



# Catholic Maritime News

SPRING/SUMMER 2020

VOLUME 93

## One Simple Thing

On Pentecost Sunday Bishop Shelton Fabre of Houma-Thibodeaux delivered a homily reflecting on the reality of racism in light of the death of George Floyd. One of the questions he addressed for the listeners was: "what can I do?" In speaking to those who were not African-American he invited us to do one simple thing. That simple thing was to ask an African American friend: "how did seeing the video of George Floyd's death make you feel?" In asking the question he asked us to give space for the person to respond. I remember hearing clearly in the response of one friend an expression of deep pain.

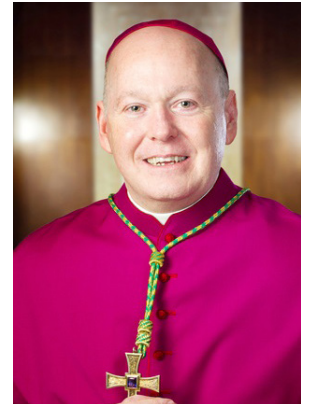
The feelings brought up by that event and the following weeks have run deep. I know that many of our Chaplains and Seafarers have had powerful conversations about race and justice in the light of the Gospel message of Jesus Christ. These conversations can be extremely intense and often we may desire to avoid them for another day. When we do have the courage to share and listen, with openness to one another's feelings and thoughts, a pathway to hope and a better day become possible. The pathway is one marked out by our ministry - striving to be a listening heart for another.

The ministry of the listening heart is evident in so many stories I hear from Chaplains around the country and the world. On May 22 we were able to offer our prayer for Mariners from locations like Jacksonville, Florida; Seattle, Washington; Washington, DC; Charleston, South Carolina; Port Arthur and Point Comfort, Texas and others. In listening to the prayers from the around the country I heard men and women who are present to brothers and sisters in challenging times related to the pandemic. Seafarers know they are not alone and there is someone who will stand up and join a voice with theirs. May our voices continue to bring to others the blessings and the challenges of the seafarers' vocation.

I want to conclude here with inspiring words that come from the first encyclical letter written by Pope Francis over six years ago. Calling us to be a Church not afraid to have difficult conversations he wrote in *Evangelii Gaudium*:

"49. Let us go forth, then, let us go forth to offer everyone the life of Jesus Christ. Here I repeat for the entire Church what I have often said to the priests and laity of Buenos Aires: I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security. I do not want a Church concerned with being at the center and which then ends by being caught up in a web of obsessions and procedures. If something should rightly disturb us and trouble our consciences, it is the fact that so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life. More than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us: "Give them something to eat" (Mk 6:37)."

May God bless you and your families throughout this summer season, and may you continue to have the strength to offer the true food of love and compassion. Let's entrust our hearts to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary and let's keep one another in prayer,



*Bishop Brendan J. Cahill*

*+ Brendan Cahill*



# Catholic Maritime News

is published by the

## Apostleship of the Sea (AOS) National Office

3 times a year – Spring, Summer and Winter.

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church  
Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees, & Travelers

**Bishop Promoter:** Most Reverend Brendan J. Cahill  
Bishop of the Diocese of Victoria, TX

**AOS National Director:** Sr. Dr. Joanna Okereke, HHCJ  
3211 Fourth Street, NE, Washington, DC 20017

Phone: (202) 541-3359 ■ Fax: (202) 541-5417  
E-mail: [jokereke@uscceb.org](mailto:jokereke@uscceb.org)

[www.usccb.org/AOS](http://www.usccb.org/AOS)

We encourage you to visit our website which has user friendly navigation tools. Check out our interactive map with a list of AOS chaplains and contacts, know about news and events and other relevant information.

## Contact Catholic Maritime News

We welcome your comments, feedback and suggestions.  
Tell us what you think by sending an email to [AOS@uscceb.org](mailto:AOS@uscceb.org).

**DISCLAIMER** Statements and opinions expressed in articles and other materials herein are the views of individual authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Apostleship of the Sea National Office.

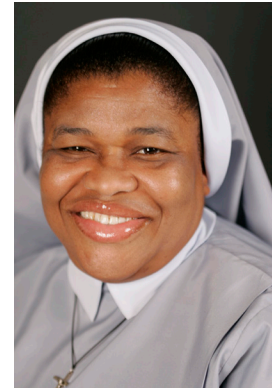
**Apostleship of the Sea of the United States of America (AOSUSA)** is a professional membership association of chaplains/associates, cruise ship priests, mariners, student mariners and affiliate members.

### For AOSUSA membership enquiries:

Doreen Badeaux  
1500 Jefferson Drive, Port Arthur, TX 77642  
Tel. (409) 985-4545 ■ Fax (409) 985-5945  
E-mail: [AOSusa@sbcglobal.net](mailto:AOSusa@sbcglobal.net) ■ [www.AOS-usa.org](http://www.AOS-usa.org)

## Do Not Give Up The Good Work

Sr. Joanna Okereke, HHCJ  
National Director – Apostleship  
of the Sea



*Sr. Joanna Okereke, HHCJ*

The coronavirus has changed life for most of the planet, as billions of people experience social isolation, loneliness and challenges. The National Office of the Apostleship of the Sea organized a “Virtual” National Day of Prayer and Remembrance for Mariners and People of the Sea. Most Reverend Brendan J. Cahill, S.T.D, Bishop of the Diocese of Victoria, Texas, and Apostleship of the Sea (AOS) promoter, participated. The day honored those who serve as merchant mariners, seafarers, fishers, their families, port personnel and all who work or travel on the high seas.

A network of family and friends joined in the prayer, thereby energizing each other and fostering deep oneness with Christ. The virtual National Day of Prayer was a wonderful show of support for the people of the sea to acknowledge their great work and contribution. Amid Coronavirus pandemic, seafarers and our team of chaplains are working often at a great personal risk. They deserve our support and thanks. As the world faces the realities and effects related to COVID-19, it is important to continue to accompany, witness, give attentive listening, provide spiritual guidance through phone call, zoom call or any other virtual means.

In over 50 ports, many AOS chaplains, maritime deacons and lay ecclesial ministers participate in the mission of Christ by sharing of the gift of love. They welcome, network and reach out to seafarers, fisher men and women, and their families. As the Church continues to honor the heroic role of those who serve as merchant mariners, seafarers, fishers, their families, port personnel amidst the many challenges they face during Coronavirus Pandemic. I ask Our Lady Star of the Sea, for her intercession and maternal protection for the end to the Coronavirus.



## Coronavirus means quiet times for maritime ministers in U.S., Canada

By Dennis Sadowski

CLEVELAND (CNS) – Cargo ships from around the world may be docking at the port of Charleston, South Carolina, but for Deacon Paul Rosenblum, the days are pretty quiet.

As the lone port minister for the Diocese of Charleston's Apostleship of the Sea ministry, Deacon Rosenblum, 66,



*In this undated photo, Deacon Wayne Lobell is seen with crew members from a cargo ship going ashore to shop. Deacon Lobell has had to shut down his outreach efforts to seafarers in the port of New Orleans to prevent the spread of COVID-19. (CNS photo/courtesy Deacon Wayne Lobell)*

has opted for staying off the ships so he doesn't accidentally bring any illness – the new coronavirus or otherwise – to seafarers.

"I'm not going on ships unless they make a request for me to come onboard," he said. "That's an oddity right now. Most of the foreign crews are self-isolating. The American crews are not so diligent about things."

Deacon Rosenblum works with the Charleston Port and Seafarers' Society to serve the crews of oceangoing vessels. He works alongside an Episcopal priest and an administrator. The ministry involves talking with crew members, offering rides for shopping, staffing a seafarer center and simply being present.

Not personally meeting seafarers makes it difficult to minister to their personal and spiritual needs. But all involved know that it's for the better for the time being, he said.

Deacon Rosenblum understands the seafarers, almost exclusively young men, must keep themselves safe from illness. At sea, there's no access to care outside of basic first aid and it can be days between ports of call. An illness can spread quickly among the crew, who spend much of their time in tight quarters.

By law, a ship's captain must report any illness on board

to the U.S. Coast Guard before docking. In shipping, time is money, and any illness can cause a delay in delivering millions of dollars of cargo.

The coronavirus has disrupted the routines of Catholic port ministers across the U.S. and Canada. Deacon Jose Deleon, 68, who works with the Archdiocese of Seattle's Catholic Seafarers Ministry, said he last visited a ship March 19. "We're pretty much down to zero," he said.

Deacon Wayne Lobell, who runs the Stella Maris Maritime Center West for the Archdiocese of New Orleans, has shut down his outreach efforts because of the exponential growth in reported COVID-19 cases in southern Louisiana.

"The detriment is we can be more of a problem to them than they are to us," Deacon Lobell, 69, told Catholic News Service March 25.

"For the past two weeks, I haven't had any calls at all. I don't know if the agents are telling them (seafarers) to stay on board. We don't want to deny them to come to shore, but it could be more of a problem if they got off. They they'd have to clean the entire ship. We've decided to stay away from that," Deacon Lobell said.

