



DICASTERY FOR PROMOTING  
INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT



## Apostleship of the Sea

From the Vatican, 14<sup>th</sup> July 2019

Re: XXV World Congress Stella Maris/Apostleship of the Sea and the Centennial Celebration

Dear Bishops Promoters, Regional Coordinators, National Directors, Chaplains and Volunteers,

As it is recorded by Peter Anson: *"A meeting took place in the Catholic Institute, Cochrane Street, [Glasgow] at 8 p.m. on October 4th, [1920] during which the revival of ship-visiting in riverside parishes was discussed."* That night in Glasgow a new era for the Catholic ministry to seafarers began.

The Popes who succeeded in guiding the Church have always blessed and encouraged the growth of this Apostolate.

Pope Pius XI blessed and approved the first Constitution in a letter dated 22 April 1922 *"With the certain knowledge that so noble an initiative, capably supported by the zeal of priestly soul, ..., will spread more and more along the seacoasts of the two hemispheres..."*.

On September 1956, Pius XII referring to the Apostleship of the Sea said: *"We are very much consoled to learn how seamen reaching the world's ports are becoming accustomed to look for the help you are prepared to give them. Besides offering them the spiritual benefits of religion, you extend your Apostleship to social service; and you do well."*

While Pope John XXIII stated that *"This particular situation of the maritime world demands your action...it is desirable that seamen be helped to lead an authentic Catholic life within their milieu. And it is a great pleasure for Us to congratulate you on the good work that you have already accomplished to make more easy the knowledge of Christ..."*

Pope Paul VI, to the people of the sea in Cagliari on 24 April 1970, said: *"... as seafarers, as men, as Christians: the network of the Apostolate of the Sea, now extended to so many ports in the world, does not leave you alone, expects you and assists you; you know that."*

John Paul II in 1982 to the participants of the XVII World Congress in Rome affirmed that *"The Church wishes to bring all the baptized to a fuller and more systematic knowledge of the person and message of Jesus Christ. In fulfilling this mission to seafarers, you face a most challenging and difficult task."*

In 2012 Pope Benedict XVI addressed the participants of the XXIII World Congress in Rome with the following words: *"The vulnerability of seafarers, fishermen and sailors calls for an even more attentive solicitude on the Church's part and should stimulate the motherly care that, through you, she expresses to all those whom you meet in ports and on ships or whom you help on board during those long months at sea."*



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And more recently Pope Francis on July 2018 said at the Angelus: *"I pray for them [seafarers and fishermen] and their families, as well as for the chaplains and volunteers of the Apostleship of the Sea. I offer a special thought to those who experience humiliating working conditions at sea and to those who work to free the seas from pollution."*

From the initial group of people who gathered in Glasgow and of whom we know only three names (Peter F. Anson an Anglican convert, Arthur Gannon and Bro. Daniel Shields SJ), today the Stella Maris/Apostleship of the Sea, is serving seafarers, fishers and their families, around the world, with a global outreach in 261 ports in 55 countries worldwide with over 200 port chaplains and hundreds of ship visitors and volunteers.

One hundred years have passed and this ministry has grown and adjusted to the continuous changes of the maritime industry remaining faithful to the initial mission *"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"*.

With this letter, I wish to announce the **XXV World Congress of the Stella Maris/Apostleship of the Sea and its Centenary Celebration from the 29<sup>th</sup> September to the 4<sup>th</sup> October 2020 in Glasgow – Scotland.**

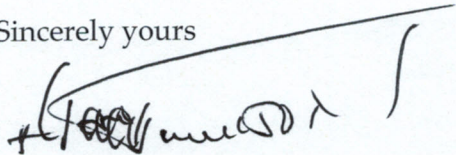
I would like to invite our ecumenical partners, international maritime organizations, representatives from Governments, the shipping industry and civic society to "save the date" and make plans to join our chaplains, volunteers and other personnel for this important event.

