



JULY
2020

Stella Maris

SUPPORTING SEAFARERS AND FISHERS AROUND THE WORLD

Inside

Port Focus

Manila, Philippines

Sunday at Sea

with Fr Colum Kelly

The Good Life

Drug Trafficking on Ships

Growing in Faith

The Heart of Christianity



Stella Maris is a Catholic charity supporting seafarers worldwide.

We provide practical and pastoral care to all seafarers, regardless of nationality, belief or race. Our port chaplains and volunteer ship visitors welcome seafarers, offer welfare services and advice, practical help, care and friendship.

Stella Maris is the largest ship visiting network in the world, working in 332 ports with 227 port chaplains around the world. We also run 53 seafarers' centres around the world.

We are only able to continue our work through the generous donations of our supporters and volunteers.

To support Stella Maris with a donation visit
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Stella Maris

39 Eccleston Square
 London, SW1V 1BX, United Kingdom

Tel: +44 020 7901 1931

Email: info@apostleshipofthesea.org.uk

[facebook.com/StellaMarisOrg](https://www.facebook.com/StellaMarisOrg)

www.apostleshipofthesea.org.uk

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MANILA, PHILIPPINES



The Philippines is an archipelago which consists of over 7100 islands. Manila is situated in the largest and most populous of these Islands: Luzon

The Port in Manila Bay has been used for over a thousand years. It saw a great expansion during the 16th century when the Philippines were under Spanish rule, during this period the city became the gateway for trade from China and Arabia to Spain and other Spanish colonies like Mexico.

Today the Port consists of three main terminals, Manila North and South Harbors and the International Container Terminal which hosts almost 2000 ships per year.

Stella Maris Manila has a presence in all three terminals and runs three dormitories (Pius, Ermita and SCPM)

with a capacity of over 300 beds. These are equipped with dorm rooms, family rooms and rooms for female seafarers. The centres are fully equipped to provide lodging and meals, wifi and Cable TV as well as common areas with reading material, sports and gym facilities.



Stella Maris Ermita Center

4th Floor, Metrobank Building,
 1149 Mabini Street, Ermita, Manila,
 1000 Metro Manila, Philippines
Phone: +63 2 8423 9101

Stella Maris Pius Center

1175 United Nations Ave, Paco,
 Manila, Metro Manila, Philippines
Phone: +63 2 8423 2261

Scalabrini Center

#48, 8th Street, New Manila,
 Quezon City, Philippines

Phone: +63 2 8722 8565

Facebook: [apostleshipofthesea.manila](https://www.facebook.com/apostleshipofthesea.manila)

All centers are open from 7:00 AM to 8:00 PM on weekdays and from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM on Saturdays, Sundays and Holidays.

Stella Maris provides seafarers with practical support, information and a listening ear



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Sunday at Sea with Fr Colum Kelly

**FOURTEENTH SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME**
5 JULY 2020

GOSPEL MATTHEW 11:25-30

Jesus exclaimed, 'I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to mere children. Yes, Father, for that is what it pleased you to do. Everything has been entrusted to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, just as no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

'Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden light.'



THE GOSPEL AND YOU

As I write this, I cannot be sure where it will be read. Will our churches still be closed, our people still in lockdown?

Many of our ships are at anchor away from ports that are not running a full-time service. Wherever you are I am certain the words of Matthew's Gospel will be words you can take straight to your hearts.

There are three aspects to the reading, Jesus praise of the Father, the identity of Jesus as teacher and the invitation to come to him.

A key aspect of the ministry of Jesus was to free people from the burden of a legalistic understanding of religion, and to introduce them to a faith marked by freedom and love.

But I imagine in these unfamiliar times the phrase that strikes most clearly is: "Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest".

Despite all that has changed in our world we still have the unconditional love of our God calling us to

him. And don't we see those loving hands of God in the selfless dedication of so many trying their best to bring light to such darkness.

I hear it often said that we are all in this together, in the same boat, but it's not like that. We are sailing the same storm, but not in the same boat.

