

## **Martin Foley**

National Director of Apostleship of the Sea

*Martin is the National Director of the Catholic charity, Apostleship of the Sea. He lives in Leamington Spa with his wife, Anna-Marie and their five children.*



### **Tell us a bit about your current work**

Apostleship of the Sea (AoS) is a Catholic charity which offers spiritual, pastoral and practical support to seafarers here in the UK and all over the world. Seafarers work in one of the most dangerous occupations and are away from family and friends for months, sometimes years, at a time. They greatly value the support the Church offers them, through AoS.

### **What does a day in your life entail?**

Our port chaplains and volunteer ship visitors are based in ports right across the UK. Whilst I spend some time each week in our main office in London, my priority is to visit and keep in close contact with our port chaplains and volunteers, supporting them in whatever ways they need. This entails quite a lot of travelling! I also seek to promote both seafarers' welfare and AoS within the Church, the maritime sector and mainstream society.

### **How did you get to where you are today?**

I studied Law at University and although I qualified as a solicitor and spent a couple of years in private practice, I felt God was calling me to something else. After undertaking some postgraduate study I began working in Parliament for the pro-life movement. After a few years I was appointed as chief executive of the charity Life. Since that time I have remained in the charity sector.

### **Tell us about someone you have always admired?**

The politician I most admire is David Alton, Lord Alton of Liverpool. His involvement in the pro-life movement and his promotion of human rights both here and overseas is inspiring. He never tires in his vital work and is a man of great integrity, commanding support across the political spectrum. One of the most gifted politicians of his generation, his support for the pro-life cause has come at personal political cost. I am sure he would have risen to the senior ranks of the Liberal Democrat party had it not been for his determined advocacy on behalf of the unborn.

### **Do you think faith and public life/politics are compatible?**

Yes, most certainly. Public life needs individuals whose faith inspires their politics. So many of the great political leaders when men and women of great faith.

### **What are the most important things you have learnt from your work and has anything surprised you?**

The most important thing I have learnt stems from my time in Parliament. It is not to be intimidated by those who might be more powerful, senior or better educated than you. Building relationships is key, taking time to get to know those with whom you work and those you wish to influence. So much change happens in public and political life because of the relationships of trust which have been established.

### **What is the biggest misconception that people often have about your work?**

That all the goods we see on supermarket shelves or the products buy on the high street come to our shores via airplanes. In fact, over 90% of everything bought and sold comes to our shores on ships, looked after by seafarers.

### **What words of wisdom/advice would you give to students?**

Christianity is a radical faith. Rather than making one feel secure and comfortable it should spur us into action. However, you can't give what you haven't got so it is important to nurture one's faith through prayer and the Sacraments. I found attending a weekly prayer group with other students particularly helpful.