“To refer all to God”
Mary Ward

Mary Ward Week
2017

Called to “something different”
Mary Ward

A woman called to “something different”

Introduction

From the Painted Life (No. 21): In London in 1609, when Mary had completed her meditation, it seemed she had not done it with sufficient fervour. To remedy this as she was getting dressed, she determined to help a noble person join a religious Order by providing her with the required dowry. While she was combing her hair in the mirror, she fell into a trance; she lost the use of her senses and could not move. She clearly understood that it was not God’s Will for her to enter an austere Order; rather that she was “called to a much greater excellent state that would grant incomparable Glory to God. For a long time, all she could hear was the word Glory”.

This experience was for Mary Ward a “new call” which gave a “new personal direction” to her life and she was shown the objective of her mission. “I knew clearly and with unspeakable certainty that I was called to “something different” which would grant greater Glory to God” (Mary Ward).

From that moment, all her plans faded and she placed all the initiatives concerning her life in God’s hands. That is when the mission of her Institute began. She had previously considered it as her own thing, she thought she had to seek it with “her own strength”; now, she had to let Him guide her, but not without ceasing to do things since she was “a woman in an active search”. She was active in the acceptance, the execution and the suffering of carrying forward that “something different” for the Glory of God.

(cf Sister Immolata Wetter)

That “something different” involved a change in the life of Mary Ward and her companions, in her way of living as a female Religious, in her way of serving the Church, in an active life rather than a cloistered one. It represented a radical change both in the way of looking at women and the way of educating the women of her time. It was also a change in her spiritual formation, now increasingly based on discernment and the capacity to choose and decide.
INTRODUCTION

23 January: Called to “something different” to give more Glory to God
Yamilet Veas CJ, Macarena Vera and David Contreras, Friends of Mary Ward, Chile

24 January: Called to “something different” in following Jesus
Carmen Hormaechea Goyoaga IBVM, Spain

25 January: Called to “something different” in daily life
Agnesa Jenčíková CJ, Slovakia

26 January: Called to “something different” in today’s peripheries
Mercedes Vargas Castro, laywoman from IBVM, Peru

27 January: Called to “something different” in communion with the Friends of Mary Ward
Mónica Cojan CJ, Romania, missioned in Cuba

28 January: Called to “something different” in commitment to JPIC
Christa Parra IBVM, USA

29 January: Called to “something different” in the prophecy of the Kingdom
Verani Ribeiro da Silva CJ, Brazil

30 January: Called to do “something different” in the Universal Mission
Margaret Finlay IBVM and Jennifer Healey, laywoman from IBVM Australia

GENERAL COORDINATION

Miroslava Santillán IBVM, Peru
Soledad Albisu CJ, Argentina

SCULPTURE OF MARY WARD: Meliesa Judge
Liquid Metal Studios
Australia 2005

It also involved a change in the concept of leadership of a Congregation, organizing itself in an autonomous manner at the service of the Pope and the Church for universal mission. These changes caused resistance, incomprehension and even persecution. Today, that “something different” is still a call to the daughters and friends of Mary Ward and all her apostolic missionaries.

Throughout this week, we invite you to pray together with Mary Ward, with the help of texts and reflections prepared by sisters and friends of Mary Ward from different provinces and regions of the IBVM and the CJ. Once again, we want to feel the commitment of what it means “Never to do alone what we can do better together”.

As we look at Mary Ward the pilgrim and our mission in today’s world, let us be challenged to feel and taste this grace and to be called by it:

To what does that call to “something different” invite each of us?
As a preliminary preparation, we invite you to enter into a contemplative exercise based on the Word of God that may allow us to incarnate that call from Mary Ward in today’s world.

FINAL PRAYER FOR EACH DAY

O Parent of Parents and Friend of Friends
You led Mary Ward into a new way of being,
in companionship with your Son at the service of the mission.
As women and men striving to live the Just Soul virtues
of Freedom, Justice and Sincerity,
we ask You to teach us how You want us to better fulfil our mission
in an ever-changing and broken world
to which we desire to be sent in Your name.
As always, we make our prayer in the name of Jesus,
Your Son and our companion on the journey. Amen
Venerable Mary Ward, pray for us and give us your spirit.
Contemplation: Ezekiel 37:1-14

“The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he led me out in the spirit of the LORD and set me in the centre of the plain, which was now filled with bones. He made me walk among them in every direction so that I saw how many they were on the surface of the plain. How dry they were! He asked me: ‘Son of man, can these bones come to life’?

