

JANUARY – MARCH  
2025



# Stella Maris

SUPPORTING SEAFARERS AND FISHERS AROUND THE WORLD

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January to March

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## 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 all over 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 [www.stellamaris.org.uk/donate](http://www.stellamaris.org.uk/donate)**

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## NEED HELP?



Please scan the QR code to get in touch, or contact us via WhatsApp or SMS on +44 7883 303529

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

# CASTELLON, SPAIN

**This one hundred year old port is located in the Mediterranean Sea about seventy kilometres north of the city of Valencia. It is currently the ninth largest port in Spain.**

The facilities (originally built for the export of oranges - an agricultural product that experienced a great boom in the early twentieth century) evolved in parallel with the social and economic growth of the area. In the second half of the twentieth century, the port has undergone a great expansion and transformation thanks to the large petrochemical industries and the growth of the ceramic industry in the same region. This port specializes in the movement of raw materials and in solid and liquid bulk, which are supplied to local industry.

The port has a fishing harbour, a sports club for mooring recreational boats, and an inland basin in the north with a transverse quay.

The port of Castelló also offers a recreational and leisure area, created in the 1990s to attract tourists and social activity, and has big plans for future development. With this growth of the port and with the aim of responding to the growing demand for support from merchant seafarers, the idea of setting up a Stella Maris base in Castelló began in 2015 on the initiative of the parish of the maritime district and marine veterans who knew, from their own experience, the help that Stella Maris offers. The project began with the opening of a building (provided by the Port Authority) in July 2017.

These headquarters are located within the port, but next to the urban nucleus. There

is a meeting room, a games room, a library, a TV room, as well as other services. Its operation is partly funded by the Castelló City Council and with occasional help from institutions and individuals. A group of volunteers and the chaplain offer ship visiting services to all the seafarers and transport from their vessels with the van provided by ITF to the Stella Maris headquarters. It is, in short, a home from home on the mainland; we are their family and temporary friends during their stay in Castelló.



## STELLA MARIS CASTELLÓ SEAFARER'S CENTRE

Av. Ferrandis Salvador (B.P. 10)  
12100 Grau de Castelló (Spain)

### Opening times:

Monday to Saturday 16:00 - 22:00  
Closed Sundays and Festivities

### Stella Maris Castelló chaplain:

Fr. Albert Arrufat

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# THE CHURCH YEAR AT SEA

## 2025 IS A JUBILEE YEAR

Every twenty-five years a special year of Jubilee is announced by the Pope as a great celebration of the anniversary of our Redemption by Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This year the theme that has been announced by Pope Francis is Pilgrims of Hope. There is a great difference between simply being optimistic about the future and having true Christian Hope. As Christians we are firm in our Hope that no matter our trials here on earth, in our family, work or personal difficulties that happiness and peace await us in an eternal loving relationship with God.



## THE JUBILEE YEAR IS A SPECIAL TIME OF PRAYER

There are many reasons and ways to pray, but at the root of prayer is always the desire to be open to God's presence and His offer of love. It is the Spirit of the Son that calls the Christian community to prayer and allows for each person to return to the Father. It was Jesus who entrusted His disciples with the Lord's Prayer, which is commented on by the Catechism of the Catholic Church (cf. CCC 2759-2865). The Christian tradition also offers other texts, such as the Hail Mary, that can help to find words to address God: "By a living transmission – Tradition – the Holy Spirit in the Church teaches the children of God to pray" (CCC 2661).



1ST JANUARY

**SOLEMNITY OF MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD**

As we start a new calendar year, the Church celebrates Mary's title as Theotokos, 'God-bearer', defined by the Council of Ephesus (431AD). Mary is the Mother of Jesus Christ, true God and true man; hence she is the 'Mother of God'. She brought Jesus into the world and continues to bring people to Him, 'to Jesus through Mary.' She is indeed the Mother of the Church and we are called to share in her Motherhood. As St Bernard wrote: 'what use would it be to me that Christ was born once of Mary in Bethlehem if he were not born of faith in my soul too?'

