



AUGUST
2020

Stella Maris

SUPPORTING SEAFARERS AND FISHERS AROUND THE WORLD

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with Fr Colum Kelly

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Stella Maris is a Catholic charity supporting seafarers worldwide.

We provide practical and pastoral care to all seafarers, regardless of nationality, belief or race. Our port chaplains and volunteer ship visitors welcome seafarers, offer welfare services and advice, practical help, care and friendship.

Stella Maris is the largest ship visiting network in the world, working in 332 ports with 227 port chaplains around the world. We also run 53 seafarers' centres around the world.

We are only able to continue our work through the generous donations of our supporters and volunteers.



To support Stella Maris with a donation visit
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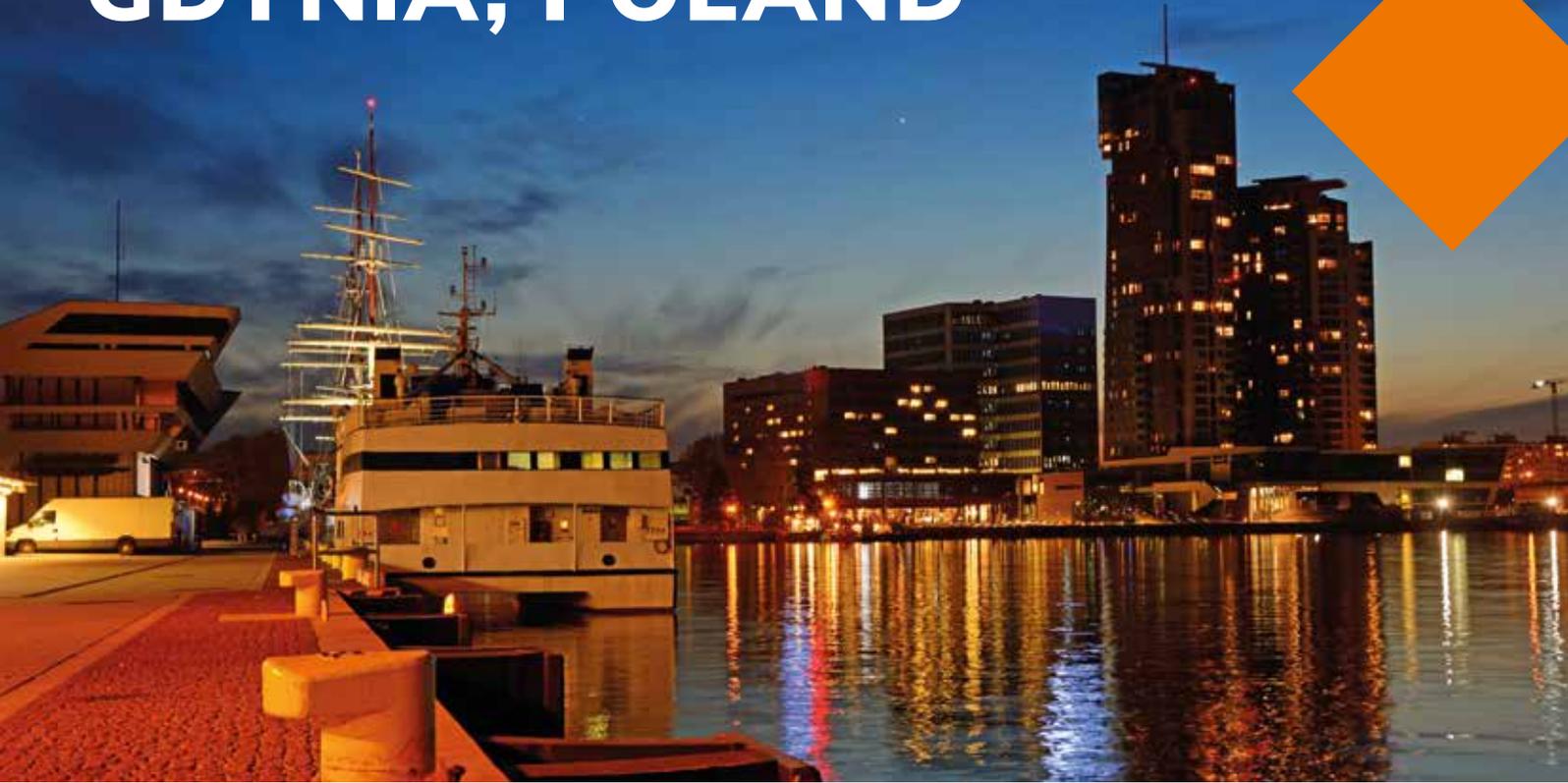
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Stella Maris
 provides seafarers
 with practical
 support, information
 and a listening ear

GDYNIA, POLAND



Built as one of the most modern European ports, the Port of Gdynia remains one of the key marine centres in the southern part of the Baltic region.

