

THE WORKS OF MERCY: HOW ARE WE DOING?

NGĀ MIHI ATAWHAI – GREETINGS TO ALL IN MERCY!

The Year of Mercy proclaimed by Pope Francis, especially through his Lenten message, has shone the spotlight once more on the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. ‘Let’s rediscover them,’ he insists, naming them in case we’d forgotten: the corporal works – to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, to visit the sick and imprisoned and bury the dead. Less well remembered, perhaps, are the spiritual works – to counsel the doubtful, instruct the ignorant, admonish sinners, comfort the afflicted, forgive offences, bear patiently those who do us ill, and pray for the living and the dead. These are the standards, says Pope Francis, on which, in the end, we will all be judged.

Capturing some of the spirit of what Pope Francis highlights here has been a recent decision by staff at Waiaatarua Mercy Parklands to raise funds for the victims of Cyclone Winston which hit Fiji on February 20. The category five cyclone caused the largest natural disaster the small Pacific nation has ever experienced, with wind gusts of more than 300 kph, destroying entire villages along with homes and crops, and resulting in more than 40 deaths.

With over 30 Fijians among its staff, the Ellerslie-based aged care facility held a BBQ which raised almost \$700 for the Caritas Aotearoa cyclone appeal; a \$5 entry fee entitled participants to a plate of delicious food prepared by Mercy Parklands’ catering staff; raffle tickets helped to swell the funds. The event was organised by a newly launched staff wellness team named the ‘Live Well Club’.

Healthcare assistant Ana Naiseruvata spoke on behalf of her Fijian colleagues, expressing thanks for the support shown for the event; tragedies in other countries were also acknowledged. Just how close to home the cyclone had come was shown by a display on the facility’s mission board, with a map of Fiji and coloured pins, identifying the territories from which each of the 31 Fijian staff members had come. “Some have relatives who have lost everything,” we were told. “Our hearts go out to them, especially to one whose uncle was among those who lost their lives.”



Fijian healthcare assistant Ana Naiseruvati (right) with colleagues at the Mercy Parklands BBQ held to raise funds for victims of Cyclone Winston. Ana expressed thanks on their behalf at the event.

The spirit of the occasion was well summed up by Chris Gill who is Domestic Services Manager at Mercy Parklands.

“Sometimes it takes a sad event to draw a team together. The sense of unity at this BBQ was there for all to see, with staff who were off-duty coming in to support the event,” said Chris. “Management, nurses, maintenance and support staff united to make it a special day. We were drawn through sadness and grief but also with love and compassion. It was a display of Mercy values and our Mercy model of care at its finest.”

One of the key themes of Pope Francis in his encyclical letter *Laudato Si'*, on caring for our common home, is his insistence that all of us are capable of rising above ourselves, choosing what is good and making even a small gesture to give the world a better chance. *“I appeal to everyone not to forget this dignity which is ours. No one has the right to take it away from us.”* (LS, par. 205).

The pope goes on to speak of our duty to care for creation “through little daily actions”, not doubting that our efforts will help to change the world. *“They benefit society, often unbeknown to us, for they call forth a goodness which, albeit unseen, inevitably tends to spread.... Such actions can restore our sense of self-esteem; they can enable us to live more fully and to feel that life on earth is worthwhile.”* (LS, par 212).

Taihoa ake, spare a moment.....

You're invited to conclude this reflection by sharing the following questions when you next meet with your colleagues at the Mercy board or ministry in which you serve.

- *Which of the works of mercy, listed by Pope Francis in the first paragraph above, is the one that strikes the deepest chord in your heart?*
- *How might this work be seen as a response to the cry of the poor and the cry of Papatuanuku, Mother Earth?*
- *How might the group on which you serve go about putting this work of mercy into action in the coming weeks or months of the Year of Mercy?*

Name the difference that your focus on this work of mercy might make.

- **Dennis Horton**

*E Te Atua, kia atawhai tou ingoa –
God, may your name be mercy
for people of all faiths, everywhere.
In a world where things can go badly wrong and
our misuse of creation only makes them worse,
show us how we can help your plan to unfold.
May we never doubt our capacity for good,
even in small, inconspicuous ways.*

*Let us be kaitiaki, guardians of
the world you have entrusted to us
as a common home for all that lives.
As we hear the pleas of the poor and
the cry of Papatuanuku, may we respond
with generous hearts and brave deeds.
In mercy's name. Amen.*

Produced for He Waka Tiaki mission team.

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