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'Being There': how Catholic chaplains support seafarers in the UK

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St Mary's
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London

Benedict XVI
Centre for Religion
and Society



**Apostleship
of the Sea**
Supporting Seafarers Worldwide



'Being There': How Catholic chaplains support seafarers in the UK

Francesca E. S. Montemaggi
Stephen Bullivant
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Key findings

1. Our modern, globalised economy is heavily dependent on the international shipping industry and, moreover, on those who work in it. Tens of thousands of seafarers visit British ports each year, making brief stops – perhaps of only a few hours – after days or weeks at sea. These ‘people of the sea’ (St John Paul II) remain almost invisible to the rest of the community, even in towns and cities whose own prosperity relies greatly on the shipping industry.

2. The world’s seafarers lead hard lives. Away from home for months at a time, they have only rare opportunities to contact their families. They live and work in closely confined environments with few comforts or opportunities for leisure. Global economic pressures, especially in the wake of the 2008 crash, have conspired to keep wages low and job insecurity high.

3. The Apostleship of the Sea, continuing a tradition that goes back to the Early Church, offers vital forms of aid and assistance to all seafarers, regardless of religion or nationality. This ‘simple response to immediate needs and specific situations’ which is chief among ‘the essential elements of Christian and ecclesial charity’ (Benedict XVI) takes a variety of forms. Among much else, AoS chaplains and ship visitors offer conversation, provide practical advice, assist seafarers in contacting families back home, and – when and where problems arise – liaise with medical services, police, port authorities.

4. In addition to practising these corporal works of mercy (cf. Matthew 25.31-46), AoS chaplains have a special mission to meet the spiritual and sacramental needs of seafarers. This is especially important, since seafarers typically come from countries with high rates of religiosity. Catholics, in particular, are disproportionately present within the shipping industry: Filipinos alone account for around a third of all seafarers. The AoS, and its partners in other countries, are the primary source of pastoral support to this vast, floating Catholic community. This too may take many forms. Most notably, AoS chaplains and ship visitors provide seafarers with often their only opportunities to go to confession and/or Mass during months-long contracts.

5. In order to continue its vital work, under the patronage of Our Lady, Star of the Sea (‘Stella Maris’), the AoS relies on the support of the wider Catholic community. In many ports, very close links exist with local parishes and schools: these provide prayers, ship visiting volunteers, Christmas and Easter gifts, and all manner of other helps, great and small. Initiatives bringing local people and visiting seafarers into contact are especially to be encouraged: people who have lived in port towns all their lives have often never met a seafarer, or have anything but the haziest idea of what goes on behind the port gates.

6. Seafaring ought not, however, only be of interest or concern to those who live in close proximity to the nation’s major shipping hubs. In a modern global economy, every person is a beneficiary of the hard (and sometimes dangerous) work of the world’s seafarers. Helping the AoS in assisting these vital workers, and providing for their personal, social, and spiritual needs, is something that all individuals – not least Catholic communities such as parishes and schools – might therefore consider prioritising.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Apostleship of the Sea for their cooperation in this research and all the chaplains and ship visitors who have participated. In particular, we are grateful to the chaplains and ship visitors in the ports visited during fieldwork in Southampton, Fawley, Hull, Goole, Immingham, Teignmouth, Plymouth, Milford Haven, Pembroke, Bristol, and Tilbury. Needless to say, we are indebted to the many seafarers we spoke to, for their time and hospitality – and indeed, for the work they do.

About the project team

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Professor Stephen Bullivant is Director of the Benedict XVI Centre for Religion and Society at St Mary's University, Twickenham. He has held visiting positions at the Universities of Oxford, Manchester, and University College London. His research in the sociology of religion has received extensive media coverage, including by the BBC, Sky News, *The Times*, *The Guardian*, *Time*, *The Economist*, *Le Figaro*, and *Der Spiegel*.

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About the Centre

The Benedict XVI Centre for Religion and Society was launched at St Mary's University, Twickenham, in 2016. It was named in recognition of the Pope Emeritus' role, over many years, as a leading contributor to public and academic debates concerning the relationship of religion and the social sciences. St Mary's was proud to host Pope Benedict during his 2010 Papal Visit to the United Kingdom.

The Centre is founded upon the conviction that interdisciplinary research, in which the sciences are brought into direct engagement with theology and ethics, is central to the life of a Catholic university (cf. Pope St John Paul II, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, 46). Accordingly, through publications, media activity, events, and attracting research students, we seek to make a major contribution to academic, ecclesial, and public debates concerning the place of religion (and nonreligion) within contemporary societies.

Our series of free, public reports aim to put research and strategic thinking that is both academically rigorous and pastorally useful at the service of the Catholic Church and wider society. Our previous reports are:

- *Contemporary Catholicism in England and Wales: A Statistical Report Based on Recent British Social Attitudes Data* (2016)
- *The Take-up of Free School Meals in Catholic Schools in England and Wales* (2017)
- *The 'No Religion' Population of Britain: Recent Data from the British Social Attitudes Survey (2015) and the European Social Survey (2014)* (2017)
- *Europe's Young Adults and Religion: Findings from the European Social Survey (2014-16) to Inform the 2018 Synod of Bishops* (2018; also in French)

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Introduction: Seafaring and the work of AoS chaplains

Containerization of the shipping industry and the consequent removal of ever larger ships from older dock areas to places allowing their speedy discharge has rendered shipping almost invisible. The days, often weeks, once spent in port by ships unloading, have been replaced by hours. Most Christian maritime activity has become as invisible as the shipping it serves, though the various churches continue to work diligently for the welfare of seafarers, with highly mobile chaplains and lay ship visitors. The Church, in its various manifestations from earliest times has been involved to a greater or lesser extent in the lives of those who travel by sea, and continues to be so. (Miller 2012: 13)

On a taxi in Southampton, I got asked the reason for my visit. When I told the taxi-driver that I was going on ships to talk to seafarers, he replied that there would not be any ships that day. In fact, there were ships – containers, oil tankers, coasters – just not cruise ships. Most people think of cruise ships when they think of ships at all; yet shipping has an enormous impact on our consumer lives. It is at once the industry that is most globalised and on which all countries depend for the trade of goods; yet it is also the one that is most distant from people's consciousness. Shipping happens in ports that are at the edge of a town or even far away from it. It is removed from daily experience. Seafarers are largely ignored by the media and are not at the top of the agenda in policy terms.

The figure of the seafarer is still at times romanticised as the man who leads an adventurous life travelling the world. In reality, seafarers are men and women who spend much of their lives in confined spaces unable to talk to their families, visit ports and their often uninspiring facilities for a few hours when they are lucky, and who may face work exploitation and bullying. The shipping industry has undergone profound changes since the mid-1970s. Its globalised character makes it difficult to regulate, opening the possibility of driving down standards in working conditions, health and safety, and pay. Recent economic and technological shifts have led to an increase in working time and reduced crews. All this makes the life of seafarers a life of sacrifice.

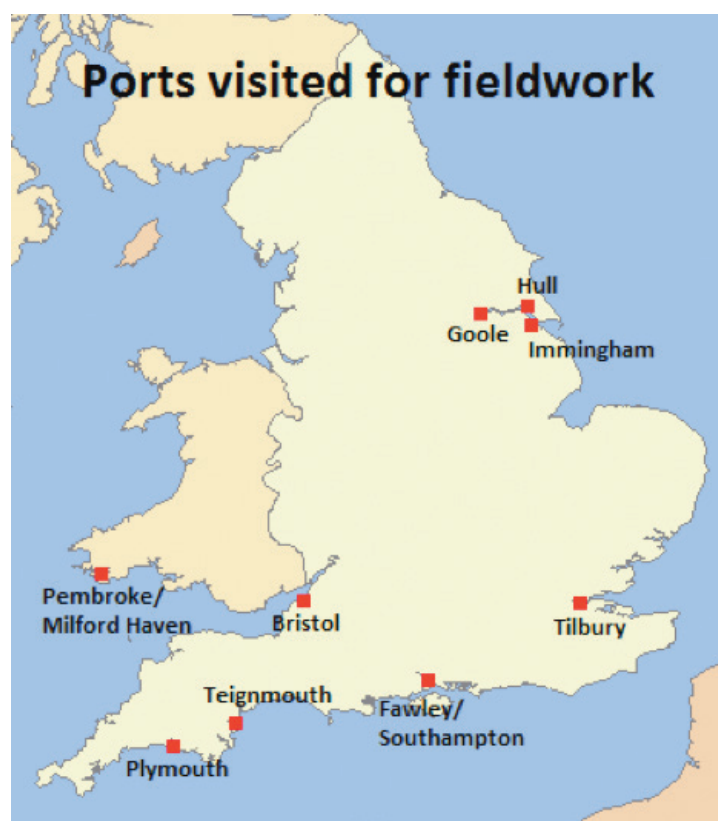
The chaplains of the Apostleship of the Sea (AoS) are on the front-line of the shipping industry, playing a vital role in supporting seafarers. They do so by providing means of communication and transport in port. This allows seafarers to contact their families at home, visit the seafarers' centre in port, or the port town. They alert port authorities to problems on board. They give pastoral care and organise Mass on board or ashore, when requested by seafarers. They offer seafarers a simple conversation that is not work-related. Thus they bridge the world of land and sea and make seafarers visible. Chaplains' focus on human encounter makes seafarers feel recognised as human beings. They provide a valuable service.

The present research, primarily undertaken between October 2016 and February 2017, aimed to identify how chaplains support seafarers and meet their needs. The research consisted of unstructured interviews with all 16 AoS chaplains, as well as six AoS ship visitors, a Church of England chaplain, and a chaplain from the German Mission to the Sea. Visits to 11 ports were made, incorporating ship visits and informal interviews with seafarers and some port workers. The ports visited were: Southampton, Fawley, Hull, Goole, Immingham,

Teignmouth, Plymouth, Milford Haven, Pembroke, Bristol, and Tilbury. Vessels visited ranged from the very small to the very large, including carriers, container-ships, and oil tankers. In summer 2017, a further phase of research was conducted, involving discussions with several people involved with AoS in various ways, an interview with the parish priest of Immingham, and correspondence with the former Rector of the National Shrine of Our Mother of Perpetual Help in the Phillipines (a place dear to the hearts of many Filipino migrant workers and their families).

A central theme that emerged during the research is the 'invisibility' of seafarers. Seafarers are for the most part invisible to ordinary people, to the media, and to policy-makers. They not only feel isolated during the long months at sea, but feel secluded from land society. I took the opportunity of interviewing several seafarers when they accepted a lift from the port of Pembroke to the shopping centre in Milford Haven. As they left they thanked me and told me that only their families ask them about their work.

Seafarers are invisible to the world and little heard. Shipping is also mostly removed from everyday life, as the abovequoted comment from the taxi-driver shows. Hence the decision to include visual methods to capture the reality of life and work of seafarers and chaplains. This offers a distinctive way of communicating research that is sensory and therefore affective, which is not possible to attain through conventional methods (Pink 2006 and 2011; Hockings 2003). The photos were taken with the consent and, often, enthusiasm of seafarers.



The present report begins by exploring the working conditions of seafarers and how this impacts on their lives on board and ashore. In the first section, we provide an overview of shipping as a truly global industry. This has wrought significant changes to working conditions leading to an increasingly insecure workforce. Technological changes, such as automation, have reduced the levels of crew but increased their working time. The second section explores how the organization of the work of seafarers impacts on their lives, their health, contact with their families, and their communities. In the third section, the work of AoS chaplains is examined on the basis of the port visits. The fourth section suggests an understanding of the ethos guiding chaplains and ship visitors. The report concludes with recommendations for the attention of AoS.

