

We have to trust

AT the top of a gangway the other week I was accosted by the usual ISPS (International Ship and Port Facilities Security Code) form which, as you know, requires you to fill in your name, company name, and passport/ID details. Sometimes there's more, such as height, weight, colour of eyes and colour of hair. For the latter I usually write "none to report". Anyway, during the procedure of getting on board, I was suddenly reminded of those words from that universally well-known carol *While Shepherds Watched their Flocks by Night*: "Fear not, said he, for mighty dread had seized their troubled mind."

A troubled mind seems to affect much of our lives today, as you who are at sea will have experienced at airports while flying around the world to join and pay off vessels which

are so often trading between ports thousands of miles away from loved ones, home and community.

While you, the seafarers, carry the goods that keep the world's countries trading with each other, there are many in the world of politics and the media who trade in fear. And in trading in fear, there always seems to be someone around who wishes to fuel the human need to make someone, or a group of people, scapegoats for the ills of society. After all, we have to reluctantly admit that bad news spreads more quickly than good, and in so doing the media sell more newspapers and the television and internet viewing figures rise.

Fear seems to have pervaded much of our daily lives, and some of it is not without reason, like, for

example, being on a ship plying the Gulf of Aden. But in reality, people in general, and seafarers in particular, seem to get along pretty well on a one to one basis. It was a former president of the United States, Franklin Roosevelt, who said "the only thing we have to fear is fear itself". Those words were spoken 77 years ago, but they remain as apt now as they were then for many in the world today.

A good tonic to counteract fear, but not the one that goes with gin, is to think of the word "trust". In order to live a normal life we have to trust people. Trust is essential to any life in society. It would be impossible to have any sort of relationship if nobody could be trusted as you can't spend your life checking up on everyone.

At sea, you have to place complete trust in your shipmates as they are not only working with you, but are

there during mealtimes and during your leisure time on board. You have to trust their skills, honesty and friendship both on and off the vessel. Sometimes our trust in people will hit a low ebb, and I'm not just talking about your team's failed expectations in the World Cup. I mean the trust that has let you down in the realms of friendship, marriage, work mates and employer. That's the time to remind ourselves that we can always trust in God and even our lack of faith should not hold us back. Remember the next line in the carol I mentioned earlier which speaks of "glad tidings of great joy I bring to you and all mankind".

Yes these are fearful times, but we must not allow fear to consume us to the point that we fail to build relationships on trust, which means spending time with those around us so that we can love God and love our neighbour as ourselves.