



CATHOLIC MARITIME NEWS

March 2006

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TITANIC

Four articles in this edition of *Catholic Maritime News* recount stories associated with the sinking of the *Titanic*. The articles appeared together in the April 10, 2005 edition of *Our Sunday Visitor* and are reprinted with permission as the 94th Anniversary of this tragic event approaches

Priestly Sacrifice at Sea

Three priests aboard the doomed luxury liner gave their lives to provide spiritual comfort to passengers

By Msgr. Own F. Campion

It has been [94] years since the British luxury liner RMS *Titanic* sank in the mid-Atlantic after striking an iceberg on April 14, 1912. Other sea disasters have cost more lives, but none has retained the popular interest as much as the loss of what then was the largest and grandest ship afloat.

Another dimension to the story, almost never told anymore, but rich in heroism and dedication, is about the Catholic priests who were aboard. There were three. All three refused seats in lifeboats as the great ship was foundering, refusing to leave terrified passengers. All three went down with the ship.

One was Lithuanian. One was Bavarian. One was English.

Passengers who survived the disaster remember the three priests on the voyage. They celebrated Masses every day. (There would have been three separate Masses. Concelebration in the Roman Rite, aside from priestly ordination, was not allowed until after the Second Vatican Council.) Survivors also remember the priests' heroism, and that the priests gave spiritual care to the passengers literally until the end.

The Lithuanian was Father Juozas Montvila. He had been born at Gudine, near Marijampole, Lithuania, on Jan. 3, 1885, the oldest of eight children. After studying at Seinai Seminary (now in northeastern Poland), he was ordained a priest on March 22, 1908.

Father Montvila's first official assignment was to a parish in Lipskas, but he had a secret ministry. He served the Ukrainian Catholics, in communion with Rome, and they were in disfavor with the government of Czar Nicholas II.

At the time, Lithuania was under Russian control, and the czar's government supported and advanced the Orthodox churches. Roman Catholics were tolerated. Powerful Austria-Hungary and France's significant Catholic population would have resented anything else. Russian had to keep its friends abroad. But Ukrainian Catholics in union with Rome had no influential friends.

Father Montvila was discovered. The imperial authorities removed him from the Lipskas parish and forbade him to act as a priest. He went to work for a Catholic newspaper in Seinai. An

SACRIFICE, page 12

Board elections approach

Elections for Officers and Board Members of AOS USA will be held during the Annual Conference April 25-28 at Texas A&M University at Galveston Maritime Academy.

All board positions are open for election. Positions are: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Pacific, Great Lakes, Gulf Coast, East Coast, and Cruise Ship Priest.

AOS USA members who have announced an interest in running for the board appear on Pages 6-7, along with a short biographical statement and a picture, as available. The list does not represent a final slate of candidates, as candidates have traditionally been nominated from the floor during the annual meeting, and this will be the method of nomination this year as well.

More members may announce a desire to run subsequently, and others may be nominated from the floor without having announced an intention to run earlier.

Current Board Members appear on Page 2. If you are interested in running for an office and would like to submit a biography and photo for the April edition of *Catholic Maritime News*, please send the information to: aosusa@sbcglobal.net

Also in this edition, on Page 7, there is included a form for drawing up suggested resolutions for the membership to vote on. The forms can then be brought to the meeting as an efficient way to submit resolutions for consideration.

Minutes from last year's Annual Conference, along with various officers' reports, will not be reprinted in *Catholic Maritime News* due to space constraints, however, all this information appears on the website at www.aos-usa.org.



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President's Column ...

It's Not DP Ports, It's the Seafarers



As I write this on March 7, 2006, **Lloyd's List** carries an article that a London judge turned down objections to the purchase of P&O Ports by DP World. This comes on the heels of many news reports that despite many objections, it will eventually go through. This really doesn't bother me that much, or should I say, it doesn't bother me any more than many other acquisitions that have taken place in this age of global capitalism. We have already sold our US-flagged, deep-sea merchant fleet to foreign interests. Lykes Lines was sold first to the Canadian company CP ships, and now CP Ships has been sold to the German company Hapag Lloyd. Sealand was bought by the Danish company Mearsk, and American Presidents Lines (APL) was bought by the Singapore company Neptune Orient Lines. The list goes on and on.

So, my attitude is that selling the operations and management of our ports to a foreign company are no more or less a threat to our national security than selling the operations and management of our international deep-sea fleet.

However, in the midst of this hubbub, truly disturbing news has come to me from the Houston International Seafarer Center. It seems that a group of Custom and Border Protection officials, dressed more like a SWAT team, has descended on the Port of Houston and Barbour's Cut to make sure that some Filipino AB is not running around the port without his shore pass. Can't they busy themselves around a Home Depot parking lot, and not add insult upon insult to working men and women who are bringing us the stuff that we need? In fact, this is the stuff that we have asked them to bring to our country.

Beginning sometime before Thanksgiving, and without any warning or consultation, a special team from Customs and Border Protection began entering the Houston and Barbour's Cut seafarer centers. Dressed in black military-style pants, black T-shirts and packing side arms, they confronted seafarers, center employees and longshoremen. Not showing identification themselves, or demonstrating their authority to perform the task that they were doing, they would demand to see shore passes or identification from those who were there. It did not matter if you were a woman in the restroom, or a seafarer on the phone, when they entered, everyone was to stop what they were doing, and demonstrate their right to be standing or sitting where they were.

This eventually went from the absurd to the insane, when they confronted an AB coming down the gang way while the ship was taking on stores. In the middle of work, they demanded that he produce his shore pass. When he responded that he did not have

COLUMN, page 8

Please Pray for:

- *M/V Infinity*, Celebrity Cruise Ship
- Repose of the soul of Fred Bading, 91, of Arlington, Texas, a long-time CMN subscriber.
- Repose of the soul of Mr. Steve Judd, SIU port agent in New Orleans, who was recently shot and killed.

The Miracle of Versailles: *New Orleans Vietnamese Community Rebuilds*

Commentary by Lance Hill - reprinted with permission
January 17, 2005 lhill@tulane.edu

Last week I visited the Vietnamese community in the “Versailles

Village” area of flood-devastated eastern New Orleans. The Versailles community is nearly thirteen miles from downtown New Orleans and stands in the wreckage of thousands of moldy abandoned houses that were once home to the thriving black “New Orleans East” community. Yet in the midst of this despairing landscape, Versailles Village unfolds like a beautiful flower. Nearly 1,000 people have returned to Versailles and! restored hundreds of homes. At the entrance of the subdivision, twenty-four businesses have sprung back to life, including restaurants, grocery stores and even a dentist office. Children are back in public and private schools and work is easy to find--employers from around the city come to Versailles to recruit desperately needed service workers.

So how did this rebirth happen while adjacent black neighborhoods continue to stagnate in eerie silence?

A good part of the success of Versailles owes to the Mary Queen of Vietnam Catholic Church. Before Katrina, the church was the center of religious and social life for the 4000 Vietnamese who lived in approximately 950 homes located within one mile of the church. Rev. Nguyen The Vien, pastor for Mary Queen church, estimates that in addition to the 1,000 people now living in Versailles, another 1,000 former residents have returned to the New Orleans area and are awaiting repairs to their homes.

During the evacuation, the church served as a vehicle for the community to collectively make decisions about when and how they would return and rebuild. Church leaders kept the Diaspora Vietnamese community linked together, with Rev. Vien constantly visiting refugee sites and fellow priests dispatched to Houston and Dallas to work full-time with the displaced communities.

