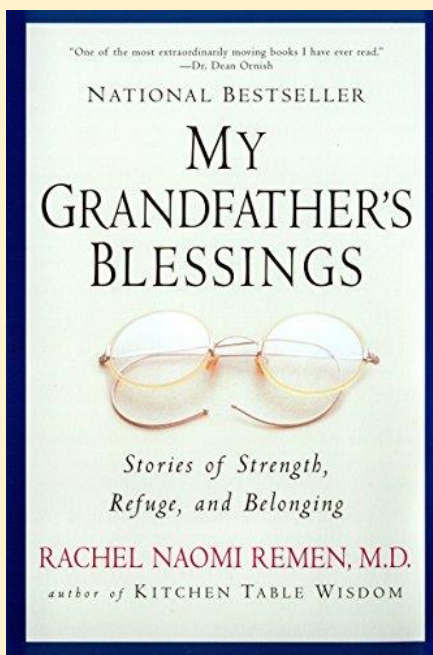




stained glass by Sieger Koder

Their utter conviction that they were “the Chosen People” led many of them to adopt a sense of superiority and the unshakable belief that the Messiah would come in power and strength to scatter their enemies and establish them in comfort and security. They could not accept that the Messiah would find his way into the world as a baby born in



humble and obscure circumstances, even though one of their prophets had proclaimed that. Luke, then, was able to look at the story of Jesus with the objectivity and discipline of a scholar with a scientific background and with a vantage point from outside Judaism.

With that long introduction, I begin today's reflection with a story. While I rarely recommend books, I have no hesitation in pointing to Rachel Naomi Remen's book, *My Grandfather's Blessings*. It is a

book for everyone, but especially for those who have, have had or are afraid of getting a very serious illness. Rachel's very name suggests her Jewish background, and her grandfather was an orthodox Jewish Rabbi. She herself is a survivor of a lifelong, chronic illness. This is one of her stories from *My Grandfather's Blessings*:

"Richard was a widower. His wife had died a long and painful death from cancer. After some time, he met Celia and they came to love each other and each other's children dearly. Less than a year into their courtship, Celia discovered a lump in her breast and went for testing. She was alone when her doctor informed her that the lump was malignant. Her first thoughts were for Richard and his children. They had been terribly wounded by cancer only a few years before, and Celia reasoned that she could not bring this terror back into their lives again. She called Richard immediately and broke off their relationship without telling him why. She declined his phone calls and returned his letters over a few weeks. However, he persisted until she agreed to see him. She intended their meeting to be one of goodbye.

When they met, she could see the hurt etched into his face.

But Richard gently asked her why she had broken up with him. Fighting back tears she told him the truth: that she had discovered a lump that turned out to be malignant, and that she had undergone surgery to remove it and was about to start chemotherapy. 'You and the children have been through this once already, and I'm not going to put you through it again', she explained. 'You have cancer?' he asked. Silently she nodded as the tears ran down her face. 'Celia', he said, and began to chuckle. 'We can do cancer. We know how to do it. I just thought you didn't love me anymore.' But she did, and they got through it together, happily married." (Rachel Naomi Remen, *My Grandfather's Blessings*, Penguin Putnam, N.Y. 2001)

As baptised members of the Christian community, we have inherited the blessing of God's Spirit and the invitation to "bring glad tidings and "proclaim the Lord's favour" to the poor, the blind, people in prison, the oppressed, the forgotten and the helpless. We all have the potential to breathe life and hope into others, just as Celia and Richard did for one another, when we do so, knowing that God's Spirit is our guide.

Having been anointed by God's Spirit in the Jordan, Jesus returned to his home-town of

Nazareth, where he was invited by the synagogue officials to read and reflect on the Scriptures. For a moment, let's imagine the scene: The people of Nazareth had surely heard that Jesus had been making an impression wherever he went. His growing reputation and the acclaim he had received had preceded his home-coming.

Having read a passage from Isaiah with which the congregation would have been familiar, there was an expectation that he would offer a reflection or commentary on what he had just read. Instead of doing that, he looked straight at the gathering and, without explanation or qualification, announced: "This is taking place right here, right now in this synagogue. Moreover, you're hearing it from the mouth of the Messiah himself, from the one whom our people have been expecting for centuries."

