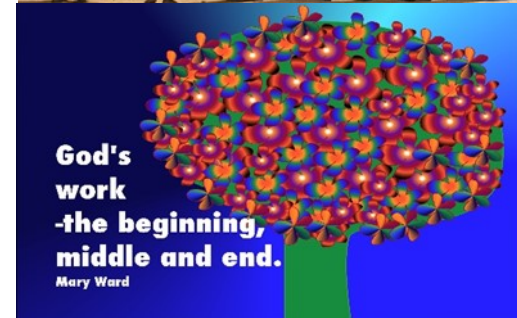


MARY WARD WEEK 2019



Our grateful thanks to all contributors:

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Day 1	PL 10 and 30: Martyrdom in the 21 st century Mariette Pinto CJ and Prathiba Palissery CJ (Nepal)
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Day 6	PL 35: Love and fidelity to the true spirit of the Institute in the 21 st century Jen Bromham IBVM and Theodora Hawksley CJ (England)
Day 7	PL 39, 40, 41 and 42: Praying in times of difficulty in the 21 st century Viktória Kaszap CJ (Hungary/Middle European Province)
Day 8	PL 50: Ageing and accepting our final call gracefully in the 21 st century Peg Caulfield, Betty Crotty, Ellen Enright, Rosemary Lynch, Mary Alfred Spatz Loreto Sisters in Resurrection Life Centre, Chicago (USA)

INTRODUCTION

Painted Life 9 and 37: Call and response in the 21st century

Pictures 9 and 37 of the Painted Life [PL], portray the insight Mary Ward received from God which showed clearly the “excellent state of religious life”. The two incidents happen in very ordinary circumstances of her life.

In PL 9, Mary was sitting sewing with her cousin Barbara Babthorpe, while in the company of a devout maidservant, Margaret Garrett. She was telling them about the severe punishment given to religious whose conduct was considered to be scandalous.

Mary is seen listening attentively to Margaret. Mary then received “so much light from God on the excellence of the religious life that she decided to embrace this state of perfection”. She was only fifteen years of age when this happened to her.

The same manner of revelation from God regarding the excellence of the religious state is shown in PL 37. This happened in 1625 while praying during a journey. This experience showed Mary that the “strength of this religious state does not consist in any temporal power, but in God alone.”



The clarity she received from God became her source of strength as she carried on with her mission. Mary Ward was attuned to God and His promptings in her ordinary life. She desired holiness and believed firmly that she would attain this in religious life. She knew her strength was in the Lord who called her. Mary's joy in serving Him is seen in her free and courageous response. In spite of the challenges she faced she was able to persevere in her call because she knew that "God would do the rest."

Today, God still has a unique way of making Himself known to us in our day to day living. Like Mary Ward we are invited to learn to listen to the voice of God in our ordinary lives. This calls us to keep on finding God in everything by discerning the meaning of the call and our response to Him.



One afternoon we, the seven IBVM sisters living at Casa San Carlo, shared our thoughts on ageing and accepting our final call. With people 75 – 95, ageing is a reality impossible to avoid. Seeing life as a journey helps to accept ageing as a normal step in the process. The effects of diminishment, illness and a loss of independence are softened as they are experienced with the others around us.

It is imperative to spend time on knowing oneself as we age and face new challenges. What we have to offer people is our presence and prayer. This is a most valuable ministry. Maintaining a joyful attitude can set a tone that lifts hearts and engenders hope.

Regardless of age or health, Mary did God's will joyfully until her death. She was a joyful woman who diffused happiness around her in spite of her sufferings. It is to be hoped that we aspire to do the same wherever God places us.

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty...



Painted Life 50: Ageing and accepting our final call gracefully in the 21st century



Life is a journey! In our world today many people are on a journey, fleeing violence and seeking asylum in a not too friendly world. They are trudging through deserts, rivers and over mountains to find a peaceful living.

Let us reflect on the journey of Mary Ward and ourselves. She and we began our journey by responding to a call from the depths of our hearts. This call came at Baptism when we, or others for us, committed us to follow Jesus and His teachings. This fundamental call is reiterated at many stages of our journey. It needs to be continually interpreted in the light of the personal circumstances each

one will encounter on the way. Each person is different and will find new ways to follow the will of God. Praying the “Suscipe” would be valuable in such a discernment.

