



# Stella Maris

SUPPORTING SEAFARERS AND FISHERS AROUND THE WORLD

MAY  
2021

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Bangkok and Sriracha, Thailand

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with Fr Pio Idowu

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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 all over 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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Stella Maris  
provides seafarers  
with practical  
support, information  
and a listening ear



# BANGKOK AND SRIRACHA, THAILAND

The city of Bangkok stands at the Delta of the Chao Phraya River as it empties into the Gulf of Thailand. It has a population of over 10 million people and is one of the world's top international tourist destinations. These travellers come to visit the royal palace and the famed Buddhist temples such as Wat Phra Kaew, home of the Emerald Buddha and Wat Pho.

Catholicism was brought to Thailand by Portuguese Missionaries in the 16th century and in 2019 Pope Francis visited Bangkok to celebrate the 350th Anniversary of the establishment of Catholicism in what was then called Siam.

Stella Maris has been working in the Ports of Bangkok and the

nearby Port of Sriracha for over 30 years. Despite the recent difficulties caused by COVID 19, Stella Maris Thailand offices continue conducting small group training sessions for migrant workers in the fishery and fish processing sectors. Stella Maris Thailand's training topics focused on occupational health and safety, safe migration and labour laws. Moreover, the staff accompanied migrant workers and their dependents to hospitals to buy health insurance.

In addition, Stella Maris Thailand conducted community visits to provide relief packages, including food, medicines, masks and hand sanitizers to migrant workers to relieve their hardships during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many migrant

workers were unemployed and suspended from work which made their livelihoods difficult.

Stella Maris provides ship visiting in Bangkok and a Seafarers centre in Sriracha where the following is available:

- Practical welfare support and assistance to seafarers
- Counselling and Religious services (Holy Communion, blessings, etc.)
- Hospital visitation, medical and seafarers' case support
- Free Mobile Hotspot, Top up cards and Sim cards (available upon request)
- Free Wifi, Indoor games; Table Tennis, Billiard and Table soccer
- Free Transport (Port to seafarers' centre upon request)



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# Sunday at Sea with Fr Pio Idowu



**5TH SUNDAY OF EASTER**  
2ND MAY 2021

## GOSPEL JOHN 15:1-8

At that time:

Jesus said to his disciples,

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

You are already made clean by the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you.

As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches.

He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

If a man does not abide in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned.

If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples."

## THE GOSPEL AND YOU

In the Gospel, Jesus calls Himself the True Vine while referring to His followers as the branches: "I am the true vine... you are the branches." With these words, He indicated the intimate communion which exists between Him and His disciples. For His disciples to be fruitful spiritually, they must abide in Him. Cut off from Him, they can achieve nothing: "He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."

Attached to the vine are two types of branches: branches that have ceased to bear fruit and branches that still continue to bear fruit. The vinedresser, who is the Father, removes those branches that have ceased to be fruitful and prunes those ones that bear fruit that they may even bear fruit more abundantly.

For the spiritual growth of the Christian this pruning takes the form of trials and tribulations which God may send to purify the soul and rid it of all uncleanness. The Letter to the Hebrews encourages us not to be discouraged as a result of the suffering we may have to bear in this life because "For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant; later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it" (12:11)

But for the soul that no longer abides in Christ and no longer bears fruit, there are some extremely serious consequences: "If a man does not abide in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned." This is an obvious allusion to fate of those who are condemned to eternal fire in hell.

Our goal must be to live and act always in union with Christ. As we begin this month of May dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, let us turn to Her who is the perfect model of Christian life in union with Christ. For according to the Fathers of the Church, Mary first conceived Christ in her soul before she conceived him in her womb.

## 6TH SUNDAY OF EASTER

### 9TH MAY 2021

#### GOSPEL JOHN 15:9-17

At that time:

Jesus said to his disciples,

"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love.

If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.

These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this,

that a man lay down his life for his friends.

You are my friends if you do what I command you.

