

Edward Pracz CSsR¹

The Pontifical University of John Paul II in Cracow

John Paul II's contribution to development of the Apostleship of the Sea

Canonization of blessed pope John Paul II is a special opportunity to elucidate invaluable contribution of the blessed pope John Paul II to the Apostleship of the Sea. In his message for Sea Sunday in 2011 President of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, Cardinal Antonio Maria Vegliò quoted the words of John Paul II addressed to the seamen and fishers of Fano town in Italy in His homily of 12 August 1984: “My presence among you today would like to stress that the Church is close to you, honours your often dangerous and hard work, is aware of your worries and concerns, supports your rights, and gives comfort to your loneliness and homesickness.”²

The words above constitute a message of hope for almost one and half million seamen from more than one hundred nations who incessantly, days and nights, work in a globalised fleet of one thousand vessels. Two third of

¹ Edward Pracz, born in 1959, presbyter in the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. Since 1993, Chaplain of the People of the Sea. In 1998 nominated National Director of the Apostleship of the Sea by the Polish Episcopal Conference. Since 2002 nominated European coordinator of the Apostleship of the Sea by Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People. In 2005 decorated by the Minister of Infrastructure with a Maritime Badge of Merit. Chief organiser of the XXII World Congress of the Apostleship of the Sea in Gdynia in 2007. Ph.D. student at the Theological Faculty of the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Cracow. Since 1993 he has lived in Gdynia.

² Giovanni Paolo II, *Visita Pastorale a Fano (Ancona) Santa Messa per i pescatori e marittimi*. Omelia, Domenica, 12 agosto 1984, www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/homilies/1984/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_19840812_lavoratori-mare_it.html (21.03.2014).

those are seamen from developing countries. They serve each day to meet the needs of the global economy carrying on board of their vessels ninety percent of goods of the world trade.³

People living ashore are not always aware that they, in their daily lives, enjoy the fruits of the seamen's hard work. They remind themselves about the seamen when, from the headlines of newspapers and TV news, they learn about another catastrophe at sea or about highjacking ships by pirates, what recently happens even more often.

These people, living in long separation from their families, experience solitude. Sometimes they are abandoned in foreign ports by ship owners. It also happens that they are left without money and food. Sometimes they are not allowed to go ashore for administration reasons. Undoubtedly all these factors cause stresses and tensions not only among seamen, but also among their families and acquaintances.

Consequently "The Apostleship of the Sea is aware of the many inhuman situations that persist in the maritime world and it stands at the side of seafarers to reiterate that their human and labour rights must be respected."⁴ We may not forget about a human being who, being on the move, needs spiritual support.

This very need was noticed by saint John Paul II. His contribution in the development of Apostleship of the Sea will be presented in the following order: terminology, continuation of the work of former popes, novelty in the John Paul II's teaching on the Apostleship of the Sea, homily by John Paul II given in Gdynia, constitution *Pastor Bonus*, and apostolic letter *motu proprio* of John Paul II regarding Apostleship of the Sea.

1. Terminology

Upon arriving to the Baltic Sea on 11 June 1987, John Paul II undertook to define the concept of "people of the sea". In his homily to the people of

See: A. M. Vegliò, J. Kalathiparambil, *Message for Sea Sunday 2011*, "Apostolatus Maris Bulletin" 108 (2011) III, p. 2.

⁴ See: A. M. Vegliò, J. Kalathiparambil, *Message for Sea Sunday 2011*, "Apostolatus Maris Bulletin" 108 (2011) II, p. 2.

the sea he said: "The sea is an open space that calls man. Calls people. Calls nations. All those who follow this call are named People of the Sea."⁵ This popular description was deepened and more precisely voiced in his apostolic letter *motu proprio* on the Apostleship of the Sea. This document does not mention any definition of the people of the sea. However, the pope specifies various categories of people associated with the sea. These are: "people at sea", "seafarers" and "people of the sea." The term "people at sea" includes all those who, for whatever reason, travel by sea, either on a merchant vessel, fishing or passenger vessels. This term refers to any people who at a given moment are at sea.

