

Apostleship of the Sea of the United States of America

Cruise Ship Priest Manual



The sixth edition of the Cruise Ship Priest Manual was presented to the administrative board of the AOS-USA by Fr. Dennis Donovan, SDB, representative for cruise ship priests. Amended and accepted by the board, it was approved by vote of the membership at the General Assembly of the AOS-USA during their annual conference held in Dania, Florida in March 2016. Revisions due to changing circumstances are made when necessary. The latest revisions are found on the website www.aso-usa.org.

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 1500 Jefferson Drive, Port Arthur, TX 77642
 409-985-4545
aosusa@sbcglobal.net
www.aos-usa.org

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Introduction

The Apostleship of the Sea, hereafter called AOS, was founded in 1921 in Glasgow, Scotland. It was recognized as the official Catholic ministry to the people of the sea by Pope Pius XI in 1922. Since then, AOS has established seafarer centers throughout the world for merchant mariners and fishermen. During the age of the great ocean liners, AOS chaplains welcomed and assisted the visiting passenger ship chaplains who accompanied the millions of immigrants who came to North American and other countries.

Pope Pius XII laid out the important roles of AOS and the ship chaplain in his groundbreaking apostolic constitution *Exsul Familia Nazarethana* in 1952. With the rise of air travel and the decline of passenger ships, the role of the passenger ship chaplain ceased being a separate work of the Church, and became part of the ministry of the AOS. Pope John Paul II reaffirmed this combined ministry in 1997, when he promulgated the motu proprio *Stella Maris*. There he states that AOS is to minister to seafarers. He then defines seafarers as “those actually on board merchant ships or fishing vessels, and all who for whatever reason have undertaken a voyage by ship.”

Today, the Apostleship of the Sea USA (AOS-USA) is one of the services of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Subcommittee on the Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees and Travelers which is under the direction of the Committee on Cultural Diversity within the Church.

Since the mid-1990s, the cruise industry has been one of the fastest growing segments of the maritime industry. Every year, new and larger vessels are launched and put into service. With the growth of the industry, the Church has grown in its awareness of its need to offer pastoral care to the growing number of Catholics who are cruise line passengers and crew members. The Church is also mindful of laicized, unattached and schismatic priests presenting themselves as Catholic priests in good standing in order to serve on cruise ships.

In 2002, the USCCB asked the AOS-USA to create a system to verify the names of approved priests for cruise ship ministry. When AOS-USA first established the Cruise Ship Priest Program, it was with the understanding that they were to ensure that not only were the priests valid and in good standing, with permission to serve, but also that they would be well trained and equipped to serve. The Bishop's wanted to ensure that the liturgies onboard were respectful and dignified.

A team was assembled, consisting of the following: Fr. John A. Jamnicky, national director of the AOS; Msgr. Michael D. Harriman, a priest in San Francisco and the assignment agent for Holland America Line; Fr. Sinclair K. Oubre, JCL, president of AOS-USA; and Miss Doreen M. Badeaux, secretary general of the AOS-USA. The group met with cruise line agents to discuss the unique needs and issues that they encountered over time. Over a weekend in late 2003, the team gathered at a Houston church and drafted the first edition of the Cruise Ship Priest Manual.

This manual was written to address the compile the experience of the cruise lines, the US Bishops, priests who have served on ships and passengers who participated in the program . In addition, AOS-USA was able to bring in its long tradition of ministry to crew members and included the Motu Proprio *Stella Maris* in this document. This is our sixth edition of the Cruise Ship Priest Manual.

Mission and Logo of AOS-USA

The AOS-USA national office was opened on July 1, 2003 in order to facilitate the Cruise Ship Priest Program on behalf of the AOS at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Committee on Migration. AOS-USA is the professional association of Catholic maritime ministers, Catholic mariners, and cruise ship priests. In August 2015, the AOS-USA became a recognized Private Association of the Faithful. The AOS-USA is listed in the Official Catholic Directory.

Our Mission

The mission of AOS-USA is to teach and witness to the Word of God and to serve God's people, especially seafarers, maritime personnel and people of the sea, by fostering their growth and renewal, through prayer, study and Christian service. In addition, AOS-USA promotes professional training and advocacy for the People of the Sea.

Our Logo

The logo denotes the three beacons guiding and welcoming seafarers to a safe haven, now and for eternity. The rays of light reach out and touch the life preserver (faith), while emanating from a warm heart (charity) and holding to the anchor (hope) of stability.



Fr. William Kelly – Eurodam, Holland America Lines, August 2015

Chapter 1 – Role of the Cruise Ship Priest

Your role as cruise ship priest is to provide the sacraments and pastoral ministry to the Catholic passengers and crew and to be available to all of the people aboard the ship. In addition to the daily Mass, you may be called upon to hear confessions and possibly anoint the sick. Weddings, funerals and the other sacraments are not provided aboard ship.

In addition to providing the sacraments listed above, your role is to help AOS-USA make the program run smoothly and convince the cruise lines of its value so that more of the cruise lines join us.

Regular ministry on cruise ships is for some of the cruise lines a new venture. Many of them have priests only for Christmas or Easter. It has taken some time to convince many of the lines of the value of having a priest on every cruise.

The cruise line representatives with whom we work may need our help in convincing the personnel on board their ships of its value, and helping them understand the needs of our liturgy and ministry. Personnel may have little understanding of how to care for sacred vessels and vestments, or where to store them in a place that is secure and convenient.

Your patience and skill in dealing with crew members, the cruise director, the assistant cruise director, and the activities director will help them see that your ministry is more than just another amenity that they offer to passengers and crew. Having a good relationship with the cruise director or the person that he or she designates is crucial. You will be under their supervision. Keep in mind that they are under pressure to meet the needs of many programs on board. They may have little flexibility in scheduling when and where the Mass takes place. Your evaluation of them and other personnel at the end of the cruise will help them as well as AOS-USA improve the program.



