



Catholic Maritime News



WINTER 2015

VOLUME 80

Christmas Message 2015

This season will be muted for 33 families. The US cargo ship El Faro sank on October 1st sailing from Jacksonville, Florida to Puerto Rico. The ship sank north of Crooked Island in the Bahamas. On board were 28 U.S. crew members and 5 Polish workers. All are presumed dead. May they rest in peace. The cargo can be replaced but the involved families will always bear the burden of the loss of a loved one. May these families find solace in this Christmas Season.

It is a Captain's duty to stand by his ship till the last command is given. When the situation becomes impossible and nothing more can be done he announces - "Every man for himself and God for us all." May the loving God help these families bear the burden of loss and grief.

The seafarer serves the needs of the world family of nations. His calendar is different in that it does not allow time out for Christmas and the other holidays scattered throughout the year. The shipping industry runs nonstop on 24 hour cycles. Modern day technology makes it possible for the largest of vessels to be unloaded and reloaded within a short period of time, and they are on their way again. There is little time for shore leave.

How does the seafarer celebrate Christmas day and the days that follow? If he is at sea it may be a short telephone call, Skype if available and perhaps a little extra at "chow" time. It may be months before they see their family again. Poets are inclined to portray the "call to the sea" as something romantic. The reality is the opposite.

This Christmas season we express our gratitude to the seafarers of the world for "who they are", and for "what they do." They are instrumental in making available to us all the goods for our day to day living. If you live in or near a port facility support the local efforts of providing a "welcome" and making it feasible for them to contact their families. Frequently they wish to purchase new clothing at the nearby outlets.

There is something majestic about a seafarer - it should be noted that the first followers of Jesus were people who lived by the sea and their sustenance came from the sea.

To the seafarers of the world - thank you. **May the Lord Jesus bless you and your families this Christmas Season.**

AMEN.



Bishop J. Kevin Boland



Karen M. Parsons, OFS and some Seafarers



United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church
Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees & Travelers / Apostleship of the Sea National Office

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Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees & Travelers

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AOS National Office web address has been changed. **If you have linked to us previously using the old www.aos-usa.org address, please remember to change your link to www.usccb.org/aos**

We encourage you to visit our website which has user friendly navigation tools. Check out our interactive map with a list of AOS chaplains and contacts, know about news and events and other relevant information. If you want to know about Mass schedules in parishes around the country, there is even a link to MassTimes.org.

Contact Catholic Maritime News

We welcome your comments, feedback and suggestions.
Tell us what you think by sending an email to aos@usccb.org.

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Apostleship of the Sea of the United States of America (AOSUSA) is a professional membership association of chaplains/associates, cruise ship priests, mariners, student mariners and affiliate members.

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Christmas: A Time for Gratitude

We have recently celebrated Thanksgiving, a feast that agrees so well with the basic attitude of a believer, an attitude of thanksgiving. Christmas, the celebration of the birth of Jesus, our Savior, is even more so an explicit invitation to gratitude because as St. Paul says, the Grace of God became man (human).

At Thanksgiving, we celebrate our gratitude in and for the family and, even those who live or work far from their families make an effort to contact them, to share with them this special time. In this year of the Synod on the family, we need to recover and/ or strengthen family life as we celebrate Christmas.

As Pope Francis reminded us in one of his homilies in Philadelphia, God the Father sent his Son to the world to through a family. The Church has this perspective, when she presents to us for contemplation the Holy Family of Nazareth during this holy season of Christmas.

Let us make our family an open home for Jesus and for others. Let us make our parishes and our chapels true homes where the members of the Church experience the hospitality, the acceptance and the support of a good family. After all, we believe that we are the family of God. He is our Father.

May our Christmas season be one of gratitude and joy lived in a family atmosphere, keeping the spirit of our families alive. Many people, among them many seafarers, may have to celebrate Christmas away from their families. They do this for the sake of their families, so even their absence from home is a sign of their love and commitment to their families. Those who are far from their families will make an effort to contact them in one way or another to shorten the distance that separates them from their loved ones. In these days of immediate communication, hopefully they will be able to talk to them and even see them wherever they may be.

