

Views from the Pews - Miracles Part 2

John 6 1-14.

Although there seems to have as yet been no public enquiry into the initial civil defence response on 14 February this year, a quick check through media reports about Cyclone Gabrielle' effect on upland Hawkes' Bay and the East Coast reveals an extraordinary story. It is a story driven partly by private people independent of public authorities. Instinctively, people acted to set up a supply chain from supermarkets and shops in Napier and Gisborne, to schools, sports grounds , and marae, then, when reliable roads and bridges gave out, by helicopter to isolated farms and settlements. Given the communication breakdown, suppliers had to rely on local knowledge – who was most at risk? Where were the children and elders? Who might be diabetic? The net quickly spread – the most vulnerable were flown out but mostly, water and food were flown in, supplies being allocated according to projected length of road isolation.

When asked, the typical response was;

'Nah, it's just what country people do in an emergency'.

Do these simple words conceal a miracle? We will never know whether 5000 were actually fed, but there are enough parallels with the miracle of the loaves and fishes to enable a comparison. Following CS Lewis' model then, we have a natural event, which causes an emergency, which in turn evokes a human response. No-one seems to have consulted their Bibles first; the story when it eventually emerges will probably show a purely instinctive reaction, coupled with a degree of planning, but above all, a determination to make what seemed at first to be too few resources – stretch a very long way.

Jesus is credited with the words;

'I have no hands but your hands', which seem to confer an obligation to carry on His works pending His return. Unlike the very early Christians, we must accept that that return may not happen in our lifetime, or that of our children or grandchildren. Does that obligation to act in His stead extend to those events which Lewis would categorize as miracles? Can miracles be effected by a seeming random group who act according to conscience – rather than to theology?

Food for thought.

Another possible miracle next week.