



# Catholic Maritime News

STELLA MARIS

SPRING 2021

VOLUME 94

St. Bernard of Clairvaux wrote the following words in reflecting upon Mary as Stella Maris, Star of the Sea:

“In danger; in distress, in doubt, reflect upon Mary, call upon Mary. Let her not leave your lips, let her not leave your heart and do not abandon your dealings with her if you wish to gain the object of your prayer. Following her, you will not stray; praying to her, you will not despair; reflecting upon her, you will not go wrong. With her taking your hand, you will not fall down; with her protecting you, you will not fear; with her leading you, you will not grow weary...” (In Praise of the Virgin Mary).



*Bishop Brendan J. Cahill*

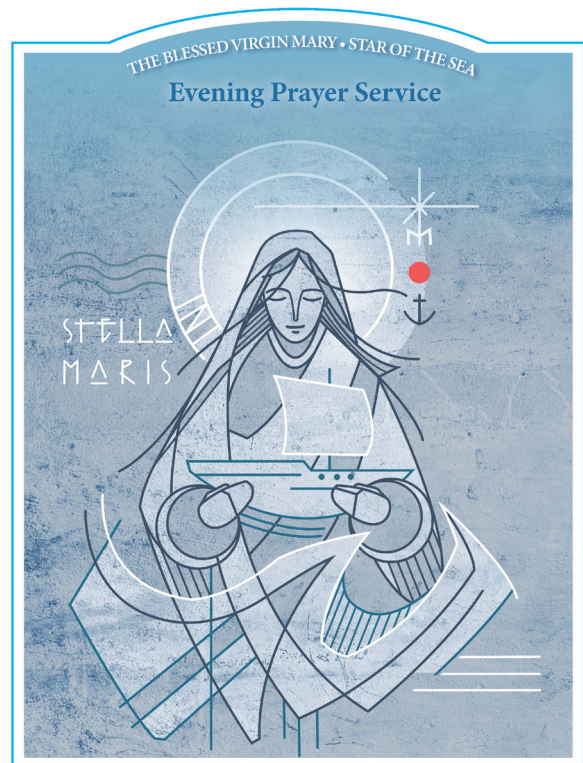
The Christian tradition of praying for Mary’s guidance goes back well before St. Bernard wrote his inspiring, heart-felt words in the 1100’s. Mary continues to guide her children through the storms and trials of life, leading us with the light of her Son.

The beautiful image of the Star of the Sea reminds us that we are never alone. This past year has been especially challenging in that the circumstances of life made many of us feel alone and isolated. As you well know the Seafarers have suffered financial hardships, crew change crises and daily emotional and spiritual battles. In the midst of all of this our Chaplains have helped them to look to the Star and pray for hope, while advocating ceaselessly for fair working conditions.

The prayer of the rosary gently reminds us that Jesus lived to teach us that those who believe in Him “will never die” (Jn. 11:26). Mary, our Mother and Star of the Sea, offers comfort to each one of us as her child. As the words Stella Maris signify the international Catholic ministry among people of the sea, Mary offers her spiritual comfort for all of us in our work.

The stories I’ve heard in the voices of chaplains throughout this year have given strong witness to endurance in trials and the power of hope. I’ve grown in my commitment to encourage my brother bishops to provide personnel and financial support to our Stella Maris chaplaincy. May you and your families be blessed by the light of the Star of the Sea, knowing the tender love of our Heavenly Mother and being led on the journey with her Son – let’s keep each other in prayer!

*+ Brendan Cahill*



MRS, together with CCOAHT, Stella Maris and the Apostleship of the Sea of the United States of America (AOS-USA) produced this Evening Prayer Service in honor of Our Lady Star of the Sea, the protectress of seafarers and fishers. The prayer can be found and downloaded from Liturgy and Resources at: [www.usccb.org/Stellamaris](http://www.usccb.org/Stellamaris)



# Catholic Maritime News

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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 [Stellamaris@uscceb.org](mailto:Stellamaris@uscceb.org)

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The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the World, especially the People of the Sea.

By Sr. Joanna Okereke, HHCJ  
National Director, Stella Maris of the United States of America



Sr. Joanna Okereke, HHCJ

As we celebrate the National Day of Prayer and Remembrance for Mariners and People of the Sea, we remember in a special way, those who have lost their lives at sea, those who have died due to coronavirus, those in dangerous and difficult situations. We honor those who serve as merchant mariners, we recognize the great work of Stella Maris chaplains, lay leaders and volunteers and the benefits of the maritime industry.

The experience of coronavirus pandemic will never be forgotten easily. Life changed for most of the planet. The "Stella Maris" 100 years celebration was postponed and later canceled. Many other maritime celebrations were canceled, and many were celebrated virtually. Many seafarers were stranded at hotels, or at sea, with shore leave denied, and restricted port entry for ships. Seafarers on board the vessels suffered isolation, physical and mental stress, lack of medical attention, and many committed suicide. Many activities and ministries were halted but the waves of the ocean continue to flow. The shipping industry never shut down because it was an essential service in providing emergency, medical and other needed goods across the world.

It's over a year, and many people are still experiencing difficulties, isolation, loneliness, lost of jobs, and many have died. A lot of things were at a standstill and at a crossroads. There were no ship visits and people were discouraged to visit family and friends. Amid these challenges, I encouraged all "Do not be afraid, be strong and courageous. Be energized to venture into the world, be available to bear witness to the love of Jesus, to assist, and to encourage other people, to trust in God and never to give up. Be like the seafarers who were exposed to danger and while working in very difficult conditions to ensure the transport of essential and needed goods for all of us." (cf. Joshua 1:9) During these challenging and difficult times of COVID-19, the Stella Maris chaplains, lay leaders, and volunteers, through virtual means, were ready to lend a helping hand.

I echo the words of Pope Francis as he encouraged seafarers, "In these past months, your lives and your work have seen significant changes; you have had to make, and

are continuing to make, many sacrifices...Long periods spent aboard ships without being able to disembark, separation from families, friends and native countries, fear of infection...All these things are a heavy burden to bear, now more than ever.” Yes, so much may be going on in our lives – spiritually, socially, and economically. But there is a great reminder that we are alive today, by God’s grace. We woke up this morning - it is by God’s goodness; this should never be taken for granted. Ephesians 2:4-5 says, “But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ”. Because of God’s great love for us, He made us alive with Christ. God is always there for us, whether in sickness or in hard times, whether in good health or good times, God is always with us. He is so faithful that he will never leave us nor forsake us. Our Heavenly Father knows what we need (cf. Matthew 6:32). His favor is for a lifetime; weeping may last for the night, but a shout of joy comes in the morning (Psalm 30:5).

During this pandemic, I come with a great reminder to the seafarers, fishers, and chaplains, you are not alone; most communities are longing for the Lord and their voices need to be heard. The Church needs to provide the necessary support and create awareness of the various groups’ contributions, unique issues, and areas of concern, so that together the Church can discern adequate pastoral responses. We must make sure that everyone is included, and no one excluded or isolated. Indeed, the Church must be flexible when serving the People on the Move communities like the seafarers, or as Pope Francis described it, an “Iglesia en Salida,” a Church that goes out to her people, bringing Jesus to them, and meeting them where they are in their unique realities as we look into the future with hope.

Indeed, we have such a wonderful God whose goodness cannot be measured by anything. The importance of the maritime industry in providing the world with food and other primary needs makes it indispensable to the world. Every one of us benefits from the work of the maritime industry.

Stella Maris is a Catholic ministry supporting seafarers all over the World. Stella Maris was founded in Glasgow, Scotland, in the early 20th century as a network of seafarer chaplaincies in ports throughout the world. Here in the United States of America, the Church has continued the maritime ministry with strength and vigor. From the Stella Maris, National Office of the United States of America, I join my prayers with those of Pope Francis, for all seafarers, fishers, the people of the sea and their ministers. May the Lord bless each of you, your work, and your families, and may the Virgin Mary, Star of the Sea, protect you always.



## STELLA MARIS

*The new logo for Stella Maris, formerly called the Apostleship of the Sea. The Vatican announced the name change of the organization Sept. 28, 2020 as it celebrated its 100th anniversary of ministering to fishermen and those who work on the sea.*

### Apostleship of the Sea becomes ‘Stella Maris’ in its 100th year

By: Cindy Wooden

The Apostleship of the Sea is celebrating its 100th anniversary and changing its name to “Stella Maris,” the Latin title of Mary, Star of the Sea, and the name by which most of the Catholic centers for seafarers are known.

As the maritime industry is struggling with the impact of COVID-19 and hundreds of thousands of sailors are stuck on ships, the men and women who staff and volunteer as part of the Catholic Church’s Stella Maris outreach must “be inventive and find new ways to be present on the docks and be a church that sails with the people of the sea,” said Father Bruno Ciceri, the Vatican-based international director of Stella Maris.

