



SEPTEMBER
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Stella Maris

SUPPORTING SEAFARERS AND FISHERS AROUND THE WORLD

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Stella Maris is a Catholic charity supporting seafarers worldwide.

We provide practical and pastoral care to all seafarers, regardless of nationality, belief or race. Our port chaplains and volunteer ship visitors welcome seafarers, offer welfare services and advice, practical help, care and friendship.

Stella Maris is the largest ship visiting network in the world, working in 332 ports with 227 port chaplains around the world. We also run 53 seafarers' centres all over the world.

We are only able to continue our work through the generous donations of our supporters and volunteers.

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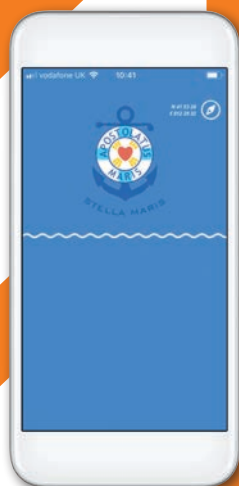
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Stella Maris
provides seafarers
with practical
support, information
and a listening ear



HONG KONG

Living in Hong Kong, we are never far from ships. When taking short ferry rides across Hong Kong's iconic Victoria harbour or commuting to and from outlying islands, we can see ships and boats of all sizes criss-cross the harbour or at anchor in the waters and ports of Hong Kong. Hundreds of both large ocean-going vessels as well as small river-trade vessels drift in and out of Hong Kong every day. Since its early days as a trading port of the British Empire to trade Chinese manufactured goods and ship them to Europe over a century ago, Hong Kong, which means 'Fragrant Harbour' in Chinese, has been one of the major ports of the world and as well as maritime gateways to the Southern part of China. Furthermore, shipping has become one of the main economic pillars and livelihood providers for Hong Kong.

The work of the Apostleship of the Sea in Hong Kong goes back to the 1930s and 40s. The St Vincent de Paul Society were carrying out ship visits and taking care of sailors until 1948 when the then Bishop of Hong Kong, Henry Valtorta PIME, assigned an Irish Jesuit priest, Fr Michael C Pelly (1907-1990), as the first full-time Catholic port chaplain. With the support of the Catholic Women's League of Hong Kong, Fr Pelly swung into action immediately and actively engaged in furthering the ministry to seafarers. His routine work included visiting the ships in the harbour, celebrating Holy Mass for Catholics onboard, visiting the sick and injured seafarers confined to hospitals, providing recreational amenities ashore, collecting and distributing books, magazines and periodicals to the hospitals and ships and so forth. In the course of five years of his service, he also formed a council composed of competent Catholic

laymen and women to provide all means of support and guidance to the chaplains and to attend to the various needs of the seafarers. And this had been continued, with more or less enthusiasm, by the succeeding chaplains. In 1969, at the initiative of the then Anglican and Roman Catholic Bishops, the AOS joined the Mission to Seafarers, and since then we have been working closely together to bring welfare services to all seafarers visiting Hong Kong. Stella Maris values the ecumenical partnership which has lasted for fifty-five years and looks forward to continuing this partnership for the betterment of seafarers, Christian unity and society at large.

Personally, since being assigned to this ministry in 2007, I have been also seeking to further the work of my predecessors with the active support, involvement and encouragement of the Council. In light of our unique arrangement, Stella Maris has been carrying out its work both independently and in complete collaboration where possible in what we believe is an effective and efficient manner. In recent years, the Stella Maris chaplaincy has been visiting ships at all terminals, docks and anchorages, in conjunction with the chaplaincy team of the Mission to Seafarers four days a week and, if necessary, other days of the week as well. On average we make about 550 ship visits a year. We also visit seafarers in local hospitals or prisons on shore and provide all possible assistance. For the past two years, the Covid-19 pandemic has affected our ship visits, especially the face-to-face interaction with seafarers on board ships and yet we strive to reach out to them and assist them in any way possible.

