

The Master's Mariner

March, 2015.



Caring for seafarers
around the world

Western Union Tension?

One of the most important welfare services we offer seafarers is the ability to transfer money overseas, directly to their loved ones.

One Sunday, Chaplain George Gayagay brought to our Mission Centre four seafarers who, after some sightseeing and shopping, returned to The Centre at about 3:40pm wanting to send money home to their families. What should have been a relatively straightforward procedure proved, however, to be a little less so!



Factor 1: In this area of our ministry we operate as a sub-branch of a Western Union Agent in the city. Unlike most other W.U. Agencies, it is open on Sundays until 4:30pm.

Factor 2: Due to severe staff shortages, we are able to have only one Chaplain on duty on Sunday. Consequently, the Chaplain must close The Centre when he is transporting seafarers to and from the Ports. Our second bus run departs The Mission at 4:00pm.

Upon their return the Centre, the four seafarers completed the necessary W.U. forms, which George then faxed to our Agent for processing. However, only three of the forms were processed. For some reason, their fax (although acknowledging receipt) did not print the 4th form. George faxed the 4th form again.

It was now 3:55pm. No response from the W.U. Agent. Waiting. It's now 4:15pm and the bus should have left 15 minutes ago. Other seafarers are becoming more agitated and demanding because their shipmates won't be able to go ashore until they return to their ship.

Eventually, George could not wait any longer. Unable to get a response from the Agent, George was unable to complete the transaction for the fourth seafarer and had to return to him the money he'd tried to send home. He was not happy, nor were the other seafarers who'd been delayed while all this was happening. In trying to do the best by that seafarer, George was 'getting grief' from everyone!

On the trip back to the Port, the seafarer rang his wife to tell her he had been unable to send her the money. As George said, *'He allowed me to hear the screaming reaction of the wife but in their native tongue I could not understand.'* (Probably just as well! - Ian)

George went on to say, *'I felt the desperation of the seafarers unable to send the needed money and the utter disappointment of the wife. At the end of their long conversation [he] begged me to take back the money and transfer it to his wife the following day* (this can be a risky procedure and is one we do not recommend – Ian). *He said, 'You have heard my wife was fighting with me as she needs it badly for the family.' Although Monday was my day off, I relented and assured him that, before he sailed at 10:00am, I would go to a Western Union agency close to home and transfer the money for him. He rang me at 9:00am that morning but, although I'd done everything from my end, I had yet to receive details from W.U.'s end. As soon as I received these details, I rang him – just as his ship was sailing out of Botany Bay!'*

Was the seafarer relieved? Oh, Yes! George told him to SMS if there was any problem but I think it's safe to say that he's quite pleased that – in that regard - there has been only silence!

A Politically Incorrect Easter

By Ian Porter

The 25th April 2015 marks the Centenary of the first ANZAC landings at Gallipoli. Although many photographs and accounts of the campaign survive, we no longer have any eye-witnesses to the horrors of that campaign. Some of you may have seen Steven Spielberg's epic WWII film, '*Saving Private Ryan*'. The depiction of the D-Day landing was so confronting that many D-Day veterans required counselling as they found themselves suddenly returned to the horrors of that day.

I don't know if Steven Spielberg ever saw Peter Weir's haunting film '*Gallipoli*' but if ever he made a film about the carnage of Gallipoli or Ypres or the Somme, the horrors would once more be bared as we revisited the slaughter of our nation's youth.

As a young Minister, I used to visit Miss Jervis, a lovely lady in her eighties. One day I felt able to ask her, 'How is it that you never married?' She replied quietly, 'All the boys went off to war, and hardly any came back.'

I will never forget the impact of her words, for I saw before me their impact upon a lovely woman whose personal loss mirrored the loss of the 'flower' of our country.



It's a uniquely human quality to want / need to discover the significance of catastrophes and conflicts; to try to make sense of them and so to commemorate those who died in them.

