



The Master's Mariner *June 2020*

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A GREETING FROM REV UN TAY

Dear Supporters & Friends,

As together we continue to deal with the difficult circumstances that Covid 19 has presented us with, I would like to share a few thoughts with you as well as present an update on what has been happening at the Mission to Seafarers, over the last couple of months.

In the Bible we read:

²⁵ "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?" ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷ Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?

Matthew 6:25-27

⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:6-7

There is nothing more consoling and assuring than the word of God when we are faced with challenges and crisis. No one ever expected the year 2020 to be such a dreadful and depressing year. The world suddenly came to a halt!

The Coronavirus has had such a devastating impact globally. We have seen borders closed, international flights cancelled, and cruise vessels stranded on the open seas. Many ports around the world refused berthing to cruise vessels. Not knowing what to do, the world went into panic mode, putting their trust and securities on temporal things such as toilet rolls, pasta, rice, hand sanitisers and other items seen as 'necessities'.

As I take a step or two back to reflect upon the whole scenario, I find it comforting and assuring in the word of God as found in Matthew 6 and Philippians 4. There is indeed hope and help in turbulent times. Let us then:

- Be Prayerful
- Be Patient
- Be Positive
- Be Proactive
- Be Productive

Together, we will get through this!

An interesting read - part of an article published recently in The London Times by Libby Purves

“Spare a thought for those who serve us at sea

Thousands of merchant sailors, lonelier and more anxious than ever, still man the cargo ships that we all depend on

We may be tiring of tales about the outraged shock and awe of us non-key workers mewed at home with family, Wi-Fi and slightly restricted shopping opportunities. I do not exempt myself from the grumblers but today I am preoccupied by another cribbed and confined population, whose conditions are rarely mentioned. Consider the merchant seafarers: provisioning the globe but largely invisible behind the tossing seas and the massive secure terminals. It is never an easy life, but now harsher and more alarming in the coronavirus crisis.

The streets may be empty and the skies quieter.... but the seas are still busy. Glance at the marine traffic website and see the coasts still swarming with tankers, container ships and bulk-carriers bound to and from every compass point. Goods, components, chemicals, vital needs, and frivolous ones are still coming and going.... Ships feed, fuel and supply the world, manned by ever smaller, lonelier crews.... It is the second most dangerous trade after deep-sea fishing; some 2,000 seafarers die every year. International regulations protect them, not always effectively.

Consider their situation now. Restricted shore leave has been an increasing problem since 9/11: some countries, notably the US, refuse even a step ashore for fear of terrorism and migrancy. But even ordinary container ships often have such tight turnarounds that crews, who may have been months at sea, can only go on land in their

couple of hours off.... using a charity-funded minibus and spend an hour in the Mission centre....

On top of that ordinary loneliness and remoteness, the shipping industry is often commercially precarious: even in ordinary times there are regular reports of ships abandoned, crews left hungry and unassisted on board or in distant ports, dependent on charities or local pity. Suicides are not uncommon: a recent survey revealed that a fifth of them had thought of self-harm.

So now consider how much more intense in this crisis is the isolation of seafarers: confined on bleak steel decks with wild grey horizons, their six-month contracts extended because relief crews cannot travel. Anxiety is spiking, last week Human Rights at Sea (HRAS) reported an unprecedented flow of pleas about non-payment of wages, contracts being renewed without consent, and crews being left in foreign ports without money or flights home. Imagine the anxiety they are feeling about distant families. Most of the world's seafarers are Filipino, Chinese, Indonesian, Russian, Ukrainian or Indian, who will be contemplating health services at home that are far less prepared than Europe's (or Australia's)

But seafarers easily get forgotten, as through much of history, because we do not see them at work. I am always moved by stories from the Mission to Seafarers, with their 200 port offices, many now closed: perhaps its Christian core makes it publicly underrated (despite the splendid hands-on patronage of Princess Anne, usually a regular ship visitor). Its chaplains are now confined to gangways in protective suiting, but they soldier on.

