



by Rawan Anani  
*Palestinian artist*

cf. <https://www.facebook.com/ArtOfPalestine/>

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We, the people of Boonah Catholic parish,  
acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation.

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which our parish is located  
and where we conduct our mission and ministry.

We pay our respects to ancestors and elders, past and present.

As a local community of faith within the Church of Brisbane,  
we are committed to honouring Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples'  
unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas  
and their rich contribution to society.

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*Warm greetings to the members of the Boonah Catholic community and beyond on the 1st Sunday after  
Christmas Day, the Feast of the Holy Family.*

## 1. REFLECTIONS ON THE SUNDAY WORD.

The **reflection** for this Sunday is offered by **Julian McDonald, a Christian Brother who lives in Sydney.**

**After three days, they found Jesus in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions, and all who heard him were astounded at his intelligence and his answers . . . His mother said to him: "Son, why have you done this to us?...Your father and I, grief-stricken, have been searching for you." He said to them: "Why? Did you not know that I had to be in my Father's house?"** Luke 2, 41-52

At the outset, it's important to note that scholars regard this gospel-reading as a later addition to Luke's original Gospel, recognising that it came from a vibrant oral tradition containing an abundance of stories about aspects of Jesus' life. Secondly, a more accurate translation of Jesus' response to Mary and Jesus is "Did you not know I must be in my Father's house" rather than the more familiar "about my Father's business?"

I suggest that in this story about Jesus getting lost there is a tension between the reality of Jesus beginning to assert his independence and the way in which we human beings can embellish stories, especially when we have the benefit of a retrospective view of the person who is at the centre of the story.

Once we accept that Jesus was like us in everything except sin (Hebrews 4, 15), we have to accept that Jesus had to negotiate the challenges that accompany normal human maturation and development. He had to grow through the physical and emotional changes of puberty, adolescence and young adulthood; he had to struggle with the trial and error learning that accompanied claiming and asserting his independence; like most young people finding their way in life, he would have failed to realise the impact on his parents of some of his decisions. At the same time, in the Jewish culture in which he grew up, there

was the custom that boys were told that on their twelfth birthday they inherited the responsibility of being faithful to the Torah. In other words, they had to start taking on adult responsibilities. Moreover, rabbis of Jesus' time, followed the practice of teaching their congregations by gathering them in groups in the temple/synagogue precincts and following a question and answer process, inviting participants to make contributions to the discussion. Apparently, this is the kind of activity in which Jesus was involved while Mary and Joseph were searching frantically for him. Those who shaped and embellished the story of today's gospel-reading would not have dared to present him as anything less than precocious. Suggesting that he stunned the Temple teachers with his answers and insights was the story-shapers' way of pointing out that there were clear signs when Jesus was only 12 years old that he was destined to be the Messiah.



Side by side with the story of the young Jesus' brilliance is the fact that Jesus, Mary and Joseph belonged to an extended family. In practice, that meant that on a pilgrimage journey, the adults chatted with one another as they walked along, and the children were left to entertain themselves. So, it is entirely understandable that Mary and Joseph did not notice that Jesus had stayed behind in Jerusalem. And it fits that Jesus had not even thought to tell his parents what he had decided to do. It was entirely credible that Joseph and Mary became frantic when they

discovered that Jesus was missing. Like all parents whose child goes missing, they would have been imagining that he had come to harm. Little wonder, then, that, when she found him, Mary gave Jesus a piece of her mind. And in keeping with the mentality of a youngster who had not dreamed that he had caused concern, Jesus gave an answer that seemed to be about defending his action. In keeping with the embellishment theory, his answer strikes me as being beyond the capacity of a 12 year-old boy. However, his answer suits Luke's purpose of pointing out that even as early as when her son was only 12, Mary was given a hint that Jesus was not hers to hold onto, that his life journey would take him away from her and Joseph. In an almost noncommittal way, Luke merely records: "Mary held all these things deep within her heart." (Luke 2, 20)

