



Apostleship of the Sea  
Supporting Seafarers Worldwide

Stella Maris Antwerp Bulletin n° 10

Summer Edition 2022

Dear Sponsor, Dear Reader,

On the 24<sup>th</sup> February the Russian Invasion of Ukraine started after months of lies, denials and diplomatic attempts to prevent the conflict. Despite these diplomatic efforts, the worst scenario became true. Missiles and air strikes hit across Ukraine. Shelling started by Russian forces on the port installations at the Black Sea and several Ukrainian cities. It is difficult to believe that our generation is witnessing an armed conflict in Europe.

In the subsequent weeks millions of people were fleeing from their homes into an uncertain future searching for refuge in other countries. The Ukrainian Government proclaimed a general mobilisation of all male citizens between 18 and 60 who were banned from leaving the country. Seafarers could no longer return to their country !

The consequences on the world economy and our daily life are overwhelming. The war triggered a worldwide food shortage and increased inflation. A lot of stress and anxiety in the first place for crew members who are concerned for their families at home or in other countries. This crisis is following immediately after the previous pandemic. Many relief organisations such as Stella Maris still feel the pain of the previous crisis and already we are faced with a new one for many crew members. Many fear for the safety of their families and cannot return home.

Under these difficult circumstances our chaplains and volunteers have a special role to bring comfort and assistance to Ukrainian and Russian crews. They are often sailing together making the situation even more unrealistic. According to the seafarers Workforce Report of BIMCO and ICS 203.000 seafarers have a Russian or Ukrainian nationality. Combined this is 14,5 % of all seafarers worldwide. In our economy 90 % of the trade is maritime trade and despite the war this has to continue.

Stella Maris and our fellow organisations at the Antwerp Seafarers Welfare are giving moral and physical relief to all crews irrespective of nationality or religion.



*President Jacques D'Havé*

## m/v Morges with an Ukrainian crew

**m/v Morges with a complete Ukrainian crew arrived early February at the repair terminal in the port of Antwerp for important repair works which would take several weeks. On the 24th February when Russia started its invasion on Ukraine the ship was still in the dry dock. On board were 20 Ukrainian seamen. They feared the worst for their families. Stella Maris paid a visit to the crew to investigate if they needed help or moral support.**



*m/v Morges at the repair terminal*

Climbing the gangway we were received on board by Vladislav, the 2nd mate speaking Russian, Ukrainian and English. Vladislav was born and raised in Odessa the major Ukrainian seaport at the Black Sea with a population of over 1 million. On the 26th February when the hostilities started his wife took her 6-months old baby and a suitcase and left for Antwerp. She knew that her husband was staying there on board of a ship. Together they found an apartment in the city at a reasonable price. Vladislav is an exceptional lucky man. His wife is safe now in Antwerp and Vladislav has a contract with a first class shipping company. The company is helping the Ukrainian crew. The salaries are paid in European currency and the shipping company provided bank cards so that the crew can pay for the expenses of their families.



*2nd mate Vladislav proudly showing a photograph of his daughter*

None of the crew members had a serious problem. They are in contact their families via cell phones. All were in good health at the time of writing and did not need support. Vladislav will under the present circumstances not return to Odessa. If he enters Ukraine he cannot leave again. At present he is together with his family and safe. His sister is in Moldavia. After termination of his present contract he will try to fix another

contract for at least half a year. In view of the present shortages this will not be too difficult. However he sees his future on the long term as very uncertain.

# Temporary Shelter for Ukrainian seafarers

**T**he Royal Belgian Shipowners' Association has opened a temporary shelter where Ukrainian seafarers can reunite with their families who are fleeing the war-torn country after it has been invaded by Russia.



Located in Hoboken, south of the city of Antwerp, the empty office building was offered for use thanks to the generosity of its owner. Through the help of Antwerp's alderwomen Els Van Doesburg, lawyer Philippe Billiet, and numerous other volunteers, the RBSA was able to refit the property in record time into a shelter to receive

Ukrainian seafarers and their families, where each family has their own private sleeping quarters.



*Shelter for the families of the Ukrainian seafarers*

As Ukrainian seafarers are unable to return to their country after having completed their mission at sea, Belgian shipowners transport them to the shelter where they are able to reunite with their families. Families arrive via different means – by car, by train and some by plane. Until they

find more suitable lodging, seafarers and their families are welcome to stay at the shelter for free.

