

“With Mary Ward – Educating Together in Church and World”

Mary Ward’s Charism

Thank you very much for inviting me to speak at this third Mary Ward Education Congress. I will speak in English, the language of Mary Ward, and the presentation will be aided by a few illustrations so as to reduce the monotony of listening to my voice. I will also speak in slow English as I know many of you have a good grasp of the language.

First, I would like to add my thanks to those of Sr Mechtild to each and every one of you for being here. You are busy people, often with heavy responsibilities, and you have come here to Rome to learn, to contribute, to forge bonds with other participants – and, I hope, take back something worthwhile to your schools and communities and well as for yourselves.

I want to begin with an experience I had a few years ago when I was working for a Catholic educational consultancy. I arrived at a Jesuit school where a new lay, female head teacher had just been appointed. She was about to go to a Jesuit educational conference in Rome and was struggling to explain to me the Characteristics of Jesuit Education and the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm. Sensing that she was not speaking with the assurance she had hoped for she commented – “Oh all this stuff is so complicated. I find it difficult enough being a Catholic head without having this extra work”. I could only sympathize. I am sure you can too. So before I get launched on today’s theme – Mary Ward’s Charism – I want to state the obvious: the charism of Mary Ward is part of, and not separate from, the charism of Jesus Christ. (Repeat)

I would like to make two preliminary remarks. The first is about the wide variety of educational institutions represented in this Congress. You come from four continents and numerous different cultures; you come from educational establishments – mostly schools, but some are from tertiary education, some work in Kindergartens, some are in educational consultancy. I will address my comments mainly to those of you in schools as you are the majority – and I will try address the needs of the minority.

Even those of you from Mary Ward schools represent an enormously wide variety of schools. In some, the majority of students are not Christian but Hindu. Teaching Christianity may even be prohibited by law. In other schools the majority may be Christian but not Catholic. Some of you will be from Christian schools with a Catholic majority or minority, with a long Mary Ward tradition. Many of these schools are now under lay leadership, perhaps under the CJ institutional umbrella or perhaps not. There will be CJ members here working in diocesan and/or state schools. Some will be from fee-paying schools alongside which will be free schools for the poor. Some of your schools exist for the education of low caste and tribal children; for special needs students; for orphans; for those in need of boarding; for vocational education –particularly those released from child labour. There will be girls’ schools, co-educational schools, urban schools, rural schools - and so it goes on. The variety is vast.

As a second preliminary remark I would like to mention CJ commitment to education and to schools especially. Since the Second Vatican Council, in keeping with the Ignatian charism of Mary Ward, our ministries have diversified to meet new needs. At a time when our own numbers are diminishing, or ‘greying’ in our European provinces, we are moving into new fields of apostolic ministry: higher education; the social apostolate; health and pastoral ministry; spiritual ministry. This diversity is in keeping with the wider apostolic vision of Mary Ward and is not a lessening of our commitment to education in general and to the schools’ ministry in particular. If you see fewer sisters in school than in the past this is not a sign of a diminishment of commitment to education and schools – it is simply that our resources are over-stretched. Maybe this is part of God’s design to ensure that we work more collaboratively with our lay colleagues.

So why is the educational apostolate so important to the Church? I will answer this briefly as I am sure it will be dealt on more fully by our next speaker.

First: **6....** the integral formation of the human being in the image of Christ– women and men fully alive – whose destiny is both in, yet beyond, the limitations of this world, is a crucial part of the evangelizing mission of the Church. With the emphasis on full, human development we are able to educate Catholics, Christians, those of other religions and those of no religion at all.

Second: the development of the human intellect, the promotion of reason as a compliment to faith, is an essential aim of Catholic education.

Third: we are educating young people to be good citizens and good leaders, concerned with the common good, able and ready to use the gift of education for the service of faith and the promotion of justice.

