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Stella Maris

SUPPORTING SEAFARERS AND FISHERS AROUND THE WORLD

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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.

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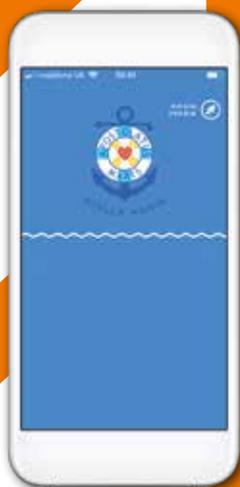
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provides seafarers
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Sunday at Sea with Fr Pio Idowu



18TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
SUNDAY 1ST AUGUST

GOSPEL JOHN 6:24-35

At that time:

When the people saw that Jesus was not there,
nor his disciples,
they themselves got into the boats
and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus.

When they found him on the other side of the sea,
they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?"

Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you,
you seek me, not because you saw signs,
but because you ate your fill of the loaves.

Do not labour for the food which perishes,
but for the food which endures to eternal life,
which the Son of man will give to you;
for on him has God the Father set his seal."

Then they said to him,

"What must we do, to be doing the works of God?"

Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God,
that you believe in him whom he has sent."

So they said to him, "Then what sign do you do,
that we may see, and believe you?"

What work do you perform?

Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness;
as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you,
it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven;
my Father gives you the true bread from heaven.

For the bread of God is that which comes down from
heaven, and gives life to the world."

They said to him, "Lord, give us this bread always."

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life;
he who comes to me shall not hunger,
and he who believes in me shall never thirst."

THE GOSPEL AND YOU

The Gospel tells us that the day after the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, the people noticed that Jesus was no longer with them and so, they "went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus." The disciples had left for Capernaum the evening before, in one boat, but without Jesus. Jesus would later appear to them, in the night and in the middle of a storm, walking on water. And the people, realising that Jesus and His disciples were no longer with them, also got into boats "seeking Jesus" in Capernaum. When they find Jesus on the other side of the sea, they question Him, saying, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" Jesus, however, cautions them against looking for Him for the wrong reasons: "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not labour for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give to you; for on him has God the Father set his seal."

We may ask ourselves: what are the reasons why we draw closer to Jesus? Why do we search for Him? It may be that we seek Jesus for material reasons only: food, good health, money, human love, peaceful life and so on. All these things are good in themselves and are gifts from God. Yet, since they are perishable things, they can never satisfy the deepest yearning of the human soul which is created to love God alone and Him above all things.

In the prayer of the Our Father, we ask: 'Give us this day our daily bread'. And Christ says of Himself:

"I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst." May we always seek Jesus, the Bread of Life. More especially, may we desire to receive him always in Holy Communion.

"I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst."



19TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
SUNDAY 8TH AUGUST

GOSPEL JOHN 6:41-51

At that time:

The Jews murmured at Jesus, because he said, "I am the bread which came down from heaven."

They said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?"

How does he now say, 'I have come down from heaven?'"

Jesus answered them, "Do not murmur among yourselves.

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.

It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.'

Every one who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me.

Not that any one has seen the Father except him who is from God; he has seen the Father.

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life.

I am the bread of life.

Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.

This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat of it and not die.

I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh."

THE GOSPEL AND YOU

While calling Himself "the bread which came down from heaven" Jesus invites His listeners to believe in Him that they may have eternal life. He says: "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat of it and not die." But His listeners could not understand why He claimed to come down from heaven, since they knew who His parents were. In fact, they referred to Jesus as the son of Joseph. Not only did He claim to have come down from heaven, but He also demanded that they believe in Him if they wished to have eternal life.

Faith in Jesus is a requisite for eternal life. Faith is first of all a personal act. It is "the free response of the human person to the initiative of God who reveals himself" (CCC 166). God, who wishes to save man, reveals His Word and initiates a dialogue with man, soliciting a response. God reveals to man His divine plan of salvation, and man, by accepting in faith God's Word, obtains salvation. Just before Christ ascended to heaven, He said to His apostles: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved."

But this personal act of faith has an object. We do not just believe; we believe in God and what He has revealed. In today's Gospel, Jesus asks us to believe in Him, the bread of life. He says of Himself: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh." This is a reference to the Holy Eucharist and whoever approaches to receive Holy Communion must believe that this is truly the Body and Blood of Christ.

