



The Master's Mariner

December, 2015.

Ian Porter

Remember

As I write, it's just past the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month. The flags on the Harbour Bridge are at half mast and, at 11am, the sounds of modern music in the coffee shop over the road were replaced with 'The Last Post' followed by a minute of eerie silence that seemed to envelop all of Walsh Bay.

Of course, Remembrance Day is there to remind us all of the enormity of war and the horrific losses of life that are involved, 'Lest We Forget'.

There's a strange irony involved in our remembrances of tragedies and our remembrances of blessings. As a nation, we are taught and encouraged to remember the dreadful reasons for Remembrance Day and ANZAC Day, but we will 'run a mile' to avoid facing up to the wonderful reason for Christmas. But why? Could it be because of who Jesus really is?:

"The really staggering Christian claim is that Jesus of Nazareth was God made man, and that he took humanity without loss of deity, so that Jesus of Nazareth was as truly and fully divine as he was human. It is here, in the thing that happened at the first Christmas, that the profoundest and most unfathomable depths of the Christian revelation lie. 'The Word became flesh'; God became man; the divine Son became a Jew; the Almighty appeared on earth as a helpless human baby, unable to do more than lie and stare and wriggle and make noises, needing to be fed and changed and taught to talk like any other child. And there was no illusion or deception in this; the babyhood of the Son of God was a reality. The more you think about it, the more staggering it gets. Nothing in fiction is so fantastic as is the truth of the Incarnation."

(J.I. Packer, 'Knowing God')

We do well to remember key events in our nation's history; but we will do even better to remember the reason for Christmas, because: "*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*".

The Rescue Of The Crew Of MV Foxhound

On 17th October 2015, MV Foxhound - a Philippines-registered cargo vessel sailing with a full Filipino crew - sank quickly and unexpectedly in the Bismarck Sea, c. 15 nautical miles northwest of Lae, PNG. The Master of the Foxhound, Captain Jonathan Montel, sent a distress signal at 1633 hrs before he and his crew boarded their lifeboat and abandoned ship.

In their rush to escape the stricken ship, the crew had left all their possessions behind.



Thankfully, Captain Montel had managed to retrieve their passports from the ship's safe. One seafarer told our Chaplain George Gayagay how, when he looked back to the ship soon after the lifeboat had been launched, he was stunned to see that it had already disappeared. The crew sustained no physical injuries but had been traumatised by the sudden loss of the vessel and had suffered severe nausea and dizziness during their time in the lifeboat.



Their SOS was received by MV COSCO Shanghai, which immediately notified The Australian Maritime Safety Authority and changed course towards the signal's location. At 1954 hrs the lifeboat was located and by 2033 hrs all 21 Filipino seafarers were safely on board COSCO Shanghai.

Capt. Montel told our Chaplains how appreciative was to Capt. Shen and his crew, who had gone out of their way to accommodate them. This was not only in terms of sleeping areas but also in terms of personal tastes such as food. Despite the extra work involved, the cooks (and all the crew) were keen to show camaraderie, support and kindness to the Foxhound crew.

The Mission to Seafarers, Sydney learned of the sinking and rescue from legal firm HWL Ebsworth, who acted for the Insurers of MV Foxhound. They informed us of the situation and requested the presence of a Filipino Chaplain to minister to the seafarers upon their arrival in Sydney. HWL Ebsworth also arranged for the crew to be examined by Filipino-Australian doctors and a psychologist and for the Philippines Consul Marford Angeles and Assistance-to-Nationals (ATN) Officer Erlinda Albay to visit them to ascertain their needs.

On 22nd October, MV COSCO Shanghai berthed in Port Botany and our Mission to Seafarers Chaplains (The Revds.) George Gayagay, David Davies and Un Tay were able



to play key roles in the care of the crew of MV Foxhound, especially in assisting in translating Chinese / English and Tagalog / English, where clear understanding of English legal terminology was required.

Chaplains George, Davo and Un met with the seafarers at the cramped gym on the lower deck, where they had been sleeping since their rescue. The Filipino crew were very keen to access SIM and Re-charge cards, which Un delivered when he arrived and then spent some considerable time activating so the seafarers might be able to call their respective families.

One seafarer shared with George his inability to sleep since the sinking and asked George to get him some sleeping pills. A Filipino doctor was scheduled to arrive at 7 p.m. but was delayed by security and arrived only after George had gone to purchase over-the-counter sleeping pills from a local chemist. He also gave the seafarer his own mobile phone to call home but the seafarer declined, fearing that the call might increase his family's anxiety.

The seafarers' first concern was 'What will I wear when I go home?' The only clothes they had were those they were wearing when the ship sank. Some had only shorts and t-shirts, others were in pyjamas, and others were in 'bits and pieces'. HWL Ebsworth had provided each seafarer with small pack of travel items (toothbrush, toothpaste, t-shirt, shorts, etc.) but this was only an interim provision and they were embarrassed to fly home in such basic attire.

