

No need to make the journey home alone

SHIPPING is the globalised industry that keeps much of the world's population fed and provides their energy requirements. It's an industry that is unconfined by national boundaries and leads the exploration of the horizon. This drive into the unknown presents a challenge for seafarers in that wherever they travel and regardless of the warmth of welcome they receive in foreign lands, the desire to return home remains strong.

Christians have recently enjoyed the celebrations of Christmas and then, in the next period of the Church calendar, we celebrate the fact that Jesus is for all people and that wherever you are in the world He is for you. He came into the world not only for the Jews of His homeland.

Today, as I write this, the Christian Church remembers that Jesus returned with His family to their home and that He was presented in the temple. In other words, Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the sacred space of the temple to present him to the Lord. This is a clear reminder that Jesus' home was with His family and His heavenly father. The desire to return to the temple to be with God was great.

The call to return home is strong because it is there that we are loved, respected and have our place. The return home reminds us of our responsibilities and why it is that we go out into the

world; not just to explore but also to provide for our families and to reap the benefits of our hard labour. Before seafarers can return home they have to face the difficulties of separation and being dislocated from family and friends while on a voyage. The strength gained from the knowledge that there are those who wait for us enables us to continue in the face of many difficulties and challenges.

So it is with faith. We are all on a journey; sometimes we may feel far away from the love of God and at other times and places we draw closer to God. Sometimes we depart and leave the security and sense of belonging with God, but return is always possible and we can make the journey home to the sacred space that is our relationship with God. God is waiting for us as He is where we are at home and He is the one that loves us and cares for us.

He travels with us; in fact, there is no distance between us and Him and if there is a sense of being dislocated and alone it is because we have chosen to be aloof. At all times we can present ourselves to Him. Just in the same way as family and friends wait for you to return home, so God is there, patiently looking and listening; with you on the journey and waiting for you to acknowledge Him. Then together in the sacred relationship you are welcomed home.