We are all on different ships during this storm, experiencing a very different journey and we are all just fighting our way through the storm. The one common factor for all who are burdened is the call to "come to Me!"

Our serving hands are needed now more than ever to send the same message of love, humility and acceptance. Are they open? Generous towards a needy person, those depending on our provision, cooking a meal for the lonely, elderly, writing a note to a friend needing encouragement, palms held together in prayer ... Our hands can do His work every day and become a blessing to others.

**FIFTEENTH SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME**
12 JULY 2020

GOSPEL MATTHEW 13:1-23

Jesus left the house and sat by the lakeside, but such crowds gathered round him that he got into a boat and sat there. The people all stood on the beach, and he told them many things in parables.

He said, 'Imagine a sower going out to sow. As he sowed, some seeds fell on the edge of the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Others fell on patches of rock where they found little soil and sprang up straight away, because there was no depth of earth; but as soon as the sun came up they were scorched and, not having any roots, they withered away. Others fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Others fell on rich soil and produced their crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Listen, anyone who has ears!'

Then the disciples went up to him and asked, 'Why do you talk to them in parables?' 'Because' he replied 'the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven are revealed to you, but they are not revealed to them. For anyone who has will be given more, and he will have more than enough; but from anyone who has not, even what he has will be taken away. The reason I talk to them in parables is that they look without seeing and listen without hearing or understanding. So in their case this prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled:

You will listen and listen again, but not understand, see and see again, but not perceive.

For the heart of this nation has grown coarse, their ears are dull of hearing, and they have shut their eyes, for fear they should see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their heart, and be converted and be healed by me.

'But happy are your eyes because they see, your ears because they hear! I tell you solemnly, many prophets and holy men longed to see what you see, and never saw it; to hear what you hear, and never heard it.

'You, therefore, are to hear the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom without understanding, the evil one comes and carries off what was sown in his heart: this is the man who received the seed on the edge of the path. The one who received it on patches of rock is the man who hears the word and welcomes it at once with joy. But he has no root in him, he does not last; let some trial come, or some persecution on account of the word, and he falls away at once. The one who received the seed in thorns is the man who hears the word but the worries of this world and the lure of riches choke the word and so he produces nothing. And the one who received the seed in rich soil is the man who hears the word and understands it; he is the one who yields a harvest and produces now a hundredfold, now sixty, now thirty.'



THE GOSPEL AND YOU

It's a long Gospel today, lots of words. lots of seeds for the sowing. Stay with it for there is much to encourage us. The reading begins the passages in Matthew's Gospel called 'the parables of the Kingdom'. All parables told by Jesus were in a language familiar to the people of the time, but they were not just nice stories, they were pointers to give his listeners, and ourselves, an insight into what the Kingdom of God meant. In his teaching they had a present and future dimension.

Jesus had a great awareness of the frailties of our human nature: he saw them so often in the lives of his followers. Yes, there is a general desire to follow the ways of God, but often this fades in times of trial or just boredom.

We do believe that God is love and wherever love is experienced God is present and active. Throughout our call to serve there are choices to be made and the parable of the sower explains some of the choices people make.

Some are simply not interested; some go along with it for a while with good intentions but easily give up. Some are too absorbed with what is going on in their own lives: ...the cares of the world and the lure of riches that are so appealing choke the word. Not much chance for growth there.

The God that Jesus reveals to us is a God of infinite abundance. In God there is no scarcity, no meanness, no shortage of mercy. As the parable of the Sower makes clear, this God scatters his seed indiscriminately on every kind of soil – bad soil, good soil, excellent soil. God can do this because His love and mercy are limitless, with no exclusions.

Maybe all of us have something in common with the sower. How often our efforts to advise, to encourage fall on deaf ears or hard hearts. Every time we dare reach out to others in need we profess the Kingdom, now and in the future.