There are other dimensions to this story. There was a time when we Catholics were led to believe that there was some idyllic quality to the life of the "Holy Family". It was as though theirs was a life which we were expected to emulate in our families. But, would we want to endure the things that came their way? Mary and Joseph had to put up with the gossip about Mary's pregnancy before she and Joseph were married; they had to contend with the indignity of Jesus being born in an animal shelter; they had to protect their son by journeying as refugees to Egypt, where they hardly lived in luxury, where, at best, they were tolerated; and Mary had to carry the pain and indignity of seeing her adult son executed



as a criminal. All that now makes me wonder if Mary ever regretted saying “yes” to Gabriel instead of telling him to go and disturb some other girl’s life. Yet, somehow, it’s their faith and trust in God that Mary and Joseph clung to as they made their way through the upsets, fears and crises that befell them that we are asked to imitate. There is no family that does not experience disappointment, dislocation, grief and tragedy of one kind or another. When people of faith risk venturing into family life, they have to learn to trust that God’s Spirit will be there to guide them through the difficulties and disappointments, through the griefs and tragedies, through the joys and triumphs that will inevitably come their way.

There is yet one more realistic implication to this story. Even a brief reflection on our lives will reveal that, while we say that Jesus and his Gospel, are central to our lives, there have been times when we have lost Jesus and his message. We claim to belong to a community of faith, yet when the conduct of its leaders is

less than we expect, we walk away and label ourselves as disaffected Catholics. When family members fall ill or sully the family reputation, we pray that God will make things right. But we don’t get the miracles for which we pray. So, we stop our prayers. We have somehow lost Jesus. Any number of things can happen in our lives that lead us to attribute the blame to God for not taking into account the good and decent lives we have lived. So, our faith wavers and we lose contact with God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

We might “lose” Jesus by distancing ourselves from him or by locking him out of our lives. But let’s not forget that he continues to make his presence felt in the kindness, love, forgiveness and compassion of the people we encounter every day. Sometimes we have to be jolted into realising that the goodness of other people, and indeed, our own goodness, reflect the goodness of God and the goodness of Jesus whose coming among us we celebrate at Christmas

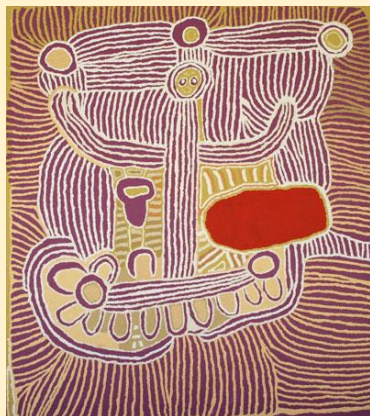
## 2. *Boonah Parish happenings . . .*

from commands to invitations,  
from laws to ideals,  
from threats to persuasion,  
from coercion to conscience,  
from monologue to conversation,  
from ruling to serving,  
from withdrawn to integrated,  
from vertical and top-down to horizontal,  
from exclusion to inclusion,  
from hostility to friendship,  
from static to changing,  
from passive acceptance to active engagement,  
from prescriptive to principled,  
from defined to open-ended,  
from behaviour-modification to conversion of heart,  
from the dictates of law to the dictates of conscience,  
from external conformity to the joyful pursuit of holiness.

When these elements are taken in the aggregate, they indicate a model of spirituality. This, they say, is what good Catholics should look like and this is how they should behave. That means the elements indicate what the Church should look like and how it should behave. This is a significant model-shift. This is a teaching of the Second Vatican Council.

- Fr. John O'Malley SJ, 2006

Our **SUNDAY EUCHARIST** schedule is:



*Desert Eucharist*  
Linda Syddick Napaltjarri (b. 1937)

**Saturday**

5.00pm

**Boonah church**

**Sunday**

7.30am

**1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday: Harrisville church**

**2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday: Peak Crossing church**

9.30am

**Boonah church**

**Please note:** *there will be no Masses celebrated during the weekdays of this week. The next Mass is Saturday night 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022, the Solemnity of the Epiphany,*

- *We pray with and for those who are sick in our parish and beyond:* all across the globe infected with COVID-19; former pastor of Boonah parish Fr. Ellis Clifford, Chris Healy, Paul White, Arthur Devin, Liliana Toohill, Libby Shields, Marko Babic, Max Gardiner, Bernice Lippiatt, Trish Merlehan, Bernadette Pinchin, Simon Greatrex, Neil O'Connor, Cate Mitten, Bernice Brault, Paula Ebrington, Fletcher Casey, Jill Archer, Louisa, David Mitchell, Vince Bellett, and sick members of parish families and those beyond our parish boundaries.