On the other hand, however, the term "seafarer" is restricted in its meaning to those people at sea who hold appropriate marine certificates and that authorise them to work at sea. These also include those working on drilling platforms. The pope also mentioned retired seamen in this group. Students of maritime schools were also included into this term, because they complete shipboard apprenticeship during their studies. John Paul II also enumerated dockers and longshoremen, i.e. those who work in sea ports. They provide services to vessels that berth in ports.

The term "people of the sea" is the broadest, because the pope not only included people at sea and seafarers, but also their families, spouses, under aged children and all persons living with the seafarer in the same home. It is worth underlining that the term "people of the sea" also refers to a seaman who is already retired.

The term "people of the sea" also describes all those who work in or for the Apostleship of the Sea.⁶

Therefore the pope takes into account both those working at sea and their families. He notices those working, because people of the sea earn their living from sea service. He also appreciates family members of those workers. He also refers to them as "people of the sea."

⁵ John Paul II, Homily of the Holy Father, [in:] *For the third time in the mother country: Addresses, homilies, reportage, reflexions*, Warsaw 1988, p. 229.

⁶ John Paul II, Apostolic letter *motu proprio* on the Apostleship of the Sea *Stella Maris* (31.01.1997), II. § 1, "L'Osservatore Romano" No. 4-5 (1997), p. 4.

Consequently, people of the sea are those whose work, life and free time are linked with the sea. In his teaching, John Paul II emphasizes that people of the sea form a large community that must be noticed.

2. Continuation of the work of former popes

The pope appreciates His predecessors with gratitude, especially those who from the very origins of the Apostleship of the Sea were involved in the work of *Apostolatus Maris*. John Paul II's predecessors remembered hard lives and difficult working conditions of these exceptional category of people, seafarers and their families, very often unnoticeable within parish communities. Seamen need support from the part of *Apostolatus Maris*, as an organisation present throughout the world serving people of the sea.

The first who drew attention to the needs of the Apostleship of the Sea was pope Pius XI, who, on 17 April 1922, approved a document *Apostleship of the Sea for Catholic Seafarers*. This document became foundation stone for the Apostleship of the Sea. The pope emphasized spiritual wealth of catholic seamen all over the world. He also indicated measures leading to achieve this wealth. These are: prayers, taking Holy Communion, participation in the holy mass, activities such as visiting vessel and hospitals, pastoral counselling, circulation of good literature and devotional objects, keeping the seamen in contact with the Church.⁷

An increasing care of the people of the sea led to the fact that the Holy See included Apostleship of the Sea into the Vatican structures. On 30 May 1940 the pope Pius XII continued this process by entrusting the Apostleship of the Sea under the leadership of Consistorial Congregation. By establishing the Statutes, the Saint Consistorial Congregation assured seamen the Church's care. The Statutes were approved by pope Pius XII on 23 October 1957.⁸

Pius XI, *Apostleship of the Sea for Catholic seafarers Approved and blessed by his Holiness Pius XI*, [in:] *Duc in altum*, ed. The Apostleship of the Sea, Glasgow 1926, p. 3.

⁸ F. Baldelli, *Cenni storici e sviluppo dell'Apostolato de Mare nel mondo*, [in:] *XXV Annuale Italiano*, ed. A. Recagna, Genova 1959, p. 64.

The next pope who, with great joy, engaged in the Apostleship of the Sea was John XXIII. He emphasized that AOS is undoubtedly a providential tool serving “moral life and reliable human and religious formation.”⁹

For all these reasons care showed by popes was noticed by Second Vatican Council II. This was emphasized in a document *Christus Dominus* relating to the bishops' pastoral office, by writing that special attention should be drawn to the people on the move, to those who cannot enjoy regular pastoral care in parishes, and that it is necessary to find appropriate and well addressed pastoral methods. All these issues should be discussed at Bishops' Conferences.

