

Catholic Maritime News

SUPPORTING SEAFARERS AND FISHERS AROUND THE WORLD

SPRING/SUMMER 2024

VOLUME 99

Bishop Cahill - Message for the Baltimore Bridge Tragedy

In light of the recent tragedy in Baltimore during the Francis Scott Key Bridge collapse, His excellency Bishop Brendan Cahill, Bishop Promoter of Stella Maris offered his prayers and a reflection for both those affected by the tragedy and all Christians. Bishop Cahill offered this reflection ahead of the Annual Maritime Mass held at the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC on May 18th, 2024.

Celebrating the "Sunday of the Sea"



Every second Sunday of July, the Catholic communities celebrate the International Day of Prayer for seafarers and their families, as well as for the Church, the chaplains and all volunteers who offer support to the maritime ministry. Any support we receive goes a long way to helping the Church reach more seafarers and their families.

Please, make check payable to "Stella Maris" and send to

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church 3211 Fourth Street, NE Washington, DC 20017-1194

For more information Contact Sr. Joanna Okereke, HHCJ National Director Tel: 202-541-3359 Email: JOkereke@usccb.org Bishop Cahill's reflection on the recent tragedy, which accompanies the article following Bishop's poignant message, on the Annual Maritime Mass.



Bishop Brendan J. Cahill Stella Maris, Bishop Promoter

We join our prayers with the entire Maritime Community, praying for the eternal rest of the six men who lost their lives in Baltimore, and for the consolation of their grieving families.

As our work on the sea unites us, we share one another's sadness and sorrow. Each of us knows we are connected by a common bond, and our hope in Jesus Christ shows us that there is something more -- something beautiful -- in store for us in eternal life.

We remain committed to loving one another here in the present, with the sure and certain hope that the friendship we share on earth will remain in eternal life.

May God bless you and your families with peace, hope, and the joy of the Holy Spirit,



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We encourage you to visit our website which has a user friendly navigation tools. Check out our interactive map with a list of Stella Maris chaplains and contacts, know about news and events and other relevant information.

Contact Catholic Maritime News

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

Stella Maris-North America and Caribbean Region

An association of Catholic ministries in the United States,
Canada, and the Caribbean that serve seafearers, fishers, port
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Shrine Mass remembers workers killed in Baltimore bridge collapse, sailors and seafarers

The annual "Mass for the Day of Prayer and Remembrance for Mariners and People of the Sea" celebrated at the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in Washington honored the memory of six Hispanic workers who lost their lives in the collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore.

Taking place in the crypt of the basilica, the May 18 Mass included prayers to honor the men and women who have risked their lives and their vessels to ensure that supplies reach their destinations safely in times of peace and war.

At the beginning of his homily, Father Arthur Unachukwu, associate director of the Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, asked the Virgin Mary to bring comfort to the families



of migrant workers Miguel Luna, Maynor Yassir Suazo Sandoval, Dorlian Castillo Cabrera, Jose Mynor Lopez, Carlos Hernandez and Alejandro Hernandez Fuentes, who perished March 26. The six construction workers died after a large container ship lost power and collided into the bridge, precipitating its collapse.

"The collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge evidenced the high risk that dock workers face every day as they go about their workday. Let us pray to God for the eternal rest of our deceased brothers and sisters and ask the Virgin Mary to accompany the families and survivors in their time of grief," Father Unachukwu said.



The priest highlighted the role of the Catholic organization Stella Maris, which, after the freighter accident and bridge collapse, mobilized to offer spiritual and material help to the crew members of the cargo ship Dali, relatives of the victims, and

federal agents involved in the rescue, salvage and civil protection operations.

He also said that the "Church is always attentive to provide spiritual and human assistance to all her children," especially to the people who work



at sea, in the ports, and in the different maritime facilities, who, with their work, ensure the flow of goods around the world.

Father Unachukwu added that every May, different religious events are held in recognition of the "actions and sacrifices" made by sailors and port employees in tasks related to commerce and maritime transportation in the United States.



Prayers at the Rondel of Our Lady Star of the Sea

At the end of the Mass, those present participated in a procession inside the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception and prayed in front of the chapel erected in honor of Stella Maris.

