

Stella Maris

apostleshipofthesea.org.uk

February 2020

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STELLA MARIS

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 339 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.

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39 Eccleston Square
London, SW1V 1BX, United Kingdom'

Tel: +44 020 7901 1931

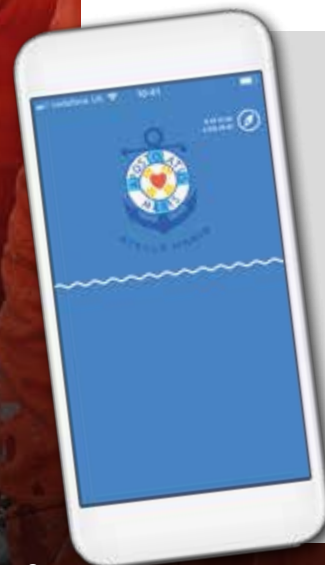
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Registered charity in England and Wales number 1069833
Registered charity in Scotland number SC043085
Registered company number 3320318

Cover image, pg 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12 courtesy of istockphoto.com
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Stella Maris provides seafarers with **practical support, information and a listening ear**



Port Focus Gibraltar



Gibraltar affectionately known as "The Rock", is a British overseas territory located near the southern tip of the Iberian Peninsula overlooking the Strait of Gibraltar. The territory shares a border with Spain to the north. It has historically been an important base for the British Armed Forces and is still the site of a Royal Navy base. Its strategic location explains why, the Rock has been used as a naval fortress and why so many battles have been fought over this tiny peninsula at the entrance to the Mediterranean Sea.

The majority of the Naval dockyard continued to be operated by the British Government right up until 1985 when it became a private concern. Utilizing its unique geographical position at the crossroads of the Mediterranean and Atlantic shipping lanes, Gibraltar currently provides a wide range of services to vessels of all sizes and types.

With over ninety thousand vessels transiting the Strait of Gibraltar each year, it has become the largest bunkering station in the Mediterranean and is an increasingly popular cruise ship destination.

2019 saw the arrival of 15,104 vessels for different purposes. Apostleship of the (Stella Maris) Gibraltar runs a Seafarers Centre at the Gibdock Repair Yard opposite the Security Post.

The centre has free Wi-Fi, a pool table, TV, a small library and public telephones and is open 24/7. The Port Chaplain and qualified ship visitors are available 24/7.

Apostleship of the Sea (Stella Maris) Seafarers' Centre

Main Gate
GibDock
Ship Repair Yard

Port Chaplain: Fr Derek Alvarez
Mobile: +350-54006914

Ship visitor: James Ferro
Mobile: +350-57405000

Sunday at Sea

Feast of the Presentation of the Lord

2nd February 2020

Commentary by Fr Colum Kelly

Gospel Luke 2:22-40

When the day came for them to be purified as laid down by the Law of Moses, the parents of Jesus took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord – observing what stands written in the Law of the Lord: Every firstborn male must be consecrated to the Lord – and also to offer in sacrifice, in accordance with what is said in the Law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons. Now in Jerusalem there was a man named Simeon. He was an upright and devout man; he looked forward to Israel's comforting and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until he had set eyes on the Christ of the Lord. Prompted by the Spirit he came to the Temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the Law required, he took him into his arms and blessed God; and he said:

'Now, Master, you can let your servant go in peace, just as you promised; because my eyes have seen the salvation which you have prepared for all the nations to see, a light to enlighten the pagans and the glory of your people Israel.'



The Gospel and You

In today's Gospel, St Luke describes a meeting between a young couple and their infant child with Simeon and Anna, both of whom were well on in years. Simeon's response when he met the infant Jesus was to pray; he blessed God. His prayer has become part of the official night prayer of the church. Anna's response on meeting the child Jesus was to speak about Jesus to others, especially to those who were waiting for God to visit them in a special way. Whereas Simeon lifted up his heart in prayer, Anna bore witness to Jesus before others. They both have something to say to us about how to receive the Lord.

We too are called to receive the Lord both in prayer and in witness. We bless God, we thank God, in prayer for the gift of his Son, the light to enlighten all people, and we proclaim God's gift to others, by witnessing to the Lord in our lives, by what we say and do. The Lord who entered the temple in Jerusalem as the light of the world has entered all our lives; today we look to Simeon and Anna to show us how to respond to his gracious coming.

