The third objective—reaching out to the needy in society—needs more time and preparation to materialize as we have to identify the need and the area where we should concentrate and organize our functioning carefully. Still, in 2012 a Summer Course in spoken English was started for the outgoing students of vernacular medium municipal schools (mainly economically poor) so that they will be well-equipped to compete with the better-educated students of private schools. This is just the beginning!

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In Romania the sense of brotherhood and intercongregational cooperation is quite strong. Together we can do great things for the greater glory of God.

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Our pastoral work is much broader in our various communities. The material presented shows only the local area of Popesti Leordeni and Bucharest.

Report by Sr Patricia Rediu CJ

Vocational discernment in Romania

In 2006 was formed the Romanian Vocational Pastoral team which includes myself. Since then, every year we are organizing intercongregational trainings for animators who are working with youth and vocational youth campus or spiritual exercises.

In October 2012, I began a journey of vocational discernment in Bucharest with a group of 15 young people, called “Samuel Group” (Ignatian method proposed by Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini for young people in search of a meaning in their lives). The subject of our meeting is: “What is God’s dream for me?” The meeting provides a journey of seven months (one meeting per month) including spiritual training, prayer, discernment, individual accompaniment and personal work for everyday life in order to find God’s will in personal life, the joy of being Christian, freedom to live in truth, the desire to serve and to love God unconditionally.

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SMAAART has chosen 30th Jan as the Alumnae Day and are right now busy preparing an Exhibition depicting how this Mary Ward school has touched and shaped their lives.

Report by Sr. Mary Jude CJ

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The community was on the move in various directions. Supermarkets were raided by Angela, Blažeja and team to find the best items for the PRSC! The walls, windows and doors of the passages loudly acclaimed “Benvenuta” in all sorts of languages and everybody understood “Welcome” in her own language! Pentecost was beginning to happen! As groups started trickling in, Angela and Blażeja found their new mission in and out of the airport. Laughter therapy found many clients even in the Generalate corridors! Jet lag was soon a thing of the past as 7th April dawned. Sunday, the 7th of April saw us all assembled in the chapel for a solemn Mass. Msgr. Mark Langham of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity was our celebrant. His very inspiring sermon, tinged with subtle humour, emphasized a questioning faith as of Thomas and this was what set the tone for our deliberations. We asked many questions, found few answers and were encouraged to ask more questions!

It has been over two years since the last ERC meeting and with four of the seven Provincials newly in post a meeting was well overdue. Judit and Varvare, who had attended previous ERC’s, had issued the invitations and planned the programme. The idea of having an Alumnae Association of St. Mary’s Mulund was popping up every now and then. It gathered momentum as we were drawing up the list of invitees for the concluding function of the Jubilee year in September 2011. At this time we, the CJ, looked back to see what we had achieved in that year to spread Mary Ward’s charism, her spirit and values among our stakeholders in Mulund. We found that our teachers and students were growing in the knowledge of Mary Ward and imbibing her spirit and values. But we were unhappy that we hadn’t reached out to our ex-students of St. Mary’s Convent High School in India and abroad. They had a thrilling reunion and during the meeting that followed, SMAART (St. Mary’s Alumnae Association to Relumine Talents), Mulund was born. Within a year all 32 batches had meetings under the guidance of Sr. Mary Jude, their Moderator. At the same time they elected their representatives of the Association took shape—(1) to deepen the bond among the alumnae themselves, (2) to deepen their bond with the school and (3) to reach out to the needy in the society. Our alumnae have batch-wise meetings to deepen their bond among themselves. There was a rush of eager offers from them to help out the school through their knowhow in various fields such as personality types, stress-management (both the teachers and the students benefited from this), career talks, counseling, summer camps, health check-ups, financing poor students, coaching weaker students etc.

