



THE APOSTLESHIP OF THE SEA IS 90

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MESSAGE OF THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE 90TH ANNIVERSARY OF AOS FOUNDATION

THE BEGINNING

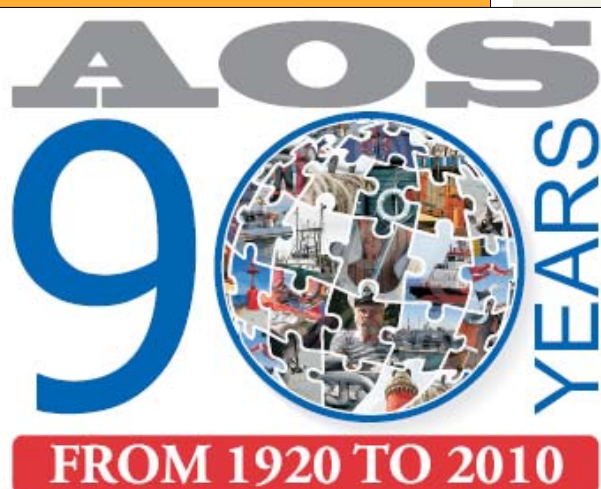
Already in the nineteen century there were several Church-related organizations offering scattered assistance to seafarers. The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul opened clubs for Catholic seafarers in Dublin, London, New Orleans, Philadelphia, Quebec and Sydney. On his part, Bishop John Baptist Scalabrini of Piacenza (Italy), was placing chaplains in the ports of Genoa and New York, and assigned his missionaries on board the vessels accompanying the thousands of European migrants seeking a better future in North and South America.

It was only in 1890 that the movement of the Apostleship of Prayer, through a series of articles published in their magazine, the *Messenger of the Sacred Heart*, invited its members to pray for Catholic seafarers and organized the sending of magazines and books to them. Unfortunately, after a few years, very little was left of these activities.

Shortly after the Great World War some members of the Apostleship of Prayer brought forward the idea of enrolling the seafarers themselves into the Apostolate and began visiting vessels in English ports and contacting seafarers.

THE APOSTLESHIP OF THE SEA (AOS)

Finally, on 4th October 1920, a small group of lay people (Mr. Peter F. Anson, a convert from the Anglican Church, Mr. Arthur Gannon and Bro. Daniel Shields S.J.) gathered in Glasgow and decided to unify these efforts among seafarers in a single work. Getting inspiration from the movement of the Apostleship of Prayer, they called it *Apostleship of the Sea* (AOS). On the same occasion, Peter F. Anson advanced the idea that became the seed for the development of AOS. Besides the religious aspect, he introduced the dimension of assistance to the seafarers. This area became the pur-



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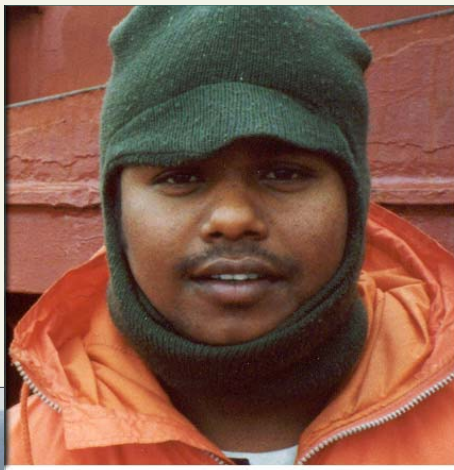
pose of AOS and later was spelled out in the first Constitution: *"to promote the spiritual, moral and social development of seafarers"*.

The AOS motto in the words of P. F. Anson was *"to reveal Christ to those who go down the sea in ships, and do business in great waters, with the object of bringing them to a deeper knowledge of Christ and his Church"* and the logo was an anchor intertwined with a lifesaver with, at the center, the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

In 1922 the Archbishop of Glasgow, as Chairman of AOS, submitted to the Holy See a copy of the Constitution. The Holy Father Pius XII responded with a letter addressed to P. F. Anson in which he blessed the *"work"* of religious assistance to the people of the sea and expressed his hope that the initiative would reach the coasts of the two hemispheres.

At that time in the world there were no more than 12 Catholic Centers in six countries and they were not connected to one another. Since then the Apostolate has grown to hundreds and hundreds of dedicated chaplains and volunteers of every culture, nationality or religion.

Throughout the years the succeeding Popes have recognized that this organization ecclesial value. First it was placed under *"the overall direction"* of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People of action and finally, through the *Motu Proprio Stella Maris* of Pope John Paul II (1997), it was included among the activities of the Apostolate.



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Looking back at its small beginning we rejoice for the great achievements obtained. In all the happenings we can see the providential hand of God who has inspired and provided vision to this Apostolate that on this day – 4th October – while celebrating its 90 years of foundation is called to look back to respond to the challenges ahead.

Prayer was the creative intuition at the origin of AOS and has supported it since then: members and supporters were invited to offer prayers for seafarers, fishers and their families, for the port chaplains, ships visitors and volunteers. Religious communities even *"adopted"* ports to guarantee to AOS the constant help of prayer. It is to prayer that we should attribute the rapid development of this apostolic *"Work"*.

I would like to quote Mr. A. Gannon, the General Secretary of AOS, who said the following at the International Conference held in Rome in 1958: *"Several founders of this movement have been mentioned. I would like to add here that without the prayers, offerings and the individual assistance of many thousands of members (especially religious in a great number*

of convents) the wonderful development of AOS in such a short time would not have been possible. Also they are regarded as founders".

LOOKING AHEAD

This year when the *International Maritime Organization (IMO) Council* has proclaimed the *"Year of Seafarer"* and on this day, while we are celebrating the 90th anniversary of the foundation of AOS, we are called to reflect on the basic and important elements of our ministry, to support and encourage the ongoing apostolate around the world, and to embark on a journey of renewal and innovation to develop new pastoral strategies and to improve the AOS structure in order to effectively continue the *Work of the Maritime Apostolate* in the years to come. This is a considerable undertaking which calls for the contribution of each one of us.

Prayer

It is important to rediscover and plunge the roots of our ministry in prayer. Only in it we will find the strength to climb the gangways of all the ships docking in the ports. Prayer will create unity among seafarers of different nationalities and beliefs. Prayer will suggest words of encouragement to distressed seafarers.

With its 90 years of experience and renewed enthusiasm, AOS can continue to sail the oceans of the world, remaining faithful to the initial prophetic intuition to care for the spiritual and material needs of seafarers.

Prayer will provide inspiration and vision to respond to the new challenges brought by the changing maritime world, as well as consolation in moments of difficulty and failure. Prayer will bring AOS close to the people we are called to serve.

Ships visit

The ships' ever shorter stops, the new safety laws and the distance from the ports to the city greatly limit the opportunities to go ashore. So today, more than ever, visits to the ships are a priority. They make it possible to meet the seafarers, listen to them and not leave them alone in a port which they often do not know, to be an expression of concrete solidarity and, above all, to give attention to the person, his life and work. Without the visits to the ships, the local Church would not exist for the seafarers.

However, a visit cannot be improvised. It calls for chaplains and pastoral workers who are prepared and trained: that is, aware of the particular forms of fragility of the people they will meet and the difficulties they will encounter even before they go aboard. For this, formation courses are especially important to prepare the chaplains and volunteers for a better professional level in order to be present pastorally in this specific environment and for the credibility of the Apostleship of the Sea. The "Manual of the Apostleship of the Sea for Chaplains and Pastoral Workers" (2008), offers a broad and valuable range of indications in this regard.

