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Writers of Daily Reflections

The tree as a symbol  Claire Renkin, Australia

Day 1:  Cecilia Goodman CJ English Province
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Day 5:  Sarah Dobson CJ English Province
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Prayers:  LAUDATE OMNES GENTES
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Ps 1:3 ... like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that it does it prospers.
The prosperity, progress and security of the Institute does not consist of riches, great position, or the favour of princes, but in the free recourse of all its members to God from whom all strength, light and protection should come.

Mary Ward

Christians are called to proclaim Jesus without fear, without shame and without triumphalism. The risk of becoming a Christian without the Resurrection is real and Christ must always be at the center of our life and hope.

Pope Francis

Come Holy Spirit, true light.
Come, Holy Spirit, true light.
Come, hidden mystery.
Come, treasure without a name.
Come, happiness without end.
Come, awaited of all those who are to be saved.
Come, O invisible one.
Come, beloved name, everywhere repeated.
Come, my breath and my life.
Come, consolation of my poor soul.
Come, my joy, my glory, without end.

St Simeon, The New Theologian (949-1022)
Jeremiah 29:11 ... For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

Reflection:

Toward the future. Where and how God calls us today?

People who are closed minded, afraid and sedentary are not apt for the charism of Mary Ward. For the pilgrim Mary Ward life was always an un-tiring search for the will of God, a continual crossing of boundaries: geographical, social-cultural (defined in her day as "proper" for a woman) and the limits of her own interior life (her shyness and her inhibitions). Like a nomad of the will of God, hardly arriving at an intermediate destination, she started again, to make herself an even more radical "companion of Jesus".

Our passionate desire to be more like Jesus is the inner energy which unites us with the roots of our charism and with many great women before us – and at the same moment this desire impels us towards the future. Faithfulness to our roots does not signify a paralyzing nostalgia, but starts us on a new journey with the audacity of Mary Ward,

- to look for the closeness and communion with the poor Jesus in the victims of greed and global violence and thus effectively anticipate the promises of the great banquet of the Kingdom;

- to live with natural elegance, the equality of women with men in science, culture, politics and religion – and in this way make us true partners with those women whose life options are mutilated by machismo;

- to set us free from the fears of unknown worlds and cultures and enter with courage into dialogue and relationship with the worlds of young people, the cultures of marginalized minorities and with other religious traditions.

CONGREGATIO JESU

INSTITUTE OF THE BLESSED MARY VIRGIN MARY

Casa Generalizia

Casa Loreto

January 2014

Dear Companions in the Lord

We are very happy to join each one of you for another Mary Ward Week of reflection and prayer - whether you are alone, in community or with companions and collaborators.

Early in 2013 a decision was taken by the two Generalates to use the 1907 painting of the Institute Tree as the theme for our prayer during this Mary Ward Week 2014. We are confident that during this week each of you will come to appreciate the special significance that this tree has for all of us in the Mary Ward family. The original is in the CJ community in Vicenza, Italy. It was copied in 1907 and is now preserved also in Ballarat, Australia. We know of many more trees around our provinces and regions, telling a story as described on page 4 - but no others like this one.

We hope that the daily reflections on our Institute trees, wherever they are, and on the Vicenza and Ballarat tree in particular, will be a source of inspiration and encouragement to each one of us as we seek to be rooted and grounded in our Mary Ward heritage and in the Gospel message, and as we seek also to respond to the challenges of our day.

We would like to thank the writers and translators most warmly for their work in bringing this 2014 Mary Ward Week booklet to life; and Monika Gloc-kann CJ and Sandra Perrett IBVM, both for their editorship and for this concrete example of inter-branch collaboration. We have no doubt that Mary Ward is smiling down on us all as we take one more step on our CJ/IBVM journey together at the service of the mission of God.

