

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF MIGRANTS AND ITINERANT PEOPLE



Message for Sea Sunday 2012

(8th July 2012)

Before globalization the maritime industry played an important role in shipping consumables, raw material and finished products around the globe and also in transporting a great number of migrants. Even more today when 90% of the global trade is moved by sea together with millions of passengers travelling for pleasure on board of cruise ships.

New ports built far away from the cities, fast turnaround of the vessels and the limited time to come ashore, often make the seafarers invisible to the society, unless a pirates' attack or a shipwreck happens and they are in the news for a short time.

However, seafarers and their families are not invisible to God and to the Church. Their hard work, difficulties and sufferings have been recognized for more than ninety years through the pastoral care offered by the chaplains and volunteers of the Apostleship of the Sea.

We see the seafarers as professionally qualified workforce, capable of performing their job often in very dangerous situations among them pirates' attacks and the unknown force of the stormy waters.

We see the seafarers working in substandard conditions on board of old and rusted vessels, victims of criminalization, abandoned and often with their salary not given on time or withheld.

We see the seafarers as people docking in foreign lands in need of a welcoming smile, a word of consolation and support, a transport to the city, a place to relax without being discriminated for their nationality, colour of the skin or belief.

We see the seafarers as family members, forced to live far away from loved ones and friends for many months in a row, sharing the limited space of the vessel with other crew members of different nationalities.

We see the seafarers as individuals manifesting with simple actions their deep trust in God, seeking guidance and strength by attending masses and prayer services and in silent prayers.

Through the annual appointment of Sea Sunday we would like that our Christian communities and the society at large first of all recognize the seafarers as human beings who contribute to make our life more comfortable and to give thanks for their work and sacrifices.

Furthermore we should increase the awareness of the importance to provide them with protection from abuses and exploitations. For this reason we renew our appeal that the Maritime Labor Convention 2006 (MLC 2006) be ratified as soon as possible to guarantee full protection and decent working conditions to the more than 1.2 million seafarers around the world.

Then, I would like to renew my invitation to attend the XXIII World Congress of the Apostleship of the Sea, which will be held at the Synod Hall in the Vatican City, from 19th to 23rd November 2012, with the theme: *New Evangelization in the maritime world (New ways and means to proclaim the Good News)*.

During those days we will gather together with AOS Bishop Promoters, chaplains and volunteers to reflect on the challenges that the new maritime environment (international multireligious and multicultural crews) is bringing to the Apostleship of the Sea to make disciples of all the nations of the world.

Finally, I invoke the Blessed Mother, *Star of the Sea*, to extend her maternal protection to the people of the sea and guide them from the dangers of the sea to a secure port.

Antonio Maria Card. Vegliò
President

✠ Joseph Kalathiparambil
Secretary