

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF MIGRANTS AND ITINERANT PEOPLE



World Fisheries Day Message (21th November 2011)

World Fisheries Day is celebrated every year on November 21 throughout the world by fishing communities to highlight the precarious situation in which many of them live and the importance of maintaining the world's fisheries.

Fisheries are a source of income and livelihood for millions of people around the world, but it is extremely difficult to have precise data of the number of persons engaged in it. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), it is estimated that roughly 15 million fishers are employed aboard decked or undecked fishing vessels operating in the marine capture fisheries. If part-time fishers are included, as well as those involved in freshwater fisheries and aquaculture, the number rises to 36 million.

The vast majority of fishers engaged in small-scale and artisanal fishing are found along the coasts of undeveloped countries living in great poverty, using antiquated method of fishing and in extreme unsafe conditions.

Fishers employed on board of Distant Water Vessels (DWV) are forced to live on board of their vessels for extended periods of time, working long hours in all kind of weather conditions, sometimes without any protection, and receive very little salary.

Fishers from developing countries are confronted with lack of people interested in the job, increased prices of fuel and policies limiting period of catch and establishing restricting national quota.

For all of them every day is a struggle against the forces of nature that devastate their boats and nets, some of which in a very dramatic way like the tsunami in Asia in 2004 and, more recently, in Japan. They have to face climate change and ecological/environmental disasters that, together with overfishing, destroy the sources of their livelihood and finally the economic system that exploits their hard work. These facts are making fishing one of the most dangerous and hazardous occupations in the world.

The Apostleship of the Sea (AOS), with its network of Centers around the world, has been for long time a "safe harbor" for many fishers. Chaplains and volunteers have provided different kind of services and assistance to respond to their spiritual and material needs.

In this Fisheries Day we would like to unite our voice to the voices of fishers, to invite International Organizations and Governments to develop standards which will ensure decent and productive work for fishers employment, income and food security and to have the *Work in Fishing Convention*, 2007 (No. 188) ratified to guarantee a safe working environment and welfare provisions.

May Mary *Stella Maris* continue to be the source of strength and protection to all the fishers and their families.

✠Antonio Maria Vegliò
President

✠Joseph Kalathiparambil
Secretar