



Empowering through Justice, Freedom and Sincerity!

Greetings!

Welcome to our partners, donors, colleagues and friends reading this first newsletter from Mary Ward Loreto.

We are delighted to present the news and events of the last few months. We hope this form of communication will bring many more partners into our network. By sharing news about our projects and partnerships we will widen our reach and achieve an increased response from others working in the same field as Mary Ward Loreto.

The focus of the mission is the combating of human trafficking, a modern day form of slavery. Pope Francis calls "Human trafficking an open wound on the body of contemporary society, a scourge upon the body of Christ. It is a crime against humanity" He also says of this crime that law enforcement authorities, "are primarily responsible for combating this tragic reality by a vigorous application of the law" but it also "includes humanitarian and social workers, whose task it is to provide victims with welcome, human warmth and the possibility of building a new life. These are two different approaches, but they can and must go together". (Meeting with Police Chiefs and the Hierarchy of the Church, Rome 2014).

Mary Ward Loreto is part of the swell of workers around the world who are called to respond in this latter way. The projects and our partnerships with Different and Equal, The Little Angels, Roma Project, managed by SHKEJ and with Religious in Europe Networking Against Trafficking and Exploitation (RENATE), are an attempt to work in the fields of direct action with the victims of trafficking, in works of prevention, awareness raising, advocacy and campaigning, to support the victim and to rid the world of this horrendous crime.

We hope that you feel inspired to join us more closely in this mission as you read this, our first newsletter and please feel free to make any comments on what you have read on our facebook page: Mary Ward Loreto, or on our website www.albaniahope.com.

Thank you for your continued interest and support.

Imelda Poole, President MWL

Mary Ward Loreto



Mary Ward Loreto Foundation is a nonprofit organization providing development programs for vulnerable communities in Albania. This organization has as its inspiration the charism of Mary Ward, the fundamental values of which are: FREEDOM, JUSTICE and SINCERITY.

The essence of this charism is to respond to the greatest needs in today's world through education and any other means. The organization forms partnerships and works with 6 main groups; women in rural and informal regions of Albania, victims of trafficking, Roma Children and their families, prisoners from 9 prisons in the Tirana/Durres diocese, young people in main cities and rural and informal regions of Albania and into the future with men from the informal and rural regions of Albania.

Our Vision

Mary Ward Loreto is animated by the spirit of Mary Ward, the founder of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Our vision is that Mary Ward Loreto is a Foundation where each person has the experience of being loved, valued and liberated as a sacred individual. This will help each person to grow into the fullness of life and empower men and women of courage, to become alive to the needs of humanity and committed to creating a better world.

Mary Ward Loreto Women

*Woman's Right in Albania for Justice,
Freedom and to Speak Her Truth!*

Mary Ward Loreto brings hope to all they work with in Albania. Thousands of lives have been improved. We are proud to be supporting this amazing work.

Issues for Albanian women and problems for systemic change

What does it mean to be a woman in Albania?

If you would read the question in the eyes of a woman it means a lot. I have worked for 10 years in the most problematic areas of Albania and I have met battered women who have forgotten to smile, but manage to survive. I have met women who enhance children with the spirit of a mother full of life, but who have never lived. I have met women who ask for a hand from the state and the state does not make any effort to look at them. I have read the laws on the rights of women; copy-pasted from the best laws taken from Nordic countries, where the woman is the basis of everything worthy of being protected. Here laws are not applied, because here the life of a woman does not count.



"There are more than enough women" is an expression that you hear often. In Albania the state considers the woman as a mathematical number, either relative or absolute, just a number.

Despite the many sacrifices that woman make today, she must also bear the burdens of prejudice, discrimination, and violence. The abuse of women in Albania is a complex and multidimensional problem, because it includes various forms ranging from humiliation, threats and social isolation to coercive sex and battering.

Even though the project is identifying the cases and the state structures have strengthened the law related to this phenomenon, it is still considered a taboo subject especially in the rural communities. This makes it difficult for the women to denounce violence. They lack freedom and need to ask permission to go out.

Even when their husbands emigrate for economic purposes, the women have to get permission from them at a distance. This real lack of knowledge and information about their rights as human beings is confused with their obligations according to cultural law.

