

SUNDAY PLUS

Safe harbour

“Protect them whereso'er they go”

By Cdr Ian Crabtree
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Today, Sea Sunday, we celebrate the life and work of all seafarers – those who fish; those who transport goods and passengers; those who maintain law and order on the high seas and defend the right of safe passage for all; and those

who care for seafarers' welfare. In the Royal Navy's Annual Naval Mass, celebrated at this time, naval artefacts are often used to symbolise a particular aspect of a seafarer's professional and spiritual life:

- The White Ensign, under which the men and women of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines serve, adorned with many crosses, reminds us of the cross of sacrifice and the sacrifices made by those who serve at sea, especially the cross of separation from loved ones and family.
- The ship's lantern that warns other shipping of a vessel's presence, is lit by a burning candle signifying Christ our Light, our guide and help in times of distress.
- The ship's bell, registers the passage of time,

encouraging us to appreciate each day in its fullness.

- The compass and sextant, which enable safe navigation, are reminiscent of the Word and sacraments that guide us in our daily lives.

These, together with the Naval Hymn “Eternal Father strong to save”, which invokes the help of the Holy Trinity, remind us of our vulnerability and need for God.

Today, let us be especially mindful of all seafarers and their families and pray that the Lord will “Protect them whereso'er they go”.

May Mary, Star of the Sea, intercede for them.

Cdr Ian Crabtree, a retired Royal Navy Warfare Officer, is currently employed as the Pastoral Assistant to the Royal Navy Roman Catholic Chaplaincy.

Sea Sunday supports the work of the Apostleship of the Sea, the Catholic Church's maritime agency that provides spiritual and welfare support to seafarers arriving in Great Britain and ports around the world. Its extensive network of port chaplains and ship visitors offer pastoral and practical assistance to seafarers who work far from home, separated from their families, and in sometimes harsh working conditions.



Our Lady of the Boat

Nuestra Señora de la Barca: Our Lady of the Boat. The small church overlooks the Atlantic Ocean on the Galician coast in north-western Spain. Unprotected from the weather and surrounded by bare rocks, it is where, according to legend, a frustrated St James wanted to abandon his efforts to preach the Gospel to people who refused to listen. Suddenly, he saw Our Lady, crossing the sea towards him in a stone boat. Mary consoled the unhappy apostle and told him to keep

working for her Son. James obeyed – and stayed for 40 years. The extremely hazardous shore surrounding the church is strewn with massive rocks, many of them hidden by the sea, even at low tide. Countless wrecks over the centuries led to the construction of a string of lighthouses to warn anybody travelling by boat. Because Mary had herself travelled by boat, she became the patroness of the local fishermen and then, of seafarers.

Foghorns across the Mersey

By Sr Janet Fearn FMDM

Fog and foghorns automatically accompanied each other in a “pea souper”. Ferries crossed the Mersey whilst liners, cargo ships, pilot boats and other vessels headed out to, or returned from, sea at right angles to the ferries. The foghorns' repetitive sound safeguarded Liverpool's ships and all those who sailed in them. They also embraced the city, highlighting the everyday hazards of seafaring before the Internet, GPS and other modern navigational aids. Most Liverpool families had links with the sea – and we prayed for seafarers, especially

when we heard foghorns. “The day I went to sea for the first time”, an elderly retired sailor declared, “my mother gave me a rosary. That was over seventy years ago and I'm still using them. The beads have almost worn away but that doesn't matter. Our Lady accompanied me through many a storm at sea, throughout the war and on more long voyages than I can remember. When you're at sea, that's when you learn to pray!”

Sr Janet Fearn is a Franciscan Missionary of the Divine Motherhood.

“The life of a sailor or fisherman is not only marked by isolation and distance. At times, it is also painfully affected by shameful experiences of abuse and injustice, by the snares of those engaged in human trafficking, and by the extortion of forced labour. At other times, they are not paid their rightful salary or are left behind in distant ports. In addition to threats from nature – storms and hurricanes – they must face human threats, such as piracy or terrorist attacks. They cross the world's oceans and seas, landing in ports where they are not always welcome.”

Pope Francis

Today: Deuteronomy 30:10-14 Colossians 1:15-20 Luke 10:25-37

Monday: Isaiah 1:10-17 Matthew 10:34 – 11:1

Tuesday: Isaiah 7:1-9 Matthew 11:20-24

Wednesday: Isaiah 10:5-7, 13-16 Matthew 11:25-27

Thursday: Isaiah 26:7-9, 12, 16-19 Matthew 11:28-30

Friday: Isaiah 38:1-6, 21-22, 7-8 Matthew 12:1-8

Saturday: Micah 2:1-5 Matthew 12:14-21

Next Sunday: Genesis 18:1-10 Colossians 1:24-28 Luke 10:38-42