

1977

Decree

De Pastoralibus Maritimarum et Navigantium Cura

Pontifical Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People

24 September 1977

The Apostleship of the Sea is both inspired by and reflected in the Gospel narrative [527] and the early apostolic preaching, in both of which there are abundant references to seafaring life and activity;

The Church has shown a special concern for seafarers, and the Apostolic See, [528] responding to the particular needs of the times, has not failed to provide the necessary means for their adequate spiritual care.

Coming into being at the start of the century, the Apostleship of the Sea provided a [529] specialized form of activity with appropriate organization. In 1957, in the light of the Apostolic Constitution “*Exsul Familia*”¹ and of subsequent positive developments, the Holy See established a specific constitution for the work with the “*Leges Apostolatus Maris*.”² More recently, the orientations and directives emerging from the Second Vatican Council and successive documents for their implementation, whilst vigorously accentuating the pastoral values involved, have nevertheless made the need felt for updating the constitution.

Therefore, after wide consultation with Episcopal Conferences, Bishops, priests and [530] laity engaged in the seafaring world and taking into account the views of the appropriate departments of the Roman Curia, this Sacred Congregation, in conjunction with the Pontifical Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, has reviewed the whole matter in the light of the decrees of the recent Ecumenical Council and now restates it in the following norms, faculties and privileges.

All these dispositions — norms, faculties and privileges — prepared by the Sacred [531] Congregation for the Bishops, the Holy Father, by his authority, has approved and ordered to be promulgated, any prescriptions to the contrary notwithstanding. Given in Rome from the Office of the Sacred Congregation for the Bishops, on the 24th day of September 1977.

✠**SEBASTIANO Cardinal BAGGIO**

Prefect

✠**EMANUELE CLARIZIO**

Pro-President of the Pontifical
Commission for the Pastoral
of Migrants and Itinerant People

PART ONE

[532]

NORMS FOR THE SPIRITUAL CARE OF SEAFARERS AND OTHER TRAVELLING BY SEA

Art. 1

“Apostolatus Maris” (*Apostleship of the Sea*) is that special activity in which the Church’s concern for seafarers and others sea travelers, who cannot benefit from the normal means of pastoral care, is put into practical effect, organized and promoted.

Art. 2

[533]

Within the context of the present norms:

a) by seafarers are intended those who by reason of their office or the nature of their work, whether in command or service, normally spend their time on board ship, fishing vessels included, even if temporarily ashore. Also considered as seafarers are the students at nautical schools.

b) A sea traveler in one who is on board ship during a sea voyage, whether migrating or traveling for pleasure or for any other reason or motive, for whatever length of time he may be on board. Unless otherwise indicated, the term seafarer is to be understood also to include all sea travelers.

Art. 3

[534]

§ 1. By virtue of his Apostolic Letter “*Apostolicae Caritatis*” promulgated by Motu Proprio on the 19th March 1970, Pope Paul VI constituted, in dependence on this Sacred Congregation, the Pontifical Commission for the Spiritual Care of Migrants and Itinerant Peoples whose major concern would be ... to procure the well being of those people who are far from their homes. It therefore belongs to the said Commission to guide any pastoral work anywhere in the world carried out for the good of seafarers and sea travelers.

§ 2. Its chief tasks are:

[535]

1) to issue instructions, counsels, etc., which pertain to the pastoral care of seafarers.

2) to coordinate the apostolic work and external activity of the Apostleship of the Sea carried out in various parts of the world, with due regard to differing circumstances;

3) to encourage, initiate, provide for and, as occasion may demand, moderate and coordinate, activities, relations and meetings of an international nature;

4) to give whatever help may be necessary or useful to the spiritual assistance of seafarers;

5) to ensure by prudent vigilance that this ministry is properly and fruitfully carried out;

6) to assist all who take part in this apostolate, inspiring and encouraging them and

correcting any grave errors which may arise.

§ 3. In order that the pastoral care of seafarers may be more efficacious and better organized, it is the duty of the Pontifical Commission to promote and foster cooperation and coordination of effort with Episcopal Conferences and Local Ordinaries. [536]

Art. 4 [537]

§ 1. In every maritime country or region a special Episcopal Committee or Commission is to be set up with the duty of promoting fostering and moderating the Apostleship of the Sea.