We contemplate our everyday world in its context of pain and aridity and as we contemplate, we observe the consequences of systems that produce and support structures of marginalization and impoverishment. We let the Lord guide us outside our own comfort zones and lead us to areas and places unknown to us and there, be shown those bones that surround our everyday life. Let us allow Him to point out that dryness, those places of pain and suffering of our brothers and sisters, men and women, boys and girls who are impoverished and victimized, and also of the devastation of Mother Earth. Let Him touch our hearts, our familiar situations and unsettle us. Let us allow the Lord’s question to linger and resonate within us: “Can these bones come to life?”

“Lord GOD,” I answered, “you alone know that.” Then he said to me: “Prophesy over these bones, and say to them: Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: See! I will bring spirit into you, that you may come to life. I will put sinews upon you, make flesh grow over you, cover you with skin, and put spirit in you so that you may come to life and know that I am the LORD.

Let us get in touch with the feelings emerging in us and allow this reality of pain to make us find an answer. What is the movement of the Spirit, the Ruah, within in us? What answer does it invite us to give? What invitation to prophesy about this reality? What commitment and proclamation? It is the Lord who brings new life, and the Ruah, the breath of life, flutters in the waters of history and reality. From our freedom, let us allow that divine breath to unsettle us, take us out of our familiar comfort zones. Let us allow it to move us and lead us wherever there is a greater need, a greater suffering.

IBVM Constitution 3.19 “Fundamental to our way of life is our relationship with the entire body of the institute dispersed across the world. We are conscious that wherever each member is, the whole institute is present. The particular community to which we belong even if circumstances require us to live separately is the concrete and privileged expression of this world-wide community”.

CJ Complementary Norm 7.14a “All members of the Congregatio Jesu, although they live in communities in various places and are reckoned as members of a province or region, nevertheless belong directly and primarily to the apostolic body of the whole Congregatio Jesu”.

Questions for reflection
Dear God, creator of women in your own image, born of a woman in the midst of a world half women, carried by women to mission fields around the globe, made known by women to all the children of the earth, listen to our prayer.

Give us the courage to speak out, the faith to believe in you beyond all systems and institutions, that your face on earth may be seen in all its beauty.
May we be Mary Ward women for our times, attentive, humble and willing to discern the “something different” that is needed for the world now. We pray this in Jesus’ name. Amen [Joan Chittister]

Closing Prayer from the Introduction:

“O Parent of Parents...”
Called to do “something different” in the Universal Mission

Mt 28:16-20 What the followers of Jesus must do

“Jesus’ eleven disciples went to a mountain in Galilee, where Jesus had told them to meet him. They saw him and they worshipped him, but some of them doubted. Jesus said to them: ‘I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth! Go to the people of all nations and make them my disciples, baptising them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teach them everything I have told you. I will be with you always, even to the end of time’.”

Antiphon: “I am with you always until the end of time”

God speaks to each of us as he makes us,
Then walks with us silently out of the night

These are the words we dimly hear:
You, sent out beyond your recall,
Go to the limits of your longing.

Embody me.
Flare up like flame

And make big shadows I can move in.
Let everything happen to you: beauty and terror.
Just keep going. No feeling is final.

Don’t let yourself lose me.
Nearby is the country they call life.

You will know it by its seriousness.
Give me your hand.

Antiphon: “I am with you always until the end of time”

(Rainer Maria Rilke)

I prophesied as I had been told, and even as I was prophesying I heard a noise; it was a rattling as the bones came together, bone joining bone. I saw the sinews and the flesh come upon them, and the skin cover them, but there was no spirit in them. Then he said to me: “Prophesy to the spirit, prophesy, son of man, and say to the spirit: Thus says the Lord GOD: From the four winds come, O spirit, and breathe into these slain that they may come to life.” I prophesied as he told me, and the spirit came into them; they came alive and stood upright, a vast army.

On St. Athanasius Day, Mary Ward felt called to “something different”, which implied leaving the place where she had felt settled. Without really knowing what that “something different” consisted of, she set out, restarted her journey and sought what God dreamed for her in the construction of his Kingdom. We may ask ourselves what this “something different” means for us today. We need to make real this call, this invitation, this exhortation. Let the flesh and nerves develop and commit to bring full life to this dry and painful reality that so many experience. This “something different” needs to be incarnated in the reality of our daily lives.

