



MEDIA RELEASE

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Stella Maris launches into the deep

Seafarers are among the least visible people in the world yet are among the greatest contributors to daily life.

Catholics around Australia are being asked to reflect on and support seafarers on **Sea Sunday, July 13**.

Stella Maris is the official maritime welfare agency of the Catholic Church.

In 1922, Pope Pius XI approved the first constitution of the movement, known as Apostleship of the Sea. It now operates in over 300 ports across the world.

“Seafarers’ lives are hard, with daily challenges,” said bishop-promoter for Stella Maris, Bishop Tim Norton.

“Seafarers share their stories with the volunteers who work with Stella Maris. These are stories of hard labour and long hours, and the dangers associated with storms; stories of unjust wages and poor working conditions.

“This is why Stella Maris exists - relying on the generosity of many people and maritime organisations, Stella Maris can address the issues that seafarers face.”

Stella Maris national director Fr Tony Cox SSC said while Sea Sunday was a time to appeal for financial assistance, more importantly it is “an opportunity to become more actively conscious of their lives of seafarers and the hardships they encounter and endure”.

“It was Cardinal Czerny, the head of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, who said that seafarers are among the least visible members of all humanity, and it is by way of their invisible effect that we can receive many of our necessities,” Fr Tony said.

“In a world where there is an ever-increasing level of hatred, war, individualism, selfishness and so many other expressions and actions that deny life, the Gospel of Matthew (25:35) remains the

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beacon of hope. By welcoming the stranger, regardless of race, colour, rank or creed, Stella Maris will continue to be a light in the darkness across the seas for all to see and experience.

“As we continue to launch into the deep, I pray that you will continue in prayer, support and thought for the advocacy that we see as very much a part of our mission. As you remember us, we will always appreciate and remember you as you journey with us.”

From very humble beginnings, with the support of the clergy and the St Vincent de Paul Society, Stella Maris now has centres in every state of Australia and in the Northern Territory but there is still work to do, including providing support for seafarers in all Australian ports.

Stella Maris supports seafarers in spiritual, social and material ways, including prayer, helping them contact their families and advocating in Australia and internationally for safe and fair working conditions.

Examples of this can be seen daily from transporting seafarers from the ships to Stella Maris centres, and providing accommodation and meals, to caring for those who are sick or injured and in times involving the death of a seafarer.

Resources for Sea Sunday can be found at stellamarisaustralia.org

Donations to Stella Maris over \$2 are tax-deductible and can be made online [here](#).

A video message from Bishop Tim Norton can be found on [YouTube](#).