3RD JANUARY

**THE MOST HOLY NAME OF JESUS**

On the day of his Circumcision the Lord received the name Jesus, meaning 'God saves.' Devotion to the Holy Name was popularised in the fifteenth century by St Bernardine of Siena and St John Capistrano, who both carried the monogram of Jesus (IHS) with them on their preaching tours. We honour the Holy Name not only because it is the name of our Saviour but because it is, in itself, a powerful prayer.

**Let us call on the name of Jesus in our need and be careful not to use his name blasphemously ourselves, or allow others to do so.**

25TH JANUARY

**THE CONVERSION OF SAINT PAUL THE APOSTLE**

This Feast commemorates the conversion of Saul of Tarsus while he was on his way to Damascus to persecute Christians. He was blinded by a light and thrown from his horse to the ground, hearing the words, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' As Pope Benedict XVI wrote, 'the Risen One spoke to Paul, called him to the apostolate and made him a true Apostle, a witness of the Resurrection, with the specific task of proclaiming the Gospel to the Gentiles.'



## THE JUBILEE YEAR CONTINUES – IT IS ALSO A TIME OF PILGRIMAGE.

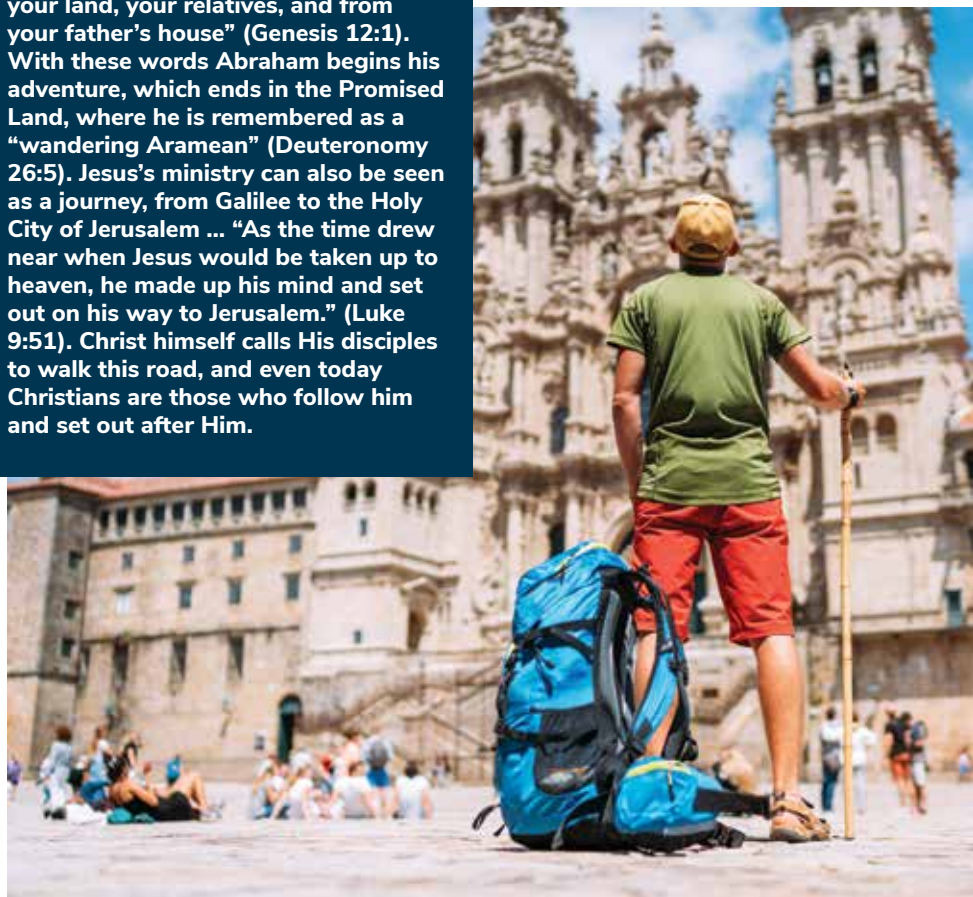
The jubilee calls for us to set out on a journey and to cross boundaries. When we travel, we do not only change place physically, but we also change ourselves. Hence, it is important to prepare ourselves well, to plan the route, and learn about the destination. In this sense, the Jubilee pilgrimage begins before the start of the journey itself: the starting point is the decision to set out.

