

APRIL – JUNE  
2025



# Stella Maris

SUPPORTING SEAFARERS AND FISHERS AROUND THE WORLD

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

# BELFAST



**The Port of Belfast is over 400 years old and was established in 1613 when King James I incorporated Belfast as a borough by Royal Charter under the proviso that a quay was established there.**

The port began to expand and take shape as a new, straight, channel was officially opened in 1849 by William Perrie, which led to an increase in the volume of shipping. The establishment of shipyards such as Harland and Wolff led to the construction of famous vessels such as the *Titanic*, which of course sank in 1912. Today the modern port includes passenger and freight ferries serving England, Wales, Scotland and the Isle of Man. There is a newly redeveloped container terminal at Victoria Terminal 3. The main port serves a wide range of cargo from crude oil, LNG, grain, scrap metal, stone and coal.

The port is always busy and served by a hard-working team of stevedores in all weathers. There are also a number of fishing vessels that come into Belfast. The offices also host conferences such as the conference on Modern Slavery facilitated by Stella Maris, which brought together charities, the emergency services, Border Force and other institutions to tackle the challenge of modern slavery in the maritime industry. Stella Maris sit on the Port Welfare Committee which ensures the welfare needs of seafarers are met. Historically Stella Maris had a seafarer's centre which is well remembered by the seafaring community, but it is no longer serving its original purpose. Belfast Harbour Seafarers Centre is run by the Mission to Seafarers and provides seafarers with free Wi-Fi, TV,

games including darts and pool. There is also a chapel, meeting room and clothing and souvenir stores. During the cruise ship season *Stella Maris*, alongside the Mission to Seafarers and Seamen's Christian Friends Society, established the cruise hub on the quayside at the cruise terminal. This took the form of a Portacabin with free Wi-Fi, comfortable seating, free tea and coffee, free books and other resources. It was also a space for chaplains to be available for a chat if needed. Some of the seafarers who visited the hub in this period still get in touch which demonstrates that the centre created a space that allowed seafarers to decompress and recharge their batteries. In this region we also support other ports serving the fishing fleets of Ardglass, Foyle Port and Warrenpoint Port as well as other areas.

The support needs of each seafarer and fisher can differ tremendously. Since re-establishing *Stella Maris* in Belfast, and Northern Ireland as a whole, we have supported seafarers and fishers in several ways including working with other institutions to ensure training is provided to those who would like to go to work at sea. Each day our chaplains and volunteers support vessels by providing a listening ear, free transportation to the city and visitor attractions, seafarers' centre or supermarket. We have helped support seafarers who have lost their luggage, those who have been ill and sadly seafarers who have been affected by war. Our global network of chaplains often comes in useful and can make a difference by providing real practical support in the moment it is needed.

## STELLA MARIS BELFAST

Ardglass, Belfast, Kilkeel, Larne, Portavogie

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## 5TH APRIL

**SAINT VINCENT FERRER, PRIEST**

St Vincent Ferrer (1350-1419) was born at Valencia (Spain) to an English father and Spanish mother. He joined the Dominicans and became renowned as an effective preacher among Christians, Jews and Muslims. Many miracles were attributed to him. He died in 1419 while preaching in Brittany and was buried at Vannes.

## 7TH APRIL

**SAINT JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE, PRIEST**

St John Baptist de la Salle (1651-1719) was born at Rheims (France). He opened free schools for poor children and introduced new teaching methods, earning him the title 'Father of Modern Pedagogy'. He founded the Brothers of the Christian Schools (de La Salle Brothers), which made a great contribution to popular education. He was declared patron of schoolteachers in 1950.