From the start, the local Catholic Community, especially those who

regularly attend the liturgical services held at St Peter's Church within the seafarers' centre, has been associated with our ministry directly or indirectly. Through the years, they have shown their care and support for seafarers by praying for them, visiting ships, raising funds and, helping out in church events/activities. With the growing support and dedication of the people within the community, Stella Maris Hong Kong hopes to continue to be an active contributor to the spiritual, moral and physical well-being of seafarers and their families worldwide and that in pursuance of this object it will use any means consistent with Christian principles and the received practice of the Church.

As Deacon Nestor says: Every visit to seafarers comes as a challenge to me, but I firmly believe in God's promise to all who place their faith in him: The Lord says: "I will not reject anyone who comes to me." (John 6:37). As a servant of God, I hope to continue sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ as well as showing God's love to all seafarers in need.



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Sunday at Sea with Fr Pio Idowu

**TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME**
SUNDAY 4TH SEPTEMBER

GOSPEL LUKE 14:25-33

Great crowds accompanied Jesus on his way and he turned and spoke to them. 'If any man comes to me without hating his father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, yes and his own life too, he cannot be my disciple. Anyone who does not carry his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

'And indeed, which of you here, intending to build a tower, would not first sit down and work out the cost to see if he had enough to complete it? Otherwise, if he laid the foundation and then found himself unable to finish the work, the onlookers would all start making fun of him and saying, "Here is a man who started to build and was unable to finish." Or again, what king marching to war against another king would not first sit down and consider whether with ten thousand men he could stand up to the other who advanced against him with twenty thousand? If not, then while the other king was still a long way off, he would send envoys to sue for peace. So in the same way, none of you can be my disciple unless he gives up all his possessions.'

THE GOSPEL AND YOU

Charismatic groups in Nigeria have a refrain which they like to sing all the time: It is a great thing to serve the Lord, walking in the light of the Lord. Yes, it is truly a great thing to serve the Lord. But this comes at a great cost. Many Christians follow Christ because they like what they hear about Christianity, because they have been witnesses to the marvellous wonders of Christ and have received a healing or blessing from him. And there is nothing wrong with this. But it is important to understand that the following of Christ comes at a great price. In today's Gospel, Christ says: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple".

The cost of discipleship is great and demanding. The words of Jesus are frightening words for most of us. Family is the one thing we all cherish a lot. Most of you seafarers have not seen your family in months. There are some whose home countries are ravaged by war and there is that constant worry about the safety and wellbeing of relatives. And so, this saying of Jesus can seem very difficult to accept.

But for the love of Christ, the disciple must be ready to carry his cross. For the love of Christ, the disciple must be ready to give up everything, including the love and affection of loved ones, including one's own very life; otherwise, "you cannot be my disciple".

Jesus is asking us to love him above all things. May we always be filled with joy in following Christ. May Our Lady, the perfect disciple, help us experience the same joy she had in giving up everything for Christ.

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME SUNDAY 11TH SEPTEMBER

GOSPEL LUKE 15:1-32

The tax collectors and the sinners were all seeking the company of Jesus to hear what he had to say, and the Pharisees and the scribes complained. 'This man' they said 'welcomes sinners and eats with them.' So he spoke this parable to them:

'What man among you with a hundred sheep, losing one, would not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the missing one till he found it? And when he found it, would he not joyfully take it on his shoulders and then, when he got home, call together his friends, and neighbours? "Rejoice with me," he would say "I have found my sheep that was lost." In the same way, I tell you, there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one repentant sinner than over ninety-nine virtuous men who have no need of repentance.

'Or again, what woman with ten drachmas would not, if she lost one, light a lamp and sweep out the house and search thoroughly till she found it? And then, when she had found it, call together her friends and neighbours? "Rejoice with me," she would say "I have found the drachma I lost." In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing among the angels of God over one repentant sinner.'

He also said, 'A man had two sons. The younger said to his father, "Father, let me have the share of the estate that would come to me." So the father divided the property between them. A few days later, the younger son got together everything he had and left for a distant country where he squandered his money on a life of debauchery.