In the Bible, Abraham is described as a person on a journey: “Go forth from your land, your relatives, and from your father’s house” (Genesis 12:1). With these words Abraham begins his adventure, which ends in the Promised Land, where he is remembered as a “wandering Aramean” (Deuteronomy 26:5). Jesus’s ministry can also be seen as a journey, from Galilee to the Holy City of Jerusalem ... “As the time drew near when Jesus would be taken up to heaven, he made up his mind and set out on his way to Jerusalem.” (Luke 9:51). Christ himself calls His disciples to walk this road, and even today Christians are those who follow him and set out after Him.

## 2ND FEBRUARY

### THE PRESENTATION OF THE LORD

The Presentation of the Lord, popularly known as ‘Candlemas,’ traditionally concludes the celebration of Christmas. It commemorates the presentation of Jesus in the Temple forty days after his birth, an occasion when offerings were made and the mother was ritually purified. Simeon’s prophecy referred to Jesus as ‘a light to enlighten the pagans’, summing up the Christmas theme of light coming into the darkness, but also points towards the Paschal Mystery, for He was ‘destined to be a sign that is rejected.





## 11TH FEBRUARY

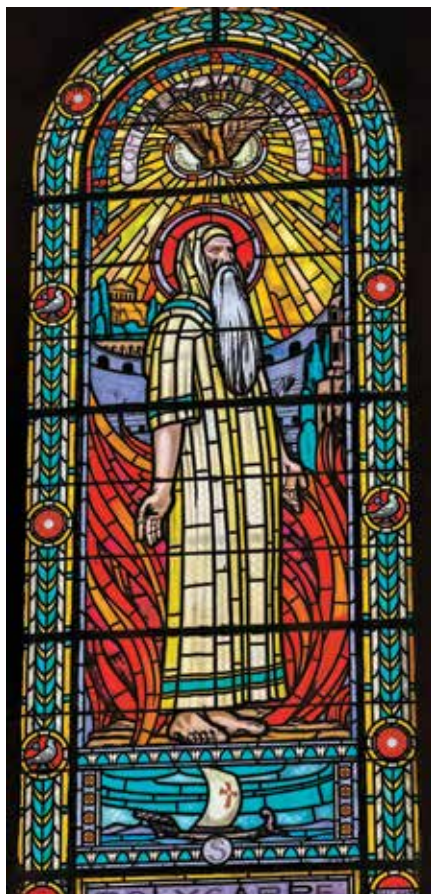
### OUR LADY OF LOURDES

The feast marks the first apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary in 1858 to fourteen-year-old St Bernadette Soubirous. There were eighteen apparitions in all, the last of which was on 16 July 1858. The message of Lourdes is a call to personal conversion, prayer and charity. In a special way, the shrine has become closely associated with the sick.

## 23RD FEBRUARY

### SAINT POLYCARP, BISHOP AND MARTYR

St Polycarp (+ c.155) was converted to Christianity by St John the Evangelist. He was later ordained bishop of Smyrna (now Izmir, Turkey). As an old man he was urged by the Roman proconsul to renounce Christ in order to save his life. The saint replied, 'For eighty-six years I have served him and he has never wronged me. How can I renounce the King who has saved me?' He was executed and his body burnt; his followers collected his relics and wrote an account of his life and martyrdom.



## THE JUBILEE YEAR CONTINUES AND REMINDS US ESPECIALLY DURING LENT THAT IT IS A TIME FOR RECONCILIATION AND FORGIVENESS.

A Jubilee year is a sign of reconciliation because it establishes a “favourable time” (cf. 2 Corinthians 6:2) for conversion. We are called to put God at the centre of our lives, growing toward Him and acknowledging His primacy. Even the Biblical call for the restoration of social justice and respect for the earth stems from a theological reality: if God is the creator of the universe, He must be given priority over every reality and partisan interest. It is God who makes this year holy by bestowing on us His own holiness.

As Pope Francis recalled in the 2015 Bull proclaiming the Extraordinary Holy Year, “Mercy is not opposed to justice but rather expresses God’s way of reaching out to the sinner, offering him a new chance to look at himself, convert, and believe. [...] God’s justice is his mercy given to everyone as a grace that flows from the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thus, the Cross of Christ is God’s judgement on all of us and on the whole world, because through it he offers us the certainty of love and new life” (*Misericordiae Vultus*, 21).