What are the roots of this fact? Is it patriarchal based education? Is it a cultural historical heritage? Or the State just does not care. According to the Albanian Law, the woman has the same equal rights that a man has, but does she really?

According to a report on gender gap issues published by the BBC, Albania is ranked 108, near to Arab countries, Nigeria and North Korea. We are the only country in Europe which is marked with an orange sign, which indicates the high percentage of gender inequality.

The Women in this country have nothing, just dreams and to dream in such conditions is a privilege and a sacrifice.

When the support centre for women does ordinary things well.

Empowering, sustainability, social justice, equality, are the key words that are being used quite often nowadays. But when it comes to facing the harsh reality of living and working in Albania then you see the enormous gap between words and action. Our philosophy at MWL is to ***"seek for gold"*** but with a different strategy: by ***"doing ordinary things well"*** (Mary Ward 1585-1645).

During the last year, the MWL project called Mary Ward Loreto Women, opened 4 centres for the support of women living in rural and mostly marginalized areas of Albania. These centres are located in the heart of the communities in Hot i Ri (Shkoder), Bajram i (Tropoja), Fier and Shendelli (Saranda). The services are based on the ethic of the Foundation and the values of Freedom, Justice and Sincerity.

The focus is:

- To provide an environment of emotional, psychological and physical safety, fostering a sense of empowerment.
- Listen, understand and validate women in a non-judgmental, safe and supportive atmosphere.
- Encourage women to have a voice through providing opportunity, knowledge and support.
- Give women equal opportunity to attain their full potential.
- Partner with other organizations to meet the needs of women in our community.
- Support the creation of social businesses and entrepreneurship initiatives.

Another centre will be opened soon in Lezha and a research will be developed in Tirana to assess the need for a women's support centre in the city. We are waiting keenly for the outcomes of this research. The dedicated work of the key workers in these centres makes a positive difference in the lives of women who are in transition, crisis or distress. The women consider these centres as an Oasis of Hope, where every woman is made to feel important and worthwhile. They are not just a number in a case file, or a statistic in the census.



The South and Centre of Albania

Planting Hope

For the last 3 months Jaru village, is suffering from drought without any rain. A woman recently told me: *"This place is cursed."* It was the first time I had heard this attitude from a woman. During the following days I heard this more than 2-3 times. It was when I heard it a fourth time that I thought: Is it such?

Jaru is a small village only 10 km from the city of Fier, one of the representatives of the biggest centers of the south and only 15km from Vlora, a coastal city and the largest in southern Albania. What leads women to think these things in such a small village? Does the fact that in these three months nature is not generous and leaves them suffering?

Why do women not think like they did 20 years ago when they raised their hopes to build a better life by migrating from remote areas in the north of Albania to come to Jaru.

It must be great hope that makes you move from one part of the country to another part.

Their Hope, in these last 20 years, was dashed by disappointment, absenteeism of their migrant husband, unemployment, suffering, discrimination and fear. Hope was reduced more and more but never disappearing totally.

Each woman brings to the MWL Women Group a bit of hope that makes them wake up early every day, to fight, to survive, by working the land, caring for children and for other family members. They may even wake up with hope because they are one of the lucky ones who has a job in the city.

In the meetings held in the MWL Women centre, the group tries to collect these pieces of hope and reflects on how they can reconstruct a new hope by doing something new and different.

The women who work at the Flowers Greenhouse unlike any other women of the group are hopeful. Working with flowers is something very new for the women and they have committed themselves to bring this business forward. Only one year has passed since they started working in the greenhouse and the women have researched the market of flowers trying to find a place in it. They have focused on 3 types of flowers in this pilot phase of the business. The varieties of flowers in the greenhouse are still low in number.

But these flowers have brought hope to the women and have made a huge impact on their perception of the future. Although living in Jaru can be quite challenging, I think this area is blessed with good people and beautiful souls who can find hope in the slightest sunray.



A Story from the Centre of Albania

Alba is a new 25-year-old mother with 2 young children. She is the main carer for her nephew. No one knows where Alba is living. She married when she was 18, mainly for economic reasons, because her family was very poor. To find a better life she came to Tirana and lived in a rented house. There were many difficulties in Tirana, the husband did not find regular work, and so Alba worked as a cleaner. The earnings were not enough to support a family of five members. Due to stress her husband was in a fight with another person and ended up in prison for two years. Alba remained alone with the children and had endless expenses.