NB: The research was undertaken by a team of three researchers, all of whom contributed to writing and editing this final report. However, with the exception of an exploratory visit (prior to the main fieldwork period) to Fawley and Southampton by Dr Montemaggi and Prof. Bullivant together, all other ship-visiting and interviewing were conducted by a single researcher (normally Dr Montemaggi). As such, we have retained the use of the first-person singular when recounting anecdotes, vignettes, or conversations.

1. The work of seafarers



1.1 Introduction

Significant transformations have taken place in the shipping industry since the mid-1970s. As the industry became more global, the work has become more insecure. Flags of convenience and sub-contracting have increased, making the maintenance of good standards arduous. Today, crews are multinational with a particular growth in Filipino and Chinese seafarers (Zhao and Amante 2005). Competition from countries with lower income has increased casualization while automation has led to cuts in crew sizes and increased working times. Increase in productivity has come from reduced time in ports and significant cuts to crew size, such as from 40-50 to 20-30 (Couper et al. 1999: 11). The industry suffers from an undersupply of officers, an oversupply of ratings, and, above all, an unsustainable surplus of ships that are expensive to run and keep berthed in port. According to the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS 2015), the global demand for seafarers is estimated at approximately 790,500 officers and 754,500 ratings, suggesting a current global shortage of about 16,500 officers (2.1%) but a surplus of about 119,000 ratings (15.8%).

The 2008 economic crisis had a significant impact on the shipping industry, inflicting huge losses (Kalgora and Tshibuyi 2016). Being a highly global industry, shipping has perhaps suffered from the financial crisis more than other industries. Prices fell dramatically while many ships sailed half-empty. Orders for new ships were cancelled and projects for proposed shipyards abandoned. According to a report by Der Spiegel, in the spring of 2008, just before the crisis, it cost \$30,000 a day to charter a ship containing 2,500 standard containers. In December, that price had dropped to less than \$12,000 (Shulz 2008). The situation today shows little improvement. The industry suffers from overcapacity, worsened by the lengthy construction of new ships that are coming into service now although ordered years ago (Tovey 2016; France24 2017).

1.2 Seafarers' employment

The shipping industry's woes have put extra pressure on cutting costs, which have impacted adversely on the working terms and conditions of seafarers (Dimitrova 2010). The rise in flags of convenience has given freedom to recruit from anywhere at lower wages and worse conditions for seafarers, including lower protection in matters of ship safety and health on-board (Couper et al. 1999: 11). The research points to an increased work load, decreased job security, and higher levels of stress (Collins et al. 2000; Agterberg and Passchier 1998).

Seafarers work on a casual basis and are contracted for the voyage (Sampson 2013; Walters and Bailey 2013). This makes seafaring a highly insecure job. To be able to ensure new contracts, seafarers rely on maintaining good relationships with their superiors on board and with crewing agencies (Bloor 2011: 976). Ratings, seafarers with no qualifications, seek lengthy contracts to ensure they have a regular income, however these often mean spending up to 12 months on a ship and away from home. The duration of the contract of employment is a concern for most seafarers. Typically contracts for ratings are between 9 and 12 months. Between contracts, ratings might get one or two months off, although that depends on the availability of employment. Officers are generally on shorter contracts, between four and six months, with four months off (Alderton et al. 2004). Shipping companies prefer lengthy contracts. Filipinos have a reputation for being willing to work for longer periods, which is reflected in ratings being disproportionately from the Philippines (see Table 1). In fact, Filipinos make up an estimated 27.8% of all seafarers: a higher proportion than the second, third, fourth, and fifth largest nationalities combined. Among ratings, the proportion is even higher: 36.7%, the same as contributed by the second- to ninth-placed countries combined. As will be explored in more detail below (see section 2.4), this has important implications for the religious and spiritual care of seafarers.

Table 1: Estimated Top Five Nationalities of Seafarers in 2003 (Ellis and Sampson 2003: 14, 18)

Nationality	Est. % of global seafarers (all rankings)	Est. % of global seafarers (ratings only)
Philippines	27.8	36.7
Russia	7.0	5.5
India	6.6	5.2
Ukraine	6.4	5.9
China	6.1	6.3

The recruitment of seafarers happens through agencies; these, as in any industry, may vary in reputation and quality.¹ Seafarers can also sometimes face high costs for identity documents, for example with visa requirements in US ports; shipping companies not complying with contracts, including delaying payment or repatriation; and inadequate food and accommodation aboard (Amante 2003). Grievance procedures are little known, with seafarers often unwilling to come forward and denounce abuse for fear of dismissal. Whistle-blowing protection depends largely on the country's legislation. The rights of workers are in tension with the pursuit of profit of shipping companies (Nichols and Walters 2013; Walters and Bailey 2013). This is made acute by the structural weaknesses of the industry in terms of oversupply of ships and ratings.

The Maritime Labour Convention of 2006 (see International Labour Organization 2017) was a breakthrough. The Convention set minimum standards for the conditions of work for seafarers, including minimum age, hours of work and rest, payment of wages, annual leave, repatriation, accommodation and food, recreational facilities, health and safety, accident prevention, and grievance procedures. The rights of the Convention are to be enforced by the port authority. The Convention has had a positive impact on the work and life of seafarers and shows that the 'race to the bottom' is not inevitable. It is an example of "a transnational regulatory regime," which combines "the powers of government and international agencies, labor unions, and employer associations" (Fink 2011: 201).

The Convention has, at least on paper, granted rights to seafarers to stand up to exploitation. Nevertheless, problems remain. Controls are stricter in ports in Western Europe, America, Australia, and Japan, while they can be non-existent in other parts of the world. Different countries, therefore, offer widely different levels of support and protection. Higher ranking seafarers feel safer in raising concerns and are able to bring court cases against shipping companies (Goetsch 2016). Meanwhile, those in lower positions who aspire to rising up through the ranks are discouraged from bringing forward cases of exploitation.

1.3 Seafarers' Ranks

Commercial ships, notwithstanding being civilian, retain much of the military hierarchy of the Navy. The crew is divided into officers and ratings (seafarers with no qualifications). Smaller ships will have around six crew members, medium ships normally 10, and larger ships up to c. 25. Thus the number of officers and ratings vary depending on the ship. The rank hierarchy is as follows:

Senior and Junior Officers:

Captain/Master		
Deck Department	Engine Department	Catering Department
Chief Officer	Chief Engineer	Chief Cook
Second Officer	Second Engineer	Assistant Cook
Third Officer	Third Engineer	
Cadet	Fourth Engineer	

Petty Officers:

Boatswain/Bosun	Electrician	Chief Steward
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Ratings:

Able Seaman (AB)	Oiler	Messman
Ordinary Seaman (OS)	Wiper	

The position in the ranks determines the length of the employment contract. As mentioned previously, ratings are often contracted for a period ranging from nine to 12 months, while officers' contracts range between four to seven months. This varies depending on nationality of the seafarers, the flag, and the shipping company, as well as the vessel type (Dimitrova 2010: 52). In the ports visited, ratings were predominantly Filipinos on long contracts (between nine and 11 months) and willing to extend them to ensure extra earnings. Some seafarers save and study to get the qualifications to become officers. However, training costs are all borne by seafarers. Filipinos, to whom I have spoken, prized qualifications from the UK. However these are very expensive. They told me they would cost around £12,000.

A Filipino seafarer, at sea for 19 years, told me that he was content to be of the rank of 'AB' (Able Seaman) and did not contemplate qualifications because of his family commitments. The onus of professional development and the ability to get constantly new contracts lie with the individual seafarer, which impacts on their level of insecurity and family life. Training requires them to take time off work to study, which is often away from their families. Rising in the ranks is however financially and personally rewarding. A 65-year-old Engineer on \$3,000 a month told me that his son was making \$5,500 a month as an officer. The undersupply of officers means higher salaries with even manning agencies 'poaching' officers from one company to another (Magramo et al. 2010).

The seafarer's position in the ranks is multifaceted, and is not limited to its financial dimension, but it shapes one's life and identity on board. Seafarers work in teams in separate spaces, such as on deck, in the engine room, or across these boundaries as electricians often do. The spatial and role differentiation of the ship mean that seafarers identify with their workplace in terms of space and teams. A second engineer talking about relationships on the ship told me that they worked well together in the engine room, but that 'on deck things are a little different'. The work space and role thus create smaller teams in a workplace that has, at most, 20-25 people.

The identification with one's ranking led to a humorous exchange between a seafarer and a chaplain. The chaplain was taking down the details of the seafarer to return the change he owed for the payment of a SIM card. He asked the seafarer for his name, to which the seafarer replied 'third engineer'. The chaplain smiled and commented that it was a really good name for him and that his mother had been prescient. The seafarer blushed.

Rank hierarchy organises the labour and power aboard. The Captain is at the top, setting the tone for the rest of the crew. The Captain is 'king' controlling not just "the work aboard the vessel but the living arrangements, and to a great extent, the out of work activities of all the crew" (Sampson 2013: 79). The Captain's authority can be easily abused, but it can also foster team-working and ensure that the crew gets adequate rest and leisure together. During the course of the research, seafarers commented that officers can make their work and life on board harder or a lot better. They can be too demanding and even bully crew members, or ensure that crew members work well together and that they have the opportunity of leisure activities together. This was valued by some of the crew to whom I spoke.

One seafarer, an AB, told me that the Captain makes the difference by providing good facilities, giving rest to the crew, ensuring safety on board, facilitating team-working, and getting people to get along together. I was told of some incidents where the Captain bullied the cook. The AoS chaplain was involved and had serious concerns. The young Messman was scared and cried with the chaplain: he wanted the Captain arrested. AoS wanted to speak to the ship company.

The matter was referred to the Police. Once the Captain had been replaced, things ran smoothly and there were no longer problems aboard the ship. This is an example of how Captains can make life aboard hard or easier.

[T]he single most important factor influencing the ‘happiness’ experienced on board was the approach and attitude of the Master [i.e., Captain]. Where Masters encouraged ‘parties’, sports tournaments, or ‘horse racing’, social integration appeared to thrive. (Kahveci et al. 2002: 12)

Power does not lie solely with the Captain, but also with the shipping company. A good relationship with the company is essential for seafarers to secure a new contract. Seafarers might also feel loyal to the shipping company (Kahveci 2003: 65), yet Kahveci speculates that this may also be the result of the insecure nature of their employment (Kahveci 2003: 70). I asked seafarers about discrimination, on the basis of sex and nationality, and I was told that there are instances of discrimination, but that also depends on the company. If the company provides training and ensures standardised conduct, the crew’s conduct and the working environment are better.

1.4 The dominance of work

The ship has been seen as a ‘total institution’. It organises the life and work of seafarers through ranks, the division of labour and time, and spatially. Seafarers also “live, as they work, under the ever present surveillance of their ‘superiors’” (Sampson 2013: 79). The ship is the workplace and, yet, it is also the home of seafarers for many months. During longer voyages, when the ship is not in port, seafarers have more time to rest. However, leisure opportunities and facilities on ships can be limited. Efficient ships often mean that space is organised to accommodate as much cargo as possible to the detriment of leisure facilities, such as gyms and common rooms. Larger and better equipped ships can often offer gyms and even swimming-pools.