The Vatican announced the name change and released a new logo for the organization Sept. 28.

According to a press briefing Sept. 25 by the U.N. International Maritime Organization, COVID-19 travel restrictions and quarantines mean some 400,000 seafarers across the globe are stuck at sea or in an endless quarantine on ships in port and have been for months. And the 400,000 seafarers who normally would replace them have been left without jobs.

“Let us use this opportunity as we assume the name Stella Maris and refresh our logo to similarly renew and refresh our ministry to seafarers, fishers and their families,” Father Ciceri wrote in a letter Sept. 24 to the 230 chaplains and thousands of volunteers who staff Stella Maris centers and reach out to sailors in more than 300 ports in 41 countries. In pre-COVID-19 times, they would visit 70,000 ships each year and interact with more than 1 million seafarers.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, members of the Stella Maris apostolate planned to meet Oct. 4 in Glasgow, Scotland, where the ministry began in 1920, for a congress

and a 100th anniversary Mass.

In a letter encouraging local celebrations instead, Cardinal Peter Turkson, prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, told members of the apostolate, “We are called to be open to the Spirit of renewal and find new ways and means to be the church sailing with the people of the sea.”

Change is nothing new, especially for those working with seafarers, he said.

“Throughout the years, the maritime industry has changed enormously with the building of new larger and computerized ships, manned by smaller multinational, multicultural and multireligious crew, docking in ports far away from cities. These circumstances together with piracy, criminalization, abandonment and lastly the COVID-19 have increased the stress, the fatigue and the isolation of the crew.”

“One of the distinctive characteristics of the work done by the pioneers of the Stella Maris was ships’ visits carried out with dedication and enthusiasm, first along the banks of the River Clyde and after according to the development of the apostolate all over the world,” the cardinal said.

“Since then, the structures and designs of the ports have changed but not the needs of the seafarers and fishers, who every time they dock are yearning to contact their families, to seek advice for a contractual problems or simply would like to talk,” he said. “Because of the many restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, our practical way of ministering has changed dramatically, but what should not change is the substance of our service that is a ‘ministry of presence.’ Let us make use of all the instruments that the technology offers us to be present in the lives of the people of the sea offering friendship, support, encouragement and continuous prayers.”

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**STELLA MARIS**

SUPPORTING SEAFARERS AND FISHERS  
AROUND THE WORLD

There several options for using the Stella Maris logo as pictured above. The link with all the options to download the logos, brand guide and video can be found at <https://www.stellamaris.org.uk/brand-identity-resources/>

On September 24, 2020 Fr. Bruno Ciceri, Director, Stella Maris International - Dicastery for Promoting Human Integral Development, Palazzo San Calisto 00120 Vatican City, sent a letter of explanation to the Chaplains and Volunteers working with seafarers and fishers explaining the change of name from Apostleship of the Sea to “Stella Maris”. Below are excerpts of the letter.

Peter F. Anson recalled how: “he went off the cliffs near the lighthouse on Caldey island, where he spend a couple of hours covering bits of paper with anchors, hearts, life-belts, stars, ships, waves and other maritime emblems”.. The next day he mailed three designs to Arthur Gannon and the organizing committee selected what became the familiar logo of the Apostleship of the Sea. It's a simple design showing a heart, representing the Sacred Heart of Jesus, recalling the initial connection with the Apostleship of Prayer; a life-belt, representing the charity of its members; both resting on the anchor of Christian hope.

In 1948, Anson commented: “This badge may or may not be a “work of art”, but in the past quarter of a century (and now we would say for the past century!) it has become familiar to seafarers all over the world. It is displayed on enameled plaques outside practically every Seamen's institute, Home or Club, and is worn or brooch by most members of the Apostleship of the Sea”.

However, research presented at the 2017 World Congress in Kaohsiung-Taiwan demonstrated that different names (in multiple languages) and dissimilar logos are being used to represent our Apostlate.

The original name “Apostleship of the Sea” (in Latin Apostolatus Maris) recalls how our ministry initially took inspiration from the Apostleship of Prayer. Furthermore, with the growth of the Apostolate many new seafarers centers were established in different ports and were called “Stella Maris” (in English Star of the Sea), a traditional name for Our Lady - referring to her as the guiding star who leads to Christ.

These two names are often inscribed inside the logo, appearing interchangeably and commonly used to define our ministry to the people of the sea. Sometimes this has created confusion and misunderstanding, giving the impression that we were two different and separate organizations.

Today, in ports around the world, seafarers, fishers and their families easily recognize the logo and identify our chaplains and volunteers as “the ones from Stella Maris”, more so than the Apostleship of the Sea.

On the occasion of the Centennial Celebration, we recognize the need to refresh our logo to reflect the new reality of our Apostolate and move towards a

standardization of the logo for two reasons:

1. Our ministry has an international/global reach and impact. Having a unified logo will help us publicize and celebrate the wonderful work being accomplished. As scripture says, "...If one member is honored, all rejoice together" (1 Cor 12:26).

2. On the side of prudence, having greater control of the logo will prevent fraudulent use of names and logos by groups that purport to represent the activity of the Catholic Church.

For these reasons, from now on "Stella Maris" will be the official name with which the Apostolate of the Catholic Church for the people of the sea will be known. This will replace the current name, "Apostleship of the Sea".

Stella Maris is a better name because, being Latin, it has greater potential for global reach (rather than using a term that requires translation with the accompanying confusion that can be possible).

The term also transliterates well into non-Roman alphabet systems (such as Cyrillic) or even pictorial language systems (such as Chinese). Both these language systems are important to the shipping industry and the crews of ships.

Together with the use of the name, Stella Maris, we would like to invite everyone to adopt the new logo that is being released (please see the video presentation at [stellamaris.org.uk/brand](http://stellamaris.org.uk/brand)).

The new logo retains all the elements of the original one designed by Peter F. Anson: the anchor, the lifesaver and the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the rays of light with the addition of the waves of the sea (reminding us the importance of the care for the environment) and the name for which we are known: Stella Maris. All the symbols are simplified and represented in a modern way, adopting eye-catching colors commonly seen in the maritime industry.

## Campaign aims to keep seafarers' livelihoods afloat during coronavirus hardships

by Soli Salgado

Invisible to those ashore yet instrumental in keeping afloat the comforts of daily life, seafarers have long seeped through the cracks as they straddle worlds and identities.

They have home countries but live literally adrift, becoming strangers to all nations. They play a role in 90% of global trade but are not typically considered essential workers. They are prone to abuse and exploitation but often fall just outside the realm of trafficking advocacy.

Now, because of the coronavirus pandemic, hundreds of thousands of these itinerant workers are also trapped.

For seafarers, who are responsible for delivering most food, medicine, electronics and even racehorses around

the world, disembarking at most international ports has become an impossibility. The ship may be welcome, but to the community where it docks, members of the crew are perceived as potential carriers of COVID-19, even though they have typically been at sea for longer than the virus lasts.

"They're sort of like prisoners, now more than ever," said Sr. Mary Leahy, a Sister of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart who ministers to seafarers as the port chaplain for Stella Maris, Australia in Sydney.



*Mary Leahy poses for a selfie at Port Botany in Sydney, Australia, with Philippine seafarers "who were so excited to receive a care package." (Courtesy of Mary Leahy)*

The inability to get off ships means crew changes are less likely, so even when a seafarer's contract expires after several months of labor, his or her tie to the job can get extended indefinitely. And because crews tend to be made up of individuals who come from poverty, their desperation for an income can be abused easily, as official complaints may leave them blacklisted from other jobs, Leahy said.

"It's fertile ground for exploitation," she said.

Since the plight of seafarers is distant to those on land, the international campaign Solidarity with Seafarers is bringing it to the fore, educating the public on the link between the products they buy and the people who deliver them as well as encouraging corporations to examine their suppliers' human rights practices.

The campaign — a joint effort by Coalition of Catholic Organizations Against Human Trafficking, Stella Maris, and the Apostleship of the Sea of the United States — has its eye on one particular whale of a retailer: Walmart.

Petitioning for Walmart to sign the Neptune Declaration on Seafarer Wellbeing and Crew Change is the campaign's ultimate concrete goal. The international pact, which over 800 companies have already signed, would help recognize seafarers as essential workers, give them priority access to COVID-19 vaccines, and establish better protocols to ensure timely crew changes, said Jennifer Reyes Lay, executive director of U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human



*Seafarers are responsible for delivering most food, medicine, and electronics around the world, but disembarking at most international ports has become an impossibility.*

Trafficking, which organized the petition.

Because Walmart has previously demonstrated a proactive interest in addressing forced labor practices in its supply chains, Reyes Lay said, this push for Walmart to include seafarers in that commitment is as possible as it would be impactful.

