Good morning/afternoon/evening everyone

My name is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and I am here on behalf of Stella Maris, the official maritime charity of the Catholic Church, which you may also know as the Apostleship of the Sea.

Firstly, I would like to thank you for the support you give to Stella Maris’s work each year during Sea Sunday. Your donations reach thousands of seafarers and fishers in need. This help is critical, and it allows us to continue our work every year.

In today’s Gospel you heard about the love and care that the Good Samaritan showed to the stranger that he found upon the road. For seafarers and fishers, Stella Maris is that Good Samaritan. It has chaplains and volunteers in ports all over the world. They are a friend for seafarers and fishers, in good times and in bad.

I’d like to share with you one story of how your love and generosity can make a huge difference to a seafarer and their family.

Recently Olek, a Ukrainian seafarer, was working on the deck of a cargo ship when he had a serious accident. He fell into the hold and broke his back. He was taken to Hull Royal Infirmary for urgent medical help. He spoke very little English and had no family or friends here to support him.

Fortunately, Anne McLaren, a Stella Maris chaplain, went and visited him in the hospital. During that first visit she found out that he was from Ukraine, his house had been bombed, and his family were still sheltering in the city.

Can you imagine how it must feel to be seriously injured, so far from home? Worried about your health, not able to speak the language of your doctors? And knowing your family are trapped in the middle of a war thousands of miles away, and you are unable to help them?

Olek stayed in Hull for several months while they stabilised his spine. Throughout that time, Anne and volunteers from Stella Maris visited him regularly and supported him as Good Samaritans. They arranged for a translator. They brought him clean clothes, toiletries, and mobile phone SIM cards so that he could contact his family back home. They made sure that he was not alone. He was not forgotten. He had a friend.

Concern for the welfare of the stranger, and the value of friendship to those who are far from home, is exactly the reason why Stella Maris, Apostleship of the Sea, was established over 100 years ago. And today this has never been more relevant.

In the last year, more crews have been abandoned by their employers than ever before. Many seafarers are still being denied the right to leave their ships for even a short break away from the relentless noise and pressure onboard. Many are reporting more stress and worse mental health. And the war in Ukraine has added to crew shortages and shipping turmoil.

But you can be a friend for seafarers in this time of need. Last year your generosity helped us to support over 100,000 seafarers in ports around the UK and many more around the world. This Sea Sunday it will help us to provide vital support to seafarers like Olek and his family.

So today, please remember seafarers and fishers in your prayers. Thank God for them and the vital role they play in our lives, often working in difficult, hazardous conditions. Please pray for the Stella Maris chaplains and volunteers who ensure that seafarers will always have a friend in port.

Your generous contributions today will help all this work continue. Your support will be an expression of God’s love, giving help to these key workers and hospitality to strangers.

You can donate in one of three ways:

* Use the giving envelope provided
* Text SEA to 70460 to donate £5
* Give via the website: www.stellamaris.org.uk/donate

If you are a tax payer, please complete one of the Gift Aid envelopes to make this collection go 25% further.

I conclude with these words from Pope Francis. “The life of sailors or fishermen and their families is very difficult. Sometimes they are victims of forced labour or are left behind in distant ports. But without the people of the sea, many parts of the world would starve”.

Without your support, we would not be able to do the work we do on your behalf. Thank you to Fr…… for your invitation to speak here today. Thank you all for your time and may God bless your kindness and generosity.