



## *DO NOT BE AFRAID, IT IS CHRISTMAS!*

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Two thousand years ago, in a humble manger Jesus was born, while the angels were announcing to the shepherds: "Do not be afraid. Look, I bring you news of great joy, a joy to be shared by the whole people"(Lc 2,10).

As chaplains and volunteers you might be busy visiting vessels, distributing Christmas gifts and maybe experiencing frustration in caring for abandoned and stranded crews.

As seafarers or fishers this might be the happiest Christmas of your lives, the first Christmas after many years at sea, spent in a new home, perhaps with a new born baby or maybe just together. For others it will be a lonely Christmas in a foreign port or in the middle of the sea, remembering the loved ones far away. Even if you will be at home with your family, you might be still sad because in this time of crisis you have lost your job and there is no money to celebrate humanly.

But, in spite of everything, the message brought by the angels is repeated to all of us today: do not be afraid! In spite of all the difficulties that we are experiencing and could make us feel insecure and afraid, the mystery of Christmas that we celebrate, renews in our heart the conviction that in whatever situation we find ourselves, we are not alone, because God is with us for ever. Jesus the Lord is our traveling companion and shares our journey's in life through joys, struggles and trials.

As chaplains and volunteers, while providing pastoral care to the people of the sea, give witness to a new vision of the world! If God is with us, we can work together also to build a new society, where we are effectively all brothers and sisters without differences and discriminations.

As seafarers and fishers, while sailing from port to port, share this message with the people that you encounter! If God is with us, our hope is for ever, in spite of fears and uncertainties.

It is with joy that we greet you in this Christmas time and wish the blessings of the Infant Jesus for you, your families and friends. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

✠ Antonio Maria Vegliò  
President

✠ Archbishop Agostino Marchetto  
Secretary

### CLIMATE CHANGE: A CHALLENGE FOR IMO TOO!



There is general agreement among the world's leading meteorological experts that the surface temperature of the earth has risen by around 0.6°C over the past 100 years. The relevant organs of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) estimate that the average temperature of the earth's surface has risen by as much as 0.74°C since the late 1800s and that, unless action is taken, it will increase by another 1.8°C to 4°C by the year 2100 – a change which it characterizes as – rapid and profound“.

... The overwhelming balance of scientific evidence clearly states that we need look no further than the effects of a century and a half of industrialization to find the principal reasons for this alarming phenomenon. The burning of ever-greater quantities of fossil fuels, mainly oil and coal; the cutting down of forests, and the widespread practice of intensive farming methods, together with industrial processes, have all spiralled during the industrial era, and they have all served to increase the amount of so-called greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the atmosphere, especially carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide.

The climate does not respond immediately to external changes but, after 150 years of industrialization, global warming now has momentum, and it will continue to affect the earth's natural systems for hundreds of years even if GHG emissions are

reduced and levels of GHGs in the atmosphere stop rising. To introduce a maritime analogy, climate change is like a giant oil tanker, in that, to stop it, or even to alter its course, not only takes a massive force but also a considerable amount of time – which means that, already, climate change is inevitable, as a result of past and current emissions of GHGs ...

The evidence for, and the effects of, global warming and the resultant climate change are well documented and the facts are overpowering. Some of these effects are already upon us, some are predicted; some are already inevitable, some might be averted if prompt and concerted action is taken now...

The transport industry is no exception to such scrutiny and pressure; and environmental concerns are now high on the agenda in all of its sectors, including shipping. There is no avoiding the fact that the modern world has become utterly dependent on motorized transport systems that run largely on fossil fuels ...

In terms of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per tonne of cargo transported one mile, shipping is recognized as the most efficient form of commercial transport. Yet the enormous scale of the global shipping industry, which is responsible for the transportation of the overwhelming majority of world trade,

#### **DIRECTIVE PASSES ON DUMPING OF WASTE INTO THE SEA**

All clear from the Council for Foreign Affairs of the 27 EU countries for the directive to improve the current rules regarding pollution by ships which also introduces penal sanctions for dumping harmful products into the sea.

The State Members have a year to conform to the new rules that seek to improve maritime security and increase protection of the marine environment from major polluters like ships. In fact, according to the new rules, illicit dumping, even small amounts, is considered a crime: i.e., it is a criminal offence if it is done intentionally through imprudence or grave negligence.

Therefore, the persons responsible for this kind of dumping into the sea are subject to relative sanctions, including penal sanctions, and similar responsibilities will also be prosecuted in the case of legal persons.

means that it produces around three per cent of global manmade GHG emissions ...

The challenge of reducing carbon emissions is, therefore, undoubtedly a critical issue for the shipping industry. As the industry's regulator, IMO shares this concern and is heavily engaged in efforts to pursue the limitation and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from ships. Indeed, the Organization has adopted –Climate change œ a challenge for IMO too!“ as the theme for this year's World Maritime Day, in recognition of the intense focus this topic is receiving throughout the Organization and the global community in 2009 ...

While IMO works to produce a regulatory regime for the international shipping industry, the industry itself has not been slow to understand its own responsibilities with regard to GHG emissions. In recent years, not only has it contributed through its industry organizations to the technical and regulatory process at IMO, it has also been responsible for generating its own technical and operational developments to help reduce GHG emissions from ships.

Carbon emissions and fuel efficiency are directly linked. In simple terms, the less fuel burned, the smaller the volume of carbon emissions. In recent decades, led by its marine engineers, shipping has developed more efficient propulsion systems and propeller designs that have yielded considerable reductions in fuel consumption. Engine technology has evolved to the extent that modern main propulsion systems for ships consume about 10 per cent less fuel than their predecessors installed some ten years ago, but with the same power output. Naval architects, too, have made their contributions; significant improvements in hydrodynamics and in vessel hull design have brought reductions of between two and four per cent in fuel consumption.

Based on the industry's continuous endeavours to achieve better results, additional improvements in hull, engine and propeller design can be expected, in the future, to produce further reductions in fuel consumption and there may also be possibilities for better utilization of waste heat. However, while work in these complex technical areas is ongoing, and some of these im-

provements may possibly materialize on board new ships within the short to medium term, it might be very difficult to apply these new technologies to existing ships. The solution for the existing fleet may, therefore, lie in improving the efficiency of certain aspects of their operation.

These are complex issues. Travelling at slower speeds, for example, might help reduce emissions; but it might also mean that more ships will be needed to transport the same quantity of cargo œ not to mention that steaming at slower speeds would also have implications in the timely delivery of goods, such that receivers who have grown accustomed to a world of –just in time“ delivery, and calculated their inventories of raw materials, components and other products accordingly, may need to make some adjustment in this regard...

Thus, while it may be possible to reduce GHG emissions per tonne/mile in a moderately significant way (perhaps by 15 to 25 per cent in the next 5 to 15 years, as mentioned above, with new, more fuel-efficient and bigger ships eventually bringing additional improvements), it would be almost impossible to guarantee any absolute re-

## **EMISSIONS: THE UNITED STATES TIGHTEN UP THE RULES**

The American Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has announced a coordinated strategy to reduce emissions from ocean liners and set new rules for the types of fuel used and for engine efficiency.

The new rules will concern the ships sailing under the American flag, but they are in harmony with the international standards aimed at reaching new, shared agreements that will lead to a significant reduction in the polluting emissions from maritime traffic on the entire planet.

The emissions due to large naval diesel engines (in particular, nitrogen oxides and fine particulate) have serious consequences for the air quality of vast areas around the main ports and the health of the people who live there, even at a distance of several kilometers.

duction by shipping as a whole, due to the projected growth in demand for shipping worldwide arising from the growing world population and global economy.

On the other hand, shipping companies themselves have a very strong incentive to reduce their fuel consumption and thus reduce their GHG emissions. Bunker fuel costs represent a significant proportion of ships' operational expenses, having increased by significant amounts in recent years ...