Fourth: are those very practical aspects of education which provide young people with the knowledge and skills they need for whatever area of work they go into. We had an example of this last year in Zimbabwe - and we have three representatives from Zimbabwe here with us. In Zimbabwe there is not enough food, water, few jobs, constant power cuts, little freedom and the highest rate of inflation in the world – over 250 million % -, but the teachers did not ask us for food or petrol or pencils – but for computers in the knowledge that computer skills will mean a livelihood when the country recovers from its present problems. **7**

But there is a fifth reason, closely related to the first, that you will probably not find in Church documents. Most of us – and especially those of us from the western world – know that today’s younger generation are not that attracted by organized religion, or to Catholic doctrine, even when skilled teachers try to explain it. Maybe as teacher’s we need to remember that advice given by St Paul about giving milk and not pig’s meat to babies. We have to start where the young people are, not where we would like them to be, and this means we probably have to start further back. The language of Catholic doctrine, however well expounded, is often not where the people are at. Start further back. The crucial hungers of our generation are usually more human than religious. Our globalizing culture has as its hallmarks fragmentation and hyperactivity, which is not a good place in which to develop a spiritual imagination. Start further back. Michael Paul Gallagher SJ, in a thought-provoking book entitled ‘Dive Deeper’ writes that that ‘our culture has difficulty with the antechambers of faith, rather than faith itself,’ and, ‘it is on the level of disposition and desire that we need help most’. How do we help the younger generation to be freer at a human depth so that the quality of wonder and desire for what is beautiful and true might grow within them? A great deal, as we know, can be done through art, literature, poetry, drama, music and science, to name but some of the curriculum subjects. I used to think that our task as educators was to sow seeds that others would harvest. I now believe we have to start further back, and pay more attention to the soil of experience into which the Sower has to sow. It was St Augustine who said: ‘Make humanity your way and you shall arrive at God’. And God can and does reveal himself in seemingly non-religious experiences.

But to return to this question of the Congregatio Jesu and the issue of schools. In some parts of the world – for example in Europe – we now have an educated Catholic laity who may be better at being in touch with the younger generation than we are! In other parts of the world we follow the Ignatian directive of “going where others are not able to go, and this is taking us into founding new schools, for example, among the tribals of north-east India. Education will always be a key Congregatio Jesu ministry. It is never of question of schools or not schools, but of what schools and where.

So much by way of introduction. I intend this morning to touch upon five main themes. These are:

1. what do we mean by *charism*?
2. Mary Ward, her spirituality – the world and Church of her time.
3. the characteristics of Mary Ward’s education.
4. the characteristics of a Mary Ward school today.
5. can charism be transmitted – and if so, how?

1. What do we mean by charism?

But I would like to begin by throwing out one challenge: it is my hope that this is the last time a member of the CJ addresses an international Education Congress. Next time, if we do our work here well, it will be a member of the laity, one of you, who addresses this Congress. When I proposed this recently to someone here today the reaction was immediate – ‘absolutely no’, with a look of horror on his/her face that said it all. I reflected on this – is it that you, our lay teachers, do not know enough about Mary Ward? Surely not. Is it that you have not been given the opportunity to reflect sufficiently so that you have a deeper understanding? Or is it a question of the usual deference that the laity has towards sisters who are perceived as the spiritual professionals – the so-called guardians of the charism of Mary Ward?

The word *charism* means simply gift. It comes from the Greek word *Char* meaning ‘to grant grace, to give, to lavish’ and is used frequently by St Paul in his letters. What characterizes charism is that it is a gift offered lovingly and freely by the Holy Spirit in order to build up the community of believers. A gift that does not build up community is, for Paul, of no use – as he wrote to the Corinthians: ‘.....and if I have all faith so as to move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.’(1 Cor 13).

The word *charism* re-emerged at the Second Vatican Council. The Council documents apply the notion of charism to Religious Life itself, to the evangelical counsels, to particular institutes, to founders, and to the personal vocations of individuals. This has led to a difficulty in locating *charism*. If St Paul is speaking of charism as a gift received and exercised by individuals can one speak of *charism* as a group charism bestowed on a particular congregation, let alone of ‘sharing charism with the laity’?