From the first days of evacuation, the community began planning to return and rebuild Versailles Village. The decision to return together was key in helping overcome homeowner fears that they might lose their investment if they rebuilt in a neighborhood that later failed to revive. The community was convinced that if they quickly rebuilt and occupied their homes, the city government and utility companies would have to provide services. The plan worked.

By the first week of October, Rev. Vien had returned to New Orleans with 300 parishioners. They temporarily stayed in Vietnamese community centers in the area until they could set up tents and housing in the Mary Queen of Vietnam church building. Working together, they set about gutting and restoring their homes. Vien negotiated with Entergy, the local electrical utility company, to provide power to the subdivision, even though Versailles was miles from any other inhabited residential neighborhood. To justify the cost of the connection work and the diversion of scarce electrical power, Entergy told Vien that they wanted some guarantee that the community was returning. Within one week,

Vien delivered 500 signed requests for electrical hookups. By November, Versailles had electrical power and water lines.

The Vietnamese community managed this rebirth despite the uncertainties about future flooding and the possibility that FEMA may require homeowners to elevate their homes at great cost in order to qualify for flood insurance. None of this seems to trouble the people of Versailles. They have refused to wait for government agencies to tell them if and when they can return to their homes. Given that most experts now agree that the flooding was a result of mistakes made by the government--the Army Corp of Engineers in particular--the Vietnamese community’s doubts about salvation by government are understandable. It takes an enormous leap of faith to expect the people who caused our problems to solve our problems.

What can be learned from the Versailles miracle? The Vietnamese community had several unique qualities that aided its successful return, some of which can be adapted to other communities. Foremost, it possessed a group-oriented culture that emphasized community needs over individual rights and interests; each individual in the community was duty-bound to help everyone in their community make it home. From the outset, community members understood that the individual’s survival depended on the community’s survival.

The catholic church provided a communication network for the community to make collective decisions and act in concert, even while dispersed around the country. No other community in New Orleans had the benefit of this kind of communication network. It proved crucial in bringing the community back at the same time and in sufficient numbers to force the government to provide services.

Perhaps the most important key to their success is that the Vietnamese community refused to place its salvation into the hands of the government.

They simply came home.

I asked one Vietnamese resident if he feared that the community might flood again and all his hard work would be for naught. He shrugged.

“Look,” he said. “We fled Vietnam. We fled New Orleans. Now we’re back. We’re here to stay.” Was he concerned that the city might ultimately bulldoze the community? He just laughed. “How they going to bulldoze a house with people in it?” he asked.

He had a point.

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Prayer:

**Don’t give God instructions —
just report for duty!**

Merchant Marine

Four arrested for murder of stowaways

The bodies of the two missing East African stowaways, who drowned after they were allegedly forced to jump off a ship in Durban harbour, South Africa, have been found.

Andrew Mwangura, Programs Coordinator for the Seafarers' Assistance Program in Mombasa, Kenya, sent the following report:

"The Bahamas-registered vessel *M/V African Kalahari* left Mombasa port December last year on her way to South America. The vessel was detained after reports that seven stowaways were thrown overboard," Mwangura said.

"The bodies were seen floating off the Maydon Wharf berths. They were identified by other stowaways who swam to safety. The stowaways are comprised of two Tanzanian and five Kenyan nationals.

"The captain and three crew members appeared again in court. The four crew members of the vessel are out on R20,000 bail. They have been charged with two counts of murder and five of attempted murder."

US Navy seizes suspected pirate ship near Somalia

The U.S. Navy issued a Press Release stating that the USS WINSTON S. CHURCHILL (DDG 81) seized a suspected pirate ship 87 km (54 nm) off the coast of Somalia. The ship (a dhow) is suspected of having fired on a merchant vessel passing off the coast of Somalia. There were 16 Indians and 10 Somalis aboard the dhow, along with various small arms.

The US Navy was responding to a report of an attempted act of piracy from the International Maritime Bureau.

The pirates were attempting to attack a Greek owned Bahamas flagged bulk carrier *M/V Delta Ranger* while under way on January 21, 2006.

Further updates from Andrew Mwangura of the Seafarers' Assistance Program in Mombasa, Kenya, appear below, along with reports on other pirate activity:

Jan 27

One of the four Taiwanese fishing vessels hijacked last year off-the Somali coast has been released and she is now on her way to Taiwan.

The release of the *F/V Chung Yi 218* comes as a UAE registered merchant ship *M/V Al Manar* and her crew were hijacked on Sunday off-the Somali coast.

F/V Chung Yi 218 and her two sister ships were seized separately in 16 August 2005, while a fourth sister ship *F/V Feng Rong* was hijacked in November.

With these fresh attacks, there are now five ships and around 100 mariners being held captive in Somalia, and some have been held for four months now.

Piracy, page 5

Professional Development Column ...

TRAINING OPTIONS AND ADVANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES?



Capt. David Teel

How many times during your maritime career have you been asked about or thought about advancement up the ladder? I suggest that everyone involved in the maritime industry has thought about this issue or discussed it with shipmates or friends. Advancement and training is now much more involved and time consuming than at any time in the past. This change in maritime training and advancement has been brought about by STCW 95 and reaction to maritime accidents.

Up until this last decade about all a mariner needed to do in order to advance up the ladder at sea was accrue sea time and take a USCG examination. This has changed dramatically and is still changing. Now all mariners need Basic Safety Training (a 5-day course) just to get a MMLD. The training requirements get more detailed and exacting as one advances up the ladder. Most maritime companies and unions have training plans and/or training schools in place. This is for the benefit of the mariners and also is a must do item for maritime companies to ensure that they have constant supply of properly trained and professional mariners in their employment.

There are many resources available for the mariner who wishes to advance his or her career. There are links on the USCG and Maritime Administration web sites to training providers and info on what training is needed for advancement. I suggest talking with company officials, senior ship officers, union representatives, and even AOS members. Advancement and training in today's maritime world is time consuming and takes dedication by the mariner. I can speak to the dedication and time needed for advancement and training from my own experiences. It took me 10 years of sailing to advance my license from third mate to master. Then I spent at least a month or more each year after that taking training course to become STCW compliant and increase my professional skills.

Feel free to e-mail me with questions about training and/or advancement at kps77@cox.net.

Capt. David Teel has 20 years sea service as a member of the American Maritime Officers' Union, including 7 years as Master in command of tankers and Roll-on/Roll-off vessels. He was Senior Deck Instructor at AMO's STAR Center and has worked for the last six years at the National Maritime Center as a Marine Transportation Specialist in the Course Instructor Approval Branch. He is a graduate of King's Point (USMMA) and has a Masters of Quality Systems Management from the National Graduate School.

Piracy _____ *from page 4*

Al Manar was hijacked 150 nautical miles off the east coast of Somalia. The gunmen have threatened the crew and are now demanding a ransom for their release. It is said that the hostages are low in drinking water and supplies.

Jan 30

Ten Somali suspects are expected to be charged with piracy in a Mombasa law court tomorrow. The suspects are being held at the Mombasa port police station after being airlifted into Mombasa from a US navy ship off the Kenyan coast yesterday morning.

It was the first time suspected pirates have been arrested by any authority after years of hijacking ships in Somalia following the ouster of the Siad Barre government in 1991.

It is said that four other suspects escaped when the US forces boarded the Indian dhow, *M/V Safinat Bisarat*.

Pirates attacked the ship 200 nautical miles off the Somali island of Kismayu, and held the crews for five days before the Americans rescued them.

It took a simple message, "help", written on the ship, to catch the eyes of the US soldiers in a helicopter.