The Centenary will be an occasion *to remember the past* and give thanks for all the people who over the past one hundred years have served the people of the sea, *to celebrate the present* and *to chart the future* of our ministry in responding to the evolving needs of seafarers, fishers and their families.

We would like to invite the Presidents of the Episcopal Conferences, Bishops Promoters, Regional Coordinators, National Directors, Chaplains and Volunteers around the world to organize at regional, national and local level celebrations to mark this important event. All these activities will increase awareness and interest in our ministry that will culminate in the *XXV World Congress of the Stella Maris/Apostleship of the Sea and the Centennial Celebration* in Glasgow next year.

May Mary, *Star of the Sea*, guide your actions and bless all chaplains and volunteers who will be involved in these events.

Sincerely yours



Cardinal Peter K. A. Turkson.

Prefect

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To the Presidents of the Episcopal Conferences  
To the Bishops Promoters  
To the Regional Coordinators  
To the National Directors  
To the Chaplains and Volunteers



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# Suggestions in preparation for the Centennial

Below you will find some proposals (everyone should feel free to implement and realize any of them, according to the national and local situation of the Stella Maris/Apostleship of the Sea). Additional suggestions will be shared in the future. They could help to plan and increase awareness of the importance of service to the people of the sea using the unique occasion of the Centenary Celebration. It is understood that to organize and coordinate all the different activities it is necessary to constitute a Committee composed of people who are part of the ministry and experienced in the maritime industry.

## Opening of the year in preparation of the Centennial

The preparation of the Centennial of the foundation of the Stella Maris/Apostleship of the Sea will run from 4<sup>th</sup> October 2019 to 4<sup>th</sup> October 2020. We would like to encourage everyone to celebrate this occasion with a special celebration or with a very simple ceremony in all the Stella Maris Centers or in any church in the Diocese. All the activities and events organized during this year at national and local level should aim to rediscover the history of our ministry, strengthen what has been done, increase awareness of the importance of service to the people of the sea in the local church and eventually start new projects.

- To be continuously reminded of this important event it is suggested to create a countdown clock from October 4, 2019 to October 4, 2020. The countdown clock can be displayed in the Stella Maris Centers, offices, schools and places where general public, seafarers, fishers and their families usually pass by.

## Universal intention of prayer of the Holy Father

The Apostleship of Prayer to which the initial history of the Stella Maris/Apostleship of the Sea is intrinsically connected has decided that the universal intention of prayer of the Holy Father for the month of August 2020 is dedicated to:

*The Maritime World: We pray for all those who work and live from the sea, among them sailors, fishermen and their families.*

- We would like to request chaplains and volunteers, particularly during this month, to preach and share their personal reflections and experiences about the ministry and invite people to pray in a special way for our apostolate and the people whom we serve.

## Celebration of a monthly Stella Maris Mass

Our Lady Star of the Sea, or Stella Maris, has long been the title under which the people of the sea have called on the Virgin Mary for her motherly intercession. She is also considered the patroness of the Stella Maris/Apostleship of the Sea. The Mass may be celebrated as a votive Mass of Our Lady on Saturday, or on any appropriate day that is not a Sunday or other solemnity, and most appropriately on the Stella Maris feast day itself (the last Thursday of September).

- In order to promote the devotion to Our Lady Star of the Sea "Stella Maris" and entrust the people of the sea and the Maritime Apostolate to Her motherly protection, we strongly encourage chaplains to celebrate this mass frequently and mark the feast day in an appropriate way (eg. organize a pilgrimage to a Marian Sanctuary specifically for



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seafarers, fishers and their families, print and distribute different images of Mary Star of the Sea with a prayer at the back, distribute rosaries and foster among the seafarers and their families the Marian prayer, etc.).

### **Celebration of the Centennial with our partners in the maritime industry**

It is important to highlight the contribution that national/international government agencies, civil societies, funding agencies, unions, maritime organizations, ecumenical partners and individuals have had in the growth and development of each Stella Maris/Apostleship of the Sea.