'When he had spent it all, that country experienced a severe famine, and now he began to feel the pinch, so he hired himself out to one of the local inhabitants who put him on his farm to feed the pigs. And he would willingly have filled his belly with the husks the pigs were eating but no one offered him anything. Then he came to his senses and said, "How many of my father's paid servants

have more food than they want, and here am I dying of hunger! I will leave this place and go to my father and say: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as one of your paid servants." So he left the place and went back to his father.

'While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with pity. He ran to the boy, clasped him in his arms and kissed him tenderly. Then his son said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son." But the father said to his servants, "Quick! Bring out the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the calf we have been fattening, and kill it; we are going to have a feast, a celebration, because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life; he was lost and is found." And they began to celebrate.

'Now the elder son was out in the fields, and on his way back, as he drew near the house, he could hear music and dancing. Calling one of the servants he asked what it was all about. "Your brother has come" replied the servant "and your father has killed the calf we had fattened because he has got him back safe and sound." He was angry then and refused to go in, and his father came out to plead with him; but he answered his father, "Look, all these years I have slaved for you and never once disobeyed your orders, yet you never offered me so much as a kid for me to celebrate with my friends. But, for this son of yours, when he comes back after swallowing up your property – he and his women – you kill the calf we had been fattening."

'The father said, "My son, you are with me always and all I have is yours. But it was only right we should celebrate and rejoice, because your brother here was dead and has come to life; he was lost and is found."



THE GOSPEL AND YOU

The parable of the Prodigal Son is a story of two sons and their father. It is a story of sin, envy and merciful love.

The parable of the prodigal son is a story of sin. The parable uses the powerful image of a Jew living and eating with pigs to give us an idea of the wretched and sad state to which the Christian is reduced who commits sin. For the Jews the pig is the ultimate symbol of abomination. And image of a Jew having no other option but to live and eat with pigs helps us to understand the wretched state of the sinner who rebels against God's will by committing sin. When we commit sin, we become like the prodigal son who was reduced to a state of wretchedness. When we commit sin, we lose God's grace which is the greatest wealth that we can ever possess.

The parable of the prodigal son is a story of envy. We see this in the older brother who represents Christians envious of the blessings God wishes to bestow on

others. We must never forget that as faithful children of the Father, everything that belongs to our Father in heaven belongs to us. "Son", the father said, "you are *always* with me, and *all* that is mine is yours." Let us always learn to rejoice in the good that God is able to accomplish in others.

But most especially, the parable of the prodigal son is a story of love and mercy. Some of us have done terrible things in life. Most of us indulge in little infidelities towards God. And we say to ourselves, God cannot forgive my sin. But you must realise that it is God who comes to you. He is the one who makes the first move, He is the One who wants to show you his merciful love. Just like the father in this parable waited with longing for his son, so also God our Father in heaven waits for us with divine longing. No matter how great your sins may be, do not be afraid to approach God for forgiveness. He is willing to forgive as long as you are truly sorry.



TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME SUNDAY 18TH SEPTEMBER

GOSPEL LUKE 16:1-13

Jesus said to his disciples: 'There was a rich man and he had a steward who was denounced to him for being wasteful with his property. He called for the man and said, "What is this I hear about you? Draw me up an account of your stewardship because you are not to be my steward any longer." Then the steward said to himself, "Now that my master is taking the stewardship from me, what am I to do? Dig? I am not strong enough. Go begging? I should be too ashamed. Ah, I know what I will do to make sure that when I am dismissed from office there will be some to welcome me into their homes."

'Then he called his master's debtors one by one. To the first he said, "How much do you owe my master?" "One hundred measures of oil" was the reply. The steward said, "Here, take your bond; sit down straight away and write fifty." To another he said, "And you, sir, how much do you owe?" "One hundred measures of wheat" was the reply. The steward said, "Here, take your bond and write eighty."

'The master praised the dishonest steward for his astuteness. For the children of this world are more astute in dealing with their own kind than are the children of light.

'And so I tell you this: use money, tainted as it is, to win you friends, and thus make sure that when it fails you, they will welcome you into the tents of eternity. The man who can be trusted in little things can be trusted in great; the man who is dishonest in little things will be dishonest in great. If then you cannot be trusted with money, that tainted thing, who will trust you with genuine riches? And if you cannot be trusted with what is not yours, who will give you what is your very own?

