

MARY WARD INTERNATIONAL NEWSLETTER



Greetings to all our readers of this MWI newsletter! We thank you for your partnership in supporting and encouraging the various IBVM missions throughout the year.

Once again Christmas is around the corner. For many of us it is a time to send out cards, shop for presents, bake cakes and puddings, and let's not forget, the beautiful decorations that put us in the warm mood of a "Happy and Merry Christmas".

However, reading the story of Jesus' birth, I am struck by the stark vulnerability in which God chose to be incarnated. His mother - an unwed mother; his birth -

born homeless under the stars; and his first years - forced to escape his homeland and become a refugee.....

As you read through the articles that have been contributed from the various IBVM ministries around the world, we hope you get a glimpse of how IBVM sisters and their colleagues continue the Incarnation story in being present to those who are often the most vulnerable and invisible to the greater society.

May the birth of Jesus "lead us from the untruth to the truth, from darkness to light, from death to immortality" (Upanishads).



*Partnership for
Development & Mission*



SOUTHERN AFRICA

Christmas time in South Africa

Christmas in South Africa occurs during our long summer holiday and is full of LIGHT. It is an important family time when our migrant workers return home from the mines. Their homecoming means that families can be together and there is celebration. Gift giving within the family is central to the celebration. Traditionally, the children got new clothes for Christmas and shoes too if possible.

Missionaries brought the tradition of the Crib, Midnight Mass and Christmas Carols to South Africa. Today Nativity Pageants and Carol Services form part of the end of year school activities. Gift giving and donations are a key part of this pre-Christmas time in schools and parishes and even in shopping malls. Groups collect *Toys for Joy* and fill *Buckets of Love* with all sorts of necessities for those less well off in our society. Parties are organised for children, the vulnerable and the elderly by inter-Church groups in the inner city. We pray that this gift giving that extends beyond our own family circle, remains at the core of our Christmas Season in this country. In this way the LOVE, JOY and LIGHT of the Christ Child comes into the lives of many.

The love, joy and light of gift giving can be seen in the 'Christmas Joy Goodie Bags'



Colourful knitted Teddy bears

Mary Ward Open Circle (MWOC) associates Christmas joy goodie bags for 'Under His Wings', Western Cape, South Africa

When winter comes to an end and summer begins to edge her way in, our thoughts turn to Christmas, and of giving children of *Under His Wings* some joy by organising a 'Christmas Joy Goodie Bag'. Under His Wings is an outreach project of MWOC and Loreto Primary, led by Pearl Strydom, a local woman who started a feeding scheme a few years ago for the poorest children in her neighbourhood. Each day she provides breakfast and lunch for over 400 children from the kitchen of her own small home. She has also created afternoon space for study time in her home to around 60 youngsters.

At Christmas time, Loreto School Strand, St Peter's Parish and the MWOC Associates together fill 400 'Goodie Bags' with items such as tooth brushes, soap and face cloths, sweets and biscuits. A few years ago we came up with the bright idea of knitting teddies to add to the gifts for each child under 5 years. With generous donations of wool, ribbons and stuffing the knitters got their needles going, and the *Teddy Bear Project* came into being. It proved a great success. We are now busy knitting teddies for the 2015 Christmas Goodie Bags.



Preparing the 'Goodie Bags'

The gifts, with hot dogs and cold drinks, will be given to the children in the second week of December when they have school holidays. Pearl, the outreach mother, says that the thoughts and gifts of strangers give the children much happiness.

MERRY CHRISTMAS

EASTERN AFRICA

St Teresa's Hostels

Hope you are well.

We are happy to announce the completion of the St Teresa's Hostels Phase one. The project has been a great success. It has been received well by the school community. It has been a challenge getting the funds, but we are grateful to the following who made the project a success financially:

- Loreto Institute Eastern Africa province
- Loreto schools in Eastern African Province
- Fundacio'n Mary Ward in Spain and the Spanish province
- Mary Ward International Australia
- The Kiltegan Fathers
- Mr. Michael "through" Maria O'Reilly from St Stephens Green - Ireland



We are also grateful to the team of professionals who worked so hard and under very challenging condition to see the hostels come to completion.