- **EVERY SUNDAY** when we gather for the Sunday eucharist, there are baskets (of some kind or another) at the entrances of our churches.

We are invited to bring a gift of **non-perishable food or goods** for people seeking help from our local St. Vincent de Paul.

*The local conference very much appreciates our weekly support.*

- **THANK YOU** to all who support the weekly Sunday collection. Your gifts enable the parish to meet its expenses and to function like an everyday household. If you would like to give weekly or monthly in a planned way, please see me.

- **CELEBRATING THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION.** The 1<sup>st</sup> Rite for Reconciliation (formerly known as Confession) may be celebrated anytime. Please phone 5463 1057 to make a suitable time. Alternatively see me before Mass (if there is plenty of time) or after Mass (once the majority of people have left the church).

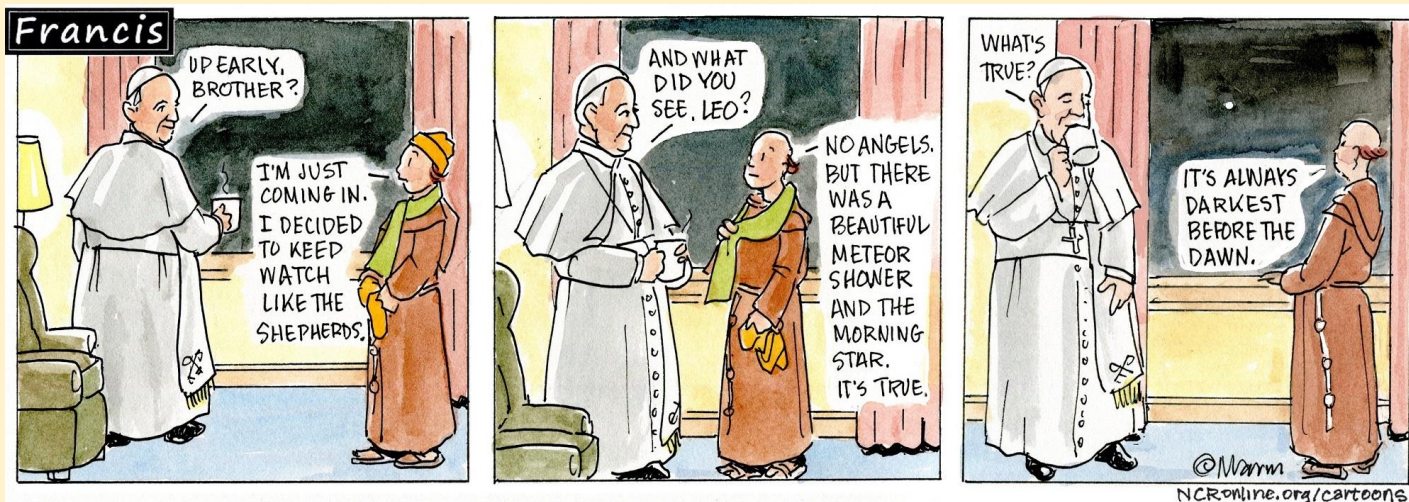
- **CHRISTMAS HAMPERS 2021.** President of our parish St. Vincent de Paul conference, Mrs. Kathryn Sallway, thanks all in the parish who contributed gifts for local Christmas hampers. There was a good response also from families at the parish school. A great deal of effort was put in over three to four days at the parish centre to assemble the hampers. *Thanks to members of the local conference and 'helpers' who gave of their time to reach out to those in need.*



- Thank you to all who ministered before, during and after the Christmas Masses. We celebrated a 7pm Mass at Harrisville church on Christmas Eve, and Midnight Mass and 8am Mass on Christmas Day.

It was wonderful to meet and greet family and friends of local parishioners who returned to the area for the annual festival of Christ's birth.

*Safe travels to all who are returning over the coming days and week.*



21<sup>st</sup> December 2021

3. Pope Francis gave his annual address to the Roman Curia (*the public servants of the universal Church*) on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> December. It is a long address but it is worth the read! (The *italics* are part of Pope Francis' text)

*Dear brothers and sisters, good day!*

As is the case every year, we have the chance to meet a few days before the feast of Christmas. It is a way to express our fraternity "out loud" through the exchange of Christmas greetings. Yet it is also a moment of reflection and assessment for each of us, so that the light of the Word made flesh can show us even better who we are and what our mission is.

