

*Next year, 2020, Stella Maris (Apostleship of the Sea) will celebrate its Centenary, 100 years since we were founded in Glasgow, Scotland. Cardinal Peter Turkson, the Vatican's Prefect for the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development in Rome (which Stella Maris falls under) has sent an official message to the Presidents of the Episcopal Conference, Bishops Promoters, Regional Coordinators, National Directors and Volunteers of Stella Maris. The letter is reproduced below;*

From the Vatican, 14th July 2019

**Re: XXV World Congress Stella Maris/ Apostleship of the Sea and the Centennial Celebration**

Dear Bishops Promoters, Regional Coordinators, National Directors, Chaplains and Volunteers,

As it is recorded by Peter Anson: "A meeting took place in the Catholic Institute, Cochrane Street, [Glasgow] at 8 p.m. on October 4th, [1920] during which the revival of ship-visiting in riverside parishes was discussed." That night in Glasgow a new era for the Catholic ministry to seafarers began. The Popes who succeeded in guiding the Church have always blessed and encouraged the growth of this Apostolate.

Pope Pius XI blessed and approved the first Constitution in a letter dated 22 April 1922 "With the certain knowledge that so noble an initiative, capably supported by the zeal of priestly soul, ..., will spread more and more along the seacoasts of the two hemispheres ...".

On September 1956, Pius XII referring to the Apostleship of the Sea said: "We are very much consoled to learn how seamen reaching the world's ports are becoming accustomed to look for the help you are prepared to give them. Besides offering them the spiritual benefits of religion, you extend your Apostleship to social service; and you do well."

While Pope John XXIII stated that "This particular situation of the maritime world demands your action...it is desirable that seamen be helped to lead an authentic Catholic life within their milieu. And it is a great pleasure for Us to congratulate you on the good work that you have already accomplished to make more easy the knowledge of Christ ..."

Pope Paul VI, to the people of the sea in Cagliari on 24 April 1970, said: "... as seafarers, as men, as Christians: the network of the Apostolate of the Sea, now extended to so many ports in the world, does not leave you alone, expects you and assists you; you know that."

John Paul II in 1982 to the participants of the XVII World Congress in Rome affirmed that, "The Church wishes to bring all the baptized to a fuller and more systematic knowledge of the person and message of Jesus Christ. In fulfilling this mission to seafarers, you face a most challenging and difficult task."

In 2012 Pope Benedict XVI addressed the participants of the XXIII World Congress in Rome with the following words: "The vulnerability of seafarers, fishermen and sailors calls for an even more attentive solicitude on the Church's part and should stimulate the motherly care that, through you, she expresses to all those whom you meet in ports and on ships or whom you help on board during those long months at sea."

And more recently Pope Francis on July 2018 said at the Angelus: "I pray for them [seafarers and fishermen] and their families, as well as for the chaplains and volunteers of the Apostleship of the Sea. I offer a special thought to those who experience humiliating working conditions at sea and to those who work to free the seas from pollution."

From the initial group of people who gathered in Glasgow and of whom we know only three names (Peter F. Anson an Anglican convert, Arthur Gannon and Bro. Daniel Shields SJ), today the Stella Maris/Apostleship of the Sea, is serving seafarers, fishers and their families, around

the world, with a global outreach in 261 ports in 55 countries worldwide with over 200 port chaplains and hundreds of ship visitors and volunteers.

One hundred years have passed and this ministry has grown and adjusted to the continuous changes of the maritime industry remaining faithful to the initial mission "to reveal Christ to those who go down the sea in ships, and do business in great waters, with the object of bringing them to a deeper knowledge of Christ and his Church".

With this letter, I wish to announce the XXV World Congress of the Stella Maris/Apostleship of the Sea and its Centenary Celebration from the 29th September to the 4th October 2020 in Glasgow - Scotland.

I would like to invite our ecumenical partners, international maritime organizations, representatives from Governments, the shipping industry and civic society to "save the date" and make plans to join our chaplains, volunteers and other personnel for this important event.

The Centenary will be an occasion to remember the past and give thanks for all the people who over the past one hundred years have served the people of the sea, to celebrate the present and to chart the future of our ministry in responding to the evolving needs of seafarers, fishers and their families.

We would like to invite the Presidents of the Episcopal Conferences, Bishops Promoters, Regional Coordinators, National Directors, Chaplains and Volunteers around the world to organize at regional, national and local level celebrations to mark this important event.

All these activities will increase awareness and interest in our ministry that will culminate in the XXV World Congress of the Stella Maris/ Apostleship of the Sea and the Centennial Celebration in Glasgow next year.