Those who will suffer most from climate change will be in the developing world. They have fewer resources for coping with storms, with floods, with droughts, with disease outbreaks, and with disruptions to food and water supplies. They are eager for economic development themselves, but may find that this already difficult process has become even more difficult because of climate change. The poorer nations of the world have done virtually nothing to cause global warming yet are most exposed to its effects.

Climate change will, of course, affect everybody. No one can be immune to it. By the same token, responsibility for finding the solution cannot, realistically, be laid at the door of

any particular country or group of countries, any particular region or continent. We are, perhaps as never before, all in this together. Successfully addressing climate change will be far from easy; but the consequences of failing to do so are far too dire to contemplate.

We all have a responsibility to take bold, comprehensive and coordinated action that not only jump-starts recovery of the planet but also launches a new era of serious and meaningful engagement to prevent a crisis, like the one we are presently facing, from worsening or recurring. Working together, with a sense of responsibility for future generations, the agreements made in Copenhagen can have genuine and lasting value.



## IMO COUNCIL MAKES 2010 THE "YEAR OF THE SEAFARER"

The Council of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), meeting for its 102nd session in London (29 June to 3 July 2009), agreed that next year's theme for World Maritime Day will be **"2010: Year of the Seafarer"**, endorsing a proposal from IMO Secretary-General Efthimios E. Mitropoulos.

The theme - to be celebrated throughout the year and also at a World Maritime Day parallel event in Argentina - was selected to give IMO and the international maritime community the opportunity to pay tribute to the world's seafarers for their unique contribution to society and in recognition of the risks they shoulder in the execution of their duties in an often hostile environment. In proposing it, Secretary-General Mitropoulos said that "the unique hazards confronting the 1.5 million seafarers of the world - including pirate attacks, unwarranted detention and abandonment - coupled with the predicted looming shortage of ships' officers, make it ever more incumbent to take immediate and effective action to forestall a situation from developing in which ships are not manned with sufficient skilled personnel".

The theme complements IMO's ongoing "Go to Sea!" campaign to attract new entrants to the shipping industry, which was launched in November 2008 in association with the International Labour Organization, the "Round Table" of shipping industry organizations and the International Transport Workers' Federation. It is also in line with the comprehensive review, initiated in 2006, of the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW) 1978 and its associated Code, updated texts of which are due to be considered by a Diplomatic Conference scheduled to be held in Manila, Philippines, in mid-2010. Once adopted, the proposed amendments to the STCW Convention and Code will provide the necessary global standards for the training and certification of seafarers to man technologically advanced ships, today and for some time to come.



## INTERNATIONAL MARITIME DAY SEYCHELLES

For five years now the International Maritime Day Celebration has been organized by the National Maritime Day committee, a body composed of various government and non governmental organizations, other stakeholders in the maritime and fishing industry, the maritime school and AOS-Seychelles.

This year's activities (21<sup>st</sup> to 27 September 2009) was centered on a work shop on climate change and its impact on fishing industry and the environment, the cleaning of reefs and the sea at St Anne island and a special mass at St Andre Church at Cascade.

A total of 60 seafarers, fishers, students from the maritime school and officials from the Environment Department participated in a one day workshop on "Climate change and its impact on fishing industry", organized by the National Maritime Day Committee, of whom the AOS is a founding member. The main objective was inform the fishing and maritime sector of the dangers and effects of climate change on the environment and its consequences on their trade and professions, and to increase awareness among seafarers of the impact that sea level and climate change have at economic and social level in the country.

A big crowd of Christian and non-Christian people participated actively in a Mass celebrated at St. Andre Church, Cascade (St. Andre is the patron of both fishers and seafarers in Seychelles).

The IMO theme "Climate change, a challenge for IMO too" was chosen for the Mass along with a thanksgiving prayer for the release of the 10 Seychellois seafarers held hostages by the Somali pirates in Somalia and for two fishermen who were lost at sea within the month of September.

In its welcoming address the AOS National Director, Albert Napier, said:

*"We Christian or non Christian, rich or poor, black or white, are all responsible for the scourge of climate change.*

*- We use the beach for leisure (picnic) but, instead of taking our rubbish home, we leave it loitering the beach or dump it into the sea, polluting the ocean and its environment. Plastic bags strangle tortoise, kill small fish, birds and other species.*

*- Our local fishers use small net to catch a variety of fish for our consumption, while long liner fishing vessels catch sharks, remove its fins and throw the carcass back into the sea;*

*- the European Union tuna fishing vessels also use thin net, catching different kinds of fishes, whereby millions of sharks, dorado, bonitos, snappers etc.. are thrown back into the sea. These practices pollute the sea and destroy many living species;*

*-the foreign investors that, in the name of development, come to our country to invest millions of dollars in a number of projects related to the tourism industry do not respect the national environment law, our coast line and maritime environment are polluted by the sewage and drainage that go directly into the sea;*

*- our government and all those responsible to safeguard the development of our country, who remain silent in front of the non implementation of the national law laid down to protect our environment and marines resources are all guilty and responsible for the catastrophe of climate change".*

He concluded by asking "God our Father to forgive us for the injustice we had done against nature and against him". Then he asked the congregation to pray God our Father to help us become more conscious in towards the environment, to have more respect for the sea and all its species that He has given us.

Father Lafortune, the parish priest of St. Andrew of Cascade said that "Seychelles are being called paradise because the sea is part of the beauty of our islands that welcomes tourists and seafarers". He continued by saying that the society must take more seriously the continued threat of Somali pirates in our territorial water and requested the gathering to reflect deeply on the subject as it involves our territory. He appealed to fishermen to come to the church and join other faithful in praying God for their health, for safe fishing trip. He asked them to change their mentality to look for God's help only when they are in danger.



The congregation then listened attentively to the testimony of two ex hostages of Somali pirates. *Serenity* was a yacht kidnapped by Somali pirates in Seychelles territorial water in February 2009 en route to Madagascar. In March another Seychellois vessel, *Indian Ocean Explorer*, was also hijacked in Seychelles water. Altogether a total of ten crews were held hostages by Somali pirates who requested ransom payment for their release.

Mr. Francis Roucou, skipper on board the *Indian Ocean Explorers*, shared his 3 months experience in captivity describing how the pirates boarded their vessels with AK47, mortars and forced the crews to sail to Somalia. He thanked all the citi-

zen that had helped them through with prayers and encouraged all fishers never to forget God in their life. Mr Gilbert Victor, skipper of *Serenity*, thanked *"on behalf of the crew all Seychellois, organizations and Authorities who had contribute toward our release"*. He thanked also all those who constantly prayed God the Almighty for their safe return.

A big number of fishermen living in within Cascade and Anse Aux Pins Districts brought their fishing boats to be blessed. Their fishing boats were decorated with flowers, flags plus photos of fishers who work on the boats. Their families and friends were also present to witness the events. A number of messages were read and the priest talked about the important contribution made by fishers catching fish for the local market and for export.