The crews, speaking yesterday in Mombasa, claimed they were tortured and threatened with death during their five days in captivity. They were turned over to the Indian consul that will arrange their journey back home.

The 16 Indian seafarers were also brought to Kenya on Saturday evening under escort by the US naval ship, USS Nassau.

The pirates demanded \$50,000 dollars and an international mobile phone, none of which the crew had.

The Indian dhow was 200 nautical miles off the Somali waters when the US naval officers took note of her.

After several attempts to establish contact with the pirates, the officers were forced to manoeuvre to scare them to surrender, but this attempt did not yield any fruits. The officers then shot in the air and the 10 pirates came out of the cabin with their arms raised in the air, a sign of surrender. The officers then took charge of the ship and transferred the crews and pirates to USS Nassau.

Feb 5

The ten Somali pirates were brought before a Mombasa law court on 3rd February charged with breaking section 69(1) and (3) of the Kenyan panel code cap 63 laws of Kenya.

The charge sheet states that, on the 16th day of January, 2006 upon the high seas of the Indian ocean jointly the suspects attacked and detained a ship called *Al Safina Bisarat* and at the time of or immediately after such acts assaulted and put in fear of their lives the crew of the said vessel and demanded upon its captain, Akbar Ali Suleiman, for ransom of \$50,000.

The suspects will be brought back again to the law courts this week.

Feb 6

The ten Somali pirates appeared before Mombasa law court early today, but due to lack of an interpreter the case was postponed until February 8th, 2006, this Wednesday.

The suspects are represented by two Mombasa based lawyers.

The suspects include: Hassan Ahmed Ahmed, Diwan Maalim Abdilahi, Abdikadior Labhale Warsame, Hussein noor Ali, Mufkar Mohammed



The US Navy seized the Indian dhow *M/V Safinat Bisarat*, a suspected pirate ship, off the Somali coast after spotting a "HELP" message on the ship, written by hostages.

Hassan and Mohammed Alifara. Others are Mohammed Abdi Fitah, Mohammed Ahmed Jama, Aweh Mohammed Hassan and Liban Addi Ali. They are all Somali nationals.

Feb 8

Five lawyers representing the ten suspected Somali pirates today told a Kenyan court that it does not have jurisdiction to try the suspects.

The five represented by lawyer Moses Waweru argued that although the country had in 1989 ratified the United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea, but the said law has not been domesticated in Kenya.

They said the sections under which the ten have been charged are only relevant to Kenyan nationals or if the alleged pirate victims are Kenyan or the country is the flag state of the ship.

But the state, represented by Assistant Deputy Director of prosecution Mrs. Margaret Mwangi, her submissions said Kenya being a signatory to the United Nations convention has the right to try the ten Somalis. She also argued that under the UN convention, Kenya can handle any criminal case occurring within the country and even in the high seas as is the case with the matter facing the ten Somalis.

However, senior principal magistrate Beatrice Jaden said she will deliver her ruling tomorrow Thursday at 3.30 Kenyan time, on whether the country's courts has jurisdiction to try the ten accused of committing the offence on 16th January, this year in the high seas of the Indian Ocean.

Other than hijacking an Indian ship *Safina Al Bisrat* and all her 16 Indian sailors, they also demanded a ransom of \$50,000.

Meanwhile, Indian high commission has sent a protest note saying they want the matter to be heard expeditiously.

In a letter dated 6th January, the Indian Charge De affair in Nairobi said if the matter is going to drag on, then the 16 sailors who have been Kenyan for about two weeks might be forced to leave the country before testifying.

The sailors are reported to have complained of missing their families, while the owner of the vessel, which is still docked at Mombasa's old port, is complaining of loss of business.

Candidates for AOS USA Board

Elections for officers and board members of AOS USA will be held during the Annual Conference April 25-28 at Texas A&M University at Galveston Maritime Academy.

All board positions are open for election.

Positions are:

President Vice President Secretary Treasurer
 Board Member - Pacific Coast
 Board Member - Great Lakes
 Board Member - Gulf Coast
 Board Member - East Coast
 Board Member - Cruise Ship Priest

The following people have announced their interest in running as candidates in the election. This is not a complete list of candidates - more members may indicate a desire to run subsequently, and additional candidates may also be nominated from the floor during the annual meeting. Please note at the time of this publication, no candidates were listed for the Great Lakes Region.

Traditionally, AOS USA Board Members are nominated from the floor during the meeting, and this will still be the method of election. Members were encouraged, if interested in running for the board, to send a short biography and a photo to be published in Catholic Maritime News prior to the conference. If you would like to submit information for the April edition of Catholic Maritime News, send it to aosusa@sbcglobal.com

Candidates for President

Fr. Sinclair K. Oubre, J.C.L.



Fr. Sinclair has served as President of AOS USA since 2000. He was President of the National Catholic Conference of Seafarers (predecessor to AOS USA) from 92-94 and President of the North American Maritime Ministry Association from 94-96. He holds an AB Limited rating in the U.S. Merchant Marine, is a member of the U.S. Coast Guard Merchant Marine Advisory Committee and is Diocesan Director of AOS - Beaumont.

Candidates for Vice President

CD R. Jon Furukawa, USNR



·Personal: 44 years old; born & raised in Hawaii; married with 2 small children; member of St. Mark Parish, Diocese of Arlington, VA.

·Work: Analyst USCG National Maritime Center; Licensed Unlimited Master/STCW95; 12-years sea service (U.S. Navy & merchant marine); Commander, U.S. Naval Reserve.

·AOSUSA: 2005-2006 Board Member - East Coast & Merchant Marine Committee

Co-Chair; 1997-2000 Volunteer Stella Maris New Orleans, LA.

·Education: MSc. 2001 World Maritime University; BSc. 1986 California Maritime Academy.

Candidates for Secretary

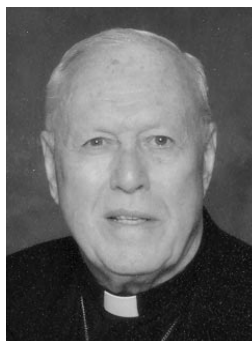


Rafael Alvarez

Rafael Alvarez served as recording secretary of AOS USA from 2004-2006. A longtime newspaper reporter for the *Baltimore Sun*, Alvarez has sailed as an ordinary seaman and wiper in the engine room. This spring, Alvarez will publish a "People's History of the Archdiocese of Baltimore," commissioned by Cardinal William H. Keeler. He is currently writing for television in Los Angeles.

Candidates for Treasurer

Fr. James P. Keating



I have served as treasurer of the AOS USA for the past twelve years. It has been my privilege to be able to have fulfilled this position. As pastor emeritus of St. Francis de Sales Parish, I still serve as full time Port Chaplain of Chicago as I have done since 1968. I serve also our Maritime Community as Chaplain of the International Shipmasters Association and its Grand Lodge and our Chicago Lodge, the Chicago Council U.S. Navy League, the Propeller Club, the East Side Chamber of Commerce and the East Side Lions.

Deacon Patrick LaPoint



I am Deacon Patrick Lapoint, running for the office of Treasurer. I am director of the Lake Charles Seafarers' Center and Treasurer of the local Propeller Club. I have been in the ministry since 1997 and was Ordained in Dec 2001. I am married to Sandra for 20 yrs now, we have 5 children and 4 grandchildren. I was Purchasing Manager for Halliburton Industrial Service for 2.5 years. Myself and Sandy were the owners of The Piety Shop, a Catholic book store, for 7 years.