In early May, Bishop Brendan J. Cahill of Victoria in Texas, the

bishop-promoter of Stella Maris in the United States, renewed his invitation to the faithful to support, remember, and pray for the men and women who make their living working on the seas, including merchants, sailors, seafarers, fishermen, port personnel and people in the maritime industry.

"Each year, we pray for those who work on the high seas and the ports. In a special way this year, we remember those who have been impacted by the collapse of the Key Bridge, particularly the six construction workers who perished in the bridge collapse, and for their families as they mourn the loss of their loved ones," Bishop Cahill wrote in a press release shared by USCCB ahead of National Maritime Day, which is observed May 22.

He also asked the faithful to pray for the cargo ship's captain and crew and the countless people who have been working in the aftermath of the tragedy, including the U.S. Coast Guard, Army Corps of Engineers, dive teams, first responders, construction workers, law enforcement, and government officials. He added that thousands of dockworkers and

those who rely on the Port of Baltimore for work are still dealing with the impact of this tragedy.

"Worldwide, there are countless men and women who labor on the high seas for their livelihood – let us seek the intercession of Our Lady,



Star of the Sea, that she protects and guides us," he noted.

by Miguel Vivanco

What is the "Stella Maris" Ministry?

"Stella Maris" is the official name of the Church's Apostolate to the People of the Sea replacing "Apostleship of the Sea." (AOS) "Stella Maris" from its Latin roots means "Star of the Sea". It is one of the tiles given to our Divine Mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary. This title Stella Maris is significant to us Catholics, because it gives us the assurance that Mary,

our mother, is both our guide, and our protector in our ever-constant journey of life.

"Stella Maris", is an international ministry of the Catholic Church which cares for the spiritual well-being and social needs of seafarers, their families, port personnel and all those who travel and work at sea. It was founded in Glasgow, Scotland, in October

1920. It was established to support seafarers in need. Today, for over one hundred years, it has been the largest ship visiting



Sr. Joanna Okereke, HHCJ National Director, Stella Maris

network in the world, providing seafarers with practical and

The Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development in Rome empowers countries and supports their initiatives for the growth of the maritime ministry. They provide guidelines and exhortations concerning pastoral ministry among the people of the sea; and ensure that the ministry is

carried out in a dignified and fruitful manner.



In "Stella Maris" ministry, we ask our Lady to guide, direct, and protect all Seafarers. As stated in the the Apostolic Letter Motu Propio on the Apostleship of the Sea' Pope John Paul II, January 31, 1997). "Stella Maris" ("Star of the Sea") has long been the favorite title by which people of the sea have called on her in whose protection

they have always trusted: the Blessed Virgin Mary. Her son, Jesus Christ, accompanied his disciples in their vessels (1), helped them in their work and calmed the storms (2). And so the Church accompanies seafarers, caring for the special spiritual needs of those who for various reasons live and work in the maritime world."

In the United States, the Stella Maris ministry is organized through the United States Conference of Catholics Bishops, Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church / Pastoral Care of Migrants Refugees & Travelers. The chaplains of Stella Maris ministry assist seafarers to meet their basic needs and offer spiritual renewal, facilitate communications with loved ones back home, and offer recreational opportunities.

Due to the nature and lifestyle of seafarers, they are often away from their home parishes, and some have no parish setting to help them maintain lasting ties with their faiths. A network of Catholic chaplains and pastoral teams, including priests, religious men and women, deacons and lay ecclesial ministers work to serve people of the sea in a way that accommodates a seafarer's unique lifestyle and needs, to continue the mission of Christ himself, in the maritime world, through Encounter, Service, and Celebration.

Stella Maris centers mostly operate as Catholic centers. However, some centers are ecumenical, and they provide services through the cooperation of two or more church denominations. In the United States, Stella Maris ministry is present in 53 maritime ports in 48 Arch/dioceses and in 26 States. There are over 100 chaplains and pastoral teams who assist in the ministry.