'No servant can be the slave of two masters: he will either hate the first and love the second, or treat the first with respect and the second with scorn. You cannot be the slave both of God and of money.'

THE GOSPEL AND YOU

The parable of the dishonest steward is a difficult parable to explain because it seems Jesus is praising the dishonest behaviour of the steward. The master had lost faith in his steward for squandering the property entrusted to his care. And so the master decided to get rid of him. Now the steward, not being used to hard labour, feared for his future and wondered what would happen to him after he became jobless. "I am not strong enough to dig and I am ashamed to beg", he said. And he decided upon a plan of action that would win the favour and friendship of his master's debtors and thus make secure his financial future. By trying to secure his future life, he swindles his own master. But in verse 8 Jesus seems to commend this behaviour when he said: "The master praised the dishonest steward for his astuteness."

In the Christian life one may have good intentions, but good intentions can never justify sinful actions. For example, telling a lie in order to preserve peace in the family is always a sin in the eyes of God. Jesus does not approve of dishonest activity. The purpose of this parable is to give us an example of how keenly we should strive to store up treasure for ourselves in heaven. Just as the steward made efforts to secure his own financial future, so also, with the same kind of diligence, we Christians, we the children of light, should seek after the treasures of eternal life.

So, when Jesus says: "make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal habitations", he is trying to admonish us to make good use of our worldly possessions and wealth. God has made us stewards of earthly goods and wealth. He wants us to use these things to secure for ourselves eternal life in heaven. If God has blessed you with riches, use them to help others, give alms for the love of God. If God has given you talents and gifts, use those talents and gifts for the good of others.

TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME SUNDAY 25TH SEPTEMBER

GOSPEL LUKE: 16:19-31

Jesus said to the Pharisees: 'There was a rich man who used to dress in purple and fine linen and feast magnificently every day. And at his gate there lay a poor man called Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to fill himself with the scraps that fell from the rich man's table. Dogs even came and licked his sores. Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to the bosom of Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried.

'In his torment in Hades he looked up and saw Abraham a long way off with Lazarus in his bosom. So he cried out, "Father Abraham, pity me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in agony in these flames." "My son," Abraham replied "remember that during your life good things came your way, just as bad things came the way of Lazarus. Now he is being comforted here while you are in agony. But that is not all: between us and you a great gulf has been fixed, to stop anyone, if he wanted to, crossing from our side to yours, and to stop any crossing from your side to ours."

'The rich man replied, "Father, I beg you then to send Lazarus to my father's house, since I have five brothers, to give them warning so that they do not come to this place of torment too." "They have Moses and the prophets," said Abraham "let them listen to them." "Ah no, father Abraham," said the rich man "but if someone comes to them from the dead, they will repent." Then Abraham said to him, "If they will not listen either to Moses or to the prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone should rise from the dead."



THE GOSPEL AND YOU

The parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus seems very straightforward. The rich man had everything that this world could give him. Lazarus, on the other hand, possessed nothing of this world. He was only a beggar at the rich man's gate, ignored and despised. The parable somehow makes us think that Lazarus may have even found it difficult to feed himself with the leftovers from the rich man's table. Both of them died and their respective circumstances were reversed. The rich man found himself in hell while Lazarus was taken up to Abraham's bosom. Now it was the turn of the rich man to suffer from torment and thirst while Lazarus enjoyed peace and comfort in Abraham's bosom.

One might be tempted to immediately think that the rich go to hell while the poor will go to heaven. That's not fair and God would be an unjust God if he treated us in that way. The real problem with the rich man was not just that he had money and power, but that he believed

that this was all that really mattered. His wealth and power were his only comfort, his treasure, his god! He didn't share his wealth and he wasn't compassionate and merciful in his power. What he thought was satisfying him was in fact enslaving him and blinding him. He could no longer see beyond the things of this world. So he was poor spiritually.

It doesn't really matter how much wealth and power we have. Even a poor man can be blinded by the pleasures of this world and driven mad by his desire for the comforts of this life. He can rob and kill in order to acquire what he believes will bring him happiness.

