



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life

Parishes called to acknowledge the vital role of Seafarers in the Year of Mercy

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On Sea Sunday 10 July, Catholic parishes throughout Australia will acknowledge the vital role of over 130,000 Seafarers who transit through Australia's 25 ports while working at sea and the associated, dedicated port chaplains and volunteers. The parish support will be generated through a collection based on the annual, national Sea Sunday appeal.

Last year approximately 20,000 vessels visited Australia. Many of these received support from 15 Apostleship of the Sea Port Chaplains and over 164 Apostleship of the Sea volunteers. In the past twelve months, support was provided to 276 Seafarers who were hospitalised in Australia as a result of a medical emergency or an injury from a vessel at sea. These seafarers are isolated when admitted to hospital and remote from family. The Apostleship of the Sea (AOS) reconnects these sick or injured seafarers with family and continues to support them until discharged, ensuring personal needs are met where possible.

The AOS is the pontifical body with specific pastoral care responsibility for Seafarers - people who work at sea. Seafarers are those on board merchant ships or fishing vessels, and all who for whatever reason have undertaken a voyage by ship.

As a Catholic ministry, Seafarers can attend various AOS centres in seaports around Australia and are provided with a range of pastoral care services appropriate to their needs from practical support to providing sacramental ministry. The work of the laity as AOS volunteers in the ports is an important aspect of this ministry.

Pope Francis in 2014 called on those who work for the wellbeing of seafarers and the families to "be the voice of those workers who live far from their loved ones and face dangerous and difficult situations."

Sea Sunday came to prominence when the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference approved a national annual appeal to support the ministry back in the 1970's. On Sunday 10 July all dioceses, even those in-land that do not have a commercial seaport, are encouraged to support this collection because all of Australia benefits from the labours of seafarers through the use and enjoyment of goods imported as a result of their labours. Parishes are also asked to keep seafarers and their families in their prayers.

The Australian Catholic Bishops Promoter for the AOS, Bishop Bosco Puthur said, 'It is incumbent on the Catholic community in Australia, united as the Body of Christ, to accept responsibility for the pastoral care of the Apostleship of the Sea workers. I call on every parish to share in the financial costs of pastorally supporting the Seafarers and volunteers by contributing in some way to the national collection on Sunday 10 July'.

'I extend my sincere gratitude to all who have donated and supported the national Sea Sunday appeal in the past. Without this support, the care and provision of pastoral services to Seafarers would not be possible.'

Bishop Puthur also acknowledged the service of the Apostleship of the Sea volunteers and he especially thanked Peter Owens, outgoing National Director of the Apostleship of the Sea. 'Peter has supported ports and port chaplains and has maintained contact with many related organisations. Peter has also raised

awareness of the pastoral needs of seafarers who visit Australia. A new National Director will be appointed following careful consideration of the ongoing and changing needs of this ministry.’

Media queries, please contact Aoife Connors on 0450 348 597 or media@catholic.org.au

Background information

- With almost 90 per cent of trade being transported by sea, the maritime industry plays a vital role in the world economy.
- Amongst other services, the AOS looks after Seafarers who are abandoned in port and those who are sick or injured through accidents
- AOS volunteers give witness to their faith in working with this charitable ministry
- The Apostleship of the Sea began under the name of the Apostolate of Prayer formed originally in Glasgow, Scotland on 31 July 1891
- The Australian Chapter commenced in 1902 with Fr Patrick May of St Francis Church, Melbourne, known as St Augustine’s Conference for Seafarers, made up of twelve young men
- In 1922, Pope Pius XI approved the first constitution of the movement known as the Apostleship of the Sea
- Some of the modern challenges facing Seafarers and this industry include: piracy and its impact on Seafarers and their families, Catholic formation for AOS volunteers and Catholic port Chaplains, workplace accidents, the changing face of the international shipping industry, smaller crews due to mechanisation and other developments, shortening turnaround times for container ships
- Workers being increasingly recruited from developing countries where wages are low

Apostleship of the Sea Australia website: <http://aos-australia.org/>