Few congregations have a distinct *charism*. Most belong to one of the main traditions: Augustinian, Benedictine, Carmelite, Franciscan, Dominican, and Ignatian to name the better known. However, what is essential is living, and being seen to live, as Christ lived. Probably what distinguishes one apostolic congregation from another is less the particular qualities than the totality – the complex shared story of all who belong to that particular unique congregation. As Antonio Romano writes (Romano, A. ‘The Charism of the Founders.’ Slough. St Paul’s 1994): “it is not the great things that distinguish one religious family from another, for these must be held in common by all, but rather the characteristic way in which these great things are developed and put together.” (p.16)

If the charism is the special grace received by the founder of a Religious Congregation, the culture is what emerges as the body develops. All organizations have a culture – the core beliefs, values, traditions and symbols which give the organization its particular meaning and purpose. Culture shapes the relationships, and experiences that members of an organization have with one another. Just as the task of the Religious Congregation is to ensure that the culture of the Congregation is a genuine reflection of the charism of the founder, so the culture of the school that originated as a Religious foundation needs to reflect that same charism. If it doesn’t then all you may be left with are a few chipped statues of the foundress, and a vague historic memory that means little in reality.

2. Mary Ward, her spirituality – the world and Church of her time.

If you want to find out about someone it can of help to look at what their enemies are saying about them. In the Papal Bull *Pastoralis Romani Pontificis* issued by Pope Urban VIII on January 13th 1631 which condemned Mary Ward and her fledgling institute to oblivion is written – ‘Nevertheless as we have learned ...in some parts of Italy and beyond the Alps, certain women....have taken the title of Jesuitesses, have lived together for some years without any particular approval of the Apostolic See on the pretext of leading a customary religious life, have worn distinctive dress, have raised buildings as

colleges....have appointed a superior and one with the title of superior general of their pretended Congregation, who is endowed with seemingly good faculties....Free from the laws of enclosure, they wander about at will, and under the guise of promoting the salvation of souls, have been accustomed to attempt to employ themselves at many other works which are most unsuited to their weak sex and character....' Then comes to condemnation: 'We have decreed that such great temerity must be repressed by sharper censure and that the poisonous growths in the church of God must be torn up from the roots lest they spread themselves further. And therefore, after mature consideration....we decree and declare... that the presented congregation of women called Jesuitesses is from its beginning null and void. And because indeed they have made progress, we totally and completely suppress and extinguish them, subject them to perpetual abolition and remove them entirely from the Holy Church of God.' – and so it goes on. Well here we are today. This Bull of Suppression is harsh even by the standards of 17th century ecclesiastical practice. What were the authorities so afraid of? It is difficult to understand the mindset that led to that dreadful condemnation.

I would like to comment on six points contained in this condemnation:

- (i) 'have taken the title of Jesuitesses' – this was a nickname of course. Mary Ward wanted the full title of the *Society of Jesus* for her institute
- (ii) 'have raised buildings as colleges' – there were, or had been, schools in St Omer, Liège, Cologne, Rome, Naples, Perugia, Munich, Vienna, and Pressburg – Mary Ward's apostolic vision was taking root.
- (iii) 'have appointed a superior with the title of superior general' – a jurisdiction beyond diocesan boundaries directly under the Pope – women in leadership at this level contradicted the commonly held male view that women were incapable of leadership.
- (iv) 'free from the laws of enclosure they wander about at will' – The 16th century Council of Trent had re-imposed strict enclosure on women religious. But the Ignatian charism required mobility – to go where the need is greatest.
- (v) 'under the guise of promoting the salvation of souls, have been accustomed....many other works...unsuited to their weak sex and character....' expresses a disbelief that women could help in the service of the church, and that they could, I quote, 'only do good to themselves'.
- (vi) 'and because they have indeed made progress....we totally and completely suppress...' this is a key sentence that explains the harshness of the suppression, Mary Ward's and her companions were proving that they could do these things well and this was a major threat to clerically dominated, exclusively male 17th century Roman church leadership.

There was an Italian proverb of the time '*o marito o muro*' – either a husband or a wall. Respectable women should be either married or behind a convent wall. How else could women be controlled? This was the viewpoint of the Roman church unused to the unique role that Catholic women, especially in England at that time, were playing in keeping the faith alive.