# First Easter Vigil celebration at the AHH <sup>(1)</sup>



*Easter Candle of Stella Maris*

**O**n Saturday April 16, the first Easter Vigil celebration took place at the Antwerp Harbour Hotel. During an intimate celebration in a salon next to the foyer our Chief Chaplain Jos Vanhoof acted as a celebrant, assisted by Peachy, a volunteer from the Philippine community in Antwerp, as lecturer.

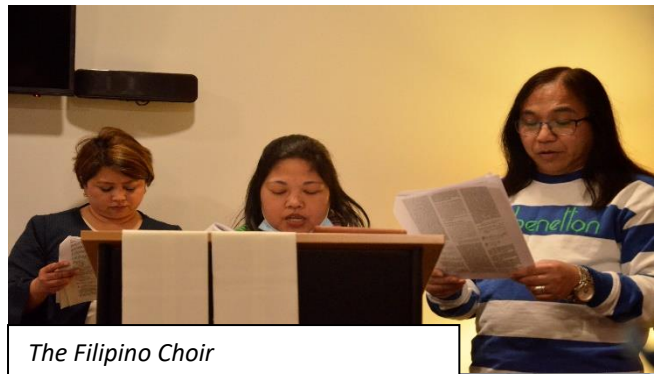
The celebration was graced by choir and music from Filipino boys and girls during a much appreciated performance.

(1) AHH : Antwerp Harbour Hotel





*Father Jos Van Hoof leading the Vigil Celebration*



*The Filipino Choir*



*Participants to the celebration*

Contrary to previous celebrations at Stella Maris it was not an oecumenical service as the other Protestant and Evangelical fellow-pastors could not be present due to unforeseen circumstances.

The present small drawing room was actually too small for the many participants to the service. Hopefully Stella Maris will soon be able to participate in the expansion of the hotel with a multi-purpose room that will also be used as a chapel. For the next major celebrations we are already looking for alternative locations. A possible option is to have e.g. the Christmas celebration in the Church 'Onze-Lieve-Vrouw-Boodschap' at the Luchtbal which is only a few hundred meters away and to provide transportation.



*After the Easter Vigil, as usual, a warm bite followed, also prepared (again) by Filipino volunteers. And it was again Peachy, the same lady who had served as a lector at Easter Mass, who was now baking spring rolls and preparing an elaborate salad. Our small meeting room functioned as an improvised kitchen and the foyer as a restaurant for the much appreciated reception afterwards.*

# Stella Maris and the Covid Pandemic

***'That the rulers and shipping companies of the world may guarantee the right of crews to disembark to relax and unwind with their families, recovering their mental and physical well-being'***. This was the message of Cardinal Michael Czerny s.j. (1) in his letter to seafarers. In our newsletter we already reported several times about the harrowing conditions in which seafarers find themselves as a result of the Covid pandemic. In his message to seafarers the Cardinal made a fervent plea on behalf of the dignity of the sailor and sent a message to ship owners and crew managers. In view of the importance of his message to the maritime world we reproduce the content here in full.



## Sea Sunday Message 2022 (10<sup>th</sup> July 2022)



DICASTERY FOR PROMOTING  
INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT



Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, beloved chaplains, volunteers, friends and supporters of *Stella Maris*:

On the second Sunday in July every year Christian communities celebrate Sea Sunday. Today we call to mind the essential work of more than a million seafarers who work on ships transporting goods around the world every day of the year. Those who live inland rarely see ships or the seafarers who work on them. Even those who live on the coast usually only see a ship 'out there' on the horizon. No-one can see the thousands of ships sailing over the horizon. They are invisible. But they are there. And so are the seafarers who work on board, not only keeping the world economy moving but also directly impacting upon the daily life of every one of us. Day in, day out, they provide the goods we use and consume, and without them the quality our lives would be considerably poorer. To understand how

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(1) Cardinal Michael Czerny s.j. is the prefect of the Dicastery for promoting Integral Human Development at the Vatican

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essential they are, we need only bring to mind the possessions in our homes and workplaces, and the food on our tables. Let us ask, *'Where does it come from?'* It is seafarers who enable us to enjoy what we have. And we must remember that seafarers work every day of the week, every week of their contract, to provide everything we have. How much we want to say, *'Thank you!'*

Now is the time to try and imagine seafarers' life and the daily challenges they endure for us. Over recent years the maritime world has been hit by a series of crises. Increased demand for goods has led to more ships being held at anchorage for longer periods of time.

