

Help in times of trouble

AT SEA and currently in the Mediterranean I have been reminded of some very real issues confronting the world's seafarers. Engine failure can, in so many cases, escalate beyond the capacity of the seafarers to contain it, leading to delays to the schedule and the potential for missing berthing slots.

In a recent incident a failure was rectified quickly and professionally: the skill and competency of the engine room crew quickly recovered the position and put the ship back on schedule. In other cases when containment is not always possible, escalation can lead to life-threatening situations.

This aspect of seafaring life cannot be underestimated. How do we cope when there is no escape, when there is no retreat, and when we have to confront the looming danger?

Much is made of the 'fight or flight' response where some people are predisposed to tackle danger head on while others, confronted with the same set of circumstances, choose not to confront danger and to run for safety. When there is no option and we ignore the reality of the danger, we allow the danger to become an even bigger threat; what, then, do we have that can sustain us?

At such times when there is danger and we are insecure, when we are not sure that we have the resilience to remain calm and professional, how do we cope? Yes, we may be well trained and be schooled in professional attitudes and responses, but so much depends on our character. Often

military personnel think of those who buckle under the strain or become dysfunctional as 'lacking in moral fibre'. I prefer to acknowledge that while some believe themselves to be self-sufficient, others may have the courage to admit that they need help.

That help can come from many places. On board, colleagues within the crew can often be the source of friendship. At home, family and friends will often come to your aid, offering advice and wise counsel to the very best of their ability in a genuine attempt to help. Regardless of whether those people are available to you or not there is always one who will reach out to you and remind you of the help He can give. One of the main themes of the Christian scriptures is that God is on hand to help. The book of Psalms especially reminds us of His help:

'Blessed be the lord, for he has heard the sound of my pleadings. The lord is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, so I am helped and my heart exults and with my song I give thanks to him.' (Psalm 28, verses 6 and 7)

Here we have the promise of support, a very real help in time of trouble, and all that is required of us is to acknowledge His willingness to help and to call upon Him. So when there is a sudden and unexpected confrontation, do not worry about retreat but remember the presence of the Lord and trust in Him.