

**Sea Sunday Message 2026
July 12, 2026**

**Beyond Cargo and Commerce:
The Human Face of the Sea**

Dear brothers and sisters,

The life of the world continues to pass through the seas, rivers, lakes, and waterways of the world. Behind global trade, fishing industries, ports, inland navigation routes, and maritime networks are countless seafarers, fishers, port workers, and maritime communities whose labor sustains nations, connects peoples, brings livelihood, and supports families across continents. The crisis of the Strait of Hormuz has reminded the world of how deeply humanity depends on the sea and those who work upon it.

Much of what societies rely upon each day arrives quietly through perseverance, sacrifice, skill, and endurance of the people of the sea. On Sea Sunday, the Church remembers these men and women not merely for the work they perform or the goods they transport, but as human persons created in the image and likeness of God and endowed with inviolable dignity. Each carries a unique story shaped by hope and fears, burdens and resilience, relationships and dreams that deserve to be seen, honored, and cherished.

Today, many maritime workers continue to face growing uncertainty and hardship. The sea, which has long connected peoples and nations, is increasingly marked by tension, insecurity, war, and fear. Many crew members not only navigate the inherent dangers of the sea and waterways but have also recently been affected by armed conflicts that have resulted in their virtual confinement on board, food shortages, and even fear for their lives. This has heightened their sense of loneliness, their isolation from society at large, their separation from loved ones, and their emotional exhaustion.

Paradoxically, even in an age of greater digital communication, many seafarers experience deeper isolation. Human closeness is becoming rarer. Reduced crew size, shorter shore leaves, demanding schedules, and the constant pressure of modern maritime life often leave little space for rest, fraternity, or genuine human encounters. In such realities, people need more than efficient systems or distant words. They need a presence. They need to know that they are remembered, welcomed, heard, and loved.

As Pope Leo XIV reminds us in his first encyclical, *Magnifica Humanitas*, technological and economic systems must never reduce the human person to “data, a cog in a machine or a commodity” (n.180). Rather, they must always safeguard the dignity, freedom, and humanity of every individual. A ship, therefore, must never become a place of silent isolation or indifference, a modern Babel where people live side by side yet remain unseen and unheard. Instead, maritime life can stand as a living witness that people of diverse nations, cultures, and beliefs are still capable of fraternity, solidarity, mutual respect, and peaceful interdependence.

In many ways, the sea itself teaches humanity that we belong to one another. Oceans do not divide people; they connect them. Each day, those who work across seas and waterways become bridges between nations, cultures, religions, and economies. In a world wounded by conflict and fragmentation, their lives bear witness to the enduring possibility of cooperation, solidarity, and peaceful coexistence. Through her pastoral presence, the Church seeks to remind every seafarer, fisher, and maritime worker that they are never forgotten and never alone.

At the same time, the sea calls humanity to deeper reflection. The oceans are not merely routes of commerce or sources of economic wealth; they are part of God’s creation, entrusted to human responsibility and care. They nourish populations, sustain livelihoods, and remind us of both the beauty and fragility of our common home. Yet today, the seas increasingly suffer from pollution, exploitation, environmental degradation, and the consequences of irresponsible human activity. When the oceans suffer, humanity suffers with them - especially fishers, coastal communities, and all those whose lives depend directly on the health of marine ecosystems. As Pope Leo XIV reminds us in *Magnifica Humanitas*, authentic progress can never be measured solely by efficiency, technological advancement, or profit, but must always be guided by the dignity of the human person, the common good, and responsibility toward future generations (nn. 12, 92). These words speak powerfully to the maritime and inland navigation world, where many seafarers, fishers, and maritime workers quietly endure loneliness, fatigue, danger, and prolonged separation from their families and usual places of worship while faithfully carrying out the essential work that sustains countless lives and communities across the globe. In this context, care for the sea can never be separated from care for the human person. Protecting marine life, promoting ethical and sustainable practices, defending the dignity and safety of maritime workers, and fostering a spirit of global responsibility are not competing priorities but dimensions of a single moral commitment to the common good and to the flourishing of both people and our shared marine environment.

This commitment is rooted in the Gospel itself, which offers an image that continue to speak powerfully to the maritime world today. Amid the storm, while fear overtook the disciples and the waves threatened the boat, Jesus remained with them: “Why are you afraid?”

Have you still no faith?" (Mark 4:40). Christ did not remain safely on the shore. He entered the vulnerability of those crossing troubled waters. Even today, the Lord accompanies all who live and work at sea, walking beside those who face uncertainty, fatigue, danger and separation from families.

Because the Church is called to continue Christ's mission in the world, She too cannot remain distant from the lived experience of maritime workers. The Lord who entered the boat with his disciples continues to draw near to those who navigate the seas and inland waterways of our time, and the Church is called to make that closeness visible through her presence and ministry. She is called to enter the boat: to accompany, to listen, to console, to defend human dignity, and to become a visible sign of hope and home amid the storms of human life. Through chaplaincies, maritime ministries, and a humble human presence rooted in the long tradition of the Apostleship of the Sea (*Opus Apostolatus Maris*), locally known in many places under names such as *Stella Maris*, the Church seeks to remind every seafarer, fisher, maritime worker, and inland navigation worker that they are remembered, valued, and never alone. Within this broad mission of service and accompaniment, our Catholic port chaplaincies throughout the world welcome men and women of all nationalities and creeds. At the same time, we are especially grateful for the opportunity to provide prayer, pastoral care and the sacraments to Catholic seafarers, who constitute a significant portion of the crews and officers arriving in ports far from their homes, families, and usual places of worship.

I express deep gratitude to all seafarers, fishers, and maritime workers and their families throughout the world. I thank you not only for what you do but for who you are. Your sacrifices sustain global trade, food security, and the well-being of countless communities. I also express my heartfelt gratitude to chaplains, volunteers, maritime welfare organizations, and pastoral workers who faithfully continue to bring friendship, prayer, listening and practical support to ports and ships around the world. May this Sea Sunday renew in all of us a deeper commitment to closeness, solidarity, care for creation and care for all the people of the sea and inland waterways. Entrusting them to the care of Mary, Star of the Sea, we pray for safety, dignity, peace, and hope for all who journey and work upon the waters.

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