

THE CHURCH'S PASTORAL MINISTRY TO SEAMEN

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I. THE GREEK STATE'S PROVISIONS FOR SEAMEN. (Ministry of Mercantile Shipping)

1. *Statistics*

a. There are 3,666 merchant ships under Greek flag listed in the Greek Government's register of Merchant ships with a total capacity of 33,956,093 G.R.T.

b. There are 682 Greek Ships with a capacity of over 12,556,872 G.R.T. under foreign flags whose crews are insured by the Seamen's Pension Fund. There are also a number of other ships whose crews are not so insured.

c. There are approximately 120,000 Greek Seamen.

d. Foreign Seamen: 28,000 seamen serve on Greek Ships under foreign flags;

2. *The Ministry provides recreational halls, libraries, radio and telephone facilities (recreation).*

3. *The seamen's families do not face financial problems. Seamen send an adequate amount of currency home.*

4. *The Mercantile Ministry's provisions for Seamen*

a. Sieres of laws for the protection and benefit of seamen, insuring a comfortable life.

b. The offices of the Greek Consulate throughout the world solve the various differences arising between seamen and employers.

c. Representatives from the branch offices of the Panhellenic Seamen's Federation throughout the world visit the crews and facilitate seamen and help them solve their problems.

d. Seamen and their families are free to choose the doctor of their preference and enjoy complete medical, pharmaceutical and hospital coverage.

e. There exists for the seamen's benefit a modern and full-scale (General) Hospital, the «Hospital Institute of Merchant Seamen».

f. In Piraeus there exists the «Seaman's Hostel».

5. The Ministry's Provisions for the Families of Seamen

a. The ministry of Mercantile Shipping has close relations with the families of seamen and solves their problems.

b. The existence of the «Seaman's House», an Administrative Centre where seamen and their families find medical and pharmaceutical care.

c. Various mercantile companies offer gifts to the best seamen.

d. The establishing of the «Kavvadias Award», presented to authors of books about the sea.

6. The State's Plans and General Prospects for Assistance to Seamen

a. The Ministry constantly studies the seamen's problems with concern.

b. Through the Merchant Marine's News Bulletin already being sent over the wireless to all ocean-going ships throughout the world, seamen are kept up to date on various matters. Such a bulletin constitutes a type of rudimentary daily Newspaper.

7. The Protective Role Played by the Ministry in Solving the Seamen's Problems.

a. All seamen address letters to the Ministry which, through the various Consulate offices, solves any problems they may have.

b. When a Greek Ship has problems with the authorities of another country the Ministry of Mercantile Shipping intervenes through the Greek Foreign Ministry, and through diplomatic channels solves the existing problem e.g. the return of Seamen to their homeland.

8. Various holidays and celebrations organized by the Ministry on behalf of Seamen.

a. On various holidays and anniversaries the Minister of Mercantile Shipping communicates with the seamen through various messages and proclamations.

b. Naval Week:

Celebrated every year during the first week in July. (Various celebrations and functions held chiefly in the seaport cities, and other celebrations throughout all of Greece. The Church actively participates in these festivities through Celebration of the Divine Liturgy, special sermons, Synodical Encyclical Messages, etc.).

II. THE CHURCH'S MINISTRY TO SEAMEN.

A. WHAT THE CHURCH OF GREECE HAS DONE THUS FAR.

a. The Standing Holy Synod, acting upon a proposal by its Synodical Committee on Pastoral Work, decided to establish a Sub-Committee on Pastoral Ministry to Seamen (see document No. 51/1676/890/ March 19, 1970, of the Holy Synod), whose purpose is «the spiritual assistance, in all possible ways, of seamen and their families as well as of veteran seamen».

This Sub-Committee was established on May 25, 1970 chiefly through documents Protocol No. 686/9-2-70 and 40/818/14-2-70.

b. This Sub-Committee (1970) circulates thousands of copies of the Archbishop's Message and sends them to seamen both at home and abroad and creates close contacts between the Naval world and the Church.

c. A Special Questionnaire entitled «Social Research Bulletin», drawn up in collaboration with the Church's social services, is sent out in order that the Church learn the real and specific problems of its seamen. This questionnaire is subdivided as follows:

I. Name, surname, date and place of birth, family address.

II. Education

III. Military service, branch, term of service.

IV. Date of entry into seamen's service, Medical Record.

V. Present seaman's rank.

VI. Occupation and financial status of relatives.

VII. Relatives having served or serving as seamen.

VIII. Name of ship on which presently serving, class (passanger, merchant), Company name. Have you changed company as a seaman?

(Name of company or companies with which one has previously served),
Name of family dependents.

