

Ports of Los Angeles, Long Beach, and Port Hueneme (Oxford)  
Rev. Henry L. Hernando,  
Pacific Coast Representative

This is a follow-up of the October 2008 by the Western regional representative. It was aired in that report: three main legitimate concerns affecting the local maritime industry due to the national economic crisis. As predicted, they came true in three key issues: toned-down volume of cargo; Transfer of business to some “user-friendly” ports: TWIC card-implementation. 3 Ts:

First, on marked decrease or lack of cargo-carriers’ movement in many berths as containers are stock-piling and car lots not moving. Fewer ships docked at the Los Angeles / Long Beach ports’ complex, compared to previous years. In the last quarter (Oct-Dec) of 2008, ex. gr. only 1329 ships came, 90 fewer than the 1419 visits of year 2007. Likewise, this first quarter has only 1235 ships docking, down from the same timeframe (Jan-Mar) of 2008 with 1339 visits. In 3 years’ period, Los Angeles ports lost 1000 ships’ visits from 6080 (’06) to 5000 for fiscal year. It surely filters down to the workforce that used to have 1100, down to 600 workers, over-all. It’s a one-third loss of what it used to be. Only the cruise ships and tankers keep their averages.

Secondly, the fear of moving out or relocating ships to some ports with less fees, is realized. A classic example is the partial transfer or relocation of “Cosco” maritime operations from Long Beach ports to Port Prince Rupert, B.C. , Canada for economic reasons and shorter land route to Atlantic seaboard destinations. It’s a practical move that hopefully won’t trigger an exodus.

Thirdly, the TWIC card-implementation has caused a mixed bag of results, beneficial to some but confusing in some cases as there’s no uniformed mode of implementing it. Personally, I’ve positive experience but heard of disturbing reports from some port chaplains and complaints from sailors that need to be heeded and responded as part of growing pains of this new era.

In view of this present snafu, what would be our response, as people of faith, doing this ministry? A theological reflection invites us to step back and take a good look and see a spiritual meaning and not jumping at once to instant solution like sheer economic stimulus for a fast, short-range and temporary palliative answer that could saddle our posterity to forever bail us out of a present situation. The big irony is that despite the “down-sized” port operations and seeming financial loss due to the crisis, POLA still is laden with high revenues by ships’ rented berths, wharves’ fees, tariffs, earning no less than \$8K per visit, and multiply that by the few thousand ships, we wonder why POLA can’t give a token free rent for our space as our Stella Maris Center is the only “non-profit” entity still paying rent, simply because we offer religious services. The economic crisis is a reminder that there’s more to life than just material riches to satisfy the human heart. That’s where our ministry kicks in to help deal with emotional fallout.

#### Year-End Stats

Our mission is accomplished receiving the more than 1,800 sailors visiting our San Pedro Center, providing for their spiritual and other needs and working in good partnership with ISC for those 7,500 sailors from the Long Beach, Terminal Is., Wilmington, transporting to and from the ships.

(Re: Fishing Industry: See Pet Parravano’s report and Cardinal Martino’s “Feb. 18, ’09’ Letter)

#### Renovated Chapel

Our Stella Maris Hospitality Center and renovated “Last Supper” Chapel space, now renamed as Msgr. Patrick Gallagher Memorial Chapel has been a steady fixture of a spiritual oasis at Berth 93-A, WCC, San Pedro. It has been a “home away from home” and the sacred site of about 200 Masses, religious services, sacraments, and counseling, as a “floating Church”.

#### Potential

This outreach ministry has much potential for evangelization, formation of lay ministers and possible vocation among the single sailors. It’s our hope and prayer as we train some to be so authorized and

properly commissioned for a “priest-less cruise”, a lesson they can take home with them as extraordinary ministers and lay readers as recipients of lay empowerment.

### Collaboration

As statement of solidarity, we work closely with the ISC and Marine Exchange and ITF people to provide total quality service and advocacy for our seafarers. In fact, we have been having Saturday evenings’ anticipated Liturgies at ISC Chapel (till lately they closed Saturdays) before we’d take them back (to their ships) in Long Beach. We also celebrated Holy Week “Triduum” religious services as in past years for them to share in the Paschal Mystery like they used to.

### Process

Our mission statement “as pilgrim people ministering to seafaring pilgrims” urges us to be a Center to answer their various needs, not only spiritual ones. We have augmented our services from the Chapel, to the Transmittal desk, to the warehouse to handle and ship “Balikbayan” boxes (mainly to P.I.) we provide means for them to send for their families’ needs and opening soon our new internet and more phone system at no extra cost for them but a phone card.

### Paradox

In our world becoming small due to the high-tech communications, yet there seems a distance between sailors and port workers. Our Center serves as a melting pot, not just a common site for Worship, but a friendly space to socialize in fellowship through snacks, light drinks, just “shooting the breeze”, but not to fraternize nor familiarize, keeping professionalism, respect keeping our overseas “USO” Centers as our working model to offer a wholesome R&R time.

### Challenge

Our urgent task is to be able to do more for less despite our Chancery’s cut back of the yearly subsidy from \$60 K to \$25 K. At least, we got only one Center to maintain with the closing of our Long Beach @ Queen Mary, two years ago. Our only contact with the Long Beach-based sailors would be at ISC or to get aboard the ships. Thank God, TWIC makes it easier for me to get through, an unescorted but it’s not always the case for sailors to get through for easy exit.

### Ongoing Mission

Remembering those serving before us, the late Msgr. Patrick Gallagher, Fr. Sylvester Thomas, we felt the loss of two volunteers, Al Garrison and Del Kopchak, we owe it to them to continue the good work they left us: to welcome with open hearts the stranger, so witness to His endless love and our Christian hospitality. Even with a limited budget, we can show His unconditional love and mercy as we fulfill our mission to be Christ to all coming to Him, “who labor and are burdened” and “He’ll give them rest” (Matt. 11,28). And He does! “Come and See” (John 1,39)

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Rev. Henry L. Hernando

### Glossary:

POLA	=Port Of Los Angeles
ISC	=International Seafarers’ Center
TWIC	=Transport Worker Identification Credential
ITF	=International Transport Federation