## 20TH APRIL EASTER SUNDAY

**A MEDITATION ON THE RESURRECTION**

This meditation is written by Fr Lawrence Lew OP. Death cannot contain Life. As the Easter Sequence says, "Mors et vita duello", "Death and Life struggled in a wondrous war, the dead Lord of Life reigns and lives". Hence the closure of the tomb is cracked open, and the grave itself stands empty, but it resembles an open door. As the Preface of the Dead intones, "for your faithful, Lord, life is changed not ended", so thanks to the Risen Lord Jesus and in union with him, death becomes the gateway to eternal life. Truly, henceforth, we need not be afraid, even in the face of death – not if we have faith in the resurrection and are united to Christ through love. The women who came to the empty tomb early on the first Easter morning were seeking Christ with hearts full of love. We can do likewise, seeking the Lord with loving attentive hearts. The invitation to come and see the place where he lay is an invitation to faith, to believe, to trust in God's Word. The women's hands gesturing towards this place are likewise inviting us to believe in the power of God to conquer sin, death, and all that would terrorise us. Fittingly, this mosaic image does not show Christ climbing out of the tomb, as so many later images of the Resurrection would do. Rather, it has the reticence of the Gospel. The Resurrection is not seen by human eyes but is based on the testimony of another. Thus are we invited to faith, to trust in the word of others, and above all in the word of him who is called the "faithful and true Witness" (Rv 3:14).



## 23RD APRIL

**SAINT GEORGE**

We all know St George as patron of England and tamer of dragons. The facts of his life are obscure, but he seems to have been a Roman soldier, probably of the late third century, who was martyred at Lydda in Palestine during the great persecution by the Emperor Diocletian, probably for refusing to renounce Christ and worship the Emperor as a god. His cult was very widespread in the east from that time on; when English soldiers went to the Holy Land on Crusade, they were inspired by this warrior saint; Richard the Lionheart put himself and his army under St George's protection. From then on his popularity in England only grew: Edward III founded the Order of the Garter, with St George as patron, in 1348; Henry V called on St George for aid before the great victory of Agincourt in 1415. Thereafter he was secure as patron of England (although the patronage of two Anglo-Saxon Saint-Kings, Edward the Confessor and Edmund of East Anglia, was not neglected), and his popularity survived the spoliation and wreckage of the Reformation.

**PRAYER TO ST GEORGE**

Faithful servant of God and invincible martyr, St George, inflamed with a burning love of Christ, you fought against the dragon of pride, falsehood and deceit. Neither pain nor torture, nor the sword nor death could part you from the love of Christ. I implore you for the sake of this love to help me by your intercession to overcome the temptations that surround me, and to bear bravely the trials that oppress me, so that I may patiently carry my cross and let neither distress nor difficulty separate me from the love of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen



## 25TH APRIL

**SAINT MARK, EVANGELIST**

St Mark (+ c.75), the author of the Gospel bearing his name, is often identified as the young man who ran away when the Lord was arrested. His Gospel gives the teaching and memoirs of St Peter. He joined St Paul and St Barnabas on their first missionary journey and later became St Paul's secretary in Rome. He is thought to have established the Church in Alexandria, and to have died a martyr there.

## 1ST MAY

**SAINT JOSEPH  
THE WORKER**

This feast was instituted in 1955 by Pope Pius XII on a day when labour was celebrated in many countries. Jesus was himself 'the son of the carpenter' and St Joseph presents a wonderful example of how even the most seemingly menial work can be sanctified.

## 2ND MAY

**SAINT ATHANASIUS, BISHOP  
AND DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH**

St Athanasius (c.296-373) was Bishop of Alexandria (Egypt) for some forty-six years. He became the champion of the faith against Arianism and, as a result, was exiled for seventeen years. He wrote many theological works, and St John Henry Newman later wrote that he was 'a principal instrument after the Apostles by which the sacred truths of Christianity have been conveyed and secured to the world.'



## 13TH MAY

**OUR LADY OF FATIMA**

The Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to three shepherd children at Fatima (Portugal) on the thirteenth day for six consecutive months in 1917. She brought a message of peace and reparation for sin, encouraging devotion to her Immaculate Heart and the recitation of the Holy Rosary.

## 26TH MAY

**SAINT PHILIP NERI, PRIEST**

St Philip Neri (1515-1595) was born in Florence but spent most of his life in Rome and is known as the city's 'apostle'. He had a mystical experience in the catacombs in 1544, when he 'felt himself divinely filled with the power of the Spirit', causing his heart to dilate. Ordained in 1551, he founded the Congregation of the Oratory. He was noted for his constant joy and the love he showed those who came to him for counsel or confession.

