



Karen Parsons

***Catholic Ecclesial Lay Minister
GSC Port Chaplain Since 1992***

BIO:

Karen Parsons is a Catholic Ecclesial Lay Minister serving as an Apostleship of the Sea chaplain in the ports of Galveston and Texas City, Texas. She also visits fishing piers in Galveston, Texas City, Dickinson and San Leon and Kemah. The Apostleship of the Sea is the Catholic Church's worldwide ministry to the people of the sea based in the Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development (formerly the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People) in the Vatican. She began her port ministry career 33 years ago in the port of Detroit, Michigan where she grew up.

Karen is a graduate of and has been on the faculty of the Houston Port Chaplaincy School since 1990 and teaches new port chaplains the ropes of the ministry there. She has also conducted seminars and workshops in South Africa, Australia, and Brazil and has travelled to every continent except Antarctica for training in this field. She is certified in seafarers' advocacy through the Center For Seafarers' Rights in New York. She holds a Full Catechist Certificate and an Adult Catechist Certificate from the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston. She is a 2007 graduate of the Spiritual Direction Institute in Houston holding a certificate in Spiritual Direction. She holds credentials as a guest chaplain at the University of Texas Medical Branch.

Karen has received the United States Coast Guard Meritorious Service Award medal for her work in safeguarding the rights and welfare of seafarers, the United States Coast Guard Public Service Commendation for seafarers' advocacy, and twice received a Papal Medal from the Vatican for her work in the pastoral care of seafarers.

In January, 2005, Karen was professed as a Secular Franciscan and is currently a member of the Maximilian Kolbe Fraternity in Houston. She holds current memberships in the North American Maritime Ministry Association, the National Association of Lay Ministers, the International Association for the Study of Maritime Mission, Spiritual Directors International, and the Galveston Ministerial Alliance.

On November 12, 2013 Karen was one of the first two women ever appointed by the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People in the Vatican as Regional Coordinator for the Apostleship of the Sea. Her term as Regional Coordinator for North America and Caribbean ended on May 11, 2018.

Karen is the author of two books, An Unconditional Love Story: Meeting the People of the Sea (Mall Publishing, 1997, author name Karen M. Lai) and Diary of a Port Chaplain (NAMMA, 2014, author name Karen M Parsons).

Karen taught theology at O'Connell Catholic High School in Galveston for eight years. She gives parish missions, directs retreats and days of prayer.

Karen is married to Captain Edward Parsons, retired US Coast Guard, and combined they have seven children and two grandchildren.