Deacon Dileep Athaide, 70, is coordinator of the archdiocesan Catholic chaplaincy service in the port of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada's largest. He said port officials had closed the seafarers center, a place where crew members could gather, arrange for rides for shopping, buy cellphone SIM cards or hang out. The center is the place where Deacon Athaide often interacted with seafarers. Not now.

"They're just being safe," Deacon Athaide said.

In normal times, the deacons would lead Communion services on ships when time allowed. They distributed rosaries and prayer cards, delivered specialty baked goods, and counsel the men who often are away from home for up to 10 months at a time.

Even before the onset of COVID-19, the need for such basic services has declined as port stops have been shortened through automation. Ships unload and reload in a matter of hours, leaving little time for crew members to take care of personal needs and less time for a minister to conduct even a 15-minute prayer service, the deacons said.

Many of the crews primarily consist of Filipinos. Indians also are common, while some East Europeans are occasionally are on board. Hailing from a predominantly Catholic country, Filipinos most often appreciate the outreach, Deacon Deleon said.

"In some cases, they'd want to go to confession," said Deacon Deleon, himself a Filipino. "I'm trying to schedule a priest to come whenever I can to come with me. But that

is very rare.”

Deacon Rosenblum in Charleston has made friends with some crew members, keeping in touch via social media or email. Once in a while an old friend will return to port and both seek out each other. But mostly, he said he realizes he won't see the men he meets ever again.

“I tell people they minister to me as much as I minister to them,” he said.

Beyond the ship crews, the deacons said they maintain good relationships with port staff, including the pilots who meet a ship and guide a captain through a harbor into a berth. Deacon Lobell in New Orleans said one river pilot, who is a devout Catholic, often acts as his eyes and ears on a ship and points out someone who is in special need. The pilot also has been authorized as an extraordinary minister of holy Communion by the archdiocese and will distribute the Eucharist – when there's time.

For now, until the COVID-19 pandemic eases, the deacons will continue to show up at the ports, hoping to be of service to anyone they run into, be they seafarers, longshoremen or security officials.

“We'll see,” Deacon Athaide said. “It's such a fluid situation. It's changing all the time.”

*Reprinted with permission. © Catholic News Service*

## Deacon Archer named award finalist

Archdiocese's maritime ministry receiving \$10,000 from Catholic Extension

By ROB HERBST

MOBILE – Arriving seafarers to the Port of Mobile will get further support from the Catholic Maritime Ministry of Mobile.

Deacon John Archer, who helps coordinate the archdiocese's ministry, was one of 11 finalists for Catholic Extension's 2019-20 Lumen Christi award. As a finalist, Deacon Archer received \$10,000 to support the maritime ministry.

Catholic Extension raises and distributes funds to support U.S. mission dioceses, including the Archdiocese of Mobile, and the Lumen Christi is the highest honor bestowed by Catholic Extension.

“You're kind of in awe,” Deacon Archer said. “It was an honor to be recognized for what you're doing and it's been nice to have the ministry recognized for the work it is doing.”

Mack McCarter of the Diocese of Shreveport was this year's winner.

The Archdiocese of Mobile routinely nominates a

candidate who “demonstrates how the power of faith can transform lives and communities.”

According to Deacon Archer, funds provided by Catholic Extension will help provide items for seafarers.

“I want to talk to our advisory board, but we want to make sure we have the things to bring seafarers when they come to port. Rosaries, having supplies ...” Deacon Archer said. “This will go a long way.”

Deacon Archer was assigned to the Catholic Maritime Ministry when he moved from the Diocese of Oakland (Calif.) to Mobile about two years ago.



*Rev. Msgr. William Skoneki, V.G., Vicar General for the Archdiocese of Mobile, Deacon John Archer, Archbishop Thomas J. Rodi, and Ms. Michele Manry, Executive Director of Financial Services for the Archdiocese of Mobile.*

Before working with the ministry, he had little experience working with seafarers.

“To their conditions and to how hard they work, it's been an eye-opener,” Deacon Archer said. “It's all new. But it does feed my business background. You're dealing with business and economy, but you're dealing with people. My ministerial side is drawn to it. It's been such a blessing for me and I knew nothing about it.”

He added: “I see a vessel going by in and out of the port. Not just a vessel. There's 20 lives on it.”

Seafaring workers can spend up to nine months at sea and come from all corners of the world.

“I love it when they say Mobile is a good port,” Deacon Archer said.

Sometimes the ministry calls for simply being there and listening to the seafarers' plights.

Recently, Deacon Archer said a seafarer from the Philippines talked to him.

“He said: ‘I think my brother wants to be a priest, but I'm not that good.’

“So I got him a little simple prayer book in Tagalog and said ‘take this, put it on your nightstand and don't discount

yourself. You're blessed in ways your brother isn't.' So (in this ministry) you get little moments like that.

"It's a presence ministry. Let the Holy Spirit do the work."

With assistance from area parishes, the ministry will also be present during Christmas. Coordinated by St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Mobile, the ministry will deliver small gifts to seafarers during Christmas.

Along with St. Vincent de Paul, parishes collecting items include Shrine of the Holy Cross in Daphne; St. John in Bromley; St. John in Grand Bay; Cathedral Parish, Corpus Christi, St. Dominic, Our Savior and St. Catherine of Siena parishes in Mobile; St. Lawrence Parish in Fairhope; as well as the Filipino community in the archdiocese.

"They're away from home at Christmas, they're away from land," Deacon Archer said. "Last year we gave them shirts that says where we are. And they're so wonderful and so thankful. They say 'thank you for thinking of us.'"

© *The Catholic Week 2020 Reprinted with permission*



DICASTERY FOR PROMOTING  
INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

### XXV World Congress of the Stella Maris/ Apostleship of the Sea and the Centenary Celebration in Scotland has been postponed

On March 31, 2020 Cardinal Peter K. A. Turkson, Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development at the Vatican announced the postponement of XXV World Congress of the Stella Maris/Apostleship of the Sea and the Centenary Celebration from the 29th September 2020 to the 4th October 2021 in Glasgow, Scotland to the Presidents of the Episcopal Conferences, the Bishops Promoters, the Regional Coordinators, the National Directors, and the Chaplains and Volunteers of the Apostolate of the Sea. The date of the XXV World Congress of the Stella Maris and the Centenary Celebration will be from Sunday October 3rd to Saturday October 8th, 2021 in Glasgow - Scotland.

Cardinal Turkson requested that the Centenary date, October 4th, 2020, not go unnoticed, but celebrated in some way in our communities.

He also expressed his gratitude to the chaplains and volunteers who found new ways to support and be near people of the sea during the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

The full letter from Cardinal Turkson may be viewed at: <http://www.apostolatusmaris.org/xxv-world-congress-postponed/>



*Participants in the Houston School Maritime Training 2020*

### Houston School 2020 – Maritime Ministry Training

By Kevin Walker

#### The Houston School's 2020 Session

A weeklong course on maritime ministry has once again been hosted by the Houston International Seafarers' Center (HISC) and NAMMA with the endorsement of AOS United States and ICMA. Instructors taught on a range of topics, some focused more on connecting with seafarers, others on the organizational aspects of seafarers' ministry, and others on religious, legal, and historical topics. Students got chances to learn, and, as importantly, to make connections: they quickly became their own miniature network of friends, stretching from across the coasts and lakeshores of North America to as far afield as Lagos, Nigeria, Felixstowe, the United Kingdom, and Mumbai, India. Our hope and theirs is that, through these connections, they learn from and teach each other, and we hope in years to come to ourselves to hear back from them at future NAMMA gatherings.

The 'Houston School' is a long-standing program for teaching and reflecting on ministry to seafarers, taught by experienced chaplains and other maritime experts. Many chaplains currently in NAMMA's membership are graduates of the Houston School, including some of those now involved in the course itself. Originally taught for two weeks in-class, the course has now been made more accessible by reducing the in-class portion to one week and supplementing it with online lessons on NAMMA's online learning platform, MARE Training, which has been developed with support of the TK Foundation.

Students came to this course with all kinds of motivations: some were new volunteers, hoping to learn more about how to do ship visiting well; some had experience advocating for seafarers in other capacities but wanted to better understand the religious and ministry

components; one was a recently-hired centre director; another had been asked to recruit volunteers and wants to learn about what he is recruiting them to do. Some have been ministering to seafarers for years and were simply interested in comparing their approaches with others'. Whatever their experience level, all benefited from the opportunity to share perspectives and build relationships.

### **Addressing Challenges in Seafarers' Ministry**

At the beginning of the in-class course, students shared their greatest struggles with seafarers' ministry: conversations across cultures, travelling long distances in large ports, keeping a ministry funded, and moments when it seems like seafarers don't actually need what we're offering them. Many were surprised to learn that about the different problems that their fellow students faced and were able to carry on their ministries in spite of. Students shared advice with each other in that opening session, and in the sessions that followed many of the lessons taught directly pertained to those original questions.

One example of course material addressing the difficulties shared by students came later on that day, with Apostleship of the Sea US Director Sr. Joanna Okereke's presentation on cultural sensitivity and communication. She taught students about the differences between cultures, for instance individualism vs. collectivism and the appropriateness of humour, and the attitudes, skills, and knowledge needed to do intercultural communication well. After the lecture component, the students gathered into groups to discuss what steps they could take to improve their intercultural skills. Important themes that emerged during the discussion included the value of "doing one's homework" when it came to the cultures of seafarers and listening carefully for what is important to the seafarers we talk with.