Mary Ward herself had to deal with prejudice persistently. On one occasion when she and her companions were being commended in Rome a priest commented: 'It is true – while they are at their first fervour, but fervour will decay and when all is done, they are but women'. Women were deemed to be constitutionally incapable of apostolic work. Mary Ward responded with these words: "There is no such difference between men and women; yet women, may they not do great matters, as we have seen by example of many saints who have done great things? And I hope in God it will be seen that women in time will do much." (Mary Ward, St Omer, November 1617)

I think Mary Ward would have enjoyed the following quip from a 16-yr old on a recent poster advertising International Women's Day:

“I’m happy being a woman because....Being a woman is so difficult that only women are capable of it!”

Traditional institutions, such as the 17th century Catholic Church reeling from the Protestant Reformation, find innovation difficult, even when the people running them are good and holy. Both Galileo and Mary Ward came up against ecclesiastical authority that failed to understand the changing circumstances of their time. Galileo has subsequently received an apology. We are still awaiting one for Mary Ward.

Mary Ward understood the changed circumstances of her time. In her own homeland the seminary priests, especially Jesuits, were under persecution, and loyal Mass going Catholics were being impoverished by the recusant fines. How could Catholicism be maintained and Catholics educate their children in the faith without schools, and without priests? Sending a child overseas to be educated was a criminal offence. It was the established catholic families – the Wards, Bedingfelds, Ingleby’s, Rookwards, Stonors, Thwings, Throckmortons, who informally ran schools in their own homes often with a catholic chaplain as the only way of keeping the faith alive. At times, with the men folk conforming to the Anglican state church to avoid crippling taxes – it was the women who managed and maintained these Catholics households – women such as Mary Ward’s grandmother in prison for years. Mary Ward knew from her own personal experience that women could be teachers and spreaders and defenders of the faith.

This was the world and church in which she grew up – an England where it was impossible to be in an enclosed convent; a world that needed active women to prepare children for the sacraments; care for the lapsed; care for Catholic prisoners; harbour the priests; arrange for Mass to be celebrated – people who had to be constantly on the move, always in danger, often in hiding, at times in prison. Here Mary is seen changing clothes with her maid so that she can carry out her mission in London without drawing attention to herself.

It took Mary Ward many years to discern what her vocation was to be. She looked initially for the strictest form enclosed convent life – behind walls - and joined the Poor Clare’s in St Omer across the English Channel. Much as she loved this life she knew that God was calling her to something different. On returning to London she collected around her a group of like minded young catholic women who served the needs of the Catholics in London as best they could.

Mary realized that something more to God’s glory was required of her than the enclosed religious life. She was doing her hair in front of a mirror one morning in November 2009, in London, when she heard distinctly the words ‘*Glory, Glory, Glory*’ and these words stayed ringing in her ears for a long time afterwards. Mary understood she was being called to ‘do something more to the glory of God’ - and in order to discern it she returned to St Omer, in what is now France, with her companions. There cannot be many religious congregations that come into existence whilst the foundress is brushing her hair in the morning, but ‘finding God in all things’ is a key part of Mary Ward’s charism. This *Glory Vision* marks the start of our 400 year foundation of Mary Ward’s institute which we will be celebrating next year.

Yesterday we heard Fr Mertes on the subject of Ignatian educational principles. I will not repeat what we heard but would like to draw attention to the key concepts of ignatian spirituality:

- (i) God can and does communicate directly with the individual – men and women.
- (ii) The individual needs to learn to discern through prayerful reflection what God is communicating
- (iii) God chooses men (and women) to be companions in his salvific mission to the whole world
- (iv) Those dedicated to his greater service must be ready to go anywhere in the world where the need is greatest
- (v) All creation is good and God can be found in all created things

This is the spirituality underlying any Mary Ward enterprise. Mary Ward through her experience of the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius was made aware that women too could be called to this mission – not as part of the Society of Jesus, but as Ignatian women with their own structure according to the Ignatian constitutions. This required non-enclosure, religious practices that did not interfere with availability and

mobility for mission – such a fixed choir, and a female General Superior directly under the Pope – rather than the local bishop or male religious superiors.

