

## **January 2011 Flood South East Queensland**

"It's awesome, just awesome" whispers a sightseer; "a flood of epic proportions" declares another.

The brown torrents – once placid rivers, creeks and streams - sweep all before them. In city and country - on the mountain and in the valley - lives are lost, families shattered; houses are reduced to kindling, businesses ruined. A carpet of rancid mud both covers and reveals scenes of desolation; animals are abandoned; people confused and grieving.

Drought to flood. Scarcity to inundation. Death to life. Life to death.

From the elevated safety of my home at Ocean View I watch as images of devastation, of death and destruction dominate the television screen day upon day, night after night, a seemingly endless procession of human heartache.

To the east I see the progress of the muddy waters discharging from the mouth of the river into Moreton Bay. Slowly, inexorably, the salty blue waters of the ocean are replaced by the ochre deluge from the land; waters without salt, but definitely not fresh water.

The enormity of the flood and its aftermath is overwhelming. No one can answer satisfactorily the endless "whys" being asked by a bewildered people. Newspapers blame the "angry river", write about "the fury" of the flood. Newsreaders and commentators proclaim "Mother Nature" the culprit. Some people find comfort and meaning in the human resilience and sense of community that emerge in this time of adversity. Others turn to prayer for reassurance.

A friend asks "how do you make sense of this?" I have no answers to offer, or at least none that brings any consolation. I understand the scientific explanations: the cycles of evaporation and condensation, the La Nina effect, climate change.

But in my heart I know (in words reminiscent of Spinoza) that it is just, "nature naturing" – nature doing what nature does. Rain falling, flowing downhill, spreading out as it finds its level. Water following its nature, water doing what water does.

Nature – beautiful, terrifying, life-giving, death-dealing, immense, awe-inspiring, predictable but, ultimately, beyond human control. Nature – water - as a reflection of the divine mystery.

- Patricia Rose -