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**1 April 2011: Ann Saunders, St Laurence Catholic Church
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Not God's fault

The World has been shocked at the terrible earthquakes and tsunami in Japan, and here in leafy Hampshire there is a feeling of complete helplessness apart from donating money and praying. It is humbling to read about the dignity of the Japanese people in the aftermath, uplifting to hear about the miraculous stories such as the 60 year old man found clinging to the floating roof of his house nine miles out to sea, and moving that *The Independent on Sunday* had on its front cover a message in Japanese saying: 'Don't give up, Japan. Don't give up, Tohoku.'



Although Japan has its problems like most countries, I can never believe, as some evangelists think, that this latest earthquake is a sign of God's wrath. Jesus said: 'Such things must needs be... there shall be earthquakes in divers places.' (Mark Chapter 13, King James Bible) Jesus does not say, 'Such things will be sent as punishment' but He does say 'And the gospel must first be published among all nations.' So yes, the missionaries and priests are carrying out the Lord's work by spreading the Gospel, but words of 'God has sent this as punishment' from some are not going to help.

I believe God never punishes; there are natural disasters that sadly happen a lot. God is there amongst us in our sadness and adversity, and weeping with us and helping us through difficult times. God knows all about grief. He lost His only Son, crucified on a Cross, to fulfil the scriptures and as atonement for our sins. And how grieving it must be for God to have the 'whole world' in His hands.