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

19 JULY 2020



GOSPEL Matthew 13:24-43

Jesus put another parable before the crowds: 'The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. While everybody was asleep his enemy came, sowed darnel all among the wheat, and made off. When the new wheat sprouted and ripened, the darnel appeared as well. The owner's servants went to him and said, "Sir, was it not good seed that you sowed in your field? If so, where does the darnel come from?" "Some enemy has done this" he answered. And the servants said, "Do you want us to go and weed it out?" But he said, "No, because when you weed out the darnel you might pull up the wheat with it. Let them both grow till the harvest; and at harvest time I shall say to the reapers: First collect the darnel and tie it in bundles to be burnt, then gather the wheat into my barn."

He put another parable before them, 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the biggest shrub of all and becomes a tree so that the birds of the air come and shelter in its branches.'

He told them another parable, 'The kingdom of heaven is like the

yeast a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour till it was leavened all through.'

In all this Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables; indeed, he would never speak to them except in parables. This was to fulfill the prophecy:

I will speak to you in parables and expound things hidden since the foundation of the world.

Then, leaving the crowds, he went to the house; and his disciples came to him and said, 'Explain the parable about the darnel in the field to us.' He said in reply, 'The sower of the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world; the good seed is the subjects of the kingdom; the darnel, the subjects of the evil one; the enemy who sowed them, the devil; the harvest is the end of the world, the reapers are the angels. Well then, just as the darnel is gathered up and burnt in the fire, so it will be at the end of time. The Son of Man will send his angels and they will gather out of his kingdom all things that provoke offences and all who do evil, and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth. Then the virtuous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Listen, anyone who has ears!'

THE GOSPEL AND YOU

In today's gospel we continue the agricultural theme with the sower, this time sowing on good ground. The trouble begins when a malicious person comes along and adds poor seed that will eventually turn to weed. In this parable Jesus is referring to the good seed of his words and actions which will be accepted by some, but more of it lost to others in the confusion of the weeds.

In the life of Jesus there is conflict even in the midst of goodness, highlighted recently in our celebration of Passion and Resurrection.

Perhaps you too in your own little world when problems arise will mutter:

"Why does something always have to come along and destroy it?"

A lovely calm day at sea overwhelmed by an unexpected storm. A family gathering full of joy, until someone upsets the serenity by reliving some real or imagined family hurt. Beautiful songs of God's love in nature, smashed by vandals.

During this Covid crisis We long to return to doing the things how we always used to, but we will return to them as changed people. The trauma of what we have all been through will leave its mark. Let us pray that the weeds of infection may be overpowered by the sheer goodness of so many in our world.

GOSPEL Matthew 13:44-52

Jesus said to the crowds: 'The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field which someone has found; he hides it again, goes off happy, sells everything he owns and buys the field.

'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls; when he finds one of great value he goes and sells everything he owns and buys it.

'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea that brings in a haul of all kinds. When it is full, the fishermen haul it ashore; then, sitting down, they collect the good ones in a basket and throw away those that are no use. This is how it will be at the end of time: the angels will appear and separate the wicked from the just to throw them into the blazing furnace where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth.

'Have you understood all this?' They said, 'Yes.' And he said to them, 'Well then, every scribe who becomes a disciple of the kingdom is like a householder who brings out from his storeroom things both new and old.'



SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

26 JULY 2020

THE GOSPEL AND YOU

The parables of the treasure and the pearl illustrate the zeal needed to seek the kingdom of God. A kingdom of great value which brings joy yet demands equal commitment.

This parable tells of two men who sell everything in order to claim their new discoveries. One, a treasure in a field, the other a pearl, but both finds are expected to bring them the ultimate in riches and happiness. They gamble everything they have to pursue their dream. I can't help hearing a little voice in my head ringing out the warning: "the value of your investments can go down as well as up."

Let's look at the pearl finder.

He thinks this pearl will fulfil all his dreams. Is he taking unnecessary risks or acting wisely for himself and maybe his family? The present state of our virus-stricken world tells us that no matter how carefully we may plan, the unforeseen can destroy those dreams.