For a congregation looking for some insight into the passage from Isaiah that they had just listened to, this was beyond the pale. To have one they had seen grow up among them make an assertion like that was tantamount to blasphemy to the people of Nazareth. They interpreted what they heard as one of their own blowing his own trumpet and simply big-noting himself. That, understandably, accounts for the hostile reception they gave him. But that's the focus of the gospel-reading for next week.

Today's first reading from Nehemiah and the second reading from Corinthians complement the gospel-reading. 450 years before Jesus, Nehemiah had encouraged the people of Israel to rebuild the holy city of Jerusalem. They set about that task with a will, and saw the day when their efforts brought success. In a record homily that went for six hours,

Nehemiah encouraged and congratulated the people, assuring them that what they had achieved was testimony to what God had done for them. That was something over which to rejoice and be grateful. Of comfort to them was the realisation that they were in God's hands, and that was all that mattered. Paul, in turn, assured the Christian community in Corinth that as members of the people of God they were all of equal importance, essential to bringing life to one another, and all having the same status, with no one either inferior or superior. In speaking to the people among whom he grew up, Jesus stated that his mission was to bring God's promises to realisation. As his disciples, and inspired by God's Spirit we have the very same mission. And that's not an option. It's an imperative. Otherwise, we're only play-acting.



▪ Attached to the mail-out this Sunday is a rich liturgical and pastoral resource for 2022 prepared by the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization. Included is a “Lectio Divina for the Family on the Gospel of the Third Sunday of Ordinary Time”. I thought some of us may appreciate a **second brief reflection** on our gospel for this Sunday and its intended audience: *a family*.



We recall that Pope Francis, in his Apostolic Letter *Aperuit Illis*, published on 30th September 2019, in memory of St Jerome on the 1600th anniversary of his death, asks that the Third Sunday of

Ordinary Time be dedicated to the **celebration, reflection and sharing of the Word of God**. In addition, on this Sunday of the Word of God we are invited to strengthen ties with the Jewish community and to pray for Christian unity.

In the text we are considering today, Jesus outlines the itinerary of his mission; it is like a preamble, an overture to **the programme** of what he will accomplish in the course of his public ministry. It also presents **the goal** of his mission, of his presence in our history, where salvation breaks through. The author of this Gospel follows traditions and the historiographical method to describe the roots of the Messiah.

Jesus, during the celebration of the Sabbath inside the synagogue, using an oracle of the Prophet Isaiah (Is 61:1-2) and enlightened by the power of the Holy Spirit, indicates what is at the heart of his proclamation. *He came to bring glad tidings to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, to give sight to the blind, to liberate those who are oppressed*. This is the proclamation of salvation and the denunciation of injustice, the specific mission of the New Kingdom.

Jesus also claims to have come to proclaim a **year of the Lord's grace (or favour)**, inspired by Psalm 9:1-2 which alludes to a jubilee year where various favours were granted. It was a sabbatical year of rest, which could be given every 10, 20, 25 or 50 years. But when we hear these words of Jesus, we think that he wants to communicate to us something deeper, which we could interpret as the **fulfilment of the time of salvation**, that is, that Jesus, the Messiah, the Lord, *has brought us a year of grace that will continue throughout the history of redemption*: for those who have lived from the beginning of humanity; for those of us who live in these already difficult times; and for those who will come and live until the consummation of time, because it is his light, the salvation that shines forever through his passion, death and resurrection, until he comes the second time.

That is why Jesus, once he hands over the scroll and goes to take his place, says, *This text is being fulfilled today even as you listen*.

Taking as reference the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy and the text of Luke behind this year's liturgical-pastoral resource booklet, *blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it*, it is important to go beyond just listening. At the end of his Letter *Aperuit Illis*, the Pope invited God's people to grow in religious and conscientious familiarity with Sacred Scripture on this Sunday, dedicated to the Word. He did so just as the sacred author taught in ancient times: *(this Word) ... is very near to you, it is in your mouth and in your heart for your observance*" (Dt 30:14). On the path of listening to and putting into practice the Word of God, we are accompanied by the Mother of

the Saviour, recognised as blessed, because she believed in the fulfilment of what the Lord told her and because she did what the Lord commanded her.