Therefore, as at the origin of our Apostolate, chaplains and volunteers are called to reach out to the crews to make visible the love of Christ and the concern of the Church for the material and spiritual welfare of seafarers and fishers.

The local Church

Maritime pastoral care must be marked by concern for hospitality and welcome in the name of the local Christian community. Seafarers as a professional group have always been marginalized. Therefore, the local Church needs to educate her faithful to consider them persons with a job that often keeps them separated from their family and ecclesial community.

The dioceses and parishes that look on to the sea are thus called to an "ordinary pastoral commitment" to the people of the sea. The future of maritime pastoral care can no longer be the work of individuals, priests or laypersons, but must develop into making the entire people of God responsible. In this sense, the parishes that are bridge communities between the reality of the sea and that of the land will be fundamental.



The Bishops' Conferences, the Bishop Promoters and the National Directors have the responsibility to "foster the *Work of the Maritime Apostolate*" (*Stella Maris*, Art. IX, 1), building awareness and persevering, also through the celebration of the "Sunday of the Sea", so that the Christian communities will become aware of this presence which calls for friendship and hospitality. The pastoral care of seafarers, fishers and their families should become more and more an integral part of the parish pastoral responsibility.

Lay involvement

The role of the laity is important in organizing and carrying out this pastoral care. The Apostleship of the Sea began as a movement of generous volunteer lay persons animated by missionary zeal. The Apostolic Letter *Stella Maris* specifies that a pastoral worker is someone who "assists the chaplain and, in accordance with the law, substitutes for the chaplain in matters which do not require the ministerial priesthood" (*Stella Maris*, Art. VIII).

Today the Apostleship of the Sea can rely on a number of lay people who have important responsibilities in our organization: Regional Coordinators and National Directors to whom should be added the pastoral workers who offer their services together with the chaplains. In the AOS we all work together: bishops, priests, deacons and laypersons, with each one responsible for the Church's mission by virtue of baptism.

Nowadays with the decreasing number of priests and consecrated people involved in the ministry, AOS should return to its origins and invite more lay people with specific qualifications (managers, drivers, lawyers, counselors, etc.) to be at the service and respond creatively to the needs of the people of the sea.

In this context, the *Manual for Chaplains and Pastoral Workers of the Apostleship of the Sea* is a valuable instrument for formation and for a common direction and vision.

A common effort

If maritime pastoral care wants to be effective and adequate it will have to develop and keep up good relations with all the partners in the sector: governmental authorities and the maritime administration, ship owners and employers, workers and labor unions, NGOs and protagonists of the other Churches and ecclesial Communities. Given the globalized character of this apostolate and the international nature of the environment in which it operates, it is essential to work in a network and continue to strengthen ties through communication, dialogue, exchanges and reciprocal aid.

A common effort could also prove to be especially useful in moments of crisis in order to help the crew members who suffer prolonged psychological effects from the more and more frequent pirate attacks while their families are also traumatized.

Moreover, the depletion of the fish resources, the destruction of the coastal areas and the pollution of the oceans challenge all of us as persons and as a community. The Apostleship of the Sea is thus called to cooperate with its partners to build responsible awareness, which is translated into consistent decisions to protect the marine environment.

In commemorating the 90th anniversary of its foundation and in celebrating the “Year of the Seafarer”, the Apostleship of the Sea makes an appeal to all the States to ratify as soon as possible the 2006 Convention on Maritime Labor and the 2007 Convention on Work in Fishing, fundamental instruments for improving the working and living conditions of seafarers and fishers. In this regard, it will be useful to organize meetings and seminars to present, explain and inform the authorities, seafarers, fishers and their organizations about the objectives and contents of the two Conventions.

CONCLUSION

Looking at the challenges ahead, it seems that the Apostleship of the Sea may face some rough sailing. Therefore, with its 90 years of experience and renewed enthusiasm, AOS can continue to sail the oceans of the world, remaining faithful to the initial prophetic intuition to care for the spiritual and material needs of seafarers.

We feel the duty to express a deep sentiment of gratitude once again to the Venerable Pope John Paul II for the Apostolic Letter “*Stella Maris*”, which continues to be a strong reference point for our work and a reminder to our communities to give witness to their faith and charity to all the people of the sea.

Let us entrust our work to the Blessed Virgin Mary, *Stella Maris*, ‘port of salvation’ for every man and all humanity, praying that in the maritime world, AOS will continue to be a beacon of hope and a secure port for seafarers, fishers and their families.

✠ Antonio Maria Vegliò
President

Fr. Gabriele Bentoglio
Under-Secretary



EUROPEAN REGIONAL MEETING FOR THE 90TH ANNIVERSARY OF FOUNDATION OF THE APOSTLESHIP OF THE SEA

(Glasgow, 18-20 october 2010)



The European regional meeting took place in Glasgow from 18th to 21st October 2010, to celebrate the 90th anniversary of the Apostleship of the Sea. It was held at the Xaverian Lanarkshire Global Education Center (known as 'Conforti Center'), Coatbridge, located halfway between Glasgow and Edinburgh.

There were 27 participants (most of which national directors) of 13 countries. Fr. Bruno Ciceri and Mrs. Antonella Farina attended representing the Apostleship of the Sea International of the Pontifical Council. Also present were Msgr. Jacques Harel, previous responsible of the AOS at the Diocese, and Mr. Terry Withfield, AOS Regional Coordinator for the Indian Ocean.

The meeting began on the evening of the 18th October, with the celebration of Vespers presided by H.E. Msgr. Peter Moran, Bishop of Aberdeen and AOS Episcopal Promoter for Scotland.

On Tuesday 19th October, after the lauds, Fr. Edward Pracz, Regional Coordinator for Europe, welcomed the participants and stressed the importance of this event which was organized with some difficulty.

Then Fr. Bruno Ciceri read the message from the President of the Pontifical Council, Archbishop Antonio Maria Vegliò, titled *Looking at the past, moving in to the future*. The Prelate was unable to attend because occupied with the work of the Special Assembly



for the Middle East of the Synod of Bishops. The message was particularly well received by the participants and object of discussion during the workshops.

He was followed by Mr. Soy Neil Keith, ITF Inspector for Scotland, which presented the situation of the maritime world, highlighting the existence of many abuses. He also stressed the cooperation of AOS with other organizations, that often lead to report these cases and to the positive resolution of it.

Fr. Giacomo Martino, AOS National Director for Italy, presenting how the seafarers often use these new technologies (note/net book, smart phones, iphones, etc.), spoke about the potentials of the web in facilitating the work of coordination both at national and international level, monitoring the ships movements and the dissemination of important information to the seafarers (news service, addresses of Stella Maris Centres, etc.). The new technology also facilitates direct communication between the seafarer and his family, with other seafarers and between AOS Centres, seafarers and their families.

In the afternoon the workshops took place where, on the basis of the presentations in the morning, some priorities were identified for a future work plan of AOS, both at national and European level. Among these were underlined the followings:

- the need for greater visibility for the Apostleship of the Sea both at ecclesial and social level;
- the need to 'advertise' the work done by our Centres;
- plan ahead at national and regional level by focusing resources in those ports that will be the key port of maritime trade;
- use of new technologies.