On 23 September 1922, the Polish Parliament passed the Act ordering the construction of a port in Gdynia, thus marking its official foundation. By 1926 Gdynia which used to be a fishing village, was declared a city. It is now a young, dynamic and growing city, strongly connected to the sea and open to people and business.

The Stella Maris Centre is situated close to the port and the entrance to the city. The Apostleship of the Sea has been working in Gdynia since 1957 when Bishop Kazimierz Kowalski tasked the Redemptorist Fathers to look after seafarers,

fishers and their families. The beautiful Maritime Church is next to the Stella Maris Centre. So the seafarers have a chance to participate in the Mass easily.

The Stella Maris Centre is open every day and we are present in the port for ship visiting.

In the summer season, Gdynia is a travel destination for cruise ships and because the passenger ships call at our port early, we also open our centre earlier for the crew to come and use our facilities for getting in touch with their families.

Hospitality is a very important

element for seafarers. Every year we hold a Christmas party for seafarers and in June we celebrate the Festival of the Sea which also starts with Mass at our Church.

When the Covid-19 pandemic started the seafarers were not left alone. They were visited by the chaplain and the Holy Mass was celebrated for them. Spiritual comfort is important but we do not forget seafarers' social needs. That is why the Stella Maris provides internet for communication with families as well as warm clothes for the freezing Baltic winters.



Apostleship of the Sea Stella Maris

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Sunday at Sea with Fr Colum Kelly

**EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME**
2 AUGUST 2020

GOSPEL MATTHEW 14:13-21

When Jesus received the news of John the Baptist's death he withdrew by boat to a lonely place where they could be by themselves. But the people heard of this and, leaving the towns, went after him on foot. So as he stepped ashore he saw a large crowd; and he took pity on them and healed their sick.

When evening came, the disciples went to him and said, 'This is a lonely place, and the time has slipped by; so send the people away, and they can go to the villages to buy themselves some food.' Jesus replied, 'There is no need for them to go: give them something to eat yourselves.' But they answered, 'All we have with us is five loaves and two fish.' 'Bring them here to me,'

he said. He gave orders that the people were to sit down on the grass; then he took the five loaves and the two fish, raised his eyes to heaven and said the blessing. And breaking the loaves he handed them to his disciples who gave them to the crowds. They all ate as much as they wanted, and they collected the scraps remaining, twelve baskets full. Those who ate numbered about five thousand men, to say nothing of women and children.

THE GOSPEL AND YOU

Jesus is in a deserted place and yet followed by large crowds, in this instance we are told there were five thousand people. The disciples had become anxious that the crowds are hungry and ask Jesus if they should go off to buy some food, enough for 5000? That would be impossible. Jesus asks how much they have on site.

"Only five barley loaves and two fish. What good is that among so many?" The equation is hopeless: so little food, so many people.

He takes the opportunity to point them towards something more enduring. His advice is, 'do not work for food that cannot last, but work for food that endures to eternal life.' I am not sure what the crowd would have made of this plea; they seemed more interested in witnessing miracles, and no doubt were concerned about their hunger.

Talking of things that endure, much of what is produced today is not made to last. Even the

furniture in our homes does not seem to last very long. The clothes that we wear have a shorter life span compared to a generation or two ago. We live in a throwaway culture. Jesus's words about seeking things that endure fell on stony ground and yet isn't it true that on our journey through life we tend to seek out what might be of lasting value like friendship and love because we sense that they can enrich us and make us better human beings? But there are few signs of endurance in our present world. On land or at sea, the Covid 19 virus has changed so much of how we see our world.

The Gospel says it starkly – so little food, so many people. How often do we find ourselves pondering that conundrum? We see so much around us that is heart wrenching and long to be able to do something to transform it. but the point of the story is precisely the hopelessness of the equation. Only through the eyes of faith can the equation be resolved.

