

# At times of media speculation and reflection: the Glory without the glamour

AS IS so often the case, it is the people who obviously hold positions of great responsibility that are the subject of public acclaim or derision. The world of shipping is no different, and for those who have significant authority, much responsibility is required of them.

All too often this comes to the public attention when there are high-profile casualties. Recently the *Costa Concordia* and the *Sewol* come to mind as examples of when professional seafarers are vilified by the press and the general public through various forms of print and social media. Behind the headlines however, there are the unsung stories of bravery in the face of disaster and heroism where even greater disaster would have prevailed if it were not for the professionalism and hard work of seafarers. Unfortunately, these acts of sacrifice do not draw so much attention of the media largely because good news does not sell.

I have had the privilege of working in all departments on board ship. I have witnessed the essential work of the donkey man-greaser, the oiler-wiper, the mess man and a variety of other positions that are not accompanied by the popular glamour of being a master on board a large and flashy cruise liner. Whilst there were the obvious responsibilities of the senior officers, there were also the not-so-obvious ones of those who did not share in the prestige of senior command.

The essence of service is that in whatever role we serve, we should excel. Without the diligence of the oiler wiper the working environment on board ship would be so much more hazardous and the incidence of slips, trips and falls with the consequent injuries would be more numerous and serious. The ship's cook needs to pay attention to all of the galley hygiene and the clean preparation of food, the navigating officers must ensure safe passage – all need to attend to their duties with diligence. Pride in one's work is essential if the outcome is to be of value. If it does not speak of our professionalism, if it is not worthy of an offering to our colleagues, it falls short and is of so much less value.

The same is true of the time we give to God. Time given directly to God in quiet contemplation or in the excitement of worship needs to be of quality. Do we give of our very best? Is our offering the very best we can achieve? There will not be the obvious acclamation of many, but what people see of our devotion to our faith will be noted. It may not be commented on and there will be no public reward or great display of admiration. People may not want to take on our position of faith and it may not be seen as necessarily attractive, but the underlying quality is one that speaks of strength, commitment and devotion. As in work, in faith we are called upon to do our very best.