§ 2. If it should happen that in any nation an Episcopal Commission of this kind cannot yet be constituted, then, until such time as it is possible, at least one of the Bishops, preferably the Ordinary of a diocese whose Episcopal See or the major part of its territory borders on the sea, will be deputed as Promoter for the careful guidance of the Apostleship of the Sea. [538]

Art. 5 [539]

The Duties of the Episcopal Commission or Promoter are:

- 1) to select a suitable priest and present him to the Episcopal Conference in order that it may confer on him by written decree and for a specific period of time the office of National Director of the Apostleship of the Sea. His name is to be communicated to the Pontifical Commission;
- 2) to issue directives to the National Director, supervise his activities and provide such counsel and help as may be necessary for him to carry out his task properly;
- 3) at stated times and as often as may seem opportune, to require from the National Director a report on the pastoral assistance of seafarers and on what has been done in this regard;
- 4) carefully to examine the report referred to in n. 3 above, and to forward it to the Pontifical Commission with his own assessment.

Art. 6 [540]

§ 1. It is the right and duty of the Local Ordinary to provide solicitously for the pastoral assistance of all seafarers who are, even temporarily, in the area of his jurisdiction.

§ 2. Therefore it belongs to him: [541]

- 1) to determine the most suitable forms of pastoral care for seafarers and to establish such ordinances or structures as local circumstances may suggest as both appropriate and effective in promoting and ensuring the good of souls in this sector, such as territorial parish, personal parish, mission with the care of souls, chaplaincy, etc.;
- 2) in consultation with the National Director, to nominate chaplains of the Apostleship of the Sea for his own diocese, and to give them their official appointment as such;

- 3) to grant to the chaplains such special faculties as are necessary or useful for their apostolate;
- 4) to afford to the chaplains such aid as is necessary for the proper discharge of their duties;
- 5) to erect and bless oratories on board ships which are registered in ports within the confines of his diocese.

Art. 7

[542]

The principal duties of the National Director are:

- 1) to relate with the Bishops of his country in those matters which pertain to the spiritual good of seafarers;
- 2) at least once a year to submit a report to the Episcopal Commission or Promoter on the state of souls and pastoral care of seafarers in his own country, giving an account of the successful undertakings of the year and of those which may have been less successful, of what remedies have been employed in the latter cases, and finally, whatever may be considered to contribute to the development of the Apostleship of the Sea;
- 3) to guide the work of the chaplains of the Apostleship of the Sea, having due regard to the rights of the Local Ordinaries;
- 4) to ensure that the chaplains carry out their duties diligently and observe the directives of the Holy See and of the Local Ordinary;
- 5) to take particular care to foster and assist the apostolate of the laity, promoting their active participation and having regard for their various aptitudes;
- 6) to represent the Apostleship of the Sea of his own country in those relations which must necessarily be established with the individual Apostleship of the Sea organizations existing in other countries;
- 7) to establish and preserve regular links with Catholic or non-Catholic associations or charitable organisations which have aims a kin to those of the Apostleship of the Sea;
- 8) frequently to visit the establishments of the Apostleship of the Sea as well as ports and ships;
- 9) by agreement with the Episcopal Commission or Promoter and at opportune times to convene all the chaplains of his country to make spiritual exercises together or to take part in conferences on the best methods of exercising their ministry;
- 10) to send to the Episcopal Curia concerned an authentic copy of the registers of baptisms, confirmations and deaths compiled by himself or by the chaplains;
- 11) to notify as soon as possible the parish priest of persons concerned regarding entries to be made in the parish registers.

Art. 8

[545]

§ 1. Apostleship of the Sea chaplain is the title given to a priest nominated by a Local Ordinary, in accordance with Art. 6, n. 2 of the present norms, and officially entrusted by him with the pastoral care of seafarers.

