

SUNDAY PLUS

Safe harbour



by Sr Janet Fearn FMDM

This is the beach where the Cockleshell Heroes trained before they set off to Germany." Often, chatting to the locals – even during a time of social distancing – can be a fascinating experience. "And that's where they trained before heading off to the Falklands." He continued. "Keep straight on along the seafront and you'll come to the fort which Henry VIII built to keep out the French and, a bit further

along, there's a set of fortifications, the Round Tower, which was also built to defend Portsmouth and keep out the French. They even heated cannon balls so that they could create havoc when they landed on wooden ships."

We live on an island. Our history is inextricably linked to the sea and ships on which we still depend. Times have changed. We no longer depend on whether or not an Admiral Lord Nelson does or does not use his blind eye when looking through his telescope. Neither do we need half-

Today is Sea Sunday, when the Catholic Church remembers, prays for and supports seafarers, fishers and the work of the Catholic maritime charity, Stella Maria (Apostleship of the Sea).

frozen younger crew members to climb masts and spend long hours in the "crow's nest", helping to ensure a safe voyage. Technology has developed far beyond our ancestors' wildest dreams...

Yet, stand on Portsmouth Harbour as the ferries, hovercraft and fishing boats enter and leave the harbour. It's still a navigational mini-miracle. We still need people of experience, wisdom and know-how, who treat the wind and the waves with the respect and deference they deserve.

Perhaps we could all take to our hearts the prayer of the Breton fishermen: "Lord, be kind to me. The sea is so wide and my boat is so small."

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

Loving Lord, help all seafarers, fisherfolk and those who depend on the sea for survival. Be with the lifeboat crews, coastguard, lifeguard and all those who risk their own lives to keep others safe.  Amen.

Home is the sailor

by Fr John Guest

The favourite topic of conversation among long-distance seafarers is home. Although they spend ninety per cent of their lives on board ship, their minds and hearts are always turning to home and their families. Maintaining contact with home during voyages was practically impossible in the past. That has become much easier with the advent of mobile phones and the social media, but the Covid-19 outbreak has shown how vulnerable that link still remains.

A main aim of the Stella Maris (Apostleship of the Sea) chaplains has always been to facilitate the links with home, and though they were unable to provide a physical welcome or community experience during social isolation, they were still able to provide the one thing the seafarers were desperate for: SIM cards for their mobile phones. At times it was back to old-fashioned style communication with a bucket loaded with SIM cards, welfare packages and chocolate being hoisted on deck, but they made it.

Fr John Guest, a priest of the Diocese of Nottingham, is also a regular contributor to Redemptorist Publications' *Living Word* and *Weekday Living Word*.

Setting sail

by Cowan Watson

We all know of people who, when preparing for a trip abroad, will always find room in their suitcase for a few tea bags or a couple of tins of baked beans, just in case! They are groundless fears, but for seafarers the anxieties associated with a trip to sea are clearly genuine. To leave behind family and friends for months at a time, to perform a hard and dangerous job with sometimes only loneliness as a companion requires faith.

When Jesus instructed his disciples to take nothing for the journey except a staff – no bread, no haversack, no coppers for their purses and only one tunic, how must they have felt? Excitement, yes, but no doubt mixed with some genuine apprehension. As Christians, it can be desperately hard to trust, to "launch out into the deep", but experience over time forces us to consider that relying on God's love for us is truly the only way.

Cowan Watson is the Editor of *Light of the North*, the magazine of the Diocese of Aberdeen.

"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... May the Lord bless each of you, your work and your families and may the Virgin Mary, Star of the Sea, protect you always."

Pope Francis

Today:
Amos 7:12-15
Ephesians 1:3-14
Mark 6:7-13

Monday:
Exodus 1:8-14, 22
Matthew 10:34-11:1

Tuesday:
Exodus 2:1-15
Matthew 11:20-24

Wednesday:
Exodus 3:1-6, 9-12
Matthew 11:25-27

Thursday:
Exodus 3:13-20
Matthew 11:28-30

Friday:
Exodus 11:10-12:14
Matthew 12:1-8

Saturday:
Exodus 12:37-42
Matthew 12:14-21

Next Sunday:
Jeremiah 23:1-6
Ephesians 2:13-18
Mark 6:30-34