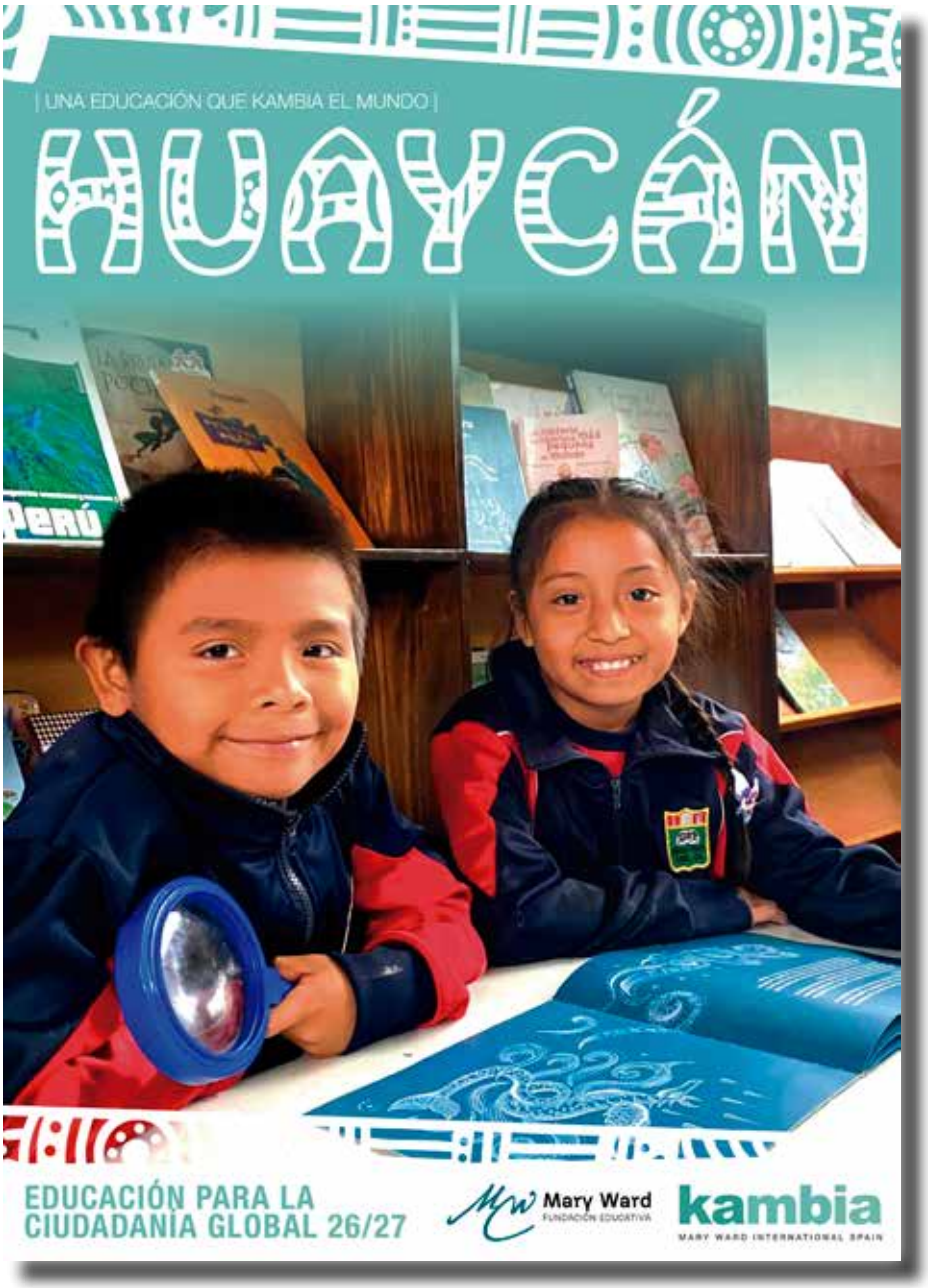


An education that changes the world: Huaycán

The Kambia Foundation, in collaboration with the Congregation of Jesus' Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Office, is continuing its commitment to Global Citizenship Education during the 2026–2027 academic year in the schools of the Mary Ward Educational Foundation, under the motto «An Education that Kambia Changes the World: Huaycán».

