

Solidarity

WITH SEAFARERS AS KEY ESSENTIAL WORKERS



Join the Coalition of Catholic Organizations Against Human Trafficking, Stella Maris, and the Apostleship of the Sea of the United States of America in paying tribute to and advocating for our world's seafarers. This packet will help all of us make a difference.

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Thank you for your support



Background ON SEAFARERS

What Importance do Seafarers Play in Our Lives?

Have you ever stopped to reflect upon the ease with which we have access to our favorite morning coffee from Brazil, grapes from Chile, or wheat from Turkey? What about our prescription medicine produced in Germany or the gasoline that fuels our cars made with crude oil from Saudi Arabia? 90% of global trade is moved by the sea and it is our fellow seafarers who work tirelessly to transport this cargo to and from the world's 6,000 ports, including the 360 seaports that line our U.S. coasts.

Why Should Seafarers Be Considered Essential Workers?

Due to the risk that the current pandemic imposes on human life, essential workers are the men and women whose jobs help protect our wellbeing, safety, and access to basic needs. While much of the world has come to a halt, seafarers continue to deliver products essential for survival to our shores (vaccines, face masks, hygiene items, staple food items). Pope Francis also stresses that, “without the people of the sea, many parts of the world would starve.”



What are the Risks that Seafarers Face at Sea?

Seafarers contend with turbulent seas made worse by climate change, modern-day piracy, long and grueling workdays, constant exposure to the elements, and lack of medical attention while aboard a vessel. Pope Francis describes their occupation as one of the most dangerous in the world. Those who work on vessels are also at risk for labor exploitation, which at times rises to the level of human trafficking.

How Has the Pandemic Exacerbated these Risks? What is the Crew Change Crisis?

In normal times, ships enact a “crew change” policy. Every 4-10 months, one ship's crew is changed for another to protect crew members from exhaustion and allow them to return to their families until their next contract. In an effort to contain the coronavirus, many governments are restricting travel into or through their countries, making it next to impossible for seafarers to leave their vessel to travel home.

This has left more than 400,000 seafarers stranded on ships long after their original contract has expired. Many are experiencing severe mental and physical health issues, as well as trauma. The crisis also brings with it risks of labor exploitation from crew being compelled to work at sea without a valid contract and in many cases beyond the 11-month limit mandated by international law. Meanwhile, seafarers on land waiting to board a vessel with a new contract find themselves stranded in hotels and dormitories, unable to provide for themselves or their families. This situation has escalated to a humanitarian crisis at sea and should be of concern to everyone, including all of us.



Background

ON SEAFARERS

What is our Church Doing to Support Seafarers?

Stella Maris, founded by the Catholic Church, is the largest global maritime ministry serving seafarers, fishers, and family members in the world. In the U.S. *Stella Maris* is present in 53 maritime ports in 26 states and in 48 dioceses. Port chaplains and lay volunteers minister to seafarers by offering pastoral care, friendship, transportation to purchase basic needs, Internet connection/phone cards to communicate with family members, and more. In addition to offering welcome on ship visits, *Stella Maris* staff assists seafarers in distress, whether due to exploitative working conditions or long periods of isolation on board the vessel.

Apostleship of the Sea of the United States of America (AOS-USA) is the official professional association of the Catholic Port Chaplains, Mariners, and Cruise Ship Priests. AOS-USA runs the Cruise Ship Priest Program with 500 priests from around the world serving on board over 650 cruises each year.

During the pandemic, AOS-USA and *Stella Maris* chaplains and volunteers have worked tirelessly to find ways to minister despite seafarers' inability to disembark at port. Many are offering "virtual chaplaincy" to lend a listening ear via email or

Facebook. Others are running errands and preparing care packages for seafarers in need of basic necessities such as cleaning wipes, and fresh water. AOS-USA also provides pastoral care and support for cruise personnel online and via phone, as well as access to the Holy Mass.

How Can I Help Our Brothers and Sisters at Sea?

The resources in this booklet will help you to elevate the visibility of the seafarers as key essential workers! They will help you to advocate for seafarers through prayer, education, and action:

- The Prayers and intercessions allow us to come together in community to ask God to fortify our commitment toward seafarers.
- The bulletin inserts, social media messaging, and resources increase community awareness about the role that seafarers play in our lives and the impact of the pandemic on their safety and well-being.
- The call to action to urge major retailers like Walmart to sign the *Neptune Declaration for Seafarer Wellbeing and Crew Change* enable us to stand up for the human rights of workers in the maritime sector. Such forms of advocacy help us to build protective factors for a group of workers at high risk of labor exploitation and trafficking.