IX. Existing contacts with his family, with the Church; What problems does he or his family face, etc.

d. The Orthodox Academy of Crete held a special consultation on the problems of seamen in February 1973.

e. The Sub-Committee publishes and circulates thousands of copies each year, free of charge, of «The Greek Seamen's Yearbook». In the back of the Yearbook one finds a calendar, the names, addresses and telephone No. of Orthodox Communities, Churches, priests and centres in all the seaports throughout the world.

f. The Church collaborates with Greek Ship Owners and assists the seamen in solving their problems (financial, family, spiritual).

g. Books of Christian content and records with Church Music are sent to ships (Records containing Church Music, Messages of the Church to Seamen, Easter-Christmas, Holy Week Services). Special books about the sea and pamphlets are also sent.

h. The Church actively participates in Naval Week (first week in July).

i. Special radio and TV programs and sermons on St. Nicholas' Day. St. Nicholas is the patron saint of Greek seamen.

j. Special Encyclical issued by the Holy Synod and special sermons during Naval Week. The entire Greek Nation participates in the numerous and multiform celebrations. Use of all available radio, TV and other communications media by the Church.

k. Periodical use of the satellite Station at Thermopylae.

l. Use of TV, radio, Church Press, periodicals, Sunday Schools, teachers of theology in High Schools and other schools.

m. The Church through the local parish maintains contact with the seamen's families.

n. The Church of Greece has growing collaboration with the Orthodox Churches abroad in solving various problems facing the seamen.

o. The Church of Greece has placed her ministry to seamen within the framework of her overall pastoral ministry, and in her desire to help in a positive way, studies the matter with great concern.

This is the reason why she has sent her representative, Archimandrite Timothy Trivizas, to the Houston Seamen's Center in the past.

B. IDEAS AND PROPOSALS CONCERNING THE CHURCH'S MINISTRY TO SEAMEN

1. The organization of a centralized Center on Pastoral Ministry in Piraeus with branch offices in all other ports throughout the country, especially in those parts of Greece where seamen's vocations are traditional. This Center is to be staffed with both permanent and voluntary personnel.

To this center would be subordinated:

a. an Interior Department

having as its purpose the pastoral ministry to seamen's families and

b. an External Department

having as its purpose pastoral care to seamen aboard ship.

In the Interior Department, there would be collaboration with various authorities, Most Revd. Metropolitans and the founding of «Seamen's Houses» throughout the interior.

The External Department should have branch offices in many ports throughout the world, collaborating in the field of seamen's problems with the Greek Consular Authorities, the Orthodox Church, and the seamen's ministry of foreign Churches, and working for the establishment of «Seaman's Houses». The «Seaman's Houses» mentioned above should be centers equipped for assistance, recreation and study (Libraries etc.) and have hostels and other facilities attached.

2. Sea Department.

a. Pastoral assistance to those aboard ship. The creation of a voluntary body of priests and social workers for seamen who would sail with the crews and have direct contact with them.

b. Their purpose would be to create an analogous climate aboard ship and to assist all, especially those who are sailing for the first time and face many problems.

These priests and social workers would be useful even to the State and the Shipping Lines and to the officers of the Merchant Marine because they would help them to form a correct idea about the life and problems of the seamen.

Thus we can say that this group of priests and social workers could help

I. new seamen going through their initial stage of adjustment.

II. In the beneficial use of free time and the education of the crew. (No seaman should feel spiritually secluded aboard ship. Organi-

sation and use of Libraries; cultivation of various interests and abilities, exercises, action groups).

3. The Priest's role vis-à-vis the Seamen.

The establishing of a body of Naval Priests working for those «who sail with good intent upon the sea» and accompanying the ships on their voyages (or having co-workers aboard ship) performing divine services and laboring in this field.

4. Cooperation between the Pastoral departments (Interior and External) and their coordination by the Pastoral Center in Piraeus is required. The Center would simultaneously cooperate with the body of Greek Ship Owners and the representatives of the shipping world.

5. The establishment of a School-Seminary for the training of priests and social workers in the field of Pastoral Ministry to Seamen.

6. The recruiting of personnel from amongst young priests and lay theologians, sociologists, teachers and social workers and their employment by the Church, after their training at the above-mentioned special Seminary.

7. A broad use of the Satellite Station at Thermopylae for the transmitting of suitable sermons, talks, Church music, advice and information.

8. Finally, since in the above-mentioned field of endeavor many non-Orthodox Churches have greatly labored, the Church of Greece should make good use of their experience.

A close cooperation and exchange of personnel between the Church of Greece and the International Seamen's Center in Houston, Texas, U.S.A., is proposed.

III. THE PASTORAL WORK FOR THE SEAMEN IN THE PORT OF PIREUS.

A. SHIP-VISITING

The work of ship-visiting by a priest or his assistant in the Port of Piraeus is very important, but not as important as it is in the Port of Houston. One reason for this is that the Port of Pireus is almost in the heart of town, so that the sailor can get in immediate contact with the world whenever he wants to.

Also most of the Greek sailors have relatives either in Piraeus or in Athens and they can get in touch with them directly.

Nevertheless, the visit of the pastor to the ship is important and necessary (a) for foreign sailors and (b) for Greek sailors who have no relatives there.

Furthermore the visit of the pastor signifies the presence of the Church's interest covering all those who work at sea.

An important improvement in this work should be the division of the Port of Piraeus into sectors, so that each pastor should visit his assigned sector systematically; thus he would be more familiar with the specific traffic in his sector.

