

Loreto Schools of Australia



MISSION STATEMENT





Stand in a place where God is to be seen.

MARY GONZAGA BARRY



66 Be seekers of truth and
doers of justice.

Marie Ward

1585 – 1645



This set me thinking and wishing our dear Loreto children were a 'row of goodly pearls'. I would string my pearls on a triple cord, strong and sure.

*Mary J. Gonzaga Barry
D. B. V.M.*



Vision

The educational vision of Loreto schools springs from the Gospel of Jesus Christ. When Mary Ward founded the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (IBVM) in 1609, she recognised the critical difference that education could make to her troubled world, especially through the care and development of faith.

Offering girls the kind of education that would make them “seekers of truth and doers of justice” was innovative and controversial, as was her plan for the Institute to be self-governing, mobile and actively engaged in the work of the Gospel. Grounded in Ignatian Spirituality, she believed in the capacity of women as well as men to find God in the ordinary experience of human life. In her time it seemed that she fought a losing battle, culminating in the suppression of the Institute, her own imprisonment and the closing of the schools.

Over 400 years later, the spirit of Mary Ward continues to inspire. Today Loreto schools are part of an international network of friendship. In 1875 Mother Mary Gonzaga Barry brought the Institute to Australia. Her influence on primary, secondary and tertiary education was both lively and profound. She established schools across the country which provided a wide range of students with a balanced, happy yet challenging education that prepared them to exert a lasting influence on the emerging nation. Moreover, her initiatives to improve the quality of teacher training and inservice went far beyond Loreto. Now the Institute is active across Australia and in every continent, collaborating with others to bring the Gospel to life in the church and in society. Education is seen as a vital part of this endeavour, a way of promoting full human growth and freedom.

This is our vision: that Loreto schools offer a Catholic education which liberates, empowers and motivates students to use their individual gifts with confidence, creativity and generosity in loving and responsible service.



Women

A vigorous belief in the capacity and responsibility of women to contribute significantly to society and to the church underlies the emphasis in our tradition on the education of girls.

It builds on Mary Ward's conviction that "women in time to come will do much" and is inspired by her independence of spirit, her strength of mind, her tenacity and her courage in breaking new ground. Yet, for all her passion to redress an imbalance, her fundamental belief was that men and women alike found their deepest truth and ultimate value in God. There is still an urgent need today to recreate the vision of what it is to be fully human, for men as well as for women. It is therefore our task to educate beyond the stereotypes. It is our hope that those involved in our schools will act freely, courageously and in a spirit of collaboration to affirm the dignity of each individual and to further the cause of human rights.

Being fully human involves gentleness as well as strength, compassion as well as action, receptivity as well as leadership and the personal integrity which grows from the practice of reflection. The capacity to reflect on experience in the light of faith, to discriminate among conflicting claims and perceptions in order to discern the deeper truths of our lives and the events of our world is essential for those with a "will to do good". Prevailing structures and uses of power must be scrutinised and, if unjust, challenged as they are in the Gospel, while alternative modes of operating must be sought and claimed. Students should be offered role models in men and women whose lives and ways of dealing with others resonate with these ideals.

The women of the Gospels, too, merit serious attention. With Mary, they model a discipleship based on deep faith and a personal relationship with Jesus. Their discipleship balances reflection with active participation in His mission, particularly in their courageous stance on Calvary and their proclamation of the resurrection.



Women also should and can provide something more than ordinary in the face of the common spiritual need.

MARY WARD

Freedom Justice Sincerity Verity Felicity

The qualities of freedom, justice and sincerity are at the core of Mary Ward's spirit. Her most profound understanding of freedom was grounded in her sense of personal relationship with God, her belief that each one of us, in our ordinary experience of life, has access to God's loving care. This is the truth that sets us free. It is an inner freedom, accepting of self, open to others and trusting of life.

Whatever the limitations of our circumstances and our humanity, we are called to grow in this freedom beyond the narrowness of self-interest and the crippling of self-doubt. In the process we will be able to respond more creatively to the needs of others and develop resourcefulness in the face of difficulty.

In this spirit, Loreto education builds on Mary Ward's desire to act out of "love not fear" and reflects the breadth of outlook and easy atmosphere associated with Mother Mary Gonzaga Barry. It encourages self-discipline and

gives genuine responsibility to students, because risk and flexibility are more allied to this lively spirit of freedom than conformity and unthinking dependence. Allowing for the process of growth, this freedom includes the capacity to face and learn from the mistakes and failures that are a natural part of human experience. In the same spirit, the relationships in the school community will be marked by ideals of mutual respect, acceptance of difference and the presumption of goodwill. In such a context, students are helped to develop a sense of identity that is inwardly free and to become more capable of accepting responsibility for their lives and of courageous, compassionate and generous service.



... So that your hidden self
may grow strong.

EPHESIANS 3:16



Freedom Justice Sincerity Verity Felicity



This is what is asked of you, only this, to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God.