The hostels can accommodate 400 girls. We are thankful that finally some of our students can have a safe place to study and also be assured of meals and security. The hostels also have two self-contained single rooms that can be used by volunteers who may come to work in our schools. There is also one single bedroomed house for the school matron in the same hostels. May God help all those who have made this dream come true. We pray that now we can get money to complete Phase two.

Abundant Life Centre

Sr. Ephigenia has been working hard to provide a safe and secure place where girls can learn about FGM and experience an alternative Rite of Passage. Despite financial challenges, the good news is that the construction of the Abundant Life Centre is almost complete.



Trust Fund

We have also now managed to raise the funds for the Education Trust Fund to Ksh 5 Million Kenya shillings using fundraising and bank interest. This means that, from next year, the funds can be used for education bursary depending on the decisions made by the provincial and her council. We also hope to continue raising funds for it to realize a Ksh 10 Million base which would give us a higher profit to be able to support more needy children in schools.

Nyakato Primary School/Igoma Land

The needs assessment is in progress and a draft proposal is already done so that fundraising can start soon.

Lunch/Feeding Program

This is a project that has been supporting the starving children of St. Teresa's Secondary and Primary School for over 3 years now.

The Kiltegan Fathers have been very supportive of this. We thank them for their dedication to it. This year we also got support from Mary Ward Mission Fund which will be spent next year on children identified by the Sisters working in the school.

AUSTRALIA & SOUTH EAST ASIA

Loreto Pre-Primary School in Timor-Leste

An achievement that is close to our hearts is the realisation of a dream by our Loreto Sisters in Timor-Leste! After years of careful planning, the first Loreto Pre-Primary School was opened in June in temporary facilities in the remote area of Gari-uai.

In another leap forward, ground was broken in October for the permanent Pre-Primary School buildings and the new Community Centre.



Loreto Pre-Primary School

Currently the interim Loreto Pre-Primary School offers two classes, each with 24 students, and a play-group of 16 for the younger children.

The local people are excited about the opening of the Community Centre after having showed a strong interest in learning more about information technology, literacy, music and sewing. This centre will provide a space where ideas can be shared and support given.



Students enjoying class activities

In 2011, the Loreto Sisters who initially moved to Timor-Leste nine years ago, were invited by the local community and the Bishop to help provide quality Catholic education emphasising the values of freedom, justice, sincerity, verity and joy.

MWIA Executive Officer, Kim Nass, visited Gari-uai in November last year and said, "it is truly exciting to see the fruition of these dreams come to life and new educational opportunities offered for the first time in this isolated area."

Brief History of Timor-Leste:

Timor-Leste endured 24 years of Indonesian occupation which left most of the country's infrastructure, including housing, irrigation, schools and almost the entire electricity grid destroyed.

The new nation of Timor-Leste emerged in 2002 as the world's first sovereign nation born in the 21st Century.

A note of Christmas Cheer!

This year has seen wonderful achievements by our Sisters around the world. MWIA is committed to our mission, supporting development works of the Loreto Sisters and their colleagues to create sustainable change.

As the year draws to a close we offer our sincere gratitude for the support of all our Mary Ward International partners and friends around the world.

We wish everyone a safe and joyous Christmas!

Merry Christmas



CANADA

How is God inviting us, within our Institute reality, to live prophetic discipleship in the 21st century?" Reality in our Province is continuous diminishment of capacity to engage in active ministry. Mission is "the heart of who we are" (C 2.1) so we know that our way forward must be "collaborating with others ... to ... become companions in mission". (C 2.6)

In Becoming Neighbours, a Joint Apostolic Ministry, we collaborate with 19 Congregations in ministry to immigrants and refugees. Each contributes financially, according to means, to support Staff who carry out the work. The Provincial sits on the Board of Directors and Sisters on the Advisory Committee. Able members are mentors accompanying individuals and families as they navigate the complex health and educational systems as well as social services and the process to attain citizenship. Others are valued prayer partners.