Prayers & INTERCESSIONS

PRAYERS FOR SEAFARERS

*“Let us pray for all the those who work and live from the sea,
among them sailors, fishermen, and their families.”*

*(Pope Francis’ Prayer Intention:
People in the Maritime World)*

The Apostleship of the Sea Prayer

Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy upon all Seafarers
(Say one Our Father)
(Say one Hail Mary)
Our Lady, Star of the Sea, pray for us.
St. Peter, pray for us.
St. Andrew, pray for us.
Lord save us, or we perish!
(First adopted in 1921)

Seafarers Prayer

Lord God, we depend on you for life itself. We depend on seafarers for many of our daily needs. Watch over them, keep them from danger, befriend them in loneliness and bring them safely home to those they love. Amen.

We pray, O God for all seafarers as they face the dangers of their calling. Grant them your strength and protection and keep them in the hours of special need. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Stella Maris Prayer

O Mary, Star of the Sea,
Light of every ocean, guide seafarers across all dark and stormy seas that they may reach the haven of peace and light prepared in Him who calmed the sea.

As we set forth upon the oceans of the world and cross the deserts of our time, show us, O Mary, the fruit of your womb, for without your Son we are lost.

Pray that we will never fail on life’s journey, that in heart and mind, in word and deed, in days of turmoil and in days of calm, we will always look to Christ and say, “Who is this that even wind and sea obey him?”

Our Lady Star of the Sea Pray for us. Amen
(Pope John Paul II)

Thanksgiving for Seafarers

God of Love, we give thanks for all those who work at sea. We acknowledge our need for the food and raw materials they transport. We recognize that they are sometimes in danger and their long absences often involve sacrifices in their family life. Help us to show our gratitude not only in our words, but also in our actions. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

(Fr. Thomas Grufferty)

Prayers for Those Who Care for Seafarers

God, we ask your blessing on all who care for seafarers. Strengthen them when the hours are long. Uphold them when the work is hard. And grant them the vision to see in those they serve the likeness of your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.



Prayers & INTERCESSIONS

INTERCESSIONS

Please choose some of the following to be included among the intercessions in your church.

Response: Lord graciously hear us.

Let us pray for Pope Francis, the bishops, priests, deacons, and religious brothers and sisters that they are filled with the wisdom and courage of the Holy Spirit to be leaders in bringing light and justice to the plight of seafarers and fishers in the maritime world. Lord hear us.

Let us pray for seafarers and fishers who serve others on the waters of the world, for their gifts of labor and sacrifice to bring us the goods we use and consume every day, and for all people throughout the world. Lord hear us.

Let us pray for the safety and wellbeing of all seafarers in their daily work at sea as they labor in dangerous and difficult conditions compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic and the crew change crisis. Lord hear us.

Let us pray for all people that we may have a greater awareness of the working conditions and injustices experienced by seafarers and commit to join their voices in solidarity. Lord hear us.

Let us pray for those who are sick or have been injured in accidents on board ships, for protection from COVID-19 and other health issues, for adequate medical treatment and safe passage home to their countries and families. Lord hear us.

Let us pray for the family members and friends of the seafarers and fishers, during long periods of separation, loneliness, and anxiety that they may experience God's loving embrace and comfort while their loved ones are at sea. Lord hear us.

Let us pray for the work of the Church; for chaplains, ship visitors, and volunteers; for all involved with Stella Maris and the Apostleship of the Sea of the United States of America; for all Maritime Ministries; and for those ministering to seafarers of different faiths, cultures, and ideologies. Lord hear us.

Let us pray for those who are trapped in a situation of slavery at sea, that they may remain hopeful and be strengthened to seek help. Lord hear us.

Let us pray for all those who have died and for all lost at sea we pray to the Lord. Lord hear us.



Bulletin

INSERTS

*Please include these paragraphs in your church's newsletter or bulletin.
You may also use them as bullet points to educate others about
the importance of seafarers to our daily lives.*

Over 1.5 million seafarers work on ships that bring goods and medicine to stores here in the United States and around the world. Their work allows our economy to grow. But the COVID-19 pandemic has hit the industry hard, and our help is needed. As governments around the world have closed their borders to contain the coronavirus, many of these workers are restricted from leaving their vessels. Several have had their contracts extended, often against their will, unable to return to their homes. Join with Catholics around the globe by advocating and praying for seafarers!