With love and prayers to each one

Jane CJ

Marian IBVM
Mapping the fortunes of a family can take many forms. Over the centuries different types of families, both “natural” and institutional, have adopted the symbol of the tree to visualize identity and belonging across generations. Such visual imagery embodies the notion that both the newest branches and the oldest growth rely on the strength of the trunk and the roots to nourish all parts of a life-system. During the Middle Ages paintings and stained glass deployed the Tree of Jesse to emphasize the human reality of the Jewish ancestors of Jesus listed in Luke 3. 23–38. The interdependence of root, trunk and branches inspired other ‘families’ to adopt this visual metaphor in order to express a relationality that interweaves the generations. Over the centuries religious orders like the Cistercians, the Franciscans and the Carmelites mapped the complicated (and sometimes painful) history of their orders by also using the familiar symbol of a tree. In prints, paintings and tapestries the “family trees” of these and other religious orders generated a remarkable diversity of such trees.

The painting of the Institute Tree executed in 1907 in Vicenza has no doubt aroused many hopes. Prominent among these must have been the desire to see the restoration of Mary Ward to a place of honour as founder of the Institute. The recent conservation of the image preserved in Vicenza can symbolize for us the commitment of Mary Ward’s followers to renewed service and renewed confidence as members of a widely branching and deeply rooted family.

I have never, to my knowledge, said or done anything against his Holiness… nor have I undermined the authority of the Holy Church. On the contrary, for 26 years, with great respect for both His Holiness and the Holy Church and in the most honorable way possible, I have put my frail efforts and industry to their service.

Mary Ward

The Mary Ward graces of Loyalty and Communion with the Church are there for us to claim. What more must I do to love the Church the way Christ loves her?

Renew your Church

Lord, awaken your Church, and begin with me.

Lord, build up your community, and begin with me.

Lord, let freedom and the knowledge of God be spread in all the world, and begin with me.

Lord, bring your love and wisdom to all people, and begin with me.

From China
Hebrews 13:17-18...Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you. Pray for us. We are sure that we have a clear conscience and desire to live honourably in every way.

Reflection:

Pope Francis when addressing the congregational leaders at a UISG Assembly recently, said *It is impossible for a consecrated man or woman not to “feel” with the Church; “feeling” with the Church generated at baptism finds one of its filial expressions in faithfulness to the Magisterium, in communion with the Pastors and the Successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome, a visible sign of unity.*

Is such an affective attitude *sentire cum ecclesia* possible today when we encounter a humanly flawed Church; one that has lost its credibility, is globally demoralized and seen as irrelevant by many in our postmodern world? Yet the Church in Mary Ward’s time was equally flawed and she never wavered in her loyalty to the Pope and the Church. She forgave her enemies and cherished them as friends despite the gross injustices and indignities suffered at the hands of the Church that she loved and served.

It was because of her intimate relationship with Christ that she was able to remain in communion with and think, feel and love the Church, as the “spouse” of Christ while remaining faithful to the founding insights given to her by God’s Spirit.

God of Love, give us the wisdom to allow your Holy Spirit to create in us and in the ecclesial community, oneness of mind and heart and enable us to both uphold the Magisterium and yet be a “prophetic presence in the Church and world”.

**Sister Eugénie Haxo** was born in France in 1865. At the age of 20 she began teaching the French language and painting in the Institute. When she became aware of her vocation to religious life, she had to obtain the consent of her family and was therefore only able to enter the Novitiate in Vicenza, Italy in 1895. She made her First Vows in 1896 and her profession in 1898, remaining in Vicenza. She taught language and painting courses with dedication and competence. All admired her artistic taste. In Vicenza in 1899 the new chapel, which still exists, was constructed. Sister Eugénie painted the windows (plates of frosted glass) of which only those of the apse have been preserved, as they are internal, while the others were destroyed, shattered to pieces during the bombardments of the last world war. Each window included a symbol of the Litany of Loreto.

Sister Eugénie painted the 14 Stations of the Cross which are inlaid into some of the side stalls. In the House her original painting of a family tree illustrating the life of the Institute over the centuries has been preserved.