In seeking to do this, we instinctively look to that which is of the ultimate significance - that which provides the ultimate meaning - and try to draw our parallels and comparisons with it.

So it is not a coincidence that the focus of the Hyde Park War Memorial is a bronze of a slain warrior lying - as if crucified - on a large

sword, as if comparing the dead with the crucified Jesus.

Nor is it surprising that terms like 'sacrifice' are commonly used and that Jesus' words, '*greater love has no man than this, that one lay down his life for his friends*' are so often quoted when remembering our war dead.

From a Christian perspective, which sees the Cross in the light of Jesus' Resurrection, such a comparison is not surprising.



From other perspectives, however, a Cross is a disgusting symbol. Crucifixion was the most shameful, degrading and hideous form of death known to man. It was reserved for the scum - the refuse - of the earth; for those deemed to be cursed by God!

On ANZAC Day, why do so many find such a strong identification with Jesus?

Could it be that Good Friday is the 'Christian Gallipoli', whereby a defeat is remembered as if it were a victory of sorts? Was Jesus, therefore, some kind of accidental ANZAC - one who bravely lost a battle but nevertheless helped win the war - so that he is now remembered with national pride?

Perhaps - if not for the victory of Easter Day!
'... if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.' (1Corinthians 15:17-19)

Analysts often describe the original ANZACs as 'lambs to the slaughter' - as being given up / handed over / betrayed by an incompetent command to draw Turkish fire away from British troops.

The Bible describes Jesus also as being ‘given up’ / ‘handed over’ / ‘betrayed’ – but by whom, and for what purpose?

In the Roman sphere the focus is upon Pontius Pilate - who ordered the crucifixion:

‘Then he handed him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus; ... they crucified him ...’

Yes, Pilate was responsible for Jesus’ death, but Jesus had told him, *‘the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin’*.

Although Jesus referred to the High Priest, Caiaphas, it is clear that the Jewish Parliament and many others (e.g. Judas) were implicated.

Jesus had enraged the Jewish establishment from the beginning of his ministry:

- By public criticisms and denunciations;
- By behaviours and teachings that were offensive to their sensibilities and traditions – especially his claim to be the Son of God, *‘thereby making himself equal with God’*

The Gospel writers fasten the major blame for Jesus’ crucifixion on 3 men:

1. Judas who handed Jesus over to the priests (out of greed);
2. Priests who handed Jesus over to Pilate (out of envy);
3. Pilate who handed Jesus over to the soldiers (out of fear).

But before we start pointing self-righteous fingers, we need to remember that it was not just these who brought about Jesus’ death.

Although, like Pilate, we may wash our hands; each of us has Jesus’ blood on us:

1Timothy 1:15 ‘The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.’

Johann Heermann wrote a hymn about Jesus’ death:

Who was the guilty?

Who brought this upon thee?

Alas, my treason, Jesus, hath undone thee;

’twas I, Lord Jesus, I it was denied thee:

I crucified thee.

There are two more important aspects that I must mention:

1. Jesus didn’t die as an accidental martyr. He

went to the cross voluntarily - even deliberately.

2. The New Testament has two more aspects of ‘given up’ / ‘handed over’ applied in connection to Jesus:

a. **of Jesus himself** - in his voluntary self-sacrifice

- *‘I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep’*
- *‘... the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.’*
- *‘the Son of God ... loved me and gave himself for me’.*

b. **of the Father** – who gave up His Son

- *‘He ... did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us’*

Who delivered up Jesus to die?

- not Judas, for money;
- not Pilate, for fear;
- not the Jews, for envy; but
- **the Father, for love!**

At the end of ‘Saving Private Ryan’, a dying Capt. Miller says to Private Ryan (whose rescue had cost the lives of most of his platoon) - ‘James, earn this, earn it!’.



The Gospel of the Jesus Christ ‘says’ to you and to me, whom Jesus has loved with His very life:

‘Accept this. Receive this. It is finished.’