"It's modern slavery ... and companies that import stuff should be able to prove there's no slavery in the chain," Leahy said.

The perils of life at sea

Even before the new obstacles COVID-19 has inflicted, the life of a seafarer has always been precarious: Pirates, dangerous waters, lack of medical attention, labor exploitation, and high rates of suicide are facts of the trade.

Leahy recalled a few cases of injuries met with apathy. When one man had a stroke while at sea, for example, his captain had to fight for the ability to port and take him to a hospital, as the company that chartered the ship insisted that the ship wait a few days to keep on schedule. The man was able to recover at a hospital, Leahy said, only because his captain was adamant that they dock.

"It's like, 'We want you to keep working like a dog, and don't cause us any trouble by having to change our route or pay extra fees,'" said Fr. Sinclair Oubre, a U.S. merchant mariner, referring to the attitude of a ship's charter.

Oubre, executive director and port chaplain of the Port Arthur International Seafarers' Center in Texas, attributed society's and governments' lack of concern to "sea blindness": One's responsibility for the issue disappears with the ship as it sails over the horizon.

"A guy commits suicide or they run into a reef someplace — that'll be over there. It's not our problem," he said.

"We want you to bring us the stuff, but we don't want to deal with you at all."

Now, the pandemic has added "a great discrimination," Oubre said.

Few restrictions have been imposed on airline personnel during the pandemic, he said; meanwhile, "trying to get a seafarer off a ship [and] to an airplane so that they can get home, that almost became impossible."

"That outraged me. ... People were treating us like it was the 15th century again," said Oubre, who is also the diocesan director of the Apostleship of the Sea in Diocese of Beaumont, Texas.

Then there is the issue of vaccines.

Some ports have been able to work with local health departments to give crews their shots from the gangway, as was the case in Corpus Christi, Texas, Oubre said. But overall, there is no organized effort worldwide to vaccinate seafarers.

"And we fear that this is going to become another stumbling block to crew change," he said: Governments point to seafarers' lack of vaccination as a reason to keep them from getting off the ship.

"You get into a real Catch-22 situation: You can't get home to get a vaccine because you don't have a vaccine," Oubre said.

Campaign, port volunteers help how they can

The perils of this occupation are not lost on Pope Francis, nor are seafarers' essential contributions to society despite their absence in the media's discussion of essential workers.

"Without the people of the sea, many parts of the world would starve," Francis said in his prayer intention for August 2020.

The Solidarity with Seafarers Campaign hopes to remind people who seafarers are, why they're crucial in the supply chain, and why it's important to take an interest, said Lisa Lungren, the national education and outreach coordinator on immigration and anti-trafficking at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Migration and Refugee Services.

"When people go to Walmart or Costco, we just think our products magically appear," Lungren said, illustrating the mindset advocates hope to change through the campaign, which launched May 22, the National Day of Prayer and Remembrance for Mariners and People of the Sea, and will continue through June 25, the Day of the Seafarer.

Educational inserts for parish bulletins, a social media campaign, prayers and information to sign the petition for Walmart to join the Neptune Declaration are all a part of the campaign's resource packet.

The campaign is also promoting donations of nonperishables for port chaplains to give to seafarers, as well as slippers and toiletries, items that may not have been in care packages before the pandemic, when crews could get

off the ship to buy basic items for themselves, Lungren said.

Now, people like Sr. Joanna Okereke run those errands for seafarers. Okereke, the national director of the Stella Maris ministry of the U.S. bishops' conference and a Sister of the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus, and other chaplains and volunteers learn what the crews' needs are, buy the supplies and leave them at the dock for the seafarers to pick up after the volunteers leave.

In addition to ministering to the seafarers' families while they're away — "many lose their families if they are at sea for close to a year and no communication" — Okereke said Stella Maris attempts to be the parish they otherwise wouldn't have and makes them "feel at home in different ports."

Though maritime ministries aim to "bring the church" to seafarers, as Okereke said, Oubre noted that the church at large should do more to bring this cause away from the margins.

"We are truly the last flea hanging on the last hair of the tip of the tail of the dog of the Catholic world," he said. "We're way out there."

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### Catholic Organizations Uncover Invisible Humanitarian Crisis

Catholic organizations are mobilizing to address an invisible humanitarian crisis affecting men and women who work at sea, while calling on U.S.-based giant retailer Walmart to do more for the wellbeing of seafarers.

Have you ever stopped to think how easily you can enjoy your favorite coffee from Brazil, use prescription medicine produced in Germany or fill your car with gasoline made with crude oil from Saudi Arabia?

The answer lies in the 90% of global trade moved by sea and in the many seafarers who work to move cargo to and from the 6,000 ports around the world. By continuing to transport the products and equipment needed for our



survival during a global pandemic, seafarers join the ranks of essential workers who protect our wellbeing and safety around the world. As Pope Francis has stressed, "Without the people of the sea, many parts of the world would starve."

The International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) is a member of the Coalition of Catholic Organizations Against Human Trafficking (CCOAH) along with 29 other national and international Catholic agencies working to eliminate the scourge of human trafficking.

Each year during Lent, the CCOAH launches a campaign to raise awareness of forced labor in the fishing industry. During this Lent and Spring, CCOAH is urging Catholics and others to use their voices as community members and consumers to pay tribute to the life of the seafarer and uplift the safety and wellbeing of one of the world's most invisible group of essential workers.

#### An Invisible Humanitarian Crisis

Seafaring is one of the most dangerous occupations in the world. Seafarers deal with turbulent seas made worse by climate change, modern-day piracy, long and grueling workdays, exposure to the elements and lack of medical attention while aboard a vessel. In normal times, ships enact a "crew change" policy. Every 4-10 months, one ship's crew is changed for another in order to protect crew members from exhaustion and allow them to return to their families until their next contract.

As many governments prevent boats from docking at their ports in an effort to contain the spread of COVID-19, more than 400,000 seafarers have been left trapped on ships long after their original contract has expired. Many are experiencing severe trauma as well as mental and physical health issues.

The crew change crisis has also created risks of labor exploitation, since seafarers are being compelled to continue working at sea without a valid contract and beyond the 11-month at-sea limit mandated by international law. At the same time, newly contracted seafarers awaiting to board a vessel are stranded in hotels and dormitories without the means to provide for themselves or their families.

In normal times, ships enact a "crew change" policy by which every 4-10 months, one ship's crew is changed for another in order to protect crew members from exhaustion. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many governments prevent boats from docking and 400,000 seafarers have been left trapped on ships long after their original contract has expired.

This "humanitarian crisis at sea" is a global concern and an important focus of CCOAH's Spring 2021 campaign.

The campaign provides resources and information to help Catholics and other interested and committed people to support its two-fold call

- for governments and shipping companies to pay greater attention and put an end to the crew change crisis, and
- for seafarers to be designated as essential workers with priority access to vaccines.

The campaign also encourages supporters to engage in a key advocacy action: to join the more than 750 organizational signatories of the Neptune Declaration on Seafarer Wellbeing and Crew Change. The Declaration calls for the recognition of seafarers as essential workers and an end to the crew change crisis.

**No Shipping, No Shopping**

Another focus of CCOAHT’s campaign is to call on Walmart to use its position as one of the major retailers in the U.S. to acknowledge how the ongoing success of their business is reliant on seafarers. Specifically, CCOAHT invites Walmart to show concern for seafarers’ wellbeing by signing the Neptune Declaration.

The Declaration points to the important role industry stakeholders have to play in “addressing the crew change challenge and building a more resilient maritime logistics chain”. Walmart is the world’s largest retailer and operates in 24 countries. Its support for the Neptune Declaration would raise awareness of the crew change crisis across the global business sector and act as a catalyst for further support from industry actors.

As Walmart sources products from more than 100 countries, signing the Declaration would be a welcome acknowledgement of the contributions of seafarers to its business success. It would also help raise awareness among its customers on the origins and supply chains of their favorite products. As one of the campaign social media taglines states: “No Shipping, No Shopping.”

The Spring 2021 campaign is being carried out by the Coalition of Catholic Organizations Against Human Trafficking (CCOAHT) in partnership with the Catholic seafarers’ ministries Stella Maris and the Apostleship of the Sea of the United States of America (AOS-USA).