The only solution that she could find to her problems at that time was prostitution. She was abused, intimidated, beaten, but she continued, as it was the only earning that could feed her children. But she could not continue for long. She gained the courage to speak to her sister and she referred her to us. Alba wanted to leave prostitution, but she was still desperate for money for the most essential things. We provided an emergency response, offering her a monthly food package, clothes for the children, and medical assistance. At the same time a plan was made with her for finding regular work. Counselling was offered to her to overcome the trauma of abuse. Now, after two years Alba is re-united with her husband and is employed. Above all she feels free, independent, hopeful and happy. (Names and places have been changed for confidentiality)

Cultural Heritage: Butrint

After you have visited the museum city of Gjirokastra, the so-called "City of Stone" and you arrive at the modern port-city of Saranda, you can't resist visiting the most magical destination of your journey, 20 km from Saranda, the National Park of Butrinti.

Nobody can escape the fascination, the beauty and the tranquility of this place, where natural fences meet beautiful ancient ruins. The city of Butrint is one of the fragments which form the fabric of Albania's ancient cultural landscape. History interlaced here with ancient art and surrounded by an amazing Mediterranean charm, occupies an important place in the memories of many people. Cultures and faith traditions are interlocked in one place in a sweep through history and time.

The Market in Butrint

With the initiative of Butrinti Foundation in 2007, a small market has taken place between the dense vegetation of the park. This opportunity has motivated a group of women from the Miredita Region, who have migrated from the north to a small village near to Butrint and not so many years ago. They are using their cultural craft making to distribute at the market.

These powerful women that fight for life, have abandoned their homes in Miredita region in '90, and have started their new lives in Shendelli village, on the outskirts of Butrinti Park. With the help of Marchelino Sisters, over the years, they now have electricity, a kindergarten and a church for prayer. These strong women are producing many crafts for the market in Butrint, they have followed a cookery and tailoring course and are beginning to take charge of their lives.



The North of Albania

Women Empowerment

Women's empowerment is strongly related to economic development. Women's groups have been encouraged to make use of their skills and talents. These consist mainly of handicraft work learnt when they were children as a way of providing clothes and ornaments for the house, not as a business opportunity. The lack of a working culture and difficulties in taking new responsibilities have been two of the biggest challenges. The women needed a lot of human empowerment training and emotional support.



25 women from the group of Hot i Ri have been trained and supervised by the MWL Women Social Animator to make stitched cards.

A core group of 10 women meets constantly in the MWL Women centre and work in a group. The rest of the group meet rarely but are given instructions for the work and take the materials for stitching the cards to their houses.

They prepare different groups of designs in order to fulfill the market requirements. To work ethically, patterns selected online from companies such as Form-a-lines, have been purchased. The social animator who is an artist, paints new card designs with different greetings, as well as traditional designs, birthday cards and cards for children. The women themselves have also been encouraged to prepare new designs. Many women in the village showed an interest to be trained and to become part of the group.

Visitors of MWL Foundation have visited the group of Hot i Ri and have been introduced to MWL Women groups activities and products. Hillary Cashman, and Sr. Anna Hawke CJ, saw opportunities to sell the cards in the UK, in churches communities, schools and fairs. The group frequently sends parcels of cards to enable this to occur.

The Women of Tropoja:

Mary Ward Loreto Women project in Tropoje operates in three areas; Raja, Dushaj and Cernicë. These areas account for a total of 90 women, whose participation varies by activity. The dynamics of these groups are different, and so are the interests, perceptions, and situations in which they find themselves. As a group the women's strengths are:

1. An ability to adapt and to function as a group.
2. A desire for active participation and engagement at work.
3. Being open. These women are strong and ready to change and become empowered for their own sake and for their family.

Explain the Situation of Water and the Local Culture.

The problem of irrigation water:

In one of the rural areas (Cernicë), residents have suffered from a lack of irrigation water in the area which obstructs their progress in developing the land for agriculture. This impacts their living standards as there is no income from the land.