Sr. Josepha Brown with some refugees

JAM enables us to remain engaged in our traditional ministry to Refugees. Otherwise, we could not continue "seeing their faces and listening to their stories" as Pope Frances calls us to do.

The new Loretto Fund for Newcomers within the Angel Foundation is collaboration with the Catholic School Board whose Staff administers the fund providing nutritional, social and emergency support to students whose families live below the poverty line. We coordinate Mary Ward, Loretto Abbey, Loretto College and Mother Teresa High School students who work together to enhance the fund ... \$80,000 in the first three years! Sisters no longer teach in schools or work for the Board but Loretto will continue to have a presence through the Loretto Fund in the Angel Foundation in cooperation with the schools which are our legacy.

These ministries address the UN Sustainable Development Goal promises: ensure humane treatment of migrants and eliminate extreme poverty by 2030.



Angel Foundation

Holy Child of Bethlehem

Holy Child of Bethlehem,
whose parents found no room in the inn;
we pray for all who are homeless.

Holy Child of Bethlehem,
born in a stable;
we pray for all who are living in poverty.

Holy Child of Bethlehem, rejected stranger;
we pray for all who are lost and alone,
all who cry for loved ones.

Holy Child of Bethlehem,
whom Herod sought to kill;
we pray for all who live with danger,
all who are persecuted.

Holy Child of Bethlehem,
a refugee in Egypt;
we pray for all who are far from their homes.

Holy Child of Bethlehem,
in you the Eternal was pleased to dwell,
help us, we pray, to see the divine image in people
everywhere.

David Blanchflower



ENGLAND

The Living Heritage Centre

On 22 October 2015 The Living Heritage centre was officially opened by Alex Polizzi, a Television presenter and member of the Forte family and a past student of St Mary's School Ascot. Alex was very proud to have been asked to perform the official opening of the new Living Heritage Centre at the Bar Convent in York.

Sister Anne McEvoy, IBVM Province Leader attended the opening and had this to say: *"What I especially appreciate are the Painted Life pictures which are beautifully displayed on the grand staircase. On the upper floor, facing the paintings, there is an interactive screen where one can bring up any of the paintings and find an explanation of that particular picture. There was also a wonderful opportunity to engage, interactively, with examples from around the world of present day mission."*



The Painted Life

Sleep Out

It is two weeks since our sleep out on the pavement of Duke of York Square Chelsea. The money raised by sponsorship means that churches in West London will be able to open two shelters every night from 2nd Nov to 3rd April bringing 70 to 100 refugees and other homeless people off the dangerous lonely streets of London to somewhere warm and welcoming. They will have a hot evening meal, a clean bed and breakfast - and some companionship.

Nine people from Allen Hall - staff and students - took part in this event along with at least two hundred and seventy others. We slept out so that others may not have to. May the Lord bless all those on the periphery of our society.

Annual Baby Memorial Service

As a Chaplain, on a multi faith team at a South Manchester Hospital, I have the privilege of visiting the Maternity Unit. I often share in the joy of a family celebrating the birth of a healthy child. Sometimes, however I am alongside anxious parents watching

their baby being cared for in the Neo Natal Unit. At other times, I am called to be with parents who are experiencing deep sadness and distress as they suffer the loss of their special baby. This is a sacred time of being with them in their grief. A simple, but very beautiful service of Naming and Blessing can follow, recognising the short life of the baby, so precious in the eyes of the parents and in God's eyes.

Each year all those who have lost babies are invited to a Multi Faith Service in the local Catholic Church. Each family is given a candle. They write the name of their baby on it and place the lighted candle at the front of the altar. The name of each baby is read out during the Service, a poignant moment for the parents when they hear the name of their child.

