



The Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary is an apostolic congregation of pontifical right. It was founded in the seventeenth century by an English woman, Mary Ward. She was the first to attempt to form a teaching order of sisters, free from enclosure, from choir, and a fixed manner of dress. Her confidence in the ability of women prompted her to also propose that this institute be self-governed, rather than be under the jurisdiction of a men's congregation, or the Bishop, as was the custom at the times. In the spirit of St. Ignatius, Mary's vision was of a community of "contemplatives in action," free to respond to the changing needs of the church, for the greater honor and glory of God. Her revolutionary ideas were not accepted officially by the church in her life time, but her vision and spirit live on today in her daughters, serving the church throughout the world.

The Institute in North America, Canada and the United States, has its motherhouse in Toronto, Ontario. The sisters, numbering 385, are known to many people as Loretto Sisters. They serve in the Canadian provinces of British Columbia, Ontario, and Saskatchewan and in the states of Arizona, California, Illinois and Michigan. The community is enriched by its international character which provides shared resources amid diverse spiritual and cultural experiences. For the most part however, Canadian sisters live and work in Canada and the American sisters

INSTITUTE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, Loretto Sisters, IBVM



reside and serve in the United States.

Each sister, using her unique gifts and talents, strives to meet the needs of today's church. They are involved in various works of pre-school through adult education. They minister to minority groups, especially the Native American and inner-city residents. They also serve as directors of religious education programs, pastoral ministers and hospital chaplains. All resources are directed to the needs of God's

people and the promotion of human dignity.

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