We all know that the mystery of Christmas is the mystery of God who enters the world by the path of humility. He became flesh, that great *synkatábasis*. Our times seem either to have forgotten humility or to have relegated it to a form of moralism, emptying it of its explosive power.

Yet if we had to express the entire mystery of Christmas in a word, I believe that *humility* is the one most helpful. The Gospels portray a scene of poverty and austerity, unsuited to sheltering a woman about to give birth. Yet the *King of kings* enters the world not by attracting attention, but by causing a mysterious pull in the hearts of those who feel the thrilling presence of something completely new, something on the verge of changing history. That is why I like to think and also say that *humility was its doorway, and invites us to enter through it*. I think of that passage of the Exercises [that says that] one cannot advance without humility, and one cannot advance in humility without humiliations. Saint Ignatius tells us to ask for humiliations.

It is not easy to understand what humility is. It is the effect of a change that the Spirit himself brings about in us in our daily lives. Such was the case, for example, of Naaman the Syrian (cf. 2 Kings 5). In the days of the prophet Elisha, this man enjoyed great renown. He was a valiant general of the Syrian army who had on many occasions demonstrated his bravery and courage. Yet together with fame, power, esteem, honours and glory, Naaman was forced to live with a tragic situation: he had leprosy. His armour, that had won him renown, in reality covered a frail, wounded and diseased

humanity. We often find this contradiction in our lives: sometimes great gifts are the armour that covers great frailties.

Naaman came to understand a fundamental truth: we cannot spend our lives hiding behind armour, a role we play, or social recognition; in the end, it hurts us. The moment comes in each individual's life when he or she desires to set aside the glitter of this world's glory for the fullness of an authentic life, with no further need for armour or masks. This desire impelled the valiant general Naaman to set out on a journey in search of someone who could help him, and he did this at the suggestion of a slave girl, a Jewish prisoner of war, who told him of a God able to bring healing to hopeless situations like his own.

Laden with silver and gold, Naaman set out on his journey and thus came to the prophet Elisha, who laid down for him, as the only condition for his healing, the simple gesture of disrobing and washing seven times in the Jordan River. Nothing to do with celebrity, honours, gold or silver! The grace that saves is free; it is not reducible to the price of this world's goods.

Naaman resisted; the prophet's demand seemed to him too ordinary, too simple, too easily attainable. *It seems that the power of simplicity found no room in his imagination.* Yet the words of his servants made him change his mind: "If the prophet had commanded you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much rather, then, when he says to you, 'Wash and be clean?'" (2 Kings 5:13). Naaman gave in, and with a gesture of humility "descended", took off his armour, went down into the waters of the Jordan "and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean" (2 Kings 5:14). A great lesson, this! The humility of exposing his own humanity, in accordance with the word of the Lord, gained healing for Naaman.

The story of Naaman reminds us that Christmas is a time when each of us needs to find the courage to take off our armour, discard the trappings of our roles, our social recognition and the glitter of this world and adopt the humility of Naaman. We can do this by starting from a more powerful, more convincing and more authoritative example: that of the Son of God who did not shrink from the humility of "descending" into history, becoming man, becoming a child, frail, wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger (cf. Lk 2:16). Once we strip ourselves of our robes, our prerogatives, positions and titles, all of us are lepers, all of us are in need of healing. Christmas is the living reminder of this realization and it helps us to understand it more deeply.

Dear brothers and sisters, if we forget our humanity, we live off the glitter of our armour. Jesus, however, reminds us of the uncomfortable and unsettling truth: "What will it profit you to gain the whole world and forfeit your life?" (cf. Mk 8:36).