What call did Mary Ward hear during the final stage of her life? In PL 50 the text says she was to die “soon”, yet she continued her work in spite of poor health. Jesus takes Mary by the hand to lead her in the way He is going. Also significant is the presence of her two friends, Mary Poyntz and Winefrid Wigmore, who were an essential support on her journey. Mary’s relationship with Jesus and her community sustained her as she faithfully responded to her call.



Recently, Pope Francis in his exhortation “Gaudete et Exsultate” called all people to “everyday holiness”. This is echoed in the life of Mary Ward, as she believed in doing ordinary things in ways that are pleasing to God. Let us pray for the grace to embrace this call to holiness in our ordinary lives as we strive to respond in our society today.

In my own life, what are the ordinary things, events or people I encounter? Am I able to listen deeply to what God is saying through each one of them? Are there blocks to my listening? Is religious life for me the excellent way of finding God, knowing Him, loving Him, serving Him and desiring to live with him forever in that perfect state of holiness?

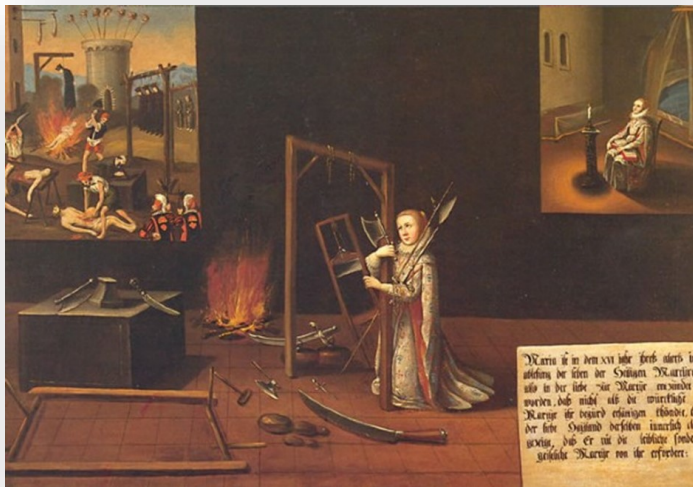
Let us walk with Mary Ward though this week and enter deeply into her message. Inspired by her may we be a glimmer of light for our contemporary world.



Painted Life 10 and 30: Martyrdom in the 21st century

PL 10 depicts the growing realization on the part of Mary Ward that God required a spiritual rather than a bodily martyrdom of her. Her desire to give her all, “not in part but altogether”, challenges us to be magnanimous towards God and to “act not out of fear but solely out of love.” Mary Ward’s ten year struggle for approbation in Rome was a form of martyrdom. Her conviction that this was God’s work enabled her to continue in the face of significant disapproval from an entrenched curia.

Today many Christians are called to make the supreme sacrifice of dying for their beliefs. What martyrdom is required of us in the 21st century? We are called to be less self-important and selfish and to strive for a deeper union with God. "He must increase, I must decrease." [John 3:30]. We may face persecution which is bloodless but more painful to endure. In some countries, our sisters suffer through opposition and neglect on the part of the government. They are deemed subversive and are denied the right to travel. In others, they are constantly ridiculed for their beliefs and are blamed for many of the ills in society. In an increasing secular and materialistic world standing with Christ can lead to humiliation and ostracization.



God is always there, but for us humans, tuning in to His love can prove challenging. In a fast paced world, we convince ourselves that we do not have time to stop, to be silent. Lack of quiet time means that our minds become flooded with distractions. Our eyes do not remain fixed on Jesus and we lose focus. Rather than communing with God, we rely on our own efforts. This can lead us to be unchristian in our actions. As a result, we may judge others unfairly, overreact and make unwise decisions. At such moments let us seek to be absorbed in God as Mary Ward was [PL 40] and to come to Him with all our troubles [PL39].

Why is prayer such a challenge in times of difficulty? Perhaps because we lose our equilibrium and are not attuned to God. Like St. Ignatius, Mary Ward sought daily to find Him in ALL THINGS. If we could live like this, prayer would be less of a struggle. We would realise that everything we do and everybody we meet, directs our attention towards God. In tuning into God we are praying. The way to God is always open. We create obstacles by our questionings and doubts.

Lord, help us to accept you fully into all aspects of our lives and, like Mary Ward, be “drawn to contemplate God only and to have no wish for anything but what He willed and because He willed it”.

[Chambers Vol II p 270].

Painted Life 39, 40, 41 and 42: Praying in times of difficulty in the 21st century

From a theological perspective, the image of God is a source of much discussion. Death, illness, loneliness, spiritual darkness, all forms of poverty, hatred, physical, spiritual and intellectual struggles would be unbearable without Him. Based on my personal experiences I do know that He exists and is in connection with me. In past moments of family difficulty and suffering, His presence was evident and sustaining.