The MWL Women social worker took this issue to the national authorities and undertook several meetings with the mayor. A project has now been prepared by the municipality to tackle the problem of water irrigation, however progress has been limited because of the lack of funding from the state, meaning, the project remains only on paper.

A small amount of progress has been made however by the opening of the channel by the residents (initiated by a mayoral candidate in Bajram Curri before the June 21 elections). Meanwhile, with the new territorial division and the stabilization of the local government, the MWL Women social worker will re-address this issue to the new municipality.

WHY an Agriculture Initiative ?

The women of Kallmet, in the district of Lezha, lack education and skills to find work. They are mostly skilled in agriculture and livestock. Referring to the advice of a local agriculture specialist made available to the project by the commune, the women agreed to plant Kallmet beans. This product keeps the name of the village. The objective of the initiative was to promote the cultivation of local products which relate historically and agriculturally to the village. This initiative has been a great success and all the beans have been sold in the market. Now the women have decided to develop this initiative with a new harvest of beans.



GLOW Camp (Girls Leading Our World)

The Glow Camp was an initiative undertaken in collaboration with the Peace Corps Volunteer service in Lezhe. Thanks to several meetings and discussion a wonderful meeting was organised according to the girls needs in these rural areas. The aim of Glow Camp was not only to involve the young girls but to ensure that their involvement was meaningful. The camp aimed at building up the girls' self-esteem, to help them appreciate themselves, their skills and everything that they are able to do. Through activities and games, Mary Ward Loreto Women project aimed at increasing the young girl's awareness of the fact that they are little leaders today and by learning what their rights are and how valuable they are to the community, they will learn that tomorrow they will become the future leaders of the society.



Mary Ward Loreto Youth

Mary Ward Loreto Youth (MWL Youth Project)

MWL Foundation Youth project, MWL Youth, aims to achieve the prosperity of youth through education and it has the main aim to empower young people to function fully in their communities, to be employed, and to become freed for citizenship and to promote change in Albania.



This project began with the research of over a thousand youth and stakeholders followed by the presentation of this in Tirana for members from the youth ministry, the government and many other interested people. This research took the project manager to approximately 20 regions of Albania interviewing 1000+ young people plus stakeholders and many other NGO leaders.



The work was achieved by interviewing individual youth and also having focus groups. The professor from the university Marina Ndrio was the mentor and the final writer for this research.



Mary Ward Loreto Youth Conference

A conference was held at The Tirana International Hotel to launch this research and present the issues and needs of youth in Albania. These had been defined in the research as a result of hours of listening and a careful analysis of the findings in which the issues and needs were recognized.

The following is an outline of the programme for this innovative conference in which the young people took part with music, drama and poetry. The questions and discussion arising at this conference animated the whole day and have led to a dynamic plan of action being formed.

The presentation of the study "The Needs and Issues of Youth in Albania"

Participant's registration and welcoming
Welcoming speech MWL Foundation President Government Authority's speech Young people's performance (Short sketches) MWLY Coordinator
Presentation of Research Dr. Marina Ndrio Round table discussion Q&A panel: All participants
Conference Summarize Government Authority's speech Shkelzen Marku
Conclusion Song and poetry
Catering All participants



Implementation of the Action

The plan of action was written and soon after the launching of the project had taken place with the launching event at the Tirana International Hotel, three groups were formed of 15 young people in 3 areas (Lushnja, Tirana and Puka). The first aim was to get to know the individual young people's desires and needs regarding vocational training and work, building a relationship based on trust. This objective was accomplished through group meetings, individual sessions which has led to the development of a portfolio for each young person. In September the vocational training will begin and also the entrance into community service.

Another aspect of the project is the trainings in 10 other regions of Albania on topics which were expressed as the most important by the young people in the research. These included Human empowerment and recognition of personal identity (self awareness), conflict resolution and training in awareness raising against trafficking in 10 local schools from the ten regions.

Greta Visit To Albania

The MWL Youth Manager was present and represented MWL Foundation at the GRETA meeting in Albania (The Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings). This meeting was with the representatives of the Albanian Civil Society in order to gather information for the new report of the Council of Europe on the Human Trafficking situation in our country. GRETA did a report four years ago and they want to measure if there is any improvement in the situation. (prevention, identification of victims, assistance to victims, compensation of victims, child victims, etc.).

