

Press Release

The Apostleship of the Sea



Seafarers Given The Opportunity To Celebrate On Ash Wednesday

In his Lenten message this year, Pope Benedict XVI, calls us to reflect on justice, on how each person can be given their 'rightful due'. The port chaplains of the Apostleship of the Sea will be taking up this call on Ash Wednesday.

The Holy Father says that each person's due is not only to receive their physical needs; food, water, medicine, but also to receive that which will help them live their life to the full. This Ash Wednesday, AoS port chaplains, as on every other day of the year, will do just this, attend to the physical needs of seafarers; help them communicate with loved ones, lend a listening ear, and also to help them live their life to the full and for those who want to, to celebrate Ash Wednesday, even in the midst of a busy industrialised port environment.

The Catholic Faith as with all other religions has many days within its calendar that are special to its followers; times for them to re-affirm their faith and to celebrate their spirituality. Ash Wednesday is one of these special days. Often these celebrations are taken for granted by those who have easy access to them, however for many individuals these times to celebrate are not always a 'given'.

Seafarers, whilst working on ships, are often unable to celebrate their faith as they would like. They do not have the opportunity to attend services. They are often at sea on special feast days and miss crucial spiritual events. Research by the International Transport Workers' Federation Seafarers' Trust (ITF) already shows that seafarers recognise their spiritual needs are just as important as their physical welfare, and the inability for them to practice their faith often has a negative impact on their mental health and wellbeing. *(Taken from ITF/SIRC 2007 report Port Based Welfare Services for Seafarers)*

Apostleship of the Sea enables seafarers that visit the UK to celebrate their faiths in the ways they so wish. They enable seafarers of any faith to attend faith services and visit places of worship. For Catholic seafarers they arrange Mass onboard or off ship, provide faith resources, help to celebrate important feasts, allow access to the sacraments and help seafarers feel they are fulfilled spiritually.

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Further information for Editors

The Apostleship of the Sea, AoS, is a registered charity and an agency of the Catholic Bishops' Conferences of England & Wales and Scotland. It is wholly reliant on voluntary donations to continue its work.

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 or call Sheila Bailey, Director of Fundraising & Communications, on 0771 286 4747.