



13th June 2007

Dear Society of Mary member,

New 'Virtual' Ward of Our Lady of Grace

As you know, those of us who are members of the Society of Mary in the St Edmundsbury & Ipswich Diocese and borders are at present 'attached' to Headquarters Ward, which means we have no actual Ward in our area, and may feel rather isolated.

Because of our geographical distribution, it is not feasible to have a Ward based solely in one place, nor to have a very formal structure and monthly meetings. For this reason, it is proposed to establish a new 'Virtual' Ward, to enable members to be kept in touch by email or by post. Each month, relevant news and details of events in different parts of the area will be circulated to members, and will also appear on a Ward webpage linked to the main Society of Mary website (www.societyofmary.net). It is hoped thereby that as many members as possible will be able to attend events in their own locality, the rest of us joining you spiritually if not physically. Once or twice a year, we will try to gather together centrally for a Mass and to meet together.

I do emphasise that this will not be the same as a formal Ward: there will be no 'subs' (though a contribution towards postage for those who receive their communications by ordinary mail would be appreciated), and therefore no elected Treasurer. For the time being, as Secretary of the Society, I am happy also to be Ward Secretary and responsible for all communications, but if anyone would like to take over at any time, please let me know! Fr Philip Gray, Vicar of S. Mary's, Mendlesham, and a member of the General Council of the Society, has kindly offered to be Ward Superior for the present.

It is proposed that the new Ward shall be called the Ward of Our Lady of Grace (being arguably the major and perhaps most ancient Shrine of Our Lady in the area) and its (physical!) inauguration will take place on Wednesday 14th August 2007 (the Vigil of the Assumption) at S. Mary's, Mendlesham, Mass 7.30pm, (preacher Fr Jeremy Dowding from Thorpe-le-Soken, Essex), followed by Procession of Our Lady, and fireworks. I do hope that as many SoM members as possible will be able to attend and join in this celebration, where our Ward will be formally inaugurated. Wear your medal and come along! Priest members who would like to concelebrate should contact Fr Philip Gray on 01449 766359. If anyone you know would like to join the Society, they can be admitted on this occasion also. Directions to Mendlesham can be obtained from Fr Philip Gray or myself, and transport for those needing it from Ipswich can be arranged.

If you would like to receive your communications by email, please do send me your email address to; ipswich@societyofmary.net. Priest members: I would be most grateful if you could let me know in advance of times of Mass and so on for celebration of Marian feasts and other Marian days in your parish(es). Inevitably, these may well overlap with meetings of Cells of Our Lady of Walsingham, Forward in Faith and other Societies to which SoM members may belong, but we do want to have as wide a coverage as possible. I attach a list of those known to me already through Forward in Faith (Suffolk) but would be grateful for all other information.

An account of the setting up of our Ward will appear in the relevant issue of AVE, as will any future events.

Our 'Virtual Ward' will be a first for the Society of Mary, and if it works well, could be replicated in other areas where members are scattered geographically, so please do support the Ward and help to make it work! All ideas are most welcome.

As Secretary of the Society of Mary, I do have access to the main database, and new members with relevant postcodes will be automatically assigned to this Ward in future. However, your details are confidential, and will remain so unless you give express permission for them to be passed to anyone else within the Ward. They will not be used for any other purpose.

I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible on August 14th.

Yours sincerely,

Celia Bush

Secretary