As we prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ we remember all babies born at this time. We pray for their families, those who bring them into the world and those who care for them.

ENGLAND

Wassailing, A Christmas tradition in England

In the Middle Ages the wassail was a reciprocal exchange between the feudal lords and their peasants as a form of recipient-initiated charitable giving, to be distinguished from begging. This point is made in the popular Christmas song **'Here We Come A Wassailing'**, when the wassailers inform the lord of the house that **'we are not daily beggars that beg from door to door, but we are friendly neighbours whom you have seen before.'**

The lord of the manor would give food and drink to the peasants in exchange for their blessing and goodwill as in the words of the song:

Wassailing is the background against which an English carol such as **'We wish you a Merry Christmas'** dating back to the sixteenth century, may be understood. This carol lies in the English tradition where wealthy people of the community gave Christmas treats to the carollers on Christmas Eve such as 'figgy pudding'.



'Love and joy come to you, And to you your wassail too; And God bless you and send you a Happy New Year'.

IRELAND

Rumbek

On a recent visit to Rumbek, it was wonderful to see the first phase of construction in the Primary school coming to completion. Eight classrooms and four toilet blocks are now completed. The students and teachers have moved in. There are 45 students in each class. Two P1 classes will continue class under the trees. At present there are 493 students, 221 are girls and 272 are boys. Our heartfelt thanks to our schools, the German government, Misean Cara and individual donors who have generously contributed to the new building.



Two of the new classrooms

Construction of a new dormitory block for the Secondary school is well underway and should be finished in time for the new school year in 2016. It will allow for a maximum of 224 boarders.



New dormitory under construction

The Secondary school girls are very familiar with Mary Ward's hope that "women in time to come will do great things". This saying is an inspiration to them. Their experience in Loreto is changing their lives, giving them a voice and hope for a better future.

Christmas Traditions in Ireland



Candle in the Window

On Christmas Eve, a lighted candle was placed in the front window of the house. It was customary for the youngest child in the house to light the large red candle. The candle was a symbol of welcome to Joseph and Mary as they travelled looking for shelter. It was also a welcome sign for anyone travelling the roads and in need of shelter. While not as common in Ireland now, there are still families who continue to light their candle.

As we light a candle this Christmas, may Christ find a welcome in our hearts and homes and may He bless us with His peace.

Happy Christmas and New Year from the Irish province.

Beannachtaí na Nollag ó MWI Éirinn.

MWI Ireland has moved office recently. Our new contact details are:

Mary Ward International Ireland,
Loreto,
Springfield Park,
Foxrock,
Dublin 18
D18Y044
Ph: 012894249

MAURITIUS

Hi everyone,

In 2015 we had the chance to start new projects.

We would like to introduce our new website:
www.loreto.mu

Please just come and say hello to the Mauritian Web Province.



Volunteers

We are still working on the volunteers' actions of MWI. We met the A level students of our seven colleges. The aim is to raise awareness of Loreto ministries in the province as well as world-wide and to promote a volunteer program of our school leavers next year so that they can assist in ministries in the province or join the alumnae association. We had a good response and more than one hundred girls showed their interest to participate in the program which will start during a weekend at the beginning of January next year. We really hope that their enthusiasm will remain high after their final exams. We are working on the program and are seeking ways where volunteerism can be at the heart of the young people's mind. We'll give them the possibility to be accompanied during the year in order to reread their experience.

Christmas in Mauritius

In Mauritius, Christmas is a national celebration where people of every faith, in their own way, celebrate with their families.

At the end of November each year, one of our IBVM Sisters provides advent sessions to the general public in order to prepare their inner self for Christmas and to understand the true meaning of this feast.