Another chance to work through the problems of seafarers' ministry came with General Presbyter of New Covenant Lynn Hargrove's sessions. Lynn began by sharing the doubts she had about a critical pastoral incident during her training, and then asked the class what they thought was good about what she had done, what was bad, and how they might have done differently. The group was affirming of Lynn, while also thoughtful in discerning some of the issues at play in her story. Then, she turned the question on the class: when have you had moments in your ministry when you didn't know what to do? Students came forward with stories of serving alcohol to seafarers when they didn't feel comfortable with it, seafarers who had been abandoned by their companies, and seafarers who had asked them for help finding prostitutes.

We heard expertise in these issues: a former bartender talked about the rules around serving alcohol commercially,

and a lawyer talked about liability for seafarers' centers. We also heard differences in each others' perspectives: we worry about personally contributing to prostitution, about talking with seafarers about their marriage commitments, and about protecting pastoral relationships with seafarers. These differences were opportunities for us to prepare ourselves for difficult situations, change our approach, and think about how we might work with people we disagree with on them.

### **Worship Together and Seafarers' Ministry in Religious Life**

As with every NAMMA gathering, every day featured a worship service with readings, prayers, and a homily given by an experienced seafarers' chaplain. As homilies, these were in themselves good testimonies to the love of God expressed in seafarers' ministry, but they were also useful instruction in advocating for seafarers' ministries to congregations and potential donors – Fr. Jan Kubisa of the HISC related an apparent miracle witnessed by seafarers that testified to the mental and physical dangers of life at sea, and Karen Parsons of the Galveston Seafarers' Center shared about a time when a seafarer demonstrated to her the lows of isolation and the highs of service to others. When seafarers' centers go looking for volunteers and sources of funding, their best resources are often churches, but it is not always so easy to find the right words to say in front of them – these homilies and other moving stories are blueprints for testifying to seafarers' ministry.

On the second day, NAMMA's Kevin Walker gave students another opportunity to think about preaching on ministry to seafarers during a lecture on the spiritual significance of the sea in Scripture and ancient religion. After going through examples of the sea as a manifestation of God's power in the Old and New Testaments and comparing the Biblical accounts with Mesopotamian and Greek myths, Kevin presented the students with Bible verses discussing the sea and asked them to consider how they might interpret them through a seafarers' welfare perspective. In exercises like these and in invitations to pray for seafarers, the students practiced connecting seafarers' ministry with their own spiritual convictions and those of others.

Things to be Thankful for

The 2020 Houston School was enriched by many more lessons and activities: lectures on active listening by Denice Foose and Ted Smith, corporate efforts for seafarers' welfare by Anuj Chopra, the MLC, 2006 by seafarers' rights advocate and amateur svedomycologist Douglas Stevenson, and on collaboration by representatives from the Coast Guard and Maritime Association. There were

planned excursions, including trips to the Norwegian Seamen's Church in Houston, the Seafarers' International Union, steak dinner with the Houston Propeller Club, and informal gatherings like dinner at local restaurants and evening worship at local churches. The hospitality of the Houston port and church communities has always been excellent, and this year in no way broke from that pattern. The Houston International Seafarers' Center and its staff are particularly to be thanked, especially chaplain Tom Edwards, executive director Dana Blume, and perennial school volunteer and friend of the HISC, chaplain Marshal Bundren.

As this new generation of maritime ministers enters our ports and seafarers' centers, we as NAMMA look forward to seeing the fruits of their work, and we look forward also to continuing to partner with the HISC in equipping more people for seafarers' welfare work in future.

<http://marereport.namma.org/index.php/2020/04/03/adapting-methods-for-seafarers-ministry-in-uncertain-times/>

*Photo and article used with permission from NAMMA*

## Thoughts on the Coronavirus and AOS ministry

By Andrew K. Middleton

Director, Apostleship of the Sea Baltimore

"Be not afraid..." A common theme in Sacred Scripture and throughout the Pontificate of Pope St. John Paul II. When the Coronavirus first threatened the United States and questions arose about visiting ships, these words came to mind. For me it was a reminder that the AOS ministry is God's work and that he will always protect us. I repeated these words to myself after making the decision to suspend volunteer activity and beginning to come into more contact with seafarers with my increased ships' visits.



*Andrew K. Middleton*

Shortly after suspending volunteer activities, I contracted Coronavirus and was home for several weeks. Again, these words came to mind when I would begin coughing or become short of breath. They were a source of comfort as I knew I was not alone. I knew that God was with me and this was all part of his plan. It was also his will that I recover and get back to visiting ships, in a modified way, and spreading his love and mercy.

We are all called by our Baptism to be saints! When you

look throughout history, you find many Saints and Blessed who ministered to God's children during plagues and pandemics. I look to them as a source of inspiration and guidance as I go about the day visiting ships. Saints such as St. Marianne Cope who cared for lepers and through the use of proper hygiene kept herself and her sisters safe or St. Charles Borromeo who fed thousands people a day at his own great personal expense when a plague struck Milan. St. Damien of Molokai or St. Teresa of Calcutta, the list goes on and on. In Matthew 25; 40 Christ tells us "...Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me." What better way to serve Christ but to follow his words and the example of so many great saints?

In some way, this period in time has led to a greater understanding of life for a seafarer and how AOS might make a difference to them. Much like myself, I am sure that all of you are eager to return to attending Mass and receiving the Eucharist. Imagine what it is like to have this as your normal life. Seafarers are at sea for long periods of time without any access to mass, sacraments or even a normal parish life! Now imagine, how happy you are when a friend stops by these days or phones just to check in. That small act of mercy can lift your spirits and make your perspective change. I imagine that is what a visit from AOS can do for a seafarer who is feeling isolated like we are now.

While these times are difficult for us all who are isolated at home, let us not forget that much of what we are experiencing could be what a seafarer feels every day somewhere around the world. While we wait for our world to return to "normal" or a "new normal" and we try to figure out how best to serve seafarers we should try and remember the words I started off with, "Be not Afraid".

Mary, Star of the Sea, Pray for Us.

## Cruise Ships-Unwelcomed and Stranded Across the Oceans, Leave Crews Suffering

Countries are now banning cruise ship from their coastal waters and internal water ways.

Some countries have banned any travel into or through their country, leaving many seafarers stranded and unable to get home.

In early June 2020 it was reported that experts estimated up to 200,000 people are still stuck at sea worldwide. Because of restrictions amid the COVID-19 pandemic local governments are simply refusing to allow the ships to come in and dock. Crews are serving even up to 11-13 months because they cannot leave the ship. Way Past the time when it is considered safe for them to be working.

Many crew members have little contact with their families

due to limited communications. There are reports that crew members are feel isolated, lonely, depressed, trapped, and a few have committed suicide.

One cruise ship, the Coronavirus-infected Grand Princess, having sailed around the California coast, while the authorities tried to decide what to do with it, was finally permitted to dock at the Port of Oakland, California in early March. The story, as it come in, was reported by John Claassen, the director of the International Maritime Center who make the center available for a press conference at that time.

Subject: Re: Grand Princess

I will just cite the mission of what seamen's clubs are doing around the world. We keep in our prayers the 1100 crew and their families during this stressful time. We are sad that we have not been able to visit with crew, but we don't want to risk the health and safety of other crews and our citizenry. We are thankful for the hospitality of our City and the Port of Oakland during this very difficult time.

There were nearly 40 people at IMC this morning for the press conference. There were 4 TV cameras including NBC KPIX,5, and ABC 7. I welcomed the group saying what I wrote below, and I then introduced Steve Zeltzer From Work Week, KPOO, Pacifica Labor Correspondent. Steve was the MC of the news conference and he does a TV program for KPOO on Labor issues. Jack Heyman from ITF. ILWU, Local 10 President, and many reps from local unions were present. Jack from ITF, the sponsor of the news conference, laid out the issues:

1) There were 4,000 passengers on board with 1100 crew. US Coast Guard air dropped 45 Covid 19 test kits. There were 21 people out of 45 tested who were positive for Coronavirus. (19 crew and two passengers) That means there were nearly 50% of passengers and crew who tested positive. What was the status of the aprox 5.050 passengers and crew who were not tested at all?

2) ITF has a contract with Grand Princess, registered in Bermuda with crew represented by an Italian Labor Union. Jack commented that Grand Princess and Carnival Cruise lines are owned by US billionaires but pay no State or US Federal taxes.

3) Under the ITF agreement, Grand Princess crew must be repatriated at once at owners expense.

4) Jack claimed that putting all crew together in quarantine is wrong medical practice. He cited Dr Fauci, Trump Administration chief doctor that it is wrong to quarantine all healthy and sick together is like having a "petrie dish" and all wind up getting infected. Jack had a retired public interest doctor validate what he was saying



about the petrie dish.

5) It is a problem for the whole maritime industry to allow ships to "fly a flag of convenience."

6) ILWU President said repatriation of crew must be top priority. He also disputed the claims of Pacific Maritime that their facilities and ships are now squeaky clean. He said this is class struggle citing their slogan, "an injury to one is an injury to all." He said that ship owners put profit before health and safety.