Most ships I visited had a small gym, a mess room, and a smoking room. Smaller vessels mean seafarers are in close contact with one another with little privacy and space to rest. The very small vessels had small cabins and a mess room and no recreation room, smoking room, or other facilities. On one vessel, the Captain smoked in the mess room and the smell of the smoke was everywhere. Smaller ships are also frequently in port, perhaps every few days, making rest more difficult.

The busiest time for seafarers is when they arrive in port. As the ship arrives, seafarers begin the work of unloading and loading cargo. Although much of the process is automated, seafarers are still needed to ensure automation works. Therefore automation often adds work to an already restricted time frame. I was told by chaplains that at times, if seafarers arrive late at night, they work through the night to be able to leave early in the morning. Although this is illegal, they “lie on the books.” Free time in port is being eroded in an effort to cut costs. As a result, seafarers, including senior officers, might not be able get off the ship and have time off. I have spoken to a seafarer who had been at sea for 48 days before arriving in Immingham, and for 72 days leading up to the stop before that.

The work of the ship is prioritised above all else. If something needs doing on board a way is found to get it done. There are no holidays, no concessions to sea sickness or minor ailments, little concession to weather conditions and no account at all of the time of day or night when a ship enters port... Work dominates all experiences of life at sea.” (Sampson 2013: 88)

2. The life of a seafarer



2.1 Introduction

Seafarers live in two separate worlds: land and sea. They spend significant amounts of time on land mostly when they are at home off work. Only a fraction of seafarers, mostly working aboard bulk carriers, spend more than a few hours ashore when in port. At sea, seafarers cannot escape the workplace. They have breaks, but no real separation between work and rest. The constraints on time aboard and ashore are an important feature of seafaring life. As one of the chaplains put it: “every day is Monday. There is no free time.” The erosion of rest and leisure has a severe impact on the mental and physical health of seafarers.

2.2 Health and Well-being

Seafaring can be a dangerous occupation. Working on ships carries risks of injuries and ill-health (Roberts et al. 2014; Hansen et al. 2002; Mayhew 1999; Lane 2002; Lefkowitz et al. 2015). However, life at sea also comes with a heavy psychological and emotional toll (Parker et al. 1997; Bloor et al. 2000; Wadsworth et al. 2008). The most important factors impacting on the mental health of seafarers are separation from family, loneliness on board, fatigue, being in a multi-national environment where communication can be difficult, limited recreation activity, and sleep deprivation (Carotenuto et al. 2012). The rapid turnaround in ports generates fatigue (Smith et al. 2008), which, in turn, can lead to accidents and lowered awareness of risk (Allen et al. 2008; Wellens et al. 2005).

In Pembroke, I met two health workers from the Italian charity Fondazione Centro Internazionale Radio-Medico (CIRM). CIRM is a non-profit organisation providing tele-medicine to all ships around the world. I was told that they have 4800 cases a year and that they are the only ones who follow each case from the first call to the resolution, including hospital discharge or repatriation. They carry out preventative health checks twice a year on each ship, as required by Italian law. When I met them they carried out checks on a Malta flagged ship because the shipping company also owns four Italian-flagged ships. The company realised that the checks ensure the well-being of the crew so they extended them to the two Malta-flagged ships.

2.3 Communities at Sea

The separation between sea and land is at the centre of seafaring culture and identity (Lamvik 2002). Life at sea gives seafarers a distinctive identity: “To be a professional seafarer involves a membership in an alternative society or reality” (ibid.: 66). Shared occupational culture helps seafarers bond together. This is kept alive by seafarers telling each other stories of things that have happened on other ships and to other shipmates, such as good and bad captains,

bars visited, storms, ports, food, and agents. Crews form working relationships aboard. They have a lifestyle in common, so “crews of complete strangers nevertheless find familiar, integrating social mechanisms” (Alderton et al. 2004: 97).

Seafarers belong to a community like no other. One that is in transit and temporary, for the duration of one’s contract. Seafarers see themselves as outsiders to the rest of society (Thomas and Bailey 2006; Sampson 2005); for instance they are not up-to-date with current affairs and they often can’t relate to the topics of conversations when they’re at home (Li 2011: 110). They might travel the world, but their time ashore is often brief. They mostly inhabit the ship, which is transnational in terms of crew, with a strong occupational culture, but located nowhere.

Ships are places where displaced people come together and form occupational communities, which are themselves isolated from wider society. (Alderton et al. 2004: 104)

Relationships aboard are also transient, discontinuous, and superficial (Thomas 2003: 50-51; Kahveci et al. 2002: 9). Cuts in levels of crew also mean fewer opportunities to socialise on board, which compounds the social isolation that seafarers face in being away at sea for several months (Chapman 1992; Forsyth 1988). Ships are also the place of work, where talking about one’s loneliness or problems at home can be seen as ‘over-disclosure’ (Sampson 2013: 120). Some feel that, in some cases, “the ship could, and should, provide welcome respite from problems; both talk of them, and consideration of them” (Sampson 2013: 120). However, in most cases, the separation between the two realms of land and sea also comports emotional restraint aboard of the vessel.

Seafarers attributed the avoidance of ‘emotional talk’ or deep conversation to concerns about confidentiality, or not wishing to ‘bring anyone else down’. Captains talked about the responsibility and social distance necessitated by their position, prohibiting emotional disclosure. (Thomas 2003: 54)

The increase in female seafarers has added gender dynamics to the mix of relationships aboard. Female seafarers often ‘act like the men’ to be accepted by the rest of the crew. Yet, research shows that female seafarers are marginalised not only on board vessels, but also in their training. Maritime colleges in the Philippines can reinforce prejudices against women’s participation in seafaring (Acejo and Abila 2016).

Masculine norms and values are so dominant in the occupational culture of seafaring that even a subtle sign of femininity can be taken as a marker of difference at sea. (Kitada 2013: 219)

In the hierarchical ‘total institution’ of the ship, the division in ranks, especially when it is also along the lines of nationality, as it often is, can create divisions among the crew. There are normally no more than three different nationalities represented on board. Research on Filipino seafarers found that Filipino ratings speak their native language to create a more familiar and informal environment.

The form of personal interaction in the mess room and during mealtimes provided a less formal interaction. Through these approaches, they were able to cope with the isolation brought about by physical distance, and were able to acquire a sense of sociality similar to that found at home. Such familiarity, according to most of the Filipino seafarers interviewed, was regarded as akin to being members in a family and made them feel in tune with the crew members’ general outlook. (Acejo 2012: 81)

2.4 Families

Seafarers contact their families when they reach a port. The satellite phone aboard is expensive and the possibility of sending emails is limited. When they arrive in port, seafarers’ main preoccupation is accessing wifi to communicate with their families. They do so by purchasing SIM cards for their mobile phones or accessing wifi in port facilities, if there are any, or in town if it is sufficiently close. When visiting a ship at the port of Immingham, a Russian ship had just arrived. The Captain told us that they were too busy to receive us. During that very brief conversation, one of the crew asked us if there was free wifi at the ‘seamen’s club’ and was immediately told off by the Captain in Russian. The implication, it seemed, was that he should not be thinking of the internet when there was much work to be done.

Modern technology has made contact with one’s family a lot easier and more frequent. This is of great importance for couples who are separated for long stretches of time. However, for seafarers communication is limited primarily to the times when the ship is in port, which are also the times when they are very busy with work or very tired. During a ship visit in Milford Haven, at the prospect of going ashore, a seafarer said “I don’t want to go on shore. I want to call and sleep.”

The physical separation from the family can make seafarers feel strangers to the life of their families. Seafarers at times feel they are seen as ‘the bank’ by their families and find it difficult to adjust to family life at such intermittent periods (Sampson 2013: 126). Communicating with home enables seafarers to participate, at least to some extent, in decisions affecting the household, including “decisions regarding their children’s welfare and their families’ financial investments” (Acejo 2012: 74). The physical separation between seafarers and their families has also the effect of creating two distinct physical and mental spaces: work and home. As Thomas et al. noted, “this separation was sufficient for seafarers to refer to having ‘two lives’, or ‘two selves’ or existing in ‘two worlds’” (2003: 35). The dichotomy between the ‘two lives’ means that seafarers need to adjust to family life, when back at home, moving “from ‘regimented life’ on board to disorder of children and family life” (ibid.: 39).

During a ship visit, the Filipino Captain told me frankly that he felt lonely. When he was young, he was attracted by the adventure, but now “it’s just the money.” He wants to teach in nautical colleges on land so that he can be with his family. During the visit, he was very enthusiastic and very happy to hear that there would be Christmas carols that evening. He told me and the chaplain that this was the lengthiest conversation he had had for some time with anyone other than the crew. Seafarers receive many visits and nearly all of them are work-related. When asked when it had been the last time they had seen a welfare worker aboard of their vessel, 72% of the seafarers surveyed said that they have not seen any welfare worker during their contract. Only 6% had seen a ship visitor during the previous week, 13% had seen one in the previous month, and 9% more than a month before (Kahveci 2007: 20).

The loneliness of seafarers is, however, only part of the picture. Their physical distance and irregular communication imposes serious burdens on their families. Male seafarers, as the majority still are, expect their wives to run the home on their own. They need to be independent and self-reliant. However, a seafarer with an independent wife and one who is accustomed to take the daily decisions for the household can sometimes feel that he lacks a role when he is back at home (Alderton et al. 2004: 147; Thomas et al. 2003: 137). Seafarers’ wives reported feigning helplessness when their husbands were at home so as to make them feel of assistance and belonging to the home (Alderton et al. 2004: 148).

Seafarers' wives often find themselves being single-parents for many months at a time, with few opportunities to socialise outside the home, and suffering from loneliness and isolation (Thomas 2003: 59). This is particularly so for women with small children, who are limited in being involved with activities outside the home. Lack of understanding of each other's difficult lives puts further stress on the couple with much of the emotional work done by the women (Thomas 2003: 64). Seafarers' partners are also stigmatised or labelled by others around them. As research has found:

The seafarer-partner identity thus seems likely to attract others' intrusive attention. Some envy seafarer-partners' having money; some sympathise and feel sorry for seafarer-partners' sufferings; and some suspect seafarer-partners' motivation for entering relationships with seafarers. (Tang 2007: 52)

The family sits in a network of ties. This is particularly so for Filipino (Acejo 2012) and Chinese seafarers (Li 2011), whose societies are typically more communitarian than Western societies. In this context, seafarers have duties towards the family, but also towards the local community. In the case of Filipinos, many seafarers will have received help in order to be supported in their education and to be offered employment. The gifts that seafarers bring home are thus no mere souvenirs and are not limited to the immediate family. They are inserted within the system of local ties and are, hence, signs of gratitude and one's position in the community. Accordingly, those who have helped the seafarer most in achieving his position rank higher in the gift pecking order.

Those who were instrumental in helping him achieve his current status would rank high on the list and would probably get more expensive presents. This included people who helped him finish his education, referred him to manning agencies, lent him money when he was wanting, or other relatives who helped him and his family, financially or otherwise, when it was most needed. The practice of gift-giving allowed him to sustain ties and retain his status. (Acejo 2012: 74-75)

Gift-giving is one of the ways in which the seafarer reconnects with the home community. Seafarers are expected to socialise and buy acquaintances a drink once they are back in the community. Remittances – i.e., funds transferred back home by those working abroad – are another means through which seafarers reinforce familial and community bonds.

