

Press Release

The Apostleship of the Sea



Apostleship of the Sea Director Awarded a Knighthood of the Pontifical Order of St. Gregory

Pope Benedict XVI has awarded Commodore Christopher York, National Director of Apostleship of the Sea a Knighthood of the order of St. Gregory (KSG) for his untiring service to the Catholic Church. The award was presented to him by Bishop Tom Burns on 5th March 2008. This announcement comes on the back of the news that Chris is to retire from the Directorship of Apostleship of the Sea (AOS) at the end of March 2008, and is a fitting reward for all his years of service.

The Pontifical Order of St. Gregory the Great was established on September 1, 1831 by Pope Gregory XVI, seven months after his election. The Order of St. Gregory is one of the five pontifical orders of knighthood in the Catholic Church. The order is bestowed on Catholic men and women (and in rare cases, non-Catholic men) in recognition of their service to the Church, unusual labours, support of the Holy See, and the good example set in their communities and country. The insignia of the honour can be recognised as an eight-pointed cross, suspended from a red and gold ribbon. The cross bears a representation of St. Gregory on the obverse and on the reverse the motto 'Pro Deo et Principe' which means 'for God and the authority of the church'.

Commodore Chris York was born in 1944, his early education was at St Aloysius College Glasgow and St Brendan's College Bristol and then he joined the Royal Naval College Dartmouth as a naval cadet in 1964. He initially trained as a pilot in the Fleet Air Arm and later specialised in sea warfare and maritime operations. After many years of service he retired from the Royal Navy in 1998 in the rank of Commodore, after a successful career that included a broad range of operational seagoing appointments and extensive periods of Ship Command. So with all this experience and with his own spiritual beliefs it was a logical move to step into the National Directorship of AOS in 2001.

For recognition of his good works, in August 2004 Chris was appointed by Pope John Paul II as one of eight new consultants for the Vatican Department which oversees the Church's work amongst migrant and itinerate workers, including international seafarers. AOS has been

recognized by the Holy Father as making an important contribution to the ability of the church to support all those workers on the move. This is work that Chris will continue even after he leaves us as National Director.

Bishop Tom Burns, Bishop Promoter of AOS commented “Throughout the 20+ years that I have known Chris York, he has struck me as a highly professional leader and also a deeply spiritual man. Both these characteristics feature and complement each other in his daily work for the Catholic Church in Britain. His service to the Church has been second-to-none, especially in raising the profile of the Apostleship of the Sea, since he became its National Director 7 years ago. The one million seafarers who visit British ports each year have much to be thankful to him for. In recognition of his experience and valued service, the Holy See invited Chris to be a Consulter to the Pontifical Council for Migrants and Immigrant Peoples and has now honoured him with a Knighthood of St Gregory. Congratulations and many thanks, Sir Christopher!”



*Bishop Tom Burns presenting the award to Commodore Chris York, with his wife Sue York.
(High res photo attached separately)*

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Further information for Editors

The Apostleship of the Sea, AOS, is an agency of the Catholic Bishops' Conferences of England & Wales and Scotland. It is also an independent charity wholly reliant on voluntary donations to continue its ministry.

Ninety percent of world trade is carried by ship, and some 100,000 seafarers visit British ports each year. They are commonly away from home for nine to 12 months at a time, suffering loneliness, depression and even exploitation. They also have to work in gruelling and often dangerous conditions. AOS chaplains and ship visitors welcome seafarers to our shores - regardless of their colour, race or creed (if any) and provide them with pastoral and practical assistance. They recognise them as brothers with an intrinsic human dignity which can be overlooked in the modern globalised maritime industry. For more information visit www.apostleshipofthesea.org.uk

For further information about the work and vision of AOS please contact Sheila Bailey Director of Fundraising and Communications, Tel: 0771 286 4747
sheilabailey@apostleshipofthesea.org.uk