There exists urgent need for cooperation between the pastors and the Port Authorities, a cooperation which would greatly facilitate the free movements of the pastors in the port. The Department of Merchant Navy can contribute to this.

My opinion is that a pastor should visit a few ships on a given day and do his job more thoroughly than visit many ships and do a superficial job only.

I also believe that the visiting pastor should first undergo special training to familiarize himself with the customs and way of living of the various nationalities so that when he visits a ship he would have a certain knowledge of the people he was to visit.

It goes without saying that the pastor must be a very patient man.

In his work the visiting pastor should be prompted only by his love for the sailors; only in this way can he influence them and through his personality can he propagate faith in Christ in a free way, not binding the free will of the sailor. The pastor must not appear as trying to proselytize or convert; he must appear as a friend who visits the sailors just to welcome them and be of some help to them.

So the visiting pastor must have brotherly love for Christians and non-Christians alike.

It is important that the visiting pastor should first meet the Captain of the ship; if he succeeds in gaining the trust and confidence of the Captain he will gain the confidence and trust of the crew.

The pastor should acquaint the Captain with the work of the Seamen's Center, inform him about everything concerning his work, and even invite him to the Center and provide him with any available literature or brochures describing the work done in or by the Center. After this he could obtain permission to see the other sailors.

The first impression of the pastor's visit is very important. After the pastor has paved the way, as I have already mentioned, he can approach the sailors and develop a friendly discussion with them. Thus he can inform them about the operation and program of the Seamen's Center. The attitude of some seamen may not be very friendly; yet the pastor should be tolerant and patient.

Of course personal friendship of the pastor with the Captain or another officer of the ship will help greatly. Even a mere sailor may exercise some psychological influence over the other seamen and thus help the work of the pastor.

The seamen will easily participate in a discussion with the pastor if they realize that his intentions and purposes are honest. It depends on the pastoral personality of the priest, a personality that must radiate his understanding, patience, love and discretion.

Leaving the ship, the pastor should not forget to stick on the bulletin board the complete schedule of the Seamen's Center and not content himself with what he has told them about it.

B. THE CENTER'S PROGRAM

We might consider as a typical program the program of the Seamen's Center of the Port of Houston, but adjusted to accommodate the Greek environment. The Center will basically be Orthodox and will cooperate closely with the Diocese of Piraeus; otherwise its operation and the work of the clergymen would be greatly hampered by the existing Ecclesiastical Laws in Greece. But the Center can be, and must be, in essence, international (a) cooperating with the Missions in Greece of all the other Churches, e.g. German, Roman Catholic, etc. offering its work to Orthodox Christians, to Christians of other denominations, to all other religious groups, to Greeks and non-Greeks, and to all in general.

The Center must be in close cooperation with the Dioceses of Piraeus and Nicaea, the Archdiocese of Athens and all the nearest Dio-

ceses; also with the «Center of the Sailor», the «Home of the Seaman», the Seaman's Hospital, the Department of Merchant Navy, as well as with the city authorities of Piraeus and all the cultural and religious centers.

The Diocese of Piraeus should undertake the responsibility of training a special group of priests who will take over the work of the visiting pastor in cooperation with the Seamen's Center.

The Seamen's Center of Piraeus must get in touch and start cooperating with the many shipowners' offices that have their headquarters in Piraeus. These companies can help both financially and with their experience in nautical matters, the work of the Seamen's Center.

One of the difficulties is that the area of the Port of Piraeus is densely populated, so there is no space for a field for games. A solution to this problem would possibly be a cooperation transportation system to carry the seamen to the large football field of «Olympiakos» or the opening of a smaller space in the Amphiale district. Or the Center could copy the features of the Houston Center but without a football field.

The whole program of the Center could be arranged so as to make full use of all the cultural and musical activities of Piraeus; the program could also include such activities as films, dancing and other, as well as excursions to the nearby areas of archeological and religious interest.

COMMUNITY—LOCAL CHURCH RELATIONS

As already mentioned, the whole work must be connected with the nearby Diocese so as to be able to survive and succeed in its aim.

In Greece generally, and specifically in Piraeus, such a project cannot be developed independently from the Church. If the job that has to be done involves priests, then it has to be dependent on the local Church; if it is not, then the work will be just a kind of social work, and priests will not be able to work and devote themselves to it.

So the work of the Seamen's Center must be a part of the whole work of the Church in order that it develop and attain the aim we all pursue.

If the local churches and nearby Dioceses love this work then many workers will be found and many volunteers will help.

In this area a lot of help could come from local High Schools, Colleges and Universities, as well as from many other independent religious societies. Even parishes may be encouraged to visit the Center; the traditional Greek Hospitality may urge many individuals to offer hospitality to foreign seamen or offer to entertain them.

Because of the peculiarity in the relationship between Church and State in Greece and the conservative theological spirit, the whole structure of the work of the Center must be put on a correct basis.

There is a strong possibility that such a work will succeed and, supported by the Church and the State, will develop; but there is also a possibility that it will fail if the whole effort is not made thoughtfully and with courage and caution.