In practical terms, reconciliation involves receiving the sacrament of Reconciliation, taking advantage of this time to rediscover the value of confession, and experiencing God’s personal words of forgiveness.

### 5TH MARCH

#### ASH WEDNESDAY

On Ash Wednesday, our foreheads are marked with ash, reminding us that, “you are dust and to dust you shall return” (Gn 3:19). In order to help us focus on Christ’s self-sacrifice and more eagerly celebrate his Resurrection, the Church asks us to practise a certain amount of self-denial during Lent. Christians who are in good health should eat just one whole meal on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. We should also refrain from meat on those days. During the whole forty days, we might consider giving up or consuming less of something we like; chocolate, alcohol. Better still, we might devote some of our precious time to prayer or spending time with the sick and lonely. In comparison with the sacrifice of Christ, our relatively small sacrifices, if done in the right spirit, will enable us to make a more loving response to God.





## 19TH MARCH

**SAINT JOSEPH, SPOUSE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**

Not a single word of his is recorded in Sacred Scripture and yet St Joseph is one of the greatest and most popular saints, largely because of his humility and his closeness to Our Lord. He died before the beginning of Jesus's public ministry and, since he probably died in the presence of Jesus and Mary, is venerated as the patron of a good death. Blessed Pius IX named him patron of the universal church and Pope Francis added his name to all the Eucharistic Prayers.

## 25TH MARCH

**THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD**

On the floor of the Holy House in Nazareth, an inscription reads 'Verbum caro hic factum est'; 'the Word was made flesh here'. When the Blessed Virgin said 'yes' to the Angel Gabriel, the Word became flesh and dwelt in her womb for nine months. The Annunciation is the prologue to the mysteries of Holy Week: the Incarnation happened so that we could be redeemed; the child conceived on this day was born to die for our sins and conquer death.



## Lectio Divina – a short introduction

How to link up with Jesus and with God if you can't get to Mass? Read the Word of God in scripture. It is like a letter from home, written specially for you – and God is writing to you. Perhaps light a candle to show God's presence.

Take a short passage, perhaps the Sunday gospel. Put yourself in the presence of God, open yourself to God, for God is all around you.

What is God writing to you about? What is Jesus saying to you? Imagine the scene. You are one of the disciples, listening and watching. Ask Jesus what he means for you.

Read the passage again, until it enters your heart. It may help to do this with others, to share with them and learn from them what Jesus is saying to them. Always end with a blessing, a sign of real friendship for your brothers and sisters and a prayer for each one's needs.

# St Paul's Shipwreck

## SCRIPTURE READING FOR JANUARY

Navigation was already hazardous, since it was now late in the year, so Paul gave the sailors this warning, 'Friends, I can see this voyage risks bringing damage and heavy loss not only of the cargo and the ship but also of our lives as well.' But the centurion took more notice of the captain and the ship's owner than of what Paul was saying.

A southerly breeze sprang up, they weighed anchor and began to sail past Crete, close inshore. But it was not long before a hurricane, burst on them from across the island. The ship was caught and could not keep head to wind, so we had to give way to the wind and let ourselves be driven. The next day they began to jettison the cargo, and the third day they threw the ship's gear overboard. Both the sun and the stars were invisible for a number of days and the storm raged unabated, until at last we gave up all hope of survival.

Then, when they had been without food for a long time, Paul stood up among the men. 'Friends,' he said, 'you should have listened to me and not put out from Crete. You would have spared yourselves all this damage and loss. But now keep up your courage. There will be no loss of life among you, only of the ship. Last night there appeared beside me an angel of God, and he said, "Do not be afraid, Paul. God grants you the safety of all who are sailing with you." So take courage, friends; I trust in God that things will turn out just as I was told, for we are to be thrown up onto some island.' And so they arrived in Malta. Coming across a place of cross-currents, they ran the ship aground. In this way it happened that all came safely to land. (Acts 27)



## REFLECTION

This story of Paul's shipwreck on the way to Rome shows the sailors carrying out all the correct steps when there was danger at sea for the little boats of that time – very different from a great modern container vessel. Luke, the author of the Acts of the Apostles, obviously knew the procedures. We too know them from the legal records of insurance cases in the law courts of the time. Of course no one took notice of Paul's instructions until it was too late, for he was only a prisoner on his way to Rome for the trial of his appeal to Caesar. It was important that Paul should reach Rome, the capital of a world empire, from where the faith could spread by land and sea over the whole world.