As a Filipino pastor, George knows many Filipinos and contacted them to ask if they might spare some clothes, shoes etc. to donate to the seafarers. George himself had clothing set aside to donate to charity and he distributed those items to the seafarers. He also called on Sister Mary Leahy of the Apostleship of the Sea, located at The Sydney Seafarers Centre. She had collections of clothing that she was setting aside for Christmas, but felt that, for these seafarers at least, their Christmas could come early this year! She also had the interesting task of shopping for 21 pairs of male underwear! At least they had some clean clothes and undies for their flight home!

Captain Monsel had asked Immigration if he and his crew could be transferred to a local

hotel and be given some financial assistance, but he was informed that visa difficulties made this impossible. Immigration officers had issued the crew with visas, but these visas only authorised the seafarers to leave the ship for the purpose of boarding a bus that would take them directly to the airport to board their flight home on Saturday, 24th October.



He also asked George if, before they left for the airport, he would hold a church service for the Filipino crew. George arranged for a Thanksgiving Service to be held at 10 am the next day, and continued to spend time with the crew, who enjoyed a time of prayer with him.

So it was that, the next morning, George, the Filipino crew, and others met together in the ship's gym to sing, to pray and to reflect on the Gospel reading of Luke 8.22-25. It was an emotional time for some of them as they prepared to part company and return home. As George bade them farewell, he assured them of our prayers.

As he returned to our Mission bus to continue our shuttle run into the city, he smiled to see that many of the Chinese crew of COSCO Shanghai were going ashore and would be waiting for him to 'rescue' them too by driving them into the City. Thankfully, for all these seafarers, life goes on.

Capt. Jack Starmans

There are times when the best-laid plans go wrong. Visiting crews is exciting, in that you never know what will happen as you go up the gangway and board the ship. The question that goes through my mind is, "Will this be a ten-minute visit - because



all the seafarers are on shore leave, sleeping, or busy about their duties? Or will this one of those 'Royal appointments' where I am able to share deeply with a seafarer and explain the Gospel?"

Last week I had visited a ship and was about to return to The Mission. As I went to leave, I saw several seafarers on deck. They had hoped to catch our bus, but had missed our 4.45pm pick-up. They were very thankful that I was able to take them into the City. Hearing this, the Captain and the First Officer asked if I could take them as well. I was happy to say, "Yes". The First Officer asked if he could grab a shower before we left, saying he'd only be ten minutes. His watch must have been on 'island time' because the ten minutes turned into thirty!



When, finally, we got off the ship we called for the intra-terminal shuttle bus to take us to the terminal gate (safety regulations prohibit walking). After waiting for twenty-five minutes, the Captain asked the seafarer on guard duty at the head of the gangway to ring the shuttle bus driver. Five minutes later the shuttle bus arrived. The driver told us that he didn't receive the first 'call'. All these delays meant that we didn't arrive at The Mission until it was close to 7:00 pm - just in time to drive the 7:00 pm run back to the port!

Being a Chaplain at The Mission to Seafarers is not what you'd call boring - you never know exactly what will happen next!

Sometimes you don't get to tell the Gospel with your mouth, but your deeds may lead to a time of sharing the Gospel. We always pray that the love we show towards seafarers will lead to sharing the great good news about the Lord Jesus Christ. And, praise God, our ministry opens the hearts of many seafarers to receive the Gospel!

Ride Completed!



On Monday 5th October, after 1026 kms of riding, my fundraising trip from Melbourne to Sydney came to a happy conclusion as I arrived – unscathed and on schedule - at our Centre in Miller’s Point.

Beautiful countryside, perfect weather, courteous truckies, small towns and villages, rosellas and parrots, safety – all these were positives in my ride. Negatives included regular magpie swoops, left knee & hip issues, ‘bogans’ in utes, and fatigue!

Seeing the countryside pass slowly by on a bike is a wonderful way to absorb its beauty.



Although I was riding on sealed roads there was, nevertheless, a sense in which I could identify with ‘Banjo’ Paterson’s envy of Clancy:

*“And the bush hath friends to meet him,
and their kindly voices greet him
In the murmur of the breezes
and the river on its bars,*

*And he sees the vision splendid
of the sunlit plains extended,
And at night the wond’rous glory
of the everlasting stars.”*

The contrast between

*“... the foetid air and gritty
of the dusty, dirty city*

*Through the open window floating,
spreads its foulness over all”*

... and the virgin bush of the late 19th Century may have been even more marked than it is today, but the slower pace and the engagement with the land that defines the lifestyles of those living in rural Australia was still very evident.



In such circumstances, the stresses of seafarers seemed far away, so I needed to remind myself (and those with whom I spoke) that rural Australia would not function without seafarers; they are the ones who crew the ships that bring harvesters, tractors, quad-bikes, 4WDs, fuel, fertilizers, fridges, TVs, air-conditioning units, etc. etc. to this country so that – even those who live far from the sea – may continue to enjoy a good standard of living.

