



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Supporting Seafarers working “*in the midst of the storm*”

Media release

Under Embargo until 5 July 2017

Parishes across Australia are called to support the work of Seafarers as part of the annual Sea Sunday Appeal on 9 July. Every dollar raised will help to provide pastoral support for seafaring men, women and their families through the works of Stella Maris centres across Australia.

Seafarers commonly face mental health challenges such as; depression, anxiety or thoughts of suicide given the nature of their work; long hours in highly pressured environments with quick turnarounds at port before heading back out to sea.

Working as crew on board a cruise ship or industrial container tanker can involve long journeys being away from home and unable to see family for weeks and months at a time. As a result, Seafarers often experience isolation, cultural barriers with fellow crew and fatigue.

The Bishops of Australia and Sea Chaplains recognise that loneliness and the mental health of Seafarers is a serious concern and a recurring theme amongst those working in the industry. Therefore the theme of this year’s Sea Sunday Appeal is ‘*In the midst of the storm*’ focusing on the importance of addressing mental health concerns and providing the necessary emotional, psychological and spiritual support to Seafarers who may well be experiencing ‘stormy times’ mentally.

In advance of Sea Sunday, Bishop Bosco Puthur, Australian Catholic Bishops Delegate for Seafarers highlighted the importance of supporting Seafarers who may be experiencing mental health challenges, ‘Our Sea Chaplains know that many Seafarers struggle with mental health conditions. In many cases, loneliness and isolation can be contributing factors to feelings of anxiety, depression or thoughts of suicide. It is important that our Sea Chaplains are resourced to support those working on board. The Sea Sunday Appeal helps us to provide some of the necessary support.’

Currently, ninety per cent of Australia’s trade involves shipping with more than one million Seafarers on the world’s oceans at any one time. While life at sea can be exciting, Seafarers can encounter poor and dangerous working conditions, mental health issues, family isolation and piracy with crews and ships being held hostage.

There are 25 ports operating across Australia supported by 15 Apostleship of the Sea Chaplains or centre managers. The Apostleship relies heavily on generous volunteers, of which there are approximately 160, who live out their faith by welcoming the stranger.

To make a donation supporting the Sea Sunday Appeal, simply transfer funds online to: Stella Maris Seafarers Centre, BSB: 083-347 and Account Number: 649518680 with the reference, ‘Sea Sunday Appeal’.

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