Fr. Sinclair Oubre, JCL (Immediate Past President of AOS-USA)
Celebrity Galaxy, Celebrity Cruise Lines, Panama Canal, November 2003

Chapter 2 – Before Your Cruise

Scheduling a Cruise

Each cruise line provides a list of cruises needing priests to the secretary general of the AOS-USA. The secretary general will post these cruise openings, including the dates and destinations, in an e-mail message sent to members in good standing. It is important that you sign up for a cruise quickly, as these positions are quickly taken. You can find the schedule and itinerary for most cruise lines at each company's website. At some time before the cruise, the secretary general or a cruise line representative will send you the boarding pass and instructions about how to embark on the cruise.

Prepare your Documents

You are required to have the following documents in order for the cruise line or the secretary general of AOS-USA to send you a boarding pass:

- Valid passport which will remain valid for at least six months beyond the date of your cruise.
- Valid AOS-USA identification badge showing that you are a member in good standing.
- A visa for those destinations where one is required. On some of the cruises, the cruise line will provide a temporary visa for passengers and crew going on an excursion sponsored by the cruise line. Call the cruise line to verify the visa requirements.
- Passport and visa requirements change frequently. It may take several weeks to obtain a visa. After checking your cruise itinerary, consult with the Department of State at <http://travel.state.gov/passport> for further information.

Prepare Your Sacramentals

Bring small containers with all three of the Holy Oils and ritual for the Anointing of the Sick.

Unless you are sailing with Holland America, you may have to bring your own Mass kit and a supply of hosts and altar wine. AOS-USA will let you know what is supplied by the cruise line when you get your boarding pass. In most cases the cruise line will provide everything, but there have been times when the priest was requested to bring everything himself.

Medicines and Insurance

You are responsible for bringing your own medication and medical supplies. Be sure to have sufficient medication to cover the entire length of the cruise, as well as several days before and after in case of delays. Keep these items in your carry-on baggage in case you need them while boarding. Carry a list of vaccinations you have received in your wallet.

The individual priest should review his personal medical insurance and medical coverage. The cruise lines and AOS-USA are not responsible for medical incidents incurred while on your cruise. We advise you to review your insurance coverage for travel outside the United States.

Affordable travel and medical insurance can be obtained online from an number of online vendors, such as www.sevencorners.com or www.insuremytrip.com. AOS-USA does not endorse these sites, but provides them here as a resource for your personal review. Be sure the policy includes evacuation coverage. If you are not sure, call a travel agent for helpful advice.

Dietary restrictions for a medical condition should be communicated to your table waiter before dinner. If you will have the same table throughout the cruise, simply tell the waiter of your needs on the first night.

Chapter 3 – Boarding the Ship

Documentation

Have your passport, AOS-USA identification badge and boarding pass or any other documentation required by the cruise line on your person, not in your baggage.

Getting to the Port

It is your responsibility to get to the port on time. You may want to work through a travel agency for your first cruise or two until you are familiar with procedures for getting to and from the port. If you are flying to the port from a great distance, book a flight that will get you there the day before the ship's departure. This will help you to avoid missing the ship when there are airline delays or cancellations.

You should arrive at the dock between noon and 1:00 p.m., unless instructed otherwise by the cruise line.

In most cases the priest is responsible for his own transportation between his personal residence and the ship. Transportation policies vary with each cruise line and are usually included in the letter that comes with your boarding pass. Cruise lines frequently have a shuttle service from the airport to the ship on the day of departure. A representative of the line is generally located inside the airport terminal. Check with the cruise line representative to see if they have room for you and are allowed to take crew members like the cruise ship priest. You may have to pay for this. Some motels also provide this service. You may find it easier, though more expensive, to take a cab.

If you are travelling with a group of paying passengers, such as a club or your family, ask one of the members in the group who has a Booking # to purchase an additional transfer for you to use. You can reimburse them later. If the group made their booking through a travel agent, the agent can purchase the transfer for you and make a notation to the cruise line that the extra transfer is for the cruise ship priest. You would pay the travel agent. Do not expect that you will receive transfers for free.

Dress Code

Clerical attire is required during the following times:

- Initial boarding and final departure from the vessel. (This does not include ports of call and excursions.)
- Formal meals and events.
- Masses and other religious services.

Wear your AOS-USA identification badge in public areas on board. On extended journeys of two or more weeks, the cruise line may provide you with a company badge worn by all of the staff and crew.

Joining Your Ship

Upon arriving at the dock, there are generally two ways to board the ship, depending upon the cruise line:

- **Holland America Line:** the cruise ship priest is considered a crew member with passenger privileges. Therefore, check in at the entry marked "Crew Members." The security agent will then take you to the Front Office onboard to issue your key card and other documents.
- **All Other Cruise Lines:** the priest follows the same boarding process as the passengers. You may wish to contact a cruise line agent in the departure lounge to introduce yourself as the

assigned cruise ship priest, and ask them the best way to proceed.

If you are checking luggage, be sure the baggage tags provided by the cruise line are attached to your bags. For carry-on baggage, your item should be no larger than what the airlines require for carry-on bags that fit through an x-ray scanner. For checked baggage, it may take several hours for delivery to your cabin. If celebrating Mass right away, keep your Mass supplies with your carry-on bag.

Check List for the First Day

Here is a handy check list of things to do as soon as you arrive at the ship:

- ✓ Wear your AOS-USA identification badge
- ✓ Carry your Passport
- ✓ Carry your boarding pass or letter
- ✓ Check in at the port by 1:00 p.m., unless your boarding letter says otherwise
- ✓ Check in! For Holland America, go to “Crew Member” check-in. For all others, check in with the paying passengers
- ✓ Find your cabin.
- ✓ Report to your supervisor, the cruise director or the person delegated to speak with you. On some ships, the cruise director will write a letter with all the information you need, leaving it in your cabin.
- ✓ Ask if there is a Mass that first day of departure. Where will it be celebrated?
- ✓ Ask for the Mass schedules for the week. When is the Mass for the crew? Are there inter-denominational services?
- ✓ Ask if there are any health precautions due to Norovirus.
- ✓ Find the infirmary and introduce yourself to the staff.
- ✓ Be sure to participate in the life boat drill, even if you have cruised on the same ship prior to your current assignment.
- ✓ Visit the dining room, if you prefer assigned seating.