7) The retired doctor and a couple of Union officials said that Governor Newsom should order Cal OSHA to investigate at once. They claimed that Cal OSHA now has only one doctor and one nurse on staff to oversee 19 million California workers.

There were also a number of Asian and Filipino workers and community organizations who spoke and are concerned about the fair treatment of the Crew of the Grand Princess which is mostly Filipino. I got business cards from them, and they would like to help out at IMC

John later wrote to say.....This story is three months old. I simply wanted to show how we involved in seafarers ministry dealt with this story that made national news. We simply worked with all of the stakeholders at Port of Oakland by hosting the ITF sponsored press conference at our Center. The health departments of the Four counties in SF Bay Area have ordered everyone to shelter in place. CDC has ordered all crews to stay aboard ship and allow no visitors. Fr Sinclair Oubre gave a good current summary in his radio interview on the plight of crews on ships. Our ministry is dealing with the needs of one seafarer at a time. All are unique and everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

#### **Stella Maris Survey: The Impact of COVID-19 on the Lives of Seafarers**

<http://marereport.namma.org/index.php/2020/05/22/stella-maris-survey-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-the-lives-of-seafarers/>

Fr. Bruno Ciceri, cs, International Director of Stella Maris at the Holy See Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, is the author of this article that ran in the Mare Report.



## Cruise ship priest keeps passengers' spirits up during coronavirus scare

By John Burger

'Westerdam' wasn't able to dock for almost two weeks, but chaplain continued saying Mass, novena for viruses.

A cruise ship that has been refused entry into a number of ports because of fears of coronavirus is expected to allow passengers off in Sihanoukville, Cambodia. The Holland America line's *Westerdam* had been at sea for almost two weeks after visiting Hong Kong, which has had some 50 cases of the ailment, now being called COVID-19.

But a U.S.-based organization that places Catholic priests on cruise ships to ensure that Catholic passengers have the sacraments while on vacation says that the priest on board the *Westerdam* has been helping to provide calm in a very anxiety-ridden situation.

Doreen M. Badeaux, Secretary General of the Apostleship of the Sea of the United States of America, said in an interview Wednesday that the *Westerdam* was nearing the end of the two-week period in which any sign of COVID-19, which originated in China, would show up. There has been no illness reported on board so far.

And the World Health Organization's head Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said at a news conference Wednesday, "Based on what we have been told, there are no suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 on board the *Westerdam*."

The *Westerdam* began a 30-day cruise in Singapore January 16 and made stops in Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam, according to CruiseMapper.com. Its last stop before it was refused further landings was in Hong Kong, where it spent about 34 hours. The vessel, with 1,455 passengers and 802 crew members, was denied entry by Japan, the Philippines, Guam and Thailand.

Holland America Line is one of four lines that participate in the Apostleship of the Sea USA's Cruise Ship Priests program. Badeaux said that so far, none of the cruise ships that currently have AOS-USA cruise ship priests have reported cases of COVID-19.

She said that the priest on board the *Westerdam*, with whom she's been in touch on a daily basis, "said it's unusual not to have someone sick — you know, with the flu or someone who broke a leg or something like that." He told her that he declined being interviewed because "he prefers to be there for passengers and crew and concentrate on them," she said.

"He said that on this ship absolutely no one is ill," she reported. "They're getting along well; they're enjoying really good food, and if anything they're kind of laughing about

how their families are so worried about them that they keep telling them 'We're just fine.'"

Fr. Sinclair Oubre, chaplain in the Port of Beaumont, Texas, where AOS-USA is based, reported that the *Westerdam* priest is celebrating a public Mass and hearing confessions every day, and also providing pastoral care for the crew.

"Certainly there's anxiety there. It's a very serious situation," Fr. Oubre said Wednesday. "It's become an international concern, and justifiably so, but at the same time, because of 24-hour press, it may be raising the anxiety higher."

He said that since nobody has been going ashore, "there's a rhythm that develops on the ship that probably helps [the chaplain] be even more pastoral and interact with the crew members more than usual. You don't have that frantic nature of getting ready for coming into port and leaving port and that type of stuff. More like everybody taking care of the three squares and whatever else."

At the request of the *Westerdam* chaplain for a novena for illness or virus that he could adapt to this particular situation, Fr. Oubre said he "googled 'novena for plagues,' and what I got was something called the 14 Holy Helpers Novena and also St. Roch, who is patron saint for those stricken with sickness. The priest formed it into a novena."

Badeaux said that the presence of the priest was an important factor at a time when the stress and anxiety of passengers and crew could make matters worse.

"The crew and staff are themselves under great anxiety and stress, worrying about themselves getting ill and worried about taking care of their people," she said. "The captain asked everyone on board to please not take out their stress or anxiety on the staff and crew and to remember that they too are not getting to get off the ship and are under the stress of this thing."

Badeaux said the priest has been a "real model for priests to have on board, to be sharing with people and making sure he shares the novena with the captain." Although the situation is serious, it's not as bad as Carnival's *Diamond Princess*, where at least 174 passengers have been diagnosed with COVID-19. That ship is docked in Yokohama, Japan, but has passengers quarantined to their rooms.

*Princess* is not one of the lines that cooperates with AOS-USA.

If a ship with cases of COVID-19 did have a priest on board, it would be doubtful he would be able to conduct services in a public area. "It would be up to the ship whether it would allow [a priest] to provide a short prayer over the intercom, and since not everyone on board is going to be even Christian, maybe they would ask him to at least

give a comforting word,” Badeaux said. “But again, if you’re doing quarantine, for the most part you’re going to want to keep him in his room and everyone else in their room. And just avoiding as much spread of disease as possible.”

Fr. Oubre added that the case of the Westerdam “really points out the importance of this ministry, because we are clearly considered a marginal ministry. ... This became really clear at the Costa Concordia sinking, where the priest was present and was able to be a consolation to the crew members and to be lifting up in prayer and being a strength during that critical time. And here is another time where a priest on the Westerdam, which is very fortunate, can be that source of strength.”

© Aleteia 2020 Reprinted with permission

## Adapting methods for seafarers’ ministry in uncertain times

by Jason Zuidema

The coronavirus crisis has deeply impacted the ministry methods of Christian seafarers’ welfare charities around the world. Ship visitors and chaplains have had to adapt their ways of ministry to find new opportunities to serve seafarers, and have had to take new measures to respect all health and safety concerns. To find out more, we surveyed hundreds of social media posts from ministries around the world. These social media posts reveal the intense challenge of balancing health and safety with the continuing desire to serve seafarers.

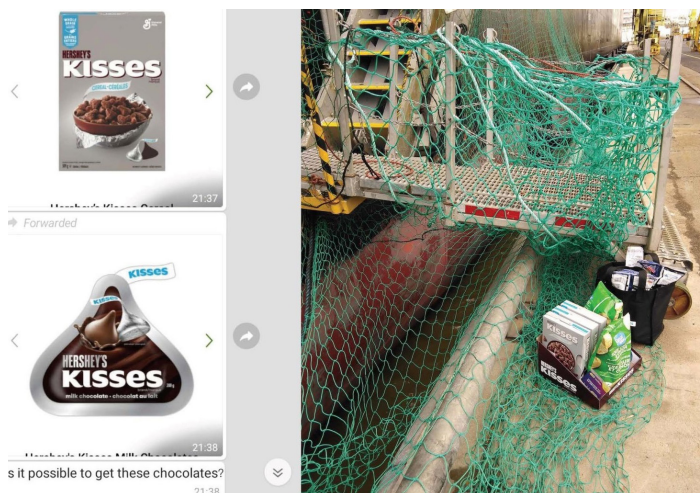
The challenges for us and for seafarers are many. Most cargo ships continue to transport goods around the world to keep our store shelves stocked, except on cruise ships, where crews are being pared down to minimum levels as cruising has effectively stopped. The remaining seafarers are sailing under increased pressure and fatigue with extended contracts, as getting fresh crew members is unmanageable with national borders closed and cities on lockdown around the globe. Even when countries designate cargo ship crews as essential workers, signing on or off is practically impossible for the foreseeable future, as many airlines have cancelled flights. Seafarers on board are exhausted, and the seafarers at home are desperate for a paycheck.

As cities and ports have instituted social isolation programs, traditional forms of ministry like visiting seafarers on their ships, welcoming them in drop-in centers, and transporting them to shops in town is now more or less impossible. Seafarers’ ministries around the globe have had to come to what seems like a standstill.

So, is ministry still possible?

Before we think about our possibilities, it is important

to emphasize: even if ministries have the will to help, there is every reason to err on the side of caution. Many ministries rely on older volunteers that are in the most vulnerable age group for the virus. Many chaplains are in vulnerable age groups, and others are vulnerable due to



other health concerns. A chaplain or volunteer who gets infected can unknowingly transmit the disease to others in their community, which could lead to hundreds more cases and more deaths. From the seafarers’ perspective, too, we should remember that we are more likely to carry the virus to them than they are to us. Ship visitors staying away is for their own protection, yes, but primarily for the protection of seafarers.

There still seems to be some openings for ministry. These openings require caution, creativity, and hard work, but they also address a time of great need for seafarers. Seeing all the ways ministries are finding these openings and stepping into them for seafarers was one of the most rewarding parts of this survey.