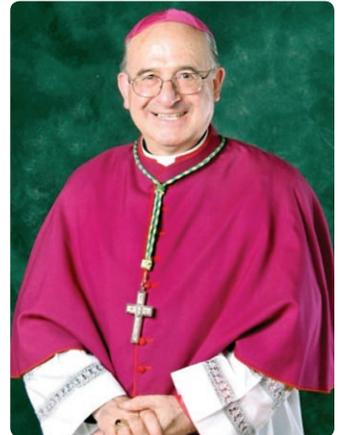
A special, joyful and holy Christmas Season to all the readers of Catholic Maritime News and to their families! A special Christmas blessing to all the seafarers throughout the world and their families.

Most Reverend Rutilio J. Del Riego

Auxiliary Bishop of San Bernardino

Chairman, Pastoral Care of Migrants Refugees and Travelers

USCCB



Remembering the Seafarers at Christmas

The season of Christmas is here; a time of Joy, Peace, Hope and Happiness. The celebration of Christmas is often characterized by an exchange of gifts between family, friends and peers. But the real significance of this holy season is the acknowledgement of God's greatest gift to the world; the gift of His Son Jesus Christ. Although, as the saying goes: **"Christ is the reason for the season"**, Christmas has assumed a more social dimension. It has become a more inclusive celebration for both Christians and non-Christians alike. Christmas season is a joyous time for many believers. It accords us the opportunity to give thanks to God for His infinite love and mercy. Christmas finds its deep and profound expression in every culture, among all peoples; including the seafarers.

The job of seafarers, merchant mariners, fishermen, workboat operators, dock workers, oil rig workers, cruise staff, and all people of the Sea can be very dangerous, tedious and risky. The recent restrictions and bureaucratic regulations have made it practically impossible for them to carry out their task. Many spend months at sea without going ashore. They have infrequent contact with their families and friends even on special festive period like Christmas. Many of these workers have little or no support to enable them experience more realistic affection and lasting bonds with their families. Their predicament are sometimes so appalling that it breeds a lack of trust and faith among families.

There is no denying the fact that being absent from their families during Christmas festivities has some debilitating effect on seafarers. They miss out on the spiritual, cultural and historical undertone associated with the season. When away at sea, they would not be able to enjoy the colorful view of the well decorated streets and shops adorned with Christmas lights. They equally miss out on participating at Mass or other Church activities to give thanks and praise to God with their families.

It is unfortunate that many seafarers continue to be separated from their loved ones at these most sacred festive periods. They are often thousands of miles away from the loving embrace of their family and friends. In response to the challenging, dangerous and lonely

conditions of seafarers, Pope Francis called on those who work for the wellbeing of seafarers and their families to *"be the voice of those workers who live far from their loved ones and face dangerous and difficult situations."* The Holy Father is asking that we stand up against this inhuman treatment of those who risk their lives in order to transport us, our food and other amenities through the treacherous seas and oceans.

I, on my part, would like to lend my voice to this clarion call. I ask that we strive to find ways to bring the joy of Christ's birth to the seafarers and their families. During this Christmas season, I pray that we may put ourselves into the nativity scene and feel the worries, anxieties and confusion that befalls seafarers and their loved ones. Like the wise men (who went in search of the new born king Jesus), we may take the risk of following the star of God so that it would lead us to care for them. The wise men also brought the gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh to Christ. May we too bring the gifts of love, peace and hope to seafarers, their friends and relatives.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta once said, *"It is Christmas every time you let God love others through you."* Christmas is a time of giving,

a time we open wide our hearts to think of others. So with gifts in our hands, let us join the port chaplains to visit the ships and the ports around the area. Let us become angels of God called to care and to minister to those who are in need. In Pope Francis' prayer for seafarers he noted, *"I call on the chaplains and volunteers of the Apostleship of the Sea to continue with their commitment to the pastoral care of these brothers and sisters. I entrust all, especially those who are in trouble and away from home, to the maternal protection of Mary, Star of the Sea."*

In conclusion, I would like to express my gratitude to the chaplains and pastoral ministers who visit ships in ports around the world and offer care and support. I thank all those who support the ministry to the People of the Sea. My sincere gratitude goes to the priests who provide the sacraments and Pastoral care onboard Cruise Ships for the passengers, staff and crew. I thank all the volunteers who continue to collect gifts all year round for seafarers and their families. During this Christmas season, I ask that we reflect on the image of the Baby Jesus in the manger, with open arms to welcome his Love for each one of us. Let us share the love and gifts that we have with others. My warm wishes to all of you. May you have a joyous Christmas filled with Happiness and Peace. Mary, Star of the Sea, pray for us.