"I am the bread which came down from heaven."

ASSUMPTION SUNDAY 15TH AUGUST

GOSPEL LUKE 1:39-56

In those days
 Mary arose and went with haste into the
 hill country,
 to a city of Judah,
 and she entered the house of Zechariah
 and greeted Elizabeth.
 And when Elizabeth heard the greeting
 of Mary,
 the child leaped in her womb;
 and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit
 and she exclaimed with a loud cry,
 "Blessed are you among women,
 and blessed is the fruit of your womb!
 And why is this granted me,
 that the mother of my Lord should come
 to me?
 For behold,
 when the voice of your greeting came to
 my ears,
 the child in my womb leaped for joy.
 And blessed is she who believed
 that there would be a fulfilment
 of what was spoken to her from the Lord."
 And Mary said,
 "My soul magnifies the Lord,
 and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
 for he has regarded the low estate of his
 handmaiden.
 For behold, henceforth all generations will
 call me blessed;
 for he who is mighty has done great things
 for me,
 and holy is his name.
 And his mercy is on those who fear him
 from generation to generation.
 He has shown strength with his arm,
 he has scattered the proud
 in the imagination of their hearts,
 he has put down the mighty from
 their thrones,
 and exalted those of low degree;
 he has filled the hungry with good things,
 and the rich he has sent empty away.
 He has helped his servant Israel,
 in remembrance of his mercy,
 as he spoke to our fathers,
 to Abraham and to his posterity for ever."
 And Mary remained with her about
 three months,
 and returned to her home.

THE GOSPEL AND YOU

Today we celebrate the Assumption of Mary's body and soul into heaven. Christians, right from early times, have always believed that Mary was assumed body and soul into heaven, after the completion of her earthly life. And in 1950, Pope Pius XII proclaimed this teaching a dogma of faith.

The solemnity of the Assumption celebrates three mysteries: Mary's dormition (that is, Mary's falling asleep), Mary's Assumption (the taking up of Mary into heavenly glory) and Mary's coronation as queen of heaven and earth.

Mary's dormition reminds us that we all shall die one day. And therefore, while we are still here on earth, our hearts should be set on the things that are above. Mary's assumption fills us with hope that even though we shall all die, if we are faithful to God's law, our bodies will be resurrected and will be reunited with our soul and we shall behold God face to face. Mary's coronation as queen is a promise of what awaits the faithful Christian who dies in the grace of God. In heaven, the body, united to the soul, will be crowned in God's glory.

Mary's assumption is a foreshadowing, a model of what will happen to the faithful Christian. So, the faithful Christian must die to sin in imitation of Mary's dormition. Only then can he or she rise to new life in Christ and be assumed into God's presence. Living a life of union with God, the Christian soul shares in the divine life and in eternity will receive a crown of everlasting glory.

Dying to sin, which is the necessary step that we all must take, also entails the practice of mortification. The practice of mortification helps us to obtain purity of heart. Without purity of heart, we cannot hope to enter into heaven. Let us ask Mary, the Virgin Most Pure, to grant us a pure heart so that we too may one day contemplate God in the beatific vision.



21ST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME SUNDAY 22ND AUGUST

GOSPEL JOHN 6:60-69

At that time:

Many of the disciples of Jesus said,
"This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?"

But Jesus, knowing in himself
that his disciples murmured at it,
said to them,

"Do you take offence at this?

Then what if you were to see the Son of man
ascending where he was before?

It is the Spirit that gives life,
the flesh is of no avail;

the words that I have spoken to you are Spirit and life.
But there are some of you that do not believe."

For Jesus knew from the first
who those were that did not believe,
and who it was that would betray him.

And he said,

"This is why I told you that no one can come to me
unless it is granted him by the Father."

After this many of his disciples drew back
and no longer walked with him.

Jesus said to the Twelve,

"Will you also go away?"

Simon Peter answered him,

"Lord, to whom shall we go?

You have the words of eternal life;
and we have believed, and have come to know,
that you are the Holy One of God."

THE GOSPEL AND YOU

In the passage preceding today's Gospel, Jesus made this categorical statement: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you." And to make sure that He was not misunderstood, he said: "For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him." For the Jews and many of His disciples, this was a "hard saying" and many of them "drew back and no longer walked with Him."