‘I will put my spirit in you that you may live, and I will settle you upon your land; thus you shall know that I am the LORD. I have promised, and I will do it’, says the LORD.

We trust in God’s presence in our midst and in the world. We are companions of Jesus who came to us and became one of us. We know we are moved by the Ruah that inspires and supports us. Let us ask Mary Ward to help us to set out on this search and let us answer the call to “something different”.
Called to “something different” to give more Glory to God

Genesis 1:26 “Then God said: ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness…’ “

While Mary Ward was combing her hair in the mirror, a very natural and daily action, she saw the Glory of God as the goal of that “something different” to which God was calling her. The painting shows Mary Ward’s face reflected in the mirror. This detail could suggest she was not focused on herself; in fact, she was thinking about how she could help another woman. It seems that that “something different” bears the seal of everyday life and a movement towards others. Not self-centred on a personal or institutional basis, rather in a constant going out towards the fertile everyday life in existential peripheries, in an attitude of acceptance of difference. Let us be activists in the culture of encounter; Samaritans who stop and act.

God created us for His Glory (Is 43:7). Throughout our entire life we are invited to experience ourselves, to recognize ourselves as creatures, sons and daughters, lovingly woven from the maternal womb, in the image and likeness of God the Father-Mother (Ps. 139). We are the clay pots containing His Glory (2 Cor 4:7). St Irenaeus affirms that God’s Glory consists in a human being fully alive, with the life of the human being representing God’s vision. On the other hand, Pope Francis states that “Only those who lower themselves may understand God’s Glory”.

Perhaps, in order to live that “something different” today, which will give greater Glory to God, “we need to return to Nazareth...to the incarnation, to the unprecedented offers of the Spirit to our fragility, needing the company of individuals like Joseph and Mary, capable of long-term commitments and

Towards the other, looking with the same compassion and honesty that Jesus had: “looking at him with love”.

Our charism becomes a prophecy of the Kingdom when love makes us set our gaze on the other, fostering the “encounter of cultures” which leads us towards building the Kingdom. Let us have only one desire: wherever we may find the charism of Mary Ward in the world, be it through religious or laity, may it convey the gaze of Jesus who loves us... God’s Kingdom is LOVE and JUSTICE!

Contemplate a small seed, feel it in your hands and then try to express what it suggests about the prophecy of God’s Kingdom

In a society where the powerful are the leaders and the weak are “nobodies”, how can we be prophets of the Kingdom in the midst of today’s paradoxes?

Questions for reflection

Closing Prayer from the Introduction:

“O Parent of Parents...”
Called to “something different” in the prophecy of the Kingdom

Mk 10:21 “Jesus, looking at him, loved him.”
Mary Ward: “This is the truth, do what needs to be done.”

Jesus begins His mission by announcing the Kingdom. One thing makes us pause. It is Jesus’ question: What is the Kingdom? Jesus does not say what it is; instead He gives us example of what He means.

The Kingdom is the yeast in the dough (Mt 13:33), it is like the seed that sprouts (Mt 13:31) or like a treasure hidden in the field that leads us to leave everything when we find it (Mt 13:44). In the Gospels, the Kingdom is especially revealed through gestures of compassion and empathy performed by Jesus. He puts Himself in the place of the other; He feels the others’ pain and anguish. The Kingdom is in our attitude towards each person, the watchful eye, or the hands that reach out; it is not limited to the work we do, but it happens, when our presence makes a difference wherever we are.

Mary Ward tells us we must be whole-hearted in doing the things we have determined to do. Therefore, more than the outcome, what matters is the footprints we leave along the way. A charism does not only consist in works; it is especially seen in our relationships … in an encounter that leaves a mark, a loving gaze, hands that reach out, in our friendships. Jesus’ ideal is to share while transforming difficulties, failures, persecutions into signs of the Kingdom where the gaze we turn on our neighbour allows only LOVE to remain.

