

MY WORD

The issue of role models has been in the news lately. Subscriber Dianne Lantry of Canberra sent this timely reflection.

Some friends and I were recently discussing “our funny ways.” I am always very careful when I iron shirts with collars, so that I don’t get little creases near the points of the collar. Why? A former colleague told me, many years ago, that you could tell if a man came from a good family by checking his collar for creases. Building on that, she also believed that clean, shiny shoes were an indicator of good family.

Another friend is very careful when ironing shirt sleeves, so that she doesn’t end up with more than one crease. Why? She had a friend whose husband left her for a woman who was very particular about having only one crease per sleeve. There were probably other reasons, but why let that ruin a good story?

I never write reminders on my hands. Why? I stopped to chat with an elderly neighbour one afternoon after primary school. Upon noticing the blue ink art over both my arms she scrubbed me *raw* with Solvol and lectured me on ladylike behaviour before sending me home.

On later reflection I realised that our conversation was largely about role models, the good, the bad and the questionable. It got me wondering about my role models. Celebrities and footballers do not feature. Why? Well that’s another story.

My grandmother is a role model for me. Nan was an excellent cook, a keen gardener and a committed Catholic. She attended Mass daily, had great faith, and never did anyone a “bad turn.” She didn’t hold a grudge and was honest and fair. *Piffle* was her expletive of choice. I never heard her blame God for the adversity in her life, nor did I ever hear her say anything uncomplimentary about anyone, including the Catholic clergy. I sometimes wonder what she would make of my criticisms, or what she would make of the recent accusations of paedophilia against the clergy. But that’s another story.

Thinking about Nan led me to wondering whether I was a role model. Do I do anything that others might emulate? I recently explained why Catholics don’t eat meat in Lent, and regularly debunk myths about Catholicism, but that makes me well informed, not a good role model. I identify as Catholic and regularly attend Mass but no-one I know or work with who doesn’t already believe or attend has been moved to believe or attend by my example.

I don’t kill or steal, and again, neither do those in my circle. I am inclined to gossip, so I’m going to work on not gossiping, and see if that might advance my transition to role model.

What about you? Role model or horrible warning?