In light of the passage you have just meditated upon, you can answer the following questions: *do you move from proclamation or reflection to*

action? In other words, ask yourself, do I help in my family? Do I help with the daily chores? Do I serve in my community, in my country, or do I just criticise? Do I volunteer in my parish? Am I available for any work that helps build the Kingdom of God? Do I put my talents at the service of others? Do I offer a good testimony of what I preach?

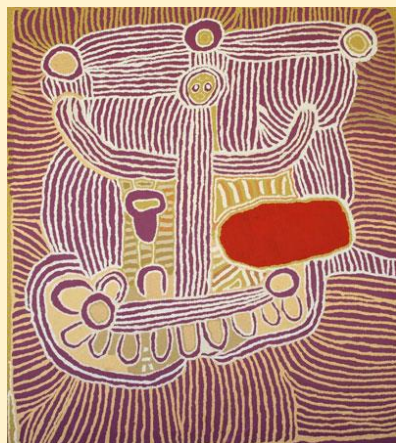
2. *Boonah Parish happenings . . .*

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:



Saturday
5.00pm

Boonah church

Sunday
7.30am

1st and 3rd Sunday: Harrisville church

2nd and 4th Sunday: Peak Crossing church

9.30am

Boonah church

(5th Sunday of the month: 6pm Sat night Harrisville & 9.30am Sun morning Boonah)

Desert Eucharist Linda Syddick Napaltjarri (b. 1937)

Our **WEEKDAY EUCHARIST** schedule for this week, the 3rd week in Ordinary Time (Year 2):

Tuesday	25 th January	1.30pm Funeral Mass: June Tregear <i>(Holy Spirit church, New Farm)</i>
		<i>There will be no 5.30pm Mass in Boonah</i>
Wednesday	26 th January	6.00pm Peak Crossing church <i>followed by dinner at The Peak Pub</i>
Thursday	27 th January	9.15am Boonah church
Friday	28 th January	9.15am Boonah church



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

▪ **COVID-19 PROTOCOLS IN OUR PARISH.** I thank all parishioners abiding by the protocols in place at this time. We are being asked to do the minimum for the common good. I don't make up the rules. As citizens we must abide by the health directives of the State Government which are:

- **WEAR A MASK WHEN INSIDE THE CHURCH**
- **SANITISE BOTH HANDS ON THE WAY IN AND OUT**
- **QR CODE UPON ENTRY – IF YOU DON'T HAVE A PHONE, THE COORDINATOR AT THE ENTRANCE CAN DO THIS FOR YOU – THIS IS NOT OPTIONAL. THERE ARE NO EXCEPTIONS.**
- **WHERE POSSIBLE, MAINTAIN SOCIAL DISTANCING WHEN SEATED AND WHEN COMING FORWARD TO RECEIVE HOLY COMMUNION OR A BLESSING.**

We have almost 100% compliance in this parish. I encourage us all to keep up these proven safe practices and thank you us for doing this Sunday after Sunday. I realise it has been a long haul! Safety of our parishioners comes first over an individual claim to do otherwise for whatever reason and out of whatever belief. Mask wearing is mandatory at Mass (except for those with valid medical reasons) and so is the use of the QR Code when choosing to enter the churches here.

Of course, if any of us have any symptoms we are asked to stay away from Mass and to be in touch with the doctor and seek advice.

▪ **FIFTH SUNDAY OF JANUARY.** January 2022 has a fifth Sunday of the month! In our parish we celebrate a Saturday night Mass at Harrisville church starting 6pm and one Sunday Mass at 9.30am in Boonah. There is hospitality after Mass in Harrisville on Saturday night. At this stage, we are planning for this to go ahead.



Those of us who usually gather in Boonah on Saturday night might like to join our northern sisters and brothers for the Mass.

The next fifth Sunday of the month will be in May 2022. *Archbishop Coleridge will be with us for a parish visitation that weekend including Friday leading into the weekend.*

▪ **REFLECTING ON THE SUNDAY WORD - LECTIO.** This designated *Sunday of the Word of God* invites us to think about the place of the word of God in our daily life and in our parish life.

When I was serving in Maroochydore parish 2017-2020, I was a member of a weekly scripture reflection group. The process used is called *Lectio*.