Remittances also found their way to distant relatives, neighbours and friends. Aside from the government's mandatory remittance policy, sending remittances enacted varied roles, including being a 'father', a 'son', an 'immediate relative', a 'friend' and a 'neighbour'. Foremost among these was the sense of reciprocity seafarers feel for their families. (Acejo 2012: 76)

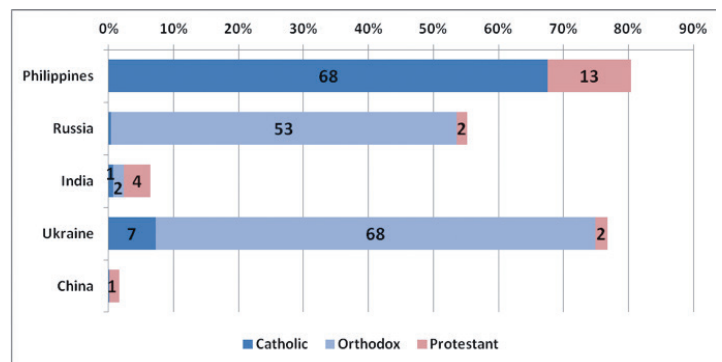
Remittances are also used to pay for local celebrations and to fund relatives' studies. Seafarers' salaries are very high by Filipino standards. Seafarers are seen as wealthy, socially mobile, international workers and this is reflected in the expectations from the community to give something back. Gift-giving ranges from informal to formal and extremely precise, including gifts of specific brands (Acejo 2013: 145-146). The strong sense of duty towards family and community means seafarers are prepared to sacrifice themselves for many years in order to give their families a comfortable life. As a Filipino AB, who has been

at sea since 1989, told me, seafaring is a "sacrifice for the family, the only good thing about it is to support the family." Nevertheless, being at sea is not all bad. Seafarers' comments go from depicting the ship as a prison and joking about being released at the end of the contract to saying that they enjoyed their work and company aboard. "Life is good", one tells me. Little things, like "conversation, karaoke, a little drink", can go a long way.

2.5 Religion

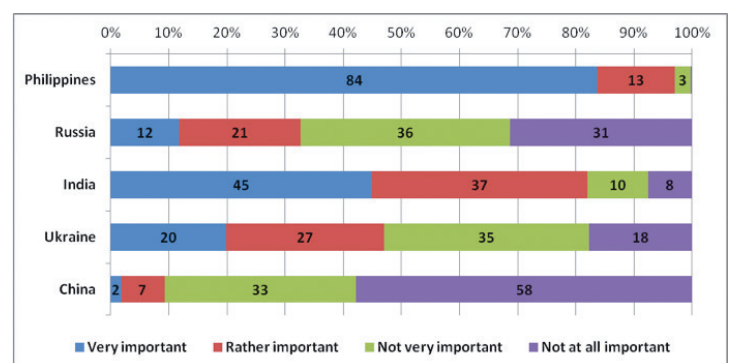
Detailed statistics on the religious identities, beliefs, and practices of seafarers specifically do not, unfortunately, exist. Some indication can, however, be gleaned from high-quality datasets focusing on seafarers' main countries of origin. Given that seafarers are overwhelmingly male, and an estimated over four-fifths are aged between 21 and 50 (Ellis and Sampson 2003: 15-16), it makes sense to limit one's focus to these groups. Accordingly, Figs 1-3 present 2013 data from the World Values Survey on the religiosity of males aged 21-50 in the Philippines, Russia, India, Ukraine, and China. As noted above (see 1.1), these are the five most numerous nationalities of seafarers globally, together accounting for around 54% of the total (and 59% of ratings alone).

Fig. 1: Christian Identity of Males aged 21-50 in Top Five Seafaring Countries of Origin



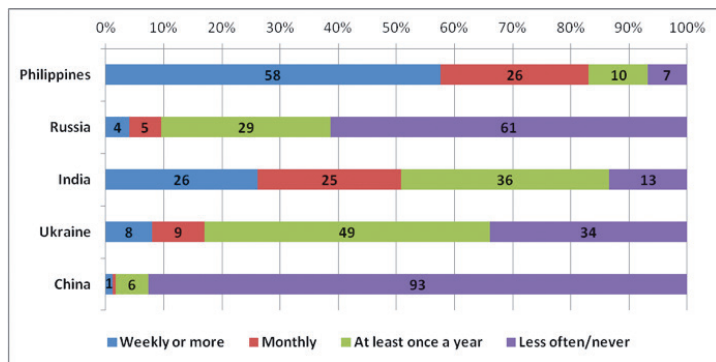
Source: World Values Survey 2010-14 (Wave 6). Weighted data. Valid N values for each country range between 375 (Philippines) and 751 (China).

Fig. 2: Importance of Religion to Males aged 21-50 in Top Five Seafaring Countries of Origin



Source: World Values Survey 2010-14 (Wave 6). Weighted data. Valid N values for each country range between 373 (Philippines) and 751 (China).

Fig. 3: Frequency of Church/Religious Service Attendance among Males aged 21-50 in Top Five Seafaring Countries of Origin



Source: World Values Survey 2010-14 (Wave 6). Weighted data. Valid N values for each country range between 372 (Philippines) and 776 (China).

As is clear from these graphs, there is a great deal of variance between the nationalities. It is nevertheless clear that a large number of seafarers come from cultures in which levels of religious conviction and practice, even among young to middle-aged adult men (not typically the most religious demographic of a given population), are much higher than one would expect in Britain. Moreover, a clear majority of our target demographic in the Philippines, Russia, and the Ukraine identify as Christians of some kind. In the present context, the remarkably high levels of Catholic identity (68%), religion being 'very' or 'rather' important (97%), and weekly-or-more religious attendance (58%), in the Philippines are of special importance. As noted previously, Filipinos form, by a very large margin, the biggest national grouping of seafarers. Also worth noting, though not picked up in these national statistics, is the large proportion of Catholics in the Indian coastal region of Kerala. There are good reasons (supported by anecdotal evidence) for supposing that Catholics make up a much higher proportion of Indian seafarers than they do of the Indian population as a whole.

This has important, though all-too-often overlooked, ramifications for the pastoral care of seafarers. The idea of people having distinct 'religious' or 'spiritual needs' – both as ends in themselves, and as impacting upon other areas of wellbeing (especially mental) – has received widespread attention in several areas of health, welfare, and care provision. Indeed, this is a primary rationale for the public funding of chaplaincy services in the National Health Service, the Prisons Service, and the Armed Forces. At the most basic level, this body of research has two main implications for AoS (and indeed, for other religious seafarers' organisations):

- Meeting the religious and/or spiritual needs of seafarers is a significant 'purpose' in itself, all the more so given their comparatively high levels of religiosity (much higher, for example, than is typical among British Armed Forces personnel, NHS users, or prisoners).
- Religious and/or spiritual needs cannot properly be separated from other areas of material, social, physical, or mental wellbeing. In order effectively 'to care for the whole person', then this aspect of their lives cannot be overlooked. Again, this is all the more true when considering people whose religious identities form a much stronger part of their 'sense of self' than we might be used to in Britain.

Not incidentally, these observations are in harmony with the authentic Catholic understanding of charity – *caritas*, love. Moreover, while Christian charity is not, and must not be used as, a front for coercive proselytism: 'this does not mean that charitable activity must somehow

leave God and Christ aside. For it is always concerned with the whole man. Often the deepest cause of suffering is the very absence of God' (Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 2005, art. 31).

At the seafarers' centre in Immingham, a Filipino motor man tells me that they have just arrived from China after 48 days at sea and that, before this trip, they travelled for 72 days from the north of Norway to China. He is looking at a big map of the world that is on the wall in the corridor. I ask him where he is from and I show him Italy, where I am from. He asks me how long I have been here and I tell him 19 years and that I go home two or three times a year, but that I had not seen my family for nine months last time. I tell him I skype, but that on skype I can't hug my dog. I ask him how he stays strong. He tells me 'prayer'. He prays before he works, before he goes to sleep, and when the weather is bad. The motor man had tears in his eyes. The separation from one's family is the most difficult part of the job. Praying is part of seafarers' coping strategy – both their own prayers, and knowing that they are the beneficiaries of prayers from their loved ones back home.

Seafarers appreciate seafarers' centres as these offer the opportunity to meet and talk to people, including priests, and also to pray (Kahveci 2007: 23). The ship environment does not allow time and space for spiritual and emotional needs, including counselling after traumatic events, such as deaths at sea or pirates' attacks (Kahveci 2007: 22, 34). Our own fieldwork confirms the findings of earlier researchers: that seafarers regard their spiritual needs as important as physical ones, yet they feel that their spiritual needs are not being met (Kahveci 2007: 27). This is particularly the case in ports outside of Western countries and Japan. Kahveci found that seafarers were very familiar with the Apostleship of the Sea/Stella Maris, as well as other religious missions, and often identify visitors by their name (2007: 15). Regular contact with the same ship helps chaplains establish relationships with seafarers.

In order to understand the religious needs of seafarers and the work of AoS chaplains, it is important to appreciate the relational aspect of religion (Montemaggi 2017). In public debates in the Western and mainly Protestant world, religion is seen as personal belief; yet for many religious people it is primarily expressed through relationships (Montemaggi 2017). It is hard and futile to disentangle the "need for connectedness" of seafarers from their religiosity (Tordillo 2007: 254) and their desire to celebrate Mass in community with others. Spirituality and religiosity are lived in relationships, which is why chaplains focus on creating relationships with seafarers. A chaplain told me that Catholicism answers basic human questions: "does anybody love me?" He joked: "that's why God was invented".

Finally, of importance here also is the culturally embedded nature of religious practice and devotion. Again to use Filipino seafarers as an example (although the same point applies far more widely), it is worth stressing that Filipino Catholicism tends to be expressed far more devotionally than is now common in Britain. This is frequently mediated through specific devotions and pilgrimage sites, whose feast days are of serious religious, cultural, and family significance to their often millions of devotees. Among the most popular of these are the Black Nazarene of Quiapo, and Our Mother of Perpetual Help at Baclaran (both in Metro-Manila), and the *Santo Niño* of the island of Cebu (a gift from Magellan in 1521, and similar in appearance to the Infant of Prague). The National Shrine of Our Mother of Perpetual Help at Baclaran is a particular focus for Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) and their families, and receives thousands of letters and emails every week requesting prayers or expressing gratitude for ones granted. The Redemptorist-run Shrine also hosts a St John Neumann Center for Migrants, which offers counselling and other support for the families of overseas workers including, naturally, seafarers.²

Also worth noting are the Philippines' own two homegrown saints: St Lorenzo Ruiz and St Pedro Calungsod. Both were martyred while working abroad, and each thus has a significant following as an unofficial 'Patron Saint of OFWs'. In addition to the spiritual significance that participation in such devotions, even if only to the extent of having a small *Santo Niño* icon in one's bunk, may have for seafarers, they also offer a very tangible connection to home.

3. The work of AoS chaplains



3.1 Introduction

AoS chaplains are men and women, some ordained, some not, who are employed by AoS on a full time or part time basis to look after the needs of seafarers coming to the ports of the UK. At the time of writing, there were 16 AoS chaplains in the UK. At its most fundamental, the work of AoS chaplains is to support seafarers in any way they can. In this they incarnate what Benedict XVI once described as the very first of "the essential elements of Christian and ecclesial charity":

Following the example given in the parable of the Good Samaritan, Christian charity is first of all the simple response to immediate needs and specific situations: feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, caring for and healing the sick, visiting those in prison, etc. (*Deus Caritas Est*, 2005, art. 31)

At this immediate, practical level, through ship-visiting chaplains seek to help seafarers communicate with their families and friends back home, offer them transport, or provide them with information about local transport and facilities. In many ports, chaplains bring SIM cards, which they sell to seafarers. If the port has a seafarers' centre, they invite seafarers to go and inform them of the facilities there, such as wifi, food and drink, and entertainment.