As the National Maritime Day approaches, let us recognize the hardworking men and women of the U.S. Merchant Marine, seafarers, fishers, port personnel, and all who work or travel on the high seas for the vital services they provide in support of our nation's economic well-being. Let us specially pray, that the Blessed Virgin Mary, Star of the Sea, would provide a light in the storm, and may that light guide all who sail in ships. Our Lady Star of the Sea, intercede and provide hope for all in distress. Our Lady Star of the Sea, pray for us. Amen.

by Sister Joanna Okereke, HHCJ National Direcotr Stella Maris



Catholic Daughters of the Americas: Shoebox Christmas

In fall of 2023, members of Catholic Daughters of the Americas Court St. John the Evangelist #2350 in Severna Park, Maryland, began asking for various types of toiletries, socks, hats, gloves, scarves, candy and snack items, and even empty shoeboxes. Items and monetary donations were received from court members, parishioners, and members of the community. On December 7, members of the court gathered to lovingly fill and wrap Christmas Shoeboxes for the

seafarers who stop at the Port of Baltimore. Besides the listed items, every shoebox contained a Rosary, prayer cards and/or a religious booklet, as well as a personally signed Christmas card. Through the generosity of many individuals, who shared the gifts the Lord gave them, on December



19, Apostleship of the Sea Director Andrew Middleton from the Dundalk, MD, office picked up 141 shoeboxes. Christmas shoeboxes have been an annual service project of the CDA court's members for many years. The gifts are a blessing to the seafarers who are away from home at Christmas, but also to the court's members, who so enjoy filling and wrapping them.

by Rosanna Farley





Pastoral Visit to the Port of New Orleans May 18th, 2024

The Port of New Orleans located in Mississippi River is a significant transport hub located in Louisiana, United States. It brings all modes of transportation (ocean, barge, rail, and truck). It serves as an embarkation point for cruise passengers and Louisiana's sole international container port. It is so spread out and covers many terminals.

At the Mississippi River showing all the port terminals is around 45 different locations. Each one of these locations can dock multiple ships. Our area starts at mile marker 70 and goes up river to mile marker 130 which is a distance of 60 miles. There is a lot of area for chaplains to cover. The difficult aspect of the ministry is that there is an east bank and a west bank side of the river with only a few bridges where chaplains can cross. Not all the ships are docked at a land base facility, and so the chaplains must service some by a water taxi because the ships are anchored in the river.

The chaplains and volunteers of Stella maris Ministry of the Archdiocese of New Orleans offers valuable services in the Port of New Orleans - Visiting and ministering to seafarers and their families. Their continued

presence for pastoral ministry, providing counselling, confession, offer prayers and blessings, other sacraments and shuttle to local stores and shopping centers is clear evidence of their dedication and joy for the ministry.



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Port of New Orleans - Visiting and ministering to seafarers on ships, providing spiritual and material support to seafarers and their families. Their continued presence for pastoral ministry, providing counselling, confession, offer prayers and blessings, other sacraments and shuttle to local stores and shopping centers is



clear evidence of their dedication and joy for the ministry.



Deacon Lino G. Parulan, Deacon Wayne A. Lobell, Director, Stella Maris Maritime Ministries, Sr. Joanna Okereke, HHCJ, and Mason and Susan Green





NAMMA Distinguished Service Awards Presented to Fr. Sinclair Oubre



On February 15th, Fr. Sinclair Oubre, the Stella Maris chaplain in the Diocese of Beaumont, and Sharon Emerson, Executive Director of the Corpus Christi Seafarers' Centre, were presented with the Distinguished Service Award by NAM-MA. The presentations took place during a celebration at the Houston International Seafarers' Centre, commemorating the 50th year of the port chaplain training course. Over 75 individuals gathered from the Port Houston community, seafarers' centres along the Gulf Coast, the NAMMA board, and current students of the course. NAMMA, the association of over 55 seafarers' welfare ministries in ports across North America and the Caribbean, organized the event.

Chaplain Michelle De Pooter, Vice-President of NAMMA, presented the awards alongside Dana Blume, Secretary of NAMMA, and Dr. Jason Zuidema, Executive Director of NAMMA.

NAMMA's Distinguished Service Award, previously known as the Lifetime Membership Award, honours individuals who have demonstrated outstanding service to seafarers' welfare over many years, both within local seafarers' ministries and in other local, regional, national, or international capacities. Nominees are typically NAMMA members, part of a NAMMA affiliated agency, or significant partners with NAMMA's members in their programs.