We start from a shared conviction: education is about much more than transmitting knowledge. It is also about teaching people to live together, respect and care for those around them, and commit to building a fairer world. That is why this year we are focusing on a culture of peace and non-violence, a particularly important proposal in a context where violence, bullying and hate speech, which have become increasingly widespread in recent years, remind us how essential it is to learn to relate to one another through respect and dialogue.

In Early Childhood and Primary Education, through classroom tutorials and age-appropriate activities, pupils will learn to recognise their emotions, manage conflicts, listen, put themselves in others' shoes and discover how their words and actions can contri-



bute to a kinder and more harmonious school environment. Kam, Kambia's mascot, will also accompany the youngest children, encouraging peaceful attitudes, respect and friendship in the classroom.

In Secondary Education and Baccalaureate, the programme invites young people to put words at the service of peace by creating the "Congress of Inspiring Speeches: Voices for Peace". This is an opportunity to develop critical thinking, communication skills and positive leadership, while reflecting on everyday choices they can put into practice to transform their surroundings.

This educational project is also connected to our solidarity project in Huaycán, Peru, where Kambia supports the education of children living in particularly vulnerable circumstances shaped by a context of violence.

We want pupils to have the tools to resolve their differences peacefully, to listen, engage in dialogue and use words to build rather than destroy. Because peace is learned and built every day. We want to help make our schools places of harmonious coexistence and transformation, where every pupil discovers that they, too, can help change the world.

Rocío Aguilar-Tablada
Kambia Foundation

Introducing the New Youth Representative CJ Spain

My name is Julia Perucho, and I am in my final year of a double degree in International Studies and Law at Carlos III University of Madrid. Since I was young, I have felt a deep commitment to social justice, which over time developed into an interest in Law. This was accompanied by a desire to help others and a strong sense of solidarity, as well as a keen interest in cooperation between countries to build support networks that serve the common good. This is how my passion for International Relations, international solidarity and human rights began.

Over the past few months as Youth Representative, I have had the opportunity to take part in several projects that I find truly inspiring. As part of the programme, we are launching this year's Generation 2030 initiative, through which we hope to build a team of young people passionate about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) who can help us raise awareness of them across our youth network. We are also gathering young people's views and concerns to draft the Youth Declaration for COP 31 in Türkiye, with the aim of bringing their voices to decision-makers.

In addition, in collaboration with our representation office at the United Nations, I recently attended an event marking the International Day of the Girl Child. There, I learned from speakers who engaged in dialogue with Member States and various UN bodies on issues such as child marriage, equality in education and abuse facilitated by advances in artificial intelligence. Furthermore, together with my fellow interns, I am working on a position paper containing recommendations to improve the situation of girls in education.

I am excited about all these projects and hope to continue taking part in initiatives that help bring young people's voices to global decision-making spaces.