In one of his letters St Paul tells us that he was shipwrecked three times on his journeying as an apostle, and on one occasion spent a day and a night in the open sea. Each one of us has a task set before us, spreading the faith and knowledge of God wherever we may be – on land or on sea. The Lord will look after us and enable us to fulfil this vocation, as long as we remain in close contact with him in prayer and confidence. The traveller has a special privilege of bringing Christ to places where he has hardly been known at all.

# The Temptation of Jesus in the Desert



## SCRIPTURE READING FOR MARCH

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert, for forty days being put to the test by the devil. During that time he ate nothing at all and when they were over he was hungry. Then the devil said to him, 'If you are Son of God, tell this stone to become a loaf.' But Jesus replied to him, 'Scripture says: A human being does not live on bread alone.' Then, leading him to a height, the devil showed him in a moment of time all the kingdoms of the world and said to him, 'I will give you all this power and their splendour, for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to anyone I wish. If you, then, worship me, it shall all be yours.' But Jesus answered him, 'It is written: You shall worship the Lord your God, him alone you shall serve.'

Then he led him to Jerusalem and set him on the parapet of the Temple and said to him, 'If you are Son of God throw yourself down from here, for it is written: He has given his angels orders about you, to guard you, and that: They will carry you in their arms in case you trip on a stone.' But Jesus answered him, 'It is said: Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'

Having finished every way of putting him to the test, the devil left him, until the opportune moment. (Lk 4:1-14)

## REFLECTION

After his baptism in the Jordan by John and the Holy Spirit the first thing that Jesus does is to go out into the desert to think out, in the company of his Father, God what all this means. How should he 'play' this act of Messiah, the chosen representative of God? The desert is an awesome place, where a person is alone with God. No other living being, no trees, no animals, nothing to distract. Everyone needs to have some place where they can be alone with God, some place for quiet reflection and prayer alone with God.

The devil suggests to Jesus ways in which he should 'play' this role – and they are all wrong. We often have the same temptations.

To produce plenty of food and live a life of luxury? No, this is to worship not God but the good things of earth.

To dominate everyone as ruler over the whole world? No, this is complete selfishness.

To jump off a high place, such as the Temple wall, without being hurt, and so show his own invulnerability? No, this would be just personal showing off.

We are all tempted to have everything serving ourselves in various ways, when Jesus shows that both perfection and joy consist in serving others. Lent, the forty days before Easter (this year on 20th April), is a special time for making a fresh start in living for God and serving other people - in whatever way our own talents suggest. It may be helpful to concentrate on three ways in which we are letting down God and other people, and two or three ways in which we can serve other people.



## Looking ahead to the future: Stella Maris Spain holds 31st National Assembly

Spain has always had close relationship with the sea, home to some of the most famous mediterranean ports such as Barcelona and famously the location of the Pillars of Hercules which stand at the threshold of the Atlantic and the Mediterranean Sea; as well as the location of famous Atlantic ports from which the first journeys to the New World of the Americas began.

Many missionary journeys began in Spain's ports so it is no surprise that the care for souls in Spanish ports continues to this day through the work of Stella Maris.

More than fifty people comprising port chaplains, volunteer ship visitors, and

members of maritime welfare communities from Spain and beyond gathered at the port of Vigo on 18 and 19 October to attend Stella Maris Spain's 31st National Assembly.

Attendees got the chance to engage with one another in person, and to consolidate the excellent activities carried out by Stella Maris' chaplains and volunteers in supporting seafarers and fishers over the past year.

"Our main achievement over the past year is the ability to continue providing timely and vital support to seafarers and fishers through our daily ship visits, that is to say being available when seafarers and fishers need us," said Deacon Ricardo Rodríguez-Martos Dauer, who is Stella Maris Barcelona Director

and Stella Maris Spain National Director.