Sr. Joanna Okereke, HHCI

Assistant Director, Cultural Diversity in the Church



NAMMA Conference in Montreal: “Refueling and Retooling for Service of Seafarers and their Families”

In the refreshing chill of autumn, as the trees of the city changed color, the North American Maritime Ministry Association held its conference in Montreal, Quebec. From Sept. 28 to Oct. 2 and with more than 110 participants, this was one of the largest and most diverse gatherings in its recent history. Through opening worship at the historic Notre Dame de Bon Secours chapel, through many memorable sessions, worships, to its final worship in the *Place de la paix* (“place of peace”) remembering those in distress on the Mediterranean and the seafarers who helped, the conference was memorable and challenging.

The theme of the conference was “Refueling and Retooling: Serving Seafarers and their Families”. Two aspects of this theme were important throughout: the conference sought to give new encouragement and resources to members in a number of presentations. We launched a number of new books and digital resources that should help individual chaplains do their work better. However, the conference wanted also to put focus on the reality that we can serve seafarers *and their families*. The keynote speaker, Ms. Marissa Oca, came from the Philippines to tell us about her work in promoting family life with one parent overseas. She has begun a foundation which has as a goal to promote 20 minutes of reading a day to children. She pointed out with great passion that this connection of reading can be integral in keeping families strong even with a father or mother away for more than 9 months.

The conference was also a great success in bringing many groups together for concurrent meetings. Among them were a number from the Apostleship of the Sea. We were honored to welcome Bishop Kevin Boland and Bishop Thomas Dowd, bishop promoters of AOS in the United States and Canada. Further, we were happy to see Fr. Andrew Thurasingam, the new AOS director from Canada.



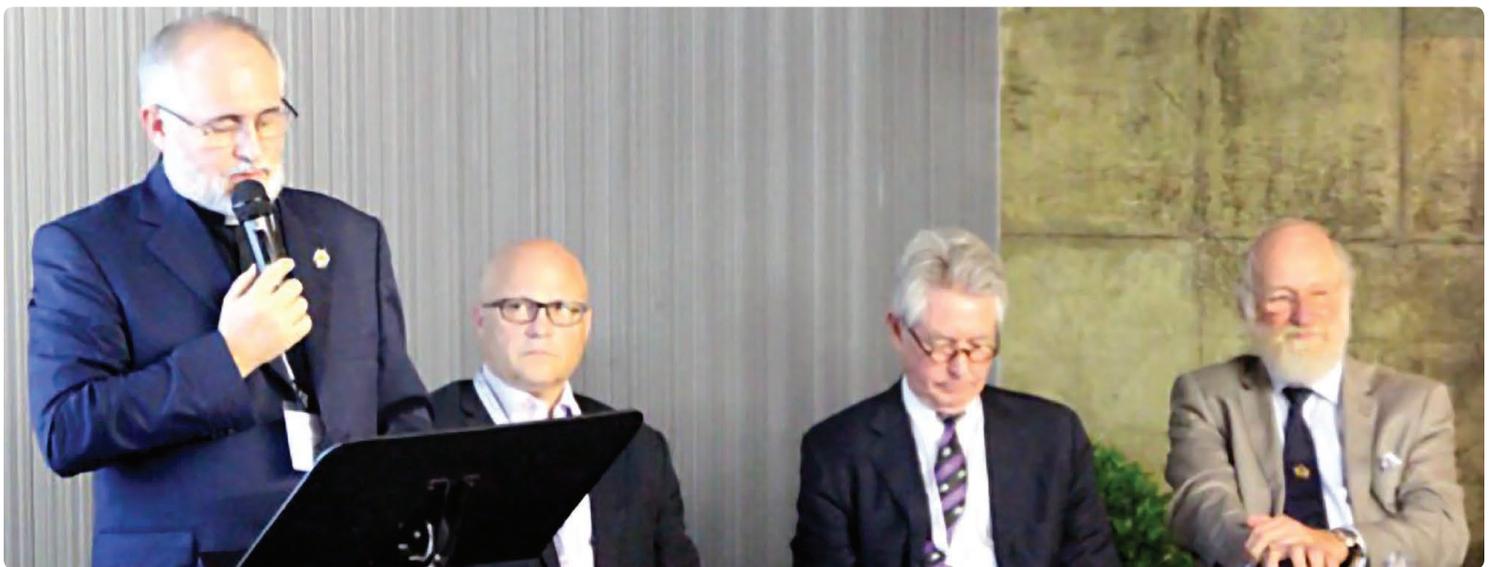
Jason Zuidema and some participants at the NAMMA Conference

Finally, it was a pleasure to host Fr. Bruno Ciceri, international coordinator of AOS in Rome, but also chairman of the International Christian Maritime Association.