## **BENEDICT XVI PAYS HOMAGE TO MARY STAR OF THE SEA**

*In Mary who was and is totally united with her Son, Christ those amidst the darkness and sufferings of this world have found the face of the Mother who gives us the courage to go on. In the Western tradition, the name "Mary" was translated with "Star of the Sea". The title expresses exactly this experience: how often does the story which we are living appear like a dark sea whose waves pound threateningly against the small vessel of our life. At times, the night seems impenetrable. Often we can be under the impression that evil alone has power and that God is infinitely remote. We often glimpse only from afar the great Light, Jesus Christ who has overcome death and evil. Yet then we see very near that light which is kindled when Mary says: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord". We see the bright light of goodness that emanates from her. In the goodness with which she met and continually meets the needs of the great and small aspirations of numerous men and women, we recognize the goodness of God himself in a very human way. With his goodness he brings to the world ever anew Jesus Christ, hence the great Light of God. He gave us his Mother as our own Mother that we might learn from her to say the "yes" that makes us become good. (Homily for the Episcopal Ordination of five new Bishops, 12 September 2009)*



What an immense joy to have Mary Immaculate as our Mother! Every time we experience our frailty and the promptings of evil, we may turn to her and our hearts receive light and comfort. Even in the trials of life, in the storms that cause faith and hope to vacillate, let us recall that we are her children and that our existence is deeply rooted in the infinite grace of God. Although the Church is exposed to the negative influences of the world, she always finds in Mary the star to guide her so that she may follow the route pointed out to her by Christ. Indeed, Mary is the Mother of the Church, as Pope Paul VI and the Second Vatican Council solemnly proclaimed. Therefore, while we thank God for this marvellous sign of his goodness, let us entrust to the Virgin Immaculate each one of us, our families and communities, the entire Church and the whole world. (*Angelus, 8th December 2009, Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception*)

# “THE CHURCH AMONG THE PEOPLE OF THE SEA”

## COLLECTIVE PASTORAL LETTER

Proposal regarding pastoral support  
for the coastal communities of the Costa Rican Pacific (Chapter III)  
(excerpts)

### SOME GUIDELINES FOR ACTION CONSISTENT WITH OUR FAITH.

*“Once again he went out along the sea. All the crowd came to him and he taught them” (Mk :2:13).*

We feel the urgent need to take more decisive steps to develop a pastoral care aimed at the world of fishing which will contribute to the best of its ability to building a more perfect temporal order by giving the fisher back his dignity, valuing his work, and favoring access to goods.

We cannot ignore the distressing situation in which the people of the sea are living. We want to take on this task from the Church, which must be carried out in a team and not in an isolated way, in a coordinated fashion with the governmental and non-governmental institutions (in inter-institutional networks), and with the social, ecumenical and integrating spirit clearly indicated in the Aparecida document. (No. 384)

“Many of us fishers are not aware of the harm to nature...we drag the nets and destroy fishing in the Gulf”, some participants in the **FORUM of the people of the sea** claimed (a meeting with representatives of the fishing communities concerned and several ecological NGOs from November 29-30, 2008). Just as the coastal lands belong first of all to the original settlers who have historically lived from its resources, with greater reason they will be the first ones responsible for taking care of and administering with the criterion of stewards or guardians the marine riches of creation which God has entrusted to us.

It is time to improve the traditional ways of organizing the fishing sector which is controlled by large producers and politicians. “Let the rivalry between organizations come to an end...Many let themselves be led more by personal interests...The members must demand change from their leaders...who should not stay in their positions forever”. These testimonies were gathered at the FORUM by the people concerned. We invite the State institutions and NGOs related to the fishing sector to cultivate new leadership among the younger people, which will overcome the politicking, individualism and machismo that continue to give their organizations a low profile.

*We, the pastors of the dioceses of Tillaran, Puntarenas and San Isidro, are aware that a fundamental solution is urgent that will make it possible to achieve harmony between the human being and nature so that the rules of development will aim at sustainability. An integral and realistic view of the coastal area’s situation is essential because the effects—both current and potential—of the activities carried out there seriously endanger the stability of the ecosystems and the weakened human cultures associated with the coastal area. (August 2, 2009, Feast of Our Lady of the Angels)*

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There are many temples and proselytizing movements of the Christian, non-Catholic communities among most of the fishing peoples of the Pacific, but they make few efforts to help in their social organization and integral liberation. “The Churches ought to help us in our search for a common project. We should join forces spiritually in order to dialogue and stop fighting among ourselves...”, the FORUM participants acknowledged. We humbly commit ourselves to sitting down at the same table together with religious leaders from different creeds in order to propose common alternatives of life and hope so that the Gospel we all proclaim will truly be “good news” for the people of the sea.

Community marine tourism continues to be a valid alternative for the coastal communities that have witnessed the drastic decline of fishing. This alternative to exclusive tourism, which does not create social inter-linking, will always be valid when it is carried out in a way that strengthens the local views about the development of the fishing communities. We urge investing more resources in these communities which will favor new employment options based on a model of solidarity-based and responsible tourism with local management and State support. For this reason, we advocate a more community-oriented, responsible and solidarity-based tourism that will benefit the people of the communities, and businessmen who are aware of their social responsibility to the communities affected.

“Insecurity at sea is not a threat but a reality...we are sorry that many humble fishers are now armed...Some of us have been attacked while working on our boats. We need to know how to present the relative reports and that the authorities will take matters into their hands”, several fishers stated in the FORUM. We urge the Security Ministry to look to the sea and create, together with experienced fishers, a “community marine policy” with sufficient training and the necessary resources to confront delinquency, at sea as well as to be vigilant regarding other kinds of crime in the coastal area.

We make an impassioned appeal to our governmental authorities to offer clear responses and concrete actions to combat the increase in coastal delinquents, the “pirates” and the “white collar” evildoers who incite the coastal people to get involved in the drug traffic and other illicit businesses; and against those who continue to assault, harass, remove and kill fishers in Costa Rican waters. There are several unsolved cases that have remained unpunished from a legal standpoint.

We ask for a more complete, human treatment of the news that refers to the people of the sea in order to stop the campaign of attributing guilt to them for the evil actions of a few, as well as the denigrating descriptions that have stigmatized them in the past years. It is well known that situations of poverty and displacement tend to drive some towards

delinquency, alcoholism and drug traffic, but it is not fair to disqualify an entire work sector because of a few wrong actions by some of its worst representatives.

We urge revising very carefully to whom the concessions are granted and to give preference to community organizations with a known history, to labor unions identified with the community, student organizations, cooperatives, etc., as the law requires.

The fishers are aware of the need for closing seasons, even though they know they renounce a fundamental right of their cultural identity. The State’s responsibility to the people of the sea who stop their productive activity must be shown in a retribution that will really satisfy their family needs and not be the limited offering that is usually given to them.

The men and women small-scale fishers wish to continue to carry out this activity, despite some inadequate or anti-ecological practices which they have to go overcome. Through their profession they have acquired a knowledge associated with the use of the marine resources which is transmitted from generation to generation to the point that it shapes the “culture of the people of the sea”. These families of small-scale fishers should also see themselves as strategic actors for the country’s food security, which is just as important as any other national productive sector. We have to recognize the right of access to the coastal resources for the local communities, adopt means in favor of the poor, and achieve a balanced use of resources.

A strategy for the small-scale fishing sector must be drawn up which will bring together the development and conservation institutions so that their approach will be integral and endeavor to satisfy the social, economic and cultural needs of this sector. To overlook governmental responsibility, with the serious ecological consequences favored by monocultures, would ruin the implementation of an effective strategy.

We ask for schools on the coastal territory for the children, boys and girls, of the people of the sea, and for a special effort both to adapt their curriculum to the coastal reality and to appoint teachers who are sensitive to the people of the sea’s prob-





lems. It is important for this personnel to be able to understand and then improve the negative aspects of the coastal culture mentality, which they acquire from childhood, and instead to foster the responsibility, enjoyment and dignity of this socially stigmatized people.

We encourage and support the efforts of small-scale and sports fishers to unite and take concrete steps for coastal improvement, and with the participation of ecological organizations and universities, to establish priorities for the protection of the seas and the fisheries in their areas of influence so they will fight over-fishing and the use of prohibited fishing arts, and everyone will feel that they are guardians of marine life.

In the Church, we are committed to supporting through the Social Pastoral Care the proposals suggested here through a team of disciples and missionaries involved in the pastoral care of the sea of the three dioceses and by participating in the inter-institutional networks in favor of the people of the sea, in which the contribution stands out of the universities, NGOs and State institutions aimed at a better approach and coordination in the coastal area.

