LOVE OF OTHERS 1.
Mary Ward was clearly an attractive and remarkable woman; she was also very loving and valued her family and friends throughout her life. As a young child she speaks of herself as shy and diffident, much preferring to be overlooked or thought of as a servant rather than noticed and made much of. Later it is clear that her sense of vocation overcame shyness and gave her a courage to face both brigands and bishops with equanimity - even in potentially dangerous situations.

Her deep love of her family and, in particular, her father meant that her choice to leave them perhaps for ever, to enter religious life was an extraordinarily costly one, while the joy of having her sister in the order was great. She clearly had great presence and attractiveness and throughout her life we hear of her impact on others. She also had the capacity for deep and enduring friendship, and her letters are full of gentle, humorous comments to those she loved.

POINTS FOR REFLECTION:
Our relationships are often a source of great joy and also at times of great pain – and God can be found in both if only we see our lives as a whole. Take some time thinking back over how you have been enriched and enlightened by others, and use that as a basis for your prayer – both the remembering and the conversation with God as a result of the remembering.

We have in this picture a detail of Mary and her parents. Just sit with it for a while allowing it to speak to you in whatever way comes naturally... Use this as a basis for your prayer.

LOVE OF OTHERS 2.
However, we see that throughout her life Mary’s love for others was in and through God – the early influence of Jesuits in her life led her to write

‘Let your love be at all times rooted in God, and then remain faithful to your friend, and value her highly, even more highly than your life,’ and ‘Do not have a divided heart, for in that case you will be left by both God and man.’

She had discovered early on that clinging to those she loved was not the answer – finding the freedom to love them IN God enabled her friendships to grow and endure and have a quality about them that no amount of possessiveness would have brought.

POINTS FOR REFLECTION:
Are there areas in your relationships with others when your own needs/hopes have got in the way and where you need greater freedom? – again use this reflection as the basis of a conversation with God...

What do you long for in these relationships? Do you ever find yourself praying for this?

LOVE OF OTHERS 3.

She wrote often about the need we have to show respect and compassion for the poor (an attribute she learnt from her father who would feed any who came to his door begging for food) and her love was not just words as we see in her comment in her Life: ‘I have found a good way to make our moneys hold out, to be sure to deny no poor body an alms’ Vita E 185.

She was also immensely practical about her relationships with others, writing:

‘Do not endeavour so much to please your neighbour, as far more to be of use to him’.

And

‘Take away from no one what they love unless you give them instead something they love still better.’

POINTS FOR REFLECTION:

We often forget to reflect on our attitudes and behaviour to those we do not really know, yet whom we meet on the street and in the general business of life. How do our fundamental attitudes to those who are less advantaged than ourselves – economically, socially, mentally, physically, emotionally – play themselves out in our everyday, and often largely unconscious, behaviour?

Mary would go to great lengths, and occasionally to the point of personal danger, to ‘be of use’ to those in need – remember moments when you too have reached out in small and large ways to others. What would you say are the particular gifts you bring to others?