MICAH 6:3-5

Educating for justice means helping people to recognise the inherent dignity of each individual and of the natural environment and to become aware of the rights and responsibilities of all. Issues of power and the use and distribution of resources must also be addressed in ways that are appropriate to students' development. Without burdening them with guilt for the inequities of our world, we can encourage them to share and use their gifts purposefully in a spirit of gratitude, compassion and hope. Our schools should develop well-integrated, soundly based approaches to the study of social justice which provide students with opportunities for experiential learning and reflection on experience. Thus they can be led to a more critical awareness of the structures in our society and the effect of these on the most disadvantaged, in the light of the Gospel's imperative concern for the poor and marginalised. The school itself, in its organisation, its relationships and its activities, should be a place where justice is demonstrably practised and valued.

We hope that our students will be people who are honest and fair in their dealings, who show empathy and respect for others without discrimination and whose lives include a real element of active and generous contribution to the community. In addition, we hope that they will have a lively awareness of local and global issues, be strong and articulate on behalf of those who have no power or voice and passionately committed to the integrity of creation, to justice, peace and reconciliation in our world.

Justice, as Mary Ward describes it, involves personal integrity based on harmonious relationship with God, with other people and with the whole of creation. It is expressed in "works of justice", in active participation in the struggle to bring about such harmony.



Freedom Justice Sincerity Verity Felicity

Sincerity in our communication and relationship with others is an essential characteristic of the personal integrity Mary Ward envisaged. Her ideal was that “we should be such as we appear and appear such as we are”.

Self-acceptance sets us free from pretence and defensiveness, free to relate honestly and affectionately, to “love our neighbour as ourselves”. This is a challenge for all of us, involving commitment to the on-going process of self-knowledge which leads to self-acceptance.

For students, faced with numerous pressures and engaged in their own developmental struggle to establish a sense of identity, particular support is needed. If we want them to become people of their word, able to speak with conviction but also able to listen to and accept difference in others, then we must help them to come to terms positively with their own individuality, their own giftedness and limitations. Everyone in the school community shares in this pastoral responsibility which involves knowing, accepting, respecting and encouraging each student as individual and modelling a consistency between words and actions.

The mutual trust and appreciation that build on sincerity, the ability to celebrate without envy the achievements of others and the capacity for loyalty are qualities of genuine friendship. Hence schools in the tradition of Mary Ward have always been characterised by friendships that enrich the lives of staff and students well beyond their years at school. In learning and practising the skills of friendship, it is hoped that students are being grounded in the qualities that will help them build and sustain deep relationships in their lives.



Let your light shine
in the sight of all.

MATTHEW 5:16

Freedom Justice Sincerity Verity Felicity



Closely linked to sincerity is Mary Ward's concept of verity. For her it means integrity and truth, particularly the profound truth of who we are and what gives meaning to our lives, a truth that centres fundamentally on the mystery of God.

Hence it underpins the essential dignity of every human being, graced and loved by God, imaging God uniquely and entrusted with freedom and responsibility. At the same time it challenges us to invest our everyday living with value: "This is verity – to do what we have to do well".

Educators have the exacting and exciting task of accompanying students in their search for truth and their growing awareness of the mystery of their lives. It is what teaching is all about. At the same time, the desires of the human heart to seek after truth, to find love and purpose, to do some good in the world are crucial elements in the shaping of a Christian consciousness, to be nurtured and encouraged. In helping students discern the real values in the choices they make and supporting their attempts to put their energies into worthwhile undertakings, we enable them to develop a sense of authenticity and a capacity for commitment that will enrich their lives with meaning.



In order to be truthful
We must do more than speak
the truth
We must also hear truth
We must also receive truth
We must also act upon truth
We must also search for truth.

THE PRAYER TREE, MICHAEL LEUNIG

Freedom Justice Sincerity Verity Felicity

Felicity is an attitude of mind, a disposition of the heart which manifests itself in cheerfulness, good humour, joy, happiness, hope, optimism, friendliness, courtesy, positive thinking, inner peace, self-acceptance and courage.

For Mary Ward, who loved a “cheerful giver” and a “cheerful mind” and showed in her own life an extraordinary connection between joy and courage, this felicity springs directly from living out the spirit of freedom, justice and sincerity.

Felicity is a natural gift of youth and an essential element of the Loreto spirit. With a positive commitment to this spirit, our schools can offer students an experience of stability and happiness in which felicity can flourish along with self-esteem. Resisting self-pity, self-centredness, undue anxiety, despondency, envy, cynicism, apathy and every form of fanaticism, felicity belongs to the open-minded and the generous-hearted; it offers a challenge to adults in the school community as well as students. It is nourished by fun and celebration, by beauty and creativity, by sensitivity to the natural environment and by opportunities for self-expression and for reflection. Whatever nourishes the spirit, values spirituality and strengthens belief in God’s compassionate and active presence in all situations, promotes this joyous, light-hearted and courageously hopeful attitude to life.