Seafarers, those who work on ships around the world, are mostly invisible and unsung heroes. They work to ensure that 90% of the raw materials, food, medicine, and products we use on a daily basis arrive to our shores. Without seafarers, the global economy would come to a halt. We would be deprived of basic necessities; some nations would struggle to survive. Join with Catholics around the globe in committing to stand up for the human rights of seafarers who face one of the most difficult jobs in the world!

DID YOU KNOW ... there are over 400,000 seafarers – those who work on ships – who are stuck on vessels at sea and unsure when they will be able to return to their families? The pandemic has hit workers of the maritime industry hard, directly impacting the ability for stores to keep shelves stocked with goods we need each day. Seafarers caught up in this crisis are enduring extreme hardship and suffering. Join with Catholics around the globe in encouraging governments to designate seafarers as key essential workers and provide them with priority access to vaccines!

Pope Francis teaches us: “The life of sailors or fishermen and their families is very difficult. Sometimes they are victims of forced labor or are left behind in distant ports ... Without the people of the sea, many parts of the world would starve. Let us pray for all those who work and live from the sea, among them sailors, fishermen and their families.” Join with Catholics around the globe in praying for seafarers!

Thanks to Stella Maris and the Apostleship of the Sea of the USA, we have port chaplains, ship visitors, and volunteers who minister to seafarers and fishers throughout our country and around the world. They offer everything from a listening ear and spiritual guidance for seafarers struggling after months at sea to providing Wi-Fi access to connect them with loved ones. Stella Maris and AOS-USA work to ensure that the dignity and rights of seafarers and fishers are upheld by monitoring for any signs of unsafe work conditions or labor exploitation. Join with Catholics around the globe in raising the visibility of the Church's ministry to the men and women who work at sea!



Social MEDIA

SOLIDARITY WITH SEAFARERS

#Seafarers; #SafetyAtSea; #CrewChangeCrisis; #NeptuneDeclaration; #SeafarersAreKeyWorkers

Say Thank you!

Seafarers are a silent force moving the world's economy and delivering essential items necessary for our wellbeing and survival to our shores. Show moral support to them and for chaplains and volunteers working at ports with a Stella Maris and AOS-USA presence. Record messages of thanks using your mobile phone and publish them online! For inspiration, watch [Pope Francis](#).

Follow & Share:

Stay abreast of what organizations are doing on a daily basis to minister to maritime workers. You can "like" their Facebook pages, "follow" them on Twitter, and "bookmark" their websites. If you see a post that moves you, share, retweet, or repost to spread the word! If you use twitter, follow @StellaMarisOrg for Stella Maris and @AOSDoreen for AOS-USA.

Pray:

Many of us turn to social media to request prayers for ourselves or others. Pope Francis has highlighted the plight of seafarers and urges us to pray for those who work and live from the sea. Spread Pope Francis' concern and prayer for our seafarers, fishermen and their families. Start by posting the [Pope's video](#) on your favorite social media platform and encourage your friends to share.



Amplify your Voice:

Use your voice to uplift the dignity of seafarers and educate your family and friends on their difficult and dangerous work compounded by COVID-19. Social media samples:

- The Catholic Church has a best kept secret! AOS-USA and Stella Maris accompany seafarers and fishers with pastoral care, social support, friendship, and protection of their labor rights in 53 maritime ports across the U.S. Give thanks to a port chaplain today! @StellaMarisOrg @AOSDoreen
- Seafarers have kept our hospitals and supermarkets stocked during the global pandemic. Let's prioritize their welfare and call for their status as essential workers. #safetyatsea for #seafarers
- Retail giants like @Walmart rely on seafarers to keep their stores stocked with merchandise. Let's urge @Walmart to show concern for seafarers' wellbeing by signing the #NeptuneDeclaration!
- COVID-19 related restrictions have stranded 400,000+ seafarers at sea or on land for months. They are unable to reunite with their families and many are forced to continue working, leading to a rise in labor exploitation and trafficking. We need #safetyatsea. Support the #NeptuneDeclaration!

The Power of a Picture

We offer you several social media graphics [here](#) to spread word among your circles of influence! We encourage you to post them alongside the messages above or to use them independently.



Making A DIFFERENCE

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Educate:

Spread the word to family, friends, and the community about the importance of seafarers and the impact of the pandemic on their well-being. We invite you to explore these resources:

- **BIMCO:** [Ships Make the World Go Round](#)
- **Global Maritime Forum:** [The Neptune Declaration](#)
- **IMO:** [Crew changes: A humanitarian, safety, and economic crisis \(FAQ\)](#)
- **NPR Morning Edition:** [Many Seafarers Are Stranded Abroad Ships Because of the Coronavirus](#)
- **Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network:** [The Maritime World Infographic](#)
- **Vatican News:** [Covid-19: Calls grow for seafarers to be given "key worker" status](#)

Donate:

Stella Maris and AOS-USA staff can bring care packages with nonperishable items directly to ships such as tote bags, toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, shower spray, slippers, and more. Now that many seafarers cannot leave their vessels to shop for needed goods at port cities, they appreciate this gesture more than ever. Find out what items are needed most by contacting a [port chaplain](#).