Sister Eugénie also painted the Sacred Heart, St. Louis, and St. Joseph. However her activities were short lived as she became ill after the war in 1920 and died rather suddenly (perhaps due to the “Spanish” flu epidemic). Her Sisters and former students have a fond memory of her.
My Feast was crowned by a beautiful surprise. At the even of the Academie, a picture painted in oils by one of our Nuns and explained by a charming recitation was offered to me. It is more than a metre high and represents the historic tree of our Institute; a gigantic tree, one of the glories of the garden of the Church. Each root represents one of the Foundations of Mary Ward, the first St. Omer 1609 etc. On the horizon, the Basilica of St. Peter surrounded by young plants, Congregations younger than ours. At the base the part of the trunk cut, bearing the date of the famous Bull, recalls to us the bitter days of Mary Ward. A small branch is detached from the cut trunk bearing two Fruits, Hewarth and two dates, viz the first foundation and occupation of this dear house, and the second 1645 the year of the death of Mary Ward; and this little branch inclines towards the Vatican to recall to us with what humility and submission our dear Mother always and on every occasion bowed down before the decisions of the Church. The other fruit, Paris, of short existence, but where our Mother lived and where are interred the faithful Winifred Wigmore and Catherine Smith. The tree rises then majestically, to the right York, the English branch, Hammersmith the only extinct house marked, its long existence and its merit truly deserve a special place in our history. To the left the Bavarian

I will not have you troubled at what you cannot mend, and at that which our Lord permits for the best, but confide in God.

Mary Ward

Reflect on your graced story of belonging to the Institute at this time. Recall how God has worked in you and in your community, local and international.

By gracious powers so wonderfully sheltered, and confidently waiting come what may, we know that God is with us night and morning and never fails to greet us each new day.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945)
Daniel 4:8-9...The tree grew taller and stronger, until its top reached the sky and it could be seen from the very ends of the earth. Its foliage was beautiful, its fruit abundant, in it was food for all. For the wild animals it provided shade, the birds of heaven nested in its branches, all living creatures found their food on it.

Reflection:

The tree has flourished in varied ecosystems. The climate has changed. Branches have been seared, stripped bare by war and political oppression. The sufferings of that crucifixion have fertilized new growth.

The sap - passion for Jesus and the reign of God in our world - pulses with vigour, enriched by directed retreats, scriptural and theological study.

The specific genetic heritage of this tree, Mary Ward’s graced story, has gained significance with new awareness of the contribution of women throughout church history. Vatican II’s theology has challenged old entitlements and attracted people from other walks of life to share her vision.

Drought has diminished once healthy boughs. Supportive Christian undergrowth has been stripped away amid distrust and sterile affluence. Dialogue with other faiths and global poverty have reshaped mission. Patterns of leadership and membership have changed as adult women seek ways to live the Gospel in our time. New cultures produce new blossoms, as they live Mary Ward’s heritage in new ways. Separated branches have reunited.

When branches rub against each other, they grow into one. Leadership, collaboration, visits, retreats, shared meetings and celebrations have brought hoped for unity closer. “Jesus say Amen!”

foundation before 1809 and their filiations. The second cutting bears the date 1809 and Suppression due to Napoleon. Very soon the houses re-open, the branches of Prussia and Austria-Hungary and of Italy appear, the tree develops. To the left we see Nymphenburg and its filiats in Bavaria, in Romania and in India; to the right Rathfarnham, deriving from York shows two beautiful branches of the Irish houses, then the groups of Spain, Africa and Mauritius. From the Irish Branch come also the foundation of Australia, North America and India. The Houses which belong to Ireland are underlined with red, those of Bavaria with blue, of Prussia with black, of Austria-Hungary with orange, of Italy with green. Certain ‘fruit’ have two lines – the first line under Rome is red, to recall its English origin, the second a blue line to indicate that it at present belongs to Bavaria. The better to give you an idea of the ‘tree’, and sure that it will give you pleasure, I shall send you to Rathfarnham a photograph of it but it will not be ready until next week. If this tree has interested even journalists (the Berica is read by the Holy Father) who have been so kind as to express good wishes for the Institute, you may judge what it was for me. In seeing it and seeing the fruits of so many merits reunited on one plant I thought of the greatness of our Institute and had great difficulty in hiding my emotion. In seeing this gigantic tree, my thought and my heart were in Rathfarnham – what a misfortune if the Irish branches should detach themselves from it, to form little Institutes and retard the triumph of the cause of Mary Ward.
Jeremiah 17:8: ...like a tree by the waterside that thrusts its roots to the stream: when the heat comes it has nothing to fear, its foliage stays green; untroubled in a year of drought, it never stops bearing fruit.