Julia Perucho B.
Youth Representative CJ Spain

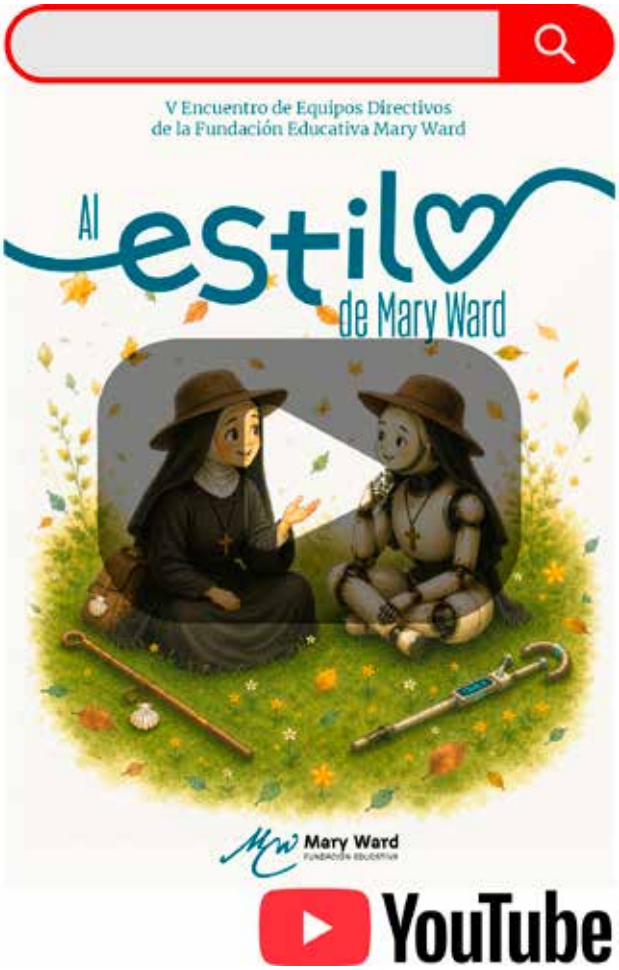
5th Leaders' Meeting "In the spirit of Mary Ward"

From 16 to 19 September, the Mary Ward Educational Foundation held its 5th Leadership Meeting, an annual gathering that brought together the Foundation's Leadership Team, the leadership teams of our schools and the heads of our specialist teams.

The meeting began with a welcome from the President and General Director of the Mary Ward Educational Foundation, who highlighted the meaning of the meeting's motto, "In the Way of Mary Ward". It was an invitation to the entire educational community to face the rapid changes taking place in today's world without losing sight of the essence and charism of our foundress.

The first part of the meeting focused on Artificial Intelligence. We began by reviewing and exploring our Digital Citizens Project in greater depth, an initiative that has made us pioneers in the use of technology in our schools and earned us recognition as part of the Google Reference School Network in 2020. Since then, ongoing training and daily practice have prepared our teaching staff for the arrival of AI, which we have already been working with for the past couple of years. Throughout this process, we have remained convinced that all our advances must take place in a safe environment and be approached thoughtfully and critically.

To explore the next steps on this journey, we were joined by Mariano Salas, a representative of Google for Education, who guided us towards the responsible use of Artificial Intelligence in the classroom. He provided our teams with training on the main educational technology developments Google will introduce in the coming months. He also confir-



med that our Google Reference School Network recognition has been upgraded to the new Google for Education Premier Reference District designation.

The second part of the meeting was devoted to deepening our understanding of our charism, which is essential to continuing Mary Ward's legacy. During the morning, we took part in a dedicated training session for the Foundation's leaders as part of our Charism Formation Plan. We were joined by Macarena Fernández de Bobadilla, the future Provincial Superior of the Congregation of Jesus in Spain. The session also included time for interior reflection, prayer and contemplation. All of this took place in the special setting of our house in Chipiona, where we also had opportunities to share experiences and continue growing together as a community.

To conclude, we celebrated the Eucharist together, which helped us return to our roots, celebrate our spirituality and entrust the life of our educational communities to God. The day was marked by fraternal dialogue, stronger networks and the sharing of experiences among the teams.

We concluded the meeting with a review of the Strategic Plan and sessions dedicated to work in specific areas, bringing together the school leadership teams and specialist teams. This was an essential step in preparing for the new academic year, ensuring that our lines of action were clear and reminding us that we support one another in this shared mission. The Pastoral Team also had dedicated time to work on and refine the pastoral project for the academic year.

In conclusion, we enjoyed a very special time of gathering and formation, approaching the challenges of the future as opportunities for growth while keeping our eyes fixed on the values that inspired Mary Ward. We are convinced that looking ahead "in the way of Mary Ward" means educating with freedom, justice, sincerity and joy, always seeking the best way to "be all you can be."

Alejandro Delgado
Coordinador Marketing y Comunicación FEMW

«Cuidado y buen trato es tarea de todas»

Seminario de formación de salvaguarda en Seúl.