GOSPEL MATTHEW 14:22-33

Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side while he would send the crowds away. After sending the crowds away he went up into the hills by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, while the boat, by now far out on the lake, was battling with a heavy sea, for there was a headwind. In the fourth watch of the night he went towards them, walking on the lake, and when the disciples saw him walking on the lake they were terrified. 'It is a ghost' they said, and cried out in fear. But at once Jesus called out to them, saying, 'Courage! It is I! Do not be afraid.' It was Peter who answered. 'Lord,' he said 'if it is you, tell me to come to you across the water.' 'Come' said Jesus. Then Peter got out of the boat and started walking towards Jesus across the water, but as soon as he felt the force of the wind, he took fright and began to sink. 'Lord! Save me!' he cried. Jesus put out his hand at once and held him. 'Man of little faith,' he said 'why did you doubt?' And as they got into the boat the wind dropped. The men in the boat bowed down before him and said, 'Truly, you are the Son of God.'


**NINETEENTH SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME
9 AUGUST 2020**
THE GOSPEL AND YOU

The crowds have been fed and sent away and Jesus has told the disciples to sail to the other side of the lake where he would meet them later.

A storm blew up, and the disciples were frightened. Seafarers tell me about the fear of storms that can suddenly swell up from nowhere. No matter how many years of experience they have at sea, the fear is very real.

I can easily imagine the fear of the disciples in their fairly small boat especially when Jesus was absent from them. God is present where we least expect, although it is a hidden, unseen presence, not always easy to discover.

The Gospel goes on to tell of the return of Jesus walking on the water, and of the impulsiveness of Peter who tried to walk towards him.

Whatever was in Peter's mind in that moment, he felt a sudden desire to jump from the boat and start walking towards Jesus across the water. That's how we need to learn to walk towards Jesus today in the midst of these unfamiliar times, to meet up with Him in the midst of darkness and uncertainty.

It's not easy of course. We too can falter and sink like Peter. But like him, we too can experience that Jesus reaches out and saves us while telling us: "You have so little faith. Why do you doubt?"

As we look at the disciples in the boat, tossed by waves and overcome by a strong wind against them, it's not hard to see the image of today's Church, tossed by so many storms, longing for the figure of Jesus to come across the waters or from wherever, restoring calm.

Our own voyage has its share of storms too, anxieties, doubts of various kinds. An unexpected happening can destroy our inner peace and even our faith. Many find it hard to stay afloat in bewilderingly changing times, struggling with family and work relationships, painfully insecure in themselves.

May Jesus come walking towards us to strengthen our faith as we experience his presence on land or on the water.

TWENTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME 16 AUGUST 2020

GOSPEL Matthew 15:21-28

Jesus left Gennesaret and withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. Then out came a Canaanite woman from that district and started shouting, 'Sir, Son of David, take pity on me. My daughter is tormented by a devil.' But he answered her not a word. And his disciples went and pleaded with him. 'Give her what she wants,' they said 'because she is shouting after us.' He said in reply, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the House of Israel.' But the woman had come up and was kneeling at his feet. 'Lord,' she said 'help me.' He replied, 'It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the house-dogs.' She retorted, 'Ah yes, sir; but even house-dogs can eat the scraps that fall from their master's table.' Then Jesus answered her, 'Woman, you have great faith. Let your wish be granted.' And from that moment her daughter was well again.

THE GOSPEL AND YOU

In the Gospel, Matthew paints a beautiful simple picture of a pagan woman who takes the initiative to approach Jesus with a request. She is an anxious mother in great distress because her daughter is "tormented by a demon". Jesus's first reaction is surprising, even a bit dismissive. He doesn't seem to listen to her. But, much to the annoyance of the disciples, the woman keeps insisting. We aren't used to Jesus saying No to anyone so his retort seems harsh "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the House of Israel".

Still the woman doesn't give up and prostrates at Jesus's feet bringing an even harsher words from Jesus about house dogs and comparing their lowly position with that of the woman. "Ah yes, Lord; but even little dogs eat the scraps that fall from their masters' table".

Jesus is impressed by her faith and so another healing miracle takes place.

I suppose this begs the question; does the welcome of God only apply to the few? Of course not you say, but do we sometimes leave ourselves open to the accusation of elitism by the way we treat others and label outsiders. Not so for Jesus who has come to save everyone for in



the Father's house there are many mansions.