No longer do I call you servants,

for the servant does not know what his master is doing;

but I have called you friends,

for all that I have heard from my Father

I have made known to you.

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you

that you should go and bear fruit

and that your fruit should abide;

so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give it to you.

This I command you, to love one another."

#### THE GOSPEL AND YOU

Following on from the Gospel of last Sunday, Christ reveals how we are to live in union with Him. He says: "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love."

And faithful observance of the God's commandments is the recipe for joy and happiness in this life: "These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full."

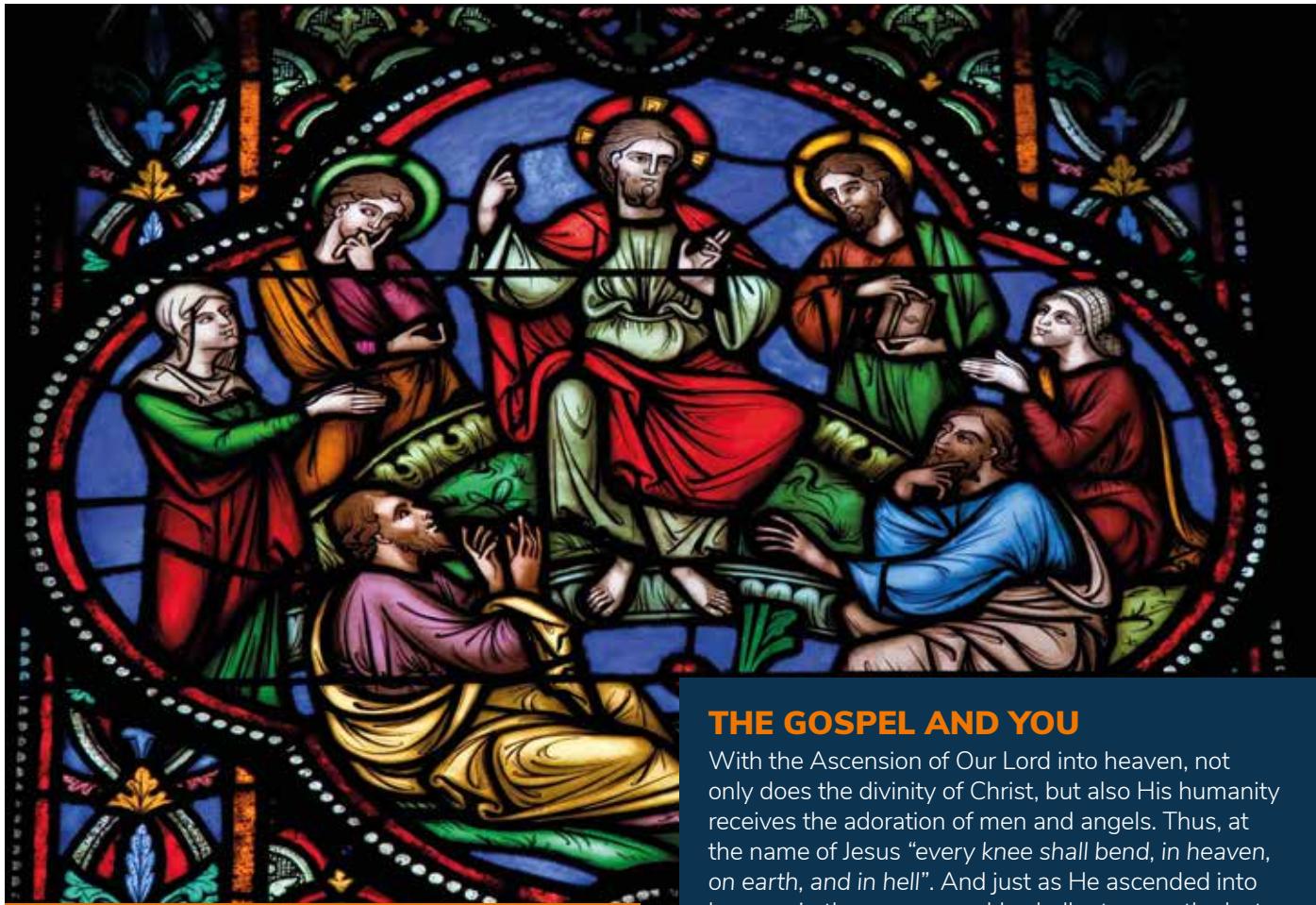
We have no reason to complain that God's commandments are difficult to observe for Christ reduces all of them to the one commandment of love which contains all the others: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."