What this parable is trying to teach us is that we must learn to place our trust in God and not in any form of earthly possession. We could ask ourselves: where and what is my real treasure? Is it the security that this world offers or is it the love of Christ? Am I the rich man or Lazarus?

Padre Pio and the Wounds of Christ (or Stigmata)

by Jim Gallagher

> The following account from Padre Pio of his stigmata was given under obedience to his superiors. It is extracted from Padre Pio: A Holy Priest.

When Padre Pio began receiving the stigmata (the wounds of Christ in his hands, feet and side) he attempted to hide it from the world. But his superiors realised what was happening and, under obedience, he gave them this testimony.

"What can I tell you regarding my crucifixion? My God! What embarrassment and humiliation I suffer by being obliged to explain what you have done to this wretched creature!

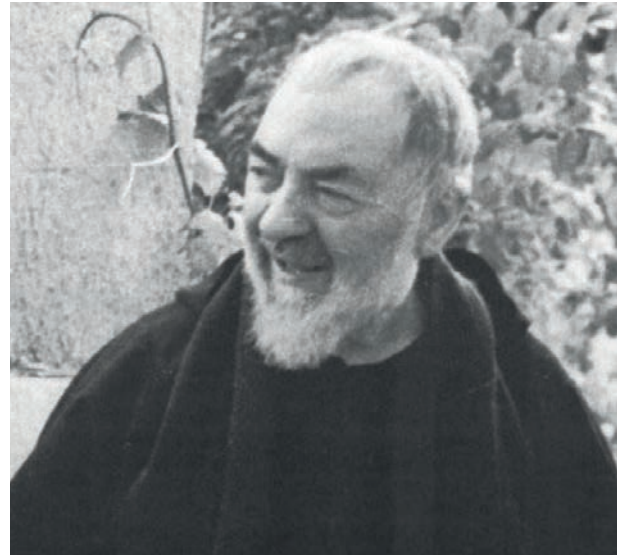
On the morning of the 20th of last month, in the choir, after I had celebrated Mass I yielded to a drowsiness similar to a sweet sleep. All the internal and external senses and even the very faculties of my soul were immersed in indescribable stillness. Absolute silence surrounded and invaded me. I was suddenly filled with great peace and abandonment which effaced everything else and caused a lull in the turmoil. All this happened in a flash.

While this was taking place I saw before me a mysterious person similar to the one I had seen on the evening of 5th August. The only difference was that his hands and feet and side were dripping blood. This sight terrified me and what I felt at that moment is indescribable. I thought I should die and really should have died if the Lord had not intervened and strengthened my heart which was about to burst out of my chest.

The vision disappeared and I became aware that my hands, feet and side were dripping blood." (Letters, Vol 1, 22nd October 1918)

Somehow, he dragged himself back to his cell. He bound up his wounds as best he could and for the next day or two tried his best to keep his hands hidden beneath the long sleeves of his habit. He was suffering both physically and spiritually. In a letter to Fr Benedetto on 22nd October 1918, he wrote: "Dear Father, I am dying of pain because

He would be the only priest in the history of the Church to be recognised as bearing the stigmata of the wounds of Christ.



of the wounds and the resulting embarrassment I feel deep in my soul. I am afraid I shall bleed to death if the Lord does not hear my heartfelt supplication to relieve me of this condition."

On this occasion, the Lord did not see fit to answer Pio's prayer. The wounds were there to stay and Padre Pio would bleed from them every day and night for the next fifty years. He would be the only priest in the history of the Church to be recognised as bearing the stigmata of the wounds of Christ.

His own patron, the patron of Italy and founder of his religious family, St Francis of Assisi, bore the stigmata. Francis was not a priest but a deacon. And the stigmata were given to him only in the last two years of his life, thought to be a gift for him personally. With Padre Pio, it seems, they were to be a public sign, a gift not only for him but for the good of the whole Church and the world; a charism.

Despite Pio's initial attempt, in his embarrassment and confusion, to keep the wounds hidden, Fr Guardian of the friary soon recognised something was amiss. On the second or third day after the 20th September, he came to Padre Pio's cell to confront him. Poor Pio burst into tears and 'admitted' everything to his superior as he told him all that had happened.