Late in the afternoon the participants travelled in Glasgow where, in the Church of Saint Aloysius, H.E. Msgr. Peter Moran presided over the solemn con-

celebration for the 90th anniversary of foundation of AOS. In his homily, the Prelate stressed the importance of the maritime apostolate and of the pastoral responsibility to continue this work in the context of the maritime world today. Then, a refreshment was offered in the parish hall attended also by the parishioners.

On the morning of 20th October, Fr. Robert Miller, researcher and historian of AOS, remarked that even before the 1920 inside the Church there had been several attempts to develop a ministry for seafarers and how the current AOS had its origin from the Apostleship of Prayer. Soon after, Fr. Pracz offered an overview of the presence of AOS in Europe by highlighting the potentials, the difficulties and the challenges for the future.

The meeting was concluded by the Holy Mass presided by H.E. Msgr. Joseph Devine, Bishop of Motherwell, Diocese that hosted the meeting.

In the afternoon, the participants travelled to Irving, a small village on the Atlantic, where they visited the local Maritime Museum and the late 19th century houses of the shipyard workers'. The day after the participants left for their country.

* * *

All participants expressed full satisfaction with the organization and the opportunities offered by the house where they stayed. Without doubt the continued presence of the Bishop Promoter of Scotland, Msgr. Peter Moran, offered a strong encouragement and helped to create a very familiar atmosphere. The presence of the representatives of the Pontifical Council was much appreciated. Despite the small number, participants had the opportunity to strengthen their friendship and exchange experiences in a more personal and deep level.

A special thank you goes to:

- Fr. Edward Pracz, for his untiring work of coordination at European level and the economic support that had made the realization of the meeting possible.
- AOS-GB, for the help offered in the organization, despite the objective difficulties (distance from London and lack of a local team).
- Deacon Brian Kilkerr and Mr. Richard Haggarty for their availability to transport participants from and to the airports of Glasgow and Edinburgh.

For the first time in the history of modern justice

Pirates under trial in the Court of Rotterdam

A Court in Rotterdam has sentenced for attempted hijacking to five years in jail the Somali pirates who in January 2009 who tried a clumsily attack to the *Samanvolu* an Netherlands Antilles registered freighter that was traveling in the Gulf of Aden. This is the first trial in modern times in Europe for piracy. The judges decided to sentence even if the crew did not testify in court, providing only written evidence; the pirates when were arrested throw the guns overboard, however, it prevailed the evidence that such weapons were used by them. It is an important precedent, for the purpose of establishing the necessary evidences to ensure the prosecution and arrest. The five buccaneers, who at the opening of the trial has pleaded innocent, had admitted of being pirates.

Also because they could not deny the obvious: fully armed with Kalashnikovs and anti-tank missile neared the ship opening fire. At that point the Turkish crew of the *Samanyolu* responded by firing rockets and Molotov cocktails. The boat burnt and the pirates were rescued by a Danish frigate promptly alerted. The Somalis told the Court that they were forced to become pirates: because as poor fishermen could no longer support their families, but they denied plans to attack the freighter, telling of being drifting in the sea for days after an engine failure.

Very different the story of the *Samanvolu* crew that for a year are suffering with serious psychological consequences: "I cannot sleep at night, said to a Dutch newspaper, one of the seafarer Deniz Ivdik, because I suffer from attacks of panic". The Director of INTERTANKO Marine Capt. Howard Snaith applauds to the sentence: "It show – he said – the will of a European nation to adhere to its obligations under international law and bring the pirates to justice. Serious aggravating are and will be the possession of rifles and grenades by those claiming to be fishers in waters infested by pirates. We therefore wish that this trial – concluded Snaith – become an example, leading to a successful prosecutions.

From Vita e Mare, **YEAR XLIV - N. 7-8 - July-August 2010**





Message of Archbishop Antonio Maria Vegliò at the AOS European Meeting

(Glasgow, 18th-20th October 2010)

Dear friends,

I convey my heartfelt thanks to Fr. Edward Pracz, the European Regional Coordinator, for inviting me to attend this celebration. Unfortunately my presence at the Special Assembly for the Middle East of the Synod of Bishops, held in Rome in these days, prevents me to be physically here. However, I am delighted to address to you all this message through the Reverend Fr. Bruno Ciceri and Mrs. Antonella Farina, who represent myself and the Pontifical Council at this important Meeting.

You are gathered in this historical city of Glasgow to celebrate a providential event. It was here in fact that on the 4th October 1920 *a small band of devoted helpers* of whom we know only three names (Peter F. Anson, an Anglican convert, Mr. Arthur Gannon and Bro. Daniel Shields S.J.) reorganized the Sailor's Branch of the Apostleship of Prayer into the Apostleship of the Sea (AOS) because they wanted *"to reveal Christ to those who go down the sea in ships, and do business in great waters, with the object of bringing them to a deeper knowledge of Christ and his Church"*.

The now world-famous badge, – an anchor intertwined with a lifesaver and, at the center, the Sacred Heart of Jesus – was designed by Peter F. Anson himself on the cliffs of Caldey Island on 29th September 1920.

The first Constitutions, entirely international in character, received the blessing and approval of Pope Pius XI in April 1922, with the invitation to develop this Apostolate all over the world.

Nothing has changed but everything is new. As AOS we are called to fulfill our mission and to respond to the old needs of the seafarers in new ways.

Today we can say without mistake, that the seed planted ninety years ago is like a mustard seed that has grown in a majestic tree that has brought great reliefs and benefits to the life of thousands seafarers in many ports of the world.

For this reason, together with you I would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Lord who, with his wisdom and providential hand, has inspired and guided the development of this pastoral work that, under *"the overall direction"* of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, continues to serve the people of the sea.

Looking at the context in which the AOS was born and operated at the beginning and considering the maritime industry today, we can see that the old steam powered vessels have been replaced with huge and reliable, computer maneuvered ships. The speed with which they sail from one port to another has made the world much smaller, the loading and unloading of cargos in many ports is fast and highly mechanized, but the reality of life of the seafarers has remained the same of ninety years ago: the desire to come ashore, to contact their families, to speak with their loved ones, to read news about their country, the need of a human contact and the protection from exploitation, criminalization and abuses. Nothing has changed but everything is new. As AOS we are called to fulfill our mission and to respond to the old needs of the seafarers in new ways.

If we look ahead, outside the calm waters of our acquired self-confidence and security, we realize that AOS is facing several challenges while sailing towards the celebration of the Centennial.

Where to minister?

As the number of AOS priests and volunteers is declining and it is impossible to be present in all the ports, we must select few places where to have a qualified presence. While we must try to recruit new members with specific qualifications for an effective service to the people of the sea, it is also necessary that, in every region and nation, a serious reflection be made in trying to identify which are the ports that in the next 15/20 years will acquire an important and strategic position for the maritime industry. The local Church then should make an effort to establish a presence investing in money and personnel to be a beacon of light and a sign of hope in the dock.

Drop in centers and ship visit

If in the past it was indispensable to build huge Centers to provide entertainment, accommodation and other facilities for crews that stayed in port several days, now the ports are far away from the cities and there is a fast turnaround of vessels. Therefore it is necessary more than ever to invest in small "drop in" centers within the limits of the port, with Information Technology's (IT) facilities available for the crews to use any time. However ship visit remains our priority as it was at the beginning of the Apostolate and it

should be carried out regularly with people who have received specific training.