In our churches this feast will be celebrated with great joy, but what about on our ships?

I am often asked by seafarers to bring them rosary beads to help them pray and to keep in touch with the Church during long voyages.

The Rosary is simply a Catholic prayer based upon the Bible that focuses on the events in the life of Jesus and of Mary his mother. So isn't this a beautiful way to reflect on the scriptures. The fourth joyful mystery of the rosary is "The Presentation" so hopefully on seas across the world, not just in churches, this great feast can be celebrated to rejoice in the promise of the light that will enlighten the darkness. And how that light is needed in the sometimes harsh and cruel world of the sea.

'The Lord who entered the temple in Jerusalem as the light of the world has entered all our lives...'

5th Sunday in Ordinary Time

9th February 2020

Gospel Matthew 5:13-16

Jesus said to his disciples: 'You are the salt of the earth. But if salt becomes tasteless, what can make it salty again? It is good for nothing, and can only be thrown out to be trampled underfoot by men.'

'You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill-top cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp to put it under a tub; they put it on the lampstand where it shines for everyone in the house. In the same way your light must shine in the sight of men, so that, seeing your good works, they may give the praise to your Father in heaven.'

The Gospel and You

Sometimes Jesus surprises us by the use of images he chooses to illustrate some important aspects of his teaching. We find in today's gospel two such images used by Jesus to let us know what he expects from his followers. They need to be the "salt" and the "light" that the world needs.

"You are the salt of the world". His listeners immediately knew what he was talking about. Everyone knows what salt is good for. It gives food its flavour and preserves it from becoming stale. In the same way, Jesus's disciples need to contribute to helping people savour life without ending up spoiled.

"You are the light of the world". Without the sun's light, the world stays dark and it becomes impossible to find our way, or enjoy life

in the midst of the gloom. True disciples carry that light needed to find the way, to search the deepest meaning of life, to walk with hope.

These images have something vital in common. If it stays isolated in a box, salt is useless. Only when it comes into contact with food and dissolves in the food can it give flavour to what we eat. The same thing happens with light. If it stays closed up and hidden away, it can't enlighten anyone. Only when it is in the middle of the darkness can it illuminate and guide.

So the gospel is a clear call to us to be that salt and light to bring light and flavour where there may be little hope. Being described by someone as 'the salt of the earth' is quite a compliment, it means that you are a person of great worth and reliability.

Seafarers know the value of salt from the stories of preservation of food in past times at sea. Today some tell me putting vast amounts of salt on food is the only way to cover up the blandness of the cook's offerings. No disrespect meant of course!

On land or at sea, be salt and light to all whose lives are in need of nourishment or enlightenment.

'So the gospel is a clear call to us to be that salt and light to bring light and flavour where there may be little hope.'



6th Sunday in Ordinary Time 16th February 2020

Gospel Matt 5:20-22,27-28,33-34,37

Jesus said to his disciples: 'For I tell you, if your virtue goes no deeper than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven.

'You have learnt how it was said to our ancestors: You must not kill; and if anyone does kill he must answer for it before the court. But I say this to you: anyone who is angry with his brother will answer for it before the court. You have learnt how it was said: You must not commit adultery. But I say this to you: if a man looks at a woman lustfully, he has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

'Again, you have learnt how it was said to our ancestors: You must not break your oath, but must fulfil your oaths to the Lord. But I say this to you: do not swear at all. All you need say is "Yes" if you mean yes, "No" if you mean no; anything more than this comes from the evil one.'

The Gospel and You

The Jews were extremely proud to be the people entrusted with the Law of Moses.

That Law contained the will of the one true God. In it they could find all they needed to be faithful to God. For Jesus also the Law is important, but now it's not at the centre. Jesus came from God to enrich our lives with a new understanding. The Kingdom of God is coming and that will introduce the building of a new way of living. It is not enough for us to just keep Moses's Law. Now it is necessary to open ourselves to the Father and to collaborate with God in building a more just and brotherly way of life.

That's why, according to Jesus, it's not enough to fulfil the commandment: "do not kill". It's also necessary to root out of our lives aggression, looking down on others, insults and revenge. Whoever doesn't kill fulfils the law, but if we don't free ourselves from violence then that God who wants to build a world based on love still doesn't reign in our hearts. Many times in the Gospel we hear Jesus say "you have heard it said" ... "But I say to you". So more is always required.