It was Fr. Bruno who eloquently stated why ecumenical networks like NAMMA and ICMA exist: *“We are working together because we are CHRISTIAN. This is our identity, our specificity and it is what makes us different from other organizations. Our services and approach to seafarers is guided and inspired by the teaching of Jesus Christ. Let us not be afraid to proclaim the Christian identity of our ministry.”*

It was a privilege to be with the group to which those powerful words were spoken. We pray that our ecumenical work might strengthen our witness and lead us to serve seafarers and their families.

By Jason Zuidema, Executive Director, NAMMA



Fr. Bruno Ciceri addressed the participants at the NAMMA Conference about a new book he wrote on the welfare needs of fishers around the world.



Bishop J. Kevin Boland at the NAMMA Conference



Boston Seafarers at the NAMMA Conference



Some participants at the NAMMA Conference



Participants at the NAMMA Conference gathered for opening worship in Notre Dame de Bon Secours Church. This chapel also was a place to pray for seafarers' in the 19th century and continues to be called the "Sailor's Church".

Lay Ministry: More Than Volunteers

Back in 1985 I was at Mass at my parish in Detroit, Michigan. I was a young mother of three all under the age of four. I was in my mid-twenties and had been praying for a long time about how I could serve in the Church. I knew my vocation was to be married and have a family. That was clear but I also felt a strong calling to serve in the Church. That Sunday in late January of 1985, I received the answer to my prayers.

After Mass I gathered up my little ones and headed for the door. I received the Church bulletin and then loaded up my car and went home. Later that evening, after all the kids were fed and bathed and in bed, I read the bulletin. There was a tiny article in it that was easily missed. But my eyes caught it. It was an invitation from the pastor of All Saints Parish, a church down by the docks of the Port of Detroit, asking for lay ministers from all over the Archdiocese to consider coming to an information meeting regarding a ministry to serve seafarers. He needed help. I heard in my heart, "Go! This is where I need you!" So I made arrangements for my parents to watch the children the evening of the meeting and attended.



Karen M. Parsons, OFS and some Seafarers

From the beginning, Fr. Rick Hartmann, pastor of All Saints Parish and port chaplain, made it clear that this was not a call for volunteers but a call to the lay faithful to minister to the needs of seafarers. Over 50 people attended that meeting from all over the Archdiocese and many of us were intrigued. The next step was committing to a six week training course. The course included important topics such as the foundation in Scripture, the building of a theological mission, empathic listening, cultural diversity training, communication skills, and practical application.

I was all in! This was very exciting to me. I felt like I was being trained as a domestic missionary with the world coming to our shores instead of me traveling abroad. It was something I could do with my home situation. Then came the practical application class. We were taken in the Apostleship of the Sea van to the docks. There was a ship in port and Fr. Rick secured permission to bring a group of new lay ministers on board to orientate us on the proper protocols. I walked from the van to the gangway. I looked up and looked over. I saw a VERY high ladder and I saw a LOT of water. I turned around and went back to the van. Fr. Rick ran to me and asked what was wrong. I said, "I'm afraid of heights and afraid of water. I can't do this."

He said, "Where did you think you would meet the seafarers? You just went through six weeks of training! You have to try at least once. If you try once and can't do it then you can go home."

When I got back to the gangway with him I stopped. I was truly afraid. He said, "Pray, Miss Karen." And so I prayed. I slowly ascended the gangway and met my first Filipino seafarer. Then I met a whole bunch more. And by then end of the visit I was hooked.

Soon I was visiting ships often. First with a partner - we were sent out two by two. Then when it became evident to Fr. Rick that I was called to serve in this ministry he turned over the leadership of it to me. I served in the port of Detroit for seven years until I was appointed the Port Chaplain in Galveston, Texas in 1992 where I have served for the past 23 years. Facing my fears every day to climb the gangways of the ships to meet the people I have been called to serve.