3. The characteristics of Mary Ward education

Mary Ward adapted the traditional curriculum of the enclosed convent so as to prepare girls for the world they would be returning to – either as wives and mothers - or as religious. Whereas the traditional model of girls education emphasized reading and writing, domestic skills such as sewing and household management, music and religion, Mary Ward’s progressive pedagogy, modeled on that of the Jesuits, extended to art and drama, classics and modern foreign languages as well as religion and moral tuition. Drama – thought to be unseemly for women and actually criticized by one cardinal - would help to expand the experience of the individual and give her manifold skills and self-confidence to deal with the antagonistic world in which Catholic women had to live. Even debates were organized to promote a well-informed mind, encourage logical thinking, and the ability to hold an argument. Without classics access to any higher form of education would be barred, and modern languages were essential if women were to “go where the need is greatest” among various peoples of the world.

4. What are the characteristics of a Mary Ward school today?

The context of Church and world within which Mary Ward’s institute operates today is different, but maybe not that different, from that of the early 17th century. In the early 17th century explorers were pushing out across the globe in search of new lands. We now live in a globalizing world, with a global culture that is post-modern, pluralistic, secular, multi-cultural and polarized; a world that is becoming ecologically ever more fragile; a world driven by market values that lead to an ever widening gap between rich and poor; a world of instantaneous communications; and a world challenged by a resurgence of religious fundamentalism. An expansion of the Islamic world was occurring in Mary Ward’s world as well as in ours. There are now huge paradigm shifts taking place in the world as the economic hegemony shifts from west to east, and in the ecclesial sphere Church membership shifts from north to south. The Tridentine model of a westernized Latin Church recovering from the set backs of the Protestant Reformation, fearful of change, and in danger of fossilization was a reality for Mary Ward. As Church numbers shrink today the temptation is to become over-defensive, and suspicious of things new. It was the religious orders – the Jesuits and Mary Ward’s fledging institute - that sought to meet the needs of a changing world then; and it should be the role of the religious congregations today to be meeting the challenges of today’s world.

In today’s context how can we develop and sustain an educational vision that is faithful to the dynamic of Mary Ward 400 years ago? I would like to start by asking some rhetorical questions. If I went into your school today how would I know that it was a Mary Ward school?

- First, I would see a big sign at the school entrance ‘Mary Ward School’, and inside would be the statues and pictures of Mary Ward and her sayings on the wall.
- What about the curriculum? Would it reflect Mary Ward’s aims and values? Is it broad and designed to develop the human potential of each?
- And the staff – are they employees or partners? What distinctions are made between teachers and cleaners and the school caretaker? Does everyone have a voice in the decision making processes?
- Is there a strong sense of community – does the school community discern and discuss together? How are ideas shared? Is the expression of dissent tolerated?
- What is the reward system? How do you measure and record success and failure? Do you rank your pupils? Do you reward effort as well as content? Whatever you do will be based on how you see the uniqueness of each human person made in the image of God

- How is success celebrated in your school?
- What form does discipline take? What punishments and sanctions are there? Do they safeguard the well-being of the majority whilst respecting the rights and dignity of the individual?
- Is the school inclusive or exclusive? – and if the latter who gets excluded and why? How do we educate the really poor and needy – those who can't pay fees?
- Do you give special attention to special needs pupils – those who are physically disabled or with learning difficulties? What extra effort is made to find them the specialist help they need?
- How do you prepare students for the world of work and family? Do you lay great emphasis on careers and well-paid jobs, or on service in the wider community?
- What level of bullying is there in your school? And by this I do not mean just between the students, but within the staff and parent body too? How is it handled?
- How does the school community grieve loss together?
- And what about the parents? Are they a part of the educational process – or regarded as pushy, demanding, complaining? How do you bring them into the decision making process? Or do you regard them as a Jesuit at Stonyhurst College once described them as - 'the invention of the devil made possible by the motorcar'.
- When things go wrong how does the school community practice forgiveness and reconciliation?
- How do you promote the social agenda? Do you see your commitment to justice and peace as not just something 'out there', but as an integral part of the way the school community organizes itself? Eco-awareness and the promotion of environmental responsibility is something our Mary Ward schools are usually rather good at. Here are pupils at our school in Jhansi, India with their paper re-cycling project.
- Is yours a 'learning community' where everyone – pupils, staff, parents – and even the head sees him/herself as a learner? Those of you who are head teachers what is the sign on your office door? Is it Head Teacher or Head Learner?
- Is each individual person respected, loved, affirmed, and able to grow in freedom?