The MWL Youth manager talked about the MWL Foundation work in the field of Human Anti Trafficking and the work in partnership with Albanian NGO-s (Different and Equal) and British ones (Medaille Trust) and our link with RENATE.

The experts present were given reports and presentations from MWL which would be useful for building their draft report on the manner in which Albania is implementing the Anti-Trafficking Convention made by Albania.

Mary Ward Loreto Logistics

Logistics in Mary Ward Loreto is a sector which supports the projects and the Mary Ward Loreto Foundation, in the realization of their activities. It is composed of a team of 3 workers; a Logistic Manager (Pjetër Tanushaj), a driver (Edmond Kocli) and a cleaner and cook (Majlinda Zajmi).

This team ensures that the personnel and every material needed for the realization of each activity is on time at the right place. The team (especially the Logistic Manager) makes the purchase of the materials needed and deals with the third parties, if there is any need to book environments for the implementation of activities outside of Mary Ward Loreto premises. These bookings would be with places like hotels, when staff are travelling, or Conference rooms or places for Mary Ward Loreto events.

The Logistic Manager looks after the visitors who come to Mary Ward Loreto. He accompanies them to the meeting places and travels with them according to their agenda. He looks after their accommodation, and all of their needs.

The Logistic Manager is responsible in finding the new places for the Mary Ward Loreto offices when necessary and to equip them according to the needs. He is also responsible for every material purchased in the Mary Ward Loreto Foundation and yearly he makes an updated inventory. He is responsible for the purchase and the maintenance of the Mary Ward Loreto Foundation cars.

We applied to MIVA for a car and they accepted our application for the second time. The first one was given to us several years ago for the Mary Ward Loreto Women Project and this year they supported us to purchase another car for the MWL/MWL Youth Project. Thanks to them we now have two cars made possible by OneMenMIVA for our Foundation. The last car was purchased by the Logistic Manager, in Germany. He travelled and checked all the show rooms in order to find the best possible car according to the needs of MWL and within the budget.



Mary Ward Loreto Project, URAT: Anti-Trafficking Awareness-raising Project in Albania.

Since 2014, the New MWL Project, URAT, has organised more than forty awareness-raising training seminars on human trafficking for 1020+ people. Managed and funded by the NGO Mary Ward Loreto in Albania, the project is a collaboration with several other organisations present in Albania, e.g. the Peace Corps, the NGO Different and Equal, the IRCA (Institute of Romani Culture in Albania and De Nobi Te Gruas Shqiptare. The URAT Network, consisting of religious and co-workers working against trafficking in Albania, remained close to this project and was the advisory board throughout this time. The project focused primarily on those who are socially and economically marginalised, the most vulnerable in Albania, who need protection against different forms of exploitation, including human trafficking. Urat Project Final Report: View under the heading: "Trafficking in Persons" on the www.albaniahope.com Home Page.



Tony Blair Faith Foundation



During the last week of February, 2015, Imelda, had been invited to teach in two webinars for the Tony Blair Faith Foundation. This was the third time in Albania that she had been invited to do this. Over two days she led two webinars with 6 schools. The topic was 'Human Trafficking: Issues and Prevention.' The first one included Northern Ireland, and two schools from Mexico. The second webinar included schools from India, Indonesia, Jordan and Pakistan. In both webinars the session was for two hours. The students were very well prepared asking reflective questions and over the time we delved deeper and deeper into the topic. The main areas of concern were regarding the lack of will in society to combat this terrible crime and the lack of a global coordinated approach. The questions also browsed around issues relating to the internet and the deep net. The young participants led the way and were very shrewd.

MWL Links with the Albanian Government

We have been encouraged, especially over the last year, to work for systemic change in Albania. This is seen to be one of the most important challenges being faced in the fight against the modern day slavery of human trafficking. Vulnerable people are the main target of the traffickers. It is our work to free people from the chains of poverty which leads to misery. The work for systemic change has led MWL to set up an academic group who first made a pilot research highlighting the corruption and poor ethic in the education system. The issues regarding poverty and high unemployment of youth in Albania has led to an effective research, informing us of the way forward with the Youth project (MWL Youth) and has also been the process for the Mary Ward Loreto Women project. All of these initiatives have moved the MWL Foundation closer into the departments of the government who gave us their support and were present at the events which presented the research topics and exposed the truth.