Professional formation

The pioneers of AOS, animated by great zeal and enthusiasm, used to climb gangways without many requirements. Today, given the governments regulations, the ISPS Code security rules and our desire to offer better spiritual and material assistance, AOS chaplains and volunteers must be professionally prepared with specific training courses that will give the necessary tools to face any emergency while in the port, on board and with the seafarers.

It is to be hoped that AOS seminars or courses be organized not just at regional level but more at local levels in order to have a specific formation. New threats such as piracy, have emerged, opening for us a new field of intervention in assisting the families of abducted seafarers and the professional psychological help provided to them once released for a full recovery from this traumatic experience.

Cooperation and Ecumenism

In the new development of the maritime industry it is of fundamental importance that AOS be in constant dialogue with port authorities, immigration officers, ships agents, unions, etc. Where it exists AOS must be a member of the Port Welfare Committee (PWC). Where this is not yet constituted, AOS could take a lead in creating it, by gathering all the maritime organizations concerned with the welfare of the seafarers in a particular port.

Even though the Catholic AOS is the latest born among the Christian organizations working for the people of the sea, and often in the past chaplains and volunteers of different denominations have competed in getting crews to their own Centers, with the foundation of International Christian Maritime Association (ICMA) in 1969 things have changed.

In spite of the inevitable tensions, conflicts and misunderstanding that sometimes all of us are experiencing, we must continue to witness a spirit of ecumenism working together, sharing resources where it is possible, but without losing our specific identity and characteristics.

ITF-ST and other charities

Since its beginning, ITF-ST, together with other charities, has been a reliable and generous partner in providing AOS worldwide with funds to build Centers, buy minivans and cars, install telephone and computers and funding training of Chaplains and volunteers. We are very grateful for the substantial support received that has greatly facilitated our ministry and service to

the seafarers of all nationalities, religions and beliefs.

While we are inviting national AOS and chaplains to be more creative in their search for funds, at the same time we ask AOS Bishops Promoters and National Directors to be vigilant in managing donations and resources given specifically for the welfare of people of the sea.

Information Technology (IT)

Unfortunately it seems that the continuous development of means of communications (e-mail, cellular phones, twitter, etc.) is not proportional to the improvement in coordination and cooperation, as several Regional Coordinators complained about lack of communication.

Applying some of these new modern technology, such as a computerized ship visitor report, internet points, phone cards, electronic news, internet conference calls, etc., could facilitate and make our ministry more efficient.

Cruise ministry

If in the past the steamers were crossing the oceans transporting millions of migrants searching a better future in North and South America, nowadays huge cruise ships carry thousands of passengers to exotic and touristic places attended by crews of numerous nationalities. AOS in different countries has responded to this new reality by creating specific structures quite different in numbers of priests, style of ministry, and presence on board. While we are respecting the choices made by the national AOS, we feel that more cooperation and a better coordination is necessary in order to be recognized by the cruise industries as the unique and appropriate provider of qualified Catholic priests on board. However we should not forget what the *Manual for Chaplains and Pastoral Agents of AOS*, published in 2008 by our Pontifical Council, says: "*a Cruise ship Chaplain...cannot embark without special preparation and training. It is of the utmost importance that he should know the environment in which he is called to exercise his pastoral responsibilities*"(Part VII).

Qualifications and professional preparation of chaplains on board are essential and no longer an option within the ministry on cruise ships. Aside from the technical training required by the maritime regulations, all chaplains on board must receive specific formation to provide the best pastoral care possible and handle delicate and sometimes difficult situations not only for passengers but for crew as well.

Fishers

Fishers and their families have been traditionally part of the AOS pastoral care and in the AOS World Congress in Rio de Janeiro in 2002, a resolution with a specific commitment for fishers was inserted in the



final statement: *"An 'AOS Fishing Committee' should be constituted, comprised of AOS members working pastorally with fishers and in contact with their respective organizations at local, national and international levels".*

The adoption in June 2007 of the International Labour Office (ILO) Convention in Fishing should help AOS chaplains and volunteers to find for the Committee the cruising speed and the specific identity in continuing to promote fishers' welfare and dignity, campaign at the regional and national level for the ratification of the Convention that for sure will bring additional protection and benefits. Meetings, seminars or workshops should be organized to present, explain and inform government people, fishers and fishers' organizations on the structure and contents of the new Convention.

Local Church

The maritime industry is becoming more and more globalized and AOS has to follow this trend because it deals with people always on the move from one country to another. It is essential to work in a global network to reach out and accompany the people of the sea in their endless sailing, but at the same time it must be the local Church that has the responsibility to provide pastoral assistance by welcoming the stranger in their midst. Bishops' Conferences of coastal states and islands must *"see that people of the sea are provided abundantly with whatever is required to lead holy life"* (Motu Proprio *"Stella Maris"*, 1997).

Where it is feasible, chaplains (even deacons) should be assigned without any other responsibilities to offer the opportunities of an effective ministry, the boundaries of parishes must be enlarged to include port areas and docks. Lay people in particular should have the pos-

sibility to get involved in a variety of services that this Apostolate provides for seafarers and fishers. We can have people that manage centers or do ships visiting, drive vans or visit seafarers hospitalized or in prison, knit hats and gloves and do fundraising.

Prayers

We should remember that the first members of AOS were formed in the Apostleship of Prayer and their main trust was prayer. We should rediscover this distinctive characteristic of the Apostolate not only by gathering regularly in prayer with the volunteers, but also by organizing people to offer daily their prayers for the people of the sea and those who minister to them.

Conclusions

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Fr. Edward Pracz, the European Regional Coordinator, who with the support of Bishop Peter Moran, AOS Episcopal Promoter for Scotland, and the assistance of AOS Great Britain, was able to organize this celebration to remember the 90th years of foundation of the Apostleship of the Sea.

Many ships have been built in the ship yards of Glasgow, but the most fascinating is the Apostleship of the Sea that was launched ninety years ago. Several 'captains' have steered its course, it has faced storms and troubled waters, but it is still sailing.

We entrust the future of this Apostolate to Mary *'Star of the sea'*, that she may continue to guide all the AOS members in providing comfort, support and pastoral care to the people of the sea.

✠ Antonio Maria Vegliò, President

Fr. Gabriele Bentoglio, Under-Secretary



The first activity of Christ was an apostleship of the sea.

In the modern anxiety to go back to the well-springs of Christianity, no sight is more beautiful than that of the fishermen gathered around Christ who chooses from among them his Apostles, the first bishops and presbyters, and the disciples, the first laymen committed to the lay apostolate.

Reliving one of those wonderful scenes, we too, here and now, with the faith of Simon Peter, ask Jesus to let us walk over the waters - not to go in search of material wonders, but that we may reach Him across the seas and oceans, to bear witness in the maritime world which today as yesterday, repeats the invocation: 'Come, Lord Jesus' (Apoc. 22, 20)".