An Injured Seafarer

by Un Tay

Recently, I visited the crew of OOCL California. While signing in at the gangway, I was told there had been an accident the day before. The 2nd Engineer had been in the engine room trying to fix a problem with one of the machines. While he was fixing it, a computerised component suddenly activated and severed the tip of his right middle finger. He was rushed to Prince of Wales Hospital for reattachment surgery.

I met with the Captain of the vessel to learn his whereabouts so I could visit him and, as a Mission to Seafarers Chaplain, provide whatever assistance was necessary. To my disappointment, they did not have his mobile contact - local or foreign - and the vessel was to depart in three hours' time.

When I returned to The Mission, I called the Port Agent to share my concern for the seafarer's welfare and to find out how I might arrange to visit him. Thankfully, the Agent had his contact details, so I called and introduced myself over the phone. I conveyed our concern for him and got his permission to visit him in his hotel room.

When I arrived, he was very pleased to see me,



and shared with me what had happened to him in the engine room. Although he was feeling quite 'down', he was positive in his view for his future. While I was there, his wife telephoned. Understandably, she was very

worried as to whether or not he would be able to manage his trip home. He assured her that he would be alright and that everything was under control.

One of his main concerns was the hospital's medical report. He is from mainland China and is not proficient in English; consequently,

he could not understand what was written. He asked me to interpret the report for him.

As I translated for him, I could hear sighs of relief and see a big smile form on his face. I returned to visit him the following day and he was happy for me to pray for him and to accept some Christian literature. He flew home the next day.

He was very appreciative for my visits and expressed his sincere thanks to Sydney Mission To Seafarers for this crucial and timely support and care provided.

Glory to God!

A Volunteer's Evening

By Graeme Small

Last Monday week I had the opportunity to share with two seafarers in the evening - one a happy discussion, the other one sad:

Early in the evening, I met an Indian seafarer who came into our Centre. This was his first trip to Sydney and he was enjoying his time off in the CBD - especially as he had just taken photographs from near the Harbour Bridge of the Opera House on a perfect Autumn evening.

He was happy to talk and showed me a photograph of his family - wife and young son - whom he will not see for another 6 months - although as he said separation is easier now with Skyping on a mostly daily basis — so different to even 10 years ago! I asked him if he was a Christian - and he said 'Yes, I am a Catholic' - he said he read his Bible every day on board ship. He then looked at the Bibles we have available for distribution and asked if he could take one - I said 'Of course!'

As he left the Centre he thanked me for my time and said he will always remember this evening as it was the first time he had visited a MTS Centre where someone had taken the time to talk with him.

I said it was a pleasure and wished him the Lord's blessing as he walked onto the street. He said he would look forward to his next visit to our Sydney Centre.

Later that evening Gabriella and I had a discussion with a Filipino seafarer - but with a

very different tone. I'll let Gabriella tell you what happened:

Warm Hearts v. Cold Heart

By Gabriella Burcher

The other day, a Filipino man came into The Mission and bought a SIM card for his mobile phone.

There were difficulties activating the card and I had to ring Customer Service for help. All this took about 30 minutes, during which time the poor man became visibly upset because he had only a short shore leave. Nevertheless, in his own quiet way, he was able to keep himself in control.

Concerned for him, we asked the reason for his distress. He told us that his wife was working on a passenger ship that was berthed at Circular Quay, and she had asked for an earlier shore leave so they might spend the afternoon together.

Cruelly, her request was denied, so by the time he arrived at Circular Quay, he had little more than 5 minutes to be with her before her ship sailed at 7pm.

They have two little children at home, cared for by an aunt. He and his wife not be in the same port again until September.

His story was quite upsetting for Graeme and I so it was difficult to know how to console him in his distress. Nevertheless, he was relieved at being able to unburden himself and was very appreciative of our prayers for him and his family.

Please pray:

- for them - like so many others, they would rather be at home as a complete family;
- for mental, emotional and physical health and strength as they await September.
- for Captains - that they will be as flexible and understanding as possible to the needs and circumstances of their crews.