Fr. Sinclair has been a longstanding member of NAMMA, having served as president of the Association for a term. He is a priest in the Diocese of Beaumont, Texas, and has served the people of the sea in various capacities. He graduated from the Houston training program in 1990 and has been deeply involved in the Apostleship of the Sea – USA

and the Port Arthur International Seafarers' Centre. His dedication extends beyond blue water mariners to inland mariners and fishers, supporting the Port Arthur Area Shrimpers Association for over a generation. In addition to providing pastoral and humanitarian care, he maintains his credentials as a licensed mariner by sailing annually, bringing a unique perspective to his role as Gulf Branch Secretary of The Nautical Institute and as a frequent speaker in industry and government panels. Fr. Sinclair will also be a speaker at the US Maritime Administration Mariner Work-Life Balance Symposium in April 2024.

In his remarks after receiving the award, Fr. Sinclair emphasized the significance of maritime the industry and rewarding nature of a career in it. He stressed the im-



portance of focusing on its positive aspects, highlighting its high-paying jobs and great benefits. He expressed his happiness in serving the people of the sea for many decades.

by The MARE Report

Has it Really Been Five Years?

The Point Comfort Seafarers Center can be traced back to the first ship visit made on April 24, 2019, to the FAN ZHOU 6. I am not sure who was more nervous, me or the Chinese officers I met. Fast forward to 2024 and we are approaching our first anniversary of opening the hospitality building inside the port. Along the way, we have delivered Christmas gifts over five holiday seasons, experienced a pandemic, talked with thousands of people from around the world and turned two empty portable buildings into a comfortable place of respite within walking distance of the docks.

We have made 1110 visits to vessels in port. Christmas at Sea has reached 4562 gifts donated and delivered. Our response to COVID included 240 care packages to remind ships they were not forgotten when no one was allowed

ashore and with the help of three medical teams, 313 vaccinations were given. We also fulfilled requests for seven Catholic Masses to be held onboard ships. Arranging a priest, or once a bishop, to visit a ship in port is a logistical puzzle to be sure. We have even hosted one school group that delivered their Christmas gifts to the center.

While the main boots on the ground have been Tom Wise and me, none of our success would have been possible without the support of many others. Tom says we have a cast of thousands like the 1959 classic movie Ben-Hur. He is not wrong. The Calhoun Port Authority has worked closely with us to make the new center truly accessible to the seafarers who need it. Local industries have donated money as well as items- from PVC siding and decking to shoe covers, cups, chairs, t-shirts, socks, and so much more. Numerous groups and people have donated items like magazines, shampoo, toothpaste, deodorant, candy, cookies, complete Christmas gifts and too many other items to list. Individuals have also given money for our building fund or other items as needed. We thank all of you for your support of our efforts to serve the world that visits Point Comfort.

byRhonad Cummins Board President

CORPUS CHRISTI INTERNATIONAL SEAFARERS' CENTER Our 50th Anniversary

Back in 1972, a Norwegian seafarer suffered a stroke while his ship was in Corpus Christi. His wife and daughter came over from Norway to be with him in the hospital, but neither spoke English. Ben Hansen, a farmer and rancher in rural Corpus Christi, was called in to act as interpreter for the attending physicians. Born of Scandinavian parents, Ben was fluent in both Danish and Norwegian. His grandfather, in fact, was a Norwegian sea captain. "There is something about the sea," Ben offered, "that stays in a Scandinavian's blood. You always want to go back to the harbor." Ben did go back to the harbor in 197 4, embarking on a volunteer scripture ministry to seamen from around the world.

At that time, the Port of Corpus Christi was the ninth largest port in the country, yet visiting seafarers had no place, off their ship, to socialize while in Port. Most all of them walked from the docks to downtown Corpus Christi with their crewmates to grab a cold beer and some relaxation. The only place they could go were the rough downtown bars; they didn't know where to go to make



phone calls or where to go to buy food and souveniTs. Unfortunately, they were almost always assaulted on their walk back to their ship and robbed of their meager earnings. The Corpus Christi Police Department asked for assistance to alleviate this problem, and a handful of volunteers, including Alice Milloy who retired from the Center when she was 96 years old, created the Seamen's Center in 197 4. Because of this project, the crime rate in the community, according to the Police, was reduced by forty percent.