New approaches to in-person interaction

In ports where local authorities are allowing it, chaplains are practicing ‘gangway only’ visits. These visits pay close attention to local port regulations and all relevant health guidance. Ship visitors practice social distancing and frequent hand washing and wear PPE as advised.

In these cases, chaplains come to the gangway without entering the ship as they would normally do. Chaplain David Rozeboom of the Ministry to Seafarers in Montreal, Canada writes, “We remain active in the Port of Montreal visiting with seafarers on the deck of the ship and trying to arrange items that the crew need.” He makes deliveries of literature or SIM cards via a mail bucket.

The London Tilbury Seafarers’ Centre, managed by Queen Victoria Seamen’s Rest, continues to deliver to gangways: “We are still providing a service to seafarers

berthed at Tilbury whilst the seafarers' centre is closed due to port restrictions. We will provide a 'one stop' delivery to the ship gangway. Please call [contact number] with a list of your top-up/data sim requirements (limited toiletries are also available)."

Similarly, the team of the Seemannsmission in Cuxhaven, Germany, shared, "Instead of visiting you on your ship in the Port of Cuxhaven without announcement, we will visit you on board only if you invite us. So if you need phonecards, information, newspapers, counselling, or anything else, pls. contact us and we will visit you. Also if you are not allowed to go shopping due to work or other reasons, feel free to contact us. In this case we will try to get the things you need from the shop."

At the Mission to Seafarers in Townsville, Australia, the local team brings a small selection of goods for sale on a fold-up table near the gangway of certain ships. If a seafarer would like to purchase, he can approach and pay.

In some ports, seafarers' ministries will run errands for seafarers who cannot have shore leave. Rev. Simon Ro, The Mission to Seafarers port chaplain in Yokohama, Japan, shared that he is "buying things from the city and bringing it back to seafarers on board ships. We received an email from the captain of a ship in port who asked us to buy some cup noodles for him and his crew, as they were not allowed to go ashore due to restrictions. On March 23rd, we were able to buy the noodles and deliver it to the ship. The captain and his crew were thankful that we were able to meet this need."

#### Ministry from a distance

Besides gangway visits, many seafarers' centers are creating care packages for crew that can be delivered with the help of harbour masters, port pilots, and shipping agents. On the Tyne River in the UK, Stella Maris chaplain Paul Atkinson has created care packages to share with seafarers to show care and support. Atkinson said, "These packages contain religious items such as palm crosses, prayer cards, prayer books, rosaries, &c., toiletries, chocolate and sweets, our monthly Stella Maris Magazine, and other small appropriate items."

Similarly, The Mission to Seafarers in Gladstone, Australia has pulled together almost 300 care packages for crews visiting in the next weeks. They shared, "The first of our welfare boxes was delivered to a vessel berthed in Gladstone today. This has been a major collaboration of so many local businesses, industry players, union, state and federal government departments, volunteers and staff."

Most seafarers' ministries have taken to the internet to try to connect with seafarers. The first thing for most ministries is simply to update their websites and social media pages

to reflect the services they can continue to share. The head office of the Deutsche Seemannsmission shared a comprehensive list of services that are being offered at all its affiliated ministries. Similarly, the Fishermen's Mission put together a list of resources to navigate the challenges of COVID-19 for the fishing industry.

Many chaplains have a long list of seafarer names in their digital rolodex that they are contacting to share a word of encouragement or to catch up on news. Most have made their contact details available so that seafarers can chat if they wish by text or voice. Some chaplaincies have even come up with new technologies for reaching out: the Danish Seamen's Church launched a new chaplain chat website, available principally for Danish-speaking seafarers, and the Mariner's Club in Hong Kong launched a new seafarers app that helps visiting seafarers get up-to-date information on the services that can be provided.

#### Coming together in faith

Special prayer and religious messages are also being shared by port chaplains online. The North American Maritime Ministry Association is offering a 15-minute time of prayer for its members every Tuesday and Friday for the month of April. In the Netherlands, Rev. Pascal Handschin and Rev. Stefan Francke, both affiliated to the Nederlandse Zeevarendencentrale, have started a similar-length series of video recorded sermons and prayers from the chapel of The Mission to Seafarers in Vlissingen.

Ministries around the world are adapting to find possibilities for ministry faced with the coronavirus challenge. These new methods require close attention to health guidance on social distancing, but also demonstrate tremendous dedication in finding opportunities to serve those who might need it most.

*Photo and article used with permission from NAMMA*

### **Pope Francis Messages for Seafarers can be Found at Vatican Website**

17/06/2020

#### **Pope encourages seafarers amid Covid-19 difficulties**

<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2020-06/pope-francis-stella-maris-message-coronavirus-trials.html>

12/07/2020

#### **Sea Sunday highlights the vital work of Seafarers during pandemic**

<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/church/news/2020-07/sea-sunday-highlights-the-vital-work-of-seafarers-during-pandemi.html>

NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER AND REMEMBRANCE FOR MARINERS AND PEOPLE OF THE SEA

Please join us in "virtual" prayer on **ZOOM** for the

# NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER

in remembrance for mariners and people of the sea.

**MAY 22, 2020 | 12:00 PM EASTERN TIME**


with

**Most Rev. Brendan J. Cahill**  
Bishop Promoter, Apostleship of the Sea

**Sr. Joanna Okereke, HHCJ**  
National Director, Apostleship of the Sea

**Dr. Paul Rosenblum**  
Deacon, and AOS Regional Coordinator

Port Chaplains, Volunteers, Brothers, Sisters and all those serving and caring for the People who make their living on the seas.



**APOSTLESHIP OF THE SEA**  
National Office of the United States of America

For more information, call 202-541-3359 or 202-541-3225 or visit [www.usccb.org/aos](http://www.usccb.org/aos).

**Bishop reminds seafarers they are ‘not forgotten’ even amid pandemic**

RHINA GUIDOS

Some of the victims of the coronavirus are an already unseen group that now has a big role to play in the pandemic.

During a May 22 online prayer service via Zoom, those who work with mariners and other maritime workers via the Apostleship of the Sea ministry praised them, their work and their sacrifice as they keep essential goods moving during the pandemic, even as they or their families have been affected.

“As you all know, during this difficult time, seafarers are essential to the movement of goods, including food and medical supplies,” said Sister Joanna Okereke, national director of the Apostleship of the Sea ministry, reminding those gathered of the importance of those they minister.

Along with Bishop Brendan J. Cahill of Victoria, Texas, the ministry’s bishop promoter, Sister Okereke said she believed it was important to continue this year, even in the midst of a pandemic, the tradition of dedicating the National Day of Prayer and Remembrance for Mariners

and People of the Sea – this time via Zoom.

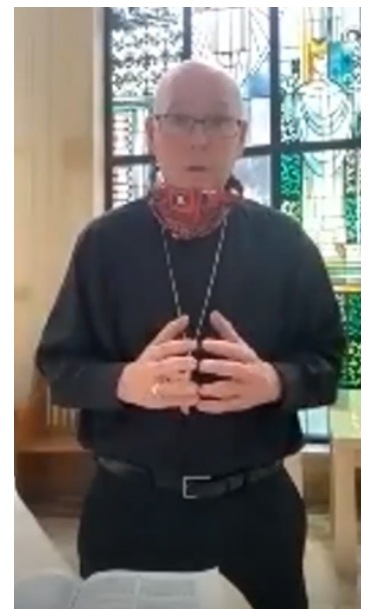
With a virtual background that featured water, Sister Okereke, of the Congregation of the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus, urged the continued accompaniment of maritime workers.

“In these challenging times, let us trust that God will protect and provide for us, let us continue to pray for one another, accompany one another, provide spiritual guidance and a listening ear,” she said. “I urge you to find ways and means to stay in touch with each other, reach out and share the love of God; for, together we can bear the burden of each other.”

The bishop, directing his prayer to the maritime workers, urged them to “know that you are not forgotten, know of our love for you each and every day.”

The work of the ministry, which involves offering seafarers rides to errands such as essential shopping when they’re on land, staffing a seafarer center and just easing their loneliness by having a conversation with them, largely came to a halt with arrival of the coronavirus and social-distancing measures.

The ministry, which began in the U.S. in 1976, is part of the Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees and Travelers in the Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and its work includes caring for the spiritual life of those who work in the seas.



*Bishop Brendan J. Cahill*

Deacons, chaplains and others who worked with the maritime workers remembered their work with them, voiced their worries for the workers’ welfare, and offered prayers for those workers who find themselves stranded on ships that aren’t able to dock, for those who are still toiling away from their families or who are sick or have sick family members. One said she had been talking to them via Facebook and at least in one occasion, the ship had allowed care packages for the workers on board.

Deacon Paul Rosenblum, a port minister for the Apostleship of the Sea ministry of the Diocese of Charleston, South Carolina, recalled the work among the



*Deacon Paul Rosenblum, Regionsl Coordinator, Apostleship of the Sea Gave a reflection on the work of the Apostleship of the Sea*

maritime workers, calling it a “ministry of small miracles.”

He recalled how at the end of the Gospel according to Luke, Jesus commission his disciples and gave the power to perform miracles.