Board Member -Pacific

Fr. Henry Hernando



Fr. Henry Hernando was US born, in the Philippines. His father, a USN chief, was assigned there during WWII. He has served in Military Navy chaplaincy, Detention Ministry, CPE/Hospital Student Chaplain, Marriage Tribunal, Associate or Parroquial Vicar in five parishes, Administrator/Pastor and once Dean of the Hollywood Vicariate before being recalled shortly by the Navy before starting as Stella Maris chaplain in July 2003.

Shore Leave/Port Security

Chaplain made leave a shore thing for foreign crews

Editor's Note: SCI Philadelphia gets a "that-a-boy" from AOSUSA

Reprinted from Lloyd's List - by Rajesh Joshi

STATESIDE opposition to Dubai Ports World's \$6.8bn takeover of P&O offers yet another reminder of the "holy cow" status of security in this country.

The facts that the US Coast Guard remains capable and responsible for port security, and that US ports largely remain municipally owned, have cut no ice with politicians and the common people they seek to inflame. The cheap, convenient cause célèbre now is to banish all those Arabs who would "wrest control over US ports".

For foreign seafarers sailing into US harbours, such characterisations are old hat. There is no dearth of anecdotes since September 11, 2001, involving valid visa-holding crews forcibly made to remain onboard their ships, either by private terminals or by federal authorities.

Over the last few years, Lloyd's List has met, or been made aware of, several foreign shipmasters whose crews have faced such hassles. Most of them requested anonymity — their chagrin at being mistaken for terrorists perhaps outweighed by that overwhelming desire to just swallow it and slink away.

Nonetheless, some cases made news. One such in 2003 involved the Arab-owned chemical tanker, the 1982-built, 23,016 dwt NCC Asir, and its Swedish-master led crew who were prevented from going ashore. The Philadelphia Inquirer exposed their troubles, thanks to a business writer familiar with the ways of international shipping.

Still, given the propensity of Americans to fear the worst, it must rank as a minor miracle that, in and around Philadelphia at least, the "shore leave" problem for visa-holding crew is now largely solved.

A large part of the credit goes to Rev James Von Dreele, executive director of the Seamen's Church Institute of Philadelphia and South Jersey, and Philadelphia port chaplain.

At the invitation of the recently retired US Coast Guard Port Captain, Jonathan Sarubbi, in 2004 Rev Von Dreele became the chair of a docks and terminals sub-committee of the area maritime security committee. The sub-committee was charged with the difficult issue of terminal access.

"This was not an easy subject," Rev Von Dreele tells Lloyd's List. "The difficulty after 9/11 was that no one wanted to press the seafarers' rights issue.

"Politicians would of course not be interested; and even private terminal operators cited their customers' concerns. The result was that the issue remained in the shadows."

Nonetheless, the likes of Rev Von Dreele and Doug Stevenson, of the Centre for Seafarers' Rights run out of the SCI counterpart in New York, raised hell regularly. These efforts finally gained traction in Philadelphia, first with the NCC Asir story, and then when Capt Sarubbi saw the connection between discontented crews and ship safety.

What followed was simply a matter of communication, Rev Von Dreele says.

"The committee's work opened up much needed communication among the various stakeholders to make the process less adversarial," he says.

"In fact, several terminal operators proactively reached out to agents, vendors, contractors and others to address their commercial concerns in terminal security."

There still are isolated cases where seafarers with visas who are caught without proper papers cause the entire ship to be banished, the chaplain reports. Nonetheless, shore leave problems at the 28 terminals along the Delaware River falling within his remit are down to "zero", he says.

Under the new protocol, "pre-approved" personnel from the SCI have undergone background and drug testing in order to qualify as escorts authorised to take valid crewmembers ashore.

Procedures have also been established to get these crewmembers to and from area shops and establishments without violating the plethora of post-September 11 security laws enforced in the US.

"Clearly, terminal operators saw and recognised the link between crew morale and ship safety," Rev Von Dreele says.

"Our combined efforts have resulted in seafarers being treated with greater dignity and professionalism, and there is a higher level of safety and security aboard ship and on the terminals."

Seafarers' rights advocates nationwide have also begun reporting a welcome decline in discrimination and shore leave denials at terminals in other parts of the US. Rev Von Dreele believes his fellow chaplains have a lot to do with this turn of events.

"The response of chaplains in 2002 and 2003 was extraordinary," he says. "The coast guard, as it formulated new legislation, held public hearings to get industry reaction.

"There was a chaplain at every single one of these hearings. This, as much as anything else, got the coast guard's attention, so that finally, most legitimate seafarers now have a reasonable assurance of shore leave when they come to the US."

COLUMN _____ from page 1

it on him, but that it was in his stateroom, they took the AB to the captain, and then took away the right to shore leave from the whole crew. (*I don't carry my wallet and valuable documents when I am working on a ship. It's a great way to lose or damage them.*)

In talking with Patricia Poulos of the Houston center, there has been some progress over the last few weeks in lowering the level of intimidation, and ending the invasion of the centers. However, this incident raises the specter that this may be the first appearance of a new assault on mariners' dignity. If it is happening in Houston, when will it arrive in New York, Oakland, Lake Charles or Port Arthur? Seafarers are already having to be vetted 96-hours before they arrive, then they must be cleared by Customs and Border Protection on their arrival, and now, they face the potential of being integrated every time they step off the ship.

If mariners from China, the Philippines and Poland are such threats to our national security, maybe we should just end flag of convenience shipping that places so many of these poor mariners on ships. Maybe we should go back to having Americans on a 5,000-ship U.S. flagged, merchant navy. Oh, I'm sorry - now I'm talking about real money. I guess it's better to just jerk around a bunch of poor, third world guys. We won't be doing anything to increase our national security, but we will certainly feel good about acting like we're keeping our country safe.

Other News...

From Dennis Bryant's Maritime Items

Mobile – maritime casualty

The U.S. Coast Guard issued a Press Release stating that it is responding to a maritime casualty in Mobile Bay, Alabama. The casualty involves a container ship and a sky-crane. One person is reported dead. The ship incurred a two-foot gash in its bow. Some oil has leaked onto the pier. A Second Press Release includes an aerial photograph of the scene. The incident is under investigation. (3/2/06).

ILO – adoption of consolidated maritime labor convention

The International Labor Organization (ILO) issued a Press Release stating that the Conference held in Geneva adopted a comprehensive labor standard for the world's maritime sector. The Provisional Record provides a background summary of development of the Convention. The Adoption Report is an explanation of the various provisions of the Convention. The Proposed Convention is the unofficial text of the Convention. The Report of the Director-General places the Convention in context with related activities of the ILO and the IMO. The Convention applies to ships larger than 500 gross tons engaged on international voyages. It will come into force after it has been ratified by 30 member states with a total share of at least 33% of the world's gross tonnage. The European Commission issued a Press Release stating that it plans to support effective implementation of the Convention in the European Union and is exploring the possibility of incorporating the Convention into Community law. (2/23/06).

Hurricane Katrina – lessons learned

The White House released the 228-page report of its investigation of the Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina. There is only a small discussion of maritime issues in the report, but it still is worth reading to see what went right (see particularly the U.S. Coast Guard) and what went wrong in the federal response effort. Lessons learned will help everyone do better in the future. (2/23/06).

Securing U.S. Ports

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) issued a Fact Sheet providing an overview of the major aspects of the layered defense in the U.S. maritime security program. The Dubai Ports World acquisition of P&O Ports is also discussed. (2/22/06).