The point of this story is that when you are looking to find helpers for your Apostleship of the Sea ministries think about this method used by Fr. Rick Hartmann. Go to the churches in your area and ask for lay ministers to serve the people of the sea. They are still volunteers because they volunteer their time but training them as lay ministers gives them a deeper purpose. They understand their place in the Church better. They feel a deeper calling to serve.

The lay ministers I worked with in Detroit were some of the most dedicated volunteers I've ever met. They served the Church by serving the seafarers. They had deep commitment to the schedule we made on a monthly basis. If they could give us one day a month it was a total day of service. If they could come every Tuesday they came every Tuesday. If they could commit to the 5th, 10th, 15th and 20th of the month, they did! If they could not climb the gangways for health reasons they became dispatchers or organizers of the social events. Everyone who went through the Apostleship of the Sea Lay Minister Training course went through a Commissioning Ceremony. As the ranks grew the veteran ministers mentored the new ministers. Our families became part of the ministry with social events organized for seafarers.

Please know that you and your ministries are in my prayers. You don't have to do this alone. Look in the pews and see the faces of the lay faithful willing to serve. Help them to hear their calling. God bless and may Our Lady Star of the Sea pray for us always.

*By Karen M. Parsons OFS
Regional Coordinator - Apostleship of the Sea,
North America and Caribbean*



Karen M. Parsons OFS and one of the Seafarers

Hello from Stella Maris Seafarers' Center of Lake Charles, LA

Fr. Theodore Hassink began visiting ships in the 1950's as the Port Chaplain while working to setup a center for the seafarers. The center has been serving the people of the sea since April 19, 1962 with Mr. Herman Verkurissen as the first director. Though the ministry is a ministry of the Diocese of Lake Charles, on September 1, 1982 the Carey Baptist Association began working as a partner in the ministry at the center doing ship visits and helping with transportation.

The Port of Lake Charles covers the Calcasieu River ship channel. There are 2 refineries, several chemical plants, 4 bulk facilities, 2 Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) plants and the City Docks which exports foreign aid. The center covers 18 facilities spread over a 35 mile radius. The port is rated the 13th largest port in the US for tonnage. In 1967 our records show 240 ships visiting the port compared to 1116 in 2014. In the near future (next 5 to 8 years) there are plans for 6 new facilities to be built and the revision of the 2 LNG plants from import to export. The forecast is by the year 2020 to see an increase in ship traffic to over 2,000 ships per year.

The current staff at the center consists of 4 employees, two of which are deacons, 1 full time and 3 part time employees. We have 2 volunteer ship visitors and a few volunteers who come in to help with special project such as rosary bags and Christmas bags. Fr. Rommel Tolentino is the current Port Chaplain and Deacon Patrick Lapoint the current director with Rev. Lloyd Nelson representing the Cary Baptist Association.

In the center we offer telephones, computers, Wi-Fi, pool table, ping pong table and refreshments. We have a TV room with comfortable furnishing set up as a home living room; seafarers really enjoy being there because they say it gives them a sense of being at home. We have a chapel, with the Blessed Sacrament, for the seafarers' to make a visit. Fr. Rommel celebrates Mass in the chapel and onboard ships. If needed one of the deacons will do a communion service. With the short turnaround of the ships we have seen a decrease of the number seafarers visiting the center. In 2014, 2211 seafarers visited the center.



Some Seafarers transported to the shopping center

We provide transportation for the seafarers through secure facilities to the center or to the shopping centers. In Lake Charles all facilities are open to letting seafarers' have shore leave if approved by Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and allowing the ship visitor's access to the ships. We have one 15 passenger bus and a seven passenger van for transporting seafarers'. In 2014 we transported 6074 seafarers' and we average 40,000+ miles per year per vehicles.



Stella Maris Seafarers Center, Lake Charles, Louisiana

Our special projects are the "Christmas away from home" project where we give to each seafarer a Christmas gift bag. In the bag we put shampoo, shaving cream, soap, deodorant, toothpaste, tooth brush, comb, lotion, playing cards, candy, socks and other items. These items are donated by the community. In 2014 we passed out over 900 bags. Our goal each year is to make sure every ship gets gift bags, but our best effort has only netted 95% of the ships. Another project which we do year round is rosary bags, where we

put a rosary and assorted prayer cards in a zip lock sandwich bag and give them out when we make a ship visit. Each year we team up with the Propeller Club to celebrate National Maritime Day with the blessing of the fleet.

