In November 2016 Cecilia O Dwyer invited us to reflect on the relevance of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from the perspective of IBVM Institute Leadership. After a period of personal reflection we had a reflection day together on February 26th 2017 in the beautiful Villa Palazzola at Lake Albano. This is our joint reflection:
The 17 Sustainable Development Goals are real in the life of IBVM. Throughout the world IBVM women are working with the poor, the marginalized, for the education of girls, empowering women, improving health care, against trafficking, with migrants, prisoners, the hungry and homeless, with HIV-Aids victims, indigenous people, and with those who are hurt and addicted. We work in partnership with local agencies, with other congregations, with governments. As Leadership we have visited the various provinces and seen at first hand how sisters and colleagues are working for a better world, to improve the lives of so many. It is heartening and encouraging to witness this on our visits. Through our own networks of MWI, our UN office and province contacts, and our JPIC we strive to connect and support our sisters and their ministries across the world. These networks are an expression of our international oneness, although it is an ongoing challenge to keep these networks vibrant and dynamic.

Our recent General Congregations have all called us to work for a more sustainable and just world, to put the poor at the centre of our lives, and to strive for oneness. Call 1 invites us to allow Jesus to transform our lives. This will direct us to bring those who are forced to live in poverty to the centre of our lives and to be people of justice, striving for oneness, in right relationship with others and with our environment. In *Laudato Si, On the Care for our Common Home*, Pope Francis emphatically calls us to be responsible for the life of our planet. We are each called to live sustainably. The gospel calls us to radical loving, the SDGs give us a practical vision to live in a responsible, sustainable way. Our living of the Gospel compels us to love, and the SDGs give us a framework to live out this call to love.

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Our spirituality, as expressed in the vision of the Just person and in our Ignatian spirituality, particularly the Spiritual Exercises, grounds us in a life that seeks harmony and justice for all. The Principle and Foundation of the Exercises calls us to a freedom and a sense of equilibrium, we are loved and created by God.
When I live consciously and in a balanced way, I am detached and free to make the world a better place, consuming in a responsible way, with respect for all of creation. *I live simply so others may simply live.*

The SDGs challenge us to live the vision personally, socially, economically and environmentally. Our Calls do likewise.

In our personal lives, to live the vision as expressed in the SDGs and in our Calls and Constitutions, is a challenge to each one. As an inter-cultural team we are conscious that we symbolize the difference that is often a reality in our world. Our diversity challenges us to face some of the critical issues facing today’s world. In our role and in our experience we meet real challenges that are daily occurrences for people around the world: difficulties crossing borders, immigration issues, language, colour and race issues. All of these challenge us to continue to search for oneness in our own team.

Living oneness at an inter-province level also brings challenges. Many of our growing provinces and Courage to Move ministries are in the Global South. It has been a desire since GC 98 to live our oneness at an economic and social level, *the one purse, one body and one mission.* This is not easy and constantly eludes us. With all the best will in the world, we struggle to share finances and resources across provinces. We search for ways to make this oneness our reality. It is difficult to dispose of our excess, our natural tendency is to hold our excess and not share: “the rainy day phenomenon!” We are possessive of our own wealth, be it wealth of personnel, finance, technology or knowledge. The Capacity for Life and Ministry Resource Assessment which was done prior to GC 14 gives us a clear indication of where our various resources lie, but it is still a challenge for us as leadership, to encourage greater cross province sharing, to become one. This is a similar challenge to what the SDGs are trying to address in our world.

As Mary Ward women in the 21st century, whatever our age or culture, we strive to create a better world, we encourage one another to live lives true to our charism. Committed to living the Gospel and to justice, we recognize the relevance of the Sustainable Development Goals for all of us. It is our conviction that there is need to constantly reflect on and deepen our knowledge of them, and to commit to this vision and its implementation in our world today.

*Brenda, Igora, Judy, Macarena and Noelle. February 26th 2017*