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European Regional Conference January 2013

The third meeting of the European Regional Conference (ERC) took place in Augsburg from the 20th – 25th January 2013, thanks to the kindness of the sisters of the Mary Ward Spirituality Centre, and Sr Angela Fries, Provincial of the Middle European Province. All seven European Provincials were present: Judit Knáb (Hungary), Pilar Urretechiaia (Spain), Letizia Galbusera (Italy), Helena Bugoslava (Slovakia), Varvara Acatrinei (Romania), Frances Orchard (England), and Angela. We were very pleased to be joined by two of the General Assistants from Rome, Elena Gatica and Elisabeth Kampe, as well as by Germana Körner (Augsburg), who came to help with the translating.

The last day was dedicated to looking at the advantages and challenges of working more collaboratively in the belief that this is what Mary Ward would expect of us as members of ‘one body’. Plans were laid for holding more frequent meetings; for twinning provinces as prayer partners and for communicating back to the members of our provinces.

Report by Sr. Frances Orchard – English Province

The photo shows (left to right) Frances, Helena, Elisabeth, Judit, Varvara, Elena, Angela, Pilar and Letizia.
The concluding mass was at 5pm in our chapel by Fr. Zollner SJ, head of the Psychology Department of the Gregorian University. The symbols of our experiences were offered at the offertory, thanking the Lord who journeyed with us, as he did with the disciples at Emmaus giving them hope.

The PRSC lunch hosted by the Via Nomentana Community gave everyone the appetite to put into practice all the inspirations received from Holy Spirit from 7th April onwards. The gorgeous table preparation loudly proclaimed the artistic talents of the community and their commitment to the well being of the universal CJ. Their generosity and hard work will always be remembered with love.

Saturday 21st April turned out to be the apt conclusion of a PRSC with a difference! Nature said it all!

We moved on to a sharing of what the LOGO meant for each one. It resulted in a deluge of amazing reflections and ideas, from listening, to empathy, to inter-religious dialogue, with special emphasis on the crescent shape and the green colour! The whole programme of the three weeks was very simply and enthusiastically shared by Jane and that put everyone at ease, knowing that we were here to experience freedom, sincerity and justice in a very “affectionate” mode with plenty of backup. On Monday the 8th of April we started with the prayer led by Elena and listened to Jane on spiritual leadership, felt inspired and geared up for action. We were also made aware of the stark reality of diminishment. We discussed in small groups as well as shared, one to one, on our responsibilities and privileges. The day ended with a review - as would happen every working day.

Our reflection on Leadership and Governance continued with inputs by Jane, followed by personal reflections, group discussions, and one to one sharing in pairs. The new consultation process for the appointment of new Provincials and Regionals was shared by those Provincials who had been through the experience so that all would be able to assess the process in preparation for a decision whether or not to approve it — and when the time came it was so approved. The mission statement and role of the General Leadership too was shared, adding to our experience of transparency in the assembly. A very fruitful day came to an end with an evening review in a reflective, prayerful atmosphere.

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The next morning saw us grappling with the complex topic of Renunciation of Property, trying to understand it from the vantage point of Ignatian poverty. Sr. Christina Kenworthy Browne led us in this session, using her great gifts of simplifying complex issues.

The afternoon session was dedicated to the all important topic of MISSION. The dance of the BURNING BUSH brought to mind all the social issues we face in our mission and the call to bring freedom and healing to our world. This was led by Prisca and Elisabeth.

Evaluation and closing session:
Prisca and Cecilia led the evaluation process based on the four questions:

What was helpful for you during these two weeks of PRSC?
What was not helpful?
Did you find anything missing?
Did anything surprise you?

Then the participants were asked to go into the garden to find something to symbolize their experience of the two weeks. Everyone shared why they chose the particular symbols, including flowers, seeds, leaves, stones, stick, buds etc.

Symbols: a bottle of water, an unusual tomato, a bunch of flowers - Mercy, Jane, Cirley

Jane Livesey ended the session by sharing with us some concluding thoughts, which we hope to bring to you in the next edition. Great gratitude was expressed especially to our translators, Maria Giovanna, Marilu, Monika CJ of the MEP and Gemma CJ.
On the evening of the penultimate day, 20th April after supper all of us gathered together in the Music room for recreation and for a thanksgiving party with the community. This was a party in which everyone, including the usually shy, sang and danced with abandon. The community were given tokens of our affection and gratitude.

