

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE



BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS

BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 0731

Lunedì 03.10.2022

Pubblicazione: Immediata

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Pubblichiamo di seguito il Messaggio che il Santo Padre Francesco ha inviato ai partecipanti al XXV Congresso di *Stella Maris* (Apostolato del Mare) che ha luogo a Glasgow, in Scozia, dal 2 al 5 ottobre 2022:

Messaggio del Santo Padre

To the Delegates of the

XXV World Congress of Stella Maris – Apostleship of the Sea

I send greetings and prayerful good wishes to all those participating in the twenty-fifth World Congress of *Stella Maris* – Apostleship of the Sea – taking place in Glasgow, Scotland, from 2 to 5 October 2022. Now that you have gathered in person for the first time since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, it is my hope that you will be able to celebrate fully the hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Apostleship of the Sea, which occurred on 4 October 1920 in the same city where your Congress is presently assembled. At the same time, you are marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of Saint John Paul II's Apostolic Letter *Motu Proprio Stella Maris*, in which the norms of the apostolate were updated to better serve the needs of today's maritime community.

On this joyous occasion, I join you, and all associated with *Stella Maris*, in giving thanks to Almighty God for the witness of faith and countless acts of kindness and charity shown by so many chaplains and volunteers over the past century to those who toil on our seas and waterways for the benefit of us all. In 1922, Pope Pius XI conveyed his own prayerful good wishes for the newly founded Apostleship and trusted that it would reap a rich harvest of good fruit. We can all be thankful that such fruit has been abundant.

Indeed, from small and humble beginnings, *Stella Maris* has grown into the widespread organization we see today, providing spiritual, psychological and material assistance, on ships and ashore, for myriads of seafarers and maritime personnel of diverse nationalities and religious traditions. Such a global presence reflects your own particular response to the Lord's command to "go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation" (Mk 16:15). In this regard, one cannot help but think of the fact that much of Jesus' ministry took place on and around a small yet vital stretch of water – the Sea of Galilee – and that some of his first disciples were fishermen, who in turn became fishers of men (cf. Mt 4:19).

Creation, our common home, is comprised of a vast expanse of water, which is essential for life and human commerce, not to mention tourism. It should not be surprising, therefore, that around ninety percent of the world's goods are transported by ships, which is made possible by the daily work of over one and half million people, many of whom are far removed for months at a time from the support of their families as well as their social and religious communities.

As is well known, the pandemic compounded the difficulties associated with such isolation and underlined the vital importance of the ministry provided by *Stella Maris*. Here, I would repeat the words I addressed directly to all suffering seafarers in my Video-Message on the occasion of your centennial: "Know that you are not alone and that you are not forgotten... Your work at sea often keeps you apart from others, but you are close to me in my thoughts and prayers, and in those of your chaplains and the volunteers of *Stella Maris*". As the world now gradually emerges from the pandemic, this Congress affords you the opportunity to draw inspiration from your rich history as you look ahead together at how you can continue to be of service to those whose lives and livelihoods are connected to our seas.

In this regard, we know all too well that, despite advances in technology, many maritime workers are subject not only to the aforementioned challenges associated with separation from their homelands, but also continue to suffer from a variety of unjust working conditions and other deprivations, aggravated not least by the effects of climate change. Moreover, damage to marine environments, as to others, disproportionately affects the poorest and most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters, whose very livelihoods are even threatened with extinction (cf. *Laudato Si'*, 48-52). I trust, then, that *Stella Maris* will never waver in drawing attention to the issues which deprive many within the maritime community of their God-given human dignity. In this way, the Apostleship will continue its noble service of putting into practice the words of Jesus, "I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Mt 25:35).

With these sentiments, I renew my prayerful good wishes for your Congress and important worldwide apostolate, and ask you also, please, to pray for me. Entrusting the chaplains, volunteers and all associated with *Stella Maris* to the loving protection of Our Lady Star of the Sea, I impart my Blessing as a pledge of fortitude, joy and peace in Christ the Lord.

Rome, Saint John Lateran

2 October 2022

FRANCIS

[01509-EN.01] [Original text: English]

[B0731-XX.02]