§ 2. An Apostleship of the Sea chaplain must be noted for his integrity, concern for souls, prudence, and knowledge; he should also be practised in languages and be of sound health. As far as possible, he should be dedicated exclusively and with a certain permanence to his task unless, in the judgement of the Local Ordinary, other reasons suggest the contrary. [546]

§ 3. In order that an Apostleship of the Sea chaplain be fitted in every way for his special work, he should be suitably instructed and carefully prepared before he is given the spiritual care of seafarers. [547]

§ 4. A chaplain as defined in § 1 is empowered to carry out amongst seafarers all those activities which are proper to the care of souls, except in matters of matrimonial jurisdiction unless he is canonically appointed parish priest or director of a mission with the care of souls. [548]

§ 5. The jurisdiction granted to an Apostleship of the Sea chaplain, which must in any case be exercised under the authority of the Local Ordinary, is always cumulative with the jurisdiction of the parish priest in whose territory it is exercised. The chaplain must therefore fulfil his pastoral duties towards seafarers in fraternal harmony with the parish priest of the area and consult with him. [549]

§ 6. a) The Apostleship of the Sea chaplain's care of souls extends to all seafarers: [550]

- 1) on board ships, whether in port or on voyages by sea or river;
 - 2) in "Stella Maris" clubs and other centres of the Apostleship of the Sea, as well as in interconfessional centres for seafarers established with the consent of the Local Ordinary;
 - 3) in hospitals and other such institutions;
 - 4) in schools and academies for seafarers.
- b) This same care is extended to the families of seafarers, even in non-port areas, in consultation with the competent parish priests in accordance with norm § 5 of the present article.

Art. 9 [551]

It is the duty of the Apostleship of the Sea chaplain:

- 1) to fulfill his ministry by attending to the good of those souls entrusted to his pastoral care;
- 2) to select from among seafarers and especially from members of Catholic organisations, men and women of sound promise and instruct them in morality and doctrine, so that they may be able fruitfully to carry out apostolic work in keeping with their lay qualities and abilities;
- 3) to keep accurate registers of baptisms, confirmations and deaths, and to send an authentic copy of these at the end of each year, together with a report of his activities, to the National Director.

Art. 10 [552]

As far as possible, the Apostleship of the Sea chaplain should not take on himself

the economic administration of “Stella Maris” centres or other such establishment, but should rather entrust it to a suitably qualified and prudent man, imbued with the spirit of the apostolate and of unimpeachable character, who would have the duty of rendering account to the Committee of the centre, presided over by the chaplain himself.

Art. 11 [553]

§ 1. An Apostleship of the Sea chaplain who carries out his pastoral work on board ship is appointed by the competent authority as Ship’s Chaplain. Endowed with those same qualities specified in Art. 8, § 2, his duty is to give spiritual assistance to everyone on board, from the beginning of the sea, lake or river voyage until its termination.

§ 2. The Ship’s Chaplain receives his jurisdiction *a iure* at the moment of his appointment and retains it for the duration of his office. In the same way he is granted *a iure* the faculties set-out Part Two of the present document, the requirements of the law being observed and only in favour of those who are with him on board ship for the voyage. [554]

§ 3. Having due regard to the special circumstances in which he carries out his pastoral duties, the Ship’s Chaplain has, in so far as they are applicable, the obligations enumerated in Art. 9 and 10. He must send to the National Director, at the end of every voyage by sea, lake or river, an authentic copy of his registers of baptism, confirmations and deaths, together with a report of his own activities. [555]

Art. 12 [556]

§ 1. For the setting up of an interconfessional centre or group, the agreement of the Ordinary is required and its statutes and activities, moreover, must be in accordance with Christian principles and with the norms promulgated in the Ecumenical Directory.

§ 2. Among the regulations - which must be kept in mind and observed, the following must be strictly adhered to: [557]

- a) the spiritual direction of the Catholic lay groups must be reserved solely to the Apostleship of the Sea chaplain;
- b) chaplains specially assigned to this work, their complete freedom to promote the Apostleship of the Sea having been assured, exercise their pastoral office under the sole authority of their own Superiors;
- c) the Catholic lay groups must also enjoy the same liberty both in fulfilling their duties and fostering normal relations, and in establishing and maintaining links with other local associations or organisations, as referred to in Art. 7, n. 7.

PART TWO [558]
FACULTIES FOR PRIESTS ENGAGED IN THE
SPIRITUAL CARE OF SEAFARERS AND THOSE
TRAVELING BY SHIP

I

The Faculties listed below are granted for the good of souls, to Apostleship of the Sea chaplains engaged in the spiritual care of seafarers in port or during voyages, throughout their term of office and from the beginning of such voyages.