This is the dangerous temptation – as I have said on other occasions – of a spiritual worldliness that, unlike all other temptations, is hard to unmask, for it is concealed by everything that usually reassures us: our role, the liturgy, doctrine, religious devotion. As I wrote in *Evangelii Gaudium*, such spiritual worldliness "also feeds the vainglory of those who are content to have a modicum of power and would rather be the general of a defeated army than a mere private in a unit which continues to fight. How often we dream up vast apostolic projects, meticulously planned, just like defeated generals! But this is to deny our history as a Church, which is glorious precisely because it



is a history of sacrifice, of hopes and daily struggles, of lives spent in service and fidelity to work, tiring as it may be, for all work is the 'sweat of our brow'. Instead, we waste time talking about 'what needs to be done' – in Spanish, we call this the sin of *habriaqueísmo* – like spiritual masters and pastoral experts who give instructions from on high. We indulge in endless fantasies and we lose contact with the real lives and difficulties of our people" (No. 96).

Humility is the ability to know how to "*inhabit*" our *humanity*, this humanity beloved and blessed by the Lord, and to do so without despair but with realism, joy and hope. Humility means recognizing that we should not be ashamed of our frailty. Jesus teaches us to look upon our poverty with the same love and tenderness with which we look upon a little child, vulnerable and in need of everything. Lacking humility, we will look for things that can reassure us, and perhaps find them, but we will surely not find what saves us, what can heal us. Seeking those kinds of reassurance is the most perverse fruit of spiritual worldliness, for it reveals a lack of faith, hope and love; it leads to an inability to discern the truth of things. If Naaman had continued only to accumulate medals to decorate his armour, in the end he would have been devoured by his leprosy: appearing to be alive, yet enclosed and isolated in his disease. Instead, Naaman had the courage to seek the thing that could save him, not what would bring him gratification in the short term.

We all know that the opposite of humility is pride. A verse from the prophet Malachi, which has struck me, can help us to understand the difference between the path of humility and the path of pride: "All the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble; the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch" (4:1).

The Prophet uses the evocative image of "stubble", which describes pride in vivid terms, for once the fire starts, stubble immediately becomes ash; it burns up and disappears. Malachi also tells us that those who live by pride will find themselves deprived of the most important things in life: roots and branches. Roots represent our vital link to the past, from which we draw the sap that enables us to live in the present. Branches represent our present, which, far from dying, grows into tomorrow and becomes the future. To remain in a present that no longer has roots or branches means living our last hour. That is the way of the proud who, enclosed in their little world, have neither past nor future, roots or branches, and live with the bitter taste of a melancholy that weighs on their hearts as "the most precious of the devil's potions". [1] The humble, on the other hand, live their lives constantly guided by two verbs: to remember their roots and to give life. In this way, their roots and branches bear fruit, enabling them to live joyful and fruitful lives.

In Italian, the etymology of the verb *remember* [*ricordare*] is "to bring to heart". Our living memory of Tradition, of our roots, is not worship of the past but an interior movement whereby we constantly bring to our hearts everything that preceded us, marked our history and brought us to where we are today. Remembering does not mean repeating, but treasuring, reviving and, with gratitude, allowing the power of the Holy Spirit to set our hearts on fire, like those of the first disciples (cf. Lk 24:32).

Yet, if our remembering is not to make us prisoners of the past, we need another verb: to give life, to "generate". The humble – humble men or women – are those who are concerned not simply with the past, but also with the future, since they know how to look ahead, to spread their branches,

remembering the past with gratitude. The humble give life, attract others and push onwards towards the unknown that lies ahead. The proud, on the other hand, simply repeat, grow rigid – rigidity is a perversion, a present-day perversion – and enclose themselves in that repetition, feeling certain about what they know and fearful of anything new because they cannot control it; they feel destabilized... because they have lost their memory.

The humble allow themselves to be challenged. They are open to what is new, since they feel secure in what has gone before them, firm in their roots and their sense of belonging. Their present is grounded in a past that opens them up to a hope-filled future. Unlike the proud, they know that their existence is not based on their merits or their “good habits”. As such, they are able to trust, unlike the proud.

All of us are called to humility, because all of us are called to remember and to give life. We are called to find a right relationship with our roots and our branches. Without those two things, we become sick, destined to disappear.

Jesus, who came into the world by the path of humility, has opened a way for us; he indicates a way and shows us a goal.

Dear brothers and sisters, without humility we cannot encounter God and experience salvation, yet it is equally true that without humility we cannot even encounter our neighbours, our brothers and sisters next door.