“I haven’t miraculously healed anyone of a disease, never spoken in tongues,” he said. “But as I reflect on this, I realize that I’m performing miracles myself ... all of us in this ministry are performing miracles. They may not be the spectacular miracles like the Lord’s, but they are miracles all the same, small ones, that is what our ministry is at our very core.

” Some of those “small miracles” included having conversations with the maritime workers in centers or onboard their ships.

“Every time, every conversation about their home and family, their work, their life at sea, every time we take time to listen to them, when they tell us about their joys and sorrows, we perform a miracle of healing by lightening their load,” he said.

“Every time we transport seafarers for shopping or medical help or any other need, anytime we console a seafarer who has lost a family member, every time we do anything that shows them that they are people, not just equipment on board their vessels,” Deacon Rosenblum said, “we perform a miracle of healing by treating them with the dignity of healing they deserve.”

“Many of our AOS centers, chaplains and volunteers are playing critical roles, risking their lives, working to provide care in various new ways. They deserve our support, our thanks and our prayers,” Sister Okereke.

Bishop Cahill, connecting with speakers and others gathered for the prayer from coast to coast and various points around the U.S., reminded all of God’s accompaniment and healing.

“If we can think of healing in our lives and how we’ve come to experiencing healing ... we pray that our hearts

may be large in caring for one another,” and that those experiencing loneliness may realize “that they may feel alone but that they are loved and cherished,” he said. “In the midst of the storm, God creates something beautiful.”

*Reprinted with permission. © Catholic News Service*



*Deacon Milton Vega*



*Deacon Jose DeLeon*



*Deacon Milton Vega, Director, Apostleship of the Sea, Diocese of St. Augustine, Deacon Jose DeLeon, Apostleship of the Sea, Archdiocese of Seattle, and Rhonda Cummins (Pictured Above), Apostleship of the Sea, Port of Point Comfort, Diocese of Vitoria, all shared during the online celebration of the National Day of Prayer and Remembrance for Mariners and People of the Sea, May 22, 2020*

## Apostleship of the Sea - Beaumont Produces 5-Part Podcast to Observe National Maritime Day

By Fr. Sinclair Oubre

The Apostleship of the Sea - Diocese of Beaumont joined with the Apostleship of the Sea - USA, the Port Arthur International Seafarers' Center, and five other partners to produce a 5-part podcast series celebrating National Maritime Day and highlighting different aspects of the US maritime industry.

For thirty-four years, the Apostleship of the Sea - Beaumont coordinated the Southeast Texas National Maritime Day observance. However, the thirty-fifth annual observance would have to be different. This podcast series was AOS' effort to honor United States Merchant Mariners in the wake of COVID-19.

From Monday, May 18 thru Friday, May 22, Fr. Sinclair Oubre, AFNI, AOS-Beaumont diocesan director, and Doreen Badeaux, Secretary General for the Apostleship of the Sea - USA interviewed leaders in the regional and national maritime industry on topics that included maritime training, the Jones Act, and opportunities for women at sea.

Each podcast is posted to the Port Arthur International Seafarers' Center YouTube channel: [www.youtube.com/channel/UC1lec97p01Mz9S9uq10bYjw](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UC1lec97p01Mz9S9uq10bYjw)

The five podcasts covered:

- Unlicensed maritime training with Captain Chris Horner of Lamar State College - Orange, and Kevin Sykes of the Seafarers International Union;
- Ports in the southern reaches of the Sabine-Neches Waterway with port directors Larry Kelley (Port of Port Arthur), Lorrie Taylor (Port of Orange), & Mic Cowart (Port of Sabine Pass);
- Women working in the maritime industry with Captain Augusta Roth (Texas Maritime Academy) and Erin Bertram (Marine Engineers Beneficial Association);
- Maritime labor & the 100th Anniversary of the Jones Act with Captain Jerry Pannell (American Maritime Officers) and Dave Heindel (Seafarers' International Union);
- Introduction to National Maritime Day Observance with Fr. Sinclair and Doreen who introducing the special US Maritime Administration's NMD video with Admiral Mark Buzby.

The Port of Port Arthur sponsored the 5-part podcast, and the following organizations supported AOS' effort:

- Apostleship of the Sea - Diocese of Beaumont
- Apostleship of the Sea of the United States of



Fr. Sinclair Oubre, AFNI, AOS-Beaumont diocesan director, and Doreen Badeaux, Secretary General for the Apostleship of the Sea-USA during a podcast celebrating National Maritime Day and highlighting different aspects of the US maritime industry.

America.

- The Council of American Master Mariners - Houston Chapter and Texas A&M Maritime Academy Chapter
- The Nautical Institute - Gulf Houston Branch
- The Propeller Club - Ports of the Sabine-Neches
- Port Arthur International Seafarers' Center
- RightShip
- West Gulf Maritime Association.

### NOTES from the SEA PORTS

Doreen Badeaux, Secretary General for the Apostleship of the Sea-USA received a letter from the Embassy of the Philippines asking for help for quarantined crew members who had tested positive for Covid-19 and staying in hotels in Florida. The company paid for the hotel but did not provide essential everyday necessities. Doreen forwarded the information to Sr. Joanna Okereke, HHCJ and Fr. Peter Lin, Apostleship of the Sea- Port Everglades. Fr. Lin and fellow port chaplains responded.

#### Rev. Peter Lin, Ph.D.

##### Port Everglades, Florida

Since the spreading the Coronavirus, our pastoral team have followed the directions of the government and church leaders, try to not only keep the social distances, but to help the various needs of the seafarers, try to keep balance of working and staying, every morning we start the online prayer and meeting, individually introduce our



Fr. Peter Lin on his way to visit crew members at the hotel

own plan and work! Sometimes we separate to go to the center office. Let pray for the ending of this virus!

A group of three of us went to a hotel in Fort Lauderdale to visit the quarantined Philippino seafarers there. We brought them a large stock of stuff including clothes, various fruits, vitamins, surgery masks! They enjoyed very much! We also left our information and told them, anything they need, call us and we try our best to help them either physically or spiritually. Fr. Sanford Sears, an Anglican priest also port chaplain, and I went to visit the quarantined seafarers yesterday at a hotel!

## **Deacon John Archer and Fr. Lito Capeding**

### **Port of Mobile, Alabama**

The week of March 16, 2020 Archbishop Rodi in compliance with civil authorities in the State of Alabama announced the cancellation of all public masses and public gatherings within the Archdiocese of Mobile. On March 19th in conjunction with the other port ministries serving Mobile we notified crews that we would not be visiting any arriving vessels in Mobile. The letter was distributed by Pilots on our advisory board telling crews that we would hold them in our prayer and that if there was an emergency to contact us for help. The next few weeks were pretty quiet as everyone tried to discern what was to be done without placing one another in potential harm from the virus.

In hind sight here in Mobile we have not stood still but we have moved in different ways. The internet, Facebook, emails, now Zoom and Go to Meeting have become our meeting places. Our Facebook page has been used to distribute stories from ports in North America, UK, Philippines and throughout the world. It has also become a means of communication with visiting vessels. Communications via Messenger has allowed us to provide wireless services to a vessel that has been here for two weeks and possibly longer. The crew is very appreciative to be able to call home. Another vessel requested shopping assistance (WalMart of course) prior to sailing for England.

We reached out to the agency handling the local cruise ship Carnival Fantasy and were assured that the crew would be sent home as soon as arrangements could be made. We also reached out to the couple that manages a shop for the crews when the Fantasy is in port.

We have engaged our volunteers who were all wondering what was happening and what could be done. The ministry has been blessed with a growing number of very energetic volunteers. I have sent periodic emails providing updates on the global response of seafarer centers. This outreach is extremely important to keep the volunteers engaged

during this extended downtime. We held a Zoom meeting to allow all to gather. Technology will continue to be an ongoing focus as only half of our team was able to negotiate the logon for the meeting. We are all learning new ways to communicate. During the virtual meeting the group recommended that we buy the Easter candy, now on sale, for distribution to ships in the port. We have already distributed care packages to a half dozen vessels.

Ecumenical relations. NAMMA and our Executive Director Jason Ziedema has been fantastic in providing the membership of NAMMA and ICMA with interviews and updates from around the world. NAMMA has also held week prayer services for members. This past week we participated in a Gulf regional forum facilitated by Jason.

Locally we have had numerous phone conversations with our partner from International Ministries ( Mobile Baptist Assoc). Gerald and I are continuing to work on ways to collaborate on ministry to benefit the Port, its seafarers, and its ministers. Besides the work of ministry we have had time to just talk which has been specially valuable.

Last week I received a call from the Harbormaster, who is also a Board member, seeking help with a situation. It was early Sunday morning and he had a call from a former classmate who worked for a tug company in Texas. There had been a death aboard a vessel and they needed someone to go to the site. The company would be several hours before they could be present and they did not want the crew to be left alone. I was able to drive to the port of Pascagoula, Ms some 30 minutes to our west to visit with the crew. I remained with the crew for the morning until Rev Tom Rhodes of the Seaman's Church Institute (SCI) arrived. Tom and I stayed with the crew for several hours. SCI has a relationship with the tug company through their work on the inland waterways. After I departed Tom remained until the company officials arrived at the site. SCI invited me to participate in their weekly ZOOM meeting so I had the opportunity to meet their ministers from around the country.