Besides the spiritual preparation, families have a tradition at the beginning of December to clean their houses, to buy gifts for every member of the family and friends. Almost every family has their own Christmas tree (natural or artificial) where electric lights, other colored decorations and 'the nativity scene' are placed by the family members. On Christmas' eve there is a family gathering and the'

baby Jesus figure' is put on the manger near the Christmas tree after the Celebration of Eucharist. It is a time of joy and love, a time to exchange gifts.

In Mauritius it's a law that all workers receive an additional one month's salary before Christmas time. Thus, we can feel the generosity of the Mauritians when some of them share gifts and a Christmas lunch to those in need, those who are lonely, especially the elderly living in 'homes' and the children in deprived areas. Nature also gives us its best fruits and flowers during this period (litchis, mangoes, flame tree flowers...). This gives a boost to the festive period in all our hearts.



PERU

Rimaq Warmi (Word of Woman)

IBVM Perú is a member of the Kawsay Network, an organisation whose members belong to religious congregations: it works to build a society free from human trafficking, to promote human dignity, justice and solidarity among people. September in Perú is especially dedicated to the struggle against trafficking; the Kawsay network held a workshop Forming Networks for a Society without Trafficking from 08 to 10 September with the aim of "raising awareness, building capacity and commitment among the bishops, priests and religious in relation to human trafficking."



On the 25 of September in the Palacio de la Juventud in Los Olivos, a vigil against Human trafficking was held. The IBVM participants were the following: Sisters Mercedes Ocharan and Mary Elizabeth Kirke alongside our communications staff members, José y Viviana. We all took an active part as we sought to inform the passers-by about human trafficking; the majority of them really had no knowledge at all about the issue.



The vigil began with catchy music and time was also given to quiet candlelit reflection.

The Day of the Girl Child was celebrated with much joy in all the communities of IBVM PERÚ. For a week in October free health campaigns were available to girls

in the parish medical centres of Lampa de Oro and Jicamarca. In the sewing workshop there was a treat for the participants and their daughters. Sisters Anne and Alicia, along with Viviana and José held a big celebration in Jicamarca, in which they underlined the importance of this special day for the Girl Child.



Phrases such as the following were to be heard: "Girls are important, too. Have a good day." "To be a girl is a blessing from God" and "Let's make sure that the girls are not held back". In other IBVM communities continuous prayer was held for all the girls of Peru and of the world.

On Christmas Eve the children enact a traditional dance-drama before the Crib to honour el Niño Jesús.



SOUTH ASIA

The Mission at Lolay

Our little village school in Lolay, Darjeeling district was opened in 1991 on the request of Bishop Eric Benjamim. It was a time of political upheaval in the Hills; Lolay was the seat of many killings, and fear gripped the simple poor people. Their faith needed to be nurtured and the Loreto pioneer Sisters, Antoinette Rodrigues, Barbara Rudum, Regina Thami, Mary de Souza and five candidates with the encouragement and support of Sr. Monica Affonso, the provincial climbed the hill with bag and baggage on 4th February 1991.

There were a few government schools in the locality but by February 15th classes started in the convent basement with 120 students. Soon the rooms were not enough and a school building had to be constructed. Sr. Noni said that '*Lolay is the seed of India's new day*'.

At that time it was usual for children to drop out of school after a few years and early marriages were the order of the day. In true Loreto tradition the children were given an all round education and each child felt special and priceless. Now many not only finish Primary school but several have reached college while others are taking professional training and the peoples' lives are changing.



However, farms are small and crops depend on the weather so many remain poor and the midday meal is still necessary as little feet trudge up or down the Hill hungry. Over the years a Sister has worked with the women, teaching them their rights and helping them to improve their living conditions. Loreto has also been instrumental in piping water from the mountain source.

There is also a dispensary which cares for the sick and

with the assistance of the Paramedic, pre and post natal care has improved tremendously. In short "Women in time to come will do much" has become a living reality in Lolay.