Seeing that many of His disciples took offence at His words and left Him, Jesus turns to the twelve apostles and asked them, "Will you also go away?" The reply of Simon Peter on behalf of the other apostles is beautiful because it is a confession of faith, so full of trust and confidence in the Lord: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God." The faith of Peter was founded on the sure knowledge of Christ, the Holy One of God.

In our trials and difficulties, in our search for lasting happiness, we need the same faith as Peter. Peter did not just speak for himself. He spoke on behalf of the other apostles. In the same way, the faith we profess personally can never be an isolated act. The faith we profess is the same faith the Church has professed throughout all the ages since its very foundation. And it is this faith alone which offers us eternal life: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God."



22ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

SUNDAY 29TH AUGUST

GOSPEL MARK 7:1-8,14-15,21-23

At that time:

When the Pharisees gathered together to Jesus, with some of the scribes, who had come from Jerusalem, they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands defiled, that is, unwashed.

(For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they wash their hands, observing the tradition of the elders; and when they come from the market place, they do not eat unless they purify themselves; and there are many other traditions which they observe, the washing of cups and pots and vessels of bronze.)

And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, "Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with hands defiled?"

And he said to them,

"Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written,

'This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.'

You leave the commandment of God, and hold fast the tradition of men."

And he called the people to him again, and said to them, "Hear me, all of you, and understand:

there is nothing outside a man which by going into him can defile him; but the things which come out of a man are what defile him.

"For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, fornication, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, foolishness.

All these evil things come from within, and they defile a man."

"This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men."



THE GOSPEL AND YOU

The Pharisees noticed that some of the disciples of Jesus ate with defiled and unwashed hands and were scandalised at their lack of observance of the tradition of the elders. These traditions were a set of rituals designed to supplement God's written Law and help in its observance. These were religious customs manufactured by the Pharisees and added to the Law of Moses. Basically, they were interpretations of the written law and further regulations handed down by the Rabbis of the past. And the one which the disciples violated was that concerning ritual purity.

So, the Pharisees complain to Jesus saying: "Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders but eat with hands defiled?" With this complaint, the Pharisees accuse the disciples of Jesus Christ with religious laxity. The Pharisees felt that legal purity demanded paying attention to externals. Hence, they "do not eat unless they wash their hands, observing the tradition of the elders; and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they purify themselves; and there are many other traditions which they observe, the washing of cups and pots and vessels of bronze."

But Christ swiftly rebuked them for placing merely human traditions on an equal level with the revealed Law of God. Christ, in his turn, accuses the Pharisees of hypocrisy and insincerity, because in their eagerness to observe traditions which had origin in earlier teachers, they neglect the essential obligations of God's Law. Their worship of the Lord was empty and vain as it came from a heart devoid of living faith.

Instead, Christ affirms that it is in the heart that evil things have their origin and not from food that is eaten. Hence, instead of hands and feet, it is the heart that must be purified if we are to stand in God's presence and offer Him true worship.



Sea Sunday Message 2021



From **Cardinal Peter Turkson**

Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, beloved chaplains, volunteers, friends and supporters of Stella Maris:

We are celebrating the second Sea Sunday against the background of the COVID-19 pandemic. The world may have come to a standstill but the ships have never stopped sailing from port to port delivering critical medical equipment and medicines to support the fight against the spread of the virus. This emphasizes that the maritime industry is a vital part of the world's economy. Some 90% of the world trade is carried by ship or, more accurately, by the 1.7 million seafarers who work on the ships.

We thank the People of the Sea for their work, and our gratitude is transformed in our prayer that the Lord grants them strength in moments of weakness, unity in diversity, safe and smooth sailing and, at the end of their contract, happiness to be reunited with their loved ones.

There have been repeated appeals from international organizations (UN, IMO, ILO), unions, ship owners, and faith-based groups to recognize seafarers as “essential workers” so that crew changes are expedited, and vaccinations are prioritized. But very few countries have facilitated these movements and implemented a clear policy for seafarers' vaccinations. This has exposed a deep contradiction in the maritime industry. On the one hand, it is highly globalized but, on the other, seafarers' rights and protection are fragmented between several players who are often not accountable to any higher regulation or authority.