Fr. David Remy – *Brilliance of the Seas*, Royal Caribbean, Transatlantic, September 2015

Chapter 4 – During Your Cruise

Finding Your Way

Once on board, find your way to your cabin. On some ships this may be a little tricky because the crew cabins are often sequestered in a section that is off limits to passengers.

Once situated in your cabin, immediately report to your supervisor, who is the cruise director or the person delegated to speak with you. Request Mass schedules for the week, especially for the day of departure and for the following day. Ask for a schedule of the Masses for the crew, as well as inter-denominational services for the week. Be aware that schedules may be changed by the cruise director if circumstances warrant. You are never certain of the schedule until the ship bulletin arrives in your room each day around 8:00 p.m. If you don't receive the daily bulletin, ask for one at the front desk.

Please ask the cruise director if there are any special health and wellness procedures for Mass. For example, if the previous cruise experienced an outbreak of virus there may be precautions about the Sign of Peace and distribution of Holy Communion. There is more about this later in this chapter.

Cruise lines have different policies regarding publicity for church services. Some will introduce you at the start of the cruise to everyone on board at one of the evening meals or floor shows. They may ask you to do a video on the in-house TV. Others only mention the availability of religious services in the daily bulletin. On some of the larger ships with extended itineraries, it has happened that the cruise director wrote a feature article about the priest in the daily newsletter.

Visit the infirmary and introduce yourself to the medical staff. Ask them if they have a procedure for the cruise ship priest to visit patients and explain that you will be available to visit patients daily and in any emergency.

Be prudent about scheduling shore excursions so as to allow for a possible schedule change from morning to evening services.

Inquire about arrangements for your seating assignment in the dining room. Most of the time you will be scheduled for open seating, which means you may come to the dining room at a time you choose and be seated with other guests. But if there are guests you know and prefer to sit with, arrange this ahead of time with the dining room maître d'. Of course, the serve-yourself buffet is open almost all of the time and needs no reservation.

Safe Environment Policy

Follow the safe environment practices required of your diocese or religious order. Each cruise line has a Safe Environment Policy similar to that required by the USCCB for institutions of the Catholic Church. In most cases, the cruise line's policy is that the cruise ship priest may have access only to the public areas of the ship. Before entering any areas restricted to crew members, be sure to check with the cruise director regarding the rules on that ship.

Do not visit the cabins of passengers on the ship. If a passenger is seriously ill and requests Anointing of the Sick or Holy Communion in the passenger's cabin, ask the cruise director to appoint a member of the staff, usually one of the security officers, to accompany you to the cabin.

Daily Duties

The cruise ship priest helps to provide publicity about the availability of a daily Mass by being very visible and introducing yourself to as many people as possible. At Mass and ecumenical services explain to people that they should check the ship bulletin every day for the time and place of services. Explain that you are available for all passengers and crew, not just Catholics, and that you are available for pastoral counseling. Tell them they can reach you through the customer service desk. Remember that the important activities you offer as the cruise ship priest include:

- Daily Mass
- Daily visit to the infirmary each morning
- Availability for pastoral counseling

More details about your priestly ministry are included in Chapter 5.

Avoiding the Dreaded Norovirus

If there's one thing that can ruin a cruise for everyone on board, it's Norovirus and other contagious illnesses. This unseen bug has the reputation of sending hundreds of cruise ship passengers running for their respective bathrooms with cramping, vomiting and diarrhea. It even has the power to turn entire ships back to port early!

The cruise ship priest plays a vital role in preventing the spread of disease. If the priest becomes ill, he deprives everyone else of the opportunity for the daily Mass. It's also makes for a depressing cruise when the cruise ship priest and a large number of other people on board, passengers and crew, are absent because of illness.

Norovirus and other infections are mostly spread by touching something where the virus has settled and then touching your mouth, nose or eyes. For this reason, it is required that the priest must wash his hands and use hand sanitizer before counting out the hosts for Holy Communion and once again before distributing Holy Communion. Use the tweezers, if provided, to count out the hosts from their original container, to be placed into the ciborium. Bring a pocket size bottle of sanitizer for this purpose, although most of the cruise lines will provide one to you on the altar. If you delegate the task of counting hosts to someone else, be sure to instruct the person likewise to use the sanitizer.

CODE RED, SPECIAL PRECAUTIONS: A situation in which there is an outbreak of virus is usually referred to as Code Red, although some lines may have a different name for it. The cruise line will make announcements over the speakers, during the muster drill and before programs, warning people of the danger of Norovirus. While they will make every attempt to notify you personally, it may happen that nobody of the staff will warn you that there is a Code Red until after you have celebrated your first Mass. For this reason, it is recommended that you follow the Code Red procedures for the first day or two of your cruise.

During a Code Red, the cruise ship priest is required to follow additional precautions:

- *wash your hands frequently and do not touch your mouth, nose or eyes;*
- *distribute Holy Communion in the hands only;*
- *do not offer Communion using the chalice by mouth, nor by intinction;*
- *skip the Sign of Peace, explaining to the passengers why you are skipping it. Or, they may offer one another a simple nod in place of a handshake.*

It may happen that you have a passenger who refuses to receive Holy Communion in the hand. Instruct that person to wait until everyone else has received and then give the person Communion on the tongue at the end of the line. Be sure to wash your hands with the hand sanitizer immediately after doing so, lest you too become infected with the virus.

Even under the best of conditions, it is generally recommended that Holy Communion be distributed in the hands only and not from the chalice.

Tipping and Gratuities

There may be a crewmember assigned to assist as the sacristan in preparing for Mass and all liturgical activities each day. It is important to show your gratitude to these crewmembers at the end of the cruise. The recommended tip is \$10.00 per day.

Each cruise line has its own policy regarding tipping of the cabin steward. Some cruise lines will apply the tip to your cabin charge. Some cruise lines, such as Royal Caribbean, will provide the gratuity on your behalf. Check with the AOS-USA office prior to your cruise for guidelines in this area or speak with your cruise director while onboard the ship.