Srs Cristina, Maria, Angela CJ wrapped in tokens of affection!

Students: Srs Agnesa, Anusha, Theresa, Xenia with Cristina
Srs Mansueta and Agnesa
Sr Blażeja – wrapped in tokens of love!

All Via Nomentana Community wrapped in tokens of affection!

The dance of the burning bush

Were not our hearts burning?

Mission as JPIC was introduced. Frances Orchard gave us a very powerful Powerpoint presentation to highlight our Mission while Elisabeth and Prisca brought home to us the very practical call of the GC to implement the Eco-Audit and to once again find province and region level animators to make our mission with regard to JPIC vibrant. This would indeed help us to follow the inscription on Mary Ward’s tombstone as the heart of our Mission as CJs.

Our first DAY OFF was very much appreciated and everyone found their own way of making this Sabbath holy.

Refreshed by the DAY OFF, we gathered together again in the palestra to reflect on Mission—Criteria for Discernment, focussing particularly on Culture and on Culture Shock experienced by those going on Universal Mission, inviting us to greater sensitivity to differences in cultures.

Sunday, 14th April was kept sacred for pilgrimage to Mary Ward’s Rome. There was great enthusiasm and emerging leadership in organizing the day in very informal and creative ways.
Our attention now turned to the reality of diminishment, departure, death as the statistics spoke for themselves and an in depth reflection on the implications of these facts for Formation was highlighted by Cecilia. Group discussions and one-to-one sharing followed after our own personal reflections.

The Day Of The General Audience

17th April was kept as the day of the General Audience with the Holy Father. Early morning, we left for St.Peter’s Square clutching our tickets and a few of us stealthily holding placards with the letters M A R Y W A R D on them to give a hint to the Holy Father about the canonization of Mary Ward. Everybody was delighted at having a closer glimpse of dear Francesco! The secret desire to have Mary Ward canonized has been made public in St.Peter’s Square and our hope is that St.Peter in heaven has taken it seriously and will keep nudging our Holy Father.

On 18th April we returned to financial matters once again. Gemma CJ gave us plenty of food for thought on the meaning of finance based on the values of the gospel which was followed by very realistic presentations on Solidarity fund and Per Capita contribution by Christina, our General Bursar.

A Special Evening at the Venerable English College

In the evening we left for the Venerable English College, where we were to have the celebration of the Eucharist. The Venerable English College is holy ground for anyone who follows Mary Ward. Here is a very dear slice of our history. Mary Ward and companions visited the VEC many times and stayed in a house very close to the English College. Monsignor Nick Hudson, the Rector, celebrated the Mass and also went the extra mile to unfold to us the treasures of the “Libro Rosso” (the red book) wherein we find recorded twice the name of Babthorpe, two of the brothers of Barbara Babthorpe, our second General Superior. Mgr Hudson gave us a greater understanding of the importance of the Venerable English College in our history. The VEC has produced 41 martyrs, and the two brothers of Barbara Bapthorpe, like the others, also took the oath to go back to the dangerous English Mission. Their motto was, “Be it today rather than tomorrow” - that is, the prospect of martyrdom. We were also fortunate to have Teresa and Monica IBVM sharing our common history. We were all indeed very moved by the experience and felt a special presence of Mary Ward and companions among us. After the Mass we made our way to Cave Di San Ignazio for a celebratory supper. Walking on the cobbled stones took us back to Mary Ward times and her presence always lingered with us.

In rapt attention in the chapel of the Venerable English College

The last two days of the Conference were very vital to our discernment process. The tour of Via Nomentana 250 as preparation for the discernment session regarding its future turned out to be a highlight of the programme. We felt the movement of the Spirit in our discernment through the tour, discussions and decisions. Regional Conference meetings of ERC (European Regional Conference), COIN (Conference of India and Nepal) and CRAL (Regional Conference of Latin America) also took place that day (this will be dealt with separately later).