

MOTU PROPRIO On The Apostleship Of The Sea

Pope John Paul II

Apostolic Letter Given on 31 January 1997

"Star of the Sea" has long been the favorite title by which seafaring people have called on her in whose protection they have always trusted: the Blessed Virgin Mary. Jesus Christ, her Son, accompanied his disciples in their boat,¹ helped them in their labors and calmed the storms.² Thus the Church also accompanies seamen, taking care of the specific spiritual needs of those who for various reasons live and work in the maritime world.

In order to meet the needs of the special pastoral assistance required by those engaged in fishing and maritime trade, their families, harbor personnel and all who travel by sea, we establish what follows, updating the norms issued in this century, after having heard the opinion of our Brother, the President of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People.

The Apostleship of the Sea

I.

Although the Apostleship of the Sea does not constitute an autonomous canonical entity with its own juridical personality, it is the organization concerned with the specific pastoral care of people of the sea and seeks to support the work of believers called to give witness by their Christian life in this sphere.

Title II

People of the Sea

II.

§1. In this document the following terms are used:

- a) seafarers, those who are actually serving on merchant ships or fishing boats, and those who have undertaken a voyage by ship for any reason.
- b) maritime personnel: 1. seafarers, 2. those who are usually on shipboard because of work; 3. those who work on oil rigs; 4. pensioners retired from the aforesaid jobs; 5. students of maritime academies; 6. those who work in ports.
- c) people of the sea: 1. seafarers and maritime personnel, 2. their spouses, minor children and all those who live in a maritime person's home even if he is not currently a seafarer (for example, pensioners); 3. those who work on a permanent basis with the Apostleship of the Sea.

§2. The chaplains and authorities of the Apostleship of the Sea will do their utmost to enable people of the sea to have easy recourse to the necessary means for living a holy life, and will recognize and promote the mission which all the faithful, and particularly lay people, exercise in the Church and in the maritime world according to their specific state.



III.

Mindful of the unusual circumstances in which people of the sea live, and taking into account the privileges which for many years the Apostolic See has granted these faithful, the following is established:

1. Maritime personnel can fulfil their Easter duty regarding Holy Communion throughout the year, after previously hearing an appropriate homily or catechesis about this precept;
2. Seafarers are not bound by the law of fast and abstinence prescribed in can. 1251: they are advised, however, when taking advantage of this dispensation, to undertake a comparable work of piety in place of the law of abstinence, and, as far as possible, to observe both laws on Good Friday in memory of the passion and death of Jesus Christ;
3. As long as seafarers have regularly gone to confession and received Communion, they can gain a plenary indulgence on the feast of the oratory's titular saint and on 2 August, if they visit the legitimately erected oratory on board with religious piety and devoutly recite there the Lord's Prayer and the Symbol of the Faith (the Our Father and the Creed) for the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff;
4. These same faithful, under the same conditions, can gain one plenary indulgence on 2 November, applicable only to the departed, if they visit the aforementioned oratory with religious piety and recite there the Lord's Prayer and the Symbol of the Faith (the Our Father and the Creed) for the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff;
5. The indulgences mentioned in nn. 3 and 4 can be gained, under the same conditions, by people of the sea in the chapels or oratories where the Apostleship of the Sea is located. On ships which have no oratory, seafarers can gain these indulgences by reciting the same prayers in front of a sacred image.

Title III

The chaplain of the Apostleship of the Sea

IV.

§1. The chaplain of the Apostleship of the Sea is the priest appointed in conformity with art. XII, §2, on whom the same authority confers the office described in can. 564 of the Code of Canon Law, to attend to the spiritual care of people of the sea.

As far as possible, he should be made permanently responsible for this ministry.

§2 The chaplain of the Apostleship of the Sea should be distinguished for his moral integrity, apostolic zeal, prudence and experience of the maritime world. He should be skilled in various languages and enjoy good health.

§3. So that the chaplain of the Apostleship of the Sea can carry out all the aspects of his unique ministry, he must be suitably instructed and carefully trained before this particular pastoral task is entrusted to him.

§4. The chaplain of the Apostleship of the Sea must identify those who show leadership qualities among the local or transient maritime personnel and help them deepen their



Christian faith, their commitment to Christ and their aptitude for creating and guiding a Christian community on board.