Communication Services

Cruise ships have numerous means of communication. These include e-mail access, satellite phone and faxes. Your cruise ship assignment representative can supply you with the necessary communication information, so that your parish or place of ministry can reach you in an emergency.

Phone charges aboard ship are quite expensive. Use the internet as an alternative. You may be able to use your cellular phone in some ports, but move well away from the ship as service from the ship can still be available in port. Check with your cellular phone service for roaming rates. Most cellular phone companies offer a flat rate for one-month service outside of the United States.

Passenger Evaluation Forms

At the end of a cruise, the cruise line will ask the passengers to complete an evaluation of the cruise. This is sometimes done with a paper form and sometimes done through an e-mail request to the passenger. The cruise lines have policies regarding the direct solicitations of comments and feedback on evaluations by the cruise ship priest.

Appropriate:

- It is appropriate to inform guests that they will receive an evaluation at the end of their cruise.
- It is appropriate to invite them to comment on their experiences, including the Mass.

Inappropriate:

- It is not appropriate to ask guests to place positive comments about the priest or the Mass on their evaluations.
- It is not appropriate to tell guests “to be sure to write on the evaluation how important it is to you that a priest is on board” or some similar line.

Benefits to the Cruise Ship Priest

Priests, entertainers, lecturers, etc., are considered enhancement personnel. In other words, the cruise ship priest is a crew member who has been granted passenger privileges. Some cruise lines provide a

discount on internet services, drinks, etc. Nevertheless, it is important that you place the passengers first at all times.

Some cruise lines allow you to bring a guest to share your state room. In this case, the guests' meals are included; however, the guest is responsible for one's own transportation and gratuities.

Ports of Call and Excursions

You may go ashore or take a tour excursion as long as it does not conflict with the daily Mass schedule. Remember that the schedule for services can change from day to day, so be careful to schedule any shore excursions so as to avoid any conflict with a possible early morning or late afternoon Mass.

Some cruise lines offer the priest an opportunity to volunteer as a tour escort, which means your tour would be free. Ask your on-board supervisor about this. Be aware that these opportunities are made available to all crew members, so there is no guarantee that you'll be able to do this. If this is not possible, you can purchase the tour at your own expense. Shore excursions can sometimes be purchased at dockside from tour operators at a lower price than the cruise lines offer, but there may be questions of liability and professionalism with dockside tours. It is not recommended that you wander into unknown parts of any port of call without the assistance of a tour guide.

Most ports of call visits are 6-8 hours in length. You are free to go ashore if you desire. You must be on board at departure time and in time for the Mass if it is scheduled around departure time.

Family or Friends Traveling with the Cruise Ship Priest

Some of the cruise lines allow you to bring a guest who shares your stateroom. Check with AOS-USA for the policy on this for each cruise line. If you choose to bring a guest, you are responsible for his behavior onboard. Remind your guests that they are seen as an appendage of the priest. If the guest is viewed badly, it reflects on the priest, which reflects on AOS-USA, the Church and even the cruise line. We are working hard to put the Catholic Church's best foot forward. So please choose your guests wisely and lay down some requirements with them before departing for your cruise.

Difficulties on Board

If you have a negative comment to make in regard to your experience on board the ship, regardless of the cruise line, please DO NOT write those remarks on your on-board cruise evaluation form. Your function on the ship is that of staff. If at any time you have vital concerns about issues on board, and you feel the cruise director or assistant cruise director is not taking the issue seriously, or is in fact the problem, contact the AOS-USA office. You can call or e-mail during the cruise, and the AOS-USA officer can usually work with the assignment agent to rectify problems.

Most of the time, the issues can simply be reported once you are home. They should be reported on your AOS-USA evaluation form at the back of this manual.

Confidentiality

Circumstances may arise which can bring about tension and frustration. Remember that as the cruise ship priest on board you are viewed as a crew member. Therefore, any matters should be discussed out of hearing distance from the passengers.

As a crew member you are to work cooperatively and deal with any matters in a professional manner. Remember that as a priest, many Catholics and non-Catholics are expecting your manner to be more

than just professional. They are expecting a Catholic, Christian attitude, on the part of both the priest and his guest, if you have brought someone with you..

Passengers may confide certain information to you, trusting your confidentiality. Unless they are reporting criminal activity on board the ship, you should not share what you hear among the other passengers.

You may hear of an incident among the crew, such as an accident or disagreement among crew members. This is very rare, but if it happens do not share the information with the passengers.

The Cruise Line Has the Option Not to Welcome You Back

If a cruise line receives complaints about the cruise ship priest, or the priest does not follow the rules, as in a Code Red situation, the cruise line reserves the right not to "re-hire" a particular priest. AOS-USA will investigate each complaint against a priest. The general secretary or the board member representing the cruise ship priests will follow-up with a phone call to the priest. An appeal on your behalf will be made if warranted. In the end, AOS-USA will stand behind the decision of the cruise line.

One or two negative comments do not keep one from being rehired, but if you are no longer able to work with one cruise line it lessens your opportunities. Cruise lines have shown that they take comments "with a grain of salt," but they do share the comments with AOS-USA.

What to Do While on Board

Relax! You may have chosen to become a cruise ship priest because it is an opportunity for a free vacation and a chance to travel. This is a golden opportunity in view of the very stressful lives most priests face, whether they are pastors of parishes with large staffs or of two or more parishes with hardly any staff at all. Administration is part of our ministry, but it is usually the most stressful.

However, being a cruise ship priest is not so much a vacation as it is an opportunity to minister in the way to which we have truly been called. It is usually very relaxing and fulfilling.

Yours is a ministry of the Roman Catholic Church to the passengers and crew of your assigned ship. All those aboard are your parishioners for the duration of your trip. Therefore, serve those on board as you do your parishioners, in a loving and caring manner.

Occasionally emergencies will arise, such as heart attacks or death. Be as present as possible to family and the care staff at such times. The cruise ship priest should constantly exercise a ministry of presence. Throughout the cruise ship there are public places where large numbers of people pass. The priest should be present in these places several times throughout the day.