Sadly we hear offensive insults cast about just to humiliate, belittle others, wounding their dignity; words born of rejection, resentment, hate or revenge. Maybe we too are guilty of this without even thinking.



How often is our own talk filled with unjust words that spread criticism and suspicion? Words spoken without love or respect, that poison our living together and cause damage – words born of irritation, meanness or pure spite.

Maybe we are victims of that culture in our work. A shouting Captain on our ship, an abusive partner, always putting us down, maybe even humiliating us in front of others. If we resent people doing that to us, how much more careful must we be to respect the God whose face we should see in the other person.

'Jesus came from God to enrich our lives with a new understanding.'

7th Sunday in Ordinary Time 23rd February 2020

Gospel Matthew 5:38-48

Jesus said to his disciples: 'You have learnt how it was said: Eye for eye and tooth for tooth. But I say this to you: offer the wicked man no resistance. On the contrary, if anyone hits you on the right cheek, offer him the other as well; if a man takes you to law and would have your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone orders you to go one mile, go two miles with him.

Give to anyone who asks, and if anyone wants to borrow, do not turn away. 'You have learnt how it was said: You must love your neighbour and hate your enemy. But I say this to you: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you; in this way you will be sons of your Father in heaven, for he causes his sun to rise on bad men as well as good, and his rain to fall on honest and dishonest men alike. For if you love those who love you, what right have you to claim any credit? Even the tax collectors do as much, do they not? And if you save your greetings for your brothers, are you doing anything exceptional? Even the pagans do as much, do they not? You must therefore be perfect just as your heavenly Father is perfect.'



'To love our enemies means above all to not do them evil, not even to wish harm on them.'

The Gospel and You

Today's reading continues on the theme of last week. Jesus tells us it is not enough just to obey the law, more is asked of a true disciple. But now even more is being asked. The call to be perfect. I would like to be perfect but when Jesus tells us that would entail loving my enemies, then my enthusiasm wavers. So it was. I'm sure, with his listeners too, who might be happy to try to love their neighbour (most of the time), but their enemies?

Without any backing from the Old Testament, Jesus proclaimed this demand with absolute clarity: "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who persecute you".

But Jesus knows what life is like. When he speaks of love of the enemy, he isn't asking us to nourish feeling of affection or sympathy or tenderness toward anyone who has done evil to us.

To love our enemies means above all to not do them evil, not even to wish harm on them. It's natural that we feel ourselves wounded or hurt by their unjust actions but we must not keep feeding our hate or thirst for vengeance. Eventually we might be able to take another step forward and actually be willing to do good for them if we find them in need. We need to remember that we are at our best when we forgive rather than when we rejoice at another's misfortune.

What about turning the other cheek? A friend recently asked me

"Just how many cheeks do I need in one week"? Think of the seafarer stuck in the confines of the ship for a long time. Little grievances can develop into mini crisis through misunderstanding or feelings of hurt. Their fellow crew mates are not only their colleagues but also family and neighbour for the entire voyage. The call to love those who belittle us, tell tales about us, mock our efforts at work, is indeed a great challenge.

May God bless the efforts of all of us as we strive to be perfect, at least in his loving and merciful eyes.



The Good Life: How to help a suicidal colleague

By Pete Clark



It is human nature to want to help someone in their darkest hour. Yet knowing how to even detect that an individual is contemplating suicide is challenging enough. How can many of us adopt new skills to engage with that person to help save their life?

Red flags

What symptoms and red flags can colleagues look out for, assuming there is no recorded history of previous suicide attempts, mental health conditions or family history of suicide?

Depression is a major risk factor for suicide. The deep despair, pain and hopelessness that accompanies a major depressive disorder can make suicide feel like the only escape route. Depression varies from person to person, but red flags can include low self-esteem, sadness or feeling 'empty',

irritability or frustration, hopelessness and pessimism. Physically, it can manifest itself in persistent unexplained headaches, digestive problems, joint and muscle pain, tiredness, loss of energy and slowed thinking and movements.

There are numerous other conditions that can be linked to a higher risk of suicidal thoughts; these include social anxiety disorders, anorexia nervosa and body dysmorphic disorder, as well as risk factors like sleep deprivation, being under the influence of drugs and alcohol and a tendency to reckless or impulsive behaviours.