★
WE
wish
YOU A
Merry
CHRISTMAS
★

SPAIN

Fundación Mary Ward: Awareness against trafficking in our schools

As we told you in the last edition of this bulletin, Fundación Mary Ward works very actively in Spain in the area of Education for a Global Citizenship within the Loreto Schools.

For this year we have a new solidarity project, and this time we are working on a new approach: the relation between what we do, what we buy and consume and the situation of millions of people who are treated as slaves in their day to day lives. So, during 2015-2016, we are working on combatting Trafficking: not only for sexual exploitation but also labour and child exploitation.



We are aware that this is a difficult topic to discuss with children, especially with the smaller ones. That's why we have two different approaches: one for the older students and another one for 3 to 6 year olds, as you can see in these two posters. In the project we tackle the consequences of our actions in the rest of the world, and we point out the right of everyone to have a decent life.

This initiative is directly related with the project we are supporting in Albania: intervention with women in rural areas. Because of a lack of education and job opportunities, women are poor and are living in difficult situations. The objectives of this project are:

- To offer legal, social and economic support to 700 women in order to help them to generate their own earning.
- To prevent the possibility of women being victims of trafficking.



In this sense, everything we do this year will be related to trafficking. For example, in October our **Solidarity Race** was against Trafficking, with more than 1000 people from the IBVM El Soto school taking part.

During the year we promoted other activities eg. Exhibitions, documentaries and round table discussions.

Finally, every year we organise the visit of somebody from Mary Ward International working on the ground to explain the reality of the projects directly to the Spanish students. This way, we create a link between them and the people all around the world.



UNITED STATES

Mary Ward's charism is alive and well in our United States. Our Irish Loreto Sisters in Arizona said "Yes," 60 years ago when they settled in Phoenix, Arizona. While time has certainly marched on, the needs continue to be present there and at our Mary Ward Center ministry in Chicago, Illinois.

Our Phoenix, Arizona IBVM are part of the SS Simon and Jude Parish and School but they go beyond the walls of those buildings with a ministry that includes IBVM Associates. Because Arizona shares a border with Mexico, undocumented people have entered in greater numbers. Many do not survive crossing the desert. Those that do, have found it difficult to remain in this country. For many years, IBVM Sisters and others went to help with burials of the unclaimed dead, offering prayers of support. Today, we have IBVM Associates, affiliated with The Kino Border Initiative, who are advocates to form policies affecting the reality of migration and the U.S.-Mexico border.

As immigrants continue to enter our country, the need to offer services, especially education and prayer will continue for many years.



Loreto sisters, including Sisters Augustine Dempsey, Mary Roche, Christine Gilsenan, Gabrielle Marry, Teresita Ryan and Elizabeth Carey pictured Oct. 1, have met a variety of pastoral needs in the Diocese of Phoenix for 60 years.

(photo by permission: Ambria Hammel/Catholic Sun, Phoenix, Arizona)

Our Mary Ward Center ministry in Chicago, teaching English to Hispanic women and men, also thrives in part because the state of Illinois has the third largest population of immigrants. Our Sisters and staff also offer the *Mujeres de Luz*, (Women of Light) group where women are welcome to share their experiences. They are fully engaged, empowered and lead in prayerful awareness to understand their role as women and discover their faith, gifts and spirituality.

These are the challenges of our times. We will continue to say, "Yes!"

In our midst is our loving God. We wish each of you the blessings and love of Christmas as we celebrate the miracle of Christ's birth.



The Joy
of CHRISTMAS

CELEBRATE THE SEASON

MARY WARD INTERNATIONAL



IBVM - LORET(T)O AROUND THE WORLD



The office of Mary Ward International supports IBVM sisters and their co-workers in many ministries throughout the world. For more information go to the www.ibvm.org website and click on the link to province contact details.

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Southern Africa: Marian Moriarity IBVM & Delmence Prevost
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Mary Ward International apologies for any inconvenience caused if you have received this publication twice.

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