Hearing – security of terminal operations at US ports

The Senate Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation conducted a Hearing on Security of Terminal Operations at US Ports. The purpose of the hearing was to examine the possible security implications of acquisition by Dubai Ports World of P&O Ports. Senator Stevens (R-AK) pointed out that federal agencies, such as the Coast Guard and the Customs & Border Protection, are in charge of port security, not the operators of individual terminals. Most of the statements of the witnesses are not yet available. Mr. H. Edward Bilkey, COO of DP World, said that his company welcomes the opportunity to tell its side of the story regarding the acquisition. Mr. Christopher Koch, World Shipping Council, discussed the international character of shipping. Mr. Tay Yoshitani, National Association of Waterfront Employers, explained the role of terminal operators in international commerce. (2/28/06).

IMO – flag state contact points for port state control

The IMO released an updated list of Flag State Contact Points for port state control issues. (2/13/06).

Bill introduced re port security

Senator Schumer (D-NY) introduced a bill (S. 2333) to require an investigation under the Defense Production Act of 1950 of the acquisition by Dubai Ports World of the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company, and for other purposes. (2/27/06).

Resolution introduced regarding port security

Senator Collins (R-ME) introduced a joint resolution (S.J. Res. 32) disapproving the results of the review conducted by the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS) into the purchase of Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation (P&O) by Dubai Ports World (DP World). (2/27/06).

Members of Congress critical of foreign ownership of port facilities

Senator Schumer (D-NY) issued a Press Release stating that he and several other member of Congress object to the acquisition of various U.S. port facilities by Dubai Ports World through its purchase of P&O Ports. The press release acknowledges that P&O Ports is a foreign company. The press release states, in part: "The deal allows the UAE company to take control of most operations at six ports on the East Coast, including New York, New Jersey, Baltimore, New Orleans, Miami, and Philadelphia." Meanwhile, Senator Clinton (D-NY) issued a News Release stating that she and Senator Menendez (D-NJ) plan to introduce legislation to prohibit companies owned or controlled by foreign governments from purchasing port operations in the United States. In a more measured response, Representative LoBiondo (R-NJ), Chairman of the Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation, issued a Press Release stating that he will further monitor the arrangement to ensure that operators of U.S. port facilities comply with U.S. port security laws and that the nation's security is not jeopardized. Reports indicate that Representative LoBiondo intends to introduce legislation to require port facility security officers (PFSOs) at U.S. port facilities to be U.S. citizens. (2/16/06).

IMO – reports of piracy and armed robbery at sea

The IMO issued a Circular listing reports it received of incidents of piracy and armed robbery at sea during the fourth quarter of 2005. During this period, 58 such acts were reported, which included 76 crew members being held hostage, ten crew members injured or assaulted, and seven vessels hijacked. MSC.4/Circ.80

U.S. – DPW controversy continues

The controversy over the planned acquisition of six port facilities in New York, New Jersey, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Miami, and New Orleans by UAE-based Dubai Ports World (DPW) continues apace. Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-TN) issued a Press Release stating that he is asking the Administration to delay the acquisition until a detailed briefing is provided. Representative Chris Shays (R-CT) is seeking a new thorough federal review of the acquisition. Representative Clay Shaw (R-FL) plans to introduce legislation aimed at preventing foreign entities from operating U.S. seaports. Meanwhile, the White House released remarks made by President Bush defending the Administration's decision to not block the acquisition. (2/21/06).

Port Ministry

Bishop Celebrates with Lay Ministers To Sailors

Reprinted with permission from The Southern Cross, the Diocesan newspaper for the Diocese of San Diego

By Denis Grasska

SAN DIEGO - In 2004, 678 commercial ships arrived at the Port of San Diego, carrying with them everything from South American produce and Japanese cars to essential building materials, such as steel and concrete.

Also on board were the professional sailors whose job it is to transport these products around the globe.

San Diego's Stella Maris Seafarers Center is dedicated to providing these visiting sailors --- 1,084 of them in 2004 - with opportunities for rest, recreation and spiritual renewal.

The center's volunteers visit incoming ships, bring magazines to the sailors and arrange to celebrate Mass onboard for Catholic crewmembers. Their ministry also extends to those on passenger ships.

Volunteers also operate the Seafarers Center itself, providing a place where sailors can watch television, play games, and use the center's computers and phones. A van is also available to transport the sailors to local shopping malls.

According to Father Jim Boyd, Catholic chaplain at the center, the Stella Maris Seafarers Center is deeply committed to ecumenism. Sailors of other faith traditions, including Hinduism and Islam, have enjoyed the hospitality of the center.

Also, though owned by the Catholic Church, the center houses both the Apostleship of the Sea, a Catholic ministry to seafarers, and its Episcopalian counterpart.

On Oct. 27, the center's 25 volunteers joined their spouses, families and friends for a Mass celebrated at the center by Auxiliary Bishop Gilbert E. Chavez, who commended the volunteers for their dedication and reminded them of the importance of their chosen ministry.

"It was wonderful to have the bishop there," said Father Boyd. "Everybody was very happy and pleased that the bishop would take the time to lead us in prayer and celebrate Mass with us."

During the Mass, which was followed by a potluck dinner, the volunteers were officially installed as "maritime ministers," a new title intended to more clearly describe their ministry and give them the same recognition afforded to lay ministers at local parishes. All volunteers were awarded a certificate bearing their new title.

Maritime ministers typically volunteer for four or five hours a week. Father Boyd said their specific responsibilities and the level of their involvement are negotiable. He said some are content watching television or reading a book at the center, while simply being present for any sailors who might need assistance, but others feel called to a more active role. According to Father Boyd, the volunteers are essential to the success of the center. He hopes for an even larger number of lay ministers to make the center's operations run even more smoothly.

For more information or to volunteer, contact Deacon Sam Martinez at (619) 429-3580 or samne11590@aol.com (email preferred).



Maritime Mass: Fr. Jim Boyd distributed Certificates to his volunteers, who were installed as maritime ministers, during an Oct. 27, Mass. Auxiliary Bishop Gilbert E. Chavez presiding, Deacon Sam Martinez, Director, assisting.

Letter...

Dear Fr. Oubre:

On my behalf and that of the families of the valour crew, our employees and fellow seafarers, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation for your thoughtful letter expressing kind words of comfort and support to all that have been touched by this recent tragedy.

Our strength has come from the great outpouring of support we've received from both the shoreside and seagoing communities. It's nice to know that our fellow brothers of the sea band together to support and comfort those in their time of need.

We appreciate your thoughts, prayers and planned remembrance for our fallen seamen and their families.

Regards,

Jonathan P. Whitworth
Chief Executive Officer
Maritrans Inc.

Port Ministry

Bishop visits Sheerness Docks

The Roman Catholic bishop with responsibility for Kent has visited the Apostleship of the Sea's chaplaincy team at Sheerness Docks and seen at first hand how the Catholic maritime charity provides pastoral and practical help to thousands of visiting seafarers.

Rt Rev John Hine, Auxiliary Bishop in the Archdiocese of Southwark, was welcomed to the Docks by Des Crampton, Port Operations Director. The Bishop was then taken on two typical ship visits by Deacon Daniel Mulcahy, a married former police officer who now serves as the Apostleship of the Sea (AOS) Chaplain to the Medway Ports.



Rt Rev John Hine, Auxiliary Bishop in the Archdiocese of Southwark (right), and Deacon Daniel Mulcahy, AOS Chaplain to the Medway Ports, preparing to visit ships.

Bishop John met visiting seafarers and was told about their particular problems and concerns. He was also taken to a communications room opened last year by AOS inside a spare port building where seafarers can make use of the three telephone booths to contact loved ones back home during their short time ashore. Seafarers can go for over a year without seeing their family.