When the pandemic hit us all, the group decided to meet via *Zoom* technology. The convenors also reached out to some of us who had left the Sunny Coast since 2020 and invited us to be part of the group once again.

So now every Wednesday from 0930-1030, I meet with this *Lectio* group. Those no longer living on the coast participate by linking-in from the following places: Dublin (yes! in Ireland); Samford Valley; Hervey Bay; somewhere in rural NSW; and Boonah. It is lay-led and there are about ten in the group. Material comes from a Carmelite web-site. I really enjoy hearing a group of people engaging their lives with the Word and I get to stay in touch with people whom I have been with in parish life.

On this Sunday of the Word of God, there may be some locals in our parish who would like to meet weekly and do the same. We can work out a preferable day and time. The length is strictly an hour. There is no commitment other than to meet for one hour. *Please see me, or email me, if this interests you.*

Due to pandemic concerns right at this moment, we would also be able to meet via *Zoom*. A suggested starting date: the week of Ash Wednesday . . . beginning of Lent. There may be some interest to commit meeting during the weeks of Lent and then at the end of the Lenten season, assess how it is going and whether or not there is energy to continue. I am also open to meeting with the people of the north in the parish if there is interest in the same.

▪ **WEB ACCESS TO DAILY REFLECTIONS ON THE WORD.** Three options that I find helpful to ponder the scripture of the day and the texts of the daily Mass are:

I. **Universalis.** Free on the web. Subscription available. Smart phone accessible. Readings at Mass, Mass texts, Liturgy of the Hours. Ability to get all texts in spoken form – you need to subscribe for these.

<https://universalis.com/>

II. **the Word: daily homilies from the Order of Preachers** (aka Dominicans): audio – excellent! It is emailed every day and you hit the listen link.



<https://word.op.org/>



III. **Give Us This Day: daily prayer for today's Catholic.**

Published by Liturgical Press (Benedictine), this includes daily prayer for Mass, reflections on scripture, morning and evening prayer, profiles of holy people – broader than the official list of saints, weekly insights, gospel art.

<https://giveusthisday.org/About/Index>

▪ **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 1st 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).

3. **NEW REPRESENTATIVE OF POPE FRANCIS APPOINTED TO AUSTRALIA: CHARLES BALVO.**



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Pope Francis appoints new ambassador to Australia

MEDIA RELEASE

January 17, 2022

Pope Francis has announced that American Archbishop Charles Balvo, a veteran of the Vatican's diplomatic service for more than 30 years, will serve as the next Apostolic Nuncio to Australia.

Archbishop Balvo, currently the Vatican's ambassador to the Czech Republic, was born in New York City and was ordained a priest of the Archdiocese of New York in 1976.

After serving in apostolic nunciatures in South America, Africa, Europe and the Middle East, Archbishop Balvo was appointed Apostolic Nuncio to New Zealand and several Pacific Island nations in 2005. He was also Apostolic Delegate to the Pacific Ocean.

In 2013, he was named Apostolic Nuncio to Kenya and took on responsibility for South Sudan after the country was established. While posted in Kenya, Archbishop Balvo also served as Permanent Observer to the United Nations Environment Program and Human Settlements Program.

He has been in the Czech Republic since 2018.

Australian Catholic Bishops Conference president Archbishop Mark Coleridge welcomed Archbishop Balvo's appointment on behalf of the Australian bishops.

"Archbishop Balvo is no stranger to the Antipodes, having served as Nuncio in New Zealand and the Pacific – and I myself came to know him at that time," Archbishop Coleridge said.

"But he returns to this part of the world enriched by his service as Nuncio in Africa and Europe."

Archbishop Coleridge said Archbishop Balvo "comes to us at a complex and challenging time in the Church and in Australia".

"But his combination of gifts and experience will equip him well for all that lies ahead," he said.

"The bishops look forward to working with him closely as together we face decisions about the future of the Church in this country and beyond."

Archbishop Balvo succeeds Archbishop Adolfo Yllana, who last year completed six-and-a-half years in Australia when Pope Francis appointed him Apostolic Nuncio to Israel and Cyprus, and Apostolic Delegate to Jerusalem and Palestine.