To exclude is to reject the humanity in all whom we meet and yet the curse of exclusion is to be seen in every walk of life. Inclusion is recognising that we are one even though we are not the same.

In my work caring for seafarers, I hear of the hurt of exclusion from many crew. I suppose it happens mostly on vessels manned by folk of different nationalities, where someone is made an outsider because he doesn't speak the same language, or individuals who are excluded from the group because they don't laugh at the same things, or who may be seen as old fashioned or outdated in their views.

Never feel yourself so utterly important that you belittle the efforts of another child of God.

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME 23 AUGUST 2020

GOSPEL MATTHEW 16:13-20

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi he put this question to his disciples, 'Who do people say the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say he is John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' 'But you,' he said, 'who do you say I am?' Then Simon Peter spoke up, 'You are the Christ,' he said 'the Son of the living God.' Jesus replied, 'Simon son of Jonah, you are a happy man! Because it was not flesh and blood that revealed this to you but my Father in heaven. So I now say to you: You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church. And the gates of the underworld can never hold out against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven.' Then he gave the disciples strict orders not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.

THE GOSPEL AND YOU

I have to say that this is one of my favourite gospel passages where two questions look similar but the answers we give go to the depth of how we see ourselves in the eyes of God.

The first is the easy one when Jesus asks "Who do people say I am?" The answer was simply to relate local gossip. Some say you are John the Baptist, others Elijah, others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.

The second question is much more difficult "Who do you say I am?"

Peter's answer: You are the Christ the Son of the living God has launched hundreds of text books and learned articles on the meaning of Messiah. But let's not go there just now.

Each of us must make a personal answer to Our Lord's questions: For us the first one, just like the disciples, is easy to answer. We can all say what our parents and priests have told us during our lifetime told us who you were.

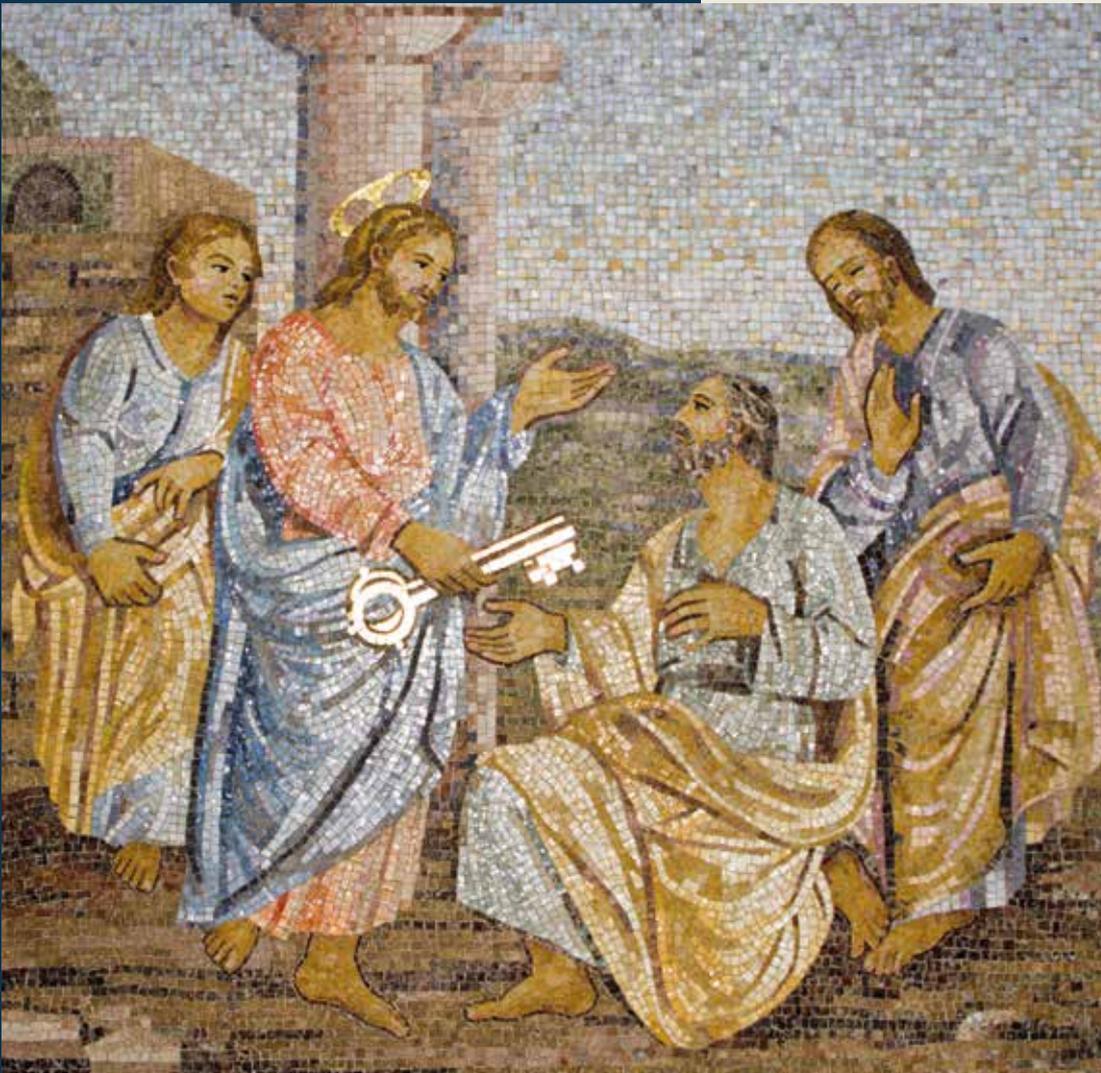
"And you, who do you say I am?" is the much more difficult one. Jesus is not asking us for a doctrinal statement about his mysterious identity, but a truthful answer that will declare our true faith in his and his word. When I pray about this question I can see the

