



Mary Ward was born in Yorkshire in 1585 and lived in a time of great social upheaval and repression of the Catholic Church. Her family, both male and female members, were strong supporters and sufferers for the Catholic cause in England.

Mary and her supporters founded their religious order in St. Omer in the Netherlands and foundations were made in London, Liege, Cologne, Treves, Rome, Naples, Perugia, Munich, Vienna, Pressburg and Prague.

Their charism was to actively support education and welfare in the community under the leadership of a female superior. This model, based on the Jesuit model, was unpopular with the Catholic Church at a time when enclosure for women Religious was the norm. This disapproval culminated in a Papal Bull of Suppression in 1631 and Mary's arrest and imprisonment for heresy but she was later released and returned to England.

Mary Ward died in England in 1645 but her Institute survived in their houses in Rome, Bavaria and Paris and in 1686 the Institute was founded in York at Micklegate Bar which was become the Bar Convent, the first English Convent since the dissolution of the monasteries in 1535.



Today there are two branches of Mary Ward's religious order; the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Loreto) and the Congregation of Jesus (CJ).