4. **SYNODALITY VIRTUES: A CULTURE OF NON-DEFERENCE** by Thomas O'Loughlin, U.K.

One of the major cultural shifts in Western society in the 20th century has been the decline – in many places, the disappearance – of the culture of deference.

Many reasons have been advanced for this shift in how people relate in society, but all are agreed that it has occurred.

What is a culture of deference?

Deference can be seen in the notion that one would greet another, not as an equal in status and dignity, but as someone who is deemed superior to oneself.

Deference assumes someone inherently deserves respect. It assumes that you acknowledge the other's authority, superiority, or worth as radically different to your own.

In those countries that are still monarchies, there is still an in-built system of deference. This deference is based on just who the person is: people are not born equal – and so one must bow, curtsy or salute that person whose status is greater than yours.



More widely, there was the deference that went with positions of authority. People offered respect to police and army officers. (In some countries there was and still is a cult of honouring the army.) They offered deference to the civic officials, to medical experts, to teachers, and – of course – to the clergy.

The basic idea is that certain people were somehow "more" than the rest and should be given the first word. They should be heard with respect (i.e. not contradicted), and given the last word, as well.

The new situation

Anyone who has been in hospital or a classroom recently knows that that the culture of deference is dead. People do not want to be "spoken down to". They want to be informed and allowed to make their own decisions. The age of the professor-is-god is over!

Moreover, those who used to be on a pedestal have been shown to be no different – and sometimes much worse – than the rest of us.

There was even the deference that came from money. We have all seen just how quickly a concierge or a receptionist in a hotel would respond to the needs of VIPs – and we find it insulting.

In the developed world, the age of automatic deference is over. And when we see people who imagine they merit such deference we react with a deep sense that we are all equal as humans and should just be treated with equal care and respect.

The Church situation

Deference has been feature of Christian life at least since the time of the Synod of Elvira (306 AD) when Christian ministers began to claim the special privileges that Roman culture granted to the pagan priesthoods (*sacerdotia*), such as the *flamines* and the *pontifices*. (Note that this occurred before Constantine's Edict of Toleration in 311 AD.)

Indeed, very soon these titles were adopted by Christian ministers. They called themselves *sacerdotes* (and justified this by an unfounded appeal to the Old Testament) and *pontifices*.

We still call the book of ceremonies used by bishops the "Pontifical" and refer to the Bishop of Rome as the "Supreme Pontiff".

Along with the titles went the uniforms -- the heel-length gown (*vesta talaris*) that (usually called a soutane or cassock in English) is still used by those ministers who like being clerics.

The use of purple -- look at the trimming on the soutanes of *monsignori* and bishops -- and the use of the title "reverend" (literally: O revered one) also comes from this ancient imperial culture of deference.



More importantly than the kit, is the attitude that being the subject of deference brings. It assumes that the revered one can speak first, is not challenged as to what he says, and then has the last word.

In a culture of deference, what Father says, goes!

However, we see ourselves, not as subjects, but as brothers and sisters in baptism who are on a common pilgrimage of faith.

All of us need to recall that no one likes to be patronized or "spoken down to".

Who speaks

Just imagine going into any group of adults (or even a schoolroom for that matter) and then speaking for 5-10 minutes.

What else would happen? There would, at the very least, be questions! Only an idiot would not make room for a "time for questions" into the plan for this communications slot.

Others would probably want to share their experience of what the speaker had been talking about. At the very least, into a 10-minute slot, a speaker would build in some time for reactions and comments.

If the communicator has had any training – or natural skill in talking to people – the whole event would take the form of a dialogue. It would be more like a class than a lecture. It would be done – at the very least – with some Q&A-style dialogue.

The style would be informal. For instance, it might pick up on the common jokes of the group on that day. And, unless one wants to intimidate a group when giving them a "dressing down", it would be done at the same level as them. Moreover, it would not be done from any throne or lectern.

Now think of the way that most homilies are given. The culture of deference still exists for most of those – be they bishops, presbyters, or deacons – who preach at our celebrations of the Eucharist.

If you want proof that it no longer works, then stand at the back and watch the assembly and how they are moving their heads. How many are actually listening? How many are engaged? How many are looking at their iPhones?

A complex problem

The Church is out of sync on the subject of deference. That which most clergy take for granted is given them. But it is resented and becomes just a token. People have moved away.