“If anything has characterised these last two years it has been the creation of the National Welfare Committee (NWC) and thanks to it, the increase in Port Welfare Committees in Spain. In 2022 there were two PWCs (in Tenerife and in Barcelona) and now there are already eight. Next year I hope there will be more,” he added.

During the National Assembly, which was held on 19 October, Stella Maris Spain Bishop Promoter Luis Quinteiro highlighted the importance of Stella Maris volunteers, saying that they were essential for the development of the work of Stella Maris now and in future.

Bishop Antonio Valín of Tui-Vigo spoke about the theological reasons for the evangelising mission of Stella Maris, stressing that it must be translated into action and is not just limited to words.

There were also presentations about the needs of seafarers, including how daily workload,

port stays, and onboard living conditions affected their lives.

Another session touched upon the management and financing of seafarers' centres and the recruiting and training of volunteers.

Speakers included Carlos Botana, President of the Port Authority of Vigo; Ana Lope Carvajal, head of the infrastructure from Puertos del Estado (Ports of the State); Dr Gloria Riesco, member of the Spanish Society of Maritime Medicine; Celia Jackson, Grants & Impact Manager from the Merchant Navy Welfare Board in the UK; and Tim Hill, CEO and National Director of Stella Maris UK.

The National Assembly ended with the celebration of Holy Mass and dinner. Special recognition was given to Monsignor Luis Quinteiro, who has been Stella Maris Spain's Bishop Promoter for twenty-two years.



**“Our main achievement over the past year is the ability to continue providing timely and vital support to seafarers and fishers through our daily ship visits, that is to say being available when seafarers and fishers need us,”** Deacon Ricardo Rodríguez-Martos Dauer, Stella Maris Barcelona Director and Stella Maris Spain National Director





## Stella Maris' Centenary Emergency Fund

➤ **Stella Maris' Centenary Emergency Fund (CEF) was launched in 2020 to mark one hundred years of Stella Maris. The fund provides crisis support to seafarers, fishers and their families, including in cases of bereavement, abandonment, and medical emergencies.**

Here are some recent examples of how Stella Maris chaplains and volunteer ship visitors, around the world, via the CEF, have made a significant difference to the lives of the recipients.



### CASE STUDY 1

A Filipino fisherman's untimely death from tetanus left a lasting financial and emotional impact on his family. His wife had the overwhelming responsibility of raising their five children.

During this challenging time, Stella Maris stepped in to provide much-needed support, after an application was made for financial help via the CEF. A grant of ₱103,614.15 (approximately £1,500) was made to the family. Further to this, Stella Maris Philippines provided the family with grocery items worth ₱6,000.

This assistance not only helped alleviate the family's immediate hardships but also exemplified the compassion and unwavering support of the Church for those in need.

### CASE STUDY 2

Oleg, a Ukrainian seafarer, had moved to the UK with his wife and two children to escape the war in his country, but soon after sadly found out that he had cancer.

He was also at risk of losing his job. The company he worked for no longer wanted to support him medically and financially.

Stella Maris put in a CEF application to help Oleg pay for two months' rent (£4,300) and to cover living expenses worth two months (approximately £1,900). Stella Maris also provided legal assistance in negotiating and interpreting Oleg's release from work form.

The grants released a huge burden from Oleg's shoulders and enabled him to make a well-considered decision without needing to rush into signing the release form because he was desperate to ensure his family was financially supported.

### CASE STUDY 3



Four Ghanaian fishers were recruited to work on a UK-flagged vessel but upon arriving in the UK were sent to work on a trawler in the Republic of Ireland instead.

During their time onboard, they were not paid in full, were verbally abused and forced to live in unsanitary conditions on board. One fisher was even denied medical treatment following an accident.

The vessel subsequently sank, but the fishers managed to get off before the sinking. Due to not having the right paperwork, they are in legal limbo and being accommodated informally while waiting for their fate to be determined.

They needed money for food and toiletries to sustain them, so an application was made to the CEF for this purpose and a grant of £4,000 was made providing much-needed temporary relief.