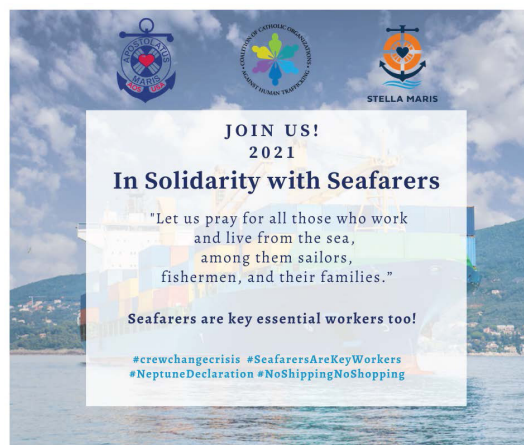
**What You Can Do**

You can take action now and during the whole spring season to support the CCOAHT campaign:

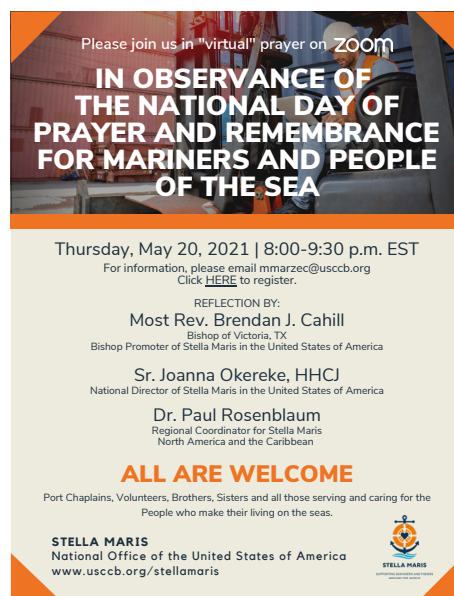
- If you live in the United States, sign the online petition to Walmart asking the company to acknowledge its reliance on seafarers and to show concern for their wellbeing by signing the Neptune Declaration. If you live outside the U.S., sign and send this letter to Walmart Executive Vice President Greg Smith.
- Download the Solidarity With Seafarers as Key

Essential Workers toolkit and use it to let others around you know about the “crew change” humanitarian crisis that affects more than 400,000 seafarers around the world. The toolkit includes background information on seafarers, prayers and intercessions, and bulletin inserts for your church’s newsletter.

- Download the Solidarity with Seafarers Prayer Service booklet.
- Use your social media accounts to express your support for the Neptune Declaration, a statement signed by hundreds of organizations around the world that lists specific action items to ensure that seafarer safety is prioritized.



Download the images: • <https://www.icmc.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Solidarity-with-Seafarers-2021.png> • <https://www.icmc.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Social-Media-Seafarer-Safety.png> and • <https://www.icmc.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Social-Media-Pope-Francis.png> and use the hashtags: #CrewChangeCrisis #SeafarersAreKeyWorkers #NeptuneDeclaration #NoShippingNoShopping © 2021 International Catholic Migration Commission, reprinted with permission.



Flyer for the National Day of Prayer and Remembrance for Mariners and People of the Sea virtual meeting created by Joe Klinker.



## Seafarers, chaplains who minister to them need 'all hands on deck'

By Janet Jones Catholic News Service

Sister Joanna Okereke, national director of Stella Maris for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, called for "all hands on deck," during a virtual gathering May 20 to celebrate the upcoming National Day of Prayer and Remembrance for Mariners and People of the Sea, set for May 22.

During the Zoom gathering, themes that rose to the top of the discussion were making the U.S. bishops more aware of the workings of the Stella Maris ministry and getting more support so chaplains can focus on their ministry.

People who work on the seas have been harder to reach at the exact time when they need ministers the most. And crew changes and shore leave were canceled for hundreds of thousands of people who work on the sea when the pandemic hit.

Chaplains and others who help minister to seafarers have been prohibited from going aboard in many cases.

"Chaplains need to be chaplains; they don't need to be administrators," said Deacon Paul Rosenblum, a regional coordinator for Stella Maris and port chaplain in the Diocese of Charleston, South Carolina.

Bishop Brendan J. Cahill of Victoria, bishop promoter for Stella Maris in the U.S., said it's his calling to reach out to the bishops and encourage them to help by providing priests and financial resources to the seafarer ministry. He said many people are not aware of the work being done at the ports by the few who are dedicated to the ministry.

A "very unfortunate trend," Deacon Rosenblum said, is the decrease in the number of priests in the port chaplaincy. "There is no solution at hand, but it is something we need to be concerned about. Because of that, I see the need to rely more and more on deacons and laypeople to be leaders in our day-to-day operations."

Organized ministry teams could be a great help in serving the spiritual and material needs of seafarers, he said. "Further on that point, I see a great need to get more religious brothers and sisters involved in our ministries."

Many of the participants also saw the need to become better organized in working with port authorities and other groups who work in and around the industry.

Some good news is that many ports are now helping international seafarers get vaccinated and, hopefully, back to normal sooner.

Rhonda Cummins, who is the maritime associate working with the Diocese of Victoria chapter of Stella Maris in Point



*Participants in the virtual gathering to celebrate the National Day of Prayer and Remembrance for Mariners and People of the Sea.*

Comfort, Texas, said they are now trying to make vaccines available to the seafarers in the hopes that they can get out of this endless quarantine at sea.

She said it is getting done in some places, but there is no consistent supply or organized system right now.

The first vaccines in Point Comfort ~ the one-shot Johnson & Johnson variety ~ were administered May 17.

The first recipient, James Vincent of India, is the chief engineer on the Stavanger Pride. She said his vaccine was administered on his arm just above a tattoo of a woman with two children walking along a shoreline. Cummins said he told her, "This is my family. This is why I do this."

Because of regulations in India, the crew has not been allowed shore leave, so Cummins reached out to a local doctor's office and brought a doctor and two nurses to the ship.

"In spite of this pandemic times, we were able to visit 400 ships and 200 seafarers were brought to Walmart," said Father Lito Capeding, director of Stella Maris for the Archdiocese of Mobile, Alabama. He is currently working with the University of South Alabama go bring vaccinations onboard for seafarers.

Father Capeding has been in the port ministry for 13 years, he said, and has delegated many tasks to deacons to help cover the needs. "I don't see any growth with port chaplain priests," he said, "We need to, of course, appeal to the bishops."

Father Bruno Ciceri, international director of Stella Maris at the Vatican, gave a recorded talk to the participants, thanking Bishop Cahill for his work as well as the chaplains and all friends of Stella Maris.

He said Stella Maris, once called the Apostleship of the Sea, started in Scotland over 100 years ago and now serves all over the world, offering counseling and material and

spiritual support.

In its centennial year, to reflect the universality of this mission, "Stella Maris" became the official name of this Catholic Church apostolate.

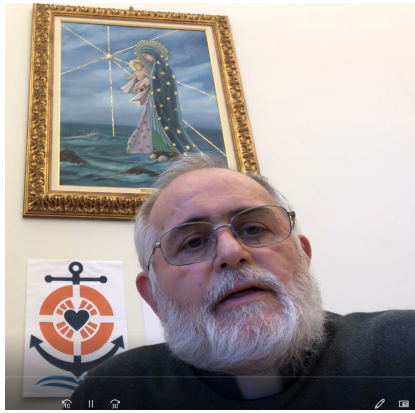
He said that despite not being able to meet many in person over the past year, they have always been in the hearts of the maritime ministers. "Let's not be discouraged and be inspired by the original mission of the founders - to reveal Christ to them."

"Despite the challenges we all face, I see a ministry that will continue to be vibrant. ... And I can say confidently that I think that the next hundred years of Stella Maris will be as successful as the first hundred," Deacon Rosenblum said.

Sister Okereke, a member of the Congregation of the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus, said the ministry, for her, calls to mind the words of St. Teresa of Avila that "Christ has no body but yours" and that Stella Maris partners must be the hands, feet and eyes of Christ for the seafarers.

Bishop Cahill offered thanks to God for the chaplains and for their presence and those who support their presence. "I honor all the chaplains and the stories I hear. Their work is heroic," he said. "The movement of our Christian faith is a movement from isolation and fear to unity and hope."

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Father Bruno Ciceri, international director of Stella Maris at the Vatican.



Capt. Pietro Parravano, Fishing Sector, during the Zoom gathering. Through prayer, scripture quotes, and Pope Francis' prayer for fishermen, Capt. Parravano shared about the plight of fishermen around the world during the pandemic asking God for courage and guidance, ending in the Glory Be (to God).



## Pope Francis Encourages Provision of Pastoral Care to All Involved in the Maritime Industry

By Dr. Jason Zuidema, ICMA

On June 21-22 the International Christian Maritime Association (ICMA) partnered with CrewConnect Europe for an international conference online to discuss the welfare of seafarers. More than 800 registrants from countries around the world took part in the event.

ICMA is the ecumenical association of seafarers' welfare missions from around the world of which Stella Maris was a founding member in 1969.

Pope Francis provided written greetings for those gathered. His welcome and prayer were read at the opening of the Conference on June 21 to participants by Cardinal Peter K.A. Turkson, Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development.

