

In loving memory of Sr Mary Wright IBVM

It is with great sadness that the Loreto Sisters of Australia and South East Asia announce the death of Sr. Mary Wright IBVM, former Province Leader and Institute Leader, on 29 March 2025.

Mary was a remarkable woman, known both nationally and internationally as an educator, leader, canon lawyer, writer, facilitator and board director. As a Loreto sister, she was at various times, Principal of Loreto Schools, Province Consultor, Province Bursar, Province Leader, Delegate to Chapters and Congregations, and Institute Leader.

Mary began her life in Melbourne, the second of seven siblings born to Molleen and Davern Wright. She was educated at Loreto Mandeville Hall Toorak and following a year studying medicine at university in 1964, she entered the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Loreto Sisters) in 1965.

After her first profession of vows in the Institute, Mary completed a Bachelor of Science at the University of Melbourne from 1968-1970, followed by a Master of Science in 1971. She then completed a Diploma of Education at Monash University. Mary worked at various Loreto Schools in Australia as a teacher and boarding school supervisor, inspiring countless students with her ever-curious mind and passion for learning.

In 1977, Mary was appointed as school principal of Loreto Mary's Mount Ballarat, marking the beginning of a long and distinguished career in leadership and administration.

In 1987, the then province leader Sister Anne McPhee, recognising the evolving needs of the Church and religious life, asked Mary to pursue a doctorate in canon law at the University of St Paul in Ottawa. At the completion of her study, Mary practised canon law in Australia and Rome, serving at the Vatican Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. Her service in the Congregation included involvement with developing Public Juridic Persons, especially in the USA, Canada and Australia.

Mary's leadership extended beyond her roles in education and canon law. She was appointed as Province Leader in 1996 and later elected as Institute Leader at the General Congregation in Mauritius in 1998, serving in this latter position for eight years. During this time, she played a pivotal role in uniting the Irish, American, and Canadian branches of the IBVM. Her global outlook led to the *Courage to Move* initiative, inviting Provinces to look at the needs of disadvantaged countries in their part of the world and move beyond borders, re-engaging with the missionary spirit evident in the early foundations. This led to the establishment of new Loreto foundations in Ecuador, Mauritius, Seychelles, Ghana, Zambia, Namibia, Albania, Timor-Leste, and South Sudan; many of which are still serving local communities today.

After her term in Rome, Mary returned to Australia, and from her base in Melbourne, continued to work, both nationally and internationally, as a canonist, facilitator, presenter and board director. She generously shared her wisdom and knowledge, working with many different institutes and congregations, playing a pivotal role at critical turning points in their history. Mary was particularly conscious of smaller orders with fewer resources, giving substantial time and energy to this task.

Mary was a “renaissance woman” knowledgeable, cultured and proficient in a wide range of fields. Her commanding intellect and natural authority combined with her enviable ability to communicate profound and complex matters with refreshing clarity and simplicity made her a highly sought after adviser and speaker. A lover of history, science, nature, the arts and humanities, Mary was both grounded and imaginative, often drawing on music and art to illustrate an argument. Alongside her incisive intellect, Mary had a deep faith reflected in her motto “Come Lord Jesus,” an abiding freedom “to refer all to God,” practical compassion and a great capacity to enjoy life. She gave herself wholeheartedly to the task at hand whether it be work or recreation.

In November 2023 Mary was once again appointed the Leader of the Province of Australia and South East Asia; a position she held until January 2025 when she resigned due to ill health.

Mary’s recent months were marked by illness, which she faced with remarkable grace and quiet dignity. She died peacefully, leaving behind a legacy of expertise, wisdom, generosity, and deep grounded faith.

Mary was a true Mary Ward woman, we celebrate her life and give thanks for her immeasurable contribution to the Province, the global Institute, the Church and the wider community.

May she now rest in peace.

Helen Maquire IBVM
First Consultor, Loreto Province Australia and South East Asia
29 March 2025



Sister Mary Wright IBVM
1945 – 2025