“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.”¹⁰

Another stage in the development of apostleship administered to the people of the sea was the inclusion of, by pope Paul VI, people involved in work at sea, seamen and fishermen, under the care of *Pontificia Commissio de Spiritualis Migratorum atque Itinerantium Cura* that was established by him in 1970. It should be stressed that it was a decisive event in the history of the Apostleship of the Sea, because seamen and fishermen were included into the group of people under the care of a Pontifical Council. John Paul II, referring to this Council, published in 1988 pontifical constitution *Pastor Bonus* under which the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People.

The subsequent important voice regarding Apostleship of the Sea was the publication by John Paul II of the Apostolic Letter *motu proprio* on the Apostleship of the Sea on 31 January 1997.

⁹ F. Le Gall, *The Apostleship of the Sea „Stella Maris” The pastoral care of seafarers*, Vatican 2001, p. 55.

¹⁰ Paul VI, *Decree concerning the pastoral office of bishops in the Church “Christus Dominus”*, www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651028_christus-dominus_en.html (22.04.2014).

3. Novelty in the John Paul II's in teaching on Apostleship of the Sea

John Paul II attributed special rank to the Apostleship of the Sea. The pope stressed that there was a need for a well organised apostleship. With this in mind he published special apostolic letter on Apostleship of the Sea. He assigned the first place to the people of the sea. John Paul II clearly voiced that was the work of the Church. He sonorously expressed this in the introduction to this letter. With respect to the deed of handing over the people of the sea to saint Mary – Star of the sea he said: Her Son Jesus Christ accompanied His disciples in their boat crossings, He helped them in their daily struggles and calmed the storms. Also the Church accompanies people of the sea and takes care of special spiritual needs of those who by their styles of life and work are linked with the sea.¹¹

The Church does this in a specific way through the Apostleship of the Sea. The novelty is also that John Paul II placed emphasis on coordination and organisation of work within the Apostleship of the Sea. He stressed the role of Episcopal Conference, that of bishops promoters, national directors, chaplains and laypersons as well. He highlighted the role of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People.

The novelty also includes privileges that people of the sea may enjoy.

“Seamen may fulfil the duty of taking Easter Holy Communion throughout the whole year after they have listened to a proper teaching or religious instruction regarding this duty.”¹² People of the sea may also be granted indulgences. They may be awarded the indulgences by offering prayers for deceased people on 2 November, by visiting a chapel and by saying “Our Father” or “Credo” in the intention of the Holy Father. The plenary indulgence may also be obtained on a day of a saint patron if a seaman piously visits a chapel legally established on board a vessel after a prior confession and taking Holy Communion. The above mentioned indulgences may be also obtained in chapels, places of prayers in the AOS Centres. If there is

John Paul II, Apostolic letter *motu proprio* on the Apostleship of the Sea *Stella Maris* (31.01.1997), “L’Osservatore Romano” No. 4–5 (1997) p. 4.

¹² John Paul II, Apostolic letter *motu proprio* on the Apostleship of the Sea *Stella Maris* (31.01.1997), III. 1, “L’Osservatore Romano” No. 4–5 (1997), p. 4.

no chapel on board a vessel they may obtain indulgences before religious pictures accompanying them during the voyage.¹³

3.1. John Paul II's homily in Gdynia

The pope in his homily in Gdynia taught that the sea is a destination for many places in this world and that it links people: "Yes. The sea tells men about necessity of seeking one another. About necessity for encounters and cooperation. About a necessity of solidarity: interpersonal and cross-national one."¹⁴ Therefore, the sea is not only a way leading to encounters with other people, but it is also the way leading to build community. Those who arrive to the Centres of the Apostleship of the Sea by sea are welcomed as brothers and sisters; they arrive at a home far from their homes.