Act!

Join us in urging Walmart to acknowledge their reliance on seafarers for the healthy functioning of their business model, and to show concern for seafarers' wellbeing by signing the Neptune Declaration.

- **What is the Neptune Declaration?** It is a global pact outlining the actions needed to resolve the humanitarian crisis facing seafarers. This includes universal recognition of seafarers as key essential workers to ensure they have priority access to the

COVID-19 vaccine. The pact also calls for greater cooperation between ship owners and those who lease ships to transport cargo (charterers) to facilitate the replacement of one ship's crew members with another (crew change). This enables seafarers who have completed their contracts to return home to their family.

- **Why is this important?** The global pandemic has gravely impacted the safety of seafarers across the world. Due to border closures to contain the spread of the coronavirus, 400,000+ seafarers have been stranded aboard ships beyond the length of their contracts, including what is allowed by international law (up to 11 months). This has increased seafarers' risk of labor exploitation and human trafficking.
- **Why Should Walmart sign?** Walmart's success is linked to the wellbeing of seafarers. Without the workers who transport by sea the goods that Walmart sells in 10,500 stores, their business would cease to exist. This is also a human rights issue. Walmart has taken positive steps to address forced labor in their supply chains and has committed to upholding labor rights. As proponents of the dignity of workers in supply chains, this commitment should extend to seafarers.

Call to Action:

- Please sign our [online petition](#), designed and hosted by the U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking.
- You can also sign and mail our sample letter to Walmart. If you prefer, you can use the letter as a guide to write your own.



{Add Date Here}

Greg Smith
Executive Vice President, Supply Chain, Walmart U.S.
702 SW 8th St
Bentonville, AR 72712

Dear Mr. Smith:

As a Walmart customer and consumer of your products, I am writing to express my deep concern about the humanitarian crisis impacting workers who are an indispensable part of your supply chain. I refer to the men and women who transport 90% of the world's cargo by sea - including the food, medicine and goods sold at Walmart's 10,500 stores located throughout the United States and 23 additional countries.

As a result of COVID-19 travel restrictions and border closings, over 400,000 seafarers have been trapped aboard vessels long after their contracts have expired. Many have been forced to continue working under deteriorating conditions and severe mental and physical stress. These conditions place in jeopardy the global supply chain on which Walmart's success depends. They also grossly undermine the "salient human rights priorities" that Walmart has identified for its company, such as "promoting a safe & healthy work environment", "combating forced labor", and upholding "the dignity of workers in supply chains".

Walmart's Human Rights Statement not only acknowledges that businesses have a responsibility to respect human rights, but publicly commits to leverage Walmart's "capabilities and influence to bring about positive change". At a time of great uncertainty and hardship for the world, Walmart has an extraordinary opportunity to act upon this commitment by Signing the *Neptune Document for Seafarer Welfare and Crew Change*. By doing so, Walmart will be promoting the designation of seafarers as key workers to ensure they have priority access to the COVID-19 vaccine. Walmart will also be advocating for increased collaboration between ship owners and charterers to make sure a ship's crew can leave the vessel and repatriate once their contract ends. These actions serve to protect the supply of critical merchandise that Walmart sells to its more than 220 million customers weekly, and more importantly, to uphold the wellbeing, safety, and labor rights of the men and women who make up an essential part of your supply chain.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

(Add your name and signature)



Resources

**Learn about the organizations supporting seafarers, fishermen, and their families
in the United States and around the world!**

Stella Maris National Office, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Apostleship of the Sea of the United States of America (AOS- USA)

Coalition of Catholic Organizations Against Human Trafficking

Stella Maris International

International Christian Maritime Association (ICMA)

International Seafarers Welfare and Assistance Network

International Maritime Organization (IMO)

North American Maritime Ministry Association

Special Thanks to:

Catholic Charities - Cleveland; Diocesan Social Action Office

Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters

Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate

U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking

Stella Maris National Office/USCCB

Apostleship of the Sea of the United States of America

Stella Maris Diocese of Beaumont

Dennis Mottola, Global Logistics Consultant

Migration and Refugee Services/ USCCB

