

## MARY WARD

1585-1645



Mary Ward was born on 23rd January 1585 in the north of England during a time of persecution and great difficulty for Catholics. Her personal quest for God's will gradually became clear to her. God showed her that she was to begin a new way of religious life for women. With a small group of friends she travelled to Saint-Omer in Flanders. She understood that they were to take the same way of life as the Society of Jesus, founded by St. Ignatius of Loyola, as far as was possible for women. Mary Ward and her first companions worked tirelessly to promote the faith, through the education of girls, spiritual conversations and whatever social and charitable activities were relevant to the time, place and circumstances. Mary Ward's belief in the dignity and worth of women enabled her to deepen in her followers the sense that "women can do much" in Church and society. She won support particularly from those who recognised the need for the education of girls. However, Mary Ward's vision of an

apostolic religious life for women did not fit in with the Church's view at that time.

She believed that God was calling her and her followers to live a life without enclosure so that the members could be free to respond to the greatest needs of the people they served. Such a way of life required a centralized form of government, a concept that was new for women religious. She encountered many obstacles which culminated in her imprisonment and the suppression of her Institute. Mary Ward accepted her suffering as she accepted poverty and sickness, with trust in God. She remained cheerful, calm and unswerving in her loyalty to the Church. She died at York in England on 30th January 1645.

On 19th December 2009, Pope Benedict XVI published a Decree recognising the "heroic virtue" demonstrated by Mary Ward and thereby conferring on her the title "Venerable."

Mary Ward's foundation exists today worldwide under the names Congregation of Jesus and Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Loreto. Her followers minister in forty-four countries across five continents.

Exiled from her own land, persecuted for her beliefs, Mary Ward is without doubt a woman for our time.

## Novena Prayer for Healing from Sickness

Lord, s/he, .....  
whom you love, is sick.

If it is your will,  
You can heal her/him.  
Your will be done.

You have said,  
Whatever you ask the Father in my name,  
He will give you.

In your name, I ask for this grace  
and I ask you  
through the intercession of Mary Ward  
who sought your honour  
and glory in everything  
and who said:  
When God grants me a place in heaven,  
I shall always help you.

Glory be to the Father.....