The pandemic must no longer be used as an excuse for banning the crew from going ashore. As long as they take the necessary precautions, seafarers have the right to put their feet on dry ground and meet people other than their colleagues on board. Chaplains and volunteers of Stella Maris make an urgent appeal to governments and shipping companies around the world to ensure that seafarers have the right to go ashore! ( Cardinal Michael Czerny

The war in Ukraine means that ships now face the impossible task of navigating through the mines in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. Many vessels have been sunk and human lives have been lost during this unjust and immoral war. The global pandemic meant that over 400,000 seafarers have been stuck on board, unable to leave the ship at the end of their contracts and return home to their families. Instead, they continue to work every day

becoming increasingly exhausted. Replacement crews have been unable to join ships which has spelled economic disaster for some because they have been unable to provide for the daily needs of their loved ones. In every case, seafarers have no choice.

Some shipping companies appear to be the only ones who have profited financially from the series of crises which have disrupted the global supply chain. It is regrettable, to say the least, that companies have only shared a tiny fraction of the exorbitant revenue they have enjoyed with seafarers or spent on improving welfare facilities in ports for the short period of time they are alongside.

Companies may receive the money, but it is seafarers and their families who pay the price. It comes as no surprise that enforced extended contracts result in physical and psychological exhaustion which can lead to human error with dangerous consequences. Longer periods on board, enforced separation from their loved ones, and not being allowed to go ashore has led to seafarers feeling even more isolated and depressed than normal. We must remember that they, too, are human beings. They have the same needs as everyone else. The difference is that, being 'invisible', they are easily ignored.

But we must not ignore them because we rely on them. We need them. Safe navigation, security and protection of the marine environment rely on seafarers enjoying good mental health. The Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (MLC) requires companies to



provide decent and clean accommodation, nourishing food, a safe working environment, proper hours of work and shore leave. Sadly, the significant gains made since MLC came into force in 2013 have been seriously undermined. Let us take the issue of shore leave. The ability to leave the vessel and go ashore, if only for a short time, is crucial for seafarers' wellbeing. Most of us take for granted the freedom we have to go outside, enjoy open spaces, place our feet on firm ground or soft grass and see different people. But seafarers have no such freedom. They cannot leave the ship, and every day they walk on metal floors and see the same faces. The only way they can share in the freedom we enjoy is to have access to shore leave. They may only have a couple of hours but that can make all the difference.



At the height of the pandemic and before the vaccination campaign for seafarers began, governments and companies understandably cancelled all shore leave. Seafarers were required to stay on board to avoid infection and spreading the virus. But as the situation continues to improve around the world, countries are opening their borders and lifting restrictions. Most people are now able to move freely again. But not seafarers. And this is a **gross injustice**. Even though they are fully vaccinated, seafarers are frequently denied the free movement we enjoy. Why? Because several governments and shipping companies still refuse to allow seafarers to go ashore. To add insult to injury, some seafarers are allowed to go ashore if they are the 'correct nationality'.

This discrimination is as unjust as it is immoral. Everyone needs to remember that seafarers' innate dignity as human beings must be respected. They must be treated equally, without any discrimination, and afforded the same opportunity to leave the narrow confines of the vessel and go ashore, if only for a brief time, to unwind and relax, wherever they are in the world.

The pandemic must no longer be used as an excuse for banning the crew from going ashore. As long as they take the necessary precautions, seafarers have the right to put their feet on dry ground and meet people other than their colleagues on board. Chaplains and volunteers of Stella Maris make an urgent appeal to governments and shipping companies around the world to ensure that seafarers have the right to go ashore!

Today, on this Sea Sunday, we thank seafarers for their hard work. We pray that they remain strong in the face of difficulties and challenges in life. And we entrust to Mary, *Star of the Sea*, the commitment and dedication of the chaplains and volunteers around the world who serve them.

*Michael Gerny SJ*

*Prefect*



# News from Stella Maris



**M**ercy Ships, a Christian organization, has been active for decades with a hospital ship to visit countries with limited sanitary infrastructure e.g. some African or Caribbean countries. The organisation provides free medical care to people who cannot afford this themselves. Ben van den Akker, a volunteer for

**the Antwerp Seafarers Welfare signed up as volunteer for Mercy Ships. This is his report.**

'Two years ago, after I had read through their newsletter about the Mercy Ship project, and the construction and arrival of the largest hospital, Global Mercy, I signed up as volunteer 1 day a week, for a period of 6 months. to be nominated. There appeared to be a need for all kinds of volunteers, including hospitality. For me that would mean transporting people from

and from Zaventem airport to the ship or a hotel. So I did this from September 2021 to February 2022'.