§5. The chaplain of the Apostleship of the Sea must identify those maritime personnel who have a special devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and train them so that they can be made extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist by the competent authority and be able to exercise this ministry with dignity, especially on their ships.

§6. The chaplain of the Apostleship of the Sea should provide spiritual assistance in the Stella Maris Centres and in other hospitality centres for maritime personnel.

V.

§1. The chaplain of the Apostleship of the Sea, by virtue of his office, can perform for people of the sea all acts pertaining to the care of souls, with the exception of matrimonial matters.

§2. The faculties of the chaplain of the Apostolate of the Sea are cumulative with those of the parish priest of the territory in which they are actually exercised. For this reason, the chaplain must carry out his pastoral ministry in fraternal understanding with the parish priest of the territory and consult with him

§3. The chaplain of the Apostolate of the Sea must carefully keep a register of those baptized, confirmed and deceased. At the end of the Year he must send a report of what has been done to the national director, described in art. IX, §2, together with an authentic copy of the books, unless the acts were recorded in the registers of the harbour parish.

VI.

All the chaplains of the Apostleship of the Sea, by virtue of their office, have the following special faculties:

- a) to celebrate Mass twice on weekdays, if there is a just cause, and three times on Sundays and feast days, whenever this is required by true pastoral necessity;
- b) to celebrate Mass habitually outside the place of worship, if there is just cause, observing what is prescribed by can. 932 of the Code of Canon Law;
- c) to celebrate a second Mass on the evening of Holy Thursday-the memorial of the Lord's Supper - if this is required for pastoral reasons, in the churches and oratories, and also in the morning, in the case of true necessity and only for the faithful who cannot attend the evening Mass.

VII.

§1. The chaplain of the Apostleship of the Sea who is designated by the competent authority to exercise his ministry during voyages on board ship is obliged to offer spiritual assistance to all who are making the voyage, whether by sea, lake or river, from the start of the trip until its conclusion.

§2. Can. 566 of the Code of Canon Law remaining in force, the chaplain mentioned in the preceding paragraph has the special faculty of administering the sacrament of Confirmation to any of the faithful during the voyage, as long as there is no Bishop on board who is in regular communion with the Apostolic See, and all the canonical prescriptions are always



observed.

§3. In order to assist validly and legally at a marriage during the voyage, the chaplain of the Apostleship of the Sea must be delegated by the Ordinary or by the parish priest of the parish in which one or the other of the contracting parties has a domicile or quasi-domicile or has been staying for at least one month, or, if they are transients, of the harbour parish where they boarded the ship. The chaplain has the obligation to report the details of the celebration to the one delegating him, to be recorded in the marriage registry.

VIII.

§1. The same authority competent for appointing chaplains can entrust a deacon, a layman, or a male religious with the task of assisting with the Apostleship of the Sea. This assistant works with the chaplain and, in accordance with the law, substitutes for those functions which do not require the ministerial priesthood.

§2. Those assisting with the Apostleship of the Sea must be distinguished for their integrity of life, prudence and knowledge of the faith. They should be suitably instructed and carefully trained before this task is entrusted to them.

Title IV

The direction of the Apostleship of the Sea

IX.

§1. In each Episcopal Conference with maritime territory there should be a Bishop promoter who is responsible for fostering the Apostleship of the Sea. The Episcopal Conference itself will appoint the Bishop promoter, preferably from among the Bishops of Dioceses with seaports, indicating the duration of his appointment and communicating its details to the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People.

§2. The Bishop promoter will choose a suitable priest and present him to the Episcopal Conference, which will issue a written decree appointing him for a determinate period of time as national director of the Apostleship of the Sea, with the duties prescribed in art. **XI.** and it will also inform the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People of his name and the duration of his appointment. The national director may be assisted by an apostolic worker.

X.

The tasks of the Bishop promoter are as follows:

1) to give directives to the national director, to follow his activities attentively and to give him appropriate suggestions and advice, so that he can properly carry out the tasks entrusted to him;

2) to request, at the appointed times and whenever it seems appropriate, a report on the pastoral assistance given to maritime personnel and on the work done by the national director;



3) to transmit the report, mentioned in n. 2, to the Episcopal Conference together with his own opinion and to encourage interest in this specific apostolate among the other Bishops;

4) to be in contact with the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People regarding everything that concerns the Apostleship of the Sea, and to transmit the communications he has received to the national director;

5) to present to the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People an annual report on the situation of the Apostleship of the Sea in his country.