This message of encouragement from Pope Francis follows that in October 2019 at the ICMA World Conference before the pandemic, but also the general messages of support for seafarers during the pandemic on June 17, 2020 and December 20, 2020.

In these new greetings, Pope Francis shared that "Amid the current pandemic, maritime workers have continued to transport essential goods," but that "the pandemic's effects on the maritime industry have made all the more evident the need for a workplace marked by care for our common home and, above all, respect for the dignity of seafarers."

The Holy Father continued his letter by saying it is his "hope that, in the aftermath of the current health crisis, the Conference will address the pressing need for those at sea to return home to their loved ones and those at home to resume their livelihood at sea." His prayer is that "in the months ahead chaplains will increasingly be able to provide pastoral care to all involved in the maritime industry."

Pope Francis' encouragement was well-received by the guests through Cardinal Turkson, as the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development is that in which Stella Maris, the Catholic network for fishers and seafarers finds its place.



*Cardinal Peter K.A. Turkson, Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development delivering Pope Francis' message to the International Christian Maritime Association Conference via YouTube.*

The voice of Stella Maris was important in the meeting. During the conference, Fr. Bruno Ciceri, the international director of Stella Maris, presented results of a new survey that listened to the needs of seafarers during the pandemic. This new survey follows up on one given a year ago, and sees whether there are new challenges that seafarers' welfare missions might be able to help seafarers overcome. Fr. Bruno noted that when seafarers go without a new contract, being stuck at home, it is not only their personal livelihood that is impacted, but also often the source of support for an extended family. We must consider help therefore not only for crew working over-contract onboard, but also those at home who have no source of income.

The two-day conference brought important figures from the maritime industry into dialogue with the ecumenical partners that make up the ICMA. These included representatives of Stella Maris international, but also a number of North American voices that are members of the North American Maritime Ministry Association (NAMMA). © 2021 *Mare Report* reprinted with permission.

## Accompanying Seafarers and Cruise Ship Workers During the Pandemic

**By: Doreen M. Badeaux**

*Secretary General  
Apostleship of the Sea of the United States of America*

The Apostleship of the Sea of the United States of America (AOS-USA) has a special mission to the Cruise Industry for all passengers and crew. The AOS-USA Cruise Ship Priest Program vets, approves and schedules priests onboard contracted cruise lines to provide Daily and Sunday Mass onboard, as well as Pastoral and Spiritual Care.

Thus AOS-USA has been a front row witness to how the Pandemic has devastated the cruise industry and their employees. As early as mid-January, we began seeing ships

re-routed and our priests began having difficulty traveling to certain areas in order to board their scheduled ships.

On February 1, 2020 one of our ships, the Holland America Line Westerdam departed from the Wuhan area of China, and quickly became a ship without a country. Because it departed from the area where the COVID-19 virus began, no country would allow the ship to stop in port.

The AOS-USA Cruise Ship Priest onboard, Fr. Rob Waller, did an outstanding job helping to keep people calm and kind. He created a Novena for the Coronavirus. They prayed it daily onboard, and he sent a very thoughtful card to the Captain letting him know they were praying for everyone onboard. After nearly 4 weeks at sea, no one had taken ill, and they were finally allowed off the ship. We were thankful and inspired by Fr Waller's gentle and calming ministry onboard! He truly made a difference in keeping people calm, and constantly reminded them to be kind to the crew who were extremely stressed by the situation.

Cruises began shutting down in March and by May, cruising had been stilled across the globe.

One serious issue we witnessed was the unfair media attention that focused on one or 2 ships which had COVID-19 onboard. When people on the Diamond Princess were found to have COVID-19, many media sources kept showing photos of that same ship for weeks, while stating that cruise ships are "like floating pitre dishes." We soon began to get phone calls from people who were concerned as to why so many ships had illness onboard, and we worked to counter that misleading perception and let them know what was actually happening at sea.

In the end, only 2 of our 49 ships ever had illness onboard, and the numbers of ill onboard was greatly contained because of prompt action to quarantine and social distance onboard.

The next serious issue was the issue of crew change and repatriation. The cruise lines voluntarily paused cruising in order to stop the spread of the virus. However, no one could have foreseen that the virus would become a full global pandemic and that it would be able to spread so quickly. So, at first, the cruise industry thought their crew could stay onboard for a month or so, make some changes to health and cleaning protocols, and get back to work. But of course, that did not happen. The CDC officially issued a ban on cruising from the USA through Oct 31, 2020. At that point, the cruise lines had to figure out how to get crew back home, and fresh crews onboard.

Why did they want to have crewmembers onboard when cruising was halted? Because a ship is a ship. It's meant to be in the water, and it is meant to run. One cannot dock a

ship and just leave it without a crew onboard. Systems have to be powered and moving or they will stop working.

However, getting crewmembers home was daunting, due to countries closing their borders and airlines discontinuing flights. Again, the media began showing stories of cruise line crews angrily demanding repatriation, but the cruise lines were trying. Finally, the cruise lines banded together and worked to ship their people home, by bringing the ships together in large numbers and then shuttling seafarers of one nation to one ship, seafarers from another nation to another ship, etc, and literally sailed them home.

Sadly though, the issue of crew change has remained a problem since the beginning of 2020. Many seafarers who worked on cruise ships, and this includes the hospitality workers onboard, cooks, stewards, entertainers, etc, have been stuck at home since January or February and are still not able to go back to work. They have no income.

The fortunate ones are those who have been able to get back to a ship.

On Nov 1, 2020 the Center for Disease Control in the United States lifted the ban on cruising from the United States. However, due to the strict guidelines that they have in place, and the need for “simulated cruises” to take place prior to a real cruise, it is believed by many that cruising will not recommence from the United States until June, or possibly October of 2021.

That means for those seafarers, it may be a year and a half, or longer without income.

AOS-USA continues to offer hope and prayers for these workers. Our priests take turns each week Celebrating Mass for the weekend, which is posted to our Facebook and YouTube channels. The priests are available to chat online, or by phone, to provide counseling, or just a friendly listening ear on the other side. Such efforts are coordinated through our office.

We have also been working to find ways to end the tremendous Crew Change issue and issues with Visas, which have plagued the industry throughout 2020 and has continued into 2021. We have been in conversations with the Philippine Embassy in Washington, DC, the Maritime Administration, Customs and Border Protection, the ITF, US Coast Guard, and industry leaders from throughout the maritime industry to find ways to call attention to the plight of the seafarers who either can't go home or can't get back to work.

Through our work, we met a Filipino Seafarer named Paul who formed a private Facebook Group for Filipino Seafarers who are out of work and needing to help support one another mentally, emotionally and through sharing information about programs which may be of

help. There are over 13 thousand seafarers on that page.

Recently Paul wrote:

*I am praying ardently that our project bear fruit for I know it will. It's just that life is getting tougher and tougher as days pass by. You can actually feel the heaviness and the burden of our members in our group. I can't blame them, for all are caught off guard. No one was prepared for this tribulation to come. Even myself, it's getting tougher by the moment. Remember, I told you I am only using my phone to serve everyone and do all my transactions, meetings, public service to our growing Seafarers Family and we are now at almost 13K!*

*Like them, I am needing the much needed help. I am pushing eleven months no income, no work, no nothing since March. I am just holding onto our Lord's promises to survive and continue my mission to all. My volunteer team and myself are working tirelessly to uplift our members who are clamouring for the much needed help.*

*I have been getting already messages from members who can now barely feed their families, asking help in any form for their children and it is disheartening. Thus, am pushing on to help everyone. I am blessed that my group is already being recognised through its mission and vision for all. I am still doing tie-ups for the sake of my members.*

*Doreen, I am looking forward for your updates. Thank you AOS-USA for all that you do.*

This is very heavy! 13,000 seafarers are in this group and are looking to us for help. But what can we do? We need everyone's prayers, AND we need governments to do everything in their power to truly treat seafarers as essential workers.

If a seafarer is truly seen as an essential worker by their government, their government will make sure they receive the vaccine right away and have authority to travel to and from their homes and their ships, so that they can get back to work and save our global economy.

**#SolidaritywithSeafarers**

What does Pope Francis say about maritime workers?

- Without seafarers, the global economy would come to a stand still
- Without fishermen, many parts of the world would starve
- We must listen to the spiritual & material concerns of seafarers and fishermen

**Seafarers are key essential workers too!**  
 #crewchange crisis #SeafarersAreKeyWorkers  
 #NeptuneDeclaration #NoShippingNoShopping

CNS photo/Paul Haring

## Seafarers receive COVID vaccine while in Baltimore ports

By Kevin J. Parks

The mobile COVID vaccination team from Johns Hopkins Medicine brought sweet relief June 14 by way of the Johnson and Johnson single-dose vaccine to international seafaring crews, which will protect their health and allow them to spend more time with families while in their home ports.