How has Christ loved us? In obedience to His Father's Will, He gave Himself up on the Cross to redeem us. His sacrifice on the cross then becomes the measure and the standard of our own love. In the First Letter of St John, we read these words: "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

So, we too, in imitation of Christ's example, must be willing to lay down our lives for the brethren for "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Christ calls us to participate in this gift of love, to offer our lives completely to God in full oblation and sacrifice. In offering our lives for the salvation of the brethren, we become with Christ co-redeemers of the human race.

Mary Immaculate is the model of perfect obedience to God. When the angel revealed to Her God's plan for the salvation of men and the special role She was to play alongside Her Son in this work of human redemption, She lovingly submitted herself to the manifest Will of God and proclaimed Her Fiat. Like Mary, may our love for God be manifest in the complete conformity of our will to His commands.





## 7TH SUNDAY OF EASTER

16TH MAY 2021

### GOSPEL MARK 16:15-20

At that time:

Jesus, appearing to the Eleven, said to them,  
"Go into all the world  
and preach the Gospel to the whole creation.  
He who believes and is baptised will be saved;  
but he who does not believe will be condemned.  
And these signs will accompany those who believe:  
in my name they will cast out demons;  
they will speak in new tongues;  
they will pick up serpents,  
and if they drink any deadly thing,  
it will not hurt them;  
they will lay their hands on the sick,  
and they will recover."  
So then the Lord Jesus,  
after he had spoken to them,  
was taken up into heaven,  
and sat down at the right hand of God.  
And they went forth and preached everywhere,  
while the Lord worked with them  
and confirmed the message  
by the signs that attended it.  
Amen.

### THE GOSPEL AND YOU

With the Ascension of Our Lord into heaven, not only does the divinity of Christ, but also His humanity receives the adoration of men and angels. Thus, at the name of Jesus "every knee shall bend, in heaven, on earth, and in hell". And just as He ascended into heaven, in the same way, He shall return on the last day to judge the living and the dead. He shall appear with all Majesty and men shall see him "whom they pierced". Those wounds of the passion, which will be clearly visible on His body when Jesus shall return, will be an object of terror to the wicked, while to the good they will be a source of unspeakable consolation.

But even now in heaven, His Sacred Humanity rules over all nations with the royal power which he received on the Day of his Ascension. He redeemed us all by his Blood; we are therefore his people, and he is our King. We all belong to Christ and we are his subjects.

Even though men do not acknowledge the kingship of Christ, He will continue to reign for, as the Apostle says, he must reign, until he hath put all his enemies under his feet, (1 Corinthians 15:25) that is, until his second coming, when sin and Satan's power shall come to an end. But we who are Christians are not to wait for the Second Coming before acknowledging Christ as King of our Hearts. We must already begin to pay homage to Christ by the testimony of an exemplary Christian living. Christ will eventually reign over all society, but He must begin with the hearts of each and every one of us individually.

We must all acknowledge that by our sins we were the cause of the humiliations and sufferings of Christ. And then, we must firmly resolve to live our Christian life faithfully and perseveringly so that by our good example and testimony others will eventually come to recognise Christ as King.

## PENTECOST SUNDAY

### 23RD MAY 2021

#### GOSPEL JOHN 15:26-27,16:12-15

At that time:

Jesus said to his disciples,  
“When the Counsellor comes,  
whom I shall send to you from the Father,  
even the Spirit of truth,  
who proceeds from the Father,  
he will bear witness to me;  
and you also are witnesses,  
because you have been with me from  
the beginning.

