

Mary Ward Celebration Liturgy

I hope in God it will be seen that women in time to come will do much.
- Mary Ward, 1617

This courageous woman, who crossed the Alps on foot to plead her case with the Vatican, and who travelled ceaselessly in England and Europe setting up schools for girls, founded communities that flourish today. This gorgeous photograph of a statue to her, surrounded by children, is from one of her schools in Australia.

A community of Mary Ward sisters has lived and work in what is now known as the Bar Convent for over four hundred years, since Frances Bedingfield (alias 'Mrs Long') moved in with her small group of companions on 5th November 1605.

Currently nine English members are active in various ways in the Bar Convent itself, available to welcome the many guests who come to stay overnight, to visit the house and the Heritage Exhibition, or to work in the archives or the library, and the groups who come to pray and perhaps celebrate Mass in the chapel, or to attend meetings in one of the conference rooms. You can find out more about Mary Ward and her living heritage centre here <https://www.bar-convent.org.uk/maryward.htm>

Groups of Friends and Companions of Mary Ward meet worldwide, including here in the UK. Many of us work within girls' education and for reform within the church. Many are Catholic and some from other Christian traditions. Prayer is central to what we do. Our tradition is broadly Ignatian. At the moment, due to the difficulties of travel and communication when communities were founded, there are two branches of the order, the Congregation of Jesus and the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Work is underway to bring these branches together, and the Friends of Mary Ward in the UK already meet as one branch.