Reflection:

As we begin this Mary Ward Week we reflect on the painting of the Institute Tree – a flourishing and strong tree but realistic too, with lopped branches and areas of emptiness. But what does it say to us?

Roots are vital to any plant system, and are individual to every type of plant; some have tap roots, single, strong and deeply embedded in the soil, others have spreading networks reaching far with branching systems, others a mixture of the two, but all provide access to nourishment, water and balance, and without them the plant withers.

It is the same for us – if we can develop our own strong root system taking us deep into the ground of our personal relationship with God, our following of Mary Ward and our human relationships, then we will find the nourishment and balance we need to live joyful religious lives, able to withstand the inevitable winds of change and disappointment.

One of her faithful companions said of Mary Ward:

The name Jesus was her first and last word,
the beginning and ending of all her prayers
her refuge in all dangers
and her protection from all evil.

Vita E 207

Work with great tranquillity, joy and magnanimity, for what is not done in one year can be done in another. We must await God Almighty’s time and leisure, for we must follow, not go before him.

Mary Ward

What builds and strengthens these connections, and how does each of us play her part in the union of minds and hearts that comprises the whole Institute?

Prayer of Commitment

With listening ears and hearts, with open minds, obedient feet, we journey on with Christ and choose again the pilgrim way. In new obedience to the vision we have caught, we offer time and talents, energy and love to serve the prince of peace in worship, partnership in mission and a life of hope. Lord, help us take the risk of reaching out for peace and justice in your name. Amen.

European Ecumenical Assembly “Peace with Justice”, Basel 1989
John 15:5 ... I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

**Reflection:** How the tree continued to grow nevertheless.

Where is my fundamental community? Where is my fundamental Institute community?

These questions were part of the preparation for our Province Assembly in May. Looking now at the image of the Institute Tree, they seem very relevant. The picture of the connections and communities of the worldwide Institute in 1907 set me off reflecting on our connections today - both personal and communal - and on the nature of the community that is Mary Ward’s Institute.

I found myself imagining a personal miniature ‘Institute Tree’, with its roots, trunk and branches: a bonsai! The tentative roots of my first meeting with the individuals who encouraged and welcomed me; the trunk of novitiate and formation; and in recent years, the opportunity to make deeper personal connections with the Institute in the UK, Australia and Europe. The experience of meeting members and visiting places where the Institute flourishes has been the beginning of the growth of my particular spreading ‘Institute Tree’.

To me, friendship and experiences of shared work, prayer and relaxation are the matter that makes the stuff of the wood and foliage of the Tree. These are the links that connect us from our wide reaching roots, through the trunk, under the one canopy of Mary Ward’s Institute.

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**Entrust your way**

Entrust your way and what grieves your heart to the most faithful care of him who governs heaven.

He who gives to the clouds, air and winds their way, course and path will also find a way where your feet can go.

In all ways you have a way, you never lack the means; your action is pure blessing, your way is pure light; no one can hinder what you do, your activity never has to rest, when you want to do what is beneficial for your children.

*Paul Gerhardt (1607-1676)*

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*Left to right:* Prague 1628, Pressburg 1628, Munich 1628, Rome 1621, Perugia 1624, St. Omer 1609, Liège 1617, Naples 1623, Trier 1621, Cologne 1620.
Ps 145: 15-16 ... The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season. You open your hand, satisfying the desire of every living thing.

Reflection:

I have come from neither nothingness nor chaos. I emerged in an environment more or less favourable to growth, given like a grace, and welcomed by my parents and family circle. I take a step back to reflect on all that has enabled that seed of life to grow and develop.