The challenges of the last month has provided us with opportunities to minister in new ways, with new partners, using new technologies and methodologies. While we all miss visiting our seafarers and visiting with one another I truly believe the ministry will be stronger as result of this experience.

## **Deacon Milton Vega**

### **Director of the Apostleship of the Sea Ministry, Diocese of Saint Augustine**

We ceased ship visitations well over 2 months before

restrictions were generally enacted by most states. I am almost certain I was one of the first Port Deacons / Directors to care preventive action, for as soon as I realized this was a pandemic spreading in the far east and that it had spread to Europe, I order my volunteers to stop visiting all ships until further notice. I took that measure because most of the vessels that come to our ports originate from those areas. At this time most of my volunteers have also opted to stay away from our ministry except one volunteer that has remained with me to keep the centers open to the port workers that are still here.

But the restrictions are still in place, not only by us but by our JAXPORT operations as well. I am keeping in contact with the stevedores crew managers and vehicle drivers to get updates from them on the conditions of the vessels that are coming. But other than authorized personnel, no one else is allowed off the ships and no one is allowed to board them. We also have several cruise ships docked along our waterways in complete lockdowns, and that is highly unusual because we are not a cruise ship destination. Regardless of what the state of Florida is doing, we are going to be led by our diocese and JAXPORT as far as resuming regular operations.

## Fr. Sinclair Oubre

### Director Apostleship of the Sea, Diocese of Beaumont Port Arthur/Beaumont

On May 28th, John Allen's website CruxNow published a story regarding COVID-19 and Cruise Ships, focusing on Great Britain. (Google: Seafarers – and their chaplains – face unique challenges during COVID-19 pandemic)

Seeing that story, Patrick Alog from Relevant Radio reached out to the Apostleship of the Sea of the United States of America (AOS-USA), for an interview regarding the situation of COVID-19 and its impact on Merchant Mariners in the United States.

On Thursday, May 28, John Harper interviewed me.

We first talked about the challenge that seafarers are facing because of extended contracts and the difficulty of being repatriated to their homelands. I noted that all the passengers on cruise ships have been repatriated but the challenge is, the repatriation of the crew members. Because some countries have closed their air space, it is not possible for their nationals to fly home. In other cases, governments are only allowing charter flights into their countries.

I also noted that crewing issues also impacted merchant fleets with contracts being extended and crew members who were to ship out unable to do so. For U.S. Merchant Mariners, crew changes have begun taking place on Jones

Act vessels, but for U.S. – flagged feeder ships in Asia, there is no solution to the problem of crew change.

As a side note, a friend of mine, Capt. Jeremy Allan, master of the SSG Edward A Carter, Jr, has been at anchor for over 100 days off the Coast of Busan, South Korea, trying to get relief to come back to the United States.

John Harper then asked me about job stability for merchant mariners, and I could not help but laugh and respond that "Job security is really good...for the guys who can't get off the ship!" However, I then noted that many seafarers and their families are suffering economic hardship because of their inability to join their ships and relieve those who wanted to go home.

John then asked about the moral and mental state of the seafarers, and I noted that we had already seen 4 suicides among cruise ship crew members. (As I write this, I have just returned from praying the Prayers for the Dead for a Messman who committed suicide while in the Pacific, enroute to Beaumont, Texas.)

I noted that another consequence of the pandemic has been the inability of seafarers to take care of personal shopping. The Port Arthur International Seafarers' Center and AOS Diocese of Beaumont have begun shopping on behalf of crew members who are detained onboard because of the Pandemic. I greatly enjoyed visiting one ship on Memorial Day and presenting them with more than \$1600 worth of goods for themselves and their families, before they made the 36-day voyage to South Korea.

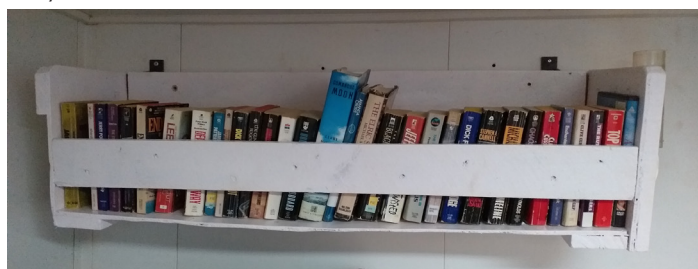
You can listen to the entire interview by going to my Dropbox at: [www.dropbox.com/s/cmk4hv8tnlwgwn21/Along\\_Morning%20Air-Oubre\\_5-27-20.mp3?dl=0](http://www.dropbox.com/s/cmk4hv8tnlwgwn21/Along_Morning%20Air-Oubre_5-27-20.mp3?dl=0)

## Rhonda Cummins

### Port of Point Comfort, TX

The M/V Brattingsborg received books to read on their vessel as they left Point Comfort for Spain with a load of needle coke from Seadrift. During their ocean crossing the crew built bookcases to hold the assorted novels and sent a photo of one after arriving safely in Spain.

Bookcase photo was emailed to Rhonda from Captain Krzysztof Walczak.





**NORDIC ACE / POINT COMFORT - LPN**

Dear Fr. Tommy Chen & Rhonda Cummins,  
 Good day,  
 We have received yesterday (06 Dec.2019) your Christmas present for all the crew on board.  
 Me & all my crew on board we really appreciate it much and we say thank you very much and we really feel the Spirit of Christmas now.

May God Bless as all and Advanced MERRY CHRISTMAS to you and to everyone of your colleagues!

Thanks and Best Regards,  
 Capt. Elton John A. Galvez  
 Master M.T "Nordic Ace"

Note: The vessel's E-mail is not online. Please call for urgent matters!

◇◇◇

The Barbara Carol Ann Moran is a US Flagged ocean going pusher tug with a crew of 8. I was able to drop off Christmas gifts to them yesterday at the Port in Point Comfort. The crewman on deck was very surprised and appreciative. I awoke to this wonderful message today and wanted to share with you all.

Rhonda

----- Original Message -----

From: Matthew Brewster <brewstermmc@icloud.com>  
 Subject: Thank you from the Barbara Carol Ann Moran!  
 Dear Rhonda,  
 I hope this email finds its way to you and finds you well. It was a wonderful surprise to come back aboard today to find your gifts. You touched us all today with your warmth and kindness, making it a little more tolerable for us as we're away from our families this Christmas. It is truly good work that you do and very much appreciated.

Merry Christmas and God Bless,  
 Captain Matthew Brewster  
 Portsmouth, NH

◇◇◇

I just had to share this beautiful email that I woke up to this morning. At the end of March I worked with the agent Sonny Boyd to get the ship some disinfectant wipes and also made them a small care package with rosaries, magnets, and a jigsaw puzzle for him to carry on board for me. As you can see, this was a big hit. It is also a sign to me that my volunteer and I are on the right track as we adjust our ministry in Point Comfort in the coming weeks. I have been attending online meetings, talking with my pilots, reading what other centers are doing, emails, etc. to learn about best practice from other centers and what I think will work here. We will be moving to making some care packages for ships

that we will leave dockside at the gangway. It is obvious that this captain was very appreciative of the quick effort in March. I foresee needs are greater now and will work with agents/captains/pilots to include needed items for crew. Much like Christmas but not gifts per person, just one box per ship.

I will try to remember to update you as this progresses. If you don't hear from me, check the

Point Comfort Seafarers Center facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/aospointcomfort/> I hope to keep that as current as possible to help grow the ministry.

IHS,  
 Rhonda

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Cap Bow Chain <cap.bow.chain@ship.odfjell.com>  
 Date: Sun, May 3, 2020 at 2:43 AM  
 Subject: Thanks for Zigsaw Puzzle, Magnetic souvenir and  
 To: Boyd-Campbell (Sonny Boyd) <sboyd@boyd-campbell.com>

Cc: <stellamaris@olgulf.org>  
 To: Boyd Campbell, att Sonny. Please forward if mail should not reach Rhonda

Cc: Stella Maris, att Rhonda.

Hello.  
 Thanks presents and souvenir received during our stay in Point Comfort late in March.

Due to "other things going on" those have been saved in my office until tonight.

Tonight we had a small Bingo session in our day room.

All received free cards, no payment, and we had some games and different smaller prices.

One of the prizes was the "Puzzle" received from You. And during a break all 14 "ornament received from You were delivered among the crew. Due to we had a crew of 26, I made ready numbers from 1 to 26, and all drew one number, and kept this. Later we drew 14 balls from our Bingo "machine" and the 14 persons with same numbers were the lucky winner.

And we also received 26 magnetic "charts" of Texas, and all onboard received one. So tonight all got "something for free" All were happy.

A break on regular Saturday routine.

Also Thanks very Much to our agent for always VERY



*Magnet created by rhonda cummins*

good support during our Point Comfort stay.

Have a nice day.  
BRGDS  
Best regards  
S.O.Fjaerestad

## Deacon Patrick Lapoint

Director, Stella Maris Seafarers Center, Diocese of Lake Charles

Here in Lake Charles we are doing very well. We are still visiting ships with care, most of this is, done on the gangways. We are checking on the seafarers for their needs, some need SIM cards and we make them available to them. We stay in them with by creating a Facebook page for the center.