Afterwards the Bishop met with port representatives and local AOS ship visiting volunteers, and the visit concluded with a celebration of Middy Prayer.

Bishop John Hine said: "It has been very interesting for me to receive this valuable insight into the conditions of seafarers and the excellent service provided for them by the Apostleship of the Sea. I was particularly interested to visit a cargo ship carrying paper pulp from Canada with Swedish officers and Filipino crewmembers. The officers told me that they had been away from their families for three months, and were delighted to be preparing to go home for a while as their ship was due to undergo repairs. Separation from spouses, children, friends and parish communities for months on end can be very difficult to bear, and Apostleship of the Sea chaplains and ship visitors seek to provide comfort, friendship and spiritual solace."



Bishop Hine and Deacon Mulcahy visit with a crewman on the deck of a cargo ship in Sheerness Docks.

Chaplain blesses new vessel

Fr Colum Kelly, an Apostleship of the Sea chaplain to the Humber ports, has dedicated a new pilot vessel in a ceremony in the port of Grimsby.

The Humber Neptune, the first of three new pilot launches funded by Associated British Ports, will help port personnel handle the busiest commercial waterway in the United Kingdom, handling some 37,000 shipping movements annually.

During the ceremony, AOS Chaplain Fr Kelly explained: "In the course of their duty, seafarers are set in the midst of many and great dangers and cannot be faithful to the high trust placed in them without the help of Almighty God. Let us pray today for His protection."

Fr Kelly continued: "Jesus came into the world to draw people together. Whatever contributes to bringing us closer together is therefore in accord with God's plan. Thus, those who are separated from each other by mountains, oceans, or great distances are brought nearer to each other whenever new means of transportation are provided. Let us then call on God to bless those who have worked on building this vessel and to protect with His gracious help those who will work on and sail in it."

Fr Kelly then blessed the vessel, its equipment and all who would use it, and was thanked by Nick Palmer, Port Director in Grimsby and Immingham.



Fr. Colum Kelly, AOS Chaplain to the Humber ports, blesses *The Humber Neptune*, a new pilot vessel launched at the Port of Grimsby in the UK.

The articles on this page detail recent activities of the Apostleship of the Sea in Great Britain and are reprinted with permission.

The Apostleship of the Sea (Great Britain) is an agency of the Catholic Bishops' Conferences of England & Wales and Scotland. It is also an independent charity wholly reliant on voluntary donations to continue its ministry.

More information about the work of AOS is available from Dominic Baster at londonoffice@aposmar.net

SACRIFICE _____ *from page 1*

artist, he drew illustrations for Catholic books and pamphlets.

Serving to the very end

Realizing that the government would not likely revisit his sentence, and wanting to serve as a priest, he finally decided to immigrate to the United States and continue his priestly ministry there. His brother, Petras, already lived in America.

Going first to England, he booked passage on the Titanic, which he boarded at Southampton. On the fateful night, Father Monvila was on the boat deck as the lifeboats were filled. A survivor reported, "the young Lithuanian priest, Juozas Montvila, served his calling to the very end." He was offered a place in one of the boats, but he refused to go. He wanted to stay on board to provide spiritual consolation to the passengers who were doomed.

His body was never recovered, or if recovered, it was never identified. A movement now exists for his canonization.

The Bavarian priest was Benedictine Father Joseph Benedikt Peruschitz. He was born on March 21, 1871, in Stasslach-Dingharting, in Bavaria. He entered the Benedictine community at Scheyern in 1894. On April 28, 1895, he was ordained a priest by the archbishop of Munich-Freising in the parish church in Scheyern. He made his profession as a Benedictine on Aug. 24, 1895.

In 1912, he was on his way to join the faculty at St. John's Abbey in Collegeville, Minn. He spent Holy Week at St. Augustine's Benedictine house in Ramsgate, England, before boarding the Titanic at Southampton as a second-class passenger.

Along with Father Thomas Roussel Davids Byles, the English priest, he went among Catholic passengers, after the ship hit the iceberg, giving absolution.

One report said it was not an effort that attracted unanimous admiration. Some people on the deck mocked the three priests. But, the priests continued to pray with those who asked for prayer.

Father Peruschitz also was offered a place in a lifeboat, but he too declined to leave the other passengers. One survivor recalled seeing him shortly before the sinking, leading a group of passengers in the Rosary.

This priest also died with the ship. His body was never recovered, or if it was recovered, it was never identified.

A minister's son

The third priest on the famous doomed ship, Father Thomas Roussel Davids Byles, had a very interesting life.

Born Roussel Davids Byles on Feb. 26, 1870, in Yorkshire, England, he was the son of a Congregationalist minister. The name Roussel, interestingly, was taken from the name of a Huguenot ancestor, Francois Roussel, who had fled to England from France in 1684, a year before King Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes, which had afforded Protestants many civil rights. Davids was his mother's maiden name.

For a while, his father, Rev. Dr. Alfred Holden Byles, served a congregation in Omaha, Neb., and his family was in the United States with him.

The Byles family was prominent. The priest's uncle served as a member of parliament and was knighted. One of the priest's sisters was a missionary in China.

Roussel himself went to Oxford in 1889, where he entered the Church of England and became interested in becoming an Anglican clergyman.

But five years later, in a letter to his brother, William Byles, who had already converted to Catholicism, he said he found himself "unable to recognize the Anglican position." Months later, he entered the Roman Catholic Church.

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When he converted, he took a new name - Thomas.

After converting, he went to Rome to study for the priesthood. He received a degree in theology from the Gregorian University and on June 15, 1902, he was ordained to the priesthood.

After returning to England, he took a teaching position at St. Edmund's College, in Ware, Hertfordshire, a Catholic school.

From 1905 until his death, he served as pastor of the Catholic parish, St. Helen's, in Ongar, Essex.

Father Byles' younger brother, William, moved to the United States. In Brooklyn, he met a woman to whom he eventually was engaged.

The couple invited Father Byles to come from England to officiate at the wedding. It was scheduled for the weekend after the Titanic was to have landed in New York.

After sailing from Southampton on April 10, the Titanic called at Cherbourg, France, to receive additional passengers. Many of these passengers had come from Paris aboard special trains chartered by the White Star Line.

While the ship was in port in Cherbourg, Father Byles wrote to his housekeeper in Ongar. His letter, which was removed from the ship in Cherbourg and posted, survives. The letter is filled with descriptions of the ship's comfort and size.

For example, the priest noted that although the Channel was very rough that day, the Titanic had made the crossing with little vibration or rolling. He also mentioned that two other priests were on board.

So, evidently within hours of sailing from Southampton, the three priest had met each other.

At circumstances' mercy

On the morning of Sunday, April 14, the day that would end with the accident, Father Byles celebrated Mass twice. On Mass was for second-class passengers. Later, Father Byles celebrated Mass for third-class passengers. Most third-class passengers were immigrants to America. Many were Irish, and they would have understood English.

Many others, however, were from continental Europe. Father Byles preached his third-class homily in English and French, and the Father Peruschitz followed with a sermon in German and Magyar.

When the collision with the iceberg came, Father Byles returned to third class. Many of its passengers, never before aboard a ship on the high seas, never before on such a large ship or amid such a crowd in such an emergency, handicapped by no knowledge of English in a strictly English-speaking environment as was the Titanic, were at the mercy of the circumstances.

Survivors remembered that Father Byles pointed third-class passengers to exits from lower decks or into the boats. He heard confessions. He prayed with anxious passengers.

Some reported that he too was offered a seat in a departing lifeboat, but he refused to leave the other passengers. He died with the ship.

His body was never recovered, or if it was recovered, it was never identified.