Travelling under the international brand of 'Stella Maris', they are well-respected and welcome visitors on board ships – often invited to join crew members for a drink or meal, for example (a courtesy often extended to us during fieldwork). This is despite the fact that being in port is normally a particularly busy time, with a tight turnaround for loading and/or unloading cargo. Simply taking this time to sit and chat with seafarers is, in and of itself, an important part of the AoS mission to seafarers. It is worth remembering that for many seafarers, in port for perhaps only a few hours, this is the only not-directly-work-related contact they will have with someone from their host country.

As such, the full benefit of the chaplains' and ship visitors' 'welcoming of the stranger' (cf. Matthew 25.31-46) cannot simply be reduced to the provision of things, services, or information (however important these might be). Hence to quote once more from Pope Benedict's systematic meditation on Christian charitable love:

We are dealing with human beings, and human beings always need something more than technically proper care. They need humanity. They need heartfelt concern. Those who work for the Church's charitable organizations must be distinguished by the fact that they do not merely meet the needs of the moment, but they dedicate themselves to others with heartfelt concern, enabling them to experience the richness of their humanity. (*Deus Caritas Est*, 2005, art. 31)

In this role, chaplains also serve as a neutral, independent person to talk to – someone to whom the stresses and strains of life on board, or personal problems, might be confided, or with whom (when necessary) welfare or legal concerns can be broached.

Seafarers also know that AoS chaplains and ship visitors are people with whom one can talk about religion – and indeed, ask to pray for, or with, them. If time allows, which admittedly it very often doesn't, chaplains can also arrange for Confessions to be heard (either by themselves, if priests, or by a willing local priest), for Mass to be said on board or in seafarers' centres (where available), or to transport people to services at local churches. One priest I spoke to mentioned that a recent seafarers' Mass had been the first that several worshippers had been able to attend in nine months' voyaging. In light of this, it is perhaps worth remembering here a point often made by Pope Francis, that 'the Church is not [merely] a humanitarian agency, the Church is not an NGO' (Francis 2013: 2) He urges Catholic organizations to take care 'that charity is not reduced to philanthropy, and that the Church does not end up by becoming an NGO' (Francis 2016a). Rather,

The Church brings Jesus: this is the centre of the Church, to carry Jesus! If, as a hypothesis, the Church were not to bring Jesus, she would be a dead Church. The Church must bring Jesus, the love of Jesus, the charity of Jesus. (Francis 2013)

The ports visited differed widely among themselves. The geography of the port impacts on seafarers, and it also determines how chaplains approach and support them. Some ports are far away from towns, some are on the town's doorstep. Some have a seafarers' centre, whereas some do not. For instance, Immingham is the largest port in the UK. It has a bus service taking seafarers from the outer berths to the seafarers' centre. The closest town that offers some shopping and leisure is Grimsby, which is around half an hour by taxi, depending on traffic. Being short of time, seafarers may thus only spend time in the seafarers' centre. The presence of the centre allows chaplains to operate from it and invite seafarers to come to the centre. In contrast, the port of Southampton has the largest tonnage but is located at the doorstep of the city and has no seafarers' centre. This means that seafarers would try to go to the city and require information on the city.

Seafarers can walk to the centre of town from the ports of Hull, Southampton, Pembroke, Teignmouth, and Plymouth. In contrast, they need to rely on taxis to reach a town or shopping centre if they arrive at the ports of Milford Haven, Fawley, and Bristol. Chaplains often offer free transportation from the port to the nearest town. This is sometimes the only means of transport for seafarers. For instance, the chaplain and ship visitors in Milford Haven offer free transport to seafarers and often take them to a shopping centre in Milford Haven, as there is no longer a seafarers' centre. They also take seafarers

from Pembroke to Milford Haven and back. The ease and costs of transportation often make the difference between seafarers being able to go ashore or not (Kahveci 2007: 5).

Kahveci's research highlighted the information leaflet produced by the Stella Maris Friends Venice for the port of Venice-Marghera, Italy, as an example of best practice. Seafarers appreciated leaflets with a map and local information, including seafarers' centres, shops, and places of worship (Kahveci 2007: 26). Not all UK chaplains give out leaflets, but I noticed that seafarers were keen to have leaflets with maps and information, which they passed around the crew. In Immingham, the chaplain offered a lift to a seafarer, who rushed to change clothes to come in the car with us. By the time he was back, word had got around and more seafarers wanted a lift than could be accommodated.

In many ports, chaplains sell SIM cards to seafarers so that they can contact their families. At first, this looks like a complicated operation. Seafarers often queue to buy SIM cards or surround the chaplain waiting to be next. Chaplains generally offer two or three types of SIM cards. Seafarers often want a SIM card with a good amount of 'data' to skype home, but sometimes they prefer to call home. Some SIM cards are better for calling and/or for calling from specific countries, and some for data to use on the internet. This is something that chaplains and volunteers learn on the job. Chaplains often find this side of the job unappealing. They are aware that it is very important for seafarers, but they are sometimes uncomfortable with handling money, and find it frustrating having to explain the features of different SIM cards without sounding like a salesperson.

The operation requires some trust. Seafarers need to trust chaplains to know which SIM card is best for them and that it will work on their mobile, and that the chaplains will return with change if seafarers cannot pay the exact amount for the SIM card. Sometimes this is not straightforward. Dealing with suspicious seafarers requires a lot of patience on the part of the chaplain, who needs to explain the same thing to each seafarer. The selling of SIM cards, generally in euros or dollars, also involves handling money and changing currencies, which might not be easy in all ports. In this respect, the provision of wifi in port can simplify the work of chaplains. However, not all seafarers have the opportunity to get ashore, especially when the turnaround is very quick.

In Teignmouth and Plymouth, the chaplain and ship visitors did not sell SIM cards, but offered seafarers an AoS room in the port with free wifi and tea and coffee facilities. The rooms are accessible 24 hours a day through the use of a code. Teignmouth and Plymouth are relatively small ports and there are days when no ships are docked. Therefore, the buying and selling of SIM cards was felt to be less of a priority as seafarers can easily access wifi in the AoS room provided. Seafarers can walk from the ship to the room in five to 10 minutes and can access it at any time. As mentioned previously, the geography of the port and the region is fundamental to the activities of chaplains and how chaplains engage with seafarers and other agencies.

Geography and time impact on chaplains as well as seafarers. Chaplains are often pressed for time. This can be as a result of the tight schedule of a ship turn around or the number of ships in port. Once a chaplain recounted that the Captain of a ship was suffering from a severe headache, but there was no gangway and only little time to get him the medicines needed. So the chaplain threw the medicines on board and the Captain thanked him with a megaphone. The time that chaplains use in getting SIM cards aboard, offering transport, or, in this case, taking medicines aboard, saves time to seafarers. While many seafarers are not financially poor (although many send a

significant proportion of their earnings back home), they are often 'time poor' and deprived of energy. The very practical work of chaplains supports them and they find it valuable. A seafarer, while visiting a ship in Southampton, told me that he was very grateful to Stella Maris for "doing things for them", for "connecting them with their loved ones."

3.2 Bridging sea and land

AoS chaplains are known to represent a charity and to provide assistance, but they are not necessarily known as chaplains of the Apostleship of the Sea. Among Filipinos the name Stella Maris is often recognised, while most other seafarers tend to refer to them as 'seamen's club'. Chaplains tend to say that they are from Stella Maris as this is better recognised. This is something that is of significance as easily identifiable branding can help in building trust and relationships and avoid misunderstanding. Seafarers receive many visitors on board from different agencies in the port. Sometimes visits include salespeople and, in some cases, these might not be trustworthy. Chaplains approach the ship in a high visibility jacket and hard hat, like any other visitor, thus by announcing a name that is associated with support for seafarers entry can be easier.

The specific environment of the port and the transitory nature of seafaring makes the encounter more challenging. Chaplains in schools, prisons, and hospitals have more time for building relationships. The relationship with seafarers is often based on an immediate impression. For seafarers, chaplains might be just another person in high-visibility and hard hat boarding the ship. It is, therefore, important that they can be easily recognised as people who can support them in their work. As a chaplain put it: "People want things from them. We go on board and ask if they need help with anything."

Breaking down barriers comes from the chaplains' and ship visitors' ability to connect with seafarers in their own personal way. Chaplains and ship visitors bring their own personality aboard, from the softly-spoken to the lightly-bantering. Bringing SIM cards or gifts justifies chaplains' presence on board, especially for those who might be reluctant to accept visitors. Speaking languages, such as Russian and Polish, also opens doors. As one chaplain recounted, sometimes "it's only because I open my mouth with broken Russian that they tell me things." As I learned to thank Filipinos by saying *salamat* (thank you) and asking if everything was *mabuti* (fine), I noticed they were pleased by my minimal effort to pay homage to their language.

Seafarers are strangers at the edge of our land. They are not immigrant residents or tourists. They are present for a very short period of time, from a few hours to a few days and, only exceptionally, a couple of weeks. Their stay is regulated by their work schedule and far too often limited to the port. They receive many visits and most conversations would be in English. The effort of chaplains, and of AoS more widely, to learn more about seafarers' language and culture is not simply a response to a practical need, but it recognises the dignity of the other. The practical help that chaplains provide to seafarers is extremely beneficial, but, even if less tangible, the recognition of the other, no matter how fraught, is of great value.

Engaging with seafarers also entails understanding how their lifestyle impacts on their view of the world. A ship visitor told me that seafarers travel the world but their life is "cocooned". They are confined to the ship. They only know the ship, so they are often not aware of customs and social norms. He tells Filipinos not to photograph girls in cafés or to talk to children to avoid possible misunderstandings. In doing so, chaplains, who are aware of UK cultural norms, translate them for seafarers. Seafarers are a constituency, heterogeneous in culture, but who share a very particular lifestyle that is little known outside of the

industry. Chaplains can thus be a bridge for seafarers into life on land, but crucially also for our society.

The bridging between 'sea and land' is threefold: firstly, chaplains talk about the work-life and needs of seafarers to the media, churches, and other audiences. Secondly, chaplains build relationships with local parishes and Catholic schools locally and regionally. Thirdly, chaplains liaise with other agencies, such as the port authorities, the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), police and hospitals. In the first instance, communicating the experience of seafarers to the wider world makes visible people who are otherwise largely invisible. When I visited Immingham, reporters from the BBC World Service were filming a documentary on chaplains to seafarers. This points to AoS being engaged with mainstream media and being recognised for its work. However, media interest on seafaring is limited. As one chaplain said: "there is no publicity of disasters at sea".

The second instance of chaplains' effort of bridging the world of seafarers with land-based society is their engagement with parishes, Catholic schools, Catholic women's groups, and local clubs. Besides publicising their work and the life of seafarers, this allows chaplains to have a network of support. Parishes and schools organise Christmas gifts for seafarers, which are taken aboard during December and the beginning of January. It is also the way in which most volunteers, but also chaplains, get recruited. Several chaplains and ship visitors told me that they became interested in the work of AoS after a talk by an AoS chaplain. Chaplains give visibility to seafarers by telling their stories, so that they are no longer just workers at sea, but human beings in a difficult environment.