I find that the Lord puts words into my mouth when I am unjustly accused and I have to defend myself. He is also the source of cheerfulness and laughter when my colleagues and I are laughing aloud on a hot summer afternoon in the office. He is with us in the moments of celebration and He helps us to be able to apologise after we have caused hurt. He moves us to forgive those who trespass against us. No border, obstacle or place prevents Him from being constantly in connection with us. He is found in “the bits and pieces” of every day.



- Where Christ advocates poverty, the world despises the poor and canonizes the rich
- Where Christ praises gentleness, the world belittles meekness and extols those who succeed by crushing anyone who stands in their way
- Where Christ promises joy only to those who seek justice and holiness, the world offers satisfaction in the enjoyment of sin
- Where Christ bids us to forgive and show mercy to those who have offended us, the world seeks vengeance and its law courts are filled with demands for retribution
- Where Christ blesses the pure of heart, the world scoffs at chastity and makes a god of sex
- To continue living a Christ-like life in this kind of environment is to practise the martyrdom of witness, giving testimony to our deep religious convictions.

Pope Francis asks: “What does the Church need today? Martyrs and witnesses, those everyday saints, those saints of an ordinary life lived with coherence. But it also needs those who have the courage to accept the grace of being witnesses to the end, to the point of death.”

Painted Life 11: Vows in the 21st century

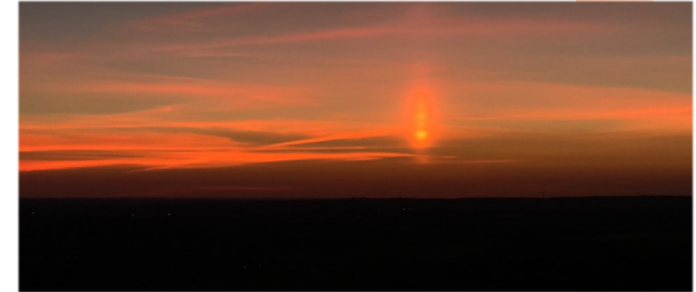
As Mary grew anxious that her desire for martyrdom was fading somewhat, she took herself to prayer, in case any lack of cooperation on her part should have caused this. Then God revealed to her that the martyrdom that was expected of her was to consist in the perfect observance of the three evangelical counsels in the religious life. [PL 55]

I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith... [Philippians 5:67-25]

Mary Ward desired to respond to God's desire in her heart, to be His own in such a way as to be ready to die for Him and for her faith. However God wanted her to live for him and her faith. He wanted her to engage her life and energy in his service, in the mission of defence and propagation of the faith in the hearts of the people. She received the invitation to follow Christ chaste, poor and obedient. This opened in front of her a way of freedom to accomplish her mission and a way to identify herself with Christ.



“To preserve the true spirit of the Institute and not to deviate from it”?



Theo presents another way of considering this picture:

Mary Ward stands before Christ on the cross, as though she is praying the colloquy at the end of the first week of the Exercises: “What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What ought I to do for Christ?”

During my time in Guyana, working with the indigenous Amerindian people of the Amazon basin, I often found myself asking the same questions. In these people, in their suffering and dignity, I stood before the crucified Christ. What was I doing for them? What should I do? This contemplation from the *Spiritual Exercises* helped me to experience our work of pastoral accompaniment in a new way. It also helped me to discover how, in this “crucified people”, Christ was accompanying me.

Mary Ward was certain that she did not want enclosure. She wanted her sisters to have freedom for mission and for different kinds of work, wherever the need was greatest and wherever Christ was calling. In our context, what does it mean to be faithful to this spirit of the Institute? How can the gift of Ignatian spirituality help us to discern where Christ is calling us today?

We have put before you two ways of contemplating this picture: the beam of light and the colloquy. We leave you to ponder the picture yourselves, in the certainty that you too will find your own insights.

Finally, to support your reflections, we offer you a universal image - a glowing sunset that lifts up the heart and shines into the darkness.

Painted Life 35: Love and fidelity to the true spirit of the Institute in the 21st century



This is a challenging picture from the Painted Life. Like most paintings, it could be interpreted in many ways.

One way of thinking might be to wonder at the intention of the artist and, perhaps linked with this, to consider the historical context. We know the initiative for the Painted Life came from Mary Poyntz and Winefrid Wigmore, with the intention of making Mary Ward's life and her vision for the Institute clearly known.