Considering the urgency of the matter, the City of Corpus Christi donated space in the old Parks and Rec building, where the volunteers created a model Seamen's Center and opened its doors on December 14, 197 4. This "pet project" grew steadily along with the growth of the Port of Corpus Christi. At present, the Seafarers' Center is housed in a 5,500 square foot facility which is only blocks from the ship channel and docks -walking distance. The Diocese of Corpus Christi, through the John G. and Marie Stella Kenedy Foundation, funded \$335,000 to design and build the Center.

Although the original founders of the Seamen's Center have passed on, they would be proud to know that their legacy and dreams have been preserved and continued. I come from a legal background, and would go to the Center to assist Alice after work and on the weekends. When Alice's five children asked her to retire, it became incumbent on me to take up the reins. I quit my paralegal job and started with the Seamen's Center fulltime. I must say, that this is more of a calling than a job.

During the pandemic, all seafarers were restricted to their ships and could not go home during crew change and the relief crew were not allowed to board the ship to work. The onboard crew worked months beyond their contracts, the relief crew could not join the ship and were without a job and without pay. Very unfortunate for both sides. Because of these restrictions, the onboard crew was not getting vaccinated. In desperation, I cre-

ated a plan with the help of the Texas National Guard and our County Health Department, along with ship Captains and local ship agents, to allow the Guard's medics and support personnel to board ships and vaccinate members of the crew who wanted to be vaccinated. Once started, this project took on a whole new meaning. It meant that there was hope for these vaccinated seafarers to complete the first step in going home. During the course of this one-year project, we vaccinated 4,897 seafarers on over 650 ships! All at no cost to the seafarer, the agent or owners.



We send advance notice of arrival requests to Captains to advise them of our services, whether it be transportation, sale of Sim cards, chaplaincy or any other ways we can assist. We ask them to let us know, before their arrival in our Port, if they or any of their crew need any of these services so we will be ready. Whether they need our services or not, our driver and chaplains take a Welcome·to·the·Port bag containing a jigsaw puzzle, big bag of chocolates, big box of cookies, bag of microwave popcorn and assorted magazines to the ship. And in carrying on Alice's generous Christmasat-Sea tradition, we stuff 1,000 Christmas bags with gift items to be distributed to the seafarers at Christmastime. These backpacks always contain a knit watch cap, a pair of Hanes socks, magnets, a Texas mini-calendar and a couple of branded items choose each year.

Our Center is gradually making new interior upgrades to make the seafarers' visit a comfortable and pleasant one. We received a nice donation from Cheniere to upgrade our computer room to the Mariners' Lounge, complete with new paint, new flooring, new furniture, including a very large television, computer and lighting. This pleasant room has been used consistently

during crew changes; whether they sleep, chat, watch sports or catch up on their emails.

Our fundraisers, St. Patrick's Day Authentic Irish Dinner in March, our HEB Chicken & Sausage BBQ in June, our Annual Lobster Feast in October and our Christmas Open House in December sustain us, along with the payment of ship assessments provided by the Port Tariff, to carry on our mission to seafarers and insure that they are all warmly welcomed to our Center and by the Chaplains who board every ship they can, rain or shine. For 50 years, our Seafarers' Center has been a home-away-from-home, connecting seafarers by fellowship, pastoral care, comfort and the support they need to stay healthy and safe.

Heavenly Father, guide and direct all who control the conditions under which the seafarers labor at sea. Enlighten and uphold all who minister to their needs ashore. Give to those who commit their possessions and their lives into their keeping a full realization of the fidelity with which this stewardship is discharged.

by Sharon Emerson
Executive Director
Corpus Christi International Seafarers' Center



The Annual Maritime Day Mass

and

The National Maritime Day

Reflections

On the next four pages are a series of photos from the Annual Maritime Day Mass and the National Maritime Day Celebration held by the Department of Transportation.