m/v Global Mercy, with its 174 m. length and 28.6 m width, can accommodate 6 operating theatres, 199 hospital beds (including intensive care), and a crew of 640 people. The entire project is supported by volunteers, who selflessly make their talent available. Each volunteer pays for his stay on the ship. She is currently active on the west coast of Africa, in Senegal. I myself also enjoyed a tour of the ship under construction in Antwerp. A wonderful project. Very impressive. Even the hired workers, specialists for the completion of the medical section, were impressed by the good atmosphere on board the ship. An atmosphere of respect and kindness. One of the workers told me during our drive to the airport: "I have come back to believe in the goodness of people". Mercy Ships is a predominantly Christian inspired organization, describing their mission as 'bringing hope and healing to the forgotten poor, following the 2,000-year-old model of Jezus'.



*Visit to Mercy Ships*



*Modern hospital facilities on board*



## Stella Maris and the Czech Television.

Although the Czech Republic is a landlocked country without direct access to the sea, there is the awareness that global maritime trade is vital for every country. Many years ago the Czechoslovak Republic had a small merchant fleet. However this declined during the previous years.

Stella Maris is an international organization with a global presence. A Czech TV crew recently visited Antwerp to interview Stella Maris and find out more about our activities in the port and our maritime presence.



*Visit to our shop*



*Stella Maris in discussion with the Czech television crew*

A Czech TV-crew visited Antwerp to make a program about maritime trade and the global transport chains. More in particular the makers of the program were interested to find out the impact is of the maritime industry and how we deal with seafarers from so many different countries

The Czech television crew was very much impressed about the organisation of our welfare

activities, our ship visits and our oecumenic cooperation with the other seafarer missions. They wanted to accompany the 'rolling store' team driving to the terminals vessels in order to meet some crews.

We explained them that the average crew is composed of at least three to four different nationalities but can go up to twenty. The epidemiological situation, interrupted crew changes and the present war is imposing continuous stress on board. So a visit from a representative from Stella Maris is more than welcome for many seamen.



*Chief Chaplain Jos Van Hoof explaining the spirituality of seafarers*

We had an interesting discussion on the spirituality of seafarers and their way of life on board. Many prejudices were rectified.

Seafarers have a large degree of integrity and authenticity, basic values in our modern society. For sure a new world was opened for the Czech public.

## Donation To Stella Maris

Since a few months visitors of the premises of Stella Maris at the Antwerp Harbour Hotel will find in the lobby a genuine ships radar, a donation of Capt. Dirk Verbergt, until recently member of the board. This radar never was installed on board a vessel. It was part of a previous navigation simulator at the Antwerp Maritime Academy.

The ship's radar was developed and built end of the 1970s by the British gramophone and records company 'Decca Records'. 'Radar' stands for Radio Detection and Ranging. It is an electronic navigation system developed during the second world-war and installed from the 1950s onwards on all merchant vessels.



*Collection Capt. Dirk Verbergt/Stella Maris)*

An electric pulse is emitted through a 360° turning scanner. This pulse is reflected by the coastline, buoys, and other ships in the neighbourhood. The same scanner picks up this reflection which is represented by a luminous dot on the screen installed on the bridge. This electronic observation allows to monitor the ship's neighbourhood and determine not only the presence, but also the distance, relative course and speed of different "targets", even by night and in bad visibility. The range can be varied, typically between ¼ to 48 nautical miles.

To allow deducing the true speed and course of other ships, the observations were plotted on a paper plotting sheet; this was later replaced by a reflex plotter which was installed on top of the screen, allowing to better visualise the situation. Connecting the radar signal to a computer

allowed the development of ARPA, Automatic Radar Plotting Aid, which rendered devices like this one obsolete.

Radar navigation is a basic part of the training of navy and merchant marine deck officers.

# Stella Maris goes Wild



*The volunteers from Stella Maris enjoying the party*

Volunteers do it for by definition for free but this does not mean that they do not appreciate to party from time to time.

Our ship visitors, rolling store workers, shop keepers and our many other volunteers gathered on May 20<sup>th</sup> at the Antwerp Harbour Hotel for a party offered as appreciation by the management for the work done during the year.

Chief chaplain Jos Vanhoof took after a few beers his accordion and soon the 'foyer' of the Antwerp Harbour Hotel, became the scene of a wild party with some sea-shanties and 'retro and folkloristic' songs as 'Besame Mucho' or the Antwerp evergreen 'Zie ik de Lichtjes van de Schelde'. Soon the other guests of the AHH joined the party and everyone appreciated our confrencier-comedian father Jos Vanhoof with popular songs as ' My Bonnie is over the ocean' or 'little Tamara'. For sure a party to remember !