- We would like to suggest that at regional, national and local level celebrations are organized to give thanks for the 100 years of Stella Maris/Apostleship of the Sea inviting the most significant partners of our ministry, including seafarers, fishers and their families. During the celebration it would be proper to recognize their contribution to the development of maritime apostolate in the country.
- In Centers where we work with other Christians denominations, we suggest organizing specific occasions of ecumenical prayer to reiterate the commitment of Stella Maris/Apostleship of the Sea to work in partnership with others.
- To remain faithful to the mission of being *the voice of the voiceless* it might be appropriate to mark the Centenary with a Seminar/Symposium on maritime welfare to promote and defend the human and labour rights of the people of the sea.
- A Centennial Year Award ceremony could be held to recognize the commitment and dedication of organizations and individuals who thanks to their dedication, generosity and support, have contributed to the development and growth of the Stella Maris/Apostleship of the Sea at the National, Diocesan and local level.

### **To the Bishops Conferences and the Apostleship of the Sea Bishop Promoters**

In order to increase the awareness among the Christian faithful and stress the importance of this ministry at the service of the people of the sea, during this Centennial Year, we would like to appeal in a particular way to all the Bishops Conferences and the Apostleship of the Sea Bishop Promoters.

- To give particular prominence to Sea Sunday on July 12, 2020 organizing a celebration in all the Dioceses of the country because even the non-coastal Dioceses benefit from the hard work of seafarers and it is essential they are aware of this ministry.
- Where it is not yet done, on the occasion of the Centennial, during Sea Sunday (July 12, 2020) we strongly suggest to have an extraordinary collection to start/support the Stella Maris/Apostleship of the Sea in the country,.
- To invite Stella Maris/Apostleship of the Sea chaplains and volunteers to share their ministry during meetings of Bishops, clergy and other pastoral gatherings.
- Not to limit the celebration of the Centennial only to a series of beautiful events, we would like to suggest that in 2020 a "Centennial Project" be realized within the country or Diocese as a concrete and tangible sign of the commitment and dedication of the Church to the service of the people of the sea.





- An old quote says: *If you don't know where you've come from, you don't know where you're going.* The Centennial celebration could be the occasion to rediscover history. We encourage, where is not yet done, the commission of a research and write the history of the Stella Maris/Apostleship of the Sea in your country or Dioceses. These different histories would reveal the continuous and universal motherly care that the Church has provided to the people of the sea even before the Stella Maris/Apostleship of the Sea was reorganized and structured in 1920. We would ask you to bring your history to Glasgow to be celebrated together because each individual history is essential for our Centennial celebration.

### **Social Media and other activities**

Where it is possible, utilize in a regular fashion both the social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, etc.) and mass-media (diocesan newsletters, parish bulletins, newspapers and magazines, local TV stations, etc.) for interviews, to share news, articles and information about the Centennial celebration and the Stella Maris/Apostleship of the Sea mission to society at large.

- To inform seafarers, fishers and their families about the global history of the Stella Maris/Apostleship of the Sea and the Centennial celebration.
- Prepare a series of articles/interviews explaining what the mission of a chaplain or a volunteer is.
- To request seafarers, fishers and their families to write and share their personal experience regarding the role that Stella Maris/Apostleship of the Sea played in a particular moment of their life.
- With the creation of specific learning material to involve government/parish Catholic schools and other organizations to know more about the maritime world and the ministry performed by Stella Maris/Apostleship of the Sea for the welfare and wellbeing of the people of the sea.
- Where possible, to invite small groups of people for a ship visit to let them experience first-hand life on board.
- Organize a visit and mass on board, presided over by the Local Bishop, to show the specific concern and care of the Church for the people of the sea.
- Reach out to bring comfort and assistance to seafarers, fishers and their families who are living in situations of neglect and marginalization such as abandonment, detention and hospitalization.

The Stella Maris/Apostleship of the Sea office within the Dicastery for Promoting Human Integral Development would be grateful if you would share your plans or suggest new initiatives to mark the Centennial. Furthermore, we remain available to assist and support the realization of any of these events.