The Annual Maritime Day Mass was held at the National Basilica of the Immaculate Conception on May 18th, 2024 with Father Arthur Unachukwu presiding. Representatives from various Stella Maris Chaplaincies and representatives of various organizations were present at the Mass and the reception which followed. Andrew Middleton of the Stella Maris Ministry in Baltimore, provided updates on the status of the sailors aboard the ship involved in the Baltimore Bridge Collapse as well as the experiences within the Baltimore port during last few months. The Maritime Day Mass and reception offered the opportunity for all those who lend their time and prayers to the ministry to reconnect and share in the joy of Christ.

At the National Maritime Day celebration, Sister Joanna Okereke, HHCJ was offered the opportunity to offer a prayer to those gathered for the event and to meet with those involved with Maritime matters accross the country. Following the pictures of the Maritime Day Mass are pictures taken at the National Maritime Day celebration held by the department of transportation. Sister Joanna's prayer, which she offered to those gathered can be found on page 14 of this Newsletter.



Photos From the Maritime Day Mass May 18th, 2024





























Photos from National Maritime Day, 2024 Department of Transportation Washington, DC

























Invocation

Sr. Joanna Okereke, HHCJ National Director Stella Maris.

God of Love and Mercy, be with us today as we celebrate the National Maritime Day. We offer our deepest gratitude to God for the U.S. Merchant Marine and the maritime industry, who play a vital role in the Nation's economic well-being and national security. They work tirelessly to make our world a better place, their wisdom, strength, and fortitude are truly inspiring, and we ask your blessings and protection for them and their families.

As we embark on this journey together, bless each of us, our families, work, and community.

When the way ahead seems long and arduous, grant us the strength to press on with unwavering resolve. And when we are tempted to give up, let us find solace in the knowledge that we do not walk this path alone, but are upheld by your everlasting grace.

We recognize the profound impact of our work on the lives of countless individuals and pray for the courage to envision bold solutions, and the perseverance to overcome every obstacle that stands in the way of progress. May our actions be imbued with integrity, our decisions grounded in justice. May our work be a testament to the boundless potential of human endeavor, fueled by compassion, driven by purpose, and illuminated by faith.

Together, with determination, and a deep sense of responsibility to steward the resources entrusted to us, we will build a brighter, safer, and more connected future – for all. We make these prayers, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Benediction

Gracious God, as we conclude our time together, we lift our hearts in gratitude for your divine presence, infinite wisdom, and boundless love. Grant us, the vision to see beyond the challenges of the present, the courage to embrace innovation in the face of adversity, and the perseverance to overcome obstacles with unwavering determination.

May we always be mindful of the impact our actions have on the lives of those we serve, and let our work be a beacon of hope that illuminates the path towards a future. May we carry with us the fire of inspiration, the spark of creativity, and the resolve to transform dreams into reality. May our endeavors be blessed with success, our efforts be rewarded with fulfillment, and our journey be guided by Your grace. May we commit ourselves anew to the noble mission of building a future of safety for all. Amen.



STELLA MARIS

SUPPORTING SEAFARERS AND FISHERS AROUND THE WORLD





The Prayer of Saint Pope John Paul II to: Our Lady Star of the Sea

Mary, Star of the Sea, light of every ocean, guide seafarers across all dark and stormy seas that they may reach the haven of peace and light prepared in Him who calmed the sea. As we set forth upon the oceans of the world and cross the deserts of our time, show us, O Mary, the fruit of your womb, for without your Son we are lost. Pray that we will never fail on life's journey, that in heart and mind, work and deed, in days of turmoil and in days of calm, we will always look to Christ and say, "Who is this that even wind and sea obey him?"

> Our Lady of Peace, pray for us! Bright Star of the Sea, guide us! Our Lady, Star of the Sea, pray for seafarers, pray for us.



Stella Maris, National Office Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees, and Travelers

3211 Fourth Street, NE, Washington, D.C. 20017

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED









SUPPORTING SEAFARERS AND FISHERS AROUND THE WORLD



Upcoming Events

2024 NAMMA Conference

September 24-26, 2024 Newark, NJ

2024 Stella Maris North American Conference

September 26-28, 2024 Stella Maris Center 170 Corbin Street, Newark, NJ

November 21, 2024

World Fisheries Day