(Archbishop Emanuele Clarizio, Pro-President of the recently-founded Pontifical Commission for Migrants and Tourism, opening speech at the XV AOS World Congress held in Rome in 1972)

AN ECHO FROM THE PAST

"We see from the Gospels how much of Christ's life was spent on or near the sea, and they tell us also, with their striking simplicity, that it was from the waves that Jesus began his mission of Teacher and demonstrated his prerogative as a miracle-worker. Here we see, in all its aspects, the first germ of the pilgrim Church, with its hierarchy and its basic community. The shores of the Lake Genesareth, at that time called a sea, were the scene of the gathering of the first faithful, the boat was the first pulpit, the banks the first temple.

PARISH PRIEST AND CHAPLAIN OF THE SEA

Msgr. Jacques Harel

In all the years I spent at the ICMA and the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, the ministry and service to the people of the sea and their families was my priority pastoral choice. Since October 2008, I have been back in my diocese of origin, and so that makes two years since my Bishop appointed me as rector of a parish located on the northern coast of the country, the Republic of Mauritius. I put my anchor down here, and after these few months of experience I think I can say that there has been no break with my pastoral choice, but rather a continuity because the men and women of the sea are always part of my pastoral and personal horizon.

In fact, my parish is made up of six large villages on the northern coast of the island, with two main places of worship: the Church of Saint Michael and the Chapel dedicated to Mary Help of Christians. The people are very different: there are professional and small-scale fishers, expert stone-cutters and bricklayers, ship-fitters whose reputation has spread throughout the region, many workers employed by international hotels, expatriates, retired people as well as old families of landowners and planters. In general, the unemployment rate is low, but of course there are the usual disparities with misery and poverty alongside wealth and affluence.

The Christians live in peace and friendship together with their Hindu neighbors, and dialogue is carried out in a natural way on the occasion of religious feasts, pilgrimages or simply by sharing a neighbor's sorrows and joys.

In a multi-religious country like mine where Catholicism is in the minority, through the Apostleship of the Sea (AOS), which has always been on the cutting edge of ecumenism and interreligious dialogue and whose track record in this area is exemplary, we have enormous possibilities here in Mauritius to practice ecumenism "with our hearts and hands" (friendship and practical coop-

eration) and to give witness to one's faith.

The beaches and lagoons are very beautiful. The region has kept its marine character and the people have always lived looking to the sea: the days are cadenced by the rhythm of the seasons, the tides and the "good and bad weather". When the weather is bad, the fishers sit on the beach waiting for a moment of calm that will allow them to raise their sails, go out and get food for their families. So today I find myself confronted once again with the everyday problems of a community that depends on the sea for its survival and which, at the same time, is in complete transfor-

mation as it copes with tourism, the problems of modernity (globalization) and, for the professionals of the sea, the urgent need to adapt if they want to survive.



Among the Mauritian fishers we find the same character traits as elsewhere. Here a fisher is a great individualist. He has his professional secrets

which he guards jealously and will not reveal to anyone. He has problems with joining an association (cooperatives, sharing the same boat, etc.). He works on his own, at irregular hours and depends on the weather conditions, the tide, the season and the migration of fish. His income has its ups, which are rare, and its downs, which are more frequent, and so it hard for him to have a family budget and make plans. His job is dangerous: every year we have to report dramas at sea, people who disappeared or drowned. The work is hard: fishers work early in the morning and late at night, in the cold, wind and strong currents. It is exhausting to move the racks, trawling nets and fishing lines. Another source of concern is the depletion of stocks. Faced with this situation, a fisher is still forced to bring back fish, and so the temptation is great to go beyond the rules, to transgress the law and become liable to heavy fines or even imprisonment. For a long time the fishers community had a bad reputation because the rest of the people considered them violent, prone to alcoholism and irresponsible. Many fish-

ers cannot read or write and they are an easy prey for fish brokers and wholesalers.

To all this should be added the constant tension with the hoteliers and tourist operators who are encroaching more and more on a marine space that was reserved for the fishers from time immemorial. Today, for economic and political decision-makers, a fish in the lagoon is worth more than a fish on the table. The fishers are encouraged to recycle in tourism, sailing and yachting, underwater exploration or recreational fishing. Some do and they make out well in their new career, but others are incapable of doing so because they are too old or too proud and independent, and so they cannot get integrated into a structure and subject themselves to a discipline to which they have never been accustomed.

The fish farms and industrial fishing also make their lives hard. These new actors on the maritime scene also encroach on their territory. Besides being the first ones to pollute and threaten the environment, they consider traditional fishing a profession of the past that is completely obsolete and goes against progress. Instead, no activity is more ecological than traditional fishing which respects the environment and the cycle of nature by using fishing methods that give the fish a chance to reproduce and the stocks to build up again.

All of this does not prevent many fishers from going beyond the threshold of poverty in which they had found themselves for generations. Through formation and awareness-building and empowerment programs, they have become homeowners, bought their boats and fishing gear and managed to free themselves from the clutches of usurers and other brokers. Their children go to school and some even go to the university. Despite all this, the profession is still not highly regarded and most fishers would want their children to choose another occupation.

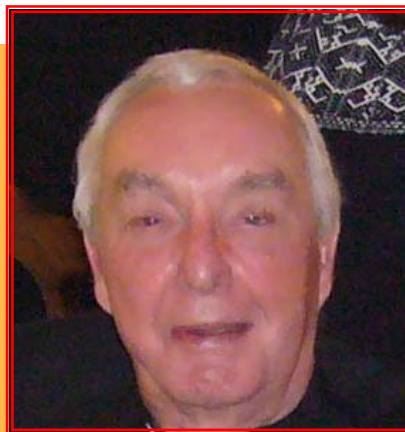
The harvest is great, and a great missionary field awaits us. Sometimes, however, we feel overwhelmed by the conflicts of interest, by situations in which the human person and his dignity come after the imperatives of the economy and profit and sometimes ecology too. We are bombarded with contradictory questions at times from all sides, and satisfying answers often elude us. But in all of this, we are comforted when we remember the spirituality of AOS which reminds the chaplains that whatever happens, we are not alone in our mission : Jesus precedes us and “is already aboard when we take the ladder of the ship’s gangway”.

The great opportunity for our Church at this time is that the laity, together with the priests, are protagonists of the mission. Today a pastoral project could not be understood or proposed in which the laity would be excluded or simply absent. It was the Second Vatican Council that opened the way to this cooperation and revolutionized our whole view of the mission. Through their baptism and vocation, the laity has the responsibility to bring the Good News. They are not there to help the priest or “do a service for him” because there is no other way to do it. Lay people are an integral part of the mission to which they too are called. To open up to the laity and give them confidence is to ensure that the Church will be open to the world, as the Council Fathers wanted, and will never close in on herself.

At a meeting in January 2010 on the theme, “Priests and laity in the mission”, Cardinal Stanislas Rylko, the President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, said: “Laypersons do not present themselves only as mere receivers of priests’ pastoral care, but also as their valuable and essential collaborators in the service of the Church’s evangelizing mission in the world...For priests, this collaboration between religious and laity implies that priests recognize the laity’s own identity. For laypersons, it calls for a lively sense of ecclesial belonging as well as the awareness of their co-responsibility and participation in the life and mission of the Church”.