piercing eyes of the Lord seeking an honest answer: no empty words or glib clichés. For when we give that honest answer Jesus's next words will be: "Prove it!"

And proving it is to live each day making life more human and more joy-filled for all. To raise the lowly and broken hearted.

From the beginning of his papacy, Pope Francis has emphasised again and again our need for a personal encounter with Jesus. What could be more personal than a faithful answer to the question

"Who do YOU say I am?"



**TWENTY SECOND SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME**
30 AUGUST 2020

GOSPEL MATTHEW 16:21-27

Jesus began to make it clear to his disciples that he was destined to go to Jerusalem and suffer grievously at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, to be put to death and to be raised up on the third day. Then, taking him aside, Peter started to remonstrate with him. 'Heaven preserve you, Lord,' he said. 'This must not happen to you.' But he turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle in my path, because the way you think is not God's way but man's.'

Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me. For anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it. What, then, will a man gain if he wins the whole world and ruins his life? Or what has a man to offer in exchange for his life?

'For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and, when he does, he will reward each one according to his behaviour.'

THE GOSPEL AND YOU

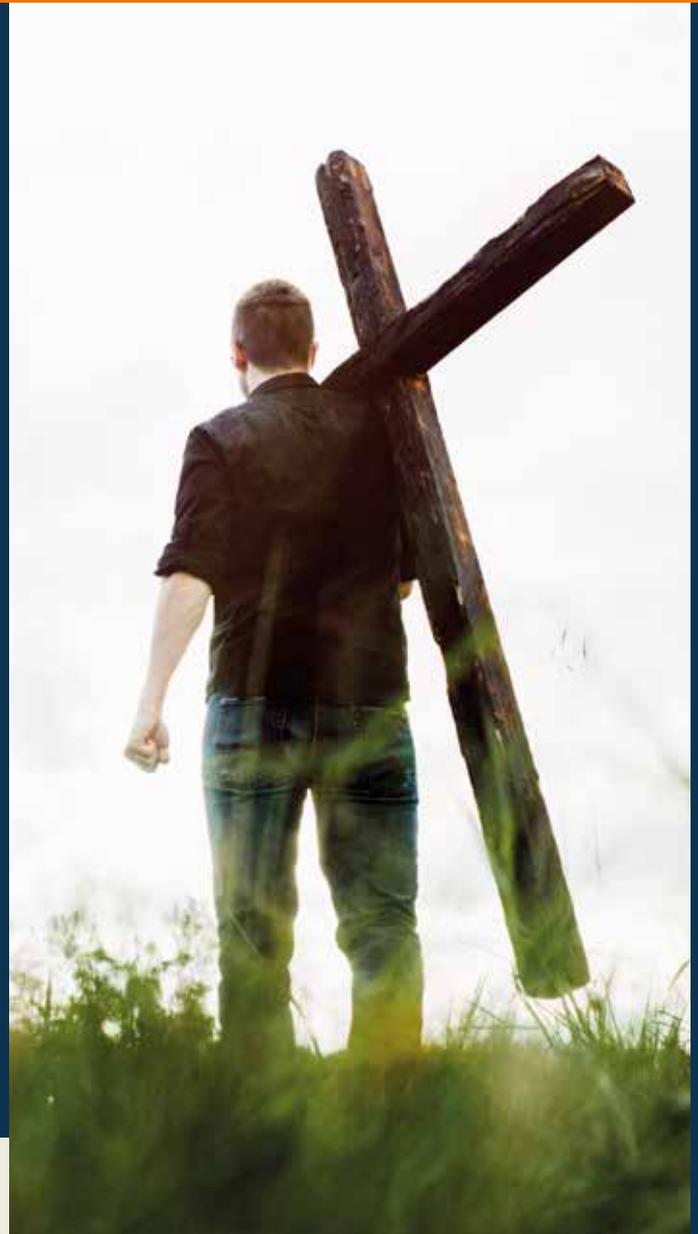
Dear Seafarers,

The Gospel for today, is that hard teaching about renouncing self, taking up the cross, losing our lives for the sake of Jesus. And even if we have not removed those words from our Gospels, do we remain deaf to them in practise, in our lives.

Harsh times are all around us at the moment, our lives on land have changed beyond all recognition. For you too these unfamiliar days bring their own hardships and deprivations, even losing the friendly voices of chaplains calling in to your home.

Though we cannot visit your ships for now, know that we are still very much connected in our prayer and care for each other. How very necessary that is in these present times of great uncertainty. On land many are in isolation, in their homes or places of care, uncertain of what the future might bring. There is worry about jobs, food deliveries, wages, the welfare of loved ones – and even life itself. Our Churches are partially closed and we are missing the presence of the Lord in Holy Communion

But then, you understand all about these things,



they have been a part of your life for as long as you have sailed.