**Most Rev. Guillermo Loría Garita**  
Bishop of San Isidro del General

**Most Rev. Oscar Fernández Guillén**  
Bishop of Puntarenas

**Most Rev. Victorino Girardi Stellin**  
Bishop of Tilarán-Liberia

## PRAYER TO OUR LADY OF THE SEA

*Virgin Mary of the sea, Mother of Christ, and mother of the people of the sea  
As we carry through our coasts*

*Your beautiful image moved by the waves,*

*We put before you the common culture of our coastal territories,*

*Rich in traditions bathed in faith along the shore of its waters.*

*Through paths drawn with radiant celestial light the preaching reached us from the sea*

*Of the Gospel of your Son Jesus Christ,*

*Who with his powerful word, ordered the fury of the waves to be silent*

*And bring peace to the fishers whose lives felt threatened.*

*Before your consoling image we come today*

*And lay an immense catch of dreams and hopes at your feet*

*So you will intercede for us with your Son, the fisher of Galilee,*

*And his word of life will strengthen our weak anchors.*

*Mary of the sea, the new EVE, our life, our sweetness and our hope,*

*Give back to us the merciful favor of your Son,*

*The tireless apostle of fishers, on our families,*

*On our coastal territories,*

*On the boats that provide our daily sustenance.*

*Protect our children and youth with compassion*

*So they will not let themselves be seduced by the temptation of what is easy.*

*We entrust our women of the sea to you,*

*Who are often diminished and wounded in their dignity*

*So they will be shining stars when the light fades.*

*And to those whose hands are calloused*

*From the harshness of the admirable work of fishing,*

*Grant them the wisdom of their many years*

*And in the Sweet Name of Jesus that*

*We will sit together in the same boat that will lead us out to sea,*

*Taken by the hand, with people from the city and the mountains,*

*Docking in new ports of justice, solidarity and peace,*

*An anticipation of our common arrival at the port of everlasting life.*

*Amen.*

## AFRICA, PIRATE NETS



The most skilled fishers from West Africa live on a contested strip of sand between the waves of the Atlantic and the placid estuary of the Senegalese river, the L'Ange de Barbarie. A small bridge connects the silent streets and rundown colonial residences of Saint-Louis (the former capital of French West Africa) with the alleys and huts of Guet-Ndar, the fishers' quarter...The river bank is where the commercial activity is concentrated: every day hundreds of canoes unload hundreds of kilos of fish, which is divided up between the rustic drying systems set up along the bank and the trucks waiting on the asphalt road higher up. Pressed into burlap bags, the dried fish will slowly travel to the markets inside Africa. The more valuable species, on the other hand, which are preserved in baskets filled with ice, will make their way to the rich European and Oriental markets...

Impoverished after decades of over-exploitation by foreign industrial fishing ships, the waters of Saint-Louis are no longer able to sustain even the local small-scale fishing. So many fishers from

Guet-Ndar, to not return with empty nets, are forced to head for the Mauritanian waters where the fish resources are less exploited ... The phenomenal fishers of Saint-Louis are not hired only from Mauritania. Some come from much farther away. In the alleys of Guet-Ndar, among ebony colored people wrapped in bright clothes or waxed fishing jackets, you can make eye contact with the narrow eyes of the Korean intermediaries...

For each mission, the Koreans contract between 40 and 50 canoes complete with their crews for a total of more than 200 fishers. The small Senegalese boats are loaded into the dark belly of the enormous Korean fishing ships, while the men are lodged in a series of tiny cells especially built for this purpose on the bridge of the ship. For months, these narrow "loculi"

### BRAZIL'S NEW FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE LAW

Brazil's new Fisheries and Aquaculture Law passed in June 2009 has important implications for women. A key aspect of the new law is that it broadens the definition of the term 'fishworker' by including those who perform critical ancillary activities that, till now, had no legal recognition. With this broadening of the definition of 'fishworker', Brazil has taken yet another important step forward. Women working in fishing activities, as harvestors, had already achieved formal recognition with the approval of the Brazilian Federal Constitution in 1988, and the institution of the Social Welfare Law in 1991, that provided rural workers the same kind of social protection accorded to urban workers. Of particular interest to rural women was the recognition of their status as workers regardless of marital status.

The new law adopts a more comprehensive view of fisheries and of the relevant social actors in this field. It ensures recognition of those engaged in fisheries related activities such as in manufacturing or repairing nets and gear, and the processing of artisanal fish products.

It is expected that this will provide workers performing fisheries-related activities, most of whom are women, access to welfare rights, notably retirement, accident and sickness cover, and maternity indemnities. Moreover, wherever annual fishing bans are established, they will benefit from the related insurance—normally a four-month allowance involving the payment of the minimum wage for each month of the ban, approximately US\$218 per month.

With this entitlement, they will receive recognition as full economic agents, who suffer, just as male fishworkers do, from income shortage during the fishing ban period. Given the major presence of women in pre- and post-harvesting activities, their official inclusion within the sector is expected to greatly increase the enrolment of women in artisanal fishworker's organizations.

or funeral niches, which are so low you can only get in them on all fours, will be the Senegalese fishers' nocturnal refuge.

The so-called *bateaux ramasseurs* (from the French "ramasser" = to gather up) stockpile canoes and then head for the less controlled waters of West Africa: Guinea Conakry, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Angola and Gabon. The canoes are released at sea, each with 5 or 6 fishers aboard armed with a fishing line who hunt all day for the most prized species. The ship owners supply the fishing lines and hooks and a bowl of rice at sunrise and sunset. At the end of each day, the Senegalese hand over what they have caught to the Koreans who pay a price established before their departure from Saint-Louis. Many times, however, the agreements are not respected and the fishers may even find themselves abandoned on their canoes hundred of miles away from home...

To fatten up the profits, many foreign boats fish without a license. The countries that face the coast do not have sufficient means to keep their territorial waters under surveillance and so the pirate fishing boats can work almost undisturbed. Illegal fishing is based on the strategy of confusion. To avoid being recognized, the owners without permits hide the identity of their fishing boats. The ships fly under a "flag of convenience", which can be bought easily (even on Internet) on the registries of countries like Panama, Belize and Honduras. The flag and the name of the boat are then changed constantly, a technique known as *flag hopping*. Besides hiding behind a false name, those who fish illegally do their utmost to make it impossible to trace their product. The catches from ships with no license are canned in cartons marked with the data of other regular fishing boats that belong to the same owner. Otherwise, the practice of *trans-shipping* is used: the fish is transferred to other boats at sea and in this way confused in the refrigerator cells of the cargo ships headed for the Canary Islands. *Trans-shipping* is also widespread among the fishing boats that have a regular license because by making the transfer far from the African ports, they can avoid the "bothersome" controls of the local navy and even sell the fish with no problem that violates the quantitative and qualitative limits foreseen by the license agreements.

... The fish are caught with methods that are prohibited because of their destructive environmental impact, such as trawling nets and overly fine nets; or fished in the waters reserved for the small-scale fishers or in protected areas such as

*To respond to a growing demand, the fleets of European and Asian fishing ships turn their prows toward the waters of West Africa where they can fish illegally without too many controls. Satisfying our palates, however, has a very high cost for the African economies and ecosystems.*

those for reproduction and natural parks ...

For the ecosystems and the African economies, the damage caused by illegal fishing is dramatic. According to FAO estimates (the UN Agency responsible for fishing and agriculture), 80% of the global fish resources risk extinction, are over-exploited or in decline. The "Fishery Committee for Eastern Central Atlantic" (the FAO Committee in charge of evaluating the state of the fish resources on the western coast of Africa) claims that squid, cuttlefish, black sea bass, pink shrimp and some types of crab are on the way to extinction ...

Economic damage is added to the environmental damage: considering the whole of Sub-Saharan Africa, Greenpeace estimates that pirate fishing takes away a billion dollars a year from the African coffers. Among the most affected countries there is Guinea Conakry, which according to the calculations of the "Department for International Development" of the British government, loses 110 million dollars a year, and Sierra Leone, where the yearly average hovers around 30 million dollars. The scenario is more serious if we consider that the Atlantic gives work to most of the coastal population and that in the diet of these countries, fish is the main source of protein.