The pope also very strongly stressed the word "solidarity" in his homily addressed to the people of the sea:

How significant is the fact, that this very word – "solidarity" – was voiced right here, at the Polish seaside [...]. This word is your pride, the pride of the people of the sea. [...] We cannot continue our way forward in this world – we cannot talk about progress, if, in the name of social solidarity, the rights of any individual human being are not respected.¹⁵

The pope highlighted the idea of solidarity in the Apostleship of the Sea. When at sea, man needs another man and you do not make differences because of someone's nationality. A conclusion to be formed is that the idea of solidarity is particularly necessary for the people of the sea. It is the Apostleship of the Sea that is close to the people of the sea. It recognises their needs. That is why the word "solidarity" sounds in the homily. This word calls to perceive human being.

In his homily to the people of the sea the pope noticed the space where the seamen and fishermen stay, often left and abandoned, stripped of their

¹³ John Paul II, Apostolic letter *motu proprio* on the Apostleship of the Sea *Stella Maris* (31.01.1997), III. 3–5, "L'Osservatore Romano" No. 4–5 (1997), p. 4.

¹⁴ John Paul II, Homily of the Holy Father, [in:] *For the third time in the mother country...*, p. 229.

¹⁵ John Paul II, Homily of the Holy Father, [in:] *For the third time in the mother country...*, p. 229–230.

dignity. The pope's highlight of the word "solidarity" bore the fruit and as a consequence of this was included into the title of the XXII World Congress of the Apostleship of the Sea in Gdynia in 2007: "In Solidarity with the People of the Sea as Witnesses of Hope through Proclamation of the Word, Liturgy and Diakonia." In his homily the pope also said:

Fortunately there is a special Apostleship of the Sea in Gdynia and Gdansk; fortunately, that for four years now there has been "Stella Maris" club at the Church of Fathers Redemptorists I also know that the Polish seamen enjoy apostleship centres scattered throughout the world. I express my joy from the fact that you have good reputation in these centres. Please keep in mind that you are ambassadors of your own nation and spokespersons of the values the nation believes in. This requires from you resolute moral attitude when facing atheist influences, surges of immorality and depravation.¹⁶

As a consequence the Apostleship of the Sea in Gdynia adopted, in its pastoral service among people of the sea, the following papal message: "We should work to regain the proper depths. The depths that are inherent to human beings."¹⁷

3.2. Constitution *Pastor Bonus*

In 1988 the pope John Paul II published pontifical constitution *Pastor Bonus* under which the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People was promoted and obtained a status of a new organisation within Roman Curia. This meant progress in the sovereignty of the Council. It became autonomous in making decisions and in administration matters.

By establishing the Pontifical Council, the pope John Paul II entrusted to this Council, among others, the care of the people of the sea. "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."¹⁸

John Paul II, Homily of the Holy Father, [in:] *For the third time in the mother country...*, p. 233.

John Paul II, Homily of the Holy Father, [in:] *For the third time in the mother country...*, p. 231.

¹⁸ John Paul II, Apostolic constitution *Pastor Bonus*, Art. 150 § 2, www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_jp-ii_apc_19880628_pastor-bonus-roman-curia_en.html (22.03.2014).

In the constitution *Pastor Bonus* the pope emphasized the Apostleship of the Sea that within the Pontifical Council plays an important role as *Apostolatus Maris*. The president of the Council is at present Antonio Maria Cardinal Vegliò, and the secretary of the Council is archbishop Joseph Kalathiparambil. Certain employees are also delegated to the *Apostolatus Maris* sector.

It is worth noticing the fact that bishops paying a visit *Ad limina Apostolorum* in Vatican also visit the Council. By appreciating the Pontifical Council John Paul II undoubtedly brought the problems of the people of the sea to the attention of the Church.