“I have yet many things to say to you,  
but you cannot bear them now.  
When the Spirit of truth comes,  
he will guide you into all the truth;  
for he will not speak on his own authority,  
but whatever he hears he will speak,  
and he will declare to you the things that are  
to come.

He will glorify me,  
for he will take what is mine  
and declare it to you.”



#### THE GOSPEL AND YOU

On this Pentecost Sunday, we celebrate the day in which the Holy Spirit descended on the one hundred and twenty persons gathered in the upper room together with Mary the Mother of Jesus, all devoting themselves to prayer. The Acts of the Apostles tells us that there was in the upper room a company of about one hundred and twenty persons. And as St John Chrysostom affirms, all one hundred and twenty persons received the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

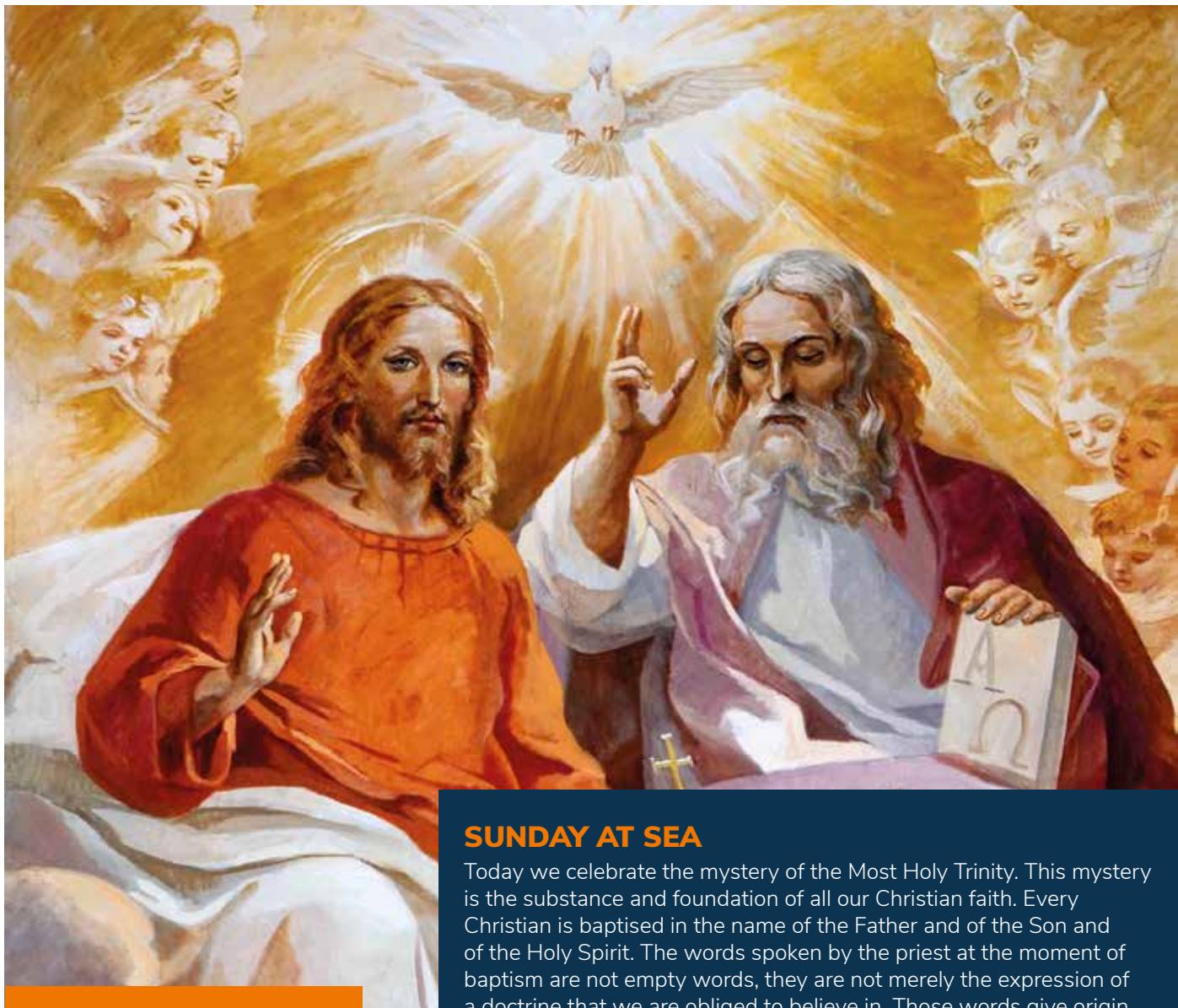
Pentecost is the fullness of God's gift to men and there is a variety of gifts which God imparts to souls through the Holy Spirit. But the Holy Spirit is not just a gift for the individual Christian, it is in the first place a gift for the Church as an institution to whom has been given the mission of proclaiming the Gospel of Christ to all nations. During the Last Supper, Our Lord Jesus told the Apostles that He would send them another Counsellor. “When the Counsellor comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me; and you also are witnesses, because you have been with me from the beginning”.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth and confirms the Church in its mission of teaching and proclaiming the truth of Christ. While teaching a correct understanding of the message of Christ, the Holy Spirit also ensures that in the Church the same truth which the Apostles heard from the Master will be preserved intact for future generations. That truth which the Apostles heard from the Master will never be forgotten but will always be kept and preserved by the Church.