Some 30 vaccinations in all were administered to the crews of the Panamanian-flagged sugar transport Century Bright, moored at Domino Sugar off Key Highway, and the Malta-flagged coal transport Nana Z, moored at the Curtis Bay coal pier.

Andy Middleton, director of the Apostleship of the Sea outreach for the Archdiocese of Baltimore, coordinated the first of what he hopes is an ongoing effort to support international ship crew vaccinations against the coronavirus, including transportation to Maryland vaccination sites when onboard clinics are not available.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that as of June 15, U.S. fatalities from COVID-19 have reached nearly 600,000, even though the daily death rate due to the virus has dropped drastically.

One of the greatest challenges in vaccinating seafarers is knowing when ships will be in port, even though the Baltimore Maritime Exchange provides a schedule. Ships can be delayed or rescheduled, creating a challenge for last-minute requests for vaccinations. But that is not a deterrent, according to Middleton.

“I got an email about vaccinations for seafarers,” Middleton said. “I asked myself why we couldn’t do that” for those who come on ships to the Port of Baltimore.

Middleton reached out to several providers, and Johns Hopkins Medicine responded in a similar fashion to earlier efforts by Bishop Bruce A. Lewandowski at Sacred Heart of Jesus/Sagrado Corazón de Jesús to get his parishioners and the Highlandtown Latino community in Baltimore City tested and vaccinated.

But it wasn’t smooth sailing right away, as Middleton was supposed to drop off the vaccination team traveling in his van close to the dock for easy loading and unloading. Unfortunately, the route was blocked by a large truck.

Determined to complete its mission, the Hopkins crew unloaded and received an impromptu walking tour of the outer edge of the Domino Sugar plant with its smells and noise, while pushing a hand truck of computers and label printer, hand carrying the temperature-controlled vaccine cooler and plastic tub of supplies through a security gate



*It's tight quarters in the crew mess for Johns Hopkins Medicine pharmacist Erin Van Meter, as she prepares the Johnson and Johnson single-dose vaccine during an unscheduled stop June 14, 2021 to vaccinate the crew of coal transport ship, Nana Z, moored at the Curtis Bay coal pier. Photo courtesy of Kevin J. Parks/CR Staff.*

and up a steep set of steel stairs to awaiting crew. These steps were not your typical house staircase.

While Century Bright was manned by a Filipino crew, the Nana Z had a combined crew from the Philippines and Ukraine.

“We are at sea for 10 months. I’ve been at sea 13 to 14 months at times,” said Engracio Luguinariano Jr., captain of the Century Bright. “The crew must remain onboard – no liberty, no shore leave. The vaccine is very important for us.”

Luguinariano said that during his most recent home shore leave he was required to stay in quarantine for two weeks, leaving just two weeks to spend with family before weighing anchor for the next run.

“I’m back because I need my job,” he said. Having been vaccinated, he can spend more time with his family while on shore.

Ryan Buluran, part of the Century Bright crew, put an emphasis on how easy the pandemic can spread globally. “We travel around the world taking cargo from one port to another,” said Buluran in his heavily Filipino accent. “We don’t know if the person coming on board has the virus or not. We are so happy to get the vaccine right here in Baltimore.”

Crews on both ships were like children on Christmas day looking for presents under the tree, as they peeked inside the door of their respective mess quarters curious and were excited about the opportunity to be vaccinated against the global pandemic.

Middleton said it was amusing to watch and was “encouraging to see the seafarers’ response.” It affirmed it was the right thing to do.

Shortly after the team stepped back on shore following



*Andrew Middleton, second from right, director of the Apostleship of the Sea outreach for the Archdiocese of Baltimore, and members of the Johns Hopkins Medicine mobile COVID vaccination team, disembark from the Malta-flagged coal transport ship Nana Z June 14, 2021 at the Curtis Bay coal pier. The team vaccinated its crew with the Johnson and Johnson single-dose vaccine hours before the ship sailed to its next port of call, South Africa. Photo courtesy of Kevin J. Parks/CR Staff.*

the Century Bright vaccination, Middleton received a call asking if vaccines were available for another ship, the Nana Z, leaving port in a matter of hours. The ship is headed for Port Elizabeth, South Africa, due to arrive July 9, according to vesselfinder.com.

Ben Bigelow, the Hopkins team leader who also aided in coordinating the Sacred Heart of Jesus/Sagrado Corazón de Jesús clinic, confirmed availability. Middleton set course for the Curtis Bay coal pier.

After a nearly 60-minute delay clearing security channels, the team boarded the Nana Z to accomplish the mission of vaccinating those on board.

The quarters in which the Hopkins team worked were anything but luxurious, as both clinics were held in the crew mess, one being smaller than the next. The crew's excitement, however, was no less diminished.

The Johns Hopkins Medicine team members were treated like rock stars, as the ships' crews not only photographed each other being administered the vaccine and showing their vaccination card or arm bandage, but also with the vaccination team as well.

Some of the Nana Z crew also made it a point to carry the team's supplies up and down the stairs.

"This was very amazing and extremely humbling and rewarding," said Mary Carole Fortunato, a nurse with John Hopkins Medicine vaccination team and a parishioner of the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen in Homeland. "We need to end this pandemic. If we only get 20 or 40 vaccinated, it's more than we had vaccinated this morning."

Those involved agreed this first offering of vaccinations

onboard ship was successful and they learned a few things for future visits as well.

"These are vulnerable people," said Middleton of the unique profession of a seafarer and the mental stress they have been under during the past 18 months of the pandemic. "We're making their (overall) health a priority while here in Baltimore, at home and at sea."

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## Press Release: NAMMA Shares Information on COVID-19 Vaccine Availability in US Ports

by Jason Zuidema

The North American Maritime Ministry Association (NAMMA) has compiled information on COVID-19 vaccine availability for foreign seafarers in United States ports. The list is available on the NAMMA website here: <https://namma.org/vaccines/>.

The list is shared to assist all the ongoing efforts of local seafarers' welfare agencies, government bodies, health care providers, industry and labour partners who are working together to provide seafarers with vaccines.

In past weeks, pharmacies and health authorities in many US states and cities have made COVID-19 vaccines available to foreigners. Requirements for receiving vaccines differ from port to port, however. In certain areas no i.d. is required, in other places foreign i.d. is accepted, or, as in Florida, the state has explicitly stated that "the Public Health Advisory also expands vaccine access and eligibility to any individual in Florida who is present in Florida for the purpose of providing goods or services for the benefit of residents and visitors of the state." [1]

The list NAMMA is compiling is for information purposes only and is not intended to correct or replace any information given by local, state, or federal government agencies or any health care providers. As no other central organization has been collecting this information and has shared it, however, NAMMA has created this webpage as part of its mission to share resources for seafarers' wellbeing.

As a signatory to the "Neptune Declaration on Seafarer Wellbeing," NAMMA supports all efforts to "recognize seafarers as key workers and give them priority access to COVID-19 vaccines." [2] NAMMA adds its voice to IMO General Secretary Mr. Kitack Lim's, who stated that "no seafarers should be left behind or forced to forgo their careers because of limited resources in their home country." [3] NAMMA also encourages broad support for the Resolution of April 23 concerning COVID-19 vaccination for seafarers adopted by the ILO Special Tripartite Committee of the International Maritime Labour Convention, 2006. [4]

NAMMA President Deacon Paul Rosenblum states, “vaccines against COVID-19 are critical for all of us to get beyond the pandemic, but they are especially important for seafarers in order to travel to their homes at the end of their contracts, to obtain new contracts, and to travel to join their new vessels. We hope that vaccinations will also allow seafarers to once again enjoy the shore leave that is so necessary for their wellbeing.”

At this time, a number of NAMMA members and partners in ports around the United States are facilitating vaccines for foreign seafarers, at local pharmacies and health providers where it is possible. In certain places, seafarers’ centers are facilitating health officials coming on board to vaccinate the crew.

NAMMA Executive Director Dr. Jason Zuidema noted, “Since the start of the pandemic, seafarers’ welfare providers have felt powerless to help seafarers stuck on their ships without shore leave or crew changes. It is a tremendous encouragement at this challenging time to directly respond to seafarers’ need for connection with vaccine providers.”

NAMMA encourages all its members to visit and make use of its webpage, COVID-19 Vaccines for Seafarers. Sharing it with others interested in helping vaccinate seafarers and sending in new and updated information are also more than welcome. NAMMA is thankful for the help of the Center for Violence Protection at UTMB Health, the International Transport Workers’ Federation, and the Center for Mariner Advocacy of the Seamen’s Church Institute. NAMMA welcomes any other partnerships that might help facilitate seafarers receiving vaccines.