3.3. Apostolic letter *motu proprio* of John Paul II regarding Apostleship of the Sea

In the pope's opinion people of the sea should not only be beneficiary of the maritime apostolate, but also they have to become witnesses of religious life, both when they are on board vessels and when they are ashore. The Holy Father said that this apostleship is responsible for the maritime apostolate and should provide special care to the people of the sea: "Although the Work of the Apostleship of the Sea does not constitute an autonomous canonical unit, provided with a separate legal identity, it is an organisation that offers special pastoral care to the people of the sea and has to support efforts of faithful people who are called to give a witness of Christian life in these circles."¹⁹ The pope understood by this that the addressees become witnesses of Jesus Christ and His Gospel, i.e. that they administer, in their professional and private circles, universal priesthood that they obtained when baptised. In his letter John Paul II dedicated much attention to chaplains. They are those who visit seamen on board vessels, undertake welfare, humanitarian and spiritual service to all those who call the ports.

The Holy Father says that chaplains should strive that the people of the sea be provided with any necessary means that allow them conduct saint

John Paul II, Apostolic letter *motu proprio* on the Apostleship of the Sea *Stella Maris*, title I, article I, [in]: *Stella Maris. Apostolic letter motu proprio on the Maritime Apostolate (AAS LXXXIX, 10 April 1997)*, p. 53.

lives, they should also recognise and support the mission that all faithful, and in particular the laypersons, fulfil in the Church and in the circles of the people of the sea in concert with their status. The pope strongly admits that this is an integral mission of the Church.

He also indicated in the apostolic letter that this work is organised and coordinated. It does not mean, in a literal sense, certain parish structures, but lively structures of faithful people. The pope encourages Episcopal Conferences for them to appoint Bishops Promoters who would foster apostleship in a given country.

Pursuant to apostolic constitution *Pastor Bonus* and apostolic letter the apostleship is directed by the Pontifical Council who is responsible for the overall work of the maritime apostolate. Its responsibilities are specified in article 13 of this letter.²⁰

At the global level the role of the Pontifical Council is to publish instructions and guidelines for the maritime apostolate. Maintaining contacts with Episcopal Conferences, national directors and bishops promoters publication of bulletins in various languages, preparation of world congresses.

The pope also delegates responsibilities down to the national level. He stressed the role of Episcopal Conference, that of bishops promoters, national directors. He says about the role of bishops so that they maintain relations in all issues associated with benefits of the people of the sea.

The novelty is the institution of a function of a coordinator for a region. The Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People “appoints, following proposals submitted by the interested bishops promoters, coordinator for a region covering various Episcopal Conferences and defining his functions.”²¹ The duties of a regional coordinator include, among others, assistance to the Pontifical Council in implementing standards and guidelines established by the Holy Father John Paul II in the apostolic letter *motu proprio* regarding the Apostleship of the Sea. Assistance

²⁰ John Paul II, Apostolic letter *motu proprio* on the Apostleship of the Sea *Stella Maris*, title IV, article XIII § 1 & 2, [in]: *Stella Maris. Apostolic letter motu proprio on the Maritime Apostolate (AAS LXXXIX, 10 April 1997)*, pp. 61–62.

²¹ John Paul II, Apostolic letter *motu proprio* on the Apostleship of the Sea *Stella Maris*, title IV, article XIII § 1 & 2, [in]: *Stella Maris. Apostolic letter motu proprio on the Maritime Apostolate (AAS LXXXIX, 10 April 1997)*, p. 62.

to national directors and in particular in the area of training and formation for chaplains and laypersons. Organisation of regional conferences under the auspices of the Pontifical Council.

The role and contribution of John Paul II in the development of the Apostleship of the Sea was emphasized by the president of the Pontifical Council Antonio Maria Cardinal Vegliò in the message of the Pontifical Council on the occasion of the 90th anniversary of establishing Apostleship of the Sea. He said then: "We feel obliged to express once again our deep gratitude to His Holiness John Paul II for Apostolic Letter *Stella Maris* that continues to be a strong point of reference in our work and a reminder to our communities so that they give testimony of faith and love to the people of the sea."²²

A. M. Vegliò, G. Bentoglio, *Message of the Pontifical Council for the 90th Anniversary of AOS Foundation*, "Apostolatus Maris Bulletin" 106 (2010) III, s. 4.

