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EDITORIAL April 2017 The Pope on coal

The dirtiest coal power station in the developed world shut down last month as Australia grapples with the need for electricity and an apparent perception (at least in government circles) that saving the planet is optional.

Hazelwood in Victoria has stopped its turbines, but the debate rages over a new mega-coal mine, the Adani Carmichael mine in Queensland, set to be the biggest in the world. Meanwhile, renewable energy guru Elon Musk has offered to sell the batteries that would open the door to enough renewables to run the country.

As Bill McKibben says in his *Guardian Australia* article (see link below), in the background is the rapid destruction of the Great Barrier Reef.

Papal encyclicals usually address issues that are current. Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* (1891), considered the first Catholic social teaching document, looked at the issue of work and the rights and responsibilities of industrialists and workers. Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*, the second anniversary of which the church marks next month, clearly addresses the issue of human-induced climate change. Francis speaks directly to the use of fossil fuels:

We know that technology based on the use of highly polluting fossil fuels - especially coal, but also oil and, to a lesser degree, gas – needs to be progressively replaced without delay. Until greater progress is made in developing widely accessible sources of renewable energy, it is legitimate to choose the less harmful alternative or to find short-term solutions. But the international community has still not reached adequate agreements about the responsibility for paying the costs of this energy transition #165. For Francis, the principle of the common good is central to the issue of sharing our common home, most particularly with the poor who have starkly limited resources. With these we might equate future generations who will be impoverished through this generation's lack of care for the environment. So he appeals for a new inclusive dialogue for change to create a better planet. Young people, he says, cannot understand how anyone can work for change without considering the environment (#13). How might we approach a campaign for a national

and international abolition of the use of harmful fossil fuels?

How can we discuss the spiritual dimension of caring for our common home in ways that are meaningful for those in power?

What can we do in our daily lives to, for example, change in the way we dispose of rubbish?

Discuss in a group three ways you can change current practices to make them more friendly for the environment at a local, national and international level.

Indigenous Australia

Abuse survivors welcome settlement over Retta Dixon home

Compensation for years of physical and sexual abuse at a notorious home for Aboriginal children will provide relief but will never erase the trauma of what happened, former residents say.

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Detainee recounts journey from bush childhood to Don Dale

"I'd changed a bit. I thought Don Dale was going to make me better, but I think it just made me tougher. I was on the streets and I was mad."

The vulnerable witness, known only by the pseudonym AU, gave evidence to the Royal Commission into Youth Detention in the Northern Territory on March 23, writes Ben Millington for the ABC.

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Environment

Adani mine a line in the sand in climate change battle

There is nowhere else on the planet right now where the dichotomy between two potential futures – one where we address the climate change crisis, one where we ignore this momentous threat and continue with business as usual – is playing out in such a dramatic and explosive way as Australia.

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Refugees and Migrants

State of the nation: refugees and migrants in Australia

The world is in the midst of an unprecedented humanitarian crisis. Yet Australia's approach in recent years has been to punish people seeking asylum, while increasing the numbers of refugees it resettles. This contrasting approach threatens the long and proud history Australia has of successful integration of refugee communities. So says the Refugee Council of Australia in its report released last month. Read more

The Death Penalty

Philippines urged to choose restorative over punitive

The Lower House of Congress in the Philippines has passed a death penalty bill. Unfortunately, vengeance and revenge for wrongdoing has become the driving force in the thinking of legislators. Compassion, rehabilitation, and eventual mercy and forgiveness are not in their hearts and minds, writes Shay Cullen.

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The Political Community

'Decolonising the mind': using Hollywood celebrities to validate Islam

When Terry Holdbrooks Jr, converted to Islam in 2003, he was inundated with death threats and labeled a 'race traitor'.

If a religious conversion ever deserves to be admired, Holdbrooks' conversion does, and not because Islam has 'won' yet another convert, but because the new convert was assigned the very role of subjugating his Muslim prisoners in Guantanamo, writes Palestinian journalist and author Ramzy Baroud.

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Israelifying airports

Last month, the Royal Jordanian Airlines satirically tweeted twelve recommendations to its passengers because of the U.S. and U.K.'s respective governments' ban of electronic devices larger than "smart" phones on planes flying to those countries, writes Mahmoud Zidan for the *Palestine Chronicle*.

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Use It

Time to draw the line

The Australian Government announced in January 2017 that it would negotiate a permanent border for the maritime boundaries which will determine oil and gas treaties between the two nations. The negotiation of permanent equitable boundaries for oil and gas is critically important for Timor-Leste to ensure that our nearest and tiniest neighbour receives just royalties from these lucrative resources. To find out about a documentary film about the disputed maritime boundaries, click here

Cecily McNeill

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