The parable challenges us to determine our own pearl of great price. If we know our ultimate aim, what should we do? When we decide to go to sea, what is it we seek?

Perhaps our pearl is the simple reality of putting food on the table. The cost is great; absence from family; working in harsh and cruel seas.

There is a pearl out there, for everyone. And there is a price for everyone to pay.

Some arrive at their heart's desire by good fortune, like the treasure in the field. Some arrive at it after long searching, like the pearl of great value. Jesus urges the disciples to seek their heart's desire in the kingdom of heaven. There they will find the living, guiding presence of a loving God.

What is our own pearl of great price? Are we willing to give up everything in exchange for it? Are we willing to live with its limits? Until we are clear on these questions there is forever the danger that, we will act out in dangerous and hurtful ways. Be careful what you wish and pray for.

DRUG TRAFFICKING ON SHIPS

Ships are attractive to drug traffickers. Security is usually lighter than the airline industry and they travel the world. Smuggling by sea has been a problem for years, but in recent years there have been some high-profile cases and evidence that the methods used are constantly evolving.

A conservative estimate values the illicit drug trade at over US\$400 billion per year. In Colombia it's cheaper to produce cocaine than coffee per gram. Match this with a huge global dependency on drugs, then it presents a low-cost, high-risk and potentially high-reward business model.

The main players

The potential for high profits attracts major international criminal organisations and terrorists. Those at the top are not the ones transporting the illicit goods. So, who is?

Couriers and mules

If a vessel is being used to smuggle drugs, it is very plausible that the crew have no idea whatsoever that drugs are on board. In such cases, it is possible that port staff may be involved, such as a stevedore who has access to parts of the vessel and can move around without raising suspicion. Or smugglers can board the vessel (or attach drugs to the hull) from the seaside or at anchorage. There are numerous opportunities.

Targeting crew

Crew are vulnerable, however. Professional traffickers have been known to target crew, either by befriending them during shore leave or taking advantage of any money worries they might have or indeed a drug addiction. Blackmail might also be a factor.

Crew are attractive to traffickers. They have specific access to suitable hiding places on board, for example tanks, enclosed spaces and storerooms. Machinery spaces are ideal for secreting illicit material. Even if the crew member is not the actual courier, they can facilitate the passage of drugs on and off the ship.

In some cases, a courier might not be aware of the presence of a 'minder', whose purpose is to ensure nothing prevents the courier from doing their job even if it means interrupting the operation of the ship.

Crewmembers need to look after each other to stop an individual falling into a position where they become vulnerable and therefore a target. Companies should have confidential reporting systems that crew can trust.



Ports and passages – new concerns

Over 90% of goods are transported globally by sea and constantly changing trading patterns between emerging and developing countries create new opportunities to shift illicit goods.

Recent incidents have highlighted a notable increase in the finding of cocaine on vessels trading from Colombia to Mexico. One particular route is Barranquilla to Altamira. Another recent spike in incidents concerns the smuggling of cocaine from Ecuadorian ports. Drugs have also been found at discharge in ports in Turkey and Algeria.

Drugs are sometimes transported via indirect routes. As main routes become better policed, traffickers will select countries with weaker enforcement or corruptible officials.

Location of smuggled drugs

There are too many locations on board of vessels where drugs could be smuggled to list them all. But below we list some of the areas where drugs are commonly found:

Concealment in bulk cargo: packages are hidden within the stow of a bulk cargo, which could be a clean grain cargo or a dirty one such as coal or ore. Drugs have been found close to ladders within the hold.

- **Containers:** Common methods include breaking into the container (and replacing the security seal afterwards) and secreting the drugs with the cargo within. Reefer containers are targeted because the technical space that houses the refrigeration equipment can prove to be a handy hiding place.
- **Ro-Ro:** drugs can be hidden in the cargo of cars, freight vehicles, trailers or coaches
- **Carry-on:** Visitors or crew can quick simply walk on board and leave a package behind
- **External:** Drugs can be attached to ship's hull. Typically, the rudder trunk and in some cases divers stash drugs on to the underwater area of the hull of a stationary vessel.
- **On the move:** Speedboats are sometimes used to attach drugs to moving vessels.

