

**BECOMING  
ONE**



**CJ GC 2022  
23 August**

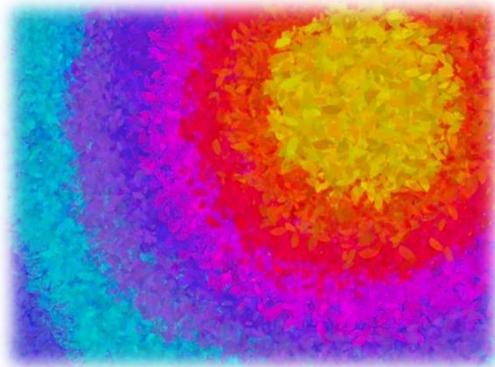
*Paint by Mary Southard*



*In silence the Paschal candle is lit*

### ***Introduction:***

Christianity is full of stories of God's call and of God's promise in the midst of turbulent stories of God's people. God's promises express God's fidelity to us as in divine time promises are fulfilled. The Mary Ward story, our congregation story, however fractured, is a story of covenant and promise. God's call to Mary Ward has taken many years to come to the fullness we are experiencing now, but we are blessed to be here at what seems to be the divine time for fulfilling God's promise. Using symbols of the river of life and of light we reflect on the creation story of Mary Ward's congregation.



*Paint by Susan Daily*

1. The source of our river begins in 1585 with the birth of Mary Ward in England, during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. It was a time when to be a Catholic was to be persecuted. She dreamed of religious life, even though there was great family and social pressure on her to marry and have a catholic family.



2. In 1609, the river grew a little when the small group of what we call the “first companions” left England and returned to St. Omer, where they opened a school for girls. At the same time, Mary was exploring ways to form the group into a religious congregation based on Ignatian spirituality and the Jesuit Constitutions.

3. A major blockage, a seeming insurmountable dam occurred in 1631 when opposition to Mary Ward grew and eventually culminated in a Papal Bull issued by Pope Urban VIII, which suppressed her Institute in very strong language, saying that it was *extirpating this pernicious weed*, and also accused her of being a heretic. Mary Ward was imprisoned in a Poor Clare convent in Anger Munich.

4. 1645 Mary’s health continued to deteriorate and on January 30<sup>th</sup>1645, she died, surrounded by a small group of faithful companions. She was buried in an Anglican churchyard, by an Anglican vicar who was described in a contemporary biography of Mary Ward as “*honest enough to be bribed*”. The river dried up somewhat with her Institute scattered with an estimated 50 members, 4 communities in England, Germany and Italy but it did not disappear completely.

5. A promising tributary appeared in 1703 when Pope Clement XI confirmed the rules of the Institute based on the rules and constitutions of the Society of Jesus. These rules maintained the original inspiration of Mary Ward. The tributary grew into a bigger river in 1749 when Pope Benedict XIV recognised the authority of the General Superior but members were still forbidden to claim Mary Ward as our founder.
6. In 1794 a major waterway began its journey when Frances Ball was born in Dublin, the youngest of 6 children. In 1803 at the age of 9 she went to school to the Bar Convent in York. Frances remained in school in York for 5 years and then returned home to be with her recently widowed mother.
7. In 1814 Frances Ball entered the Bar Convent York and spent 7 years there preparing to bring the Institute to Ireland, on the invitation of and with the complete support of the Archbishop of Dublin, Daniel Murray, who also accepted and approved the Mary Ward Constitutions brought by Teresa Ball from York.
8. In August 1821 Mother Teresa Ball, along with 2 novices, Ignatia Arthur and Baptist Therry, travelled to Dublin, and opened the first house of the Institute in Ireland a year later in 1822. From here many houses of the Institute were founded around the world. The tributaries of this waterway divided and spread throughout the world nourished by its strong beginnings in York and sustained by its connections with Institute members.





9. At the request of India, the Holy See granted a momentous Rescript in 1881: any house founded anywhere in the world by Rathfarnham, could belong to Rathfarnham provided the local bishop agreed. Mary Ward's dream of central government became a global reality. All the mission foundations, except Toronto, became provinces of the then Rathfarnham Generalate. In 1881 Toronto was granted the status of a generalate.

10. Our river became a major one when in 1877 the Institute was confirmed by the Holy See and in 1909 Mary Ward was acknowledged as its founder.

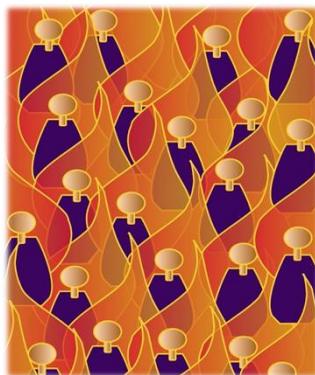
11. Over the years there have been attempts to unite the houses and branches of Mary Ward's Institute as one congregation. In 1900 members from all branches met in Rome to discuss the union of the Institute. In 1953 the Roman Union took place. By 1987 the 3 Irish foundations of Omagh, Navan and Fermoy which had remained under diocesan jurisdiction, had re-united with Rathfarnham.

12. In 2003, the reunion of North American Branch with the Irish branch took place to create the current Loreto Branch. The waterway which began in York, spread to Dublin and from there throughout the world, had become a mighty river. However, there was still one last reunion that needed to happen.

## 2022 Formal request

Instinct for oneness has always been with us and in spite of attempts to suppress our congregation it has never died. We, the members of Mary Ward's Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, have already begun this journey together with you, the members of the Congregation of Jesus, and we are now ready to take a further canonical step by inviting this body, the Congregation of Jesus General Congregation, to commit to walk with us on the journey of becoming one.

In the event of the IBVM General Congregation voting in favour of a movement towards becoming one, with the prayers of the many members who have gone before us and who longed for the union of Mary Ward's Institute over the centuries, and on behalf of all the IBVM members around the world, I come today in the light of the overwhelmingly positive discernment of IBVM members, and take a formal step towards oneness by requesting juridic fusion in due course with your branch, the Congregation of Jesus and to ask that this General Congregation approve our request.



*Paint by Susan Daily*

We invite you to continue to walk with us on the journey. May the coming together of our two branches be the fulfilment of the dream of Mary Ward and Teresa Ball, and of all the many women who have desired this oneness and may we be granted the grace to continue the journey and in **this** divine time, to experience God's fidelity to the call and dream of Mary Ward.

Jesus Say Amen.

### **Jane Responds**

Jane is presented with one of the cloths as a symbol of our river, to hold for the day we become one



*Cloth painted by Susan Daily*