

EDITORIAL October 2017: Welcoming the stranger

The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program in the United States is the latest to come under the Trump axe. This Obama-era program enabled around 800,000 so-called Dreamers – teens and young adults without documentation who were brought into the United States as children – to seek higher education and to work legally. The administration of US president Donald Trump has reversed this and vows to deport such people to their original countries where, having left with their parents, they may now lack family connections. The US bishops say this is a reversal of the gospel message to love the stranger.

Today, our nation has done the opposite of how Scripture calls us to respond. It is a step back from the progress that we need to make as a country.

The deportation of the DACA “Dreamers” in the US is symptomatic of a global attitude to refugees. The treatment of the Rohingya people in Myanmar has raised a worldwide outcry. The Rohingya, who have been in Myanmar – formerly known as Burma – for generations but have struggled to gain citizenship, are being forced over the border to Bangladesh where they are also not wanted.

In Australia, the idea of deporting adults who entered the country as children with their parents has also taken hold in the Turnbull government’s latest attempts to deal with crime. In Myanmar, where the military still holds the balance of power, the Rohingya are labelled “terrorists” and the move to deport them, “ethnic cleansing”. The situation of some New Zealand-born citizens who arrived in Australia as young children with their parents is on a much smaller scale. But in both cases, members of a particular culture are being forced to resettle in a country they left long ago. Refugees seeking asylum in Australia who have been locked up in detention centres on Manus Island or on Nauru are also entitled to rights which they are not getting.

Pope Francis is unequivocal in his [call] for original countries and migration countries to work together to ensure the best possible settlement for refugees and migrants. In his address for the 104th world day of migrants and refugees, January 1, 2018, issued on August 15, the pope says the universal right to a nationality should be recognised for all children at

birth.

The statelessness which migrants and refugees sometimes fall into can easily be avoided with the adoption of ‘nationality legislation that is in conformity with the fundamental principles of international law’. Migratory status should not limit access to national healthcare and pension plans, nor affect the transfer of their contributions if repatriated.

Quoting his predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI, Pope Francis says when migrants are recognised and valued, they can be a true resource for the communities that welcome them.

This is why I hope that, in countries of arrival, migrants may be offered freedom of movement, work opportunities, and access to means of communication, out of respect for their dignity. For those who decide to return to their homeland, I want to emphasise the need to develop social and professional reintegration programmes.

What can we in Australia do to ensure the pope’s message is understood and put into practice?

Refugees and asylum seekers

Church leaders condemn Trump ending of DACA

Reacting to the move to end DACA [and deport thousands of young Americans who arrived in the country as children], the bishops said, "Today, our nation has done the opposite of how Scripture calls us to respond. It is a step back from the progress that we need to make as a country."

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Faith leaders at odds over raising Rohingya issue during pope’s visit to Myanmar

The Catholic Bishop's Conference of Myanmar (CBCM) have suggested to Pope Francis not to use the term "Rohingya" when he visits Myanmar for three days in November. But other faith leaders disagree saying Pope Francis already understands the reality of Myanmar.

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Indonesia speaks up as global support for Rohingya grows

The Indonesian government has stepped up its support for ethnic Muslim Rohingya promising humanitarian aid and a new hospital in their homeland in Myanmar's Rakhine State as the military continues to torch villages while battling homegrown insurgents.

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Aung San Suu Kyi – don't give up on her – Rudd

Former Australian prime minister Kevin Rudd says now is not the time to walk away from Myanmar's fragile democracy.

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Mixed welcome for Rohingyas in Bangladesh

In impoverished Bangladesh sympathy for Rohingya abounds but many Bangladeshis are increasingly suspicious of the presence of such large number of Rohingya in the country.

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Indigenous Australia

More support services for first Australians

The coalition government is to put nearly \$330,000 into providing more social services for indigenous Australians in Blacktown, New South Wales. The funds will enable Marist180 to provide wrap around support for 30 families per year. The program helps young people at risk of dropping out of school by engaging families using culturally grounded techniques like yarning circles alongside case management.

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Triumphant songlines at the national museum

The shortcomings of the English language are never more apparent than when it is used to translate indigenous Australian beliefs customs and culture. How could a museum even contemplate an exhibition about something as central to 60,000-plus years of Indigenous life on this continent as "songlines" – paths of Indigenous knowledge and creation history that crisscross land, heaven and water? writes Paul Daley for *The Guardian*.

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Environment

India's floods expose poor countries' vulnerability to climate change

In West Bengal, residents say Hurricane Harvey in the US is "no comparison" to devastation for which their country left them woefully unprepared.

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The drivers of China's green shift

China has had a bad reputation when it comes to environmental protections. But one expert argues China is leading the way in a "global green shift" through its adoption of renewable energy sources - with the alternative too dangerous for the country to consider.

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The Political Community

Timor-Leste's Mari Alkatiri set to make a comeback as PM

Muslim politician Mari Alkatiri, who quit as prime minister 2006 after four years as the mainly Catholic nation's first parliamentary leader after its independence, is set for a dramatic return to lead the government for the next five years, writes Thomas Oro in Dili.

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Working for the dignity of displaced Delhi slum people

Lalita Devi and her family were forced to pack up their slum-dwelling belongings and move to a new location 15 years ago. They had done nothing wrong in the slum of New Delhi, the nation's capital. But the residents were considered to be too close to an up-market residential complex housing influential people, including politicians and bureaucrats.

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Millennials rapidly losing interest in democracy

Not long ago, liberal democracy was regarded by many as not just the best form of government, but the inevitable form of government. At the end of the Cold War, Francis Fukuyama famously called the end of history: democracy had won, everything else had failed. In 2017, that view looks naive. New research warns that democracy's fan base is shrinking, especially among younger people.

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Human Rights

Letter from Gaza: alive due to lack of death

Gaza-born Jihad Abusalim describes the devastating effects of Israel's blockade on the daily lives of Palestinians.

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See also [Israel is turning Palestinians into Zionists](#)

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