The most important such relationship is with those parishes within which the ports themselves sit, and/or other nearby ones. In many cases, these communities have a long and deep involvement with "the people of the sea" (John Paul II 1997). At its most fruitful, the local parish can become an indispensable partner in the work of the local AoS chaplaincy. Although, as so often, much depends on the local parish priest. To give one very positive example here, the relatively new parish priest at Immingham (one of whose three churches is named, tellingly, "Our Lady, Star of Sea")³ recalls that visiting the AoS chaplain was "virtually the first thing I did" upon arrival. He describes his own, direct contributions to AoS' work as "provid[ing] a sort of supply service", offering Confessions and Mass on board ship or at the seafarers' centre when requested by the port's fulltime priest-chaplain. Above and beyond his own personal contributions, the parish as a whole supports AoS's work in various ways. In addition to a financial collection on Sea Sunday each July, there are also collections of Christmas shoeboxes (see 4.3) and Easter Eggs. Each of the three churches has its own dedicated AoS volunteer, and several of the AoS port chaplaincy team are parishioners. Nevertheless, the parish priest is keen further to strengthen these links. He notes that for many of the several dozen parishioners who came to a recent Mass in the seafarers' centre, this was the first time they had ever been inside the port complex. He therefore intends to hold regular parish Masses there, bringing local Catholic worshippers into contact with some of the thousands of fellow Catholics who visit their parish every year. Plans are also afoot to have parishioners commit to spending a few hours in the seafarers' centre each evening, welcoming visitors.

Chaplains, in the third instance, are an important link between seafarers and agencies on land. In all the ports I have visited, AoS chaplains maintained good relationships with the other agencies, such as the ITF, the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, the police, and the local Port Authorities. This is crucial in raising any problems seafarers encounter, such as breaches of contract, bullying, ill-health, and bereavement. As noted earlier, seafarers trust chaplains with confidential information

knowing that they will not bring about formal proceedings without the consent of the seafarer. Chaplains thus play an important role in ensuring the welfare of seafarers by working alongside other agencies. However, a chaplain pointed out that one needs to be mindful of the fact that other agencies "have different agendas, different ways of seeing seafarers, of acting, different speeds and focus."

AoS chaplains seek to focus on the person of the seafarer and empower them to make their own decisions. They are often the 'first port of call' for seafarers who are facing problems. What a chaplain found challenging was that she had to stand back and find a way to work with seafarers rather than just solve the problem. As she stated: "It's for seafarers to find the way to solve a problem, it's not about finding the answers for them, but trying to get the best information. They are not informed enough. They have no time and energy. They need encouragement to take up the issue." Also, sometimes seafarers are not free to follow a course of action that can solve the problem for fear of losing their job. Chaplains, unlike some other agencies, do not simply follow a set procedure. They hear the complaint and offer to inform the relevant authorities while leaving the choice of what to do with the seafarer. At times seafarers do not want to act, but want to get it off their chest.

3.3 Trust and Presence

The ability of chaplains to hear seafarers' complaints and suggest ways to redress the situation is highly dependent on building trust as an individual and organisation with seafarers, and on confidentiality. Over and over again, chaplains pointed to the need to be discreet, as letting agencies know of an issue can set into motion actions that seafarers might not want to take. For instance, medical emergencies are normally raised through agents, but agents would need to notify the company. This might lead to seafarers being sent home by the company with loss of salary and potentially being seen as unreliable. Seafarers prefer contacting chaplains in order to try to solve any medical issues that are minor. Chaplains offer the opportunity to talk to someone about a problem and reflect upon it.

Chaplains have limited time on the ship and sit in common areas. It is therefore not easy for seafarers to broach some subjects. Yet it is their presence that allows seafarers to open up. As one of the chaplains noted, "Today seafarers have many numbers and help available online, but if you're not there and speak to them, they won't look for help. I stayed with a Filipino crew for more than two hours. I asked them whether everything was fine. They all seemed fine, then when I was going away, they tell me that they hadn't been paid for five months." Building a relationship is easier when ships come into the same port regularly. In many cases, seafarers spend a short time in port and sail for another quickly. Yet, even in cases where seafarers are unwilling to take a course of action to solve a problem, as may be with bullying or a breach of contract, or might not have the necessary time, chaplains can link them to other chaplains or authorities in the next port.

The trust put in each individual chaplain is trust put in the organisation as a whole. Thus, the ability for seafarers to know what the Apostleship of the Sea does and its trustworthiness is of great significance. In this light, it must be admitted that the name 'Apostleship of the Sea' is not itself well-recognized or understood by seafarers themselves. That is not surprising, since it is of course simply the English translation of the international organisation's Latin name, *Apostolatus Maris*. Different national affiliates, thus translate the phrase differently: *Mission de la Mer* in France, for instance, or *Duszpasterstwo Ludzi Morza* in Poland. Since seafarers visit ports throughout the world, they can hardly be expected to learn each local permutation. Accordingly, as previously mentioned, chaplains tend to use the universally-recognised term *Stella Maris*:

Our Blessed Lady, under the title, 'Mary Star of the Sea', is acknowledged as the universal and principal AoS Patron. Stella Maris is the name by which many seafarers know the Apostleship of the Sea. Just as seafarers have traditionally depended on the stars for navigation, so they trust in the protection and guidance of Our Lady so as not to lose their course. This is the reason why the AoS Seafarers' clubs and centres around the world are named Stella Maris, in honour of our patron. They are the beacons and safe havens, always ready to welcome, protect and guide the weary seafarer, fisherman, cruise personnel and traveller. (Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People 2007: 47)

Adding to the potential for confusion here, the charity's logo (using a radiating heart within an anchor), which is used on all AoS materials distributed to seafarers, bears the title APOSTOLATUS MARIS. Certainly, there are good reasons for this mix of brandings – in particular, it is important at the national level that the charity has a name that clearly conveys the nature of its work to others, not least to support the charity's profile and fundraising efforts. Nevertheless, it does create the possibility of confusion among seafarers, especially for those with poor English and/or are relatively new to this way of life. These considerations notwithstanding, in practice AoS chaplains seem to have few difficulties in being recognized and readily welcomed aboard. Easy recognition and an extended network, such as that of AoS, are great resources. As one chaplain put it, chaplains are recognised as people who will be willing to help, because "we have built this business for 2,000 years."

3.4 Slavery

AoS chaplains have been instrumental in rescuing fishermen who had been enslaved in the UK. Back in 2012, the chaplain and ship visitor in Teignmouth became aware of four Filipino fishermen being exploited on a fishing vessel; made to do dangerous tasks with no training, little food and no pay. The Filipinos jumped off the vessel with their suitcases. The Captain followed and attacked them. The chaplain called 999 and took the four Filipinos in his car to a hotel. They were terrified and the chaplain offered to pray with them. They had not been fed and they had worked non-stop for days. Their passports had been taken off them and they thought they were going to die. They also thought that the crew carried drugs on the vessel. AoS chaplains informed ITF, while the police shrugged responsibility. This was before the Modern Slavery Act 2015. The chaplain took the Filipinos to Buckfast Abbey near Teignmouth as a safe haven, and ITF and AoS ensured that other fishermen had the means to contact them. The word got around and others were helped with six or seven being rescued in total. This incident, along with other reasons, was a catalyst for AoS to work more closely with the fishing industry. It is also helping to address human trafficking through involvement with the Santa Marta Group.⁴

This episode is extreme, although sadly there has been an increase in modern slavery (Townsend 2016). However, it encapsulates the ethos of AoS chaplains, which is based strongly on recognising and giving value to the human person, and this is what makes AoS so effective. Chaplains are effective because they work together across the organisation and with other organisations, such as ITF. The ability of individual chaplains or ship visitors to call on the experience, contacts, and support of other chaplains nationally and internationally should not be underestimated. In situations of emergency, such as this one, or serious breaches of seafarers' rights, like the abandonment of ships, having contacts with the right people in other agencies is fundamental. In turn, the reputation and professionalism of AoS chaplains makes it easier to form strong links with organisations such as ITF and the authorities, and ensure cooperation.

3.5 Maximum flexibility

Chaplains need to be flexible with their time and to whatever situation they might encounter. Chaplains' work and, many times, that of ship visitors, rarely has a defined schedule. However, there are some patterns to practice when ships are in port. For instance, at Immingham, Friday is normally a quiet day and so are mornings, while late afternoons and evenings can be quite busy. Seafarers arriving at night or in the morning are busy unloading and loading the cargo. Only later can seafarers receive guests and get off the ship. Emergencies can happen at any time and chaplains are always 'on call'. This impacts on their work-life balance and family life. Some ports, like Milford Haven and Pembroke, are busier in the mornings and late afternoons, leaving 'dead periods' in the middle of the day. Chaplains appreciate the flexibility and feel supported by their families; yet it is important to recognise that the routine of chaplains, and that of their families, follows the rhythm of the port.

The highly flexible nature of the work makes it difficult to recruit volunteers. It is impossible to visit ships for those who can only dedicate a few hours. There were times, during my visits, when no ships were in port. Ship visitors are thus often retired or able to dedicate a full day to ship visiting. Getting to a port can also be an issue in many areas in terms of distance and transportation. Volunteers need to have private transport. They also need to go regularly to learn about the port, port agencies, how to approach seafarers, and how to be confident in their role. After a mentoring period, volunteers can work independently thus sharing the work of chaplains. Nevertheless, chaplains need to manage volunteers. As a chaplain commented, "Running a team of volunteers is hard work, it is also bureaucratic. You are responsible for all the forms. You give emotional support to them, and consider they are people with different personalities."

Volunteers are appreciated greatly by chaplains. "We work as a team. There is no difference between what I do and what they do", one told me. For another chaplain, "Volunteers are not assistants. They share the priesthood." Volunteering for AoS is a "big commitment," as recognised by chaplains. It is a commitment in terms of time and transport, but also in terms of 'emotional labour'. Ship visiting requires an open and generous attitude, which at times might be taken advantage of. Seafarers can be demanding and ungrateful at times. They might turn away chaplains and visitors, or be suspicious of their presence on board. Chaplains and volunteers are also, on occasion, confronted with their inability to act or solve a problem on board. This can be emotionally draining. It is a type of service that can make one feel lonely, as a chaplain told me. Therefore, support from other chaplains and ship visitors is important.

Debriefs and regular sharing of the stories encountered aboard are an important way to support chaplains and visitors, and help to create a bond. Once again, they work as a team and have flexible hours to accommodate the needs of seafarers. AoS has the highest number of chaplains in British ports. There are other churches and charities who have a presence, such as the Mission to Seafarers, the German Seamen's Mission, and the Sailors' Society. Most of the time, each organisation works autonomously and cross-organisational contact is minimal. This is partly due to the higher number of full-time AoS chaplains. Tilbury port stood out for its unique cooperation between AoS, Mission to Seafarers, and the German Seamen's Mission. All three chaplains work together as a team, as I witnessed. "We might disagree on theology, but we work together", the chaplain told me. The work of ship visiting is emotionally and physically tiring; yet all chaplains and visitors I have interviewed felt that they got back much more than they gave. They often talked of "the privilege" of doing this work. As one chaplain put it: "I love how they allow us into their lives,

what they give back to us. It enhances my spirituality especially how they share what they do, their families." Another told me: "The personal encounter with seafarers is what matters most. It only happens when you're there. It's an unbelievable, beautiful experience." Chaplains value most the meeting of another human being, with the same wants, needs, and aspirations. They consider their work and, indeed, service to be about building relationships through conversations. It is not just about solving a problem, but sharing a life.