What Not to Do

The cruise line policy is that cruise ship priests:

- Do not participate in any events where there are monetary prizes (this includes priest's guests).
- Do not gamble in the casino or participate in Bingo (this includes priest's guest's).
- Do not sit on a bar stool at the bar. Please sit at a table where you can socialize with others.
- Do not have individual conversations or counseling in a cabin. When someone needs to talk with you, find a quiet corner in a public area.

Money and Fund Raising

Each cruise line has its own policy regarding collections at Mass. For those that have collections at Mass, the funds are pre-arranged to be distributed in a certain way approved by AOS-USA. You will be told about the cruise line policy when you obtain your boarding pass.

Cruise ship priests are prohibited from soliciting funds for his personal benefit or his apostolate.

Helpful Hints from Experienced AOS-USA Members

- Ask whether you can make a courtesy call on the ship's captain. It will help to familiarize him with the AOS-USA program.
- Most ports now offer free Wi-Fi in the general boarding area. Just follow the crew to see where they hang out to check their e-mail. This is much less expensive than using the ship's internet.
- Most ships offer free laundry for the crew, including the priest. Ask first. If not, there are generally coin-operated washing machines on one of the decks.
- Some passengers will complain about past cruises on ships that did not have a Catholic priest. Suggest that when they book a future cruise, they should ask specifically whether there is an AOS-USA certified priest on board.
- Consider becoming a member of the Cruise Ship Priest Committee. We can use your help in improving our ministry. Contact the office at 409-985-4545 or contact the Cruise Ship Priest board representative directly.



Fr. Joseph Schad, SJ – Volendam, Holland America Lines, Alaska, September 2014

Chapter 5 – Ministry of the Cruise Ship Priest

Ministry to Passengers

Mass

Of course, your highlight of the day is offering the Mass each day. The cruise director's Office will:

- Publish the time and location of the Mass in the daily bulletin or elsewhere.
- Schedule the time and location of the Mass for the crew.
- Schedule an inter-denominational service if you are to lead it.

Catholic priests and deacons may be traveling on your cruise. They may approach you asking to concelebrate or serve as the deacon of the Mass. Once assured of their clerical status (use your discretion in making this decision), they may be welcomed to exercise their priestly or diaconal duties only during liturgies at which the approved AOS-USA priest is presiding. However, since they are not part of the cruise ship priest program nor have permission from their competent authority to perform this pastoral ministry such priests and deacons should not carry out any shipboard ministry either through their own initiative or through your delegation.

However, there may be priests on your cruise leading a parish or pilgrimage group. If this situation arises, the priest has the permission from the cruise line to give pastoral care and celebrate Mass for his group only. You are encouraged to assist him in carrying out his ministry to his group, but you are not to delegate him for any cruise ship priestly ministry. You should not interfere with his ministry to his own group, but facilitate it as needed.

Liturgical Items

Bring stocks containing all three of the Holy Oils and Rite of Pastoral Care for the Sick.

Cruise lines in partnership with AOS-USA generally have everything on board (vestments, wine, altar linens, missals, etc.) that you will need for liturgical services. Holland America Lines provides essential liturgical items, daily Missals and song books, and a crew member who serves as the sacristan. On most of the other lines, the inventory of liturgical items will vary from ship to ship. In any case, it is advisable that you bring the Roman Missal and readings, or something like a copy of the monthly magazine *Magnificat*.

Take a moment to assess the status and condition of all Mass items. If materials are missing, in low stock, or in poor condition, please alert the crew member setting up the altar for you and send a note to the AOS-USA office as well. In this way, though there may be a new cruise ship priest each voyage, each will have all items needed.

In place of an altar, a dinner table is sometimes used for the celebration. If you have a problem seeing print from a distance, bring a large print Roman Missal with you.

For a dynamic liturgical celebration, especially on solemnities and national holidays, some AOS-USA priests have prepared printed sheets with songs and prayers to be handed out for the occasion. These efforts are always commented upon favorably by the passengers. But be careful to observe copyright laws.

Sacrament of Reconciliation

At all Masses, communicate to the people that you are available for the sacrament of Reconciliation and how they may contact you to make an appointment. Since there are no Reconciliation rooms on board, we suggest that appropriate places for this would be: public rooms not in use; outside, in areas where there is some privacy; in a quiet corner of a public place. In most cases, the best time for this is after Mass when the congregation has left the room.

Anointing of the Sick

When visiting the infirmary, bring the oil of the sick. Inform the people that they may contact you at any time for the Anointing of the Sick or any other pastoral needs through the front office.

Sacraments of Initiation

In cases of emergency, the priest on a cruise ship may perform the sacraments of initiation for an unbaptized individual. The cruise ship priest lacks the faculties to validly confer the sacrament of Confirmation while serving at sea, outside an emergency conferral of the sacraments of initiation. It is therefore necessary to carry all three of the Holy Oils.

Marriage

The cruise ship priest lacks the faculties and the delegation to witness Catholic marriages or convalidations, or any other marriages.

Regarding the renewal of marriage vows, this practice is discouraged. Most cruise lines reserve this service to the Captain, unless the priest has prearranged a service for a couple with the approval of the cruise line. If the priest does conduct a renewal of marriage vows, he must inform the participants that the ceremony does not change their marital status if they were married outside the Church.

The priest must avoid any situation in which it appears that he is approving or renewing the vows of same-sex couples.

Death and Burial

Although rare, people do sometimes die at sea. The cruise director may ask you to provide comfort for the family and perhaps offer a prayer for the deceased. Ask permission from the cruise director before telling others that someone has died. Hearing about it could be disconcerting to the passengers.

Generally, the cruise line will arrange for the family to disembark along with the remains of the deceased at an appropriate port of call. Funeral services follow in the home town of the family. If requested to offer a funeral Mass on board, contact the AOS-USA office first for clarification as to whether this request can be accommodated. It is necessary to have the funeral Mass recorded in parish register.

Burial at sea is discouraged by the cruise lines and the AOS-USA. Again, contact AOS-USA if this request is made.