And while the Church will always persevere in the truth of the Gospel, each individual Christian must conform his or her life to this truth which saves and sanctifies.

Let us ask the Blessed Virgin Mary to unite her prayer with ours, as she united them on this day to those of the Apostles and disciples, and to obtain for us, as she did for them, an abundant outpouring of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. She lovingly submitted herself to the manifest Will of God and proclaimed Her Fiat. Like Mary, may our love for God be manifest in the complete conformity of our will to His commands.

**“Let us ask the Blessed Virgin Mary to unite her prayer with ours, as she united them on this day to those of the Apostles and disciples”**



## TRINITY SUNDAY

30TH MAY 2021

### GOSPEL JOHN 3:16-18

God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.

He who believes in him is not condemned; he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God.

### SUNDAY AT SEA

Today we celebrate the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. This mystery is the substance and foundation of all our Christian faith. Every Christian is baptised in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. The words spoken by the priest at the moment of baptism are not empty words, they are not merely the expression of a doctrine that we are obliged to believe in. Those words give origin to the spiritual life produced in us by the waters of baptism. Through baptism we belong to the Holy Trinity.

Pope Pius XII says that: "When we speak of the Trinity we must do so with caution and modesty, for, as St. Augustine says, nowhere else are more dangerous errors made, or is research more difficult, or discovery more fruitful." Speaking imprudently and without humility about the Trinity can result in a lot of confusion. And Pope Pius XII limits himself to saying: "This is the Catholic Faith, that we should adore one God in Trinity and Trinity in unity."

This is a profound mystery and there is no human mind that can adequately comprehend it let alone explain it. But then, the human soul is capable of reaching out to God, of living and experiencing within itself the mysteries of the divinity. And one of the concepts that can help us understand the mystery of the Trinity is the concept of love. We always say that God is love and creates a relationship between at least two persons. Love unites a community of persons. So, in God there is a community of love between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

God invites us to participate in this community of love. For this reason He sent His Son to teach us how to love. And before ascending into heaven, Christ promised us the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who sanctifies us, who unites us to God in a bond of love.

# OUR LADY STAR OF THE SEA

By Dr Damian Costello

**Our Blessed Mother has always had a special love of seafarers. Early in Church history she revealed one of her names to be Maris Stella, “Mary Star of the Sea.” Churches in port cities around the world took her name and became holy places where seafarers and their families could pray for safe journeys. Devotion to Maris Stella became an important part of the seafaring life.**

And seafarers saw Maris Stella in the night sky. Mary has always been connected to the stars. She wears a crown of stars in the Book of Revelation and a cloak of stars in the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Polaris, the North Star, the most important star for navigation, became her star.

