

Report for AOSUSA ADMINISTRATIVE Board Meeting from the Pacific Region

Ports of Los Angeles, Long Beach, Port Hueneme (Oxnard)
submitted by Rev. Henry .L .Hernando, ,Pacific Rep, sending this
Report May 6, 2010

“All is quiet on the Western Front” could describe the slow pace if not the “peace” we enjoy at the Maritime Ministry. It’s not the result of the absence of hostilities that Eric Remarque commented during the WWI in Europe. It is our POLA’s situation during the week. It’s the reduced volume of cruise ships’ visits down from four days to two days a week, only on Saturdays and Sundays.

In the October 2009 report, we painted not a rosy picture of the economic situation then having a 40% less number of ships visiting the Los Angeles/ Long Beach Port complex, down from previous years. We expressed some hope that almost reaching the “bottom-out” point, there’s nowhere to go but upwards. There are positive signs that shipping traffic seems to stabilize and move upwards.

We received some data from our Marine Exchange that in the month of March, ship visits reached above the 400 mark, along with heavy traffic of 18-wheelers plying our port route showing signs of economic recovery, gradual but surely a promising note in the right direction. The key though is the ratio of inbound to outbound shipping. It still shows the imports still outweigh the outgoing goods.

As the maritime economy goes, so the national economy moves. We’d leave it to the “higher powers that be” to really DO something not just talk on economic recovery. Even simple port workers know we need more production, not necessarily drilling, to offset this trade imbalance. For us in the ministry is to breathe over some spirituality, sense of responsibility, and moral, socio-economic justice’ values.

WE work hand in hand for this reason with Marine Exchange, ITF and responsive ship agents to really provide for the spiritual up-lifting, emotional stability and financial security for our seafarers. We share information, time, and resources with our partner in ministry and service, the ISC, to provide a very holistic program: transport, internet, overseas phone calls, money transmittal and shipping packages.

Stats for this six-month period (Nov-April), we have humbly served close to 1500 persons visiting our Stella Maris Center at POLA, mainly cruise ships’ crewmembers, port workers, security guards and cruise passengers. Every cruise day, there was steady flow of “Ins-and-outs” visits by sailors pressed for time, but still had time for Sacraments, counseling, mainly for temporalities, and few Mass attendees.

Despite their own financial problems, our ISC partner is very gracious in allowing us to hold Divine and Sacramental services on Saturday nights (since resuming the “Sat-open” business schedule). In fact we held our Easter Triduum services in

their Inter-faith Chapel. We provided seasonal Communal Penance services & individual confessions for Advent and Lent in San Pedro Center. ISC, is located in Long Beach and has served the temporal needs for more than 4000 sailors, still a decrease from previous years WE conducted shipboard Masses and blessings whenever the need arose, which again has been reduced.

Now, here are some input or no-input calls from the other ten ports comprising the Pacific Region:

-San Diego: Fr. James Boyd regrets his non-attendance at this Conference but sends a worthy pinch-hitter Ed Danuan. Their access to shipboard Masses had been revoked by the Activities Director of one RCCL cruise ship. This resonated with a similar snafu at a POLA-docked visiting Los Angeles cruise ship. - Stockton: Mike De Toro is Mike, the Maverick asking what's the use of attending the AOSUSA when he's set to attend NAMMA's summer conference in Vancouver. He reported: "no ships for ten days" in his usual angst in demanding when will the next conference come to the West Coast? Can it be possible? - Oakland: Fr. Joseph plans to attend despite his financial status with the Diocese withdrawing its much needed subsidy. He has to find ways "on his initiative" to fund the ministry's operational costs that include the annual rental of \$3,000. Is there a way for Bishops to see the value of maritime ministry?

-Port Hueneme continues serving the few docking cargo ships through an Inter-Faith group of ministers Our POC (person of Contact) Vic Gallardo has the local Pastor, Fr. Joy Zabala, of Mary Star of the Sea Church to help in emergency cases. We'd make from L.A. few irregular visits to those reefer ship sailors. *Our flagship Port of Los Angeles stands as a beacon light figuratively and a spiritual oasis literally for sailors longing for home-church away from home. Our renovated Chapel can now hold forty worshipers at full capacity, though we have a ¼ occupancy being used at Mass. We usually have more attendance at shipboard Liturgies both for cruise and container ships in port. The main reason for sailors' not being able to come to Mass is their limited "free" time and competing worldly interests. With TWIC's deficient implementation at Terminals, these are key factors why sailors fail to attend for their spiritual needs. -Long Beach: Our close collaboration with ISC eases our loss of Chapel space to provide for the welfare of our southern "sister" Port. We feel bad that on cruise days (more than L.A., Fri-Sat-Sun-Mon) we DO NOT have a visible presence in the port itself, close to the world-famous ship Queen Mary, where we had a Chapel for three happy years. Our Legal Counsel is exploring the possibility of getting a new space in the vicinity to resume serving the Carnival Lines' seafarers with our pastoral services. Meantime, ISC offers their Center, a mile away from the Cruise Terminal, yet serves our missionary efforts there in L.B.

-San Francisco Center is run by the Chancery Office and no update on ministry was received from them.

-Portland, OR. Retired Deacon John Ries reported: "there's no Chaplain" for this Port serving about 1700 ship visits. This "brown water" (Columbia-Wilomett Rivers) Port is attended by a Vancouver Protestant. -Seattle, WA: Fr. Tony Haycock still going strong is the fearless leader and lone RC Chaplain aside from a -Tacoma's Fr. Richard Gallagher, who couldn't be reached as his phone is "no longer operational" at all.

-Vancouver, WA Port could be a good potential to have a Catholic ministry with NAMMA's Conference.

-Anchorage, Al.'s Sally Boswick is still unheard. To have a Hawaii Center is still a dream worth making it! There's no new update on the "defunct" Fishing Industry and long-gone bu"out-sourced" canning sites. We ended this around the Pacific Rim Report by joining the National Day of Prayer and getting ready for the National Maritime Day on May 22. Looking forward to the Regional Conference at Niagara Falls next week Meantime, let the Easter alleluias resound with a prayerful sigh: "Aspice Stellam, et voca Mariam!"