Please contact us for updates or with questions: Dr. Jason Zuidema, Executive Director, NAMMA. [jason.zuidema@namma.org](mailto:jason.zuidema@namma.org)

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**Update from Dr. Jason Zuidema**

Alongside the list of ports on the NAMMA.org list (<https://namma.org/vaccines/>), we are thrilled to see new international initiatives which are now listed at ICMA (<https://icma.as/vaccines/>). I would be happy to update either of those lists if you have new information to share.



*Stained glass window from Holy Cross Catholic Church in East Bernard, TX*

**The Power of Being There**

By Rhonda Cummins

The phone rings. The ship’s agent says “We have a ship’s officer being hospitalized in Port Lavaca and his ship is leaving tomorrow. He will be all alone. Can you go visit him?” My response “Yes, yes, of course, I will go.” Details were shared, the call ended and the next day, I made my first hospital visit to meet 2/O Paul Dimson. I alerted our Port Chaplain Fr. Tommy Chen and he met me there. Our first visit was short since he was due in surgery but he knew we were there and he was not alone.

Paul’s procedure went well and as he spent the week recovering in the hospital; I saw him every day. Fr. Tommy was able to see him again. My Filipina friend Armie and her family came to visit him, often taking native foods. The



staff also took time to visit with him since they understood his situation. As he waited for his flight home to the Philippines, he had new friends and he was not alone.

During one of my visits, I was explaining about starting the seafarers center. I spoke about my ship visits and leaving behind our email address so they could contact us if they needed anything. I mentioned that I seldom heard from any of the ships, even the ones that came back to port several times. Paul said they mostly used messenger, not email. This led to him explaining about what messenger was and how it was part of Facebook. He was surprised that I was not on Facebook and offered to help me set everything up. Paul was there teaching me and I knew I was not alone.

Paul and I used messenger as he made his way to the airport and home. He let me know he arrived safely. As the world began closing down with the pandemic, I found myself with time to learn more about Facebook and messenger. Using those new tools and email, I reached out to several seafarers and they reached back. We began to build a community and word started to spread that the Point Comfort Seafarers Center as here. We started to hear from the seafarers. They knew we were here. Our seafarers are not forgotten. There is power in being there.



*Editors Note: When asked how Paul was doing Rhonda sent this response. "Paul did get home last year in March after his hospital stay. Then in September, he was back on his ship the HELLAS APOLLO in Point Comfort (photo attached). His ship is on a regular run between Texas and Trinidad. I have seen him several times, including Christmas and last month. They will be back in port later this month and I will take them the shopping items they have requested." Paul and Rhonda are pictured above on one of their visits together.*

## Welcome to Point Comfort!

by Susan Huppert, NAMMA



*Rhonda Cummins with Christmas Gifts for Seafarers. Photo by Janet Jones, Diocese of Victoria. (Dec. 24, Facebook)*

Smaller ports are significant when the measure is not volume of cargo or the speed of exchange, but care for seafarers. Seafarers' welfare work in the Port of Point Comfort, Texas, with only five deepwater berths and 6 barge slips, deserves attention for its personalized care.

Ship visitor, Rhonda Cummins, an Episcopalian, calls on seafarers in Point Comfort. Working jointly with Stella Maris, the Catholic maritime charity, she views the port as "tiny" compared to others like Corpus Christi or Houston. Yet, regarding the impact on seafarer's lives it is far from tiny.

When ships dock, international seafarers commonly search for people who have their interest at heart. Seafarer ministries and ship visitors fill that role. Those living and working at sea feel a sense of trust when they hear a ship

visitor is from the "Stella Maris" or the "Seamen's Mission." They need someone they can trust and Cummins and her team are those people at Point Comfort.

"She is just on fire," said the Most Reverend Brendan J. Cahill, Bishop of the Diocese of Victoria, Texas, and serves as the Apostleship of the Sea, Bishop Promoter for the United States. Bishop Cahill encourages seafarers' welfare in ports around the country, but is especially happy to support the work of Rhonda Cummins and her team in his own diocese.

"Seafarers need a friend in every port," said Cummins, Volunteering her time in conjunction with the Catholic mission. "I am trying to fill that void."

"I have been listening to a small, quiet voice for years, saying that I could make a difference. I have searched, learned, grown, and stepped out in faith. These very beginning days of starting a center at Point Comfort are challenging," she wrote.

Cahill, recalls his important contact with Cummins in 2017 following Hurricane Harvey. He received a call from Cummins with her concern for fishers needing to raise their sunken shrimp and oyster boats.

"She is a woman filled with faith, commitment and zeal," said Cahill, who Cummins views as a key partner along her way.

"She is a person who is passionate about this ministry."

Cahill believes she has a story to tell and a call to fulfill. He helps by encouraging, listening and giving her time. As financial needs arise, Stella Maris assists.

Cummins' goal is to create something at Point Comfort that will be as self-sustaining as possible and flexible enough to grow with the changes in the port and industry. This will take time and patience. She contends that a carefully thought out and tailored solution should be able to stand the test of time.

The Reverend Tommy Chen, priest of Our Lady of the Gulf Catholic Church is the port chaplain for Point Comfort's budding outreach. He celebrates Mass with seafarers when requested and able. Chen also supplies Bibles in the Tagalog language and his parish donates generously when asked for donations for care packages or Christmas gifts.

Point Comfort is part of the Calhoun Port Authority, a key gateway to world markets for the Texas mid-coast region. The port plays a vital role in supporting Texas chemical manufacturing industries and in building a stable economic foundation for Calhoun County.

Woven within this economic exchange is the nascent seafarers' mission, extending itself without a physical center or team of paid staff. As the mission grows these services



will come. Yet, because they are still small, they can give personalized care to visiting seafarers.

As bishop promoter of port missions within the Catholic Church nationwide, Cahill feels Point Comfort is likely to grow and this ministry along with it. He is confident the church will get behind it even more.

“Right now, all you have is people who care,” said Cummins. “I am living out my faith tradition which is to welcome the stranger. I walk along the port, smile and wave and remind seafarers that they are not forgotten.”

Cummins’ interest began more than a decade ago, when she visited the Seamen’s Church Institute in Paducah, Kentucky. There she discovered a formal system of care for merchant mariners. The impact resulted in her campaign to fill Christmas shoe boxes and deliver to seafarers’ centers in Houston and Galveston in the years to come.

In 2017, following Hurricane Harvey, she attended the World Conference of Stella Maris which was held in Kaohsiung, Taiwan. Cummins gave a speech on good practices in fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico, as she was at that time Calhoun County Extension Agent for Coastal & Marine Resources. Since that time she has kept up contact with seafarers’ and fishers’ welfare colleagues, especially in the Apostleship of the Sea of the United States of America.

In 2019, she attended online classes and completed the Introduction to Seafarers’ Welfare and Maritime Ministry produced by the North American Maritime Ministry Association on site at the Houston International Seafarers’ Center. This course in Houston prepared her for outreach and ship visitation. She ultimately gained access to ships at Point Comfort.

“For years I felt it was important to do this,” said Cummins.

Her ongoing education about international seafarers is through continuing conversations with a select few including Cahill, which she calls a “valuable stepping stone of mentorship” considering his extensive knowledge as the Apostleship of the Sea (AOS) Bishop Promoter for the United States.

“She is a beautiful example of someone’s journey to serve,” said Cahill.

During the 2019 Christmas season Cummins coordinated donations from more than 40 organizations including Cub Scouts, churches, families and individuals to fill and deliver 517 Christmas boxes to seafarers on 31 vessels at Point Comfort.

Cummins is looking for opportunities not limitations.

Although COVID-19 curtails contact with seafarers to a great degree, Cummins finds the opportunities to deliver more than requested. Recently, an opportunity when a

ship’s agent messaged the Point Comfort Facebook page that a ship captain had a special request for “cleaning wipes”. Cummins made a care package for the ship including the request and much more, leading to multiple gangway visits since.

In the coming years the ministry will continue to grow, strengthening the volunteer base, making the right partnerships, and considering new services that could help seafarers.

She has her ear to the ground for such a provision and her eyes toward the ships so that many seafarers can hear “Welcome to Point Comfort!”

Follow the work of the Point Comfort Seafarers’ Ministry or contact them here: <https://www.facebook.com/aospointcomfort>

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## Stella Maris - Once Called Apostleship of the Sea A note from Our Parish Bulletin

By Paula Maria Gentile

On Saturday May 22nd, Sisters Joanna and Francisca came to the Rosary Celebration at “Our Lady’s Gazebo.” Sister Joanna Okereke is the National Director of Stella Maris, once known as Apostleship of the Sea.