Some journeys are measured in kilometres, while others are measured by how deeply they change us. My journey to Seoul belonged to the second kind. For ten days, sisters and lay collaborators from five continents gathered in South Korea for the Congregation of Jesus International Safeguarding Seminar. I returned to Spain with a suitcase full of notes and, above all, a heart full of gratitude.

A welcome that stays with you

The first thing I remember is not a presentation, but a welcome. The sisters of the Province of Korea received us with such generous hospitality that it is hard to describe. Nothing was left to chance: time to rest and adjust, an introduction to their country and its history, transport cards for those who wished to explore independently, guided trips by van, metro and bus, and meals and tea breaks that became a true lesson in Korean culture and cuisine.

From the very first moment, I felt at home. I believe this is the best definition of what we seek when we speak of safeguarding: that every person can feel this way. And we learned this before opening a single document, simply by allowing ourselves to be cared for.

I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to Sr Helena, who coordinated the local preparations with great competence and exceptional attention to detail, and to the entire Generalate team. The materials we received before travelling, the stationery waiting for us on the tables, the clear schedules and the simultaneous interpretation ensured that no one was excluded because of language. My thanks also go to Tina, Una, Manyu, Anna and Geraldine, each of whom contributed wisdom, attentive lis-

tening, laughter and engaging activities. I would also like to give special mention to Estela, who worked on organising the seminar but could not be with us in Seoul. She was only able to join us by video conference for one day, and I am grateful to her, too, for everything she did.

When the serious work began, we sat around tables. Many of us had never met before, while others were seeing one another again; some of us had met at last year's merger celebration. What made this arrangement so meaningful was the mix of different realities, cultures, languages and ages around each table, with both sisters and lay collaborators. We explored theoretical frameworks, real-life cases, legal regulations and examples from everyday life.

It was there that the message the Safeguarding Policy never tires of repeating began to make sense: true care requires genuine equality. When we open the discussion to all voices, the experiences of those who bring with them a different culture, different laws or a different understanding of authority open our eyes to realities that we would otherwise be unable to see. By listening to one another from our different realities, we realise that risks and wounds take different forms in every setting, and that the task of care is not the exclusive preserve of any one culture. Our safeguarding policy is rooted in a simple yet profound conviction: every person is created in the image and likeness of God and possesses the same innate dignity. This applies to the young girl and the vulnerable adult, to the senior sister in a residence and to the person who works with us, to those who exercise responsibility and to those who are entrusted with it. No one is worth more or less. And precisely for this reason, protection is not a matter for specialists alone, but a responsibility shared by all, regardless of position, country or age.

Exploring Seoul: a country of contrasts

During the first two days, we combined time together with outings around the city. It was a wonderful way to get to know one another before beginning our work. Our excursions around Seoul revealed a city of contrasts. We visited Lotte World Tower, the tallest tower in the country, surrounded by state-of-the-art glass and steel buildings that seem to reach into the future. It symbolises a Korea that is moving forward rapidly, creative and embracing technology.

We also visited Gyeongbokgung Royal Palace, where time seemed to stand still amid its wooden pavilions, curved tiled roofs and spacious courtyards. We felt the same when we saw traditional Korean houses, known as hanok, which reflect a culture that values silence, harmony with nature and shared life. We, too, experienced this sense of togetherness: we explored the city side by side, despite speaking different languages and coming from different countries, shared meals and conversations, and discovered Korean culture through the eyes of our sisters. Within just a few hours, we travelled from the Korea of centuries past to the Korea of tomorrow.

On Sunday, we celebrated the Eucharist at the cathedral. Afterwards, we joined guided tours in small groups, each accompanied by different Korean sisters who showed us their city with great warmth. It was a simple and personal way to discover their culture, spend time together and continue building bonds among us.

A very special day

During the seminar, I also experienced a very special day: my birthday. The community and all the participants surprised me with a gift I will always treasure in my heart: a delicious cake, a wonderful meal and, above all, the affection of people who had become family in just a few days. Thank you for celebrating life with me, so far from home and yet feeling so much at home.