Ecumenical and Interfaith Services

Occasionally, you may be requested to conduct an ecumenical or inter-denominational service. For ecumenical services, prepare a Liturgy of the Word-type service lasting 30 minutes. In addition to the usual Liturgy of the Word, there are to be hymns, prayers, reflection time and a homily that addresses our common Christian beliefs.

On special occasions such as Memorial Day, Anzac Day in Australia, Remembrance Day in Canada, Veterans Day or Thanksgiving, you may be required to work with the officers or other religious leaders to prepare and participate in a common religious service. This may also happen if there is a tragedy at sea, such as a mishap during an excursion in which passengers are involved. Gather as much detail as you can so that your prayers will be sensitive to the need and a comfort to those who are suffering.

Holy Week Services

Those who serve on cruises during Holy week should be aware that the schedule may require services at other than customary times for Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil, and to do them in less time than usual. The motto proprio *Maris Stella* offers great flexibility in this area.

Palm Sunday: The cruise lines will generally supply palms for Palm Sunday. Contact the AOS-USA office prior to the cruise for verification.

Holy Thursday: Keep in mind that in order to have enough consecrated hosts available for Good Friday, you will need to consecrate enough hosts on Holy Thursday. Since there is no tabernacle on board, you will need to bring the consecrated hosts back to your room for safekeeping. Please do not place a lighted candle in your room near the hosts. AOS has a dispensation from this rule.

Good Friday: The cruise line will probably schedule services for the same time as daily Mass, usually around 8:00 a.m., and will call it "Mass". Advise the people during the week that it will not be a Mass, but the usual Good Friday service. You can make the first part of the service ecumenical in nature; open to people of all faiths. However, let the Catholic passengers know that Communion will be available to them following the service.

Veneration of the Cross and Stations: Bring your own small wooden cross for the Good Friday services. Stations of the Cross are also acceptable, but bring your own booklets. In one case, a priest brought several hundred pocket sized crosses to give to the faithful.

Instead of kissing the cross during the veneration on Good Friday, especially when a Code Red condition exists, it is better to have the faithful simply kneel or bow before the cross.

Easter Vigil: It may be very difficult to hold a vigil service because of the schedule. The cruise director may allow you to do it after the evening show in the main theatre, which will make it quite late, around 11:00 p.m. If you hold the Easter Vigil, you may light the candle but you may not light a fire.

Easter: Depending on when the ship arrives or leaves port, Easter Mass may be celebrated on Saturday evening in place of the Vigil Mass, Sunday morning or possibly Sunday evening.

Ministry to the Crew

On a modern cruise ship there may be anywhere from 800 to 2,200 persons on board who serve as members of the crew. This includes the officers, seafarers, staff, cabin and dining room stewards, entertainers, casino, shop and cocktail lounge employees. Crewmembers have contracts from nine to twelve months. They work a minimum of six days a week, averaging sixteen hours a day. During that time, they are away from their families, spouses and children, as well as the sacramental and spiritual life of the Church.

Because of their special situation, their need for pastoral care by the cruise ship priest is paramount. Your courtesy, support, show of regard for their dignity and appreciation of their work and their personhood is invaluable. As the cruise ship priest, you must encompass a spirit that recognizes the crewmember not as an employee but as a brother or sister in Christ, and model for the passengers that spirit of Christian dignity and esteem.

Please try to acknowledge crew members' presence and affirm their gifts and talents on every occasion possible.

Remember that the crew has many tasks to perform each day, and cruise ship policies do not allow for their attention to be diverted from their work. You must be aware that any pastoral care must be done during the crew member's off-period.

Ask the cruise director whether you have permission to eat with the crew. Some lines allow this and others don't. Be aware that security personnel in the crew areas may not be familiar with the role of priests and may question your presence there. You may want to ask the cruise director for a ship security badge.

The cruise ship priest will provide the crew with the following, as a minimum:

- Weekly Mass for the crew. Sometimes this Mass is at extreme hours, such as midnight. Since the crew consists of people from many countries, be careful that one ethnic group does not dominate in your selection of hymns, readers, and Communion distributors.
- Sacraments of Reconciliation and Anointing, and pastoral counseling.
- Remind the crew that they can reach out to all AOS-USA cruise ship priests for any pastoral care needs.

Rosaries, holy cards, prayer booklets, and other religious articles are treasured gifts for crew members. Bringing about 40-50 on board with you is a great way to let the crew know you care and are available to them. These are available through the AOS national office in Washington, D.C., by contacting aos@uscgb.org or the AOS-USA office.

Prayer books and religious poetry can also be obtained from Salesian Missions in either Spanish or English by calling 914-633-8344 or at info@salesianmissions.org.

Free rosaries can be obtained from a number of websites on the Internet, but be aware that delivery time may take several weeks. These too are available from the AOS-USA office.

Important Notes from the Motu Proprio *Stella Maris*

Mindful of the special circumstances of the people of the sea and taking into account the privileges which over the years the Apostolic See has granted the people of the sea, the following is established:

1. Maritime personnel can fulfill their Easter Duty regarding Holy Communion at any time during the year having first received the appropriate instruction or catechesis.
2. Seafarers are not bound by the laws of fast and abstinence prescribed in canon 1251: They are advised however, when taking advantage of this dispensation, to undertake a comparable work of piety in place of abstinence, and as far as possible to observe both laws on Good Friday in memory of the

sufferings and death of Jesus Christ. Seafarers are those actually on board merchant ships, fishing ships, cruise vessels, and all who for whatever reason have undertaken a voyage by ship, including passengers.

3. Flexibility is allowed for the timing of the celebration of services. Vigil services traditionally offered in the evening may be offered any time of the day. For example, if the only time available for Mass is 7:00 a.m. on Holy Thursday and Good Friday, the services may be offered at that time. Likewise, it may be that the only time available for a Christmas Vigil Mass is 4:00 p.m. However, the Easter Vigil should remain close to sunset or later. As always, use your judgment in these matters and communicate with your cruise director.