Nora Malaj from the Ministry of Education, Elona Gjebrea, from the Home office, with the port folio of anti trafficking and Anuela Ristani representing the ministry of Social Welfare and Youth, were all present at these various events and openly supported the initiatives. MWL is represented on the government coalition against trafficking and is represented on the EU Civil Society platform against trafficking. Elona Gjebrea has spoken at three of our events which have included also the Board Meeting of RENATE held in Albania this year and logistically managed by MWL.



**UCESM:
Meeting of the Union of Major
Religious Superiors In Europe in
Albania, March 2015**

On March 26th, Imelda was invited to present RENATE at the AGM of UCESM, the Major Religious Superiors Conference in Europe. 30 European conferences were represented by about 70 religious. Imelda was warmly welcomed and received good feedback after her presentation.



One of the excellent fruits of this presentation has been on-going conversation with a priest and religious from the Ukraine who were looking for help to initiate anti trafficking work in their country. This conversation continues and now two of the RENATE members from Slovakia will be going to The Ukraine in the autumn to meet the priests and religious and to look at the way forward in this challenging work.

Also and since that meeting, a religious present at the meeting has donated from her congregation, 5,000 euro for the work of RENATE. For this we are very grateful. The following day some of the MWL staff came on pilgrimage with the 50 members of UCESM to Shkodra. It was towards the end of Lent and we made a most moving stations of the cross following in the footsteps of the many martyrs, priests and nuns who had died during the communist regime, in Albania, for their faith. We finished the day with Mass at The Cathedral in Shkodra.

**Visitors/Networks
Medaille Trust**

An important collaboration has been with the Medaille Trust in the UK. The development of the work with the women of Shendilli and the effective work together across borders has been invaluable. This partnership has led the Medaille trust staff to come to Albania to see the work being done and to enter into good dialogue about this. The same has happened on several occasions when MWL staff have gone to the UK to visit the shelters and to develop good practice by working with Albanian victims of trafficking who are staying at the UK shelters. A joined up approach took place in Slovenia where staff from D&E, MWL and the Medaille trust met with members of the police to develop ways of collaborating more effectively across border.



Other Visitors

MWL is constantly receiving visitors to the Foundation, developing networks and strengthening the work through good collaboration. Visitor included representatives from the Police, Professors from the University of Tirana, the Peace Corps, stakeholders from Albanian NGOs, Priests and religious and we thank Bishop George Frendo OP who has always supported our work and visits us regularly.

**The RENATE Board meeting was
hosted by MWL in April, 2015
in Durres Albania.**

The staff of MWL excelled themselves in every way, no detail was missing in the preparation. It was a rich experience for the members of the Board and also for the staff of MWL. Delegates appreciated the thorough insight into the local situation in Albania, as conveyed by guest speakers Ep. George Frendo OP; Fr. Giovanni Peragine; Mrs. Edlira Gjoni; Mrs. Elona Gjebrea and Mrs. Marjana Meshi.

Each of whom shared aspects of the following specific to their own individual responsibilities:

- The rich Religions and Faith Traditions of Albania.
- An overview of the Conference of Religious in Albania.
- The cultural reality of Albania.
- An overview of the human trafficking situation in Albania and Government policies to try to combat this.
- The work of anti-trafficking at grass-roots level in Albania.

The highlight of the week was undoubtedly the Field Trips to witness first-hand the mission of anti-trafficking in Albania, through Mary Ward Loreto and the Roma Projects; Different and Equal Project; and sharing time with members of the local women's group at Shkoder/Hot I Ri project. Through these projects, the enormity of the challenge to try to combat human trafficking was reduced to realistic possibilities and where the phrase **"No longer slaves but brothers and sisters"** came alive.