Last 17th October, we set out on the synodal journey that will occupy us for the next two years. In this too, humility alone can enable us to encounter and listen, to dialogue and discern, to pray together, as the Cardinal Dean said. If we remain enclosed in our convictions and experiences, the hard shell of our own thoughts and feelings, it will be difficult to be open to that experience of the Spirit, which, as the Apostle says, is born of the conviction that we are all children of & “one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all” (Eph 4:6).

That word – “all” – leaves no room for misunderstanding! The clericalism that, as a temptation, a perverse temptation, daily spreads in our midst, makes us keep thinking of a God who speaks only to some, while the others must only listen and obey. The Synod wants to be an experience of feeling ourselves all members of a larger people, the holy and faithful People of God, and thus disciples who listen and, precisely by virtue of this listening, can also understand God’s will, which is always revealed in unpredictable ways. Yet it would be wrong to think that the Synod is an event meant for the Church, as something abstract and distant from us. Synodality is a “style” to which we must be converted, especially those of us here present and all those who serve the universal Church by their work for the Roman Curia.

The Curia – let us not forget – is not merely a logistical and bureaucratic instrument for meeting the needs of the universal Church, but the first body called to bear witness. Precisely for this reason, it grows in prestige and effectiveness when it embraces in first person the challenges of that synodal conversion to which it too is called. The organization that we must adopt is not that of a business, but evangelical in nature.

For this reason, if the word of God reminds the whole world of the value of poverty, we, the members of the Curia, must be the first to commit ourselves to being converted to a style of sobriety. If the Gospel proclaims justice, we must be the first to try to live transparently, without favouritism or cliques. If the Church follows the path of synodality, we must be the first to be converted to a different style of work, of cooperation and communion. All this is possible only by following the path of humility. Without humility, we cannot do this.

During the opening of the synodal assembly, I used three key words: *participation, communion and mission*. These arise from a humble heart: without humility there can be neither participation, nor communion, nor mission. Those words are the three requirements that I would like to indicate as a style of humility at which we here in the Curia should aim. Three ways to make the path of humility a concrete path to follow in practice.

First, *participation*. This ought to be expressed through a style of co-responsibility. Certainly, in the diversity of our roles and ministries, responsibilities will differ, yet it is important that everyone feel involved, co-responsible for the work, without having the depersonalizing experience of implementing a programme devised by someone else. I am always impressed, and I like it, whenever I encounter creativity in the Curia. Not infrequently, this occurs especially where room is made and space found for everyone, even those who appear, hierarchically, to occupy a marginal place. I thank you for these examples – which I find and I like – and I encourage you to work so that we are capable of generating concrete dynamics in which all can sense that they have an active role to play in the mission they have to carry out. Authority becomes service when it shares, involves and helps people to grow.

The second word is *communion*. This does not have to do with majorities or minorities; essentially, it is based on our relationship with Christ. We will never have an evangelical style in our respective settings unless we put Christ back in the centre, not this or that party opinion: Christ at the centre. Many of us work together, but what builds communion is also the ability to pray together, to listen together to God's word and to construct relationships that go beyond work and strengthen beneficial relations between us by helping one another. Otherwise, we risk being nothing more than strangers working in the same place, competitors looking to advance or, worse yet, forging relationships based on personal interests, forgetting the common cause that holds us together. This creates divisions, factions and enemies, whereas cooperation demands the magnanimity to accept our own partiality and to be open to working in a group, even with those who do not think as we do. In cooperation, people work together, not for some extraneous purpose, but because they have at heart the good of others and, consequently, of the entire People of God whom we are called to serve. Let us not forget the real faces of people. Let us not forget our roots and the concrete faces of those who were our first teachers in the faith. As Paul said to Timothy: "Remember your mother, remember your grandmother".

Seeing things from the standpoint of communion also entails acknowledging our diversity as a gift of the Holy Spirit. Whenever we step back from this, and regard communion as a synonym of uniformity, we weaken and stifle the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit in our midst. An attitude of service requires, and indeed demands, a good and generous heart, in order to recognize and

experience with joy the manifold richness present in the People of God. Without humility, this will not happen. I find it helpful to reread the beginning of *Lumen Gentium*, numbers 8 and 12, about the holy faithful people of God. Reflecting on these truths is oxygen for the soul.