Summary

John Paul II's contribution to development of Apostleship of the Sea

The point of this article was to present the continuity of John Paul II's teaching with the teaching of his predecessors and, at the same time, what was novelty and contribution in the care of the Apostleship of the Sea. The contribution included organization of structures and essential documents to which those responsible for the Apostleship of the Sea may refer.

Keywords: Apostleship of the Sea, itinerant people, John Paul II, Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, Apostolic letter *motu proprio* on the Apostleship of the Sea

Wkład Jana Pawła II w rozwój duszpasterstwa ludzi morza

Artykuł omawia wkład Jana Pawła II w rozwój duszpasterstwa ludzi morza (DLM). Najpierw przedstawiono terminologię, następnie wkład poprzedników Jana Pawła II w instytucjonalizowanie i rozwój duszpasterstwa ludzi morza, a następnie inicjatywy Jana Pawła II w tym zakresie, a więc: doprecyzowanie terminu „ludzie morza”; wskazanie potrzeby solidarności ludzi morza; podniesienie rangi DLM wraz z Papieską Radą ds. Duszpasterskiej Troski o Migrantów i Ludzi w Drodze, do której DLM należy. Wkładem Jana Pawła II jest też powołanie koordynatorów regionalnych DLM.

Tymi inicjatywami Jan Paweł II zasłużył sobie na wdzięczność pracowników DLM, która została wyrażona przez przewodniczącego Papieskiej Rady ds. Duszpasterskiej Troski o Migrantów i Ludzi w Drodze kard. Antonia Marię Vegliò.

Słowa kluczowe: duszpasterstwo ludzi morza, ludzie w drodze, Jan Paweł II, Papieska Rada ds. Duszpasterskiej Troski o Migrantów i Ludzi w Drodze, List apostolski *motu proprio* o duszpasterstwie ludzi morza

Bibliography

Baldelli F., *Cenni storici e sviluppo dell'Apostolato de Mare nel mondo*, [in:] *XXV Annuale Italiano*, ed. A. Recagna, Genova 1959, pp. 59–64.

Giovanni Paolo II, *Visita Pastorale a Fano (Ancona) Santa Messa per i pescatori e marittimi*. Omelia, Domenica, 12 agosto 1984, www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/homilies/1984/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_19840812_lavoratori-mare_it.html (21.03.2014).

John Paul II, *Apostolic constitution Pastor Bonus*, art. 150 § 2, www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_jp-ii_apc_19880628_pastor-bonus-roman-curia_en.html (22.03.2014).

John Paul II, Apostolic letter *motu proprio* on the Apostleship of the Sea *Stella Maris* (31.01.1997), [in:] „L'Osservatore Romano” 4-5 (1997), pp. 4-7.

John Paul II, Apostolic letter *motu proprio* on the Apostleship of the Sea *Stella Maris*, [in:] „*Stella Maris*”. Apostolic Letter *motu proprio* on the Maritime Apostolate (AAS LXXXIX, 10 April 1997), pp. 53-62.

John Paul II, Homily of the Holy Father, [in:] *For the third time in the mother country: Addresses, homilies, reportage, reflexions*, Warsaw 1988, pp. 228-236.

Le Gall F., *The Apostleship of the Sea „Stella Maris”. The pastoral care of seafarers*, Vatican 2001.

Paul VI, Decree concerning the pastoral office of bishops in the Church *Christus Dominus*, www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651028_christus-dominus_en.html (22.04.2014).

Pius XI, *Apostleship of the sea for catholic seafarers. Approved and blessed by his Holiness Pius XI*, [in:] *Duc in altum*, ed. The Apostleship of the Sea, Glasgow 1926.

Vegliò A. M., Bentoglio G., *Message of the Pontifical Council for the 90th anniversary of AOS Foundation*, “*Apostolatus Maris Bulletin*” 106 (2010) III, pp. 1-4.

Vegliò A. M., Kalathiparambil J., *Message for sea Sunday 2011*, “*Apostolatus Maris Bulletin*” 108 (2011) II, p. 2.