## 31ST MAY

**THE VISITATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**

The Visitation commemorates the meeting between Mary and her cousin St Elizabeth at Ein Kerem, just outside Jerusalem. Feeling the presence of his divine Saviour, St John the Baptist leapt in his mother's womb on the Blessed Virgin's arrival. Following St Elizabeth's words of greeting, Our Lady proclaimed the Magnificat, a hymn praising the Lord for all that he had done for his handmaid and expressing her attitude of faith and humility.





## 1ST JUNE

**SAINT JUSTIN, MARTYR**

St Justin (+ c.165) was born in Nablus, Samaria and, having studied Platonist philosophy, converted to Christianity at the age of about thirty-three. As a lay apologist he travelled around preaching the faith, defending it from attack and writing works such as the *Apologies* and *Dialogue*. He was beheaded in Rome during the reign of Marcus Aurelius.

## 3RD JUNE

**SAINT CHARLES LWANGA AND COMPANIONS, MARTYRS**

The Ugandan martyrs suffered under King Mwanga of the Baganda in 1885-1886. They included St Joseph Mkasa, master of the pages at court, who had criticised Mwanga and was beheaded on 15 November 1885, and his successor St Charles Lwanga, who was burned alive with other Christians (of several denominations) on 3 June 1886 at Namugongo. The martyrs were canonised in 1964 by Paul VI, who visited the shrine at Namugongo five years later.

## 8TH JUNE

**PENTECOST SUNDAY**

Pentecost, the Feast of Weeks, marks the fiftieth day after Passover in the Jewish calendar (a week of weeks is forty-nine days, plus one for the feast itself). The Church celebrates on this day the descent of the Holy Spirit on the disciples, locked by their fears into the virtual prison of the Upper Room, but suddenly given the same zeal and fire as came down on the Elders of Israel when Moses received the Law on the Holy Mountain, which the Jewish Pentecost or Shavuot called to mind. The Church, it is often said, was born on the day of Pentecost; but it is also a day that reminds us strongly of our enduring ties with the People of the Covenant.







## 29TH JUNE

### SAINTS PETER AND PAUL, APOSTLES

St Peter (+ c.64) was the brother of St Andrew and a Galilean fisherman. He was called by the Lord and, despite his obvious human weaknesses, eventually chosen as the leader of the Twelve, the 'rock' on which the Church was built. After Pentecost, he became particularly associated with Antioch and then Rome. He was crucified under Nero and buried at the Vatican.

St Paul (+ c.64/67) was a tent-maker from Tarsus (then capital of the Roman

province of Cilicia, now in Turkey), a Pharisee and a Roman citizen. He was initially a persecutor of Christians but was converted by the Lord on his way to Damascus. He became the Apostle of the Gentiles, preaching the Gospel to the uncircumcised, reaching Greece, Italy, Malta and possibly even Spain. He was beheaded along the Via Ostiense and buried nearby, on the site where the basilica bearing his name now stands.

## 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.

# Easter



## SCRIPTURE READING

After this, Jesus showed himself again to the disciples. They got into the boat but that night caught nothing. When it was getting light, Jesus was standing on the shore, though the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus called out, 'Children, have you anything to eat?' They answered, 'No.' He said to them, 'Throw the net out and you will find something.' So they threw the net out and did not have strength to haul it in because of the number of fish. The disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord.' So Simon Peter tied his outer garment round him (for he was stripped) and threw himself into the sea.

When they came ashore they saw a charcoal fire there with fish cooking on it and bread. Jesus said, 'Bring some of the fish you have just caught.' Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.' When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?' He answered, 'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my lambs.'  
(John 21:1-8,9-10,12,15)

## REFLECTION

The Risen Christ invites his disciples to eat breakfast with him. He is a real person, not just a ghost. He cooks on a fire, and in Luke's gospel actually eats a real piece of fish. The disciples have reverted to their old way of life, fishing, but they make no progress, catch nothing all night. Then they obey Jesus's instructions and get a huge catch of fish. Even Peter, who has three times denied Jesus at his trial before the high priest, now boldly says that he loves Jesus more than the others – three times. The stage is set for the apostolate. The lesson is that without Jesus we get nowhere, but with Jesus we can be real disciples of Christ. Easter is a time of forgiveness, new beginnings and new enthusiasm for the Lord. Once again we commit ourselves to the Lord.