A Great Captain!

By Jack Starmans

I never cease to be amazed at the sacrifices people are prepared to make for others. I was driving the Mission bus to port, when I began

a conversation with a Master. We were talking about crews being treated as things rather than as valuable human beings. The Master told me of an incident that highlighted how companies can sometimes treat seafarers as mere 'things'.

One of his crew had come to him with shocking news. The man's wife had just rung to let him know that she was ending their marriage and was leaving their six-month-old son at home by himself. The man was frantic. How could he possibly help his son while he was at sea and so far away?

The Master assured the man that he would make sure his son was looked after until he was able to return home to make long-term arrangements for his son. The Master had a friend who lived close to the man's home, so the Master contacted and arranged for him to look after the child.

The next problem was getting the seafarer home. Leaving the ship early meant he would break his contract with the Company. Considering the circumstances, you'd think this wouldn't be a problem. However, the Master was told that if the seafarer left the ship he would never be allowed to re-join it.

The Master told the Company that the man would indeed:

- leave the ship to return home; and
- re-join it when he was able.

In reply, the Company only re-emphasised its position.

The Master then informed the Company that the ship would not leave the port until the seafarer received a guarantee that he would be able to return to the ship. The Master risked his own Contract and career by defying the company in this way.

What was the outcome? The seafarer left the ship, made long-term arrangements for the care of his son and re-joined the ship to complete his Contract.

I marvelled at the selflessness and commitment this Master showed his crewmember.

Annual General Meeting

The 49th Annual General Meeting of The Mission to Seafarers, Sydney NSW is scheduled to take place at GF 24 Hickson Road, Millers Point on Wednesday 8th April 2015 at 12:00pm. For catering purposes, please RSVP to 02 9241 3009 or to sydney@mts.org.au before Monday 6th April.

Some Statistics

Between 1st January and 31st March 2015, we:

- welcomed **1,728** seafarers to our Ministry Centre in Miller's Point;
- provided **356** free return bus trips between Millers Point and Port Botany, involving some **14,600** kms of travel; and
- enjoyed **236** crew visits.

A New Website is Coming!

In today's day and age, an organisation's public profile is (for better or for worse) largely determined by its website and Facebook page (our Facebook page is 'The Mission to Seafarers, Sydney NSW').

In the next few weeks, we will have our very own, dedicated website. When you look up www.missiontoseafarers.org.au you will find a website that is very attractive, informative, and helpful. The website will contain:

- prayer and praise points;
- regular contributions by our Chaplains;
- recognition of our donors;
- opportunities to donate;
- opportunities to enquire about volunteering;
- past and present issues of The Master's Mariner;
- local and international Mission news;
- links to supportive Shipping Companies;
- links to other Mission to Seafarers Centres and their publications;
- upcoming events;
- and lots more!

Bravo or 'Cyco'?

As you know, The Mission has been struggling with finances for some time. Dealing with this requires fundraising initiatives and spending some money (hence the website!) in order to

promote our ministry. Sometimes it involves 'thinking outside the square'.

I've been cycling for many years and, since we moved to Millers Point, often ride between home and The Mission.

In a moment of 'wild erratic fancy' I thought of riding the 1,340 kms from Hobart to Sydney (via Albury) to raise funds for The Mission. And no, despite requests, I don't plan to pedal across Bass Strait!

I've ridden 100+ kms quite a few times, so the thought stayed in my mind and I began to do some feasibility planning. The ride would take 18 days (including four rest days). It sounds



overwhelming and, in a sense, it is; but with a 'steady as she goes' mindset, it should be manageable.

If you'd like to support The Mission by sponsoring me on the ride (either on a per km or on a one-off basis) there will

soon be ample opportunity to do so. I'm planning to start the ride in Hobart on Saturday 19th September and, God willing, to arrive at Millers Point on Monday, 5th October.

There will be more updates in future editions of 'The Master's Mariner' and on our new website!

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Donations over \$2 to the Welfare Fund are tax-deductible.