... The driving force of pirate fishing is the demand of the final markets which pay prices that are ten times higher than those on the African markets. Europe, whose waters barely satisfy 40% of its internal consumption, is the greatest world importer. According to the estimates of the European Commission, each year pirate fish arrives on the internal markets to the tune of 1.1 billion Euros.

... With their fish resources plundered, the fleets of small-scale fishers from West Africa are going through a crisis that gets deeper and deeper year after year. The coastal population, at the limit of survival, is thus forced to join the hordes of desperate people who besiege the "Fortress Europe". The canoes, which can no longer guarantee the families' sustenance, are transformed into the fragile means on which they defy the Atlantic. Struggling along for days on the same routes of the pirate fishing boats, the most skilled fishers of West Africa are reduced to pursuing the mirage of European well-being. (A. Marzi, *Popoli*, October 2009, n. 10, excerpts)

# MESSAGE OF THE MISSION OF THE SEA OF FRANCE TO THE GENERAL DIRECTION OF MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

The Mission of the Sea hopes for responsible, sustainable fishing that is managed regionally and respects the fishers and the fish resources.

## 1-Values to be favored for the sake of «the human element».

The Mission of the Sea has been committed for more than 50 years to the communities of fishers, faithful to Gospel values and faithful to the aspirations of the fishers and their families, in liaison with the maritime bodies. It recognizes that it is necessary to restructure the community policy on different bases.

We have no ship, fishing quota or market share to defend, but only «the human element», the values inspired by Christianity and the Gospel, in particular, sharing in Creation, solidarity and the respect due to everyone, the fishers of the European Community and the entire world. All of these values have been gradually erased, on the one hand, by the domination of immediate profit and, on the other, because of a governance marked by the failure to balance the decision-makers and the aspirations of the communities of fishers.

*The Mission of the Sea sent a reply to the consultation launched by the European Community regarding the common fishing policy. Here are some excerpts from it.*



**2-Give the floor to the fishers.** The Mission of the Sea **approves of this initiative** in favor of the fishers' greater participation, and all the more so because they bear witness to us of their little confidence in the structures, whatever they may be. Until now, politics, the market, scientists and the industrial owners have had the floor, but fishers, especially seafarers and the young ones, have been the «voiceless» of Europe.

**Let's not be gullible :** The floor is given to the fishers after they have been «thrown overboard», paralyzed in the «European corset», muzzled by administrative constraints, and crushed by a «globalized market» that pays no attention to the fruit of their hard labor. They are made guilty for all the ills and treated openly like "poachers of the sea", or "killers of the sea"...

The fishers' word is important. They need to take the floor locally, regionally, nationally and on the European level. **The word of small-scale fishers, of women, seafarers' families and associations that support fishing,** is not the word of industrial fishing or aquaculture. This word needs to be distinct, audible and heard.

**3-Start from reality, get out of confusion, generate confidence through knowledge common to all : fishing knowledge is the key to the door of the PCP future.** In application of the Maximum Sustainable Yield Stock Level, some scientific reports announce that 80% of the planet's fish stocks are in danger. This does not correspond to the observation of the fishers we meet. They do not understand each other any more or speak the same language. **The Mission of the Sea believes it is very important to treat this point with great attention.** We need to know if there is really a reduction and to look for its causes in the most precise way possible. It is necessary to get out of the habit of confronting fishers and scientists by favoring a common task.

**The fishers are accused of over fishing.** The responsibility for the «collapse of stocks» is put on the community of fishers as a whole, without specifying which kinds of work and which fisheries practice «over fishing». It is deduced from this that it is necessary to «**destroy boats**». The reasoning is as follows : if we reduce the fishing capacities, the resource will recover. These plans have emptied the ports, sent fishers on land and

wiped out the valuable knowledge of the artisans of the sea.

At the same time, **people do not talk enough** about climate change, warming and the «tropicalization» of the waters of the Gulf of Gascoigne, the change in marine currents with the changes in the Gulf Stream following the melting of ice banks and pollution : these are real factors that change the marine ecosystems. We hope that the **Copenhagen Summit** will uncover the attacks on the environment and enable all the sectors of society to correct their behaviors. **The fishers are the first ones who want to know about the real state of the ocean.**

**4-Seek a more sustainable fishing effort.** The Mission of the Sea proposes to start from the fishing practices to point out what is going in the right direction and what is not.

**Some praiseworthy practices:** The fishers carry out activities to pick the fish at the bottom of the ocean. In great numbers, the fishers have acquired an ecological awareness thanks to the new generations who want to earn their livelihood worthily by working properly and thinking about the future. Many small-scale fishers work in this way without throwing almost anything back into the sea. Many communities of fishers have opted for quality rather than quantity. The fishers saw that it was necessary to put their efforts in common rather than competing with one another. There is much to be done in favor of a real policy for selling wild fish from the sea.

**Some ethically unacceptable practices:** All fishers are predators and all fishing techniques are predatory. But it must be recognized that there are some ways of fishing that are responsible and others which are not. In the different nets, especially the trawling nets, noble fish with a high commercial value are caught and a tremendous amount of dead fish are thrown back into the sea because the quota has been reached or the fish caught are not of the prescribed weight. And yet, at the same time, there is a market on site provided by the companies outside the Community, and no one cares about the size or the origin. There are also tons of fish that leave regularly for a withdrawal price. Many of these practices, like discarding, are covered by the European laws, but it must be recognized that they are unacceptable from an ethical viewpoint and cause the destruction of a healthy food source which is sea protein. This leads to **discrediting fishers** by environmentalists who are heard more and more and given great media coverage.

**Fish in a different way:** Everyone knows now that the planet's resources are limited. Everyone in his/her place must carry on together within these limits. Today the fishers are capable of understanding this necessary conversion.



**Some questions to be asked: What is necessary so that a fisher can live decently from his fishing without « emptying » the sea ?** This work needs to be remunerated and supported by good marketing which allows the crew to live and secure a return on the boat. It is not normal for fishers to be the ones who benefit least from the added value. All the actors in the fishing network have a guaranteed revenue except for the fisher. An effort is also needed to limit fishing to a threshold that does not jeopardize the reproduction of the fish. **It is a question of no longer taking the ocean for an «inexhaustible mine» but finding a happy medium.**

**5-A COURAGEOUS revision of the fishing effort: YES to improved handling of quotas.**

The Mission of the Sea thinks it is necessary to take seriously the loss of thousands of tons of food that are thrown overboard or taken away from our markets, and to find an alternative to gradually put an end to this state of affairs. We recognize that the quota regime can be damaging as it is applied at times, but many fishers feel satisfied. To abolish the quotas is to put an end to the «relative stability» among all the State Members. This would endanger small-scale fishing which would thereby lose its « catch rights ». The system of « biological unemployment », which depends on the quotas, is not applied in all the countries of the Community, but it enables the fishers to accept a regulation of the fishing effort.

**The Mission of the Sea is not in favor of the ITQs (Individual Transferable Quotas) or the individual transferable fishing rights.**

It rejects the fact that this common good, the fishing resource, is subject to the logic of private property and market laws. We see what this brings about on land : the accumulation of riches by the richest and the lack of transmission to the future generations. The Mission of the Sea believes in the deep values of the small-scale

fishers : sharing catches, solidarity, fair distribution of the fishing effort, putting efforts and goods in common through the action of cooperatives, the transmission of skills, ships, and fishing places to the future generations. It is concerned by the rise in individualism and the loss of the «collective spirit» that was so beneficial to the fishers.

## **6-The Mission of the Sea is in favor of more consist forms of management and adheres to some objectives of the Green Book.**

- Reinforce sustainable fishing, forsake over fishing. – A preferential market for the fisheries run in a sustainable way. – An eco-systemic approach to managing the marine environment. –A powerful synergy between the different sectors of maritime activities (producers, aquaculturers, processors) as well as among the actors (scientists, politicians, NGOs) on the European, regional, national and local levels ... - Decision-making as close as possible to the fishers communities. – Get the fishers’ communities interested in scientific research and get the scientists interested in the fishers’ opinion. – Check information, regain the media’s confidence, gain credibility, do not allow just anything to be said and foster communication.

