



Message for Sea Sunday 2023

(July 9, 2023)

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Since the very beginning, the Gospel has reached every corner of the world thanks to mighty ships. The Acts of the Apostles and the other writings in the New Testament tell us the many ways in which the life of the messengers of the Good News was intertwined with those of seafarers – often spending months at a time together – sharing their daily lives and opening their minds and hearts to the faith.

Each year, *Sea Sunday* offers Catholic communities throughout the world the possibility to not forget their own origins and to pray for those who work today on the ships that transport goods throughout the entire world. We are talking about more than a million human beings, thanks to whom our daily lives become possible and the economy is sustained. Yet we know hardly anything about them, about their faith, or about how they love and hope.

Sunday is the day of the Eucharist, our weekly Easter. Yet many have no access to it because they have been forced to be away from their loved ones and their own community. For the whole Church, celebrating the Risen Jesus means at the same time not forgetting anyone, and hastening to bring salvation everywhere. This calls us to ask ourselves how whoever is absent and invisible might still come to feel saved and precious, bearing a dignity that is shared with each and every son and daughter of God.

The apostles spoke of Jesus on ships, bringing the community together in every harbour city. They were therefore present in a world that today is becoming ever less known. The complex organisation of our society and a certain propensity to hide inequalities often leaves in the shadows the spiritual treasures and the material needs of humble people. Sea Sunday is not therefore reserved to seafarers, but calls the attention of every Christian community to those thanks to whom we receive a great part of the goods that nourish us and that we use every day .

To those who are at sea may this resounding, choral message reach you: the Church is near you. Whatever brings you joy and whatever oppresses you is close to our hearts. We not only have something to give you, but we want also to receive your story, your testimonies, your point of view about work, about the economy, about the relations between religions and diverse cultures, about the conditions at sea and on the earth, and about faith. Your experience can reach and challenge all the members of the Church, and through them, our societies.

We are a synodal Church, in which we walk together. We should go forward together, navigating together, without leaving anyone behind, and enriching one another. No one should think that they have nothing to offer. If therefore there is a specific effort this year it would be to find ways with which we could get closer to each other in an ongoing exchange that would make your work less far from the daily experience and the faith of all.

May Mary, the Star of the Sea, intercede for us and be a font of consolation and perseverance.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Michael Czerny S.J.", followed by a long horizontal flourish line.

Card. Michael Czerny S.J.
Prefect