Following Jesus’ example, Pope Francis calls us to be a Church which goes forth. Being on our way out represents an attitude of search. Going out today hopes that overcome banishment… We need to go out to the shores of Lake Galilee, let the nets of our toils dry out in the sun and listen calmly to the one coming forth with a new Word, to the otherness that opens the self-sufficiency of our discourse and the protection of our institutions, relations and tasks empty of substantive contents… We will benefit from stopping at the Bethany of friends, amidst the harshness of commitments, where fatigue and burdens meet limitations in a reconciled manner and where we are strengthened by the abundance of encounters and perfumes, words and shared meals… We need to return to Jerusalem, where a small group of fragile men and women are transformed by the power of the Spirit into creators of a future so small that paradoxically they will not manage to detain it…” (Gonzáles Buelta, SJ)

Questions for reflection

Closing Prayer from the Introduction:

“O Parent of Parents…”
Called to “something different” in following Jesus

“Divine love is like a fire which will not let itself be shut up for it is impossible to love God and not to labour to extend his honour”. (Mary Ward)

Lk 5:28; Mt 4:20 “And leaving everything they followed Him”

The call to follow Jesus continues to challenge today all those who have fallen in love with Him and His Project, His announcement of Love, Justice and Mercy.

Today more than ever, in the midst of the world in which we live, we are called to leave our securities to go toward new existential frontiers, as Pope Francis insistently invites us, so that the following of Jesus we want to experience and transmit is faithful to that “something different” to which Mary Ward felt called.

That “something different” in following Jesus will lead us to the favourites of the Kingdom, the poor, the marginalized, the persecuted, the migrants, etc., in imitation of Jesus. Let us pray for this call to be strongly rooted in our hearts so that it may become flesh in our lives.

Mt 5:10-12 “Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of the Kingdom of heaven”

As we look at the Blessed Virgin, the first follower of Christ, we ask her to help us experience this “something different” with courage and to place us close to her Son Jesus together with so many of our sisters and brothers who need His love.

Our Ignatian way of proceeding is “something different” we offer our beautiful and wounded world. For God’s greater glory we respond to Jesus’ question with a brave, “yes!”

How is God calling me to love today?
Who are the most vulnerable people in my life?
How do we relate to one another?
How involved am I in JPIC at a local and global level?

Questions for reflection
Thank you for the gift of this day to receive and give your love.
Grant me courage and grace to be faithful to my call as a contemplative in action.
May my prayers and actions help our international community especially our JPIC ministries, “bring those forced to live in poverty to the center of our life and ministry and go where the need is greatest” Amen. (IBVM GC 14 calls)

Closing Prayer from the Introduction:

“O Parent of Parents…”
Called to “something different” in commitment to JPIC

Jn 21:15-17  “When they had eaten, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me more than these others do?’ He answered, ‘Yes, Lord, you know I love you.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed my lambs.’ A second time he said to him, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me?’ He replied, ‘Yes, Lord, you know I love you.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Look after my sheep.’ Then he said to him a third time, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me?’ Peter was hurt that he asked him a third time, ‘Do you love me?’ and said, ‘Lord, you know everything; you know I love you.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed my sheep’.”

Jesus is very clear in his conversation with Peter. Love requires action. Through our worldwide commitment to justice, peace, and integrity of creation, we strive to “feed and tend” God’s people. Some of our ministries focus on effecting systemic change such as our work at the United Nations and Mary Ward International. Some of our ministries include direct service such as teaching ESL to immigrants, providing housing and education for children on the margins, accompanying women recovering from human trafficking, domestic abuse, or addiction.

We are in solidarity with people all over the globe through our presence, actions, advocacy, and prayers. Our commitment to JPIC is grounded in a faithful prayer life as we are contemplatives in action.

Questions for reflection

How great is my enthusiasm and commitment today in following Jesus?
Let us imagine we are on the boat with Jesus and many others. Suddenly the Lord invites me to get out of the boat. Where is He inviting me, to what margins? What do I feel? What must I leave? We can share…

Be at the disposal of the Lord.
Free, attentive, careless of the waves.
Go out, when the Lord calls.
Remain in prayer.
PL 31

Closing Prayer from the Introduction:

“O Parent of Parents...”
Called to “something different” in daily life

Micah 6:7-8 “What is good has been explained to you – this is what Yahweh asks of you, only this, to act justly, to love tenderly and walk humbly with your God.”

The Just Soul: PL 25 “The happiness of this state, as far as I can express it, is a singular freedom from all attachment to things of earth, and with a whole hearted availability and fitness for all kinds of good works.”

As companions of Mary Ward we are called in daily life to be “contemplatives in action”, to be fully present to the reality in which we live, because “love is expressed more in the works than in the words”. [Sp.Ex. 230]

It is a unique and original call, to be attentive to the here and now with open eyes, to discern the signs of God in what is ordinary. Every day, every moment, either grey, demanding, or happy, is itself a unique encounter with God. It is a place to give and receive, to be surprised by the presence of God who works in us and for us in our world and in our history.