### CASE STUDY 4

A migrant fisher from the Philippines had to give up working overseas and resort to fishing locally. His income was reduced, and he was finding it tough to make ends meet.

On top of this, his eldest child became very sick with nephrotic syndrome, causing her to be admitted to hospital twice. The cost of hospitalisation, treatment and medicines put enormous financial and emotional stress the family.

An application was made via the CEF to help cover six-months' worth of medicine supplies resulting in a grant of ₱43,124.

**These are just some of many examples of how Stella Maris' CEF grants have helped support seafarers, fishers and their families in times of need when crisis strikes.**

If you are in need or know of a colleague or seafarer who needs help for an emergency, and who could benefit from the CEF, please email [concerns@stellamarismail.org](mailto:concerns@stellamarismail.org)

# The Importance of St Joseph for Men

## St Joseph is a powerful intercessor

"Some saints are privileged to extend to us their patronage with particular efficacy in certain needs, but not in others; but our holy patron St Joseph has the power to assist us in all cases, in every necessity, in every undertaking." St Thomas Aquinas

## St Joseph can help us increase in virtue

"Oh, what a saint is the glorious St Joseph! ... St Joseph will obtain for us, if we repose confidence in him, an increase in every kind of virtue, but particularly in those which he possessed in a pre-eminent degree. These are a perfect purity of body and mind, humility, constancy, fortitude, and perseverance: virtues which will render us victorious over our enemies in this life, and enable us to obtain the grace of enjoying in the life to come those rewards which are prepared for the imitators of St Joseph." St Francis de Sales

## Among all people, St Joseph most closely resembled Our Lady.

"St Joseph was the one who made the nearest approach [to Our Lady's level of virtue]; and as a mirror when set before the rays of the sun reflects them perfectly, and another set before the first so vividly repeats them that it is scarcely possible to see which of the two immediately received them, even so Our Lady, like a most pure mirror, received the rays of the Sun of Justice, which conveyed into her soul all virtues and perfections; and St Joseph, like a second mirror, reflected them so perfectly, that he appeared to possess them in as sublime a degree as did the glorious Virgin herself."

St Francis de Sales





### St Joseph shows us the holiness of ordinary life

"Good St Joseph! Oh! How I love him! I can see him planing, then drying his forehead from time to time. Oh! How I pity him! It seems to me their life was simple... What does me a lot of good when I think of the Holy Family is to imagine a life that was very ordinary. It wasn't everything that they have told us or imagined..."

"How many troubles, disappointments! How many times did others make complaints to good St Joseph! How many times did they refuse to pay him for his work! Oh! How astonished we would be if we only knew how much they had to suffer!"  
St Thérèse of Lisieux

### St Joseph shows us how to trust in God's plan

"Even in difficult and sometimes tragic moments, the humble carpenter of Nazareth never claimed for himself the right to dispute God's plan. He awaited the call from on high and in silence respected the mystery, letting himself be guided by the Lord. Once he received the mission, he fulfils it with docile responsibility. He listens attentively to the angel, when he is asked to take as his wife the Virgin of Nazareth (cf. Mt 1:18-25), in the flight into Egypt (cf. Mt 2:13-15) and in the return to Israel (cf. Mt 2:19-23)." Pope St John Paul II



### St Joseph reminds us to listen for God's voice

"St Joseph's silence does not express an inner emptiness but, on the contrary, the fullness of the faith he bears in his heart and which guides his every thought and action..."

"Let us allow ourselves to be 'filled' with St Joseph's silence! In a world that is often too noisy, that encourages neither recollection nor listening to God's voice, we are in such deep need of it."  
Pope Benedict XVI

St Joseph shows us a very special example of holiness. The titles given to him by the Church tell us he is the most just, chaste, prudent, strong, obedient and faithful. He is named the Pillar of Families, Solace of the Wretched, Hope of the Sick, Patron of the Dying, Protector of the Church and Terror of Demons.