XI.

The principal duties of the national director are:

1) to maintain relations with the Bishops of his own country regarding all that concerns the spiritual good of maritime personnel;

2) to send, at least once a year, a report on the status animarum and pastoral care of maritime personnel in his own country to the Bishop promoter: in this report he is to explain both the activities which had a positive result and those which were perhaps less successful, as well as any corrective action taken to avoid losses and, lastly, whatever seems useful for increasing the Apostleship of the Sea;

3) to promote the specific training that chaplains should receive;

4) to guide chaplains of the Apostleship of the Sea without prejudice to the right of the local Ordinary;

5) to make sure that chaplains diligently fulfil their duties and observe the prescriptions of the Holy See and the local Ordinary;

6) to hold, with the consent of the Bishop promoter and according to the circumstances of the time conventions and spiritual exercises for the chaplains of the whole nation, or for chaplains and other faithful who work with the Apostleship of the Sea;

7) to encourage and to develop the apostolate of the laity with particular concern, fostering their active participation and mindful of the diversity of their outlooks;

8) to establish and maintain regular contact with associations and aid institutions, both Catholic and non-Catholic, and with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which also pursue the goals proper to the Apostleship of the Sea;

9) to visit frequently the places where the activities of the Apostleship of the Sea take place;

10) to send an authentic copy of the baptismal confirmation and death registers to the competent episcopal curia, prepared by himself or by the chaplains;

11) as soon as possible to inform the parish priest where the parties concerned have a domicile of the data that must be recorded in the parish books;

12) to establish relations with the Apostleship of the Sea in neighbouring countries, and to



represent his own country at the regional or continental level;

13) to maintain regular contact with the regional coordinator mentioned in art. XIII, §1, 6.

XII.

§1. It is the right and duty of the diocesan Bishop to offer pastoral assistance with zealous concern to all maritime personnel who reside, even for a short time' within his jurisdiction.

§2. The diocesan Bishop is responsible for:

- 1) determining the most suitable forms of pastoral care for maritime personnel;
- 2) appointing, in agreement with the national director, chaplains for the Apostleship of the Sea in his Diocese, and granting them the necessary mandate;
- 3) granting permission for an oratory to be built on a ship listed in the public registry of a port located within the territory of his jurisdiction.

XIII.

§1. The Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, which is responsible for the overall direction of the Apostleship of the Sea, has the principal duty to:

- 1) issue instructions, in accordance with can. 34 of the Code of Canon Law, give exhortations, suggestions, etc. concerning pastoral assistance to people of the sea;
- 2) prudently see that this ministry is carried out in accordance with the law and in a dignified and fruitful way;
- 3) exercise the functions proper to the Apostolic See regarding associations, with respect to other associations encompassed by the Apostleship of the Sea;
- 4) offer its own assistance to all who are involved in this apostolic work by encouraging and supporting them, and also by providing for the correction of possible abuses;
- 5) promote an ecumenical spirit in the maritime world, at the same time seeing that this is done in faithful harmony with the doctrine and discipline of the Church;
- 6) appoint a coordinator for a region including various Episcopal Conferences, at the suggestion of the Bishop promoters concerned, and specify his functions.

§2. So that the pastoral care of people of the sea may be better and more effectively organized, the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People should encourage and foster the co-operation and reciprocal co-ordination of projects with the Episcopal Conferences and with the local Ordinaries. The same dicastery will establish relations with institutes of consecrated life and with associations and organizations that can co-operate at the international level with the Apostleship of the Sea.

We order all these things to have lasting effect, whatever to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given in Rome at St. Peter's, on 31 January 1997, the nineteenth year of Our Pontificate.



ENDNOTES

1 Cf. Mt 8:23-27; Mk 4:35-41; Lk 8:22-25.

2 Cf. Mt 14:22-33; Mk 6:47-52; Jn 6:16-21.

19 March 1997

Taken from:

L'Osservatore Romano
Weekly Edition in English
date, page

L'Osservatore Romano is the newspaper of the Holy See.
The Weekly Edition in English is published for the US by:

The Cathedral Foundation
L'Osservatore Romano English Edition
320 Cathedral St.
Baltimore, MD 21201
Subscriptions: (410) 547-5315
Fax: (410) 332-1069
lormail@catholicreview.org

