



DICASTERY FOR PROMOTING  
INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

**XXV Stella Maris World Congress**  
*2-5 October – Glasgow, Scotland*

**Card. Michael Czerny S.J., Prefect**  
**Welcoming Address**

Your Excellencies,  
Distinguish guests,  
Chaplains and volunteers,

With great pleasure I welcome you to the XXV Stella Maris World Congress in Glasgow, the city where this vital mission of the Church was founded a hundred years ago.

The first meeting of 'the Apostleship of the Sea' took place on 4 October 1920, near today's Marriott Hotel, when a group of lay men, women and clergy established '*a society of Catholic men and women united together in prayer and work for the greater glory of God, and the spiritual welfare of seafarers throughout the world*'. From its modest beginnings in Glasgow, today this mission extends to over 400 ports worldwide, in over fifty countries.

I welcome you gathered in Glasgow, and those joining online. The Church is greatly enriched by your pastoral ministry of the sea promoting the integral human development of seafarers, fishers, their families and communities.

The last time chaplains and volunteers of Stella Maris gathered in Glasgow was in September 1938. The world was on the brink of the devastating II World War. Today's era is characterized by similar levels of tension and turbulence, not least the Covid-19 pandemic and the many wars, in Ukraine and elsewhere.

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact. When the world went into lockdown, the people of the sea kept the global economy moving. "*Look at the real heroes who come to light in these days,*" said Pope Francis. "*They are not famous, rich and successful people; rather, they are those who are giving themselves in order to serve others.*"



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Let me commend Stella Maris chaplains, staff, and volunteers for your tireless advocacy and service. Many chaplains were most generous. Fr Roque Nornha, former National Director of Stella Maris India was selfless in his ministry, working closely with your colleagues in the Dicastery and with Stella Maris UK. In 2021, Fr Roque contracted Covid-19 and died. May his ministry continue in others!

Due to the pandemic, the crew change crisis and ongoing challenges in supply chains, the disrespect for the rights and dignity of seafarers and fishers came into sharper focus.

In his encyclical, *Fratelli tutti* (22), Pope Francis said: *“It frequently becomes clear that, in practice, human rights are not equal for all. Respect for those rights is the preliminary condition for a country’s social and economic development. When the dignity of the human person is respected, and his or her rights recognized and guaranteed, creativity and interdependence thrive, and the creativity of the human personality is released through actions that further the common good”*.

Seafarers and fishers continue to be exposed to:

- Denial of shore leave and access to welfare services.
  - Violence and abuse at sea, not least through piracy and slavery.
  - Abandonment, often with unpaid salaries and meagre food and provisions.
- 2021 saw a record number of ship abandonments.

All this is deplorable.

As Church we call upon governments and institutions to both implement and enforce the ILO’s Maritime Labour Convention and Work in Fishing Convention. Stella Maris is ready to work more closely with governments, trades unions and the shipping industry in support of seafarers and fishers.

Now I declare the XXV Stella Maris World Congress officially open and underway in Glasgow, the city of its birth, to mark its Centenary. Let me express sincere gratitude to everyone who has made this possible: the Scottish Government representative; the city of Glasgow; the Archdiocese of Glasgow for serving as host; the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Scotland, in particular its President, Bishop Gilbert; and finally, the many sponsors that have helped Stella Maris in kind and financially for the realization of this event.

Finally, I thank you, the chaplains, staff and volunteers of Stella Maris, for navigating this great mission a hundred years, sometimes no doubt through stormy waters! Please use the next two days to give thanks to God for your past and recommit



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yourselves, and the global Stella Maris network, in the future service of seafarers, fishers and their families, always with the support of the local Church.

Let us give praise and thanks to God and to Our Lady, Star of the Sea, for this great ministry of the Church. As you chart the next stages, may the Holy Spirit renew you, and those who follow you, in serving seafarers, fishers and their families in their integral human development for many more years to come.