On April 20th we had a ship come in with a death on it from an accident which happened while they were at anchor, his name was Jorell Anthony Cabalang from the Philippines. We have told all our drivers to stay home due to the fact that there is no transportation. I stay in touch with them and all are doing well.

Our revenue is gone but the bills keep coming.

I thank God for his protective care he has blessed us with.

## Must Read: Seafarer Mental Health Study

Fr. Sinclair Oubre

In October, the International Transport Workers Federation Seafarers' Trust and Yale University released their final report entitled Seafarer Mental Health Study. ([www.seafarerstrust.org/seafarer-mental-health-study-2019](http://www.seafarerstrust.org/seafarer-mental-health-study-2019)) It is a must read, and the first step in a systematic study which incorporates findings regarding seafarers' instances of depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation, with these same mental health issues in the larger population.

During World War II, thousands of American seafarers sailed from our refinery docks in Port Arthur and Beaumont, they all experienced the stress of potential German U-boat attacks, but for hundreds and hundreds, they experienced the actual trauma of being attacked, struggling to survive with their tanker aflame, seeing their shipmates enveloped in flames and lost, and suffering severe burns that would leave them scarred for life.

As William Geroux points out in his book, *Matthew's Men*, the US draft board had no patience with seafarers since they were considered "draft dodgers" for choosing the merchant marine rather than the military. So, whether a mariner survived an attack off Cape Hatteras and was picked up by the Coast Guard, if he spent weeks in an open

ITF SEAFARERS' TRUST & YALE UNIVERSITY

# Seafarer Mental Health Study

Final Report, October 2019



Seafarer Mental Health Study (Lefkowitz & Slade, Yale)

life boat, or if he spent months in a hospital recovering from his burns, he had 30 days once he was fit for duty to catch another ship, or he would be subject to the military draft. ([www.usmm.org/faq.html#faq9](http://www.usmm.org/faq.html#faq9))

When the SS Texaco Oklahoma sank in 1971, 18 crewmembers survived. Months after the tragedy, one of the ratings was preparing to return to work. While at the airport, he called the company, and said that he just couldn't go back to sea.

Fortunately by the time the OMI Charger blew up in Galveston Roads in 1993, shipping companies and maritime labor unions realized that mental help would be needed for the crew, and this help was provided. One of my parishioners was onboard when the explosion occurred. He had just been relieved in the engine room, and was in his cabin when the explosion ripped open the deck, and killed his relief.

In the aftermath of this tragedy, he was able to get counseling and the support that allowed him to address the trauma of the incident, some addiction issues, and bring him to the mental level to return to sea and complete his career.

Today, merchant ships are encountering refugees in the Mediterranean, and merchant sailors rescuing desperate refugees in sinking vessels, recovering the bodies of men women and children. Fortunately, the maritime community has realized that simply developing best management practices to efficiently handle the "problem" of boat refugees was not enough. They have instituted structures to address the post traumatic stress that comes from being exposed to such levels of human desperation and tragedy.

The maritime industry has gone from believing that the mariner did not need any mental health assistance, to an industry beginning to understand the importance of maintaining good mental health among its seafarers.

The ITF Seafarers' Trust/Yale reports makes a couple of obvious but important observations. First, the presence of good food, and sufficient amounts of food is important to

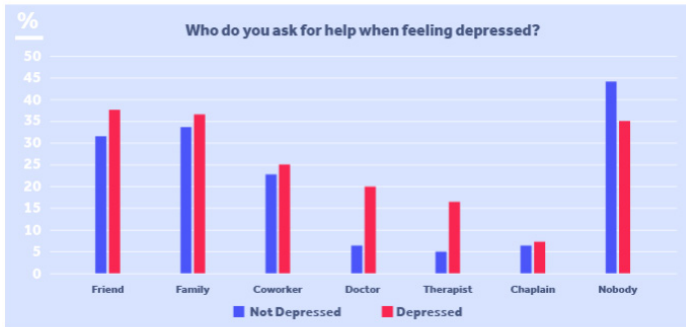


Figure 10. Distribution of who seafarers ask for help when feeling down or depressed, by depressed status. Respondents could select more than one choice, hence percentages add up to more than 100.

maintain good morale aboard the vessel. Second, there is a connection between the mariner’s mental health, and his or her susceptibility to illness and injury. Third, the seafarer’s mental health has a strong correlation to the mariner’s intention to remain at sea.

One fact caused concern for me as a port chaplain. The study reported that only about 6% or 7% of seafarers considered contacting the port chaplain or seafarer welfare agent when he or she was feeling depressed.

Now, we like to see ourselves at the service of the seafarer, and we want to be one of the first persons he or she reaches out to in time of need. However, this statistic raises a real question about how effective we are in communicating our availability to support seafarers when they are feeling depressed.

Table 10 of the study shows that the number one response to “Who do you ask for help when feeling depressed?” was “Nobody.” However, next three responses were “Friend,” “Family,” and “Coworker.” The fact that the first two groups that seafarers would reach out for help were not onboard, raises real questions as to why seafarers would search out to doctors or to therapists, before they would reach out to port chaplains or seafarer welfare agents who are at the port where the ship calls.

I personally believe that the reason is that we have faded from the mariner’s “conscious horizon.” The seafarer cannot imagine that the “ship visitor” or the “van driver” who is taking them to Wal-Mart or Best Buy can be of help. Instead, these “seamen’s mission” people are there to visit the ship, provide SIM cards, or transportation to the store.

This report should be a warning to all of us in the seafarer welfare community that we have a job ahead of us in bringing awareness to the mariner that assistance is as close as the next port, and that trained and professional seafarer welfare agents are coming up the gangway ready to assist him or her in his or her spiritual, mental or physical needs.

## Welcome Aboard! Deacon Richard Longoria



In late January our bishop for Corpus Christi Diocese, Michael Mulvey, asked me to be involved in our local seafarers’ ministry by working with parishes seeking volunteers to work for our Seaman’s Center and other elements of the maritime industry at our Port.

I spent a week in Houston at NAMMA’s seafarers ministry school to learn as much as I can about seafarers and those who minister to them. I had the privilege to become acquainted with other men and women who work in the ministry. I met folks from Canada, New Jersey, Savannah, England and India and a few from the Houston area. It was an eye opening time. I also had the pleasure to listen to presentations by Sister Joanna who was marvelous, dedicated and so smart!

Returning to Corpus Christi I began working with a local priest who is the diocese’s representative to the seafarer’s ministry, Father Roy Kalayil. I met with Sharon Emerson, the director of the International Seaman’s Center and with some of her staff. I began to set up meetings with various diocesan pastors so I might be able to address their congregations from the pulpit and through various parish organization meetings about the need for volunteers to minister to seafarers here at our port, which is the 10th largest in our country.

But then came the order suspending Masses, and stay at home orders from local leaders. So my work has been put on hold. I continue to pray for those in the maritime industry and for those who minister to them. I take part in NAMMA’s weekly noon (CST) on line prayer sessions. I look forward to next week when I will present the scriptural readings and the intercessory prayer during this on line prayer session.

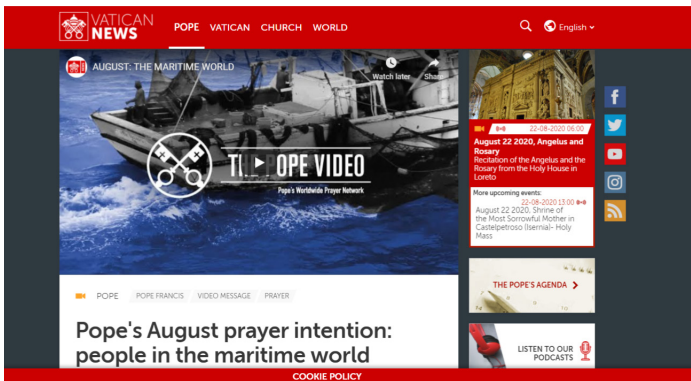
God bless you and your work.  
Deacon Richard Longoria



**Apostleship of the Sea, National Office**  
**Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church**  
**Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees, and Travelers**  
3211 Fourth Street, NE, Washington, D.C. 20017

NONPROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**



Aug 04, 2020

## Pope's August prayer intention: people in the maritime world

According to Robin Gomes' article, on the Vatican website, Pope Francis released a video message of his prayer intention for August 2020 as prayers for those "who work and live from the sea, among them sailors, fishermen and their families". The network is a pontifical initiative, whose mission is to pray and encounter the challenges facing humanity and the mission of the Church that concern the

Holy Father, expressed in his monthly intentions.

The article went on to mention that the Pope referred to the situations people of the sea face: "Sometimes they are victims of forced labor or are left behind in distant ports." "The competition of industrial fishing and the problem of pollution make their work even more complicated." However, the Pope admits, "without the people of the sea, many parts of the world would starve".

Robin Gomes also noted "This is the third time in less than two months that the Holy Father has addressed the issue of maritime workers. On June 12, he sent a video message to the Catholic Church's Apostleship of the Sea (AOS), in which he thanked the maritime workers and fisherfolk for their important contribution to feeding the people of the world. Remembering the hardship they face, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Pope encouraged seafarers in their work, assuring they are not alone or forgotten.

<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2020-08/pope-francis-prayer-intention-august-2020-video-message.html>

Put: "Pope's August prayer intention" in your web browser for additional stories.