## **The Sparkling River**

I wrote the following story during a time of devastating floods in Brisbane – it was used in primary schools with children aged five years and upwards.

A sparkling river goes through a cycle of destruction and recovery, while the river dwellers are helped by a different kind of sparkle.

It has since been modified and translated into two Filipino languages – Tagalog and Visaya – to be used by teachers in the communities in Southern Philippines which suffer from floods each monsoon season.

**T**here was once a town built on the banks of a long and winding river. The people who lived in the town loved their river – its waters sparkled in the sunshine, many boats moved up and down its lazy flow, bicycles and cars travelled along paths and roads on its banks, and children played in the parks along its way. By night, the moon and stars and the lights of the town were reflected in the river’s silky stillness.

The people who lived in the town were proud of their river that sparkled by day and sparkled by night.

At certain times during the year, the rains would fall, and the sparkling river would grow brown and swollen and flow swiftly by. But when the rains stopped the river would settle down again, and all would be as clear and sparkling as before.

However, there was a week when the rains fell so heavily that the river filled up and swelled over its banks and into the town. The muddy brown waters flowed into houses and shops and schools. Many people had to move out of their homes and sleep in large halls together, in many beds all in a row.

When the rains stopped, the sun shone once again. The brown waters slowly flowed back out of the houses and shops and schools. The brown waters slowly flowed back down the streets and into the river and out into the ocean. And as the brown waters flowed back into the river, they left a coating of mud on everything.

It took many months and much work for the mud to be cleaned up. It took many months for the river to lose its muddy brown colour and regain its sparkle.

However, during this brown, muddy time, the people of the town discovered a new kind of sparkle. It was a sparkle in the eyes of helping neighbours. It was a sparkle in the eyes of helping strangers. It was a sparkle in the offer of a helping hand that came from all over the land and from faraway lands.

This new kind of sparkle helped give the people of the river town much hope. They carried this with them through all the muddy days and muddy weeks and muddy months.

They carried this with them until once again, their river was sparkling in the sunshine.

They carried this with them until once again, the moon and stars and the lights of the town were reflected in the river’s silky stillness.

***Written by Susan Perrow © - taken from ‘Stories to Light the Night’, Hawthorn Press, 2021***