For you they can often come together in the space of one voyage. You worry about wages, will they be paid this month? Will the chandlers get food to the ship in time? Is my family safe at home? Is my job safe for another contract? You can teach us so much about coping in these times we call unfamiliar, times that cause us to be so fearful.

Your lockdown begins on every voyage once the gangway is raised, hatches and doors fastened. Irrespective of the size of the crew, the long hours, even months of isolation must be a drain on mind and soul.

May the Divine presence be a source of strength and comfort in these dark days. Days when we really do know what it means to suffer and take up many crosses.

Until we meet again

Fr Colum



MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO MARITIME PERSONNEL AND THEIR FAMILIES

WEDNESDAY, 17 JUNE 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

These are difficult times for our world, for we have had to deal with the suffering caused by the coronavirus. Your work as maritime personnel and fishermen has thus become even more important, since it is providing our greater human family with food and other primary needs. For this, we are grateful to you. But also because we know the risks involved in your work.

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.

I would like to say something to all of you. Know that you are not alone and that you are not forgotten. Your work at sea often keeps you apart from others, but you are close to me in my thoughts and prayers, and in those of your chaplains and the volunteers of Stella Maris. The Gospel itself reminds us of this, when it speaks to us of Jesus and his first disciples, who were fishermen.

Today I would like to offer you a message and a prayer of hope, comfort and consolation in the face of whatever hardships you have to endure. I would also offer a word of encouragement to all those who work with you in providing pastoral care for maritime personnel.

Make the Lord bless each of you, your work and your families, and may the Virgin Mary, Star of the Sea, protect you always. I too give you my blessing and I keep you in my prayers. And I ask you, please, not to forget to pray for me.

Thank you.

Pope Francis

HOW TO BE HAPPY

THE FOUR PILLARS OF HAPPINESS

Relationships

It is not just any kind of relationship that will make for happiness, of course. Abusive relationships, those where one person attempts to control or exploit another, where they are in it only for what they can gain themselves and offer little in return – all of these are more likely to provoke unhappiness than its contrary. Yet the power of relationship is such that at times people will settle even for these kinds of deceptive bonds, rather than being left without anyone to whom they can relate. The growing awareness of the suffering caused by loneliness often – though by no means exclusively – in the elderly, likewise points to the importance of relationships for a happy life.