One of the earliest Latin hymns that we have, Ave Maris Stella, is a song to her. It describes her exalted place in Salvation History. But seafarers rightly saw how the lyrics fit the deepest yearnings of someone braving the danger of the sea. “Show Thyself to be a mother,” the song begs, “...Prepare a safe way.” Sailors adopted the hymn as their own, singing it at night as a kind of protection song.

Ave Maris Stella is a prayer to revitalise. For those on land, this song is a way to pray for our seafaring sisters and brothers who risk their lives to bring so much of the food and goods that we use. A way to pray that the world may find better



working conditions and compensation for those that sail the seas. And a prayer for the health of the ocean.

For those at sea, implore Our Blessed Mother’s protection through the light of her star and the music of her song. Remember, St. Augustine taught us that to sing is to pray twice. And know that wherever you are, no matter how far from home, how lost you feel in life, how far from God you feel, she is there looking down at you and holding you just as she held her Son. Let her light guide you home to the saving love of Christ.

**“For those at sea, implore Our Blessed Mother’s protection through the light of her star and the music of her song”**

# COMBATTING ISOLATION

**As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact everyone's lives, what does 'isolation' mean for crew and what can be done to combat it?**



Isolation is the state of being or feeling alone, without anyone to talk to or discuss things. This can lead to feelings of anxiety and being unable to talk to anyone about your concerns.

Being alone at times is not necessarily bad for us, but when this isolation continues for long periods of time it can become problematic.

The restrictions imposed by ports and countries to combat the spread of COVID-19 can increase the sense of isolation, such as:

- spending long periods of time away from friends and family due to lengthy and extended contracts
- having to stay socially distanced from colleagues whilst on board vessels to reduce the risk of infection
- lack of shore leave due to COVID-19 restrictions

## The effects of isolation on seafarers

As human beings we are typically social creatures. Isolation can negatively affect anybody, of any age, and it can really test even the most resilient of us. Living in isolation for prolonged periods of time can have a serious impact on health, not just mental but also physical.

Some research has shown that even short periods of isolation can lead to increased levels of anxiety, stress and depression. It can also cause disrupted sleep and focus.

Whilst working at sea can be very rewarding it can also be very isolating, and it is important that crew take active steps to avoid becoming isolated and the negative effects on their health that this can have.

## What you can do about it

Isolation affects people in different ways but interacting with others and discussing our problems and concerns can help get us through these periods.



Some hints on helping seafarers include:

- Make time to try and interact with each other on board. Movie nights, karaoke, group exercise and time spent together at meals can be a great way to do this
- Keep in touch with family and friends at home
- Look after your general health – eat well and exercise

It is likely that we will all experience isolation in our lives at some point and such feelings are often temporary.



## It's good to talk

Sometimes it can feel that there is no one to talk to or that no one will understand your concerns. Other times, you may feel more comfortable talking to someone independent. Stella Maris chaplains and ship visitors are always available to talk.

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**The month of May is a time when the People of God express with particular intensity their love and devotion for the Blessed Virgin Mary.**



O Mary,  
You shine continuously on our journey  
as a sign of salvation and hope.  
We entrust ourselves to you, Health  
of the Sick,  
who, at the foot of the cross,  
were united with Jesus' suffering,  
and persevered in your faith.  
"Protectress of the Roman people",  
you know our needs,  
and we know that you will provide,  
so that, as at Cana in Galilee,  
joy and celebration may return

after this time of trial.  
Help us, Mother of Divine Love,  
to conform ourselves to the will of  
the Father  
and to do what Jesus tells us.  
For he took upon himself our suffering,  
and burdened himself with our sorrows  
to bring us, through the cross,  
to the joy of the Resurrection.  
Amen.

(Prayer by Pope Francis)



**STELLA MARIS**

Stella Maris is the largest ship-visiting network in the world. We improve the lives of seafarers and fishers through our network of local chaplains and seafarer centres, expert information, advocacy, and spiritual support.



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