4. The ethos of AoS chaplains

'It is important not to leave those who belong to the great family of the sea without spiritual support. They should be given an opportunity to meet God and to discover the true sense of life in him.' (John Paul II 2002; cf. Pracz 2014)



4.1 Introduction

The ethos of AoS chaplains is "rooted in service", as one chaplain said to me. They need to be 'present' to care for the other. Again and again chaplains talked about being of service to seafarers in very practical ways, for instance by making it easier for them to call home or saving them time by offering transport. Chaplains seek to "bring the gospel to seafarers", however this need not imply proselytising, but rather "being like Jesus" to seafarers, tending to their physical and emotional needs. In this they are in full accord with the Church's own vision of Catholic charitable activity:

Those who practise charity in the Church's name will never seek to impose the Church's faith upon others. They realize that a pure and generous love is the best witness to the God in whom we believe and by whom we are driven to love. A Christian knows when it is time to speak of God and when it is better to say nothing and to let love alone speak. He knows that God is love (cf. *1 Jn 4:8*) and that God's presence is felt at the very time when the only thing we do is to love. (Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 2005, art. 31)

The chaplains themselves often made reference to Pope Francis to explain their understanding of their mission. It is about "dirtying your hands with the job" and stopping being "a sofa Christian", as one chaplain put it. This is the "gospel in the raw", as another described it, the "church in the field. You deal with the injured where they are; deal with their practical needs and let them know that they are loved."

It is worth noting that this kind of dockside *diakonia* has a distinguished history within the Christian tradition. St Peter Claver, the patron saint of both slaves and seafarers, gained fame for ministering to all those on board the ships docked in seventeenth-century Cartagena (modern-

day Colombia). While by no means neglecting their spiritual welfare, he would also bring biscuits, brandy, tobacco and lemons as respite from their physical hardships. Compare also this episode from the life of St Pachomius, one of the great founders of monasticism in fourth-century Egypt. Forcibly conscripted into the Roman army, the then-pagan youth Pachomius was transported up the Nile for military training.

As he was being carried off with others on board ship to foreign parts, they docked one evening in a certain port where the citizens, on seeing how strictly the raw recruits were being guarded, enquired what their situation was, and motivated by the commandments of Christ, took great pity on their miserable plight and brought them some refreshments. Pachomius was very surprised at what they were doing and asked who these men were who were so eager and willing to perform such humble acts of mercy.

He was told they were Christians, who were in the habit of doing acts of kindness to everyone, but especially towards travellers. He learned also what it meant to be called a Christian. For he was told that they were godly people, followers of a genuine religion, who believed in the name of Jesus Christ the only begotten son of God, who were well disposed to all people, and hoped that God would reward them for all their good works in the life to come.

Pachomius' heart was stirred on hearing this, and, illumined by the light of God, he felt a great attraction towards the Christian faith.⁵

4.2 Prostitutes, drugs and multivitamins

Chaplains need to be open to whatever situation they might encounter. They need to be open to the person and meet them 'where they are'. There are, however, times when a seafarer is not merely the hard-working family man, but a flawed man with urges and wants. Indeed, they are often both at the same time. Thus seafarers may occasionally ask chaplains and ship visitors where they may find prostitutes and drugs, and sometimes they even want to sell drugs to chaplains. So while the chaplain and I were eating lunch in a greasy spoon, I asked the chaplain what he says when he encounters such situations. He told me: "This is the wrong address". A ship visitor also told me that sometimes he gets asked where the nearest brothel is, he responds by saying that there are no brothels in the area so he has no information to pass on anyway.

Studies suggest that seafarers engage in sexual intercourse with occasional partners (Grappasonni et al. 2011). There has been a significant rise in the number of Filipino seafarers contracting HIV/AIDS (Suñas and Mateo 2002). Young unmarried Filipino seafarers, in particular, tend to engage in risky sexual behaviour (Saniel 2010; Gregorio 2012). Seafarers' requests for prostitutes are not common; yet the overwhelmingly male environment and gender norms on board would tend to lead to a purely sexual view of women. While on a ship, I noticed there was a calendar with a half-naked woman on the cover. The chaplain from the German Seamen's Mission in Tilbury distributed the Mission's own calendars, which were appreciated by seafarers.

An AoS chaplain told me that once on a ship, he noticed that a seafarer had a computer screen with a sports car, but the guy told him "No, sports cars are second, first is naked girls". Nevertheless, the chaplain told me: "In four years, no one has asked me for free condoms, but for multivitamins to improve the performance of the rooster in cock-fighting". He told me that once he gave five hours of free wifi to a seafarer, who watched cock-fighting for the entire time. Many of the ratings I met were young men in their twenties and early thirties, armed with smart-phones and with their head often glued to

the screen. An older seafarer shook his head and told me that things today are worse because seafarers are always looking at their phones and nothing else. Yet, those phones make possible real time talk to their families at home, as well as hours of cock-fighting!

4.3 Hospitality

The work of chaplains is to meet the concrete needs of seafarers as far as possible. It happens in seafarers' centres and on ships and gangways. The spatial dimension of the work means that it is chaplains who reach out to seafarers and are guests. Unlike in hospitals, schools, and prisons, chaplains need to ask permission to get aboard from seafarers themselves. They are dependent on the hospitality of the seafarers aboard. Yet they also offer hospitality by providing transport, free wifi, conversation, and, at Christmas time, gifts. The relationship between chaplains and seafarers is thus characterised by reciprocal hospitality.

Filipinos are very hospitable. On visits, we were always offered food and drink. They liked having visitors who are not related to work. We would normally be shown into the mess room, where we would sit and wait for seafarers to come for SIM cards or any other issues. Word of our presence would be passed onto the rest of the crew. On a couple of ships I talked to seafarers working in the engine room and asked them whether I could see it. They seemed happy to show me the room and the engines. They took time to tell me what things were and what they did. They seemed to appreciate my interest.

Many of my port visits happened in the run up to Christmas. I would go with the chaplain or ship visitor to the ship carrying gifts for the crew. This is an opportunity for chaplains to make contact with seafarers and show that they are there for them, and an ice-breaker for seafarers who are more reserved. Seafarers were very grateful. On one ship, they put the presents under the tree and told us that they had fake packets until then. They said: "You're the first to give presents to us". Thousands of packets, from woolly hats filled with sweets to large boxes, are collected from parishes and Catholic schools to be distributed to seafarers. At the port of Immingham, chaplains gave over 1200 boxes; in other ports, it was several hundred.

Many seafarers were at sea during Christmas so would rarely be at home for the holidays. One seafarer told me that while he had spent Christmas at home the year before, that had been the first time in five years. At Immingham, the chaplains organised a carols evening with people from the local parishes attending. The room was full and seafarers enjoyed being part of the evening and receiving gifts. A group of seafarers, who had gone to Grimsby while off-duty, came back in time for the carols.⁶ More broadly, the gift-giving and carols are opportunities for local parishes and churches to be involved. One of the children who collected woolly hats with presents in them told the chaplain that in the hats were their prayers.

Hospitality is however not straightforward. It is understood and practised differently in different cultures. Cultural customs and expectations create or bring down barriers. Filipinos are very hospitable although reluctant to bring up problems on board. Chinese, Russians, and Ukrainians are generally reserved and it is harder for chaplains to be invited in. A chaplain tells me that "With Russians and Ukrainians you get five minutes. For Russians and Ukrainians, getting things for free is new. They expect people will want money or something from them. With Russians it is best to talk when they need something, you always need to tell them what we can offer, you need to introduce them to a different culture."

Chaplains and visitors also reported some cultural barriers in dealing with Indian crews. The Indian caste system and the ship ranks often prevent communication with Filipinos aboard. One time, an Indian crew came ashore but did not tell the Filipinos about the transport provided by AoS, so the chaplain had to make two trips and go back to the same ship to collect the Filipinos. The attitude is also less malleable. Chaplains reported that suspicion can get in the way and that they needed to explain everything separately to every single crew member. The caste system also means that chaplains and ship visitors who drive AoS vehicles are looked down on, as drivers tend to be of a lower social position in India. However, chaplains take time to explain that driving in the UK is not a lowly occupation, that they have qualifications, and that they offer transport to support seafarers.

Hospitality rests on encountering the other, which is often fraught with ambivalence (Pitt-Rivers 1977/2012). The meeting of the other is not always smooth or free from misunderstandings and tensions. Indeed, hospitality has been seen at times as paradoxical in trying to balance control over one's identity and resources with opening oneself and one's community to others (Derrida 2000). Chaplaincy in other environments, such as schools, prisons, hospitals, puts chaplains in contact with people from different backgrounds and religions (Todd 2011). In secular spaces, chaplains are called on to be open to and respect such diversity. Respect for diversity drives AoS chaplains, who serve seafarers of different nationalities. Chaplains value diversity and find the encounter with another enriching. However, such encounter is not free from challenges. Cultural differences, as described above, can present some obstacles.

4.4 The 'ethic of compassion'

Cultural diversity is one of the aspects of the job that chaplains appreciate. One chaplain said that she values the diversity of people as individuals and the opportunity of engaging with people from all over the world. She told me: "I can touch the other edge of the world without moving." Another chaplain pointed out that meeting different people from different cultures makes one's "approach to life much more flexible and understanding", it broadens one's mind. The chaplains' attitudes here call to mind a remark of Pope Francis':

We come from distant lands; we have different traditions, skin colour, languages and social backgrounds; we think differently and we celebrate our faith in a variety of rites. None of this makes us enemies; instead, it is one of our greatest riches. (2016b)

Accordingly, chaplains seek to put themselves "in their (the crew's) shoes", "understand why they do what they do", so to "understand better and become much more sympathetic and empathetic". When asked what is 'the essential ingredient' of their work, chaplains and ship visitors often said it was "compassion".

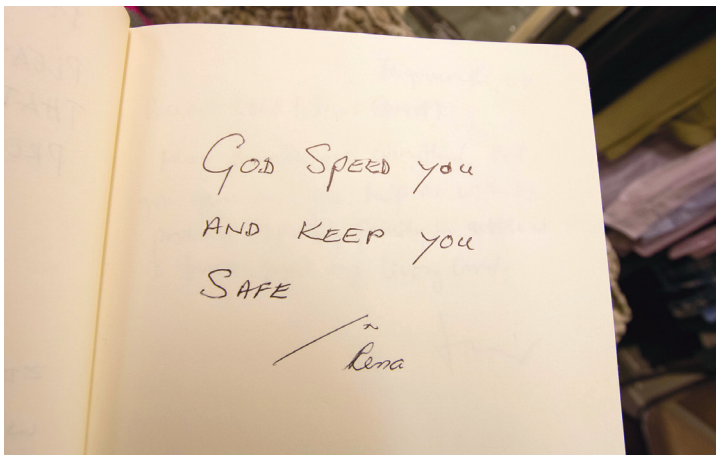
Chaplains refer to compassion as empathy for seafarers, understanding what their life is like, but also as love. Based on previous research, I suggest compassion needs to be understood as a person-centred ethical approach, which seeks to accept the person and refrain from judgement (Montemaggi 2013: 214-25, 305-16). This is in contrast with a norm-oriented approach that establishes rules of behaviour. Chaplains reported over and over again that one needed to be "open", "listening", "accepting", and "patient". They need to adapt to whatever they find aboard, such as problems on the vessel, suspicious attitudes from seafarers, and even being rejected or sent away.