To these objectives, those of the fishers from other countries should be added, in particular those from the **Third World**. Just because someone pays does not mean that they should vandalize everything ; stop the corruption of the managerial classes, check where the money goes from the licenses, and favor the development of small-scale fishing.

### **Conclusion : Let us dare to believe in a solidarity-based future!**

The work framework has just been set up : the Great Maritime Regions. The Mission of the Sea works within the European network of the Apostleship of the Sea. For the purpose of supporting the fishers’ communities, it is ready to bring its contribution to the different RCCs (Regional Consultative Committees), in particular the South RCC, which connects the point of Finistère (Brittany) to the South of Spain and Portugal.

Regardless of our faith, our involvement in the maritime world and our degree of adherence to the European construction, it is up to all of us to continue to « **seek and unite with the paths of justice and dignity** ». These paths do not lead to the slow death of small-scale fishing but its survival. For this, it is necessary to give pride that has been lost back to the fishers and revitalize their energies. The Mission of the Sea believes in the power of the young people, the seafarers, their wives and skippers, the ones who risk their lives at sea today. It is with them that healthy change will be made..

*La Rochelle, November 19, 2009*

## **THE ABANDONMENT OF SHIPS AND CREWS by Domingo Gonzalez Joyanes**

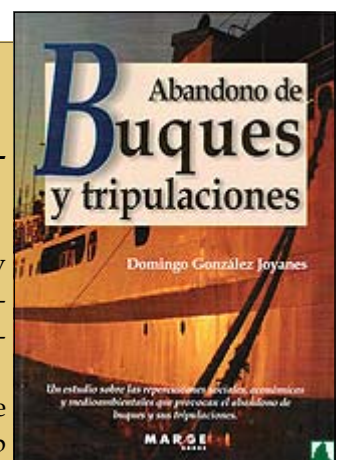
**A study on the social, economic and environmental repercussions caused by the abandonment of ships and their crews.**

*Abandono de buques y tripulaciones*, [The abandonment of ships and crews], a work directed by Domingo González Joyanes, is a new title in the collection “Biblioteca de Logística” published by Marge Books with the collaboration of the Center for Seafarers’ Rights and the Diocesan Delegation of the Apostleship of the Sea, Stella Maris.

The abandonment of ships under a flag of convenience and their crews in ports is a grave problem with great social, economic and environmental repercussions. This book takes up all the aspects involved in the abandonment of a ship and its crew, including the problems related to legal proceedings, and offers concrete cases and a study of all the agents involved.

The author carries out this study from a practical standpoint through his experience as Director of the Center for Seafarers’ Rights of the Apostleship of the Sea, a member of the International Labor Organization, and in drawing up agreements regarding the world of the sea.

This publication offers the professional in the maritime and port sector a reference tool for dealing with this kind of situations and contributing to their prevention. It is also a highly useful study for law professionals, the authorities and the public and private bodies that have to confront and handle this problem.





# ICMA

INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN MARITIME ASSOCIATION



ICMA was born on 29 August 1969. The occasion was the International Consultation on Services to Seafarers held in Rotterdam. Over 100 delegates from 52 Christian voluntary organisations, representing 44 seafarers' centres in 66 countries, attended together with representatives of secular agencies including the International Labour Organisation.

The opening ecumenical worship service was led by Rev Jan Willem Schokking, one of the port chaplains in Rotterdam. Quoting 1 Corinthians 13: 13, he set the tone for the encounter, reminding delegates that love is the greatest virtue.

The gathering was then addressed by Dr Emile Dieth of the International Council of Seamen's Agencies (later North American Maritime Ministry Association) who had been one of the instigators of the event. He laid down the challenge to the delegates to study the needs of seafarers and then to form strategies for the most appropriate action to meet those needs. The two tasks should be seen in the light of God's promises in Romans 8, 28-39.

The consultation culminated in a statement of "Conclusions and Resolutions" which was passed unanimously. A Working Committee was chosen to implement the resolutions. One of these was the formation of an international association of Christian voluntary organisations which was to be both consultative and representative.

The working committee included representatives of the following organisations: Apostleship of the Sea; British Sailors' Society (later Sailors' Society);

Dutch Seamen's Mission; German Seamen's Mission; International Council of Seamen's Agencies (later North American Maritime Ministry Association); Mission to Seamen (later Mission to Seafarers); Nordic Seamen's Mission; World Council of Churches.

On 29 August 1969, the Working Committee choose the title "International Christian Maritime Association". Thus was born one of the most successful organisations of the modern ecumenical movement and a significant voice in international seafarers' welfare. The Working Committee then proceeded to organise the first ICMA conference, to be held in 1972, at which a draft constitution would be presented.

\* \* \*

**Archbishop Antonio Maria Vegliò, President of the Pontifical Council  
for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People,  
sent the following letter of congratulations to Reverend Hennie La Grange**

Dear Reverend La Grange,

On the occasion of the 40th foundation anniversary I would like to congratulate the International Christian Maritime Association (ICMA) for the great service that has done to ecumenical cooperation and ministry.

Forty years ago, signs of ecumenism were difficult to find between our Church, other Churches and Ecclesial Communities. The founding of ICMA as a Christian association of charitable, non profit organizations was a small and humble beginning. All these organizations were related to Christian Communities recognized by the World Council of Churches or by the Vatican and engaged in promoting the well being of seafarers and their families, irrespective of creed, color, nationality or political opinion.

Today it can be safely claimed that there are few, if any, parallels to compare with the extent and range of the ecumenical co-operation in Christian ministry that ICMA offers to the people of the sea.

The Apostleship of the Sea (AOS), as one of the founding members of ICMA, considers important the ecumenical cooperation in the seafaring ministry while respecting one another's ecclesiastical discipline, theology and tradition. Today, more than ever, we are called to work together in the maritime industry to be prophetic and at the same time in cooperation with others maritime welfare agencies, to offer protection from injustices and exploitation of seafarers, fishers and their families.

Journeying together, in the past forty years, has sometimes not been easy but it has been an important witness to the words of Christ: "By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35).

Assuring you of my support for the ecumenical work of ICMA and of my prayers, I wish that ICMA will continue for many more years to bring on board of vessels in any port of the world the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Sincerely,

✠ Antonio Maria Vegliò  
President

## UNITED NATIONS ORGANISATION REPORT CITES ICMA'S RESOLUTION ON PIRACY

The Secretary General of the United Nations has cited ICMA's resolution on piracy in a report to the General Assembly of the United Nations Organisation.

ICMA Chairman, Douglas B. Stevenson, addressed the Meeting of States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea last June at UN Headquarters in New York. Douglas Stevenson called attention to the need to provide for seafarers who have been affected by piracy. He highlighted the ICMA resolution in his speech, and provided copies to the delegates and the UN Secretariat.

ICMA has since learned that ICMA's resolution on piracy has been highlighted by the UN Secretary-general in his report to the UN General Assembly. Paragraph 125 of report A/64/66/Add. 1 states:



« The International Christian Maritime Association has adopted a resolution urging States and international bodies, including ILO and IMO, to work together to establish a resource centre for shipowners, seafarers and fishers on the availability of specialized counselling, medical care and other appropriate services for victims of piracy and armed robbery at sea ».



### IMO GIVES SWIFT SUPPORT TO ANTI-PIRACY RESOLUTION



The 26th session of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) assembly has adopted on December 2 a resolution on piracy and armed robbery against ships in waters off the coast of Somalia, which, was taken on November 30 by the United Nations Security Council (through resolution 1897 (2009), among other things, it condemns and deplors all acts of piracy and armed robbery against ships, irrespective of where such acts have occurred or may occur.