As a priest, parish rector and chaplain of the Apostleship of the Sea, my pastoral priority now is to build a community together with my parishioners, to work for the unity and cohesion of all, and to set up the structures that will enable them to respond to their vocation. In co-responsibility with all these laypersons, I must take on the Church’s mission, which is to give witness that we are all called to build a more human, more just and more fraternal world. We will be able to humanize our environment and build a “new world order” to the extent that we, Jesus’ disciples, will be men and women capable of compassion, dialogue, kindness and tolerance, while always bearing in mind the Lord’s words, “*In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places*” (Jn 14:2. “No one is too small or too big to give and receive from others”, as Cardinal Jean Margéot used to say, who led the Church of Mauritius for half a century and passed away just a year ago (July 17, 2009). He also used to say, “If you have to err, let it always be on the side of compassion and charity, never on the side of injustice and intolerance”.

"On this 90th anniversary of the Apostleship of the Sea, I would like to pay tribute to the AOS and all its chaplains and volunteers around the world. I give thanks for the remarkable work they have done in all these years. Through their actions and the positions they have taken, they have given visibility to all these workers in the shadows that no one ever sees".



AOS 90th Anniversary of Foundation

So I thank Providence for allowing me to be in a vital Christian community and to live my priestly ministry by walking every day together with these responsible, committed lay persons, this part of the people of God who are my brothers and sisters in Christ. What a joy it is to meet each week with the assembled community to share the Word and the Eucharist, to celebrate Christmas and Easter together, to make the connection between the Gospel (the Beatitudes, the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son...) and life. I often discover in many parishioners hidden under an exterior of evangelical simplicity and great shyness, a thirst for God and an authentic spiritual life. They are more comfortable in a kind of popular religion. It is up to us, without ever taking the easy way out, to find the right, suitable words that will enable them to quench their thirst for God and his Word, and to gain confidence in themselves and go further.

In conclusion, on this 90th anniversary of the Apostleship of the Sea, I would like to pay tribute to the AOS and all its chaplains and volunteers around the world. I give thanks for the remarkable work they have done in all these years. Through their actions and the positions they have taken, they have given visibility to all these workers in the shadows that no one ever sees. They have given a voice to the voiceless and put into practice the Lord's commandment of preferential love for the poor. Through their presence in the ports and on ships and fishing boats, they have been the sign of the Lord's love and his Church for these sons and daughters of God who are so often disregarded.

We need the Apostleship of the Sea more than ever. Its mission is up to date, and through the intercession of Mary, the "Stella Maris", I hope the AOS will stay the course and "ad multos et felicissimos annos".

Msgr Jacques Harel

Grand-Gaube and Cap Malheureux

Republic of Mauritius

The Church in the maritime world



MSGR.
JAMES DILLENBURG

As a child I learned that the Catholic Church is both human and divine. I have been privileged to witness that truth while serving the AOS on every level: parish, diocesan, national, universal. A friend who had been port chaplain in the American Great Lakes port of Green Bay, Wisconsin was being transferred. Aware of my interest in ships and the sea, he recommended to the Bishop that I replace him. Bishop consulted with my pastor (I was an associate at the time) who readily agreed to the appointment because "port chaplaincy was just a paper job." I would not be expected to do anything. But I wanted to do something! I wrote to then National Director, Fr. Tom Mc Donough, C.Ss.R., asking how to do this ministry. I received a short letter in return welcoming me to the Apostleship of the Sea and telling me to just go to the ships and do it!

The first visit I made to a ship as port chaplain was met with a rebuff: "Where is your pass?" So I applied to the steamship company for a pass, only to be denied. (They had never heard of a port chaplain or AOS.) Unfazed by this, I thought I could talk to those aboard while standing on the dock. "What are you doing down there?" the mate asked on my second visit. "Come on up!" "I don't have a pass," I answered. "Come on up!" Never again was I denied access to a vessel! (That was in the pre-TWIC days, of course!)

At the same time there was a Protestant minister (Rev. Paul Schippel) in Green Bay who had studied "ministry in the workplace." Since his office overlooked docks in Green Bay, he decided to visit ships. A dedicated Methodist couple indicated their concern for the welfare of seafarers in port to Port Commissioner (Bob Barclay) who brought us all together. This resulted in one of the first ecumenical ministries anywhere in the world.

Unaware of the interfaith International Council of Seamen's Agencies (ICOSA, now known as the North American Maritime Ministry Association or NAMMA), AOS welcomed Schippel and me to its National Meetings. There I complained about being expected to minister in a strange environment with no training. Episcopal Promoter Robert Tracey convinced the Catholic Daughters of the Americas (CD of A) to fund a training program. He appointed Fr. Rivers Patout of the Port of Houston and me to develop it. With the help of educators in Green Bay and on-site help from the ecumenical team of chaplains in Houston and others, the program was inaugurated in 1974 and has been held there year since.

A woman at the dock

SISTER
MARY LEAHY



As I begin to write some few reflections on my ministry as AOS chaplain in the Port of Syd-

ney, Australia over the past 18 years, I'm conscious of the fact that we stand now on the shoulders of those gone before us.

Therefore it is with great pride and gratitude I offer these personal reflections at this special time when we commemorate and celebrate ninety years of dedication to the welfare of seafarers by the Catholic church through the ministry of the AOS.

My name is Sr. Mary Leahy rsj. I was born in Ireland and came to Australia as a missionary in 1979 where I joined the Josephite Congregation. I worked as a registered nurse for 10 years, during which time I completed a Bth. (Bachelor of Theology). In 1992 the Sydney Archdiocese was looking for a chaplain for the Port, and with encouragement of my sisters and others I began my own contribution to the ministry. I strongly believe my previous nursing experience and theological studies were great assets to me as I embarked on a very new journey.

My life with seafarers over the past 18 years has been a source of great joy for me. They and their families and loved ones have become family to me. And hopefully I to them. While many and varied spiritual and functional aspects of the ministry have been taken care of in that time, the predominant experience for me has been, and continues to be the mutuality between seafarers and myself. The recognition that both they and I are human beings on a journey together, giving life to each other, and receiving life from each other. I thank God daily for this privilege.

Back in 1992 it was a new venture for the Sydney Archdiocese to employ a female chaplain for the Port. And apart from a group of

In 1980 Bishop Gracida decided that the AOS in the USA needed a full-time National Director and tabbed me for the position. Few shore-based people were aware of a special ministry to seafarers. Fewer cared to know. They presumed seafarers were unsavory types who weren't worth their time, and felt little compunction to know better. Because seafarers are an "invisible" and often forgotten group, so is the ministry to them – and so are those who do the ministry. As National Director, I sought to "minister to the ministers," "pastor the pastors." The flags of convenience phenomenon was creating havoc for many seafarers



and their families. Stories of exploitation and suffering had to be told. We worked to change such attitudes. Chaplains brought in the press to introduce the public to seafarers and their needs. The CD of A invited us to speak at their conventions and encouraged their members to get involved in local ministries. Many did. Others who lived at a distance from ports collected items, baked cookies or made donations to assist the chaplains.

People in port ministries, Catholic and non-, were feeling overwhelmed by the size of the task before them. Resources were limited, both financial and personnel. The wisdom of ecumenical cooperation was becoming more and more apparent. AOS and ICOSA had met separately in San Francisco and enjoyed a harbor cruise together. Soon thereafter joint conventions were held with everyone invited to general sessions while allowing time for business to be conducted by each group. After my Bishop recalled me to Green Bay in 1984 I was elected chair of ICOSA. Greater appreciation and trust for the gifts and dedication of others was garnered. The sin of Christian division seemed on the wane. Chaplains enthused that what ecumenists talked about, port chaplains were doing!

