



## **Catholic Church's National Appeal for SEA SUNDAY 12 July 2020**

### **SUGGESTED APPEAL TALK During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

The Theme for this year's Sea Sunday is "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11: 28)

We only have to look around us, in our homes and in our work, to recognise the many commodities that are brought to our shores by cargo ships. In fact, over 95% of global trade is carried by ships.

As an island nation, we in Australia are totally reliant on ships and the commodities they bring to us for our survival.

The Stella Maris (Apostleship of the Sea) ministry has recognised this reality and concerns itself totally with the welfare and pastoral care of seafarers who crew these ships.

By anyone's standards, seafarers are burdened more than most other workers. They are in need, especially at this time of the pandemic, of the rest that Jesus promises in our Gospel theme. They are burdened by:

- Isolation
- Loneliness
- Exploitation
- Wage theft
- Climatic hardship

Physical, sexual and verbal abuse  
Fear of piracy  
Insecure employment etc.

During this Covid-19 period, all these burdens have been exacerbated leading to extreme stress on seafarers working on cargo and cruise ships globally.

We have heard of a frightening increase in suicides onboard ships.

Much was in the media about the Ruby Princess cruise ship and the plight of seafarers on that vessel. Likewise, seafarers are stranded on both cargo and cruise vessels all over the world at this time. Thousands of the seafarers have already been onboard working for 14 months straight, way beyond the end of their contract due to closed borders and Covid-19 restrictions.

The Stella Maris Apostolate has, for the past 100 years, responded to seafarers' needs and has advocated on their behalf regardless of their colour or creed.

During this Covid-19 time, Stella Maris chaplains, managers and volunteers have doubled their efforts around the Australian ports to serve these vulnerable confined seafarers when ships dock.

In light of our Gospel theme, we sought to ease the burdens of these seafarers who did not know when they would see their loved ones again. Some expressions of the Stella Maris ministry have eased their sufferings and brought rest to seafarers through the provision of:

- Chaplaincy services
- Care packs of essential hygiene products
- Phone cards/Wi-Fi
- Warm clothing
- Knitted beanies
- Communication through social media

- Liaison with families
- Telephone Counselling
  
- Live stream Masses for Catholic seafarers
- Advocacy on behalf of seafarers with the maritime industry
- Advocacy with government officials ...

The Stella Maris ministry is dependent on donations both financial and in kind. This annual appeal encourages the Catholic community to acknowledge seafarers as the essential workers they are and to respond by giving back something to them in gratitude for all the sacrifices they endure to make our lives more comfortable.

Please keep seafarers and their families in your prayers and give generously to this appeal.

Mary, Star of the Sea. Pray for us.

[www.aos-australia.org](http://www.aos-australia.org)