Joy is the Christian’s
gigantic secret.
GK CHESTERTON



Challenge



In Australia we are part of a rapidly changing culture which offers us both challenges and opportunities. Mary Ward strove to educate in and for society, not apart from it. Without being simplistic or defensive, she would encourage us to be open and yet discerning of the various movements of our time, “referring all things to God” to sift what is truly good from what diminishes.

In a pluralistic but substantially secular culture, Loreto schools need to generate an environment where Gospel values are appreciated, lived and imparted. They need to build a strong sense of Christian community, offering a genuine experience of what church is and can be, within the context of the wider Church. Critical attentiveness to social, political, economic and ecclesial issues is part of the same imperative. This requires the commitment of all involved to the ideal of promoting intellectual development informed by Christian values and seeking truth wherever it may lead. Where accepted notions or modes of our society deny or are at variance with the deepest truths of humanity, as revealed in Jesus, then we are called, like Him, to be counter-cultural, however unpopular that may be.

Issues such as social inequity, environmental destruction, materialism, human rights, multiculturalism and reconciliation are rightly, therefore, the concern of our schools. As such they should be addressed in programmes, in policies and in the experiences offered to students. As well, members of school councils, staff and parents are challenged and encouraged to develop and deepen their personal commitment to the attitudes and values the schools uphold. This challenge is ongoing. Sensitivity, balance, trust and respect are integral to the endeavour, as is the firm conviction that the very nature of Loreto education is essentially characterised by hope.



See this city? Here God lives
among the people.

REVELATIONS 21:3

In collaboration with the network of schools across Australia, the Institute is committed to the task of sustaining and renewing this vision, entrusting to local school communities – Council, staff, students and parents – the task of making it a reality.

For us, as for Mary Ward, the future is unknown. Because of this fundamental uncertainty, we find a gift for our time in her charism: love of Jesus, freedom, justice, sincerity, verity and felicity. This distinctive spirit is our inheritance. It can be a resource for the future, informing and guiding our reflection, our decisions and our action.



Acknowledgements

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Special thanks are due to the following people:

Writer:

Margaret Honner ibvm

Process Facilitator:

Moya Hickey (1998)

Archivists: (1998)

Josie Jeffery ibvm

Majella McCahon

Paula Ziesing ibvm

IBVM Workshop Presenters: (1998)

Jan Barlow ibvm

Margaret Burchell ibvm

Jennifer Collins ibvm

Deirdre Rofe ibvm

Cynthia Wright ibvm

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Inside front cover and page 11: A sculptural portrait of Mary Ward. Sculptor: Meliesa Judge. Liquid Metal Studios. 2006. Australia

Loreto Ballarat

1600 Sturt Street

Ballarat Vic 3350

www.loreto.vic.edu.au

Loreto Normanhurst

Pennant Hills Road

Normanhurst NSW 2076

www.loretonh.nsw.edu.au

Loreto Marryatville

316 Portrush Road

Marryatville SA 5068

www.loreto.sa.edu.au

Loreto Kirribilli

85 Carabella Street

Kirribilli NSW 2061

www.loreto.nsw.edu.au

Loreto Toorak

10 Mandeville Crescent

Toorak Vic 3142

www.loretooorak.vic.edu.au

Loreto Coorparoo

415 Cavendish Road

Coorparoo Qld 4151

www.loreto.qld.edu.au

Loreto Nedlands

69 Webster Street

Nedlands WA 6009

www.loretonedlands.wa.edu.au

John XXIII College

Mooro Drive

Mt Claremont WA 6010

www.johnxxiii.edu.au



Do your best and God
will help.

MARY WARD





LORETO BALLARAT (EST. 1875)



LORETO NORMANHURST (EST. 1897)



LORETO MARRYATVILLE (EST. 1905)



LORETO KIRRIBILLI (EST. 1908)



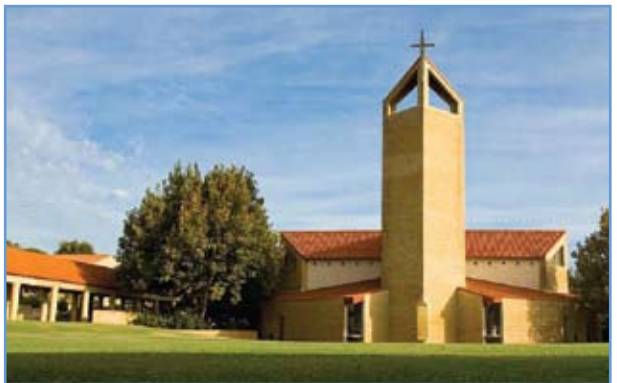
LORETO TOORAK (EST. 1924)



LORETO COORPAROO (EST. 1928)



LORETO NEDLANDS (EST. 1931)



JOHN XXIII COLLEGE (EST. 1977)



Our ideals often make our realities.

MARY GONZAGA BARRY