Fr. Dennis Donovan, SDB – *Maasdam*, Holland America Lines, Quebec, July 2015

Chapter 6 – After Your Cruise

Evaluation Forms

Before leaving the ship, ask the cruise director to complete the cruise ship priest evaluation form found in the back of this manual. Be sure to complete the evaluation form about your own cruise experience.

Disembarkation

Disembarkation off the ship can sometimes be harder than embarkation. Remember that you are a member of the crew/staff, and therefore may be one of the last off the ship. Speak with the people at the front office on board the ship a few days before the end of your cruise to learn about the disembarkation process.

Packing Your Baggage and Baggage Claim in the Terminal

Do not pack your Holy Oils in your checked baggage, in case you need them during the night. Checked baggage must be placed outside your cabin door by midnight. Upon arrival, it will be taken off the ship and placed in a large room with that of all the other passengers. They will give you a color coded tag, but several hundred other people will have the same color. Tie something bright on your luggage so that you can identify it quickly. If sailing aboard one of the new mega-ships, expect this process to take a long time as several thousand people will be disembarking throughout the morning.

If you have only carry-on luggage, be sure to tell the people at the front office on board ship a day or two before you disembark. While crew members are usually the last ones off the ship, they may let you off earlier if you have only carry-on luggage.

Layovers between Consecutive Cruises

At the airport, if you have a one-way ticket you will most likely be pulled out of line for a special search at airport security. It doesn't take long, but you will wonder why they keep picking you if you have a multi-city itinerary.

If you have a layover between cruises, consider contacting the cathedral parish in major cities, or one of the downtown parishes. They usually have an extra room and may be able to use your help. Also consider contacting the local port chaplain. You can get a list of them from the AOS website at www.aos-usa.org. Visiting one of the merchant ships on your layover can give you some insight into this ministry, and you may want to do some volunteer ministry back home if you live near a port.

Appendix

The Apostleship of the Sea

The Apostleship of the Sea is the Roman Catholic ministry to the people of the sea. For nearly a century, the Church has fostered pastoral care and support for Catholic seafarers, fishermen, sea passengers, offshore oil workers and their families. The Second Vatican Council affirmed the responsibility of each diocesan bishop to oversee the pastoral care of the people of the sea in the decree *Christus Dominus*, proclaimed by Pope Paul VI on October 28, 1965:

Art. 18 – Special concern should be shown for those among the faithful who, on account of their way of life cannot sufficiently make use of the common and ordinary pastoral care of parish priests or are quite cut off from it. Among this group are the majority of migrants, exiles and refugees, seafarers, air travelers, gypsies, and others of this kind. Suitable pastoral methods should also be promoted to sustain the spiritual life of those who go to other lands for a time for the sake of recreation. Episcopal conferences, especially national ones, should pay special attention to the very pressing problems concerning the above-mentioned groups. Through voluntary agreement and united efforts, they should look to and promote their spiritual care by means of suitable methods and institutions. They should also bear in mind the special rules either already laid down or to be laid down by the Apostolic See, which can be wisely adapted to the circumstances of time, place, and persons.

In addition, the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerants (PCMI) has been entrusted with the responsibility of encouraging and coordinating this ministry worldwide. PCMI's mandate is found in *Pastor Bonus*, proclaimed by Pope John Paul II on June 28, 1988:

Art. 149 — The Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People brings the pastoral concern of the Church to bear on the special needs of those who have been forced to leave their native land or who do not have one. It also sees to it that these matters are considered with the attention they deserve.

Art. 150 § 1 – The Council ensures that in the particular Churches refugees and exiles, migrants, nomads, and circus workers receive effective and special spiritual care, even, if necessary, by means of suitable pastoral structures.

§ 2 – It likewise fosters pastoral solicitude in these same Churches for sailors, at sea and in port, especially through the Apostleship of the Sea, over which it exercises ultimate direction.

§ 3 – The Council has the same concern for those who work in airports or airplanes.

§ 4 – It works to ensure that the Christian people become aware of the needs of these people and effectively demonstrate a fraternal attitude towards them, especially on the occasion of World Migration Day.

Art. 151 — The Council works to ensure that journeys which Christians undertake for reasons of piety, study, or recreation contribute to their moral and religious formation, and it is available to the particular Churches in order that all who are away from home receive suitable spiritual care.

Motu Proprio *Stella Maris*

Portions are included here to give you an understanding of the breadth and structure of the Apostleship of the Sea.

MOTU PROPRIO STELLA MARIS ON THE MARITIME APOSTOLATE

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, helped them in their work and calmed the storms. 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 order to meet the requirements of special pastoral assistance for people involved in commercial shipping and in fishing—as well as their families, port personnel and all who travel by sea—we establish what follows, updating the norms issued earlier in this century and having heard the opinion of our brother, the President of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People.

SECTION 1

The Work of the Maritime Apostolate

I. Although it does not constitute an autonomous canonical entity with its own juridical personality, the Work of the Maritime Apostolate is the organization concerned with the specific pastoral care of the people of the sea; it seeks to support the work of the faithful who are called to witness to their Christian life in this sphere.

SECTION 2

People of the Sea

II. 1. In this document, the terms used are defined as follows:

a) Seafarers are those actually on board merchant ships or fishing vessels, and all who for whatever reason have undertaken a voyage by ship;

b) Maritime personnel include 1. seafarers; 2. those whose work normally involves being on board a ship; 3. those who work on oil rigs and platforms; 4. pensioners retired from the aforesaid jobs; 5. students of nautical institutes; and 6. port workers;

c) People of the Sea includes 1. seafarers and maritime personnel; 2. the spouses and children who are still minors of seafarers and maritime people as well as those who share a home with them even if they are not actually seafarers (e.g., pensioners); 3. those who work regularly in the Maritime Apostolate.

2. The chaplains and the authorities of the Work of the Maritime Apostolate will strive to see that the people of the sea are provided abundantly with whatever is required to lead holy lives; they will also recognize and promote the mission which all the faithful—and in particular the laity—are called to exercise in the Church and in the maritime world in accordance with their specific state.

