

## Apostleship of the Sea

# Sea Sunday: 13th July 2008

## A message for Sea Sunday from the Bishop Promoters of the Apostleship of the Sea.



**Today is Sea Sunday, when the Church remembers all those who live and work at sea.**

Many people have never stopped to consider how important seafarers are to our standard of living. Without them we would not have most of the items we use in our everyday lives. In our current industrial world, 90% of world trade travels by sea, as does 95% of all goods imported into the UK. This level of shipping means that 150,000 merchant ships arrive in British ports each year, and there are hundreds of thousands of seafarers working on ships each day, to bring us the goods we use and consume every day.

Many of these seafarers do not have the quality of life on board ships that every human has the right to. Globalisation has resulted in most seafarers being recruited from poorer developing countries where wages are lower, they work long hours for little pay, are sometimes enduring dangerous working conditions and are often lonely, tired and spiritually deprived. Seafarers spend up to 12 months at a time away from wives, sons, daughters and friends on the high seas, while their families back home are missing them terribly.

The Apostleship of the Sea (AOS) deploys port chaplains and ship visitors to welcome merchant seafarers to our shores as our brothers and sisters, regardless of race, nationality or creed. Seafarers are visited onboard their ships or taken to well-equipped seafarers centres, and their pastoral and practical needs are provided for. They are given the opportunity to contact loved ones back home via phone or internet, relax, get a change of clothes; or even just pop to the shops to pick up much needed supplies. For a seafarer who feels unloved and under-valued, a chaplain's hand of friendship can make an enormous difference to his or her physical and spiritual wellbeing.

As many as 600,000 seafarers who visit our shores each year are Catholics, and AOS chaplaincy teams give them the opportunity to receive the sacraments and be re-connected to the life of the Church if they wish. However, whether or not a seafarer is Catholic, or indeed religious, AOS provides the presence of Christ and his Church in their midst.

However far our parish communities may be from the sea, each of us benefits from the work of seafarers and so each of us has a part to play in supporting the Church's outreach to seafarers. That is why as bishops and promoters of the work of AOS, we strongly encourage you to pray for seafarers and those who minister to them on our behalf. We also encourage you to support AOS financially, as you are able, and especially today on Sea Sunday. The money you give in the special donation envelopes provided for Sea Sunday, remembering to sign the Gift Aid declaration on the back if you are a UK taxpayer, increasing the value of the gift at no additional cost, makes a very real difference to the lives of vulnerable, lonely and deprived seafarers. On their behalf, we would like to thank you very much for your support.

*+ Tom M Burns*

Rt Rev Thomas M Burns SM  
Bishop in Ordinary to HM Forces  
AOS Bishop Promoter, England & Wales

*+ Peter A Moran*

Rt Rev Peter A Moran  
Bishop of Aberdeen  
AOS Bishop Promoter, Scotland