Regarding discipline - contrary to common usage of the time, Mary Ward forbade her sisters to use physical punishment; rather they were to teach in ways marked by gentleness and respect for the individual.

Parental involvement – Mary Ward and her sisters were known to go and visit pupils and their parents in their homes emphasizing a partnership model of education impossible in an enclosed convent.

Education for the poor – Mary Ward always aimed to have a poor school alongside the fee-paying schools. Boarding pupils could have existed within the enclosed convent environment, but educating poor children meant non-enclosure as the sisters had to go out and find them.

There was a strong sense of community within Mary Ward's schools – a sense of enjoyment at learning together, praying together, grieving together, encouraging one another. A strong sense of community is one of the key characteristics of a Catholic school. In a community everyone knows everyone else, students feel confident enough to stretch themselves; schools are welcoming to the stranger, tolerant towards the new; open to others.

Mary Ward's educational establishments were popular because they met the needs of the time. But this does not mean that her task was any easier than it is today. In Munich, the Elector of Bavaria had begged her to establish a school to deal with the unruly behaviour of (I quote) "the wanton daughters of the burghers"!

Mary Ward developed an educational philosophy rooted in the principles of Ignatian spirituality and adapted to the changing needs of the times. We need to be sensitive both to the fundamental principles of an Ignatian education – experience, reflection, action as we heard yesterday - and to the world in which today's student will live and in which she/he will help to build the kingdom of God.

One of the greatest and most subtle of factors undermining our educational charism today is the encroaching market approach to education. This takes many different forms in different parts of the world – a secular stranglehold over the curriculum; over-regulation; an over-focus on examination results – it is presumed that what is measurable must be good – at the expense of a more holistic education. There can be fee-paying parents who because they are paying tend to think that education is a supermarket and they can take what they want regardless of the impact on the whole. Whilst parents are partners in education they need to be helped to realize that in deciding to send their children to a Mary Ward school they have committed themselves to the values and policies of that school, and some things are just not negotiable.

If I wanted to find out whether or not a Mary Ward school was living according to its founding principles, values and methodologies I would not start by looking at the prospectus with its well-articulated mission statement. Rather, I would prefer to ask an adolescent, or the school cleaning lady - 'what does it mean to you to be part of a Mary Ward school'?

5. Can charism be transmitted, passed on, shared, communicated – and, if so, how?

In an article entitled '*Handing over the Baton: From Religious to Lay Administration*' Paul Starkey, an Australian educator, draws a distinction between two paradigms (models) used by Religious Congregations to inculcate the charism of the founder. The first paradigm he calls 'the paternal paradigm' and describes it as 'members of the Religious Congregation conveying to their lay colleagues key insights and symbols ...so that the lay staff give expression to them in the culture of the school'. The second paradigm which Starkey calls 'the partnership paradigm' has 'members of the Religious Congregation working with their lay colleagues to discover what the congregation's traditions might look like when they are allowed to find expression in a lay context' (p.62). In the 'paternal paradigm' the Religious Congregation 'has possession of the tradition and tells the laity what it is' (much as I am doing today). In the 'partnership paradigm' a partnership has been formed to 'discover' together what that tradition might look like in a new context and there is no knowing in advance how it will develop. That's the dangerous bit. Although the partnership paradigm might appear risky to the Religious Congregation, it is in keeping with the fact that a charism is a gift given at a particular time to a particular person for a particular reason; it is not a possession, nor a code of practice, nor a philosophy, but a spirituality to be lived.

The packaged approach of the 'paternal paradigm' can be seen as an attempt to impose particular formulae of the traditions of the congregation canonized at some point in history. The 'partnership paradigm' regards the traditions of the congregation as alive and rich, and members of the Congregation work with the laity to help discover together how old truths might find expression in new settings. The latter takes courage and trust as well as a great deal of mutual listening, reflection, and creativity. Where it works the results are evident in the ability and willingness of lay men and women to speak, often spontaneously, knowledgeably and publicly, about the charism of the founder and the traditions of the congregation in a way that is compelling. The spirituality has been grasped and made one's own. I have no doubt which paradigm Mary Ward would have preferred. Perhaps now you understand why I

expressed the wish that next time, as a result of lay reflection on the charism of Mary Ward, one of you might be willing to address the next Education Congress.