This picture is a reference to the troubled times of 1619. We see two praying women, Mary Ward and her unnamed companion who stands behind her. Is she a symbolic representation of each one of us? Whoever the companion, we know the setting is St Martin's Church, Liege.

Jen wants to draw your attention to the beam of light that seems to come from a heavenly source! The rays point towards Mary herself. Could this be the light of insight? We notice the same quality of light illuminates the figure of Christ and how this illumination links Mary to Jesus. Could this beam of light be there to remind us of Mary's deepest desire:

We equally listen to the call of Christ and, as the companions of Mary Ward, we proceed the same way as she did, but in the context of a different historical period. Today, when the world shows us alluring visions of self-fulfilment, success, power, possession, independence and richness, the possibility to fulfil quickly each of our needs/desires, an authentic life of consecrated people is still "a city set on a hill that cannot be hidden". We are consecrated women sent to be the prophetic voice and sign of God. It does not mean fulfilling our ambitions but the person of Christ and His vision. In a deep relationship with Christ, we may become purer in our intentions and in relationships with God and people. We may be humanly and spiritually fruitful in our mission.

In Mary Ward's time living religious poverty meant being dependent on benefaction, receiving from others to enable the communities to live at least simply. Today we are invited to live simply, to be able to give and share our material and spiritual goods with people to whom we have been sent. To share with the poor of our times. Living poverty today also means to live ecologically.

In obedience to God and our mission, we listen to the needs of our time together and become aware of the signs of the times. We can open our houses and hearts, go out to the people, out of our safe boundaries towards newness – through Christ, with Christ, and in Christ, through the faith. The vows are a gift of God, and the grant of a faithful life in vows is He himself.

I might return to the moment when I discovered the desire to belong wholly to God. How did I live it? What is a challenge for me in living my vows today and what is an inspiration which helps me to live them authentically?

Following Him

Once you find yourself in His sight, you no longer belong to yourself...

From now on – moment by moment – you receive yourself from being seen by Him...

The heart rooted in Him is drawn by the dust of the street more than by the roof over your head...

Because in His footsteps, your steps can go beyond every horizon...

And in His presence, you are kindled as a fire is kindled...

[Andreas Knapp, Brennender als Feuer – Geistliche Gedichte, free translation]

**Painted Life 17, 18 and 19: Creative response to contemporary needs
- happy together in the 21st century**



Mary Ward is with a sick person in Coldham Hall. With a gentle touch and consoling words, she encourages her to turn away from heresy. In the second picture, she dresses in a servant's garb to enable another woman, her aunt, to feel more comfortable as they seek to find God together. In the third, Mary focuses again on one person, engaging in spiritual conversation, ready to listen, hoping that God will touch this person's heart and bring her to repentance and transformation. These pictures are full of small images of groups listening in, two people chatting and watching, Mary turning to another for advice. The spiritual conversations, the communion and community, bring the lost to the one who can bring joy and peace. They do it together, in companionship, widening the circle.



- For those who understand that just being named a Christian is not enough for being faithful to the Church, but who accept Christianity as a life-style and engine of the soul and because of this they are convinced that is necessary to live, think and to be integrated Christians.

We are open harbours...

- When we are quiet places of recovery far from waves: places of refreshment of spirit and sharing, the open harbours ready to welcome each ship, because being together gives energy to our life which is often demanding and might bring with it painful deceits, temptations, falseness and hypocrisy.

We are open harbours...

- When we are zealous witnesses against contamination, unrestrained technology, unrespected ecology, disordered globalisation, superficial socialisation.

We are open harbours...

- When we are supportive to those who give testimony to the faith in a special way - the consecrated people - that they might witness a presence of Church of solidarity according to the spirit of Mary Ward. She prays in PL 29 that the seed of faith might be received, protected and entrusted to God in prayer. Following this, we today are close to new vocations in their diversity. May the Holy Spirit illuminate them also through the net of readiness, shared humanity and humility.

We are open harbours...

- When we honestly try to attract to the Light those who desire to experience the Spirit. We are convinced that each of Mary Ward's friends is called to live in freedom, sincerity, authenticity in relationship with the other, in the relationship lived as a gift.

We are open harbours...

