

APOSTLESHIP OF THE SEA

SUPPORTING SEAFARERS WORLDWIDE
STELLA MARIS ANTWERP BULLETIN SUMMER EDITION 2019



Dear Sponsor, Dear Reader,

Antwerp delegation of Stella Maris received by Pope Francis

The Apostleship of the Sea, better known as Stella Maris, is a truly international organization with many branches.

From 24th – 27th June our Antwerp Chaplains Fr. Jos Van Hoof, National Director Apostleship of the Sea Belgium and his colleague Fr. Jorgedy Bago assisted in Rome to an international conference of the Apostleship of the Sea (AoS) organization.



Antwerp port chaplains Fr. Jos Van Hoof and Fr. Jorgedy Bago received by Pope Francis

On Thursday 27th June Cardinal Turkson of the Department of Promotion and Development of Human Rights introduced the AoS delegation to Pope Francis. The pope received them for a private audience in 'Sala Clemens' at the Vatican. The Holy Father gave in his speech a strong message underlying the importance to support seafarers in their spiritual and material needs as an essential element of human rights in a globalized shipping world. The text of the message of Pope Francis can be found as an enclosure to this newsletter (1).



Foto: Vlaamse overheid –
Agentschap MDK

Jacques D'Havé, President ApM

Suicide is the major cause of death with Seafarers.

Seafarer mental health is a major problem in the globalized shipping world. The result of mental health issues among seafarers is that suicide is the highest cause of fatalities at sea, accounting for 15% of deaths according to the UK P&I Club.

Seafarers are ranking second most at risk from suicide. Experts point out that there are constantly reports of younger crew onboard, who are not experienced – “these are the people most at risk of mental health issues”.

In the case of seafarer’s young age, isolation and the impact of social media are considered as negative factors. Young seafarers such as cadets are seen as particularly at risk. When you look at cadets the figures are even more horrifying. Some 40% of 11 deaths of cadets over the last 10 years came as the result of suicide according to the UK P&I club.

Our port chaplains confirm this situation which is very frustrating indeed. Many times, they are confronted with seafarers with a severe depression. In recent years our chaplains were asked several times by the captain to conduct a service on board of the ship after one of the crew members committing suicide.

In terms of the causes of depression among seafarers one is looking at work stress, hours of work and rest and in particular social media. Today seafarers have more possibilities to contact home but in case of a problematic situation in the family they are alone with little or no possibilities to share their feelings. Stella Maris is one of the few places where they can freely talk about their personal issues.

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Belgium in the top as flag state

Just as in the latest inventories, Belgium scored the maximum points in the annual statement “Flag State Performance Table 2017/2018” by the International Shipping Federation International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) publishes.

Only 10 flag States have achieved the best possible rating. Maritime safety, working conditions, environmental and the flag states commitment to the work of the IMO and their implementation of international conventions are measured.

The other countries, which tops the list are Bahamas, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Hong Kong (China), Japan, Marshall Islands, Portugal, Singapore, UK.

Warm clothing for Seafarers



In the magazine 'Band van de Verenigde Protestantse Kerken' port chaplain, Marc Schippers, from the ecumenical pool of port chaplains wrote an article about the collection of warm clothing for seafarers. In the following lines Marc Schippers tells us his experience in this field:

Since many seafarers are originating from the Far East, like the Philippines and Indonesia, they are not used to the cold temperatures in Europe especially during the winter. What we consider as chilly makes someone from the Philippines shivering in the cold! Seldom did they experience temperatures below 18 ° C. Arriving in Europe in wintertime they often have no proper clothes. Moreover, the luggage they are allowed to take with them is limited. Winter clothing as sweaters and jumpers take a lot of place in suitcases. Sometimes the ship owner is providing warm clothing but then it happens that the orders are not delivered in time.

So the reasons why they are in need of warm clothing are many. The Antwerp Seafarers Centre is keeping a stock of knitted caps and used winter clothes collected by volunteers which are distributed to the seamen at Christmas time or in case of need.

If you want to donate your used warm winter clothing in particular warm coats, sweaters etc. you can always contact our port chaplains or Stella Maris. All gifts are warmly appreciated!



News from Stella Maris



Every Week on Saturday and Sunday at 19:30 hrs a Holy Mass is celebrated at Stella Maris either in the Chapel or in the party hall of the Seafarers Centre depending on the number of participants.

At Easter the consecration of the light is attended by many and celebrated with splendor. Afterwards the Seafarers receive the traditional eggs.



Family Trip Volunteers Stella Maris



Yearly Stella Maris is organizing a family trip for the volunteers of the Antwerp Seafarers' Centre.

At Whit Monday this year a visit to Mechelen was organized with a boat trip on the Dyle for the many volunteers dedicating a lot of their free time on the welfare issues of the seafarers.



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Upcoming Events



September

26. September 2019 World Maritime Day 2019, London, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

The International Day observed annually by the United Nations system in recognition of the maritime community and its importance to the world.