III. Mindful of the special circumstances of the people of the sea and taking into account the privileges which over the years the Apostolic See has granted this people, the following is established:

1. Maritime personnel can fulfill their Easter duty regarding Holy Communion at any time during the year, having first received appropriate instruction or catechesis;
2. Seafarers are not bound by the laws of fast and abstinence prescribed in can. 1251; they are advised, however, when taking advantage of this dispensation, to undertake a comparable work of piety in place of abstinence, and, as far as possible, to observe both laws on Good Friday in memory of the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ;
3. Seafarers, who have properly confessed and received Communion and who visit with religious piety a legitimately erected oratory on board and recite there the Lord's Prayer and the Creed for the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff can gain a plenary indulgence on the titular feast of the oratory and also on 2 August;
4. These same faithful, under the same conditions, can gain one plenary indulgence, applicable only to the departed, if they visit with religious piety the aforementioned oratory on 2 November and recite there the Lord's Prayer and the Creed for the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff;
5. The indulgences mentioned in No. 3 and 4 can be gained, under the same conditions, by people of the sea in chapels or oratories of places where the Maritime Apostolate is active. On vessels which have no oratory, seafarers can gain these indulgences by reciting the prescribed prayers before a sacred image.

(Section 3 omitted)

SECTION 4

The Direction of the Work of the Maritime Apostolate

IX. 1. In each Episcopal Conference with maritime territory there should be a bishop-promoter whose responsibility it is to foster the Work of the Maritime Apostolate. The episcopal conference itself will appoint the bishop-promoter, preferably from among the bishops of dioceses with ports, indicating the term of his appointment and communicating the details of the appointment to the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People.

2. The bishop-promoter will choose a suitable priest and present his name to the episcopal conference which will then appoint him, in writing and for a determined period of time, as national director of the Work of the Maritime Apostolate.

XI. The Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People is to be informed of his name and the duration of his appointment. The national director may be assisted by a pastoral worker.

X. The tasks of the bishop-promoter are:

1. to give directives to the national director, to keep in touch attentively with his activities and to give suggestions and advice, as appropriate, so that he can properly carry out the duties confided to him;

2. to request at the appointed times and whenever it seems appropriate, a report on pastoral activities for maritime personnel and the work done by the national director;
3. to transmit the report, mentioned in no. 2 to the episcopal conference, together with his own comments; and to encourage interest in this apostolate among his fellow bishops;
4. to maintain contact with the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People regarding all that concerns the Maritime Apostolate, and to transmit to the national director communications he has received;
5. to present to the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People an annual report on the situation of the Work of the Maritime Apostolate in his territory.

XI. The principal duties of the national director are:

1. to maintain relations with the bishops of the country in all matters affecting the spiritual good of maritime people;
2. to present to the bishop-promoter, at least once a year, a report on the “status animarum” and on pastoral work for the maritime people of his country; in this report he is to explain both the activities which went well and those which were, perhaps, less successful, as well as any corrective action taken to avoid losses and, finally, whatever seems useful for the spread of the Work of the Maritime Apostolate;
3. to promote specific training programs for chaplains;
4. to direct chaplains of the Work of Maritime Apostolate without prejudice to the rights of the local ordinary;
5. to make sure that chaplains diligently fulfill their duties and observe the prescriptions of the Holy See and the local ordinary;
6. to arrange, with the consent of the bishop-promoter and according to the circumstances of the time, meetings and spiritual exercises for all the chaplains in the country or for chaplains and other faithful who are involved in the Work of the Maritime Apostolate;
7. to be particularly concerned to encourage and develop the apostolate of the laity, fostering their active participation while bearing in mind the diversity of their talents;
8. to establish and maintain regular contact with institutions and aid organizations—both Catholic and non-Catholic—and with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which pursue goals akin to those of the Work of the Maritime Apostolate;
9. to make frequent visits to places where the Work of the Maritime Apostolate is active;
10. to send authentic copies, prepared by himself or by the chaplains, of Baptism, Confirmation and death registers to the appropriate diocesan offices;

11. to inform, as soon as possible, the parish priest where parties concerned have domicile of the data that must be recorded in the parish registers;

12. to establish relations with the Work of the Maritime Apostolate in neighboring countries, and to represent his own country at regional or continental level;

13. to maintain regular contact with the regional coordinator mentioned in art. XIII, 1, 6.

XII. 1. It is the right and duty of the bishop of a diocese to show zealous concern for and to offer pastoral assistance to all maritime personnel who reside, even for a short time, within his jurisdiction.

2. The bishop of a diocese is responsible for:

1) determining the most suitable forms of pastoral care for maritime personnel;

2) appointing, in agreement with the national director, chaplains for the Maritime Apostolate in his diocese, and granting them the necessary mandate;

3) granting permission for the erection of an oratory on a ship listed in the public registry of a port located within the territory of his jurisdiction.

XIII. 1. The Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, which is responsible for the overall direction of the Work of the Maritime Apostolate, has these principal duties:

1) to publish instructions, in accordance with can. 34 of the Code of Canon Law, and to give guidelines and exhortations concerning pastoral ministry among the people of the sea;

2) to ensure prudently that this ministry is carried out in accordance with the law and in a dignified and fruitful manner;

3) to exercise, with respect to other associations encompassed within the Work of the Maritime Apostolate, those functions proper to the Holy See regarding associations;

4) to offer assistance from the Pontifical Council to all who are involved in this apostolic work by encouraging and supporting them, and also by seeing to the correction of possible abuses;

5) to promote an ecumenical spirit in the maritime world, at the same time seeing that this is done in faithful harmony with the teaching and discipline of the Church;

6) to appoint a coordinator for a region encompassing several episcopal conferences, at the suggestion of the bishop-promoters concerned, and to specify the functions of such a coordinator. So that the pastoral care of people of the sea may be better and more effectively organized, the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People should encourage and foster cooperation and reciprocal coordination of projects among episcopal conferences and local ordinaries. This same Council will establish relations with institutes of consecrated life and with associations and organizations that can cooperate at the international level with the Work of the Maritime Apostolate.

Personal Notes