**I might feel inspired to write about
my own desires and hopes for
being an open harbour following
the spirit of Mary Ward.**



Artist: Mateci-Antonio Lucio Rudy Lacquaniti,
Colours on the harbour

Painted Life 29, 30 and 31: Loyalty to the Church in the 21st century



Mary was once praying earnestly for a priest whom she had rescued from an evil life; she feared that he had again yielded to temptation, but God allowed her to see his guardian angel, standing at the head of his bed and with arms stretched lovingly over him as if to protect him from all dangers. The angel said to her: "Do you not see how faithfully I keep watch over him?" [PL 29]



In 1619 when Mary was meditating on the call of the Apostles, she perceived that they had no resting place in anything of this world but were entirely at their Lord's disposal. This knowledge roused in her a renewed desire to attain perfect self-denial. Suddenly she experienced a feeling of complete liberty and detachment from earthly things, from the world and from created things. [PL 31]

The sense of concern and solicitude of Mary Ward in PL 29 is extremely important. There is also the openness of the disciples in PL 31, which Mary contemplates, as they are ready to follow and serve their Master. Mary Ward's concern on behalf of others, openness toward them, and readiness to welcome and accompany them, challenge us. Following her we commit ourselves to become "open harbours"...

There is a zeal which can be caught as these pictures unfold. Mary burned to give faith to people. God will use our zeal if we have the desire. We are invited to let go and take that leap in trust, not holding back but, daringly, offering that loving touch and open heart to listen and to be led by the Spirit. With the heart and the ears open to listen to God we can find greater union and greater peace. She speaks on the same level and evokes the Holy Spirit from others. There is a sense of wonder in this. We are called to use the small moments to remove struggles and doubts. Society today is full of people wondering where they are going and where they belong. There is a spiritual thirst. Transformation can come just with one touch. It can be as simple as this. We are drawn into the call to love the Church as Mary and all the Ignatian family are called, and to be faithful in this. We marvel at the patience of Mary Ward who suffered so much at the hands of the Church but remained faithful. How much we need formation to grow "closer to Him" (MW). We desire this fidelity in the service of God in those moments offered to us day by day, often in the midst of daily struggles and doubts. It is our gift and our call to grow "closer to Him" (MW). These pictures have the touch of holiness and evoke peace. We are called to this patient and accepting hope, not alone, but in communion with others.



'Happy Together'
With Permission of the Bulgarian Artist, Emilia Milcheva
for the MW Novena Booklet, 2019

Painted Life 22: Companions in the 21st century



PL 22 depicts Mary and her companions (Winefrid Wigmore, Susanna Rookwood, Catherine Smith, Mary Poyntz and Jane Browne) seated together prior to their departure to St Omer and to “some other thing to be done by me, but what in particular was not shown.” Mary knew that she was being called to some enterprise which was as yet unclear but which could only be undertaken “through the help of whose Grace alone it is fitly and perseveringly feasible.” The picture shows the first five of the seven companions. These women had close familial ties as well as a common faith, and the hardships and difficulties they endured served to strengthen their bonds.

One is struck by the lively expressions and the open circle which seems to emphasize their willingness to collaborate and to forsake an hierarchical structure. With total trust in God, these young women were able to venture forth into an insecure and unclear future. God takes us as we are and uses the gifts we are endowed with to achieve His ends.

The right hand side of the picture depicts the scene of embarkation for St Omer. The image is full of symbols. Mary's demeanour as she approaches the boat is upright and full of trust. Is the tiny boat really seaworthy? Are

these companions being led by the Spirit? In relying on our time rather than God's, how often do we vacillate over decisions through lack of trust and allow our energies to be leached away by seeking certainty and assured outcomes?

The contrasting image, although painted in 1927, is astonishingly contemporary and depicts a scene of a solitary individual. The picture could be interpreted in several ways. Many aspects of our current society are reflected here. So many people are starved of simple human contact and exist with no sense of community. Individuals are constantly on the move and alone. Certain objects and details draw the eye. The subject has a hat drawn down over her head, and her eyes are averted. She seems to signal that she doesn't want to engage with anyone. This is further reinforced by the empty chair. How often do we indicate to others that our time is precious? Could we be more aware of those around us and be more generous with our time and attention?

Note the isolation of the woman drinking her solitary coffee. It is in sharp contrast to Mary and her companions. Mary boards the ship, surrendering willingly to all that lies ahead. In Hopper's painting the sense of alienation is palpable. Mary Ward placed her trust solely in God and was content to leave the outcome of her efforts to God. “Man proposes and God disposes, whose will be done. We shall experience all in time”.



Artist: Hopper, Automaton 1927