His brother and his brother's fiancée went on with their wedding, conducted, of course, by another priest. Newspapers of the day said that the couple left the church in their wedding finery, went home to dress in mourning clothes, and returned to the church immediately for a Requiem Mass for Father Byles.

Later that year, they traveled to Europe. They asked to tour the House of Commons. Their guide was a young man destined to be very much a part of the British Parliament, Winston Churchill.

In Rome, Pope St. Pius X received them, and the Pope called Father Byles a martyr.

Priests show how to practice altruism

By David Mills

Standing on the sidewalk long after midnight throwing rocks at the window of our bedroom on the third story, I realized how deeply my wife slept, and how foolish I was to leave my key at home. I have thought of this many times since, when she was nursing each of our children.

She liked to sit in a chair in the living room and, dragging herself from sleep, would rise when the children cried. She could have told me to go fix a bottle of milk and gone back to sleep, but her children needed her and that was that.

Years ago, I worked with a man who would skip lunch so that he could buy his wife flowers from a street vendor on the way to the commuter train. She loved flowers, but they didn't have any money for such things. He drank lots of coffee during the day, he told me cheerfully, because caffeine suppresses the appetite.

About the same time, I heard a woman who had opened her home to students explain to a friend, who was saying how wonderful it must be to have all these exciting, energetic young people around all the time, "You know what this kind of ministry means? It means seeing all of your wedding presents broken."

And then there are the three priests on the Titanic, doing their work knowing they were going to die - in fact, dying when they could have lived. No one would have blamed them for getting on a lifeboat. They had more work to do. They were needed elsewhere.

And they stayed on the ship anyway. They stayed to serve the people who needed them, knowing that soon the cold water would reach them, and that they would hold their breath as it went over their heads, and hold it until their lungs burned, until they had to breathe, and then they would suck in all that water and die.

How could they do it?

When we really think about what they did, most of us ask, "How could they do it? And how could they do it with such peace?" The answer is: they practiced ahead of time.

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Witness to history

A future priest was on board the Titanic for a while, but he was not ordained at the time, and in any case he left the ship before it departed from Europe.

He was an Irish Jesuit scholastic, Francis M. Browne. In 1912, his uncle bought him a first-class ticket on the Titanic, just for the Channel crossing from Southampton to Queenstown (now Cobh) in Ireland. It was a gift, obviously given to allow the young student the opportunity to see the splendid new pride of the British merchant marine, and to enjoy several meals in its magnificent first-class dining room.

Young Browne was an enthusiastic amateur photographer who took many pictures of his hours on the ship. After the disaster, these photos became important records of the ship.

As planned, when the Titanic landed in Queenstown, cleric Browne went ashore and went home. Later that day, the ship sailed into the open Atlantic and into history. Ordained in 1915, Father Browne became a famous retreat master in Ireland. He died in 1960.

All but forgotten

Five Protestant ministers were aboard the Titanic. None survived. The wife of one of these ministers also perished. However, the stories

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Or else we say, "Gosh, that's so great. I wonder if I could do something like that." The answer is just as simple: if you want to be ready to give your life for others, start practicing by giving your life for others now. Practice saying, "You, not me."

My wife dragging herself out of bed to feed her children, my co-worker going hungry to buy his wife flowers, the woman watching her treasures get smashed by careless college students were all practicing to die for others. From what we know of these three priests' lives, they had done the same in their own ways.

I don't think any of them would have thought of it this way. (My wife doesn't.) They did it because they loved the others they were caring for. But it was practice nevertheless.

Granted, it's easier to give yourself for your children or your spouse, but I think about the woman who opened her home to college students. They were about as unlovely as anyone can be. They were careless, demanding, rude, self-centered, ungrateful, oblivious to the pain and trouble they were causing her, taking her kindness as if they had a right to it, and treating her like a servant.

But she cared for them anyway. And she did it for decades.

Chances to practice

Life gives us lots and lots of chances to practice giving our life for others. We have lots of chances to say "You, not me."

Some are quite small, like holding the door for others to go first or leaving the last steak on the plate for someone else to eat. Many our church provides, like getting up early to read at the first Mass or giving up your Saturday evenings to help with the youth group or taking communion to the sick and shut-in.

Learning to die for others is mostly a matter of practice.

But it's not just a matter of practice. The three priests could give up their lives for the people on the Titanic because they knew they were not really dying. They were simply following the one who died for us, and on the third day rose again.

David Mills is the editor of Touchstone magazine (www.touchstonemag.com)

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of clerical heroism surrounded the Catholic priests only.

Rescue ships eventually recovered many bodies from the scene. Many of these were identified and sent to relatives for burial in the United States and Europe.

The many unidentified bodies were taken to Halifax, Nova Scotia, where they were buried. Perhaps one or more of these priests were buried in Halifax among the unidentified.

Newspapers and magazines of the time specifically reported the heroism of these priests. Small monuments exist, one to Father Peruschitz at the Sheyern abbey in Bavaria, the other to Father Byles at the parish church in Ongar, Essex.

Several years ago, the American Benedictine Historical Review published an article about Father Peruschitz. However, given the considerable publicity still forthcoming on the disaster, little reference is made today to these three priests, all of whom literally gave their lives to provide spiritual comfort to the anxious and the doomed.

Msgr. Own F. Campion is associate publisher of Our Sunday Visitor. This article first appeared in OSV's The Priest magazine.

Famous survivor was strong on board and on land

'Unsinkable' Molly Brown worked tirelessly to benefit the Church and women's rights

By Monte Mace

When the Titanic struck an iceberg on its maiden voyage on April 14, 1912, a few lucky survivors watched the luxury ocean liner plunge into the frigid North Atlantic from the safety of a lifeboat.

At the oars of one of those boats was the Titanic's most famous survivor - the 44-year-old "unsinkable" Molly Brown.

What most people now don't realize is that, in her day, Brown was famous for far more than surviving the Titanic - she was both a determined advocate for women's rights and a prominent Catholic who worked unceasingly for the benefit of the Church.

Brown's great-granddaughter, Helen Benziger McKinney of Weston, Mo., said that were she alive today, Brown would encourage women to think for themselves, to take responsibility for their actions and to protect the rights of unborn children.

McKinney said her great-grandmother was a remarkable woman in a time when a woman's place was considered to be in the home.

Courage amid chaos

Margaret Brown got her nick-name, of course, from her quick thinking and courageous actions aboard the Titanic.

When she and other survivors arrived in New York aboard the rescue ship Carpathia, reporters asked how she had survived.

"Typical Brown luck," she replied. "We're unsinkable."

But Brown not only helped save the lives of other passengers when the Titanic sank, but she also led people to safety during a fire at The Breakers Hotel in Florida, risked death to take ambulances to French soldiers during World War I, ran for the U.S. Senate before women were given the right to vote and acted as a leading fund raiser for the Catholic Church in Denver.

There is much about her great-grandmother, McKinney stated, that is not part of the public record. For one, Brown chastised the women who survived the sinking of the Titanic, saying they had shirked their responsibilities the night of the accident.

"After the Titanic sank, she really read the riot act to the surviving women, especially those her own age," McKinney said. "She admonished these women who had raised families or may not have had families [for] allowing women and children to get into the lifeboats without their husbands.

"She said, 'Why not step back and let that man get into the boat and save an entire family rather than sending a wife and child off to a life of abject poverty?'"

Brown knew well the plight of single women in the early 1900s - for a family rescued without a man to support them was doomed to extreme poverty.