However, this concept of shared educational mission in schools is one that the church is promoting. In the 2002 document from the Congregation for Catholic Education entitled 'Consecrated Persons and Their Mission in Schools' – (a not very helpful title) – we read (para 57) - “in the modern situation, the educational mission in schools is increasingly shared with the laity. Whereas at times in the recent past, collaboration came about as a means of supplementing the decline of consecrated persons necessary to carry out activities, now it is growing out of the need to share responsibility not only in the carrying out of the Institute’s works but especially in the hope of sharing specific aspects and moments of the spirituality and mission of the Institute. Consecrated persons must therefore transmit (unfortunate word) the educational charism that animates them and promote the formation of those who feel that they are called to the same mission. To discharge this responsibility they must be careful not to get involved exclusively in academic-administrative tasks.....(note). I am a little concerned that in some parts of the CJ we hold onto leadership posts, the accounts office, admissions – but lack a key sister for overall pastoral and spiritual care, to act as an animator.

I want to anticipate a request from this Congress to provide all CJ schools with a written manual on 'how to integrate Mary Ward’s charism within your school'. It would not work, not simply because the cultural context varies so widely, but because it can only become incarnated in your schools by being experienced, reflected on, shared and lived – that is contextualized. Sharing must be a two-way process – listening to each other, and developing a real partnership model for your school. I can, however, recommend some good models from the Brazilian and Spanish Provinces and I am sure there are more.

Those of us, who have the privilege to be associated with Mary Ward’s foundation, religious and lay, are blessed to have a distinctive and attractive foundress, a clear educational vision resting on tried and tested ignatian principles, an exciting story of rejection, rehabilitation and growth. However, we need to remember that the spirit works now, in the present, and through everyone, in very ordinary realities and through everyday experiences, and it is more important to remember who we are now than who we were when we were founded.

I want to conclude by touching again on some of the characteristics of today’s world – global, post-modern, pluralist, ecologically fragile, with a population predicted to rise from just under seven billion in 2008 to nine billion by 2040; on the brink of an economic recession of global proportions, where communications via the internet are instantaneous, but where the gap between rich and poor is widening the whole time, and the ecological threat brings with it the prospects of global warming at an alarming rate; increased food and water shortages; floods and eco-migration on a scale never seen before. The Catholic world view born of the conviction that God created the earth for all means we cannot be complacent – we cannot be neutral – either we are perpetuating the global inequalities by our life-style or we are the victims of the same inequalities. Through the incarnation God has already involved us in creation and re-creation of our world. Our response and our involvement is critical.

There is encouraging news though – when recently we conducted an audit of ecological awareness among our sisters worldwide by far the best response came from the schools. Whatever it is, you are doing it well. But what more can we do? A Mary Ward school is forming leaders and reflective and strategic thinkers – people who will be influential in their workplaces and within their families and environment; people who are able to make a difference. Is this reflected in your guidance to your students as they deliberate on their life choices. Will they be people who, probably unwittingly, perpetuate the injustices, or will they be people who strive alongside others to find solutions.

What a huge resource we have in our CJ schools, but what are we doing to communicate on a more permanent basis with each other so that we can share our resources, our concerns and our hopes. We now have a website – thanks to Tom Sompek - which lists all the CJ schools. I hope this Congress can continue to provide good opportunities for building effective and sustainable partnerships.

If Mary Ward were here today what might she say? She would be amazed, and delighted. She once expressed a great desire to have, I quote, 'a school in the great city of London'. Well a Mary Ward Education Congress in Rome is nearly as good. She never lost hope in that *Glory Vision* given to her in 1609. Just before her death in 1645 when she saw her inconsolable companions gathered around her bed, she said: "O fie, fie! What? Still look sad? Come, let us rather sing and praise God joyfully for all his loving-kindness."

Sr Frances Orchard CJ, Rome, October 2008