# June: the Pope's Intention: Compassion

## SCRIPTURE READING

One of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came up, and seeing Jesus, fell at his feet and pleaded with him repeatedly, saying, 'My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her that she may be saved and may live.' Jesus went with him.

So they came to the house, and Jesus saw a commotion with people weeping and wailing unrestrainedly. He went in and said to them, 'Why all this commotion and crying? The child has not died, she is asleep.' But they ridiculed him. So he turned them all out and, taking with him the child's father and mother and his own companions, he went in. And taking the child by the hand he said to her, 'Little girl, I say to you, get up.' And at once the little girl got up and began to walk around, for she was twelve years old. And he said that she should be given something to eat. (Mark 5:22-24,38-43)

## REFLECTION

The year 2025 has been declared by Pope Francis a Jubilee Year, when we are to be especially compassionate to those in need. In the Bible every fiftieth year ( $7 \times 7$ , the sacred number squared) was a Jubilee Year, when all debts were wiped away, giving everyone a chance to start again in freedom, with a blank sheet. For this June the Pope's special prayer is that all Christians should be more compassionate, more open and responsive to the needs of others. In the story about Jairus's daughter we see Jesus responding immediately, alert to the parents' need for peace and quiet with their daughter, conscious also that twelve-year-olds are always hungry. He is thoughtful for everyone. Their needs, and not his own plans, are his immediate concern. We too, and especially in this Jubilee Year, need to love others and put their needs and feelings before our own.







## St John Baptist Scalabrini





➤ **St John Baptist Scalabrini was born at Fino Mornasco near Como in northern Italy on 8 July 1839. He was ordained 30 May 1863, and consecrated Bishop of Piacenza, also in northern Italy, on 30 January 1876, when he was thirty-six years old. During his twenty-nine years as Bishop, he worked unceasingly to meet his flock's spiritual and charitable needs.**

St John Baptist Scalabrini became interested in the care of migrants when he noticed the extent of migration from his own diocese, and was inspired to act when he witnessed how the Italian emigrants were treated – robbed of their dignity and money on their way to a new land.

He researched, lectured and wrote pamphlets about emigration, forcing issues into the arena of national debate. In 1887, he founded the Missionaries of St Charles, a community of priests who ministered to migrants in transit as well as when they arrived in their new homes.

In 1895, Bishop Scalabrini accepted the vows of the first Missionary Sisters of St Charles. St John Baptist Scalabrini founded the Missionary Sisters of St Charles because he realized that the Italian emigrants needed to be accompanied by Italian missionaries who knew the Italian language, understood their culture and would lead them to fit into and become part of the society in the United States without sacrificing their religion or their culture. Scalabrinian Missionaries opened the St Raphael Society at ports of departure and in downtown Manhattan to assist immigrants and to protect them from unscrupulous merchants of human flesh.

St John Baptist Scalabrini foresaw the future. He innately understood that immigration would remain an important part of the way the world works, and called for the Church to develop ministries appropriate to migrants.

St John Baptist Scalabrini died on June 1, 1905. Pope John Paul II beatified him on November 9, 1997. He was canonised by Pope Francis on October 9 2022.

### Biographical notes

- Born and baptised the same day in Fino Mornasco (Como) 8 July 1839.
- Ordained priest on 30 May 1863; professor and rector of the St Abbondio diocesan seminary.
- In 1870 named pastor of St Bartholomew parish in Como.
- Ordained bishop in Rome on 30 January 1876.
- Entry into the diocese of Piacenza on 13 February 1876.

### Bishop of Piacenza

- He made five pastoral visits to the 365 parishes of the diocese.
- He celebrated three synods: 1879, 1893, and 1899.
- He founded the School of Christian Doctrine; Pope Pius IX called him Apostle of the Catechism. Founded the catechetical review *il Catechista Cattolico*; held the first National Catechetical Congress in 1889.