The rhythm of our days and the beauty of our differences

Our days began at seven in the morning with Mass and singing. Hearing the different languages brought us straight into one another's realities. It was moving to experience such diversity and, at the same time, to discover different ways of praying and different sensitivities, while sharing the same faith.

Each day, a group from a different country prepared and led the morning prayer. Rather than allowing one culture to set the tone for everyone, we prayed using one another's words, symbols, music and silences. There was something deeply comforting about this rhythm: listening, asking questions, reflecting and gradually getting to know one another. We stopped being delegates and became companions sharing the same mission.

The afternoons brought informal conversations, preparations for the following day's sessions, shared prayer or a short walk before nightfall. During these pauses, over one cup of tea and then another, something invaluable took shape: the certainty that we are part of a living network that supports and accompanies one another. We do not walk alone.

Safeguarding is not about reacting: it is about preventing harm and building a culture of care

One of the lessons that made the deepest impression on me was that safeguarding is not simply about knowing what to do when something goes wrong. It means recognising risks in time, preventing all forms of harm and building, day by day, a community culture grounded in respect, safety and love. We spoke about protecting children and young people, as well as older people and vulnerable adults, because any of us can experience moments of vulnerability through bereavement, illness or loss.

There were moments of honesty and awareness that were not easy. Facing human suffering and vulnerability is difficult. Yet we discovered that sincere dialogue, the courage to seek the truth and humility are the only way to protect the dignity of every person the Lord places in our path.

A commissioning that changed everything

On the final day, we held a commissioning celebration, and the words Verónica shared with us continue to resonate within me. She invited us to embrace this responsibility not as a task or a checklist of things to do, but as a mission rooted in our charism: to bear witness to the love of Christ, paying particular attention to those who suffer most.

She reminded us that although congregational leadership has entrusted us with this responsibility, it is Christ who calls us by name and sends us out to bring relief, support, empathy and hope to those trapped in situations of abuse, and to accompany those who hold positions of responsibility. This is an ongoing process: observing, learning, discerning and acting, time and time again.

She also spoke to us about fear. It is only human to feel afraid when faced with such a great responsibility. But we are not alone: Christ promises to remain with us: “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:20). Through the gesture of anointing, we returned home with the certainty that God sustains us and has chosen us for this sacred purpose. For me, that gesture, received by women from so many countries and language groups, was the clearest expression of our equality: all anointed, all sent, all responsible.

Visit to the Daejeon community

On our way to the Daejeon community, where all the sisters of the Province of Korea welcomed us, we celebrated a beautiful Eucharist, carefully prepared and accompanied by wonderful singing. After lunch, the Provincial gave a presentation on the history of the Congregation’s arrival in Korea and its journey up to the present day. Listening to her helped us understand the roots of the mission shared by this Province and feel part of one common story.

Back in Spain: taking concrete steps

Returning to the Province is the moment of truth: putting what we have learned into practice. A profound experience is of little value if it does not become part of our lives. That is why we want to take concrete steps, carefully and calmly: meet with the Provincial to review the proposed actions and establish immediate priorities in an action plan; appoint and organise a Safeguarding Team and a Risk Management Team; and share the plan, its responsibilities and its implementation stages with all members and collaborators of the Province.

I take on this task knowing that it is not mine alone, even though I have a particular responsibility as the delegate. It is a mission for each and every one of us. Every community, every ministry and every care home is a place where, in everyday life, the dignity of people must be protected.

A truth that makes us equal

Mary Ward left us an invitation that Seoul brought to life in a new way: “Love and tell the truth at all times.” Telling the truth makes us equal, because no one stands above anyone else when truth is at stake. Those who hold authority and those who do not are all called to look honestly at our reality, to name what hurts and to care for what has been entrusted to us.

May the courage to seek the truth and the humility to embrace it continue to transform the way we care for our community life and for those entrusted to us. And may we learn, as we did around the tables and in the groups in Seoul, to sit together more often and on increasingly equal terms.

United in prayer and in our mission of care.

Amparo Matínez González
CJ Centro España

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