Because of this pandemic, we would like to invite the maritime industry to learn to act as one by facilitating crew changes and vaccinations and strengthening the

implementation of international standards to enhance and protect the human and working rights of the People of the Sea.

It was estimated that in September 2020 some 400,000 seafarers who ought to have been repatriated were in fact stranded at sea because of COVID-19. In some cases, seafarers have not been able to go home for 18 months. COVID-19 has exacerbated the working and living conditions of hundreds of thousands of seafarers who have been stranded at sea and required to work for many months longer than usual. This affects not only the seafarers themselves but also the daily lives of their families. The problems of isolation, loneliness, separation and anxiety about family and loved ones, thousands of miles away, together with uncertainty over their future, has increased the physical and psychological stress on board ships, sometime with tragic consequences.

We appeal to ships owners, management companies, agents and recruiters to regard crewmembers as more than “labour force” and remember that they are human beings. We urge the development of working practices, which are based on human dignity rather than profit, and to provide everything, which is necessary to improve the mental, physical and spiritual well-being of seafarers.

Since January 2021, 38 piracy incidents have been reported including 33 vessels boarded, two attempted attacks, two vessels fired upon, and one vessel hijacked. The number of reported piracy incidents may have decreased but violence against crew is increasing. These are sad reminders of the fragility of a maritime industry, which has already been tested by the pandemic. Seafarers have the right to perform their work without running the risk of being kidnapped, injured or even killed. Furthermore, piracy disrupts the global economy and the constant threat

of danger and harm places considerable stress on seafarers and their families.

We request all governments and international organizations to determine long-lasting solutions to the scourge of piracy, mindful of the need to address the fundamental problem of the inequality in the distribution of goods between countries and the exploitation of natural resources. Moreover, ship-owners should adopt all requisite preventative measures to ensure the safety not only of ships and their cargo, but especially that of seafarers.

The International Transport Worker's Federation (ITF) has reported a doubling of ship abandonments from 40 in 2019, to 85 in 2020. Abandonment at sea happens for a number of different reasons. The most common reason is the deliberate decision of a ship-owner to dispose of a vessel they no longer deem valuable, crew included. Stranded in a foreign country, with wages unpaid, no prospect of immediate income and deprived of food, the abandoned crew are faced with inhumane conditions and their families suffer immediate devastating financial consequences.

In order to prevent the tragic consequences of abandonment at sea, we demand the full implementation of the new obligations under the Maritime Labor Convention (MLC 2006), which were adopted in 2014 and entered into force in 2017. Ship-owners are required to have compulsory insurance to cover abandonment at sea, to pay for expenses including food, drinking water, medical care and repatriation costs.

The number of shipwrecks and marine accidents is declining but one is too many, especially when seafarers are injured or die, go missing at sea or are unjustly criminalized and detained indefinitely. Sometimes these happen due to the forces of nature, but there are too many instances of negligence by those who prefer to prioritize profit over safety and security. Every tragedy results in families in despair, children without parents and nowhere to lay a flower and say a prayer.

We lift our prayers to Mary, Star of the Sea, to accompany those who are no longer with us to the safe harbour of heaven and comfort the devastated relatives and friends who are left behind.

Throughout the pandemic, Stella Maris chaplains and volunteers have always been at the service of seafarers and fishers. They are present in their lives, constantly adapt their ministry to changing circumstances and address seafarers' spiritual and material needs.

We pray that all Stella Maris chaplains and volunteers continue to: "Be apostles faithful to the mission of proclaiming the Gospel, show the loving face of the Church which also welcomes and makes herself close to this portion of the People of God; respond without hesitation to maritime people who wait for you on board to appease the deep longing of their soul and make them feel active members of the community."¹

We entrust to Mary, Star of the Sea, the well-being of the People of the Sea, the commitment and dedication of chaplains and volunteers and we entreat Our Lady to continue to protect us all from every danger, especially from COVID-19.



Prayer inspired by the Message for Sea Sunday (11 July 2021) of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development

O God the Father, who call man and woman to cooperate with their labour in the work of your creation, we thank you for the tireless dedication of the people of the sea, who in this period never stopped transporting from one port to another essential medical equipment and medicines to support the fight against the spread of the virus.