The third word is mission. This is what saves us from falling back on ourselves. Those who are turned in on themselves “look from above and from afar, they reject the prophecy of their brothers and sisters, they discredit those who raise questions, they constantly point out the mistakes of others and they are obsessed by appearances. Their hearts are open only to the limited horizon of their own immanence and interests, and as a consequence they neither learn from their sins nor are they genuinely open to forgiveness. These are the two signs of “closed” persons: they do not learn from their sins and they are not open to forgiveness. This is a tremendous corruption disguised as a good. We need to avoid it by making the Church constantly go out from herself, keeping her mission focused on Jesus Christ, and her commitment to the poor” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 97). Only a heart open to mission can ensure that everything we do, *ad intra* and *ad extra*, is marked by the regenerating power of the Lord’s call. Mission always involves passion for the poor, for those who are “in need”, not only of things material, but also spiritual, emotional and moral. Those who hunger for bread and those who hunger for meaning are equally poor. The Church is summoned to reach out to every form of poverty. The Church is called to preach the Gospel to everyone, since all of us are poor; all of us are, in one way or another, needy. But the Church also reaches out to the poor because we need them: we need their voice, their presence, their questions and criticisms. A person with a missionary heart feels the absence of his brother or sister, and, like a beggar, accosts him or her. Mission makes us vulnerable. This is beautiful, that mission makes us vulnerable. It helps remind us that we are disciples and it makes us rediscover ever anew the joy of the Gospel.

Participation, mission and communion are the characteristics of a humble Church, one attentive to voice of the Spirit and not self-centred. As Henri de Lubac wrote: “Like her master, the Church cuts in the eyes of the world the figure of a slave; on this earth she exists ‘in the form of a slave’... She is no cenacle of sublime spiritual geniuses or gathering of supermen, any more than she is an academy of the learned; in fact, she is the very opposite. The warped, the sham, and the wretched of very kind crowd into her, together with the whole host of the mediocre... It is hard, not to say entirely impossible, for the ‘natural man’ to find in such a phenomenon the consummation of the saving kenosis and the awe-inspiring traces of the ‘humility of God’ – that is, until his innermost thoughts have been radically changed” (*The Splendour of the Church*, 301).

In conclusion, my desire for you, and for myself, is that we may allow ourselves to be evangelized by the humility of Christmas and the humility of the manger, by the poverty and simplicity with which the Son of God entered into the world. Even the Magi, who were certainly of a higher social position than Mary and Joseph or the shepherds of Bethlehem, fell to their knees in the presence of the Child (cf. Mt 2:11). They fell to their knees. To do so is not only a gesture of adoration but also a gesture of humility. When they fell to the bare earth, the Magi put themselves at the same level as God. This *kenosis*, this descent, this *synkatábasis*, is the same that Jesus would make on the last evening of his earthly life, when he “rose from supper, laid aside his garments, and girded himself with a towel. Then he poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded” (Jn 13:4-5). Peter’s response to that gesture was one of dismay, but Jesus himself showed his disciples the right way to interpret it: “You call me Teacher

and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you" (Jn 13:13-15).

Dear brothers and sisters, mindful of our own leprosy, and shunning the worldly thinking that deprives us of our roots and branches, let us allow ourselves to be evangelized by the humility of the Child Jesus. Only by serving, and by seeing our work as service, can we be truly helpful to everyone. We are here – I myself before anyone else – to learn how to kneel and adore the Lord in his humility, not other lords in their empty trappings. We are like the shepherds, we are like the Magi; we are like Jesus. This is the lesson of Christmas: humility is the great condition for faith, for the spiritual life and for holiness. May the Lord grant it to us as a gift, starting with the primordial sign of the Spirit's presence within us: desire. And to ask the Lord for the grace to wish to desire it, to become men and women of great desires. What we lack, we can at least begin to desire. And that desire is already the Spirit at work within each of us.