Preventing drugs getting onto your vessel

Trading in certain parts of the world will put a vessel and its crew at risk of being victims of drug trafficking. There is no magic solution in preventing a determined trafficker. However, there are measures that can be taken to keep safe.

The measures employed by a shipowner and the crew depend on the risk. A voyage from certain South American countries to North America or Europe is clearly higher risk. However, there are plenty other drug routes around the globe and this check should be part of a vessel's voyage risk assessment.

Assessing the risk

- Check the level of port security. Secure fences, gates and lighting as well as CCTV and security patrols are just some of the important measures which need to be in place. If a port has poor security measures, the risk to the ship will increase. This requires close co-operation between the ship's security officer and the port security officer so that an increase in vessel security can be arranged.
- A strong security presence on the gangway is paramount. A vessel that looks like it takes security seriously is a less attractive proposition to a smuggler.
- Access points should be restricted and kept to a minimum. A single gangway under close watch is preferable where possible. Pilot ladders should always be raised after use.
- The ISPS code states that an effective gangway watch is always required with a list of all crew and expected visitors. It's also very important to check the ID of any personnel embarking your vessel.
- Restricting access around the vessel and maintaining good lighting on deck are good effective measures. Locking doors that lead into the accommodation, storerooms and technical spaces removes an easy opportunity to hide packages.
- Locks, code-locks and other devices used to restrict entry should be regularly checked to ensure they are still working.
- Be aware that stores, spares and repaired or serviced equipment are another easy route for smuggling drugs.
- If CCTV is fitted on the vessel then make sure it works and covers the right areas.
- Monitor all around the vessel – including the sea side – for any suspicious behaviour or approaches. If a port has a history of smugglers attaching drugs below the waterline, periodically turn the engine.
- Searching a vessel for small packages of drugs is a huge undertaking for a small number of crew. But high-risk easily accessible areas can be checked before sailing.
- Encourage a strong security culture on board your vessel. Crew should be aware of the risks and know the importance of reporting suspicious activity. The more alert and secure crew appear to be then the more they may prevent drug smuggling happening on your vessel.

By Mark Smith Courtesy of P&I North www.nepia.com





THE HEART OF CHRISTIANITY

Unanswered Questions

Many people find it hard to believe in a loving God. They doubt his existence altogether, or their experience of suffering and human tragedy make them doubt his love. Scientists seem to be solving the great puzzles of the universe, and psychologists seek to unlock the deepest mysteries of the human heart. But there are some questions that don't go away.

- What caused the whole universe to exist in the first place?
- Why is there so much suffering in the world?
- What is the meaning of human life?
- What is the point of my own individual life?
- Is there such a thing as life after death?

These are huge questions. You would be suspicious if someone claimed to answer them with any certainty. There is a limit, surely, to what we can discover for ourselves, and very often we need to admit that some questions are simply beyond human understanding.

God has not Left us Alone

The heart of Christianity, however, is the belief that God has spoken to us in human history, by sending us his Son. He has not left us alone. He has revealed himself to us. We don't have to go round in circles trying to solve everything ourselves. He has come to our help. The idea that Christians claim to know the truth about God will

sound arrogant or even fundamentalist to many people. But in fact there is a kind of humility behind this claim. It's not that Christians, as people, are special - far from it. It's that they have been given the most extraordinary gift: the knowledge of Jesus Christ. And their desire is simply to share that gift with others. It's Jesus himself who taught that he is the Way to God, and the Truth, and the Life.

