



Stella Maris Press Release

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‘Do not lose hope’, global charity tells cruise ship crews

Global maritime charity Stella Maris (Apostleship of the Sea) has reached out to cruise ship crew members as many are left stranded on board with vessels not being allowed to berth at ports.

In a letter sent to cruise companies Costa Cruises, MSC Cruises and Grandi Navi Veloci, Stella Maris Genoa Director Deacon Massimo Franzi told crew members, “You are not alone... you are not abandoned. Do not lose hope.”

“In this difficult period, full of fear and uncertainty, we remind you that even if you feel yourself prisoners you must not lose hope. Even if your difficult life has become even more difficult, even if you are worried about sick colleagues ... you are not alone,” Deacon Franzi wrote.

It is estimated that at least nine cruise ships with nearly 8,000 passengers and thousands of crew members are stranded at sea as ports deny those vessels access amid the Coronavirus disease (Covid-19) outbreak.

Several cruise companies have also temporarily suspended sailings, leaving crew members on board their ships. Larger cruise ships normally have around 1,000 crew members, often living in close quarters below decks.

As well as their physical safety, Deacon Franzi also expressed concern over the mental and emotional wellbeing of crew members left on board those ships.

“Many seafarers and many ships in the world are experiencing a moment of difficulty. You have seen your ship, your home (your whole world, when you are on board) ‘closing’, becoming even more isolated from your families, not knowing when this difficult period will end,” he said.

Deacon Franzi said although Stella Maris chaplains are currently not able to visit cruise ships and minister in person to crew members due to social distancing measures, “our hearts are with you.”

“Even if it is not possible to relieve the pain you feel while staying away from those you love ... we want to remind you that you have a family in every Stella Maris centre in the world,” he said.

“We embrace you and remind you that you will always have a ‘Home away from Home’. This is a moment of trial, however [be assured] that Mary, Star of the Sea, will lead you to a safe harbour and to your families when the storm is over,” he added.

Note to Editors

Stella Maris cruise chaplains provide cruise companies with a spiritual and pastoral service to their crew members. Cruise lines are realising that having a chaplain on board a ship can be of great benefit to both crew and passengers. Cruise chaplaincy is part of Stella Maris’ broader work of supporting seafarers working on merchant and fishing vessels and also their families back home.

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Further information for Editors

Stella Maris, (formerly known as Apostleship of the Sea), is a registered UK charity. It relies on voluntary donations, grants and legacies to continue its work.

90% of world trade is transported by ship. However, the life of a seafarer can be dangerous and lonely. They may spend up to a year at a time away from home, separated from their family and loved ones, often working in harsh conditions.

Stella Maris chaplains and ship visitors provide seafarers and fishermen with pastoral and practical support, information and a listening ear.

For more information contact Martin Foley, Chief Executive Officer on +44 (0) 7941231628 or email martin.foley@stellamarismail.org

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