



Our Lady Star of the Sea

Catholics have been addressing Our Lady as *Stella Maris*—Star of the Sea—for well over a thousand years.

The image of a star shining on the sea is certainly an inspiring and beautiful one—a fitting description for this majestic, celestial Lady that recalls her identity as the Queen of Heaven, crowned by twelve stars.

But the title *Star of the Sea* has an even deeper meaning.

Star navigation is an essential seafaring skill. The stars guide sailors through vast expanses of the ocean, where—with no landmarks and no sun—it is easy to become lost or get off-course. The stars are the perfect guides: bright and visible in the darkness, reliable in their movements, unshaken by the tumults of the world yet somehow firmly connected to it.

Our Lady, too, guides us on the tumultuous sea of life. She is never dimmed by clouds or storms, but shines bright no matter the weather. In times of difficulty—be it severe temptation, personal loss, physical suffering, or a time of spiritual aridity—she is our guiding star, lighting the way to a safe haven.

As one of Our Lady’s great devotees, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, said:

“If the winds of temptation arise, if you are driven upon the rocks of tribulation look to the star, call on Mary. If you are tossed upon the waves of pride, of ambition, of envy, of rivalry, look to the star, call on Mary. Should anger, or avarice, or fleshly desire violently assail the frail vessel of your soul, look to the star, call upon Mary.”

The Church as a whole is also referred to as a ship, the “barque of Peter,” navigating through the seas of the mortal world towards her heavenly home. Our Lady—the Mother of the Church—is Her constant guiding Star.

Our Lady seems to particularly resemble the North Star, Polaris, which is the only star in the Northern Hemisphere that doesn’t move. All the other stars appear to rotate around it. It might be beyond the skill of the average non-sailor to correctly trace the paths of moveable stars, but the North Star is simple to locate. Like the North Star, Our Lady is near us always, easy to find, steadfast and unmoving.