

# THE SEAMEN'S POST

JANUARY 2014

## GOD OF ALL COMFORT REV. LEE

Super Typhoon Haiyan passed through Tacloban City in the Philippines on November 7, 2013. It caused a massive disaster and humanitarian crisis. More than 13,000 people died, thousands of homes were swept away by the surging ocean, powerful winds and heavy rain. Suddenly, hundreds of thousands of grief stricken people had no food, no drinking water, no shelter and no medicine.

As Filipino crewed ships docked in Philadelphia in the weeks following the storm, I asked seafarers about their families back home. Time and again the answer was that their families had escaped the storm's path. But on a cool day in late November, I met three Filipino crewmen who had suffered painful losses because of Typhoon Haiyan.

I was visiting the Shimanami Queen, a commercial vessel berthed at the Balzano Marine Terminal. She had 21 Filipino seafarers on board and was bringing steel to Philadelphia. As I talked with the Captain, I

quickly learned that three of the men, the Captain, his second officer and an able seaman, had received devastating news.

Captain T.S. Honor's home had been destroyed, but thankfully his wife and two teenagers were safe. They had nearly drowned in the rising sea waters as their home was inundated. During the night as the storm raged, the water entered their home so they

cue team the next morning.

Able seaman Candelon's wife and four children evacuated early from their home which was totally lost to the typhoon. Unfortunately, his favorite uncle and three close cousins died during the storm. But by far, the man who had suffered the most was the ship's second officer, Saldana Oquino. Although his wife and two children



retreated to the second floor. Soon the water reached up to their necks but the wind was so violent that they were afraid to leave the shelter of their house. They made it through the night and were brought to safety by a res-

cue team the next morning. were safe, his home town suffered a direct hit and unimaginable devastation. Fourteen members of his extended family were killed. At first, I was so shocked when I heard this, and the seaman was unable to speak a single word for a

“On Him we  
have set our  
hope that He  
will deliver us  
again.”  
2Cor. 1:10b

long time because of his weeping. The only thing I could say was, “I’m sorry.”

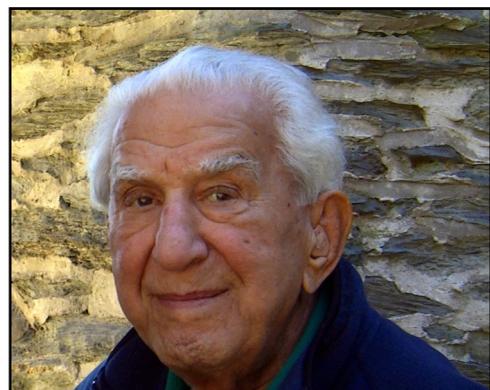
I spent nearly two hours aboard the Shimanami Queen listening to the men's disturbing stories, one by one. As I led them in prayer before leaving, I shared 2 Corinthians 1:3-4: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”* It was my privilege to meet these seafarers who were suffering, to pray for their grieving families and to tell them about the God who loves them and will comfort them in their sorrow. They offered their heartfelt thanks for my ministry to them.

## REMEMBERING AL PIRANIAN EDITOR

Last March, Alfred Piranian, one of the founders of the Mission to Chinese Seamen along with Rev. Yun Yong and John Hill, was called home to rest with our Lord Jesus Christ. Al established a business called the International Ship Supply Company in 1962 which operated at the Port of Philadelphia. He felt compassion for the Chinese crews of the ships which he was supplying. During the late 1960's Mao rose to power in China and a brutal period of its history known as the Cultural Revolution began. Western religious ideas

and Christian missionaries were not welcomed in China. Al Piranian saw the opportunity to reach out to Chinese men passing through the Philadelphia region as merchant seamen via a compassionate port ministry which also verbally proclaimed the gospel. Shortly after expressing his concern for the spiritual welfare of the Chinese crews to Reverend Yun Yong, himself a recent immigrant from China, the Mission to Chinese Seaman was launched. It has been a beacon

of Christian faith and care at the port for almost five decades.



## UNTOUCHABLES REV. LEE

Valero oil terminal is one of the busiest terminals among the South Jersey ports along the Delaware River. The main reason is that there is a busy oil refinery operating in the area which both receives imported crude for processing and distributes refined products. As a result, there is always a ship berthed at this terminal.

One day last September, I visited the terminal so that I could share the love of Christ with the seafarers. He had brought to the Philadelphia region that day. At the security gate on my way into the terminal, I met an "oiler" (seafarer on an oil tanker) who was going out to visit a dentist. When he saw me, he asked if I would help him with shopping after his dental appointment. I was eager to help so I gave him my cell phone number and urged him to call me when he was ready. While we were talking, the port agent who was accompanying the oiler to the dentist yelled at him for having spoken to me. I was shocked.

When I boarded the berthed oil tanker a few minutes later, eight crew members of various nationalities were waiting for me. They were anxious to go out shopping.