In 1990 my Bishop received a request for me to serve the AOS as an expert for the AOS at the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerants. Fr. François LeGall was already in place. I brought along to my new responsibilities the old desire to pastor the pastors – who in this case were the often lonely and under-appreciated National Directors. Upon my arrival, Archbishop (now Cardinal) Giovanni Cheli revealed his vision that AOS be a

ladies who used to frequent the ships at the time I was the only other lady. I could relate many, many funny situations that occurred at that time and even today.

Although I wore our congregational emblem, to many within the Port and indeed on-board ships I didn't look like the 'Sound of Music' type 'Sister'. Therefore it was challenging for all, to reassess perceptions. (of religion, church, nuns, port chaplains etc) And this in turn opened doors for me to engage in dialogue on issues of God, Church and Spirituality, Humanity in a way that was deeper than that which respected only superficial/external appearances. It was then I began to discover that port chaplaincy included the whole port community at any given day. This I continue to find a very enriching and challenging role.



My love for seafarers has always impelled me to seek out the most vulnerable onboard. To be present to all. To care for the abused and the perpetrators of abuse. To be their voice in the places of power, even at the risk of being unpopular.

Ship visitation has been my *modus operandi*, where I find myself in the seafarers' territory, their 'home', 'prison' and sometimes sadly what can only be described as their 'torture chamber'. It is onboard, in their little cabins, mess rooms, engine rooms, bridges and gangways that I've witnessed the seafarers' vulnerability, listened to their sadness, pain, struggles and also their joys. It is in those places I have seen many tears and heard many heartbreaking confidential stories of terrible abuse and loneliness.

It is there I've experienced the ever presence of God. A presence that is there ever before I arrive, that is never pushy or demanding, but rather a gentle presence of immense

worldwide membership organization, LeGall and I began consultations and preparatory study on the *motu proprio* to become known as *Stella Maris*. It clearly defined the ministry and its scope. Not only active seafarers and their families were included but also retired seafarers, maritime students, port and company officials. Ecumenical cooperation was encouraged by *Stella Maris* as a tool to benefit everyone. Regions were encouraged to send funds that would encourage and enable local people to take an active part in promoting the ministry. No longer was AOS a "top-down" entity. Chaplains, National Directors, Bishop Promoters were deemed "servants" of the ministry!

Port ministry is difficult: dealing with so many strangers, cultures, languages, separations and divisions, lead to misunderstandings and suspicions. Some are reluctant to see people who live differently from themselves as equals, no matter what the Gospel may teach. That is true in how we may reach out to others. It is also true in how some people reach out (or don't) to us. One example was ministering to seafarers from the Soviet Bloc during the Cold War. After being confined to a ship during long voyages, seafarers have a need to stretch their legs when the ship is at the dock. Port ministry seeks to serve holistically, meeting not only seafarers' spiritual needs but physical and emotional as well. Most port chaplains sought to welcome Soviet bloc seafarers to their centers for rest and relaxation in a safe place. However those seafarers often remained confined to their ships by an on-board commissar when entering Western ports, usually for fear of their being approached and converted by religious people.

This changed with the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989. An overture to ICMA was made to explore collaboration between ICMA agencies and the Soviet seafarers' centers by Roald Al-yakrinsky, representing Russian seafarers' unions. ICMA exec. members were invited to Moscow to study the situation. I went to St. Petersburg where I met a young Catholic priest (Fr. Stepan Katinel) who was willing to serve as port chaplain. The beautiful seafarers center there provided space for a chapel that was dedicated by the Catholic Archbishop of Moscow. Unfortunately the center fell on hard times. The chapel was converted to a shop selling expensive items to tourists. But ice had been broken. Suspicions had thawed. Eastern bloc seafarers were free to use the

sensitivity and respect for human dignity. A presence which inspires me in my role if I listen for it and to it.

I endeavour to relate to seafarers as individuals with individual needs. While much is common to all seafarers, one can sometimes stereotype seafarers' needs. It is wrong for us as chaplains, as AOS, as welfare workers or as other powerful bodies within the industry to do so.

The exercise of deep listening to seafarers as individuals is of great importance within the chaplaincy role. Regardless of whether the conversation is about work issues or personal issues, positive or negative. Deep unconditional and loving listening will promote dignity and freedom, and create an atmosphere of trust and respect.

Challenges

I encounter many challenges in my role as chaplain within the Port. I don't believe the challenges I face as a woman are all that different from those faced by a man in the same role. The same professionalism is required. There are all the physical challenges that require a certain fitness level in order to climb gangways safely etc. There are all the security issues to be aware of and compliant with. But all these challenges and difficulties are minor in terms of the reward of being able to get access to seafarers onboard ships, to be able to help in whatever way possible and above all to witness their lives and to be in solidarity with them spiritually and physically.

I have always believed that ministry to seafarers requires of us to "comfort the afflicted, and to afflict the comfortable". By this I mean that while seafarers are our primary concern, we must also be diligent in challenging those involved in the world of the sea and shipping, Unions, Shipping Companies, Shipping Agents, Terminal Operators etc, in order to highlight the lives of seafarers and their reality.

Even our own AOS structure/ organization locally and globally needs to be challenged to grow, to be relevant, professional, more



facilities provided by Christian sponsored Seafarer Centers – including religious services.

After leaving AOS in 1996 I was invited to serve as Counselor to the Pontifical Council.

I have seen a deepening appreciation for the families of seafarers and fishers and respect for what they bring to the ministry. Following the tragic disaster of September 11, seafarers around the world suffered xenophobia more than ever. Port chaplains and their sponsoring agencies (including AOS) almost single-handedly confronted the injustice of forcing seafarers to remain aboard ship in a foreign port, no matter what needs he or she may have. AOS has taken a giant step forward in addressing the needs of fishers, artisan and industrial, around the world. NGOs and others appreciate AOS' expertise.

The Holy Spirit is at work in people of good will all over the world: volunteers, shipping company executives, ordained. AOS has always met challenges and opportunities, strengths and weaknesses in bringing the Church to the maritime world. Countless people throughout the

inclusive (especially of women), more ecumenical.

Because seafarers are relatively silent in terms of critiquing how helpful we are, we need to constantly critique ourselves and our way of operating.

We have received a great legacy from those who began this AOS apostolate ninety years ago. It is therefore incumbent on us to continue the good work not only for the organization, but most importantly for seafarers. I will finish with the words of an Irish poet.

"Men build their heavens as they build their circle of friends.

God is in the bits and pieces day by day.

A kiss here, a laugh there and sometimes tears." (Kavanagh)

The new slaves are fishing for European consumers

A room with a sweltering 45 ° temperatures is not an ideal environment in which to work. Then if you are on board a ship and you have to manipulate fish for several hours a day, you do not know anymore if it's work or slavery. Members of the British Association Environmental Justice Foundation came across to this hell by following the traces of a traffic of fish illegally caught. When they boarded a South Korean vessel in activities along the coast of West Africa, found themselves facing something much worse.

"It was horrible. Men — a veteran of the Foundation, Duncan Copeland, told to the British newspaper Guardian — worked in the cold storage without air nor ventilation with a temperatures of 40-45 °. The inside of the fridge was rusty, oily, hot and with the smell of sweat. In the storeroom there were cockroaches everywhere and the food was in filthy container. All that the men had for washing was a pump that was spewing salty water. A stinking environment. A heartbreaking scene".