With each year emphasizing a unique theme, events in 2019 will focus on the role of women, under the theme "Empowering Women in the Maritime Community".

The occasion will be celebrated globally through events sponsored by national maritime administrations and the wider shipping industry, as well as at IMO Headquarters in London.

14. September 2019 Dag der Zeelieden en Bloemenhulde, Stadspark Monument Albert I

29. September 2019 Dag der Zeelieden en Misviering, Sint Pauluskerk

Sponsors

During 2019 Apostolatus Maris received donations from various sponsors and organisations.

We thank all of them in the name of the Seamen!

**You or your company/organization want to support the Seafarers Center?
Go for it!**

Also during 2019 your support is greatly appreciated.

Any amount is welcome.

We also worked out some special sponsorship formulas:

Bronze: 2.500 €

Silver: 5.000 €

Gold: > 5.000 € up to your discretion

More information?

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be paid

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Enclosure (1)



**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE FRANCIS**

*to National Directors, Chaplains and Volunteers
of the Apostleship of the Sea in Europe*

(27 June 2019)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am pleased to receive you, the national directors, chaplains and volunteers of *Stella Maris* – Apostleship of the Sea, on the occasion of your meeting, which has taken place here in Rome in these days. I thank Cardinal Turkson for his kind words of introduction and presentation. I welcome all of you and I trust that your gathering has been fruitful.

Your meeting has brought together chaplains and volunteers working in European ports at the service of sailors and fishermen, who by their hard work bring us products on which we depend daily. The *Stella Maris* apostolate is active in over three hundred ports worldwide, offering spiritual and material assistance to great numbers of sailors, fishermen and their often distant families.

Since more than ninety percent of world commerce is transported by ships of various kinds, the dependence of our society on the maritime industry is indisputable. Without sailors, the global economy would come to a standstill; and without fishermen, many parts of the world would starve. I would ask you to convey my esteem and encouragement to the sailors and fishermen whom you meet, many of whom work for lengthy periods of time, thousands of miles away from their native land and their families.

The life of a sailor or fisherman is not only marked by isolation and distance. At times, it is also painfully affected by shameful experiences of abuse and injustice, by the snares of those engaged in human trafficking, and by the extortion of forced labour. At other times, they are not paid their rightful salary or are left behind in distant ports. In addition to threats from nature – storms and hurricanes – they must face human threats, such as piracy or terrorist attacks. They cross the world's oceans and seas, landing in ports where they are not always welcome.

As chaplains and volunteers of *Stella Maris*, you have been entrusted with the mission of presence, bringing the Good News of the Lord Jesus to the complex and varied world of seafaring. Your daily visits to the ships enable you to encounter people in concrete situations, at times serene, at other times anxious or even deeply troubled. With compassion and discretion, you give them a chance to pour out their hearts. This is the first and most precious service that you provide, above all to those who have few similar opportunities. Your ministry to sailors and fishermen is above all one of listening to them and to their material and spiritual needs. "Listening helps us to find the right gesture and word which shows that we are more than simply bystanders" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 171).

Listening can then lead to action. I encourage you and the chaplains and volunteers of *Stella Maris* to redouble your efforts to confront issues that are all too often the fruit of human greed. I am thinking of human trafficking, forced labour and violations of the human and labour rights of so many men and women who live and work on the seas. Through your service, you can help restore to these persons their sense of dignity.

In addition, thanks to you, those who are most vulnerable can find hope for a better future. Your efforts can help them not to give up in the face of a life that is precarious and at times marked by exploitation. Your presence in the ports, large and small, is already a sign of God's fatherhood and the fact that, in his eyes, we are all children, brothers and sisters to one another. Your presence is also a sign of the primordial worth of the human person, prior to and above every other interest, and an incentive for everyone, starting with the poorest, to work for justice and respect for fundamental rights. Let us remember that "men and women who are made new by the love of God are able to change the rules and quality of relationships, transforming even social

structures. They are people capable of bringing peace where there is conflict, of building and nurturing fraternal relationships where there is hatred, of seeking justice where there prevails the exploitation of man by man. Only love is capable of radically transforming the relationships that men maintain among themselves" (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 4).

Dear brothers and sisters, I urge you to persevere in commitment to your apostolate, following the fine example of all those who have gone before you. Indeed, you are preparing to celebrate next year the centenary of *Stella Maris* at your Twenty-fifth World Congress in Glasgow, Scotland, where this mission of the Church was born in the hearts and actions of several lay people. This anniversary will be an occasion to remember the past in order to discern the present and to look ahead to the future. Pope Pius XI wanted the *Stella Maris* apostolate to extend its mission to the oceans and the shores of every continent. May the Holy Spirit, through the intercession of Our Lady, Star of the Sea, renew this pastoral service in accordance with the needs of our time.

To all of you I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing, which I ask you to bring to everyone you meet. And please, do not forget to pray for me.

(Check against delivery)