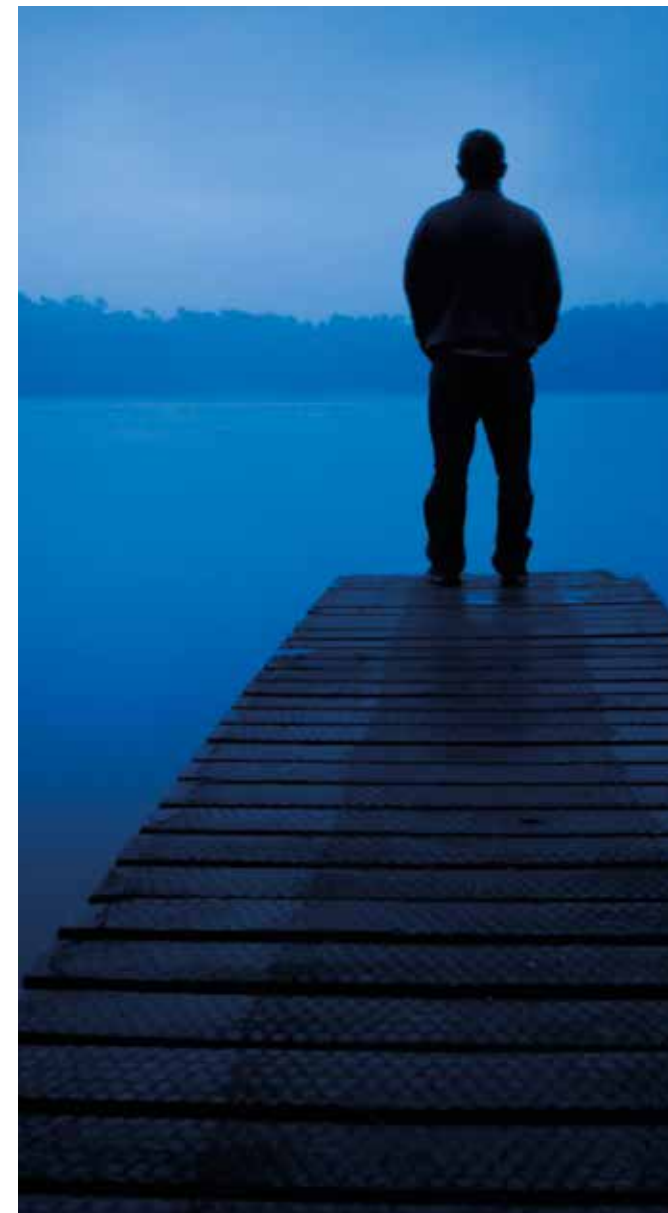
Life-changing personal injury can also trigger suicidal thoughts. We have handled cases where individuals are facing trauma of a very serious injury, and fear their jobs are at stake, and we have helped them realise precisely when a Doctor needs to be informed urgently.

Handling someone in crisis

But in reality, what can a concerned colleague do if they suspect someone is at risk? There is a massive void that can stop us from intervening, and it's often about sensitivity and qualms around confidentiality and privacy, and even a fear that we can tip someone 'over the edge' if we talk to them about it.

We have created an 8-point checklist for handling someone who may be in crisis.

Mention to the individual that they look a little quiet, down or anxious, and ask if there is anything you can do for them.



1. Listen and be there for them. Empathise if you can (it's not for everyone); sympathise if not.
2. Avoid judging them or sounding condescending.
3. Gently ask if they are having suicidal thoughts. Studies show it does not increase risk.
4. Signpost them to call a helpline, friend, family member, their doctor or mentor.
5. Follow up with them after the crisis has passed.
6. Escalate extreme cases by contacting the individual's Doctor or community mental health team, informing them that they need to assume duty of care. You don't need to, nor should you, keep someone's thoughts of suicide confidential.
7. Keep lists of agencies that can help, speak to a Stella Maris chaplain or Ship Visitor when you get into port.
8. If someone is at risk, keep them safe by staying around and removing anything that could cause harm while seeking help. Be practical and realistic.

Pete Clark is head of corporate and public sector service development at HCML, in charge of occupational rehabilitation



Lent

A Time of Spiritual Renewal

The word 'Lent' comes from the old English word 'lencten' (meaning Spring) and refers to the lengthening of days that occurs at this time of year in the northern hemisphere. As the natural world undergoes rebirth and renewal during this season, so Lent is a time for Christians to reflect on our rebirth in Baptism and engage in spiritual renewal in preparation for Easter.