*A happy Christmas to all! And I ask you to pray for me. Thank you!*

As a Christmas gift this year, I would like to leave you a few books... Books to read, not to put on a bookshelf, for whoever will inherit our estate! First of all, a book by a great theologian, little known because he was too humble, an Undersecretary of the Doctrine of the Father, Monsignor Armando Matteo, who takes a look at one social phenomenon and how it calls for a pastoral response. It is



called *Converting Peter Pan. On the fate of faith in this society of eternal youth*. It is provocative, and helpful. The second is a book on minor or forgotten characters of the Bible, by Father Luigi Maria Epicoco: *The Rejected Cornerstone*, with the subtitle *When the Forgotten are Saved*. It is beautiful. It is for meditation, for prayer. Reading it, I thought of the story of Naaman the Syrian whom I mentioned. The third is by an Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Fortunatus Nwachukwu, whom you know well. He wrote a reflection on gossip, and I like the picture he painted: that gossip leads to a "dissolution" of identity. I am leaving these three books for you, and I hope that they will help everyone to keep moving forward. Thank you for your work and your cooperation. Thank you.

Let us now ask the Mother of Humility to teach us how to be humble: *Hail Mary* . . . [Blessing]

**As your sons and daughters, O loving God,  
we come before you in thanksgiving,  
called and united by your eternal Word.**

**Teach us to ponder the mystery of Nazareth,  
that we may always find in you  
the source of our strength  
and the unity of our families.**

*(Year C: The Holy Family, Alternative Opening Prayer)*

# Christmas Greetings Occupied Holy Land

“When you celebrate Christmas, remember that in Bethlehem, in Jerusalem, life is not a Christmas life. It is not the blessed life of the new redeemed humanity.

Christmas, every year reminds us that there is no peace on the earth, especially in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, and that we have to make [peace] again.

We know the pain. We taste the daily trauma. Sadly, we know that darkness yet hovers over the Holy Night.

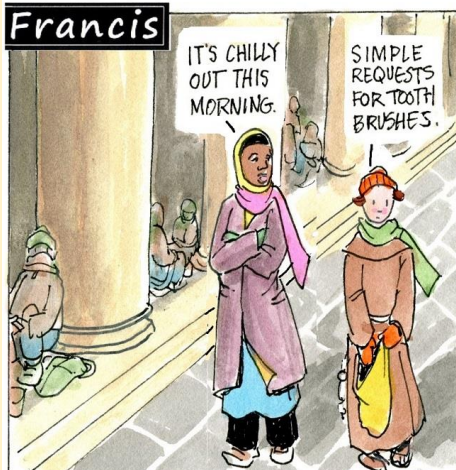
In the face of the [Israeli] occupation and insecurity, children suffer. Natural innocence is stolen. Random violence and vulnerability robs mothers of peace for their children in Bethlehem and throughout the Holy Land.

**Michel Sabbah**  
Latin Patriarch  
Emeritus of Jerusalem

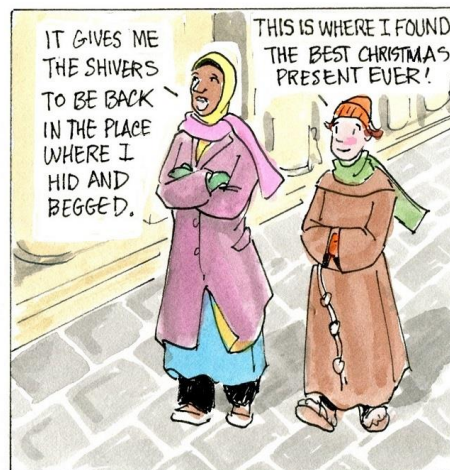


Sliman Mansour • Bethlehem

## Francis



NCRonline.org/cartoons



MERRY CHRISTMAS 2021

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ARCHDIOCESE OF BRISBANE

# STOPline

STOPline receives information about abuse, harm and other serious misconduct by Archdiocesan workers (including priests, religious, employees and volunteers).

**Information can be provided anonymously.**

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**Phone:** 1300 304 550  
**Email:** AOB@stopline.com.au  
**Online Report:** [www.bnecatholic.stoplilereport.com](http://www.bnecatholic.stoplilereport.com)



**If you think it's wrong ..... report it.**

**My humanity is bound up in yours,  
for we can only be human together.**

~ Desmond Tutu



As our bulletin is being finalised this evening, we pray for the repose of the soul of Archbishop Desmond Tutu who died today, 26<sup>th</sup> December. *May he rest in peace.*

*John*

pastor  
Boonah Catholic community