Under obedience to his superiors, Padre Pio allowed this photo to be taken of his stigmata.

Explaining Angels

by Fr Michel Remery

➤ **Have you ever wondered what angels really are? Often depicted in art as cherubic children with wings, or associated with the saints, this blog seeks to discover the truth about these incredible creatures, from the archangels to guardian angels.**



Angels are intelligent beings created by God. The Bible often mentions angels, and they can be divided into various groups or choirs. Like people, God created them with a free will, so that they could freely choose to accept God's love. Since they did accept his love, they live forever with God in heaven. It is incredible to imagine, but some angels decided in their freedom not to accept God's love, and turned against him. These are the 'fallen angels' or 'angels of darkness', led by Satan, the enemy of God. Angels are, as it were, a step ahead of us, just as the saints are, for they have made their final choice for God already. We too can choose to accept God's love during our lives; our choice becomes definitive at the moment of our death. The word 'angel' comes from the Greek *angelos*, meaning messenger. They can bring our prayers and petitions to God. And they are more than that.

Guardian Angels

The angels are sent by God to help us as travelling companions. Jesus said that even the smallest among people have angels assigned to them, who are with God in heaven (Mt 18:10). Everyone has a guardian angel. Our guardian angel has the task of helping us in our faith and finding the way to eternal life with God (Heb 1:14). From conception to death your guardian angel prays for you and cares for you. You can pray

daily to your guardian angel: 'Angel of God, my guardian dear, to whom God's love commits me here: ever this day be at my side, to light and guard, to rule and guide. Amen'.

Archangels

The only angels whose names are mentioned in the Bible are the three Archangels Michael, Gabriel and Raphael. Each of them plays an important role on our path to God. Michael is mentioned several times throughout the Bible as the defender of God's people against the enemy of God, and the leader of the heavenly host or 'army' (Dan 12:1; Rev 12:7). Gabriel brings God's message to Mary, telling her that she had been chosen to be the mother of God, and receiving her answer in his name (Lk 1:26-38). Raphael was sent to help Tobit and his son Tobias. He travelled with Tobias and helped him find his wife. Finally, he healed Tobit from his blindness (Tob 3-12).

What is the difference between angels and saints?

The essential difference between angels and human beings is that angels are pure spirits: they do not have a body – and never had one. When we die, our eternal soul is temporarily separated from our body, and can go to heaven. Just as true love cannot simply disappear, our soul cannot die. God's love for each of us is for eternity, and

he promises that at the end of time, our soul shall be united with an 'updated version' of our own bodies.

So, our bodies make us different from angels. This difference remains in heaven, simply because we are different kinds of creatures. Human beings never become angels and the saints have not 'earned their heavenly wings.' To complicate matters, we often refer to the Archangels as, for example, St Michael, or the holy Archangels. This is because anyone in heaven is holy, and therefore worthy of the term saint. Did you ever pray to your angel?

God helps us through the angels

'We have...received a truth which must be profoundly important for every Christian: that there are pure spirits, creatures of God, initially all good and then, through a choice of sin, irreducibly separated into angels of light and angels of darkness. And while the existence of the wicked angels requires of us that we be watchful so as not to yield to their empty promises, we are certain that the victorious power of Christ the Redeemer enfolds our lives, so that we ourselves may overcome these spirits. In this, we are powerfully helped by the good angels, messengers of God's love, to whom, taught by the tradition of the Church, we address our prayer.'

(Pope John Paul II, General Audience, 20 August 1986)



29th September is the Feast of the Archangels

PRAYER TO ST MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL

St Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle;
be our defence against the wickedness and snares of the devil.

May God rebuke him, we humbly pray;
and do thou, O prince of the heavenly host,
by the divine power,
cast into hell Satan and all the other evil spirits
who prowl about the world, seeking the ruin of souls.
Amen.



STELLA MARIS

Stella Maris is the largest ship-visiting network in the world. We improve the lives of seafarers and fishers through our network of local chaplains and seafarer centres, expert information, advocacy and spiritual support.



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