Compassion, understood as a person-centred ethic and expressed in the chaplains' attitude of acceptance towards the other, goes a step further than empathy and 'listening'. It allows the chaplain to go beyond the contingent situation and person and grasp the wider humanity embodied in the person in front of them (Montemaggi 2013: 313). Chaplains describe their work as "being there for them", "sharing experiences, touching people's lives". It is a "companionship that is genuine, not fake." In this companionship, chaplains come to see the person ahead of the demographic and social characteristic of the seafarer. Through compassion, they "open to the stranger" and "identify with one another's humanity" (Montemaggi 2013: 314).

Listening to seafarers, chaplains realise that "we have the same feelings of loss, of grief, of happiness." "Human beings are just the same, wherever they come from," as chaplains often told me. Chaplaincy is thus not only about solving problems, but enjoying life together. "We want to share space and time and be happy about it. We can still be fully a person, not dehumanised... The human factor, feelings, emotions, humanity should come first. We [as chaplains] don't have an [economic] interest."

When a seafarer was waiting to go back to the Philippines because his son had died, a chaplain stayed with him and prayed. The seafarer told him that he was fine and that he could go, but the chaplain told him that he was important, there was no need to talk. The person is at the centre. Chaplains do not provide a service; rather they serve people, regardless of their nationality, faith, or status. "Humanity comes before any Christianity or Catholicism," a ship visitor tells me. Chaplains seek to restore the dignity of the human to people, who live and work in a physically and socially confined environment. There are no trees, green grass, or water fountains in ports, only machinery, metal, and brick. Chaplains "bring a human face in that heavily industrial environment." That 'personal encounter,' 'connectedness,' 'sharing of life' is what chaplains and ship visitors value most.

Chaplains live out their faith in their service. Faith is what supports them, what takes them 'the extra mile' (Matthew 5.41). On a slippery gangway, in the middle of the night or at the crack of dawn, in the cold or the heat, they go out to seafarers, because "people who do it for faith go out in all weathers," and it is worth it. Time and time again, chaplains tell me that they get more out of it than they give: "It's not work, it's a blessing." A chaplain explained: "I love how they allow us into their lives, what they give back to us. It enhances my spirituality especially how they share what they do, their families." The encounter with seafarers, even when fraught with difficulties, is rewarding spiritually for chaplains and ship visitors. It is in that encounter that compassion grows: "the most important thing it gives me is compassion."



Conclusions

This report has provided a detailed, ethnographic overview of the work and life of seafarers, and how AoS chaplains and ship visitors serve seafarers. Further, we have sought to elucidate these concrete realities in light of wider research contexts: the nature of contemporary seafaring; Catholic social teaching on the authentic nature of Christian charitable organisations; and the sociology of religious practice and belonging.

It is clear from the literature and this research that seafarers are too often 'invisible' to society at large. Chaplains help make them visible by forming relationships with them. They bridge the worlds of land and sea by learning about the life of seafarers, supporting them, and communicating that to local communities. From the perspective of chaplains, they live and 'bring the gospel' to seafarers not by proselytising, but by recognising their dignity as human beings and providing practical help. Chaplains have an attitude of compassion that goes beyond empathising with seafarers; they try to see the 'whole person' irrespective of nationality, faith, age, gender, status, or rank. AoS chaplains do a valuable work that should be supported nationally and internationally.

To aid this, we offer below a number of proposals, in no specific order, suggesting ways in which AoS might further its mission of supporting seafarers.

Recommendations

1. The most pressing needs of seafarers are communication and transport. As noted several times (see 2.4, 3.1), phone and internet access is a major priority of sailors in port, both as a means of contacting family and for much-needed recreation. Anyone who accompanies a port chaplain on ship visits will realize the amount of time and effort that goes into satisfying this demand. Chaplains need to evaluate locally what is the best way to assist with this (e.g., SIM cards, 24hrs room, seafarers' centre); specific solutions will differ from port to port. The attachment that seafarers have to their smartphones, however, offers an important opportunity for 'meeting them where they're at'. In this regard, the recent release of an AoS app – appropriately named "Stella Maris" – is a very welcome development. This combines both practical information (including an online version of the AoS Port Directory) and devotional substance (daily scriptural reflections, prayer resources).⁷ Plans are, we understand, in place to make it available in a number of languages.

In our view, this app has the potential to make both seafarers' and – not unimportantly – chaplains' lives notably easier. At present, the information for each port in the app's Directory does not extend far beyond contact details. But a great deal of practical information on each port could also be made available: maps of the port and local area, transport information, local Mass times, advice on nearby wifi availability, perhaps even a rough guide to various SIM cards' pros and cons. Inclusion of such information, so long as it is kept rigorously up-to-date, would have a number of benefits. Firstly, its usefulness would incentivize seafarers to download and engage with the app on a regular basis (thus reminding them of its devotional riches). Secondly, it might free up a great deal of chaplains' and ship visitors' time spent on board.

2. The trifold branding of AoS – i.e., “Apostolatus Maris”, “Apostleship of the Sea” (and local vernacular equivalents), “Stella Maris” – was principally discussed in section 3.3. While initially confusing, the reasons for there being different brands for different audiences in fact makes very good sense. Firstly, Apostolatus Maris is a fitting Latin title for a venerable Catholic charity of genuinely global reach. Secondly, once translated into the vernacular (i.e., Apostleship of the Sea in the Anglophone world) it functions as a clear and straightforward description of what the charity actually does – a vital tool in raising awareness of, and indeed funds for, any charity. Thirdly and finally, Stella Maris – with all of its rich Marian resonance – operates as a universally recognized ‘nickname’ among seafarers themselves, and one far easier to remember and pronounce than either Apostolatus Maris or any of its vernacular equivalents.

Nevertheless, this triple branding does potentially raise problems when used on literature distributed to seafarers. For example, on the ‘Port Chaplain Directory 2016’ AoS’ current logo featured prominently in the bottom left hand corner of the front cover. This combines the words *Apostleship of the Sea* in large, bold letters, accompanied by *Apostolatus Maris* (much less obviously) as part of the heart-and-anchor ‘coat of arms’. Meanwhile, the primary way in which seafarers (many of whom have little or no English) know the charity – i.e., as *Stella Maris* – makes a single, inconspicuous appearance in small letters at the top. This is far from optimal. Given the intended audience, it would be far preferable if *Stella Maris* were a more dominant feature of the design, whether as incorporated into the logo itself, or by some other means (e.g., in the cover image).

3. Where they exist, seafarers’ centres and other drop-in facilities are much-valued. These can be used for holding Masses or other events, as a non-ship social space, and as a means of accessing computers or wifi. Admittedly, such dedicated facilities are not always practical, and they naturally cost significant money to both build and run. As such, it is perhaps worth further exploring ways in which certain functions of seafarers’ centres might be replicated in other ways. Might, for example, a local parish hall be made available (at least at certain times, when transport permits) to serve as an informal drop-in centre, with tea and coffee facilities, free wifi, and friendly volunteers? More easily, the creation of smallscale, outdoor wifi hotspots – potentially nothing more complicated than a wifi router set up in a locked building on-site, with details of the password distributed by ship visitors – would be a significant service to seafarers, allowing them to contact home without using up valuable SIM card data.

4. Partnerships between port chaplaincies and local parishes can be fruitful and enriching for both parties. We have described some of the many ways in which priests and parishioners are already valuable co-workers in AoS’s mission (see 3.2), and we hope that other parishes might gain inspiration from these examples. Related to this, and given also the oft-mentioned ‘invisibility’ of the modern shipping industry (including to those who live very close to its main hubs), we specifically encourage ways of introducing people to the work of the ports. Essentially, any way in which local people can be brought to “come and see” (John 1.39) the port itself – Masses in seafarers’ centres; carol singing; volunteering; school or youth group visits – is a valuable means of making the modern shipping industry, and thus the valuable work of AoS, real. People who have at least some acquaintance with life ‘behind the port gates’ will be more likely to value the work of AoS, to pray for its mission, to consider becoming involved themselves, and/or to prioritize financial giving.

5. The above emphasis on the importance of personal acquaintance, however partial, with the hidden world within which AoS operates raises a related issue. AoS, like all charities, relies heavily on its promoters and ambassadors, whether formal (paid employees, official volunteers) or informal (people who know and thus value the work it does). Even at the most basic level, it is one thing for a congregation to be told simply “this being Sea Sunday, a second collection will be taken for the Apostleship of the Sea”, perhaps with ‘Hail, Queen of Heaven, Ocean Star’ sung to honour the occasion. But it is quite another for the celebrant to say a few knowledgeable words, ideally based on their own experience, in support of the charity, and thus to urge worshippers to be generous with both money and prayers. In this regard, aside from chaplains, employees, and volunteers, perhaps the greatest ambassadorial resource AoS has its disposal are those clergy who have previously worked in port chaplaincy and/or those who are current or former Cruise chaplains. AoS would therefore be well-advised to cultivate continuing links with this extensive ‘alumni network’, based in parishes throughout the country.

6. For various reasons of history and economics, contemporary seafarers have a distinctive national and cultural – and ipso facto, a distinctive *religious* – profile (see 2.5). The prevalence of Filipinos, and therefore the prevalence of a certain style of Catholicism, is the most obvious manifestation of this, although other concentrations are well-known to chaplains (e.g., Catholics from India or Croatia, Orthodox from Russia and the Ukraine). To help in meeting the spiritual needs of those whom they serve, chaplains and ship visitors might think of how the resources they provide might be accordingly ‘inculturated’: a case of “When in Milford Haven, I do as the Filipinos do”, to modify St Ambrose’s famous maxim about Rome and the Romans. For instance, medals and prayer cards (in Tagalog) of the *Santo Niño de Cebu*, Our Mother of Perpetual Help, or the Black Nazarene can be bought in bulk, relatively cheaply, online. These would be both very meaningful to the recipients – not least as a means to connect, spiritually, with home – and would serve as an ideal conversation-starter about religion and/or family life. Likewise, the offering of Mass on the relevant feast days, or on those of St Lorenzo Ruiz or St Pedro Calungsod, would be an appreciated gesture.



Endnotes

1. At the extremer negative end of what some seafarers can experience, see Dutt 2015; Kongsvik et al. 2012.
2. For details, please see www.baclaranchurch.org/ofw.html.
3. This is, incidentally, one of over twenty so-named parishes in England, Wales, and Scotland.
4. See: <http://santamartagroup.com/about-santa-marta-group>. The presentation given by Santa Marta's Deputy Director, Mick Duthie, at AoS' National Conference in May 2017 may be found at www.apostleshipofthesea.org.uk/sites/default/files/imce/Day%20%20-%20F%20Mick%20Duthie%20Modern%20Slavery.pptx.
5. The episode is quoted here from the Life of Pachomius, written in the sixth century, and available online at www.vitae-patrum.org.uk/page11.html. For more on Pachomius, and his significance for the New Evangelization, see Bullivant 2013: 119-20.
6. Nevertheless, sensitivity is sometimes needed here. In rare instances, the giving of Christmas presents, seen as an overtly Christian act, is objected to by non-Christian seafarers. I witnessed one occasion where two seafarers refused the gifts and did not let chaplains bring any to the rest of the crew. Needless to say, those bringing the gifts, though disappointed, respected this refusal, and did not try to push the issue.
7. At the time of writing, the app is still partially under construction, with some features – including, pleasingly, a “Prayer Request” function - “Coming soon”.

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