Thanks to Our Lady of the Chesapeake Catholic Church Family we were able to give Sr. Joanna all of the religious objects that you so generously donated. Religious items included: Rosaries, Bibles, religious necklaces, bracelets, medals, scapulars, prayer pamphlets, prayer cards, and small statues. All these donations will be given to the seafarers

that sail into our U.S. ports, and of course our Baltimore harbor is one of them. In our conversation with Sister Joanna, it was revealed to us that 90% of the consumer goods that we use are brought to us by ship, yet the seafarers have not been considered to

be key essential workers during the pandemic, and many of them are still trying to get vaccinated. Thanks to Stella



Paula Maria Gentile, Sr. Francisca Josephine Nzeke, HHCJ, Sr. Joanna Okereke, HHCJ and Ellen Endres

Many of them are receiving the vaccine as they come into American ports. The pandemic has been very hard on these workers. Without the vaccine many ports of call will not allow them off the ships. Volunteers from Stella Maris will often run errands for them, and get them what they need. Chaplains at the ports will often go onboard the ship to say Mass and administer the sacraments for those who are Catholic. Because of the pandemic many seafarers are not even able to get back home spending many months at sea. When asked if any of these workers are targets for human trafficking, Sister said, "Yes!" Unfortunately, labor trafficking runs rampant on the high seas. We gave her a box of the National Human Trafficking Hotline Telephone Number cards, and she thanked us very much.

Stella Maris is a ministry of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in the office of Cultural Diversity in the Church. We will continue to help in this most needed ministry with the collecting of religious items. Our "Giving Basket" will continue to be out in the foyer of church. Just look for the painting of "Peter and John Running to the Tomb." The basket is located at the bottom of the table.

For the 1.5 million seafarers across the seas bringing needed goods and medicines to our shores, we say, "Thank you for your service."



Paula Maria Gentile, who is also a member of the Catholic Daughters of the Americas, facilitated a meeting between Rosanna Farley, Regent, Court St. John the Evangelist #2350, in Severna Park, MD. and Sr. Joanna Okereke. Mrs. Farley shared with Sr. Okereke the Catholic Daughter's efforts with the Stella Maris Christmas Shoebox Project. She later sent this photo of Past Regent Maureen Stansell who delivered them to Andy Middleton, Stella Maris Diocesan Director, Baltimore, last December. Shoeboxes and ditty bags have been crucial for the seafarers this year of Covid-19 since they have not been able to leave the ships to buy essential personal needs.

## NOTES FROM THE PORTS

### Looking back at 2020

By Rhonda Cummins

The Point Comfort Seafarers Center is still so new that we must continue to explain we do not have a building or a van. Seafarers who have experienced other Centers and Seaman's Missions across the world know about the safe haven provided by many groups. When we arrive at their gangway and introduce ourselves the first questions are "how far to your center" and "can you take us to Wal-Mart". These questions basically stopped in 2020 as the pandemic changed the world and shore leave was essentially cancelled.

We made a step change, learning to use Facebook, messenger, and email to reach out to seafarers we had met. We also improved upon our fledgling ship visits by taking care packages to the gangways. Stating up front that we did not need to come aboard the ship, we eliminated the awkwardness and uncertainty of more strangers coming into their space. Instead, we offered smiles from a distance and donned masks when the distance was closer. Our boxes of toiletries and snacks included a few books, cards, dice, puzzles, etc. to help fill empty moments. Before our Christmas giving began in December, we delivered 105 boxes to help crews know they were not forgotten.

Perhaps the single biggest change was enlisting the help of a retired priest to write and share words of encouragement for the seafarers. These were recorded and posted online in our Fridays with Fr. Jim series where his words could be heard or read. As the library of short videos eventually grew to 32 messages, we decided to incorporate some of them into a book. We also asked Bishop Cahill for some words of hope and encouragement to include along with photos we had taken. Preserving this effort in a physical form gives us another way to reach out to our ships. It also gives us a way to help tell our story during these early and sometimes difficult days to potential partners.



The booklet is a small sign of our commitment to supporting seafarers who visit the Port of Point Comfort, Texas.



## Port of Jacksonville (JAXPORT)

From Deacon Milton Vega

### The name stella maris

My friends and partners in ministry, Monsignor Vincent Haut, who serves in the cruise industry and is in my Deanery, shared this most interesting story that I want to pass on to you regarding our new global official ministry name. Hope you enjoy it as much as I did.

The name stella maris is first applied to the Virgin Mary in the manuscript tradition of Saint Jerome's Latin translation of the Onomasticon by Eusebius of Caesarea,[1] although this is in fact a misnomer based on a transcription error. For reaching this meaning the Hebrew name Miryam had to go through a series of transformations: in Judeo-Aramaic it became Maryam, rendered in Greek as Mariam. It was this form, that was etymologized by Eusebius. He interpreted Maryam as mar-yam "drop of the sea", based on mar, a rare biblical word for "drop"[2] and yam "sea".[3] St. Jerome adopted this interpretation and translated the name into Latin as stilla maris, "drop of the sea", but at some later stage a copyist transcribed this into stella maris, "star of the sea", and this transcription error, became widespread.[4]

Another opinion [clarification needed] states that Jerome himself interpreted the name as meaning "star of the sea" or Stella Maris, by relating it to a Hebrew word for star, (ma'or), from the verb ('or), to be light or shine.[3]

The etymologization of the name of Mary as "star of the sea" was widespread by the early medieval period. It is referenced in Isidore's Etymologiae (7th century). The plainsong hymn "Ave Maris Stella" ("Hail, Star of the Sea") dates from about the 8th century. Paschasius Radbertus in the 9th century has an allegorical explanation of the name, writing that Mary is the "Star of the Sea" to be followed on the way to Christ, "lest we capsize amid the storm-tossed waves of the sea." In the medieval period, stella maris came to be used as a name of Polaris in its role as lodestar (guiding star, north star); it may have been used as such since Late Antiquity, as it is referred to as "always visible" by Stobaeus in the 5th century, even though it was still some eight degrees removed from the celestial pole at that time.

In the twelfth century, Saint Bernard of Clairvaux wrote: "If the winds of temptation arise; if you are driven upon the rocks of tribulation look to the star, call on Mary. If you are tossed upon the waves of pride, of ambition, of envy, of rivalry, look to the star, call on Mary. Should anger, or avarice, or fleshly desire violently assail the frail vessel of your soul, look at the star, call upon Mary." [5] Anthony of Padua also wrote of Mary as Star of the Sea.[6] Pope Pius

XII in his encyclical Doctor Mellifluus also quoted Bernard of Clairvaux in saying: "Mary ... is interpreted to mean 'Star of the Sea'. This admirably befits the Virgin Mother ... (for) as the ray does not diminish the brightness of the star, so neither did the Child born of her tarnish the beauty of Mary's virginity." [7] Stella maris was occasionally also used in reference to Christ. Robert Bellarmine (writing c. 1600) deprecated this use of the title, preferring the allegory of Christ as the morning star as the "brightest star of all", classing the less-bright polar star as "paltry" (exigua).[8]

## Port of Mobile

*Excerpted from: Stella Maris chaplains minister to Seafarers amid COVID-19 restrictions*

By JANET JONES  
Catholic News Service  
and ROB HERBST  
The Catholic Week

COVID-19 has certainly impacted the Stella Maris ministries throughout the world, but it hasn't stopped the Archdiocese of Mobile's ministry from ministering to seafarers.

Fr. Capeding celebrated Mass at the Cathedral-Basilica of the Immaculate Conception on May 21

in commemoration of the National Day of Prayer and Remembrance for Mariners and People of the Sea, which was May 22. Stella Maris ministries throughout the U.S. celebrated this Mass in recognition of seafarers.

It's been a challenging year for the ministry and seafarers. People who work on the seas have been harder to reach at the exact time when they need ministers the most. And crew changes and shore leave were canceled for hundreds of thousands of people who work on the sea when the pandemic hit.

"In spite of this pandemic ... we were able to visit 400 ships and 200 seafarers were brought to Walmart (to purchase necessities)" said Fr. Lito Capeding, director of Stella Maris for the Archdiocese of Mobile. He has also been working with the University of South Alabama to bring vaccinations onboard for seafarers.

Fr. Capeding, pastor of Shrine of the Holy Cross Parish in Daphne and St. John Mission in Bromley has been a Stella Maris chaplain for 13 years. He is assisted by Deacon John Archer...

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*Fr. Lito Capeding during the virtual gathering virtual gathering May 20 for the National Day of Prayer and Remembrance for Mariners and People of the Sea.*



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**Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church**  
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## Upcoming Events

**July 11, 2021**  
 Sea Sunday

**September 27, 2021**  
 Feast of Our Lady Star of the  
 Sea

**August 10-11, 2021**  
 NAMMA Conference  
 Registrater on NAMMA Website  
<http://namma.org/conference-2021/>

**November 21, 2021**  
 World Fisheries Day