### Father to migrants

- On 28 November 1887 he founded the Congregation of the Missionaries of St Charles.
- 1889 established the St Raphael Lay Association for Assistance to Migrants.
- On 25 October 1895 he founded the Missionary Sisters of St Charles.
- Visited his missionaries and their missions in the Americas: in 1901 in the US and in 1904 in Brazil.
- Died in Piacenza 1 June 1905 (Solemnity of the Ascension).

# New IMO data shows growing crisis of seafarer abandonment

24 January 2025



Stella Maris, the global maritime network, is calling for urgent action in response to record levels of ship abandonment, which left thousands of seafarers stranded without pay, provisions, or a way home in 2024. In January 2025, joint IMO/ILO data confirms a staggering 310 ships were reported abandoned last year, a significant increase from 142 in 2023.

**“These figures are not just statistics; they represent lives upended and families pushed into financial hardship. Abandoned seafarers often endure harrowing conditions – trapped on vessels without adequate provisions or wages and unsure when they’ll be able to return home to their loved ones. The physical and mental toll is devastating.”**  
– Tim Hill MBE, Stella Maris UK Chief Executive

Seafarers can spend months aboard vessels as they await resolution of their cases, without any income to send home. In one abandonment case supported by Stella

Maris, a group of abandoned seafarers in Kenya faced over a year on their ship with little food and no wages.

Margaret Masibo, the Stella Maris chaplain in Mombasa, Kenya, recalls: “Men were crying, others were shouting, some had withdrawn into silence. For several days, they’d had no food or fresh water. They were starving to death. Since the ship had been abandoned, not a single person had stepped on board to help – until I did. The men had no money and couldn’t disembark because they didn’t have papers to be in Kenya. It was a terrible, heart-breaking sight to see people abandoned so carelessly.”



MARGARET MASIBO, STELLA MARIS



FISHERS SUPPORTED IN KENYA

Often the primary breadwinners for their families, their absence can plunge loved ones into financial distress.

*"The ripple effects of abandonment stretch far beyond the ship. Whole communities suffer when seafarers are left stranded and unpaid,"* Hill added.

Stella Maris provides direct support to seafarers, including food parcels, legal assistance, and pastoral care. However, the charity warns that more needs to be done to prevent this crisis from escalating.

*"The world relies on seafarers to keep trade moving, yet they remain among the most vulnerable workers. We must stand together to enforce international laws, hold negligent companies accountable, and provide immediate assistance to abandoned crew to ensure that seafarers' rights are respected and their dignity upheld,"* Hill said.

In a recent press briefing, International Maritime Organization (IMO) secretary-general Arsenio Dominguez underscored IMO's commitment to addressing the problem of seafarer abandonment, but stressed the need for better compliance with existing regulations.

***"There is a responsibility for member states and ship owners to treat their people better. The framework is in place, but we need everyone to do their part."***

– Arsenio Dominguez, IMO Secretary General

## IN MEMORIAM Rostik Inzhestoikov



We remember our dearly beloved Rostik, our dear friend and colleague in Stella Maris Ukraine, who sadly passed away in his home in Odesa, Ukraine on Tuesday 4th February 2025. Rostik has served as the Assistant Chaplain to Fr Oleksandr Smerechynskyy since 2003, and had previously worked as a port chaplain for The Mission to Seafarers. Many of our trustees, chaplains, support staff, volunteers, fellow charity shipmates and colleagues past and present will have met Rostik over the course of their service, and they will remember him for his infectious smile, his fantastic sense of humour, humble nature and dedication to serving seafarers and their families. Rostik was forty-seven years old and leaves behind his wife, Iryna and their eleven year old twin sons, Illia and Kyryl. We pray for the repose of his soul. May he rest in peace and rise in glory.



# How to Develop Intimate Friend

> **We need a blueprint to build a house; we also need a blueprint to build a house of prayer within our soul. St Ignatius of Loyola gives us this blueprint in the Prayer of Ignatian Contemplation.**

“The glory of God is man fully alive”, according to St Irenaeus. The human person is composed of body and soul. We are both physical and spiritual beings, and both need to be nourished if we are to become fulfilled human beings. We nourish our spiritual life through prayer. Or, using another analogy, what air is to the lungs, prayer is to the soul.

