

Heart for the Poor. It can be tough at the beach. April 6th 2010

Our Easter weekend was spent at a friend's bach in an archetypal Northland bay, the lovely beach fringed with Pohutakawas and rocky cliffs. There is nothing like being the first to walk the shoreline at sunrise, that mystical juncture of land, sea and sky poking at coloured shells and assorted detritus that has floated in on the tide overnight. With little to do, observing the neighbours provides much entertainment. One is whistling away as he replaces part of the roof on his bach, next door is cutting the rampant kaikuia with his weed eater and a bronzed gentleman of advanced years is enjoying an outdoor shower directly across the small valley from our breakfast table, much to the blushing delight of my widowed mother in law.

Increasingly our seaside communities are starting to resemble upmarket city suburbs sporting large houses overflowing with boy's toys. Yet many still choose to enjoy the simple pleasures of camping, carrying water, sharing communal facilities, queuing at the shop for a limited range of necessities. I was sent out over 6 kms of hilly gravel roads on my bicycle in search of fresh mint, real chicken stock and sesame seeds amongst other ingredients required for a recipe from a glossy women's magazine. Needless to say some creativity was required to cross everything off that list.

While we choose to get over the minor discomforts associated with camping, such conditions are thrust upon many after being forced to leave their homes due to civil unrest, war or famine. For a lot nothing has changed years after the film crews left and politicians have washed their hands of the refugees intractable problems. It is in these camps that TEAR Fund has for years supported the work of agencies such as Medair, TEAR Fund UK, It is understandably hard for us to keep interest in these seemingly unsolvable situations where corrupt governments and militias reportedly "confiscate" aid destined for the needy.

We read in Exodus the trials of Israel as for 40 years its people endured the desert after escaping captivity in Egypt. With no comforts they had to rely entirely on God's provision. I believe that today we are called to provide for the necessities of life to those caught in such situations irrespective of the rights or wrongs of their predicament. This can be a challenge when we are continually being asked for help by legitimate causes here in New Zealand. What is the answer? Again I consider what would Jesus do when we are faced with stretching our few extra dollars around those calling for help. I believe he would ask us to consider each situation. What hope does a mother in a camp in Dafur, Sudan have in securing food and medicine for her children compared to a struggling mother in New Zealand? Yes there is real injustice and need occurring in New Zealand and we must help, but we must also assist that mother in Darfur.

In contrast, the limited product range in the Whananaki North Beach store meant we made do with instant chicken stock and dried mixed herbs; we didn't miss the sesame seeds in the excellent dinner that resulted.

Prayer: Father God we cannot understand why there is so much beauty and abundance in this world particularly in our nation when there are such problems in other places. Why have you chosen to bless us? We may never know the answer, but we do thank you. Grant us wisdom as we reflect on

the needs around us. Give us peace of heart as we struggle with balancing our requirements with those of others. Amen.