The new resolution welcomes the decision, to renew, for a period of 12 months, its previous authorizations for states and regional organizations cooperating with the Somalia Transitional Federal Government (TFG) to enter Somalia's territorial waters and use all necessary means to fight piracy and armed robbery at sea off the Somali coast, provided advance notification was given by the TFG to the United Nations Secretary-General.

The IMO Assembly resolution (A.1026(26)) supports the Security Council resolution by appealing to all parties that may be able to assist, to take action (within the provisions of international law) to ensure that all acts or attempted acts of piracy and armed robbery against ships are stopped and any plans for committing such acts are curtailed; and that hijacked ships and any persons on board are immediately and unconditionally released and that no harm is caused to them.

The assembly also adopted the revised Code of Practice for the Investigation of the Crimes of Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships, updating the Code of Practice adopted by resolution A.922(22) in 2001.

### THE BIG BUSINESS OF «MERCENARIES»

If the pirates make money thanks to the West, in the West there are those who make money thanks to the pirates: they are the private security companies to whose protection ship owners often entrust their ships. This happens in all the seas, but especially in the Gulf of Aden where 20,000 oil tankers and various merchant ships transit each year, from 80 to 100 ships a day. For the modern buccaneers, it is a paradise of temptations. And down there, when the frigates of the individual States or the European Union do not come to impose the law, the contractors arrive, as they are called in America, the mercenaries of the oceans. They are former military men (especially British, American and Israeli) who are well armed, well trained and very well paid. Sometimes they are small teams of a few men assigned to the ships and confused among the crew. Sometimes they are real mini-armies even equipped with light helicopters in addition to very fast boats. From the base of the Fifth American Fleet in Bahrain, ship owners are openly encouraged to request the services of these private contractors. The most famous contractors refer to three agencies: the American Blackwater Worldwide, which has already been investigated in Iraq for the alleged killing of civilians; the British Aegis, which for years has evaluated "the risk factors in the areas of the world for the purpose of war insurance" for Lloyds of London; and the Hollow Point Protective Services, based in Mississippi, which boasts "having received one of the only two licenses for maritime protection issued by Yemen". It offers "8 protection teams in the Gulf of Aden", or "4 advanced strategic bases in the same region".

The contractors cost a fortune, even if the ship owners are very careful to not let any figures be known, but those who spend more for better protection count on saving on the insurance policies and, of course, the failure to seize the ship. This is what the ship owner of the "Melody" did. Last April, this Italian cruise ship with 1000 passengers and a 500 man crew on board was attacked in the Indian Ocean and hit with a shower of bullets. But just as the stampede was about to succeed, someone answered the fire with automatic arms and a violent stream of water canons. They were Israeli contractors hidden on board from departure, indistinguishable from the other seafarers. The "Melody" was saved and the pirates gave up the attack. They probably made up for it a few hours or days later.

L.Off. Corriere della Sera, Thursday, October 15, 2009

# CRUISES ON CARGO SHIPS

*To the South Seas, the Norwegian fiords or even the Far East, in a double cabin at table with the crew with a set menu.*

(Excerpt from Repubblica.it, July 14, 2009)



... By now there are many who choose to travel on a ship mainly to make contact with the idea of navigation. The most concrete way to do this if you not a seafarer is to embark on a cargo ship where the center of the captain's and crew's attention is the freight, and the structure of the ship, the timetables and the course are built around the freight. Of course, not all cargo ships accept passengers, but this kind of cruise has started to spread more and more in the past thirty years for the many people who choose responsible tourism.

Hundreds of ships of this kind all over the world have chosen to host passengers over the course of their voyage, a voyage that conditions the duration of the vacation and not the other way around. Ten days can become eight or twelve, depending on the various factors which are mainly the loading or unloading of freight... Among the leaders of these companies there is the Italian Grimaldi which offers hospitality on its ships headed for Greece, Turkey and the Middle East, but also Northern Europe, South America and West Africa.

On these ships, you eat with all the others and usually rather early. If you miss breakfast you have to wait for lunch, but around noon the seafarers get rather hungry. There is no problem with an embarrassingly wide choice of what to eat because there is none: the cook decides the day's menu and if you don't like something, well, you have to bear with it. The voy-

age described is one of the shortest and lasts 13 days, but the company makes it a point to specify "approximately" because a cargo ship has to serve those who ship freight...

The liner headed for South America leaves from Hamburg, stops at Tillbury (G.B), Antwerp, Le Havre, Bilbao, Casablanca, Dakar, Conakry and Freetown, and then goes on to the Atlantic: Salvador de Bahia, Vitoria, Rio de Janeiro, Zarate in Argentina, Buenos Aires, Montevideo, then back to Brazil and Dakar again, and [after two months] Europe.

If the voyage on a cargo ship seduces us, we might decide on some even more exotic destinations, for example, the Antilles where the ships' voyages are frequent and tried and tested because they have to provide the exchange of merchandise with territories that are far-off but still European from an administrative viewpoint. This is the case of the French Cgm which travels to the French Antilles, Fort-de-France, the capital of Martinique, or Point-à-Pitre in Guadalupe...Departure is from Le Havre and costs about a thousand Euros...

Freighter Cruises ... passes through the Suez Canal to reach Dubai and then goes straight on to Chiwan, near Hong Kong, Korea, different ports of China, including Xingang and Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia after which it returns home. It takes about seventy days and costs approximately a hundred Euros a day.

To spend less, you can leave with Eastern European companies,

for example, the Polish Pza, which is one of the world's largest navigation companies and asks no more than 20 Euros a day to embark on one of its many ships headed for Northern Europe, the Mediterranean, Africa or America.

Advice regarding these voyages not only for the prices but also for an atmosphere which, at least until a little while ago, was really "nautical" is given by the Frenchman Hugo Verlomme in his *Guide to voyages on cargo ships*. With its 2000 up-dated version, it is still the reference text today for anyone who wants to experience this emotion: *«A sea voyage is a voyage out of time. On land people are always complaining that they do not have time at their disposal. At sea we lose our reference points [...] We are overtaken by a kind of fullness in contrast to what normally happens on land».*

In Europe, there is a spectacular 12-day itinerary through the Norwegian fiords which has fatally attracted so many tourists that it convinced the Hurtigruten company to plan an almost daily departure from Bergen. The whole thing costs about 1,400 Euros, but there are also shorter 5 to 7 day trips that cost less.

... The postal ship Aranui only serves Tahiti and departs from Papeete: 15 days on the ship that connects the Marchei and the Tuamotu islands to the rest of the world among the land, seas and people painted by Gauguin ...

# THE SEAFARERS' WIVES SPEAK OUT

*They call for equality with the families on land in their family and social life*

(Boga, 2009, n. 17, excerpts)

## HOW DOES FAMILY AND SOCIAL LIFE EVOLVE?

**MARÍA:** In family and social life, we appear to be from another dimension because we have to decide and act alone in good times and in bad: sickness, studies, permission for our children to go out... getting involved with other families when there are parties ...

**CONCHITA:** I think there are two different family and social lives: an extraordinary one when your husband is there and another more difficult one when he is not. Sometimes it seems complicated to know which one is your real life. In the case of a seafarer's wife, all the burdens falls on her. Her decisions are not applauded by anyone, "It was what I had to do", but her mistakes are always reproached, "I wouldn't have done it like that".

As to social life, I have to say that I live surrounded by people "of the land," and the women friends I have do not know what loneliness is or the responsibility that is required. They have no idea what it is to live without having a partner, a friend, a confident, someone who, with just a look, makes the daily struggle

Interest in the theme of equality among the fishers' wives was the reason for starting a dialogue and making their opinions known. A questionnaire was used as the basis for describing their sentiments and evaluating the situation of equality in reference to their family life.

worthwhile.