University Sponsorship Programme

Two Albanian students have been sponsored to study a Masters degree abroad since this programme was offered by MWL who ensured that the application and the fulfillment of the requirements from the donors was fulfilled. We are pleased to say that our first sponsorship was a great success. Brikena Petritaj

successfully gained a place at Durham University in the UK and achieved a credit in her Masters in TESOL. She stayed with a past pupil of Loreto, Manchester, Dr Mary McHugh, who supported her throughout the year of studies. She was one of the top students of her class. Congratulations Brikena.

The second sponsorship was gained by Sara Çapaliku. She is still studying in Bremen, Germany and will soon achieve her Masters degree in International studies. MWL is happy to continue to support this programme for young people between the ages of 25 years and 30 years. It is a wonderful opportunity.



Art Exhibition at MWL

A new and rather different venture emerged by the second week of April when a group of psychologists in Albania asked for help to fund raise to cover the cost of their fees for studying Cognitive Behavioural Psychology. This is a four year course and led by a team of specialists from Israel. The first decision made to raise these funds was to paint 50 pictures. Three of the group were artists. MWL offered to host the exhibition. A few pictures were sold and others were sold through contacts in the UK. An event followed at one of the hotels, courtesy of the International group in Tirana, at which another two pictures were sold. Imelda had the opportunity to speak about the mission of MWL at this event so it had an extra benefit for MWL. So far over 2,000 euro has been made, enough for the first deposit to be given by each student. Well done psychologists! Below is one of the paintings which has been sold:



Friends of Mary Ward

As this month's meeting of the Friends of Mary Ward would be the last before the holidays, some of the group went on a pilgrimage and mini retreat to Kallmet, where the group could reflect at the beautiful Eufemia church and surrounding area. The theme for the retreat was 'Trust in God'. We reflected on some of the stages in Mary Ward's life where she was most challenged.



We prayed together, had silence for contemplation and shared our reflections after pondering on some of the pictures of the Painted Life of Mary Ward. We reflected on how her struggles and her faith in overcoming these, could be applied in our own lives. After a morning of prayer we went to a beautiful setting where an established organic restaurant had been developed. The meal was delicious. We ended the day drinking coffee near the sea at shengjin. We were a very happy group on our return home.

February 8th, St Bakhita Day: First International Day of Prayer Against Trafficking



St Bakhita day was held for the first time as an international day of prayer on Sunday February 8th, 2015. Imelda was invited to participate in Rome at the Press Release announcing this day of prayer on February 4 – 5. Apart from the 30+ journalists, those present included Sr Gabrielle, the Director of Talitha Kum and many dignitaries from the church including three Cardinals representing Justice and Peace, Migrants and Refugees and UISG. It was an

opportunity to speak against this horrific crime.

"The primary objective of the International Day is to create greater awareness on this phenomenon and to reflect on the overall situation of violence and injustice that affect so many people, who have no voice, do not count, and are no one: they are simply slaves."
(Osservatorio Romano)

In Albania we chose to have an event at The Cathedral in Tirana, which MWL staff organized with URAT, the network against trafficking. We showed the film of the life of St Bakhita followed by a prayer service against trafficking. It was a profound experience for everybody as we remembered the victims of sex trafficking, labour trafficking, child trafficking and organ trafficking. It will be an important event every year in the church.

Thank You to Everyone!

We would like to thank our generous donors for their support who have enabled Mary Ward Loreto to implement their plan of action during the year.

In particular we thank our European donors, OneMenMiva, Members of the IBVM English Province, Mary Ward International Spain, our many donors from the UK, both individuals and parishes, individual donors in Australia and USA, The Medaille Trust and the Loreto Schools, also in the UK. These are our present donors but as this is our first newsletter, we would like to include in our thanks those who have been our donors in the past. This includes all of the above people and groups but also, Mary Ward International Ireland, Mary Ward International Australia, and the Conrad Hilton Foundation for Religious, USA.

We would also like to thank our collaborators and volunteers who have worked tirelessly on our behalf during this year.

Also we want to thank Mary Ward Loreto Foundation team, who have worked tirelessly to implement the aims and goals of the projects in such a creative and fruitful way. Without them the empowerment of so many beneficiaries would not have been accomplished.

Thank you again on behalf of Mary Ward Loreto Foundation, for your very kind support and trust. Without your continued support the mission of Mary Ward Loreto Foundation would be impossible.