The principal faculties are:

- 1) For a just cause, to celebrate Mass twice on weekdays and, if there is a real pastoral need, three times on Sundays and Holydays of Obligation.
- 2) For a just cause, to celebrate Mass at any time of the day and administer Holy Communion in the evening, the requirements of the law being observed.
- 3) Occasionally for a just cause or habitually for a more serious cause, to celebrate Mass outside of a sacred place, in a fitting and decent location though never in a bedroom.
- 4) For a just cause, to celebrate Mass on board ships at sea or in rivers, due precautions being taken.
- 5) Whenever necessity requires, to use electric lights in place of candles when celebrating Mass on board ship. [559]
- 6) Where pastoral need suggests it, to celebrate a second evening Mass on Holy Thursday (the Feast of the Lord's Supper) in churches and public or semi-public oratories, and, in case of real necessity for those of the faithful who could in no way assist at evening Mass, to celebrate Mass in the morning.
- 7) To reserve the Blessed Sacrament in legitimately erected oratories on board ship, provided that the appropriate Apostolic Indult has been obtained from the Holy See through this Pontifical Commission.
- 8) To administer the sacrament of Confirmation, in the course of a sea, journey, to any seafarer or any child or adult on board ship provided no Bishop in communion with the Holy See is present and it is clearly foreseen that age or lack of knowledge of the language of local circumstances in the country of destination would make the reception of the sacrament very difficult, and that other requirements of the law are observed. [560]
- 9) To absolve penitents, during the course of a sea journey, from whatever censures they may have incurred, in accordance with the norms of can. 2350 § 1, C.I.C. for procuring abortion, the requirements of the law being observed.
- 10) To absolve penitents on board ship for whatever reason during a sea journey from the censures and penalties referred to in can. 2314 C.I.C., provided such penitents, having culpably defected from the Catholic faith and communion, contritely seek reconciliation with holy mother the Church.³
- 11) As often as any cause impedes him from carrying out his duties and it is impossible to have recourse to the local Ordinary or to the National Director, to depute any priest on board during a sea journey to act as vice-chaplain and to attend throughout the voyage to the spiritual care of all seafarers and others travelling on board, making use of the faculties which are proper to chaplains. [561]

II [562]

The principal privileges are:

- 1) Seafarers may fulfil the Paschal precept regarding Holy Communion at any time during the year, after suitable instruction or catechesis regarding the precept.
- 2) Seafarers are dispensed from the law of fasting and abstinence referred to in Ch. III c) II § 2 and 3 of the Apostolic Constitution "Paenitemini." It is desirable however that those who are so dispensed should perform some suitable pious work in compensation and that they observe the law of fasting and abstinence, if possible, at least on Good Friday (of the Passion and Death of Jesus Christ).
- 3) During a sea voyage, those who are on board ship for any reason and are subject to the law of fasting and abstinence referred to in Ch. III c) II § 2 and 3 of the Apostolic Constitution "Paenitemini", are dispensed from the law, with due regard however to the clause in No. 2 above.
- 4) The faithful on board ship, having properly confessed their sins and received Holy Communion, obtain a Plenary Indulgence if, where a legitimately erected shipboard oratory exists, they piously visit the oratory on its titular Feast or on the 2nd August, and there recite devoutly the Lord's Prayer and the Creed for the intention of the Holy Father. [563]
- 5) The faithful may also, under the same conditions, obtain once on the 2nd November a Plenary Indulgence applicable only to the souls in purgatory, if they piously visit the aforementioned oratory and there devoutly recite the Lord's Prayer and the Creed for the intention of the Holy Father.

The Indulgences referred to in 4 and 5 above may be obtained, under the same conditions, by seafarers and their families as well as by members of Apostolatus Maris either in the chapels and oratories of "Stella Maris" clubs or in the oratories of other Apostolatus Maris centres. [564]

1 AAS 44 (1952), pp.649-704

2 AAS 50 (1958), pp.375-383

3 Ecumenical Directory n. 19

Source: "De Pastoralis Maritimum et Navigantium Cura" (Pontifical Commission). *On the Move*, 7:19 (1977): 17-30.
