

# Greater than the sum of its parts

RECENTLY I have had the privilege of working with The Mission to Seafarers teams in both New Zealand and South Africa. Both are successful teams that take pleasure from a job well done. Their successes are driven by port chaplains that are eager to agree on future work and are able to determine the education and training needed to accomplish their goals. They are single-minded in their pursuit of knowledge and inspired to continuously improve on previous outcomes.

In both teams there is a mix of cultures, languages and heritage, and all expressed their faith in their own unique ways. Our meetings proved to be one of those occasions when 'the total was more than the sum of the parts'.

It was a pleasure to witness the infectious laughter as they went about their allotted tasks. Equally rewarding was the way in which some were able to help others with the cross fertilisation of ideas, all the while listening intently to the opinions of others. Their exchanges of ideas fashioned the way in which future work of the Mission would be undertaken.

This, it seems to me, is the same model as for ships' crew, where the team works together to ensure that the voyage is successful. Seafarers know very well the benefits of team work, where the skills of one complements the competencies of others. Team work among a well-educated, trained and happy crew ensures safe passage through difficult waters.

Jesus relied on a team to carry his words to many more people than he could manage to reach himself. There were twelve disciples in particular that formed a cohort of committed men, dedicated to the task of disseminating news of what Jesus said and did.

Their common goal was to ensure that Jesus was heard, and while listening they learned so much of their leader's thoughts and deeds. No doubt there was great happiness among them, feeling as they most surely did the liberation and freedom of accepting the principles of life that Jesus himself pursued.

The 'infection of fellowship' gave a value-added dimension to their relationships. Their relationships held them together in the difficult times of Jesus' arrest, trial, condemnation, punishment and crucifixion. They were emboldened and empowered to witness their faith. That does not mean that they never strayed from their path, or were less than honest about their commitment to Jesus and each other. Rather the whole experience was one of growth, which enabled them to overcome their doubts and to witness the power and glory of God.

You may believe you are strong on your own, but reach out to your shipmates and work as a team and you will find that you too are more able to accomplish the task in hand and go beyond the limitations of individuality. When the team is called by God, the strength to witness faith is powerful and you will become infected with laughter and joy, finding peace and calmness in the midst of doubt.