Mary Ward tells us to be vigilant, to see daily life through the prism of “the Just Soul”, that is: Sincerity, Justice and Freedom, so that everything we live is a reflection of God’s love for us.

Questions for reflection

What motivates the laity to be interested in following Mary Ward’s Charism?
What concrete gestures are we performing and/or could we perform to ensure many more will come to know Mary Ward and our spirituality?
What seems essential in order to grow in communion with the Friends of Mary Ward?
Share with one Friend of Mary Ward or a neighbour something specific that fascinates us about our charism; and exchange the gifts received.

Testimony of a couple, Friends of Mary Ward:

“We are fascinated by the deep content of FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND TRUTH that emanates from within the JUST SOUL and challenges us to live this charism with plenitude in our everyday life.”

Closing Prayer from the Introduction:

“O Parent of Parents…”
Called to “something different” in communion with the Friends of Mary Ward

In 1:35-39 “The next day as John stood there again with two of his disciples, Jesus went past, and John looked towards him and said, ‘Look, there is the lamb of God.’ And the two disciples heard what he said and followed Jesus. Jesus turned round, saw them following and said, ‘What do you want?’ They answered, ‘Rabbi’ - which means Teacher – ‘where do you live?’ He replied, ‘Come and see’; so they went and saw where he lived, and stayed with him that day. It was about the tenth hour.”

In his “Contemplation to Attain Love” Saint Ignatius invites us to look at the gifts coming from above; everything is given to us and at the same time, the attitude of the one performing the Exercises must be one of receiving and giving – an exchange of love. In our relations, this communion is nourished by the awareness that God gives himself gratuitously and, at the same time, becomes a gift, a communion with all creation and all creatures. Therefore, He becomes gift in all our relationships, in the sharing of our spirituality and charism with the laity, with the Friends of Mary Ward and with all those who are searching for their roots. I recall a sentence which said: “The future has deep roots”. This holds a beautiful and marvellous truth. We are invited to share these deep roots with all those who wish to truly know them.

“Come and you will see!” is our invitation, through which we can mutually discover God’s gifts and not only them, but even God himself through his gifts. Through this communion, we can build the more fraternal world for which we long for. Thus contemplation allows us to train our gaze, in order to contemplate and experience the mystery of ordinary life.

Questions for reflection

What does it mean to me today “to refer all to God”?

How can I live that “something different” in daily life?

We might share our reflections creatively with a gesture, words or a drawing.

Closing Prayer from the Introduction:

“O Parent of Parents...”
Called to “something different” in today’s peripheries

The contemplation of my country in this perspective sets me on a path toward an attitude of availability and movement, but at the same time of loss in the vortex of the ambiguity of the term “periphery” – contour, limit, surrounding.

If I approach it from a psychosocial point of view through literature, I can relate to Julio Ramón Ribeyro Zúñiga, a Peruvian author. (Tale, ‘Los Gallinazos sin pluma’). From a demographic perspective, I look at the great migrations from the country to the city and from region to region. The migrants go with all they are, carrying with them all their customs, as they journey to seek the Promised Land.

In response to the invitation to reflect on the call to “something different” in today’s peripheries I focus on the educational field where I feel attuned to the protagonist of this grace, my dear Mary Ward. She answered to that “something different” in her time by creating schools for girls. The importance she attributed to women’s education responded to a need of her time that forced her to break through the existing social frontiers, and to face for that reason many persecutions and difficulties.

Education is essential so that both men and women can become architects of their own existence. Not as gods, rather in an interdependence between the creature and his Creator. This leads us to turn our gaze to those who are excluded from society to help them to be aware of their dignity, their self-worth and so not exclude them from our existence.

In his Exhortation “The Joy of the Gospel”, Pope Francis reminds us that: “all of us are called to take part in this new missionary ‘going forth’. Each Christian and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out, but all of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the ‘peripheries’ in need of the light of the Gospel”. (Evangelii Gaudium, 20)

Let us pray to Mary Ward and ask her that Jesus will indeed be our guide as He was for her until the moment she left this wonderful world.

Mary Ward was a great pilgrim in the style of Jesus, always moving to help others.

Are we a missionary Church that is looking outwards? What comforts must we leave behind to carry the Gospel to those who need its light today?

We come from different directions seeking an encounter with one another and sharing our reflections.

Questions for reflection

Closing Prayer from the Introduction:

“O Parent of Parents…”