If you are reading this, the assumption is that you already have a prayer life or at least that you desire to have one.

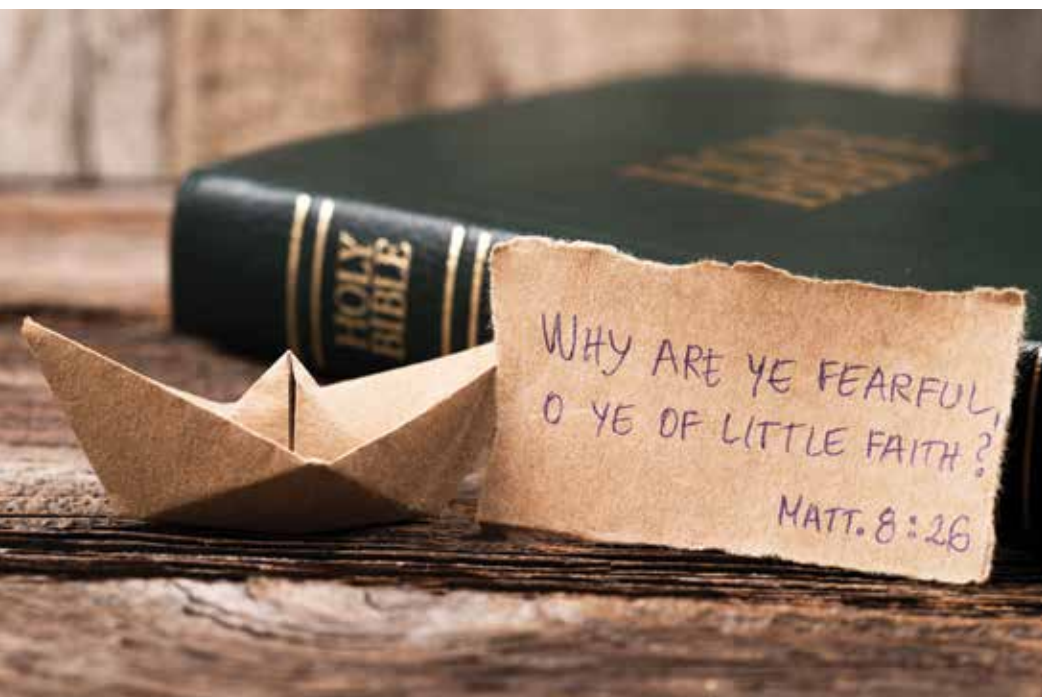
Let us start with Scripture, the Word of God that speaks to us in all the

circumstances of our lives. Martha and Mary were two sisters who lived with their brother, Lazarus, in Bethany. Jesus and his disciples were always welcome to visit this family who loved him very much.

Mary, the more contemplative or prayerful one by nature, would sit at the feet of Jesus listening to him. Martha, the more active one, would busy herself preparing a meal for their guests to enjoy. On one occasion, Martha decided to speak up.

Let us read the following passage of Sacred Scripture (Lk 10:38-42) to see what happened:

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to





# ship with Jesus in Prayer



be made. She came to him and asked, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!” “Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed – or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”

Jesus is calling each one of us to enter into “the one thing necessary” – a deep, intimate friendship with him through prayer. Friendship is based on getting to know someone by spending time with that person. With Jesus, the most important friendship in our lives, St Ignatius of Loyola says to give him an hour a day. Spend one hour a day with Jesus and he will bless the other twenty-three hours of your day! If, in all honesty, you cannot pray one hour a

day, then make a commitment to pray at least thirty minutes a day to establish this intimate friendship with Jesus. Why do we do this? Because it is Jesus who is calling us to himself so that we can avoid sin and practise virtue and he can help us through the trials and sufferings of this life until we rejoice with him for ever in heaven! As a bonus, by the graces we earn and the example we give, our daily hour of prayer helps us bring many others to heaven with us. Especially those whom we love and pray for, who do not pray for themselves.