The "goods" produced in these floating factories, i.e. the catch transformed by these "slaves", is intended for the European market. Of course, in the old Continent there are also illegal distribution channels that allow you to avoid the rigorous hygienic requirements of the European Union. Last May, approximately 150 Senegalese were found while working on a fishing vessel off Sierra Leone. Work shift of 18 hours a day and rest into bunk beds less than one meter tall. The ship had a license to export fish in Europe.

The cry of alarm from the Environmental Justice Foundation is therefore twofold. On one hand to denounce the inhuman conditions of those forced in a situation of extreme discomfort for 200 dollars per month. On the other hand to inform the consumers that they are supporting this situation of exploitation, by consuming fish treated without any hygienic precaution and potentially harmful to health. Without considering the environmental damage caused by illegal fishing, which uses trawls, destroying everything is on the sea floor. The penalties are ineffective: the maximum fine for illegal fishing in Sierra Leone is \$ 100,000, which according the Foundation is equivalent to the profit generated by this activity in just two weeks.

This situation has then a clear impact on the activities of fishing vessels which comply with the rules. Not only risking of being shut at in international waters by some "zealous" military, but are forced to confront the competition of unscrupulous entrepreneurs who manage to commercialize products less safe and then at better price.

Alberto Ghiara

Vita e Mare, September-October 2010

Scalabrinian missionaries committed to work with international seafarers on the seven seas

Within the celebrations of the 90th anniversary of foundation of the AOS and the “International Year of the Seafarer”, the 1st meeting of the missionaries involved in “ministry” among seafarers, fishers and the people of the sea was held from 6th-10th October, in Santos, Brazil, with the support of the Scalabrini International Migration Network (SIMN).

As signs of the work done by the Scalabrinian missionaries in communion with the universal and local Church, the meeting was attended by H.E. Msgr. Jacyr F. Braido, Bishop of Santos and AOS Promoter for Brazil, and by Fr. Bruno Ciceri, of the AOS International of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People. Were also present repre-

sentatives of organizations related to the maritime industry (customs, port authorities, trade unions, ITF and ICMA) to exchange information, experiences and good practices on the social and pastoral ministry done by the Scalabrinian missionaries in 10 ports of five continents in partnership with different Christian denominations (Lutherans, Baptists, among others), Government and civic organizations.

The participants reflected on the need to return to the origins of the charism of the Congregation which since 1887 had on-board chaplains and was present in several ports. The sea which yesterday was crossed by steam ships crowded with European migrants sailing towards the new world, is today a working place for thousands of seafarers on commercial vessels and cruise ships and a source of life for millions of fisherfolk.

The main resolution of the meeting was to create the AOS Scalabrinian Network to systematize, articulate and integrate the work with seafarers, fishermen and their families, in the ports of Ravenna (Italy), Kaoshiung (Taiwan), Cape Town and Saldana Bay (South Africa), Montevideo (Uruguay), Buenos Aires (Argentina), Rio Grande, Rio de Janeiro and Santos (Brazil) and Manila (Philippines).

Fr. Paulo Prigol, chaplain and Director of the Stella Maris Center in Manila, was elected coordinator of the newly established Network. He highlighted the main challenges that motivated its creation: “We work in five continents and in different realities, but we face common challenges, because we deal with seafarers who leave their country of origin docking in the ports of other countries, facing like any others labor problems or difficulties related to families. There are also common struggles in the ministry exercised by chaplains or lay people who work with us. From this context we realize the importance of creating a network to unite our efforts, optimize human, technical and financial resources to better respond to the challenging reality of the people of the sea”.

Fr. Rui Pedro, member of the General Administration of the Congregation and responsible for the organisation of the meeting, made a general evaluation of the work: “Our assessment is very positive, in looking at the reality we can say that seafarers, fishermen and their families appreciate the Church's presence among them. Don't forget that we are talking about around 1.4 million of seafarers and about 30 million fishers. This create a series of consequences for which we must be even more and better prepared, i.e. improving the infrastructure in some of our centres, because of the growing demand. The privatization of ports, creates, in some cases, restriction on our presence to visit the vessels. As religious, our specific mission of evangelization is intertwined with the social and human aspect of the life of the workers. Therefore, we cannot ignore all aspects involving the lives of the seafarers: legal issues, working conditions, physical and psychological health, but also, emotional issues, lack of contact with their home and relationship with the families, also offering our religious assistance to those who are Catholics, evangelizing without proselytizing and respecting all religions on board and ashore”.

The Americas Regional Secretary of ITF, Antonio Rodriguez Fritz, talked about the reality of seafarers and asked for the support of the missionaries for ongoing campaigns worldwide: “We are making a big effort with Governments, international agencies and businesses to be more effective against piracy on the high seas that directly affects the security, working conditions and life of seafarers. In some cases, these actions are in the hands of very well organized groups and became a real industry therefore combating piracy at sea must be a collective effort. And the your help as Congregation and of the Church which gives assistance to these seafarers will be crucial for us”. Fr. Beniamino Rossi presented, from the historical perspective, the still un-



known, but decisive and prophetic action of the founder, Blessed John B. Scalabrini and its missionaries, in defending human rights in the ports of departure and arrival; Fr. Leonir Chiarello, Executive Director of the NGO Scalabrini International Migration Network (SIMN), spoke about the principles, methodology and dimensions of networking.

Fr. Ciceri talked about the teaching of the Church and the pastoral guidelines for AOS. He affirmed the need of an overall restructure of the ministry and encouraged systematization of hundreds of "Stella Maris" Centres data, with a view for a practical and up-to-date description of the action of the Church in the maritime world.

The meeting approved a work plan for 2011-2015 which contemplates, among other projects, the creation of a database to gather and share information, a prevention campaigns of HIV-Aids and other STIs among seafarers, continuous training programmes for chaplains and lay volunteers and projects for financial self-sustaining centres Stella Maris administered by religious and laity and the study of the assumption of other ports, as the case of Haiti and Jakarta.



A Current Buster is towed behind the Pope Benedict XVI in skimming operations. The OSV, owned by Adbon Callais Offshore LLC, is under contract with BP for recovery operations.

ICMA WORLD CONFERENCE

The next ICMA World Conference will be held in Hamburg (Germany) from August 19th to 23rd 2011. The conference cost including accommodation and meals (excluding travelling) will be around 700 €.

However, the organisation's committee are searching for additional sponsors to lower as much as possible the expenses.

It is important to start planning for this important event by marking the dates in the calendar, additional information will be provide in the next few months.

The World Conference is generously supported by the ITF Seafarers Trust and the TK Foundation.

SCAM ALERT

In recent weeks a streams of scams has hit different AOS Centers around the world, we would like to invite you to be alert and extremely carefully in responding to any request of money coming to you by phone or e-mail.

Usually a person claiming to be a Bishop Promoter or a National Director or even a chaplain, volunteer of a certain country will tell you that he is stranded in a foreign airport or city and he is in need of money that should be remitted through Western Union. Because the AOS World Directory is accessible on the web, the organizers of the scam they might provide information (names, addresses. etc.) that could their story more credible.

Please, doesn't matter how touching will be the story, before sending any money as much as possible try to verify the information by contacting directly the interested person or different AOS international or national offices that could validate the story.