Among them were an Indian Captain and Chief Engineer. To exit the Valero terminal, one must pass through many security gates. At the first, we waited for about 10 minutes because the security officer was late arriving to process the seafarers. We went through two more gates before we finally had clearance, about 40 minutes later, to head for the mall. During our drive, as we were making small talk, the Captain suddenly complained about the iron fences and security procedures that served as barriers to the seafarers. He had also heard about the crewman who had been yelled at by the port agent taking him to the dentist.

The Captain's complaint can be restated simply. Seafarers in the United States are treated like "untouchables," the lowest social class in traditional Hindu society. He concluded that seafarers were of such low status in the U.S. that it was permissible for the government and commercial enterprises to mistreat them. His tone was so stern that I couldn't respond right away. So, I asked God to give the Captain peace of mind and me the opportunity to counsel him in this matter. A short time later, the

Captain asked me whether there was a place he could go for a haircut. So I took him to my friend's hair salon in Cherry Hill.

During our drive, I explained the security policies and practical difficulties the government was dealing with in guarding the U.S. ports but the Captain did not want to hear about them. So I paused to simply hear and ponder his dismay. While he was having his hair cut, I again prayed that God would give me wisdom in these circumstances. The Holy Spirit brought to my mind the passage in Mark 5:21-34 which describes Jesus' encounter with the woman who quietly walked up behind him to touch his garment and was immediately healed. I kept this story about Jesus in mind as I patiently waited for the hair stylist to finish.

After leaving the salon, we went to Dunkin Donuts for a coffee and I began asking the Captain about his life and personal background. He grew up in India under a strong Hindu tradition. His social class was not very high so he was mistreated his entire life. In order to escape that reality, he became a

seafarer and, eventually, a ship captain, gaining position and wealth. The intensity of his reaction to the security gates suddenly became more understandable. His planned escape from social mistreatment was being thwarted. His social status as a seafarer had returned him to that desperate position which he thought he had left behind him long ago. And he couldn't endure it.

Suddenly, the Holy Spirit opened my eyes to this man's spiritual dilemma. I told him the story of the woman from Mark's gospel who was an untouchable, unclean under the Jewish purification laws because of her bleeding disorder, and therefore ostracized by traditional Jewish society. When Jesus came to her town, she found the courage to exercise faith in him when she reached out her hand to touch the edge of the Messiah's cloak. He allowed this untouchable woman to touch Him because Jesus had come to advocate for and save such outcasts. So I asked the Captain to believe in Jesus and he prayed to receive Christ as his savior that very day.

## BEING A CONTRAST PEOPLE EDITOR

I had the privilege to begin the new year at a Christian conference where one of the keynote speakers was Dr. Michael Goheen, Associate Professor of Religion and Theology at Redeemer University College. The focus of his teaching was that the kingdom of God is the central motivation for missions. Jesus himself said, "I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God ... because that is why I was sent." Luke 4:43.

Following Christ's redemptive act on the cross, the kingdom has arrived for those who have put their faith in Jesus. But it will not be fully manifested until His triumphant return.

Therefore, the mission of the church, empowered by the Holy Spirit, is to proclaim the gospel. Doing so we participate in God's gathering of all whom the Father has chosen. Moreover, we must live out our lives as a holy nation and be a kingdom of priests

through whom God continually makes His name known to others. As Dr. Goheen put it, "we are a showcase people!" The Christian community must be a contrast society in the midst of the other nations, he urged.

One way to demonstrate your commitment to the church's mission is to support the Mission to Chinese Seaman which faithfully shares the good news of salvation through Jesus! Rev. Lee's ministry has been effective

and requires your financial commitment to continue.

As we begin 2014, we ask you to prayerfully consider using your financial resources in a way that sets you apart from your neighbors! Become a monthly or quarterly donor to the Mission to Chinese Seamen.

*Send your donation to: MCS, c/o Janice Hill, White Horse Village, G-163, 535 Gradyville Road, Newtown Square, PA 19073.*



Mission to Chinese Seamen

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[www.seaministry.org](http://www.seaministry.org)

## PRAYER & PRAISE LOG

- Praise God for his provision of Christmas ditty bags for distribution to seamen at the holidays.
- Pray that the Holy Spirit would prepare the hearts of seafarers so that they may exercise faith in Jesus Christ.
- Pray for safety for seafarers working dangerous and monotonous jobs to support their families.

### SAVE THE DATE!

*Our annual banquet will be held at Proclamation Presbyterian Church in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania on Saturday, April 5, 2014. Please join us to hear Rev. Lee's inspiring stories about the power of the gospel in the lives of seafarers he ministers to at the ports of Philadelphia.*

<sup>43</sup>The ocean depths raise their voice, O LORD; they raise their voice and roar.  
<sup>44</sup>The LORD rules supreme in heaven, greater than the roar of the ocean, more powerful than the waves of the sea."

*(Psalm 93:3-4)*