Her great-grandmother would not have taken a seat in the lifeboat herself if it hadn't been for two ship officers, said McKinney. Brown had turned to leave the lifeboat and help people on the other side of the Titanic when the officers literally threw her into Lifeboat No. 6, she said.

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Ship's anti-Catholic myth doesn't hold water

By Thomas J. Craughwell

Every major disaster attracts its share of rumors and myths, but the tragic sinking of the Titanic leaves them all behind. The best urban-legend resource online, www.snopes.com, has an entire section dedicated exclusively to Titanic folklore. And one of those urban legends will be of interest to Catholics.

According to the story, the Titanic was built in Belfast, Northern Ireland, at the Harland & Wolff shipyard. There it was assigned the hull number 3909-04. Catholics who worked on the ship recognized that the hull number was actually an insult to their faith. Hold a mirror up to the hull number and it appears to read "NO POPE."

Harland & Wolff's Catholic employees protested, but management assured them it was a coincidence, that no anti-papal or anti-Catholic slur was intended in the random assignment of a hull number. Nonetheless, the Catholics of Belfast were convinced that with such a number emblazoned on her hull, the Titanic was doomed.

And, as everyone knows, the Titanic sank, with catastrophic loss of life.

Is there anything to this story? The short answer is, "No."

A good story spoiled

The Titanic was indeed built in Belfast at the Harland & Wolff shipyard. There it was assigned two numbers: 131,428 by the Board of Trade, and 401 by Harland & Wolff as her yard number. The accursed number 3909-04 appeared nowhere on the great ocean liner.

Then there is the matter of Harland & Wolff's Catholic labor force. Working in a prestigious shipyard was a plum job in early 20th-century Belfast. Such jobs went to Protestants, not Catholics. This pattern of locking Catholics out of better-paying skilled labor jobs survived in Northern Ireland into the late 1960s and early 1970s.

As for the "secret message," it is a staple of urban legends. The all-time classic "decodes" the Procter & Gamble logo of a crescent moon with 13 stars enclosed in a circle as a Satanic symbol. The executives at P&G - all of whom are supposed to be in league with the Devil - put the nefarious emblem on every package of every product they sell to show their covert support for the Prince of Darkness. This story still makes the rounds among the gullible, in spite of the fact that there is no evidence that the crescent moon and 13 stars has ever been a symbol for any witches' coven or demonic cult.

Writing in his book "The Choking Doberman" (Norton, \$13.95), Jan Harold Brunvand, the guru of urban legends, tackled the secret-code motif. "The clearest indications of all that this is the stuff of urban legend," he says, "and not of a dark hidden vein of reality are that none of the 'sources' for the story ever turns out to be reliable."

Thomas J. Craughwell is the author of "Catholic Cardlinks: Patron Saints" (Our Sunday Visitor, \$11.95) and "Saints for Every Occasion: 101 of Heaven's Most Powerful Patrons" (Stamper Enterprises, \$19.95). He writes from Connecticut.

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Strong in her beliefs

Born Margaret Tobin in 1867, she showed an early inclination for independence and courage. She left her birthplace of Hannibal, Mo., and moved to Leadville, Colo., at the age of 18. There she married Jim "J.J." Brown, who struck it rich in the lead mines of Leadville. Margaret Brown soon became a community leader in Denver.

She was also, said McKinney, "a staunch Irish Catholic," and not only led fundraising efforts to expand St. Joseph Hospital but also played a part in the building of the cathedral in Denver.

According to the website for the Molly Brown House Museum in Denver, Brown "wholeheartedly believed that if men and women were to truly be equals, they should serve their countries together in the battlefield." She even advocated that women should go to the front lines of the Mexican War in 1914.

The belief that women should share in wartime duties led Brown to volunteer her services in France during World War I, where she served behind the front lines as the director of the American Committee for Devastated France and organized rebuilding efforts and the distribution of food, clothing and tools.

In her day, Brown was considered a social liberal. But McKinney said Brown "would have been right there with me on the lines with the pro-life protests, saying take responsibility for what happened."

Despite her many adventures and derring-do, Brown's most remarkable quality was her "servant's heart," McKinney said.

"Everything she did was for other people ultimately," she added. "She came from abject poverty and went to extreme wealth. But she never forgot where she came from and she never forgot her Catholic roots and her political roots."

"I am honored and constantly amazed at the affection people have for Margaret Brown - even after all these years. She is truly an American folk heroine."

Monte Mace writes from Kansas. Reprinted with permission of the Catholic Advance, newspaper of the Diocese of Kansas City, Kan.

Hurricane Updates...

At long last, I've received news from the Archdiocese of New Orleans, regarding the whereabouts and well-being of 2 former AOS Chaplains: Deacon Doug Strayhan and Deacon Gil Smith. (Deacon Doug served at the Stella Maris Club in New Orleans & at the Port Arthur International Seafarers' Center here in Port Arthur, TX. Deacon Smith served at the Stella Maris Club in New Orleans.)

Both Deacons Gilbert Smith and Doug Strahan are well and recovering from the effects of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Deacon Smith lost his home in the Metairie area. He is residing

Reader edits book about his father's experiences at sea

One of our readers, Chris Common, has written a book about his father's seafaring adventures, entitled *A Star to Steer By*. More information on the book and its subject matter can be found on his website: www.chriscommon.com. Details on the book are as follows:

A Star to Steer By
The Seafaring Adventures of Captain Jim Common

A Memoir - As Told to his Son
 Edited by Christopher J. Common

This beautiful coffee-table book is hardcase bound, 305 pages, with full-color cover. It is 9 x 11 inches in size and contains nearly 350 historical photographs, illustrations, documents and maps. This fully indexed book includes appendixes, photo credits and vessel particulars.

ISBN# 0-937861-61-8
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The book features such topics as:

Sailing Yachts, Kelp Harvesters, Ferryboats, Miki Tugs, Atlantic Convoy, World War II, Northern Europe, Spruce Goose, Queen Mary, Harbor Tugs, Ocean Going Tugs, Towing Barges, Lumber-Oil, Salvage, Ocean Rescue, West Coast, Mexico, and the Panama Canal.



Capt. James A. Common, age 24, US Army Transport Service WWII, Plymouth, England, 1944



Capt. Jim Common and 5-year old son, Chris, at the steering wheel of the tug Challenger in San Diego, California / June 21, 1952

in a rental home until they figure out what to do with the other house. You can reach him at (504) 835-6808 home or (504) 256-1403 Cell.

Deacon Strahan also lost his home to both hurricanes. He has re-located to Starksville, Mississippi with his family. He has not been well for some time and the hurricanes have really taken its toll on him. You can reach him at (662) 338-9339 Home or (662) 228-4993 Cell.

When you have a chance to give one of them a call to say hello, I'm sure it would make their day to know that their AOS family is praying for them, and is there with them in solidarity.

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Upcoming Events For Maritime Ministry

April 25-28, 2006 AOS USA Annual Conference,
Texas A&M University at Galveston Maritime Academy
May 22, 2006 National Day of Prayer and Remembrance for
Mariners
July 9, 2006 Sea Sunday
June 23-30, 2007 (tentative) AOS World Congress
Poland

Maritime Memorial at Chicago's Navy Pier



“Captain on the Helm”

This statue was commissioned by the International Shipmasters Association (I.S.M.A.) Lodge 3, in 1997.

The monument was dedicated in a ceremony at Chicago's Navy Pier in May of 2000.

The inscription notes that it is a “memorial to all mariners sailing the waters of our inland seas, our Great Lakes”

Photo and information submitted by:
Fr. James P. Keating.

Send information about maritime memorials in your area to: aosusa@sbcglobal.net