**MODESTA:** This life takes place without the father's presence, and it is not easy at all for the children, who miss him and come to feel a little different from the other children because their report cards are always signed by mother and it is always mother who talks to the teachers and professors. When they are growing up, we usually keep our children very close to us because we are alone and they feel different again because mother says: "Father is at sea and if something happens, I am the only one responsible and I do not want any criticism when your father comes back".

**ELISA:** We are always alone. Reference to other couples is not useful. A seafarer's wife thinks and decides alone. Socially, if you are lucky and have contact with women who are living your same situation, then you have a social life that is normal on the average; otherwise, your life is limited to the home, work... Since your husband is not there, you are not invited. You take

care of strictly family matters, for example, the children's social events.

## WHAT VALUES AND ATTRIBUTES NEED TO BE DEVELOPED?

**ELISA:** Courage in order to give birth without his presence and raise your children thinking that your husband is at sea and you have to act alone. Courage in the face of illness, the death of loved ones, raising your children and taking care of your elderly family members. Composure is needed because no matter what happens, you cannot lose your calm. You are alone in the home, you have to transmit confidence, stability and hide problems or make them smaller. You have to make your children understand that their father has a different position or job than other fathers who work on land. The mother is the bridge between the children and the father.

**CONCHITA:** Each and every one of the values which, in a family "of the land", are taken on by the two members of the couple, but instead they are incorporated in one person, the woman: illnesses, economic problems, the children's problems, tasks of all kinds from which all the attributes come: woman-economist, woman-doctor, woman-mother, woman-father, etc., except for the most important one: woman-wife.

**MARÍA:** The values are high. Courage to face the professors, doctors, the family, and financial, economic and bureaucratic decisions. You also need bravery and boldness because sometimes you feel rejected, or you are not invited to family ceremonies and events.

**MODESTA:** I think that the first value we must have is when we decide to marry a seafarer because we should think that we are always going to be alone for everything: raising the children, illness, making right or wrong decisions alone.

It is not easy to run the economy in these homes either, because the trip has only been liquidated for a new years now. Before my husband would go out to sea on 6-7 month trips and the firm would send an advance 35 days after the boat left and then every month, and after 15 or 20 days on land they would compensate for the trip.

## IS THE FUNCTION OF SEAFARER'S WIFE WELL ACCEPTED, RESPECTED AND VALUED?

**CONCHITA:** Our functions are not valued. The reasons? The children consider it routine that their mother is there

for everything. This has been their everyday life from the time they were born, and so it seems to them that the mother-father is the most normal thing in the world. Our husbands? My husband always tells me that I am like the machine on his boat: if it stops, the boat sinks. What they do not realize is that we are not machines. We cry, we laugh, but yes, I think they value us, even if sometimes it is hard for them to accept it.

**MARÍA:** No, and much less. When you face up and fight, they call you "bossy" Then they say, "Her husband is a saint. They are more like witches; all they need is a broom." They also say that you are always on a honeymoon. But they do not know that we give birth alone and that our husbands' miss their children's first smile, first guest, first word, when they start to read...

**MODESTA:** I think our function is not valued by our



husbands because they have a very hard life locked up on a boat in small quarters with no comforts and work 16 to 18 hours a day. So they think that running the house, the economy, and the children's upbringing means staying on the sofa all day looking at TV. And the women whose husbands work on land do not value our function either because they say that after each trip we are on a honeymoon, but the women who stretch out their arms and find their husbands by their side do not know what loneliness is. Also, there are those who think that our husbands earn a lot of money and that we can afford luxuries which they cannot, whereas the greatest luxury is to share everyday experiences.

### **WHAT EFFECT DOES THE THEME OF EQUALITY HAVE FROM THE MAN-WOMAN AND THE FAMILY STANDPOINT?**

**CONCHITA:** Equality, what does it mean? What do they suppose we are saying or asking for when we cry out for equality? When our husbands go to sea, they leave us at home with all the responsibility this entails, and they leave us full power to direct our lives, our children's and even theirs. Equality? We know that this is not what we have

to ask for because we have always had it. We are and have been EVERYTHING inside and outside the family by taking on the problems that everyday life presents as the women we are and as men, when necessary. Is there room for more equality? Don't let them talk about feminism to us who carry the weight of everything because I will answer: "The equality I want is that of woman-woman (woman-wife of a seafarer- woman-wife on land), family of the sea-family of the land".

**MARÍA:** We, the seafarers' wives, are equal because our husbands are constantly over the waves for 4, 6, 7, 8 months and more. We also recognize that they value us because they know that even if they are not at home, the family works well.

**MODESTA:** It seems to me that women with the same studies as a man and the same ability in her job should have the same money and not be discriminated against. However, I think that in the family women have lost out because work outside the home forces her to leave her children with other people and they are not brought up in the same way. For me, to have equality with my husband, I would have to embark but the sea frightens me very much, whereas my husband is not very good at housework because he has always been on board a ship.

### **IS YOUR SELF-ESTEEM AS A SEAFARER'S WIFE HIGH, LOW OR NORMAL?**

**CONCHITA:** I think that self-esteem, in this case, is a rather abstract concept. Let's say that I value myself very much as a person-mother-wife, but the setbacks that come up in everyday life put my abilities up for question at times. However, I always try to have two oars in this life: love and humor.

**ELISA:** My self-esteem is normal.

**MARÍA:** Our self-esteem is rather high because there are always difficult situations and you have to be consistent with yourself because if the children see that you vacillate, that's not good.

**MODESTA:** Our self-esteem is high because we need it to cope with the problems that come up for us every day: e.g., encouraging our children in their studies and not letting them go downhill, and it is the same for the difficulties in life. It is also high because we have had to deal with the employers when 40 days passed and they did not give us the advance on the first month; or when we went with the children to the doctor and found out we were not on the Social Security list and had to denounce the fraud regarding the contributions; and now that my husband is retired, we continue to have very high self esteem to show them that if we were able to run the house alone for 35 years, we know how to run it now too.

## STAR OF THE SEA AWARD

At the 2008 AOS USA Winter Administrative Board meeting, the board chose to bestow its highest honor on our good friend, Msgr. Jacques Harel. At the Annual Meeting in New Orleans, we announced to those attending that Msgr. Jacques would be the recipient, and invited those attending to record video messages that would accompany the certificate.

Msgr. Jacques Harel receives the *Star of the Sea Award* from AOS USA. The Text of the Award:

*We, the Apostleship of the Sea of the United States of America, bestow our highest honor, the Star of the Sea Award to Msgr. Jacques Harel as an expression of our deep respect, honor and love.*

*By this award,, we recognize your decades of service to the People of the Sea, the Apostleship of the Sea, and the entire Christian ministry to seafarers. Your untiring commitment has eased the life of the average mariner, comforted the souls of those left behind, and created greater dialogue and harmony among maritime ministers of all Christian faiths. It is the prayer of the Apostleship of the Sea of the United States of America that you have many blessed years of good health, while continuing to serve your brothers and sisters in Mauritius. Godspeed and God's peace be with you.*

Msgr. Jacques' Response:

My dear Friends of AOS-USA.

Today I received by post the beautiful award that you have given me: *The Star of the Sea Award*. I am deeply touched by this mark of your esteem and affection and I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart.

During all these years that we have worked together and collaborated, your friendship and support have meant a lot to me. I have also always admired and appreciated your commitment and professionalism in the pursuit of seafarer's welfare.

In the last ten years, in spite of the appearance of new threats, I sincerely believe that we have contributed, albeit modestly, to make the seafaring profession a better and safer place. Through our daily humble presence in the ports and in our centres, we have given testimony that Jesus through his Church cares about seafarers and their families.

I sincerely hope that we shall meet again. You will always be in my prayers. I hope that one day to welcome you in Mauritius, where at present I am ministering to a coastal parish with a lot of fishing families and activities.

May Our Lady Star of the Sea continue to guide us on our voyage and bring us to the safe haven that our Lord Jesus has prepared for us.

With warm regards and affection

Jacques Harel