In general it can be said that it is loving relationships that contribute most to happiness. That is not to say that other relationships are insignificant from this perspective. To operate as part of a well-motivated team, where everyone knows their role and feels able to contribute from their own skills and talents, may well make for a happy work environment. But love would most often seem to be a key element here. In his book, *The Four Loves*, C.S. Lewis distinguishes between four kinds of love, each of which is capable of contributing to the kind of relationship that leads to happiness. Three are naturally characteristic of human beings: empathy, friendship, and erotic attraction. The fourth, and greatest, is that unconditional love to be found in God which can also be, in Lewis's view, cultivated as a specifically Christian virtue. While the first three can contain, and indeed cloak, elements of selfishness, the fourth is wholly dedicated to the well-being of the other, and so will lay the foundation for the fullest, most genuine happiness.



Morality and conscience

It is a common human experience that bad people often seem to thrive while good people suffer, and indeed that the thriving of the bad may be a direct consequence of, and dependent upon, the suffering of the good. Many of the Hebrew psalms worry away at this experience, wondering why God allows it and challenging him about it. One theory as to how the concept of an afterlife gradually took root among the Jews is precisely because it was needed to redress the balance, to provide a forum in which justice, at the Last Judgement if not before, would finally be seen to be done.

Going deeper here is complicated by the fact of the near-impossibility of living a fully moral life. Christians believe that Jesus himself was able to do this, and many share the view that his mother Mary was similarly blessed. But the rest of us are all more or less sinful people, never wholly docile to the promptings of conscience. It becomes difficult, then, to ascribe all happiness to moral virtue, or all unhappiness to transgression. The parable of the wheat and weeds told in Chapter 13 of St Matthew's gospel well describes the situation that we are all likely to find ourselves in throughout our lives on this earth. From this viewpoint it takes, perhaps, an act of faith to affirm that morality and happiness belong together.

Gratitude

One of the basic foundations of any life shaped by religious faith is the acknowledgement that every good thing that we enjoy is ultimately a gift. We did not create ourselves, bring ourselves into being; nor did we create everything around us that we rely on. We need other people to provide for us, and in the end we can only rely upon God to raise us from death. As soon as you begin to see the world in this light, it becomes clear that the only appropriate response is gratitude. Gratitude to God, in the first instance, and gratitude to the people around me. And so that gratitude becomes one of the pillars that is essential for the life of anyone who strives to be happy.



The examined life

The Greek philosopher Plato recorded much of the thought of his own teacher, Socrates. One of the most famous sayings of Socrates that Plato remembered is that “the unexamined life is not worth living”. Of course it is possible to drift through life, merely reacting to whatever presents itself moment by moment. But Socrates believed that what separates human beings from animals is our capacity to reflect and consider, to learn from the past and plan for the future. Only in this way, he thought, could a truly human happiness be achieved.

Writing to the Christian community in Philippi, St Paul tells them, “I want you to be happy, always happy in the Lord; I repeat, what I want is your happiness.” (Ph 4:4). This can be read as no more than a pious platitude, rolling off the tongue as easily as saying “Happy New Year”, with no real thought. Surely it isn’t possible to be always happy? Now it is certainly true that any human life is likely to have a mixture of happiness and unhappiness, with perhaps long stretches that seem more neutral. But this idea of the examined life puts happiness into a more central place. It is both the result of living the life for which we are created – there is a deep-rooted happiness that comes from loving and serving God, even if this leads me into difficult situations– and a kind of indicator that I am on the right track.

On this road to happiness, examining my life for this consolation becomes the compass – or perhaps the sat-nav? – that points me in the right direction.



From the book
How to be Happy
by Fr Paul Nicholson SJ
© Catholic Truth Society



Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

15th August

Immaculate Virgin,
Mother of Jesus and our Mother,
we believe in your triumphant assumption into heaven
where the angels and saints acclaim you as Queen.
We join them in praising you
and bless the Lord who raised you above all creatures.
With them we offer you our devotion and love.
We are confident that you watch over our daily efforts and needs,
and we take comfort from the faith in the coming resurrection.
We look to you, our life, our sweetness, and our hope.
After this earthly life, show us Jesus,
the blest fruit of your womb,
O clement, O loving, O sweet virgin Mary.
Amen



STELLA MARIS