The Christian Message

What, then, is the Christian message? It is this: that God is love. His love created and sustains the whole universe. His love brings into being every human life. We were meant to live in peace with God and with each other, but this peace was broken through hatred and sin. In the fullness of time, God sent his only Son, Jesus Christ, to be our Saviour. He came into the world to reveal the love and mercy of God, and to lead us to the Father. Through him we can find peace with God and with each other. His death on the Cross brings us forgiveness. His Resurrection on the third day, and his Ascension to heaven, give us the hope of an astonishing new life. And the gift of the Holy Spirit allows us to share in that life even now on this earth, through faith and through belonging to the Church. You may not be convinced by these ideas. But at least you can see that the heart of Christianity is not a theory or a programme but a person: Jesus Christ. A person we can come to know, above all through faith.

An Invitation to Believe

Faith is a gift. We can only believe in Jesus Christ if the Holy Spirit helps us to believe. At the same time, faith is a step that we can choose to take – it is a personal decision. In any human relationship there are moments when we need to trust and to make a commitment – despite our uncertainties. It's the same with God. He calls us to trust him and to reach out to him. Faith changes everything. It transforms our life, our relationships, our hopes, our love. Don't be afraid of taking a step in faith. You might do this in different ways. You might speak to a Christian friend about their faith, and find out what it means to them. You might read some of the Bible, or find a Christian book or website that could help you. You might visit a Christian church, and appreciate the beauty and serenity of the building. You might speak to a priest, and put some questions to him, or find out if there is a group for enquirers in a local church that you could join.

An Invitation to Pray

The simplest and most important way of taking a step in faith is to pray. Don't be afraid to open your heart to God in prayer, however nervous or uncertain you feel. He always responds, even if it is in quiet and unexpected ways. Say to him, out loud if it helps, a simple phrase like: "Lord, help me". "God, have mercy on me". "Jesus, I believe in you". Or simply, "Lord, I want to believe, help my lack of faith". If it is helpful, you could pray with the words of the Lord's Prayer, the Our Father, which Jesus gave us. Or if this is all too much, you could just sit in silence, with the intention in your heart that God would guide you and be

“Lord, you have made us for yourself; and our hearts are restless until they rest in you”

with you. To pray in any of these ways is like opening a door. It allows God to work in your life and reveal himself more and more. Faith is not an irrational leap in the dark, it is a response to the love of God. And perhaps, in the depths of your heart, he is calling you, even if you are not sure how to interpret that call. What matters is that we try to respond. It was Jesus who said, "Ask, and it will be given unto you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you."

The Church

Eventually, if you come closer to Christ in faith, this desire will bring you to the Church. The Church is the community that Jesus himself founded, so that his followers would always have a spiritual home to live in, a family to belong to. This community is found today in its fullness in the Catholic Church. In the Church we receive the life of Christ in the sacraments; we come to know him through the inspired words of the Bible; we hear his teaching through the bishops and the Pope; and we share in the great tradition of Christian faith that stretches back through the centuries. The Church is a rock that Christ never abandons, despite the sins and weaknesses of her members. It is a spiritual home that will always be a place of safety and security, a place where we can rejoice in the gifts of the Holy Spirit and in the friendship of our fellow Christians.

The Love of God

So whatever you feel about your own worth, never doubt that your life has a meaning. God created you for a purpose. He loves you and cares for you. And he is closer to you than you can imagine. You will never find true peace or lasting happiness without him. As St Augustine wrote: "Lord, you have made us for yourself; and our hearts are restless until they rest in you". Whatever your questions and doubts, don't be afraid to find out more about him and open your heart to him.

Courtesy of the Catholic Truth Society www.ctsbooks.org





Prayer to St. Thomas the Apostle, for Faith

The 3rd July is the Feast of St Thomas the Apostle who travelled far from his home in Palestine to bring the Good News to India.

Almighty and ever living God, who strengthened your apostle Thomas with sure and certain faith in your Son's resurrection: Grant us so perfectly and without doubt to believe in Jesus Christ, our Lord and our God, that our faith may never be found wanting in your sight.

Amen



STELLA MARIS