The Mission and others have joined the request to world governments to give “key worker” status to merchant crews, parallel to airline and medical personnel, so they could be helped to travel home and have welfare centres kept open at ports in the pandemic. As for the rest of us, I suppose all we can do is back that politically and support the charities. And to remember, in our comparative if tedious comfort, those who serve us in great waters.”

Here in Sydney, the Mission to Seafarers, remains open, unlike many around the world. Although we are operating with strict restrictions in place, the welfare of seafarers is still our main priority.

During this time, the cruise ships have received a lot of media coverage, especially the Ruby Princess. Much assistance was provided to the crew of this vessel, local businesses and individuals donated \$70,000.00 worth of items and, in conjunction with the Sydney Port Welfare Committee and the ITF we started a petition, requesting that the state authorities consider the health and wellbeing of the crew, to test everyone on board to ensure that they are virus free and repatriate those wanting to fly home. We thank God that the government decided to delay sending them away and conducted testing to all on board.

However, this was not the only ship in need of aid. On March 24, we received an email from Radiance of the Seas asking us to buy supplies, as the provedore was unable to provide for them.



The chaplains got into action quickly and the next day went out visiting many supermarkets, requesting permission to bulk buy, due to the many restrictions in place. We thank God, that Jim met the manager of a Woolworths store, who was sympathetic to the plight of the crew and he allowed us to make bulk purchases.



Radiance of the Seas was supposed to be docking in Sydney but due to last minute rescheduling and berthing, we were requested to deliver the supplies to Port Kembla. We loaded all the supplies into our Mission bus and headed to Port Kembla and delivered their order – 5 pallet loads.



Then on April 1, we received an urgent email from Ovation of the Seas just after midday saying that their supplier could not supply them, and they needed help from us. We only had 24 hours to shop and deliver the supplies. The chaplains again worked very hard collecting supplies from various shops. To cut the long story short, we managed to meet their request and beat the deadline given! It was a challenging time rushing through the shopping, packing and delivering.



Lockdown, not Lockout!



When we announced the restrictions at our Mission, we thought it was going to be quiet and a slowdown of activities happening for us. However, it has been very busy in a different way. We now receive emails and calls from container vessels requesting SIM and recharge cards, as well as shopping lists to purchase items on their behalf as they have no shore leave. We deliver these supplies to them at their gangway. We also take the opportunity to provide the seafarers with newsletters, magazines, gospel booklets, bibles, DVDs, etc. As well as essential provisions, we have delivered pizzas, Hungry Jack's



meals, crispy crème donuts, basketballs, a ukelele, fishing lines and tackle, clothing, shoes and many other things. We are grateful to the operators at Port Botany, where both DP World and Patrick allow us to drive our bus into the terminal to deliver items at the gangway, with an internal bus escorting us in and out of the terminal. BLB and Hutchinson will deliver the items on our behalf. By assisting seafarers in this manner, we are eliminating many of their anxieties and fears and providing some positive mental health support.

Many of you would have seized the opportunity to use the latest technology, Zoom. The Rev. Un Tay has started conducting Sunday zoom services for seafarers. We have had participants from South America, Africa, Asia and locally. In addition to all this, the Rev Un Tay has been kept busy providing much needed assistance to both stranded and injured seafarers.

Although it is lockdown, we are not locked-out! Isolation, quarantine, restrictions and closures are still in place, but our hearts are always open to the seafarers at our doorstep. Please continue to pray for both seafarers and our staff, for protection and good health.

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Tax deductible donations can also be made directly into our Bank Account:

BSB 062 074

Account 1000 8062

Cheques can be sent, however there may be a delay in processing as banking will only be done fortnightly.

As together we go through these troubling times, please continue to remember us and all seafarers in your prayers and financially through your donations, both regular and by creating a bequest through your will which is a special way you can continue to care for seafarers.

**Thank you, stay well and
God bless you all.**



Volunteers — When once again possible

We will be looking for volunteers to partner with us.

Drivers who have a Light Rigid vehicle license, to drive our small buses.

We are also looking for people to help with researching potential companies to partner with us financially.

To get involved please contact us.