I have given you a look at what we do in Lake Charles and how many seafarers' we serve, but all this is not what we do, it is all about who we serve, Jesus.

*By Deacon Patrick Lapoint
Director, Stella Maris Seafarers Center
Charles, Louisiana*

Congratulations and Prayers! World Fisheries Day November 21, 2015



Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near.
(Isaiah 55:6)



Seafarers at Work



PSALM 107

23 "Some went off to sea in ships,
plied their trade on the deep waters."

24 "They saw the works of the LORD,
the wonders of God in the deep."

25 "He commanded and roused a storm wind;
it tossed the waves on high."

26 "They rose up to the heavens, sank to
the depths; their hearts trembled at the
danger."

27 "They reeled, staggered like drunkards;
their skill was of no avail."

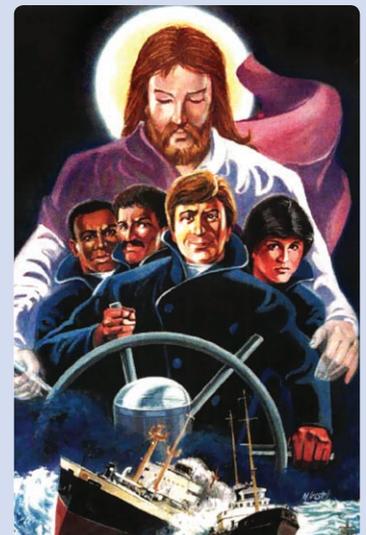
28 "In their distress they cried to the LORD,
who brought them out of their peril;"

29 "He hushed the storm to silence,
the waves of the sea were stilled."

30 "They rejoiced that the sea grew calm,
that God brought them to the harbor they
longed for."

31 "Let them thank the LORD for his mercy,
such wondrous deeds for the children of Adam."

32 "Let them extol him in the assembly of the
people, and praise him in the council of
the elders."



A Seafarers' Prayer

O God, I ask you to take me into your care and protection along with all those who sail ships. Make me alert and wise in my duties.

Make me faithful in the time of routine, and prompt to decide and courageous to act in any time of crisis.

Protect me in the dangers and perils of the sea; and even in the storm, grant that there may be peace and calm within my heart.

When I am far from home and far from loved ones and far from the country that I know, help me to be quite sure that, wherever I am, I can never drift beyond your love and care.

Take care of my loved ones in the days and weeks and months when I am separated from them, sometimes with half the world between them and me.

Keep me true to them and keep them true to me, and every time that we have to part, bring us together in safety and in loyalty again.

This I ask for your love's sake.

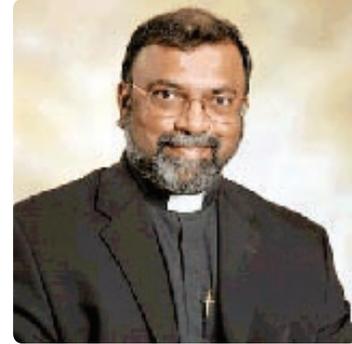
Amen.



Our Canadian AOS Brothers



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December 1, 2015

Dear Catholic Maritime News Readers:

This is to inform you that we will create the newsletter under a slightly different format and it will be mail electronically. To each of you, our dear and beloved friends and supporters, we ask that you allow us to continue to reach you, and keep you informed, through a new electronic Catholic Maritime News newsletter. Please contact us if you would like to receive the newsletter electronically by sending us your name, and an email address. You may send your email address to Margaret Marzec at: mmarzec@usccb.org. You may contact us by writing to USCCB/SCDC/PCMRT, 3211 Fourth St. NE, Washington, DC 20017.

Respectfully yours,

Sr. Joanna Okereke, HHCJ
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FEBRUARY 21-MARCH 3, 2016

Houston Maritime Chaplain Training School

MARCH 1-2, 2016

NAMMA Caribbean Conference in Fort Lauderdale, FL

MARCH 14-16, 2016

AOS-USA Annual Conference, AMO STAR Center Dania, FL

MARCH 23-23, 2016

CMA Shipping 2016 Stamford, CT

MAY 19, 2016

Lloyd's List Awards North America - New York

MAY 23, 2016

National Maritime Day and NAMEPA EIM Seminar,
Washington, DC

AUGUST 2-5, 2016

NAMMA Annual Conference