We will now address two key elements of our daily holy hour, namely praying with Scripture and bringing to the Lord the concerns that are heavy on our mind and heart. However, when you are reading Scripture or talking with Jesus about your

life, it's important to stay with a thought that captivates you. Stay where your heart is until you feel ready to move on. Our Lord never tires of spending this time of loving friendship with you. On the other hand, if you are reading Scripture or talking to Jesus and you are not getting much out of it – we all hit dry spots – stay for the whole hour anyway and make it an offering of love to Our Lord. Prayer is a decision, not a feeling. Our Lord cannot be outdone in generosity, and he will shower you with blessings for your perseverance.

Finally, after each holy hour, take a few minutes to write in a journal your key experience in prayer that day. It will help you to see over time how your relationship with Jesus has grown. However, if you miss one day, or even more, simply begin again. Do not try to make it up by doing two holy hours a day. That is a temptation of the devil that will discourage you and make you give up prayer.

### **Let God speak to you**

The first element of praying your holy hour is listening to the Word of God – Sacred Scripture. This is God himself speaking to

you. Start by reading the Gospels, the life and teachings of Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Each Gospel has something special to offer. For example, the Gospel of Luke is generally known as 'the mercy Gospel'. In addition, Luke starts with the infancy narratives, the births of John the Baptist and Jesus.

For one hour a day, read the Gospel narrative and think about how the words and happenings in the life of Jesus speak to you. You may even try imagining that you are present in certain scenes of the Gospel. This is 'Ignatian contemplation'. In the Gospel of Luke, you might imagine that you follow the shepherds going to see Jesus born in the stable of Bethlehem, and there you see Jesus in the arms of Mary. Imagine Mary handing you the baby Jesus to hold. What are you thinking, what are you feeling, holding the Saviour of the world in your arms?

After praying with the Gospels, you can read and pray with the Acts of the Apostles, also known as the Gospel of the Holy Spirit, to see how the Church that Jesus established grew after Pentecost. Peter gave a sermon, and three thousand





were converted. The witness and blood of the first martyr, St Stephen, led to the conversion of St Paul.

In the Old Testament, pray with the Psalms. They capture all the thoughts and emotions of the human person and can bring great comfort to us. There are great stories of faith and courage to be found in the Old Testament, too. The book of Genesis, chapters 37-50, tells the story of Joseph, son of Jacob, who is a Christ figure. The book of Tobit is a charming story of God's intervention through the Archangel Raphael in the lives of two suffering servants of the Lord, Sarah and Tobit. The book of Esther is the story of a queen willing to risk her life for the salvation of God's people. Isaiah speaks about the "suffering servant", a prophecy of the life and death of Jesus.

As often as we read and pray with the Scriptures, the Word of God speaks to us in a different way, because we are different. Delve into the richness of God's Word! Let it enter deep into your heart and help you ponder the story of your life, and how God is calling you to love and to serve others.

### Talk to the Lord

The second element of praying your holy hour is talking with Jesus about what is happening in your daily life – your joys and sorrows, hopes and dreams, worries and sufferings. Place them in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, pierced for love of you. What is on

your mind and heart right now? Talk with Jesus about this. He hears you, he sees you, he loves you, and he will help you by giving you what is the greatest good for you in your life right now. We do not always see it that way. However, if we are honest, looking back over our life, we can see that he was always working on our behalf, through the good things, as well as the hard things that helped us become the person he created us to be. His plans are always better and greater. Lord, we praise you and we bless you! Help us to stay by your side always by means of our daily holy hour, our "Hour of Power" as Venerable Fulton J. Sheen called it.

If after reading my recommendations for improving your prayer life you still believe that you are too busy to spend one hour a day with Our Lord, or at least thirty minutes a day, then maybe you are too busy. Let us be honest: our work is never done. Consider this maybe another distraction of the devil so that we will miss the greater good: a deep and abiding friendship with Jesus through the time we spend with him in our daily holy hour. Let us resolve to defeat the enemy of our soul by being faithful to our daily conversation and growing friendship with Jesus. Fortified in his love and grace, we are able to turn our goodwill and resources with greater love and charity to the needs of others, those whom God places in our lives, and he will bless our efforts with even more abundant fruits.

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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