Bishops are often glad to get presbyters from developing countries where deference is still part of the culture. But these men in not realizing that deference is no longer part of our culture are often pushing people away from the gospel. This is a matter that needs cultural education.

We have a variety of ministries in the Church. We have to learn anew how to respect these differences *without appealing to the modes of deference*.

We are seeking to become a **synodal Church**, but the assumption of every synod is that all who meet at "the cross-roads" (the *synodos*) do so on a level-playing field. If we try to become synodal while ignoring that many of the laity involved no longer live in a world of deference, then the process will lead to resentment, frustration, and rejection.



Hope or Trap?

We need to make a virtue of living in a post-deference society.

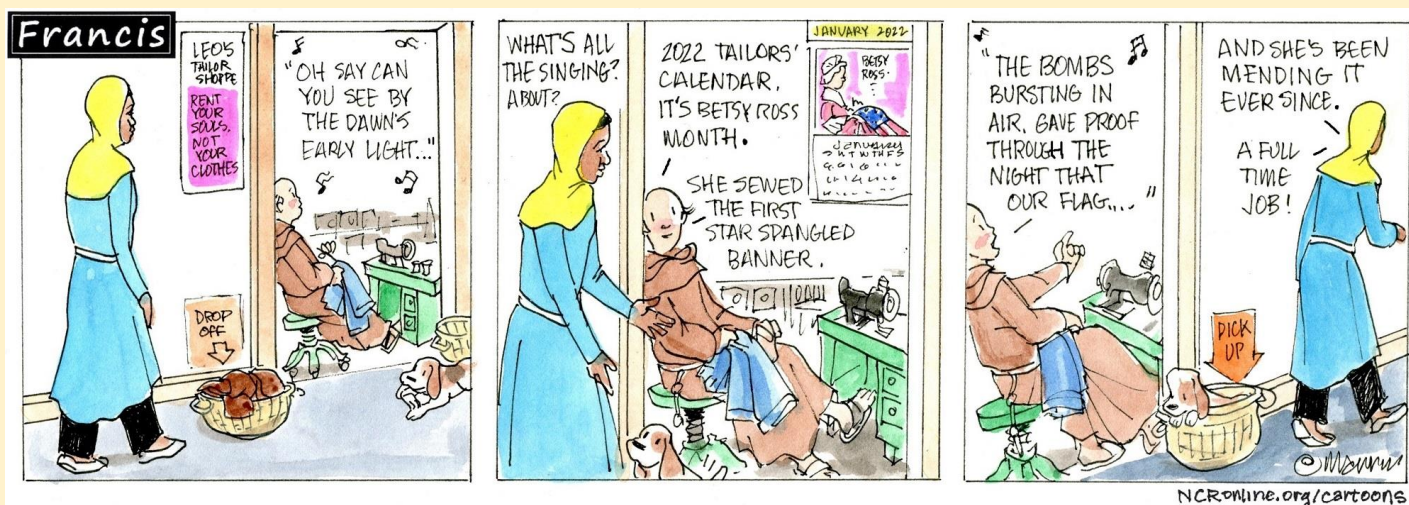
If you miss that – for instance people deferring to you or greeting you by kissing your ring – then that is sad!

If we go into the synodal process without this virtue of post-deferential relationships with others, this process (on which many are pinning their hopes for the renewal of the Roman Catholic Church) will lead to the alienation of many of the very Christians we need for our renewal.



Thomas O'Loughlin is a presbyter of the Catholic Diocese of Arundel and Brighton and professor-emeritus of historical theology at the University of Nottingham (UK). His latest book is Eating Together, Becoming One: Taking Up Pope Francis's Call to Theologians (Liturgical Press, 2019).

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<https://international.la-croix.com/>



18th January 2022

Lord God,
whose compassion embraces all peoples,
whose law is wisdom, freedom, and joy for the poor,
fulfil in our midst your promise of favour,
that we may receive the gospel of salvation with faith
and, anointed by the Spirit, freely proclaim it.

(Year C: 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Alternative Opening Prayer)

Francis



20th January 2022

Brisbane Catholic Education
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If you think it's wrong report it.

John

pastor
Boonah Catholic community