Yes, at times the ride was hard. There was a time when I feared that a knee injury (a ‘lateral meniscus lesion’) might force me to stop but, mercifully, it seemed to resolve itself and I was able to continue with only minimal disruption. I nearly had a serious accident during a fast descent from Beechworth, but managed to maintain control and to rectify the (likely) cause of my ‘moment’. Trucks were almost always considerate of my vulnerability and gave me a wide berth when able to do so.



I am very grateful to you and to everyone else who supported me on the ride. Donations are still coming in, but the ride has now raised more than \$21,000 towards a new bus for seafarer transportation.

If you have Internet access and you'd like to learn even more about The Mission to Seafarers, Sydney, please go to www.missiontoseafarers.org.au. This is our new website where you'll find all sorts of wonderful things!

If you need some 'virtual' exercise, the daily blogs of my ride are there, too!

Distance ridden?	1,026 kms
Average speed?	26 kph
Total pedal strokes?	144,820

I'm especially grateful to Janette, my wife, who drove the ambulance Land Rover. Her support made the whole ride possible. Thank you, sweetheart!



Supporters' Morning Tea



On behalf of the Chaplains and Board of The Mission to Seafarers, Sydney, I'd like to invite you to a special Morning Tea here at The Mission from 10:00 am – 12:00 pm on Thursday 3rd December. We want to thank you for your faithful support, which has, in so many cases, spanned decades.

We'll have ~~jumping castles~~, lovely things to eat and drink, interviews with Chaplains, ~~fairy floss~~, Q & A sessions, ~~line dancing~~, role plays and some special surprises (esp. to us?).

There's now a bus stop right outside The Mission in Hickson Road so, if you'd like to come by bus, you'll need to catch bus # 324 or #325 in Park St, near Town Hall.

These are pre-paid buses – no tickets are sold on board. One leaves at 9:48 am and others follow every 15 minutes. If you plan to come (and we hope that you will!), please let us know before Friday 27th November by:

- Telephone: 02 92413009; or
 - Email: flyingangelsydney@gmail.com
- and we'll know to cater for you!

The Outlaw Ocean

Ian Urbana's series in the New York Times continues with a harrowing account of illegal manning agencies.

'When Eril Andrade came back from sea in a coffin his body was covered in bruises and cuts, and he was missing an eye and his pancreas. The handwritten note from his captain said he died in his sleep.

For local Filipino police investigators though the real mystery came when they realized that for over two decades thousands of other men from the Philippines and a half dozen other countries had been similarly recruited by a Singapore-based manning agency under false promises, dispatched to sea sometimes for years on notoriously violent and dangerous Taiwanese tuna long-liners, then sent back home, often without pay. How could a firm like this operate with such impunity?

This next installment in The Outlaw Ocean series looks at the little-known industry of maritime manning agencies which supplies the crews working on most of the world's ships. We reported from Taipei, Cape Town, and Singapore but especially in the Philippines which produces roughly a quarter of seafarers globally. I focused on one firm in particular, Step Up Marine Enterprise, which recruited Mr. Andrade and has had an especially egregious track record of human trafficking over the years.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/09/world/asia/philippines-fishing-ships-illegal-manning-agencies.html>

You never know...

We were crew visiting on a ship that I'd never been on before. We spoke with the 3rd Officer,



who was about to start leave when the ship arrived in Singapore. He was looking forward to spending time with his wife and his 1-year old daughter, whom he hadn't seen in the last 9 months. He was so excited

that he would soon be at home with them! It was a privilege to pray for him and his young family. It struck me that I'd had many talks about Jesus with crew who were about to sign off. Did signing off make seafarers more willing to talk about spiritual matters?

We then went to the crew mess, where 'Cookie' was generous in his welcome and with his offer of food! Our conversations were punctuated by crew coming and going - each one asking if we had any SIM Cards for sale?

Then, however, some seafarers came in and greeted me: 'Hello Sir!'. I replied, 'Salamat' in my very best Tagalog (Filipino).

'Have you been on a cargo ship at sea, Sir?' 'I have to admit that I haven't,' I replied, 'but The Mission expects me to go to sea at some stage. I just need to find a kind Captain!'

Their smiling reply was genuine, and moving: 'We have a kind Captain. You could come for a voyage aboard our ship!'

Thank you,' I replied. Although I recognised them, I couldn't remember their names. 'I am Jake, and he is John, Sir. You played us at table tennis the last time we were in Port, at your Mission in the City.'

So, what is more significant? Sharing and praying for a Seafarer as he is about to go on leave? Good relationships with the ship's cook? Playing Table Tennis with seafarers when they visit the City? You never know where each opportunity will lead.

1 Cor 10:31 '*So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God.*'

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