

The Pastor's Keyboard—Msgr. Richard Huneger

Third Sunday of Advent

December 12, 2021

December 6, feast of **St Nicholas**. My first gift: a cell phone update to iOS 15.1, the featured "feature" being a **verifiable vaccine passport** in Apple Wallet. Meanwhile something that could turn into an *Oregon* digital vaccine passport may go into effect March 8. If that is so, is it another step in a potentially unsavory direction, even if (currently) voluntary? Yes, it may simplify and secure information more reliably and uniformly than paper documents. And even interface with the proposed *Immunization Infrastructure Act (HR 550)* that provides \$400 million for an "immunization system data modernization and expansion" of "a confidential, population-based, computerized database that records immunization doses administered by any health care provider to persons within the geographic area covered by that database." But last Spring **Dr Michael Yeadon**, retired chief scientist at Pfizer warned of the lust for digital data *and control* being aided and abetted by the scare factor in "public health" surrounding Covid.

The **totalitarian thirst** for digital track-and-trace mechanisms, he says, is insatiable: that is, to link medical, financial, mobile, and other data (all of which might be turned "on" or "off" arbitrarily by whoever owns "The Database," affording "social control" of behavior options). While there can be *good use* under benevolent authority, of such data networks, there can be terrible *abuse*. A good-usage example would be the very rapid deployment in **Taiwan** in early 2020, of GPS cell phone data-mining, combined with Covid test results, to let you (and others) know if and when you had been exposed to the virus. Consolidated GPS information let you know where you were, and when you were, near anyone (and who that person was) that came down with Covid. A quick Red-Yellow-Green risk-identification notice let you flash your status to a grocery-store gatekeeper, or inspired you to quickly take yourself to a PCR testing location. It worked as a benevolent public health information system to help everyone. However, in **Australia**, with a zero-Covid policy of harsh imposed lockdowns, the quarantined (diagnosed Covid-positive, and soon, unvaccinated) must stay home, and within strict confines; at random moments 24/7 the government sends a text message, requesting a "selfie" within 15 minutes (failure to comply has penalties): one's cell phone must be on and at hand at all times, to allow proof of identity (facial recognition technology handles that) and location. Facial recognition technology has grown exponentially, and is deployed extensively, in China, where millions of connected cameras dot the landscape and street corners and inside buildings. You may recall that in 2020 Microsoft decided not to allow its facial recognition technology to be supplied to USA law enforcement (for fear of abuse by police).

It is being said out loud more and more that whoever controls **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** will control the planet. Putin, recently. China, obviously. We, sheepishly. You've probably read about the dispute between China and Elon Musk of *Tesla*. Tesla is the largest manufacturer of electric vehicles in the world. Musk wants to keep and extend the Chinese market for his cars, but his 1,680 (out of 42,000 planned) Space-X Starlink satellites power the iPad-like control panel in the Tesla, to remind you of the next charging location, but also to provide Tesla with vehicle operation details useful for improving its cars. The Chinese want all that data (to be made available, of course, to its military). Musk wants to sell cars but keep the data. It's good to recall the dangerous personal-data mining, including speech profiling, being done via *TikTok* (used by billions), and China's near-monopoly on *DNA data* for the whole world, given its aggressive acquisition of DNA-equipment and -testing companies. *Ethnic-DNA* bioweapon viruses are said to be on the way. More cause for concern! China's extensive social-credit *surveillance* system grants or denies your desires, based on your behavioral history. But, getting back to Artificial Intelligence, remember that AI "learns" from data, and needs **Big Data**, the more the better (Facebook and Google know this too). We are shy about forced collection and consolidation of all kinds of even very private information from which no one can escape. But dictatorships are not. They can and do collect massive data useful for developing AI quickly. We face a **conundrum**: If we do not want invasive data gathering and the potential for social control "credits" that can be defined any way the powers that be want to, forcing us to yield our freedoms, we may yet inevitably have to yield those freedoms anyway to whoever masters AI first. Not a pleasant thought. Currently we have a lead in some areas, such as producing high-end chips needed to crunch Big Data for AI purposes. But one leading federal official has recently claimed that we have perhaps 10 years to "catch up" in other facets of AI development, or we'll be "left behind" forever. The future of humanity, he says, is at stake.