*Father Jos Vanhoof as the entertainer of the evening*



*Chief chaplain Jos Vanhoof and his accordeon*



*Many visitors to the AHH enjoyed the party as well*



*Our barmaid Mrs. Corinne Sels ,and some sailors at the party*





**STELLA MARIS**

## *Call for Volunteers*

*Are you interested in our organization ?*

*Do you want to participate?*

*We have vacancies for:*

- *Ship visitors*
- *Shop Keepers*
- *Shop Assistants Rolling Store*

*Please contact our secretariat*

*03/233 34 75*

[contact@aposmar.be](mailto:contact@aposmar.be)

# Antwerp Seafarers' Welfare

## Bus Connexion



## Come to the Seamen's Center

**Antwerp Harbour Hotel Noorderlaan 100 -  
2030 Antwerp Opening hours: 19.00 hrs – 23.00 hrs**

**Bus Company: +32 3 541 18 57**

**Call before 17.00 hrs for free shuttle bus**

Please mention your Ship Name and Berth number.

Be there 15 minutes before the indicated departure at the pick up place.

The bus departure is between 18.30 hrs and 19.15 hrs.

## Right Bank

- |               |               |               |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| ■ 526: 18.30u | ■ 408: 18.41u | ■ 210: 18.52u |
| ■ 500: 18.34u | ■ 330: 18.43u | ■ 209: 18.53u |
| ■ 480: 18.35u | ■ 330: 18.43u | ■ 217: 18.55u |
| ■ 468: 18.36u | ■ 320: 18.45u | ■ 225: 18.57u |
| ■ 420: 18.38u | ■ 310: 18.46u | ■ 253: 18.58  |
| ■ 319: 18.59u | ■ 361: 19:05u | 403: 19:10u   |
| ■ 303: 19.02  | 353: 19.03u   |               |
| ■ 913: 18.30u | ■ 750: 18.45u |               |
| ■ 713: 18.34u | ■ 736: 18.46u |               |
| ■ 863: 18.36u | ■ 730: 18.48u |               |

- 661: 18.37u                      ■ 503: 18.52u
- 641: 18.39u                      ■ 483: 18.54u
- 621: 18.41u                      ■ 457: 18.58u

## Left Bank

(From Antwerp Harbour Hotel ) Free transport back to the Port: 23:00 hrs.

ITC Rubis Terminal 1660 – 1670 . Bus will come to

Main Gate :16.30 hrs

- Antwerp Euro Terminal 1331 – 1313. Bus will come to Ship : 18.33 hrs
- Vopak Terminal 1311 – 1313. Bus will come to
  - Car Park outside Main Gate : 18.40 hrs
  - ICO Rorto Terminal 1235 – 1309. Bus will come to
    - Ship : 18.44 hrs
- Katoen Natie 1225 – 1233. Bus will come Gate France: 18.50 hrs
- Euroports 1205 – 1223. Bus comes to road outside Main Gate. 18.55 hrs
- Antwerp Gas Terminal 1191 – 1195. Bus will come to Main Gate. 19.00hrs
- Belgian Scrap Terminal 1199 – 1203. Bus will come to Main Gate. 19.05 hrs
- ADPO 111 – 1131. Bus comes to road outside Main Gate. 19.05 hrs
- Deurganck Dock Terminal 17.00 – 1712 ; 1714 – 1718; 1732 – 1742.
  - Bus will come to Main Gate. 18.15 hrs

**Free shuttle Bus back to the ship : 23:00 hrs ( be there before 22:45 hrs)**

Stella Maris Chaplains : Fr. Jos Vanhoof - Fr. Jorgedy Bago

Sailors' Society : Port Chaplain: Rev. Marc Schippers

German Seamen's Mission : Port Chaplain: Rev. Jorg Pfautsch

Antwerp Harbour Hotel : Welfare Officer : Ann Van der Sypt

# Our Sponsors



**Port of  
Antwerp  
Bruges**



**Rotary**





**You or your  
company/organization  
wants to support the  
Seafarers Centre ?**

**Go for it!**

***Any contribution is more than  
welcome !***

**For companies we worked out  
special formulas :**

Bronze: 2.500 €

Silver: 5.000 €

Gold: > 5.000 € up to your discretion

Bank account Apostolatus Maris vzw  
to which donations may be paid :

IBAN BE20 3630 5928 8056

BIC : BBRUBEBB

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