

BUSH AID

By Bill Pugh



Clergy in the bush often opened the door to a smiling, rough-looking, bearded character, called a swaggie. A rolled swag on his back, battered hat, underneath a brown whiskered face. Trousers, tied at the waist, with a piece of rope. Looking for work, had enough of the city, running from a relationship, on the wallaby. Any of the above. Politely, “*can you spare a bob or two, Father, to keep me going?*” Maybe a thirst quencher at the pub was in his mind? Father had had enough.

His Church was on the highway. Too many called. So, with Irish wisdom, he developed a strategy. “*Are you Catholic?*” To the Catholics he gave a warning about the evils of strong drink, the need for confession and attendance at Mass, and sent them on their way with a coin or two. The rest, denomination or not, he directed around to the manse, well off the main road. A meal only was to be found there, and the offer to find bit of work, being true to the parson’s protestant work ethic.

Reflection:

a quaint story, but there is a point. Can our giving ever have any other guideline than a response to human need? We, who experience daily the overwhelming generosity of a gracious and loving God, are challenged to give and give again.