The time came when I was convinced that Jesus was choosing me to be with him and work with him on the Father’s plan, walking in the footsteps of Mary Ward, and with the same stars in my eyes, as hers.

I take a step back to recall this journey: the events, the people, the places, the inspiring books which brought this desire to birth in me, made it grow and led me at last to this decision. I give free rein to my innermost thoughts and free expression to my feelings.

I have been a member of the IBVM family now for 10 or 20 or 50 years, endeavouring like Mary Ward, to bring forth and develop all that is deep down in the heart of both the young people and the adults that I work with, helping them to discover the need to contribute their own talent to the building up of the world.

Prepare yourselves to undergo many difficulties; never seek to fly from that which our Saviour so willingly embraced.

Mary Ward

In our day numbers are less, yet the responsibility to live from the strength of the roots and the trunk, in the spirituality of Ignatius and the charism of Mary Ward, is still ours.

I believe in the sun, even if it does not shine.

I believe in love, even if I do not feel it.

I believe in God, even if I do not see him.

On the wall of the Warsaw Ghetto by an unknown Jew
Job 14:7 ... For there is hope for a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that its shoots will not cease.

Reflection:

The seed of the Institute, planted by God and tended by Mary Ward, became a mighty tree which bore considerable fruit, and in spite of several contrary spells of weather, it prospered.

But in 1631 it was cut to the quick by the Bull of Pope Urban VIII: it was lopped down. The Institute was declared to be “null and void”. The consequences: all the houses were abolished, the communities dissolved, the sisters sent home.....

However, thanks to several courageous women, the roots of the tree stayed healthy. The sisters lived and worked in the background of international events such as the thirty years war – they went on living their vocations alone or in small groups. So as time went on new buds of growth began to show.

This continued for almost two centuries; but with the beginning of the 19th century new storms erupted that caused further damage to the tree.

The French Revolution had left its marks especially in Europe. Dissension between the powers of the state and the Church broke out in some places and reached its peak, especially in Bavaria, in the Secularization with confiscation of church property and the dissolution of monasteries.

A solid branch of the Institute tree had been broken off, the trunk violated. At the same time new life began to prosper, e.g. in York and new growth appeared in Ireland.

I will always love, highly esteem and choose this holy Institute. And in myself and in my proceedings I will seriously endeavour to have and exercise those virtues which are proper and peculiar to this Institute, truly and solidly and perfectly. I will take it for a pattern by which to model my life and actions.

Mary Ward

What has become of me?

How have I been moulded by the closeness of Jesus and the spirituality of Mary Ward?

When I look back on the road I have travelled, what is stirring in my heart?

Surrender

You, my Lord and my God, give me all that leads me to you.

You, my Lord and my God, take away from me, all that separates me from you.

You, my Lord and my God, take me away from myself and offer me entirely to you.

Nicholas of Flue (1417-1487)
Proverbs 3:21 ... Do not let wisdom and understanding out of your sight, preserve sound judgment and discretion.

Reflection:

As I gaze at the Vicenza Institute Tree, my eyes are drawn to the trunk: that gnarled, ancient conduit of life and sustenance to the boughs. And I ponder its substance, rooted in that new way of living brought to the Church by Ignatius and Mary Ward and written in Constitutions so that future generations could draw from that same source.

As I reflect, I think of my own Institute roots. I see how my ongoing growth and development depends on my willingness to tend and feed this frail foliage by becoming daily more familiar with the nourishment that is our Constitutions. However, like the tree, the Constitutions are an organism that depends on us today for future life and growth. Since my story is but one of the many that make up our Institute story, I find comfort and strength in our togetherness as we face the contemporary challenge named in Verbum Domini 83: Every charism opens up new pathways [....] marked by the radicalism of the Gospel.

Be not changeable but remain steadfast in the way of virtue, for not she who begins well, but she who endures to the end shall be saved.

Mary Ward

Prayer for unity

God our Father,
pour out the grace of your Spirit on us anew, that we may be worthy of our calling and bear witness to your truth among all people.

Trusting in you, help us strive for the unity of all Christians and our communion in the one Church.

Missal of the Catholic Church (Germany)