Grant them strength in moments of weakness, unity in diversity, a safe and smooth sailing and, once the contract is over, happiness to be reunited with their loved ones. Our Lord Jesus Christ, with Your grace, encourage the maritime industry to facilitate crew changes, vaccinations and strengthen the implementation of international standards to enhance and protect the human and working rights of the people of the sea. Free us from the scourge of piracy and the tragic consequences of the abandonment of seafarers.

Holy Spirit, hovering over all the waters of the world, awaken in the chaplains and volunteers of Stella Maris the appeal of the splendour of the faith, so that they always witness it with the consistency of life, revealing the caring face of the Church which welcomes and is close to the people of the sea, responding without hesitation to their spiritual and material needs.

O Blessed Virgin Mary, Star of the Sea, we entrust to you the wellbeing of the people of the sea and pray that you continue to protect us all from all dangers, especially from COVID-19. Assist us with Your maternal blessing, while we are sailing to the port of all our hopes. Accompany those who are no longer with us into the house of Heavenly Father and give comfort to grieving relatives and friends. Amen!

¹ Pope Benedict XVI, Rome, XXIII AOS World Congress, November 23, 2012

For Those in Peril on the Sea – A Hymn of Protection and Offering

By Damian Costello

As long as human beings have gone to sea, we have performed ceremonies and sung protection songs to open up a safe way. The Maori of New Zealand offered songs and the first fish of the season to Tangaroa, the Spirit of the Waters. This is one of the many prayers that guided the greatest navigational feat in human history: the settlement of the Pacific Ocean, an area greater than all the land on earth combined.

Many of these seafaring traditions continue today and one was on display at the Duke of Edinburgh, Prince Phillip's funeral earlier this year. A highpoint of the service was the singing of "Eternal Father, Strong to Save," the official hymn of the Royal Navy and U.S. Navy.

The hymn, also known as "For Those in Peril on the Sea," was written in 1860. A British student confided to his headmaster, William Whiting, that he was terrified by his upcoming Atlantic crossing. Whiting understood the student's fear as he barely survived a violent storm in his own youth. He believed God saved him and he wrote the hymn to pass on God's protective power to the student.

The first three verses recount God's work in the sea in Salvation History. Verse one uses the imagery of Psalm



104: "Eternal Father, strong to save, Whose arm hath bound the restless wave."

In the second verse, Christ acts on the Sea of Galilee, hushing "the raging storm with his word" and walking "on the foaming deep."

The third verse goes back to the creation of the world, when the Holy Spirit hovered over "the chaos dark and rude, And bid its angry tumult cease."

Each verse ends by naming who the prayer is for, "those in peril on the sea." The song culminates in the final verse by invoking the protective power of the Trinity. "Our brethren shield in danger's hour," the singer implores, "From rock and tempest, fire and foe."

The song ends, like the prayer of the Maori fisherman, with an offering. As we receive from God, so we give; in this case, "Glad hymns of praise from land and sea." When sung at Mass, as it is often done in naval settings, this offering of praise is combined with a physical offering, the bread and wine at Mass.

Let's add "Eternal Father, Strong to Save" to our prayer life. With prayer, the great Polynesian seafarers settled Moana Oceania. With prayer, we can face the dangers of the sea and transform the injustices that plague our maritime systems. And, like Prince Philip, prepare ourselves for the greatest journey of all: from this earthly life to the Heavenly Jerusalem.



ETERNAL FATHER STRONG TO SAVE

Eternal Father, strong to save,
Whose arm hath bound the restless wave,
Who bid'st the mighty ocean deep
Its own appointed limits keep;
O hear us when we cry to Thee,
For those in peril on the sea.

O Christ, Whose voice the waters heard
And hushed their raging at Thy word,
Who walkedst on the foaming deep,
And calm amidst its rage didst sleep;
O hear us when we cry to Thee,
For those in peril on the sea.

Most Holy Spirit, Who didst brood
Upon the chaos dark and rude,
And bid its angry tumult cease,
And give, for wild confusion, peace;
O hear us when we cry to Thee,
For those in peril on the sea!

O Trinity of love and power,
Our brethren shield in danger's hour;
From rock and tempest, fire and foe,
Protect them wheresoe'er they go;
Thus evermore shall rise to Thee
Glad hymns of praise from land and sea.

Amen.



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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