To help us in that task, the 'landscape' and worship of the Church is noticeably different. Purple vestments are worn, hymns and songs are more reflective in nature, the Gloria is not sung at the Sunday Eucharist and the Hebrew word 'alleluia' (meaning 'Praise God') is also omitted from the liturgy. Traditionally, crucifixes and images are veiled to emphasise how sin separates us from God.

Forty Days and Forty Nights

Lent is 40 days long counting from Ash Wednesday and comes to its climax with Holy or Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and the Saturday before Easter Sunday. The six Sundays during Lent are not counted because Sunday is always a celebration of the Resurrection. The 40 days help us to identify with Jesus, who spent 40 days of fasting and prayer in the wilderness before beginning

his public ministry. The number 40 is connected with other biblical events. It is no coincidence that Moses spent 40 days of fasting and prayer before receiving the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. After escaping captivity in Egypt by crossing the Red Sea, the Hebrew tribes spent 40 years wandering in the desert before reaching the promised land of Canaan.

Making Space for God

As our lives become ever busier, there is the danger that the voice of the Lord gets drowned out. Even in Jesus' own time, it was easy to become distracted by the cares and duties of everyday life as the episode of Martha and Mary shows. As an antidote, Jesus invites us to "come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while" (Mk 6:31). In the early centuries of the Church, men and women accepted this invitation quite literally and withdrew to a solitary life in the deserts of Egypt and Syria. From this began the Christian monastic tradition. While not all of us feel a call to become monks or hermits, there are many disciplines and practices we can all undertake to help us live this season of renewal to the full.

Fasting and Abstinence

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 visiting 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.

Remembering our Baptism

Fasting is one of the traditions Christians have inherited from Judaism. It was common enough at the time of Jesus for him to warn us: "when you fast do not put on a gloomy look as the hypocrites do: they pull long faces to let men know they are fasting. I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward" (Mt 6:16). During the Middle Ages Lenten discipline became extremely rigorous. Milk and eggs were often discouraged or prohibited. Shrove Tuesday the day before Lent begins, or 'pancake day' was

the occasion when surplus fatty foods were used up. Mardi Gras as it is also called in some countries literally means, 'fat Tuesday' in French.

Today, the Church seeks to rediscover the spirit and meaning of Lent as understood by Christians in the first centuries. At that time, adults seeking Baptism (known as catechumens), were expected to undergo a period of strict discipline during the final two or three weeks of preparation before being received into the Church at the Easter Vigil Eucharist. By the fourth century, it became common for the faithful to join in solidarity with the catechumens and the clergy encouraged them to attend instruction by way of a 'refresher course'. It was at this time that the extension of Lent to a period of six weeks took place.

For those of us who are already baptised, Lenten repentance and self-denial will help us return to our own Baptism, the occasion when we were washed of sin, joined to God in Christ and received the Holy Spirit. As Paul says in his Letter to the Romans: "*when we were baptised in Christ Jesus we were baptised in his death... so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the Father's glory, we too might live a new life*" (Rm 6:3, 4).

Text courtesy of the Catholic Truth Society www.ctsbooks.org

There are many ways to keep a good Lent.

Here are a few:

- Try to abstain from a particular food or pleasure.
- See if a fellow crew member would like to read the gospel and meditation in this Stella Maris magazine with you each week during Lent.
- Spend time reflecting on your own Baptism. Read John 4:5-42, John 9:1-41 and John 11:1-45. Ask God to renew the gifts you've already received.
- Try and go to confession to prepare for the gifts the Lord wants to give you at Easter, details of Stella Maris chaplains, who can help arrange this, are here www.apostleshipofthesea.org.uk/aos-worldwide.
- Pray for people who will be received into the Church at Easter.
- Whatever you do or give up, do it with joy and moderation!

Heavenly Father,
give us grace this
Lent to die to all
our worldly cares
and desires.

Help us to make
space in our hearts
for you to enter in,
and so be healed
and restored to new
life in Christ Jesus.

Amen



February is the Month
of the Holy Family

Jesus, Mary and Joseph,
in you we contemplate
the splendour of true love,
to you we turn with trust.

Holy Family of Nazareth,
grant that our families too
may be places of communion and prayer,

authentic schools of the Gospel
and small domestic Churches.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph,
graciously hear our prayer.

Amen



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