# Liturgical Living in Lent



➤ **Why do we fast in Lent? Why is Lent forty days? How is Lent traditionally observed? What is the purpose of the Stations of the Cross? Discover Catholic customs & traditions for Lent By Joanna Bogle.**

“As we approach the season of Lent and the days leading to the Easter festival which focuses attention on the mysteries of our redemption, the need for religious preparation is proclaimed... These forty days which have been instituted by the Apostles should be given over to fasting. This means not just reducing food which benefits soul and body, but the elimination of unworthy habits. To these we should add almsgiving which, under the name of mercy, covers a multitude of praiseworthy deeds of charity. So all the faithful, though unequal in worldly possessions, are equal in the inspiration of their spiritual lives and can achieve an equal standing in loving all their brothers and sisters in the human race... if we show love to those in any kind of distress then we are blessed with the virtue of charity and are at peace.” (Pope Leo the Great d. 461)

## The forty days

In the Old Testament, Moses led the people of Israel for forty years through the desert. In the New Testament, Christ spent forty days in the desert in prayer before the start of his public ministry. Numbers are very important in the Scriptures, and the Church’s times and seasons reflect this. Lent is forty days long, covering a period of six weeks. You can count up the days on a calendar, starting from Ash Wednesday and leaving out the six Sundays, which brings you to Holy Saturday, the day before Easter Sunday. Each Sunday is a little Easter, a Day of Lord, and cannot be counted as an ordinary part of Lent. Some parishes provide special “Lenten charts” for children: these have boxes to colour in, one for each day, each box suggesting some special activity or small penance for that

day: "Today I will do a secret good turn to someone" "Today I will not complain about anything" "No television today". Such a chart could also be made at home or at school.

During Lent we will not use the word "Alleluia" in our prayers at Mass, and we will not be singing the Gloria. Both of these are exclamations of joy and therefore not suitable for this season of penance.

### "Lent"

The English word "Lent" is of Old English origin – like the word "shrove" – and refers to the fact that the days are starting to lengthen at this time of year. In Italian, the word is Quaresima, referring to the forty days. In German, it is Fastenzeit, fasting-time.

### Why fast in Lent?

Fasting is a central part of Lent. We are meant to eat less and deny ourselves luxuries. We are meant to renounce even good things – cream, meat, sweets – because we are seeking to become closer to God. Even people who are not Catholics are aware of the tradition of "giving up" something during this season. But we need to understand what fasting and penance are all about:

"In our own day, fasting seems to have lost something of its spiritual meaning, and has taken on, in a culture characterised by the search for material well-being, a therapeutic value for the care of one's body. Fasting certainly brings benefits to physical well-being, but for believers, it is, in the first place, a 'therapy' to heal all that prevents them from conformity to the will of God." (Pope Benedict XVI, 2009)

Jesus himself fasted, and showed us that this is a way to overcome evil and also to draw very close to God. It is an aid to prayer and a rebuke to Satan.

"The Gospels speak of a time of solitude for Jesus in the desert immediately after his baptism by John. Driven by the Spirit into the desert, Jesus remains there for forty days without eating; he lives among wild beasts, and angels minister to him.



At the end of this time Satan tempts him three times, seeking to compromise his filial attitude towards God. Jesus rebuffs these attacks, which recapitulate the temptations of Adam in Paradise and of the Israelites in the desert, and the devil leaves him 'until an opportune time.'"

### Penance and conversion

The major theme and purpose of Lent is to offer Christians a time for penance and conversion, in preparation for the Easter feast itself and the fifty days of Eastertide that follow. Catholics are urged to confess their sins during Lent, and receive absolution. This is linked to the obligation that we must receive Holy Communion at least once a year, at Easter or thereabouts. The old expression for this is "Easter duties".

All Catholic churches have extra opportunities for confession during Lent. Some parishes arrange special evenings when a number of priests come to the church to hear confessions, with prayers and a short sermon beforehand to help people prepare.

Catholic schools and organisations often arrange similar Penitential Services during Lent. Major centres of pilgrimage, big city parishes, and cathedrals, will have special arrangements for confession during this season too. "The confession (or disclosure) of sins, even from a simply human point of view, frees us and facilitates our reconciliation with others. Through such an admission man looks squarely at the sins of which he is guilty, takes responsibility for them, and thereby opens himself again to God and to the communion of the Church in order to make a new future possible."

Stella Maris is the largest ship-visiting network in the world. We improve the lives of seafarers and fishers through our network of local chaplains and seafarer centres, expert information, advocacy and spiritual support.



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