

# Drawing strength in times of crisis

As I reflect on what is right and good in the shipping industry I find myself giving thanks for the seafarers who enable world trade and without whom we would all be in a very sad state, lacking food, fuel, raw materials and finished goods.

That train of thought then inevitably leads me to the many companies that set a good example in caring for their crew by ensuring really good living and working conditions. If only all companies would follow their example there would not be any exploitation or abuse.

Too often, we at The Mission to Seafarers have been involved in protracted disputes where seafarers are made to wait for their due recompense as companies fail to recognise their responsibilities. When we are in a dispute with others it can feel like a tiring battle, and before long we may be ground down by anxiety and stress. On such occasions we need sustenance for the long periods of doubt, discomfort, worry and concern. So I ask where do you draw your strength from? Do you have the faith to see you through the long periods of separation from your loved ones and the long sea passages? In the Christian scriptures we can read a passage from one book called the Psalms which reads: "My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth." The passage continues: "The Lord watches over you, The Lord

will keep you from all harm, he will watch over your life; the Lord will watch over your coming and going, both now and forevermore." This is such a straightforward statement with no ambiguity. God is there watching over us. Sometimes when we lose sight of this truth we feel very alone and vulnerable. If you are not accustomed to reading the *Holy Bible* or any other scriptures perhaps you might turn to secular writings that may also point the way to a truth of faith.

So it is that I think of the popular poem called 'Footsteps'. A Wikipedia summary of the poem reads: "This popular text describes an experience in which a person is walking on a beach with God. They leave two sets of footprints in the sand behind them. Looking back, the tracks represent various stages of their life. At various points, the two trails dwindle to one, especially at the lowest and most hopeless moments of the person's life. When the person questions God, believing that the Lord must have abandoned His love during those times, God gives the explanation: 'During your times of trial and suffering, when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you'."

I recommend that you reflect on this and in hard times call to mind God's explanation that during times of trial and suffering, "it was then that I carried you".