

# REFLECTIONS AND NOTES

for using AC magazine in parishes and schools

CHRISTMAS 2006 VOL 14 NO 5

## Finding your place in the world

The Christmas 2006 edition of *Australian Catholics* features an interview with filmmaker Khoa Do, a young man who has come a long way in his life since his family arrived in Australia as refugees.

Khoa's films are influenced by his experiences as a refugee growing up in Australia, as well as the experiences of others he has encountered. His first film looked at home-based migrant sweatshop workers in Sydney, while his second film was inspired by a group of homeless young people he encountered in Cabramatta. In 2005, Khoa received the Young Australian of the Year award for his efforts to raise awareness about these issues and for his support for young people in need.

In his latest film, the 27-year-old continues to explore themes that are important to his life and understanding of the world. Khoa explains:

**'The film isn't about football. Rather, it's about the important themes of family, friendship and finding a place for yourself in the world. It's about realising broken dreams and ambitions. It's about finding a way home.'**

### Questions for students

Students could read the story *Aussie legend* and answer these questions:

- 1 How does Khoa describe what life was like when he was growing up? What opportunities has he had growing up that he might not otherwise have had?
- 2 What does Khoa mean when he says that filmmakers have 'a responsibility to do the best job possible because what you do can potentially change people's lives'? Has a film ever left a lasting impact on your life?
- 3 What attributes do you think should make someone a Young Australian of the Year? Does Khoa have these attributes?
- 4 Khoa found inspiration for his films in the injustices he saw around him. Describe injustices you see in your community.
- 5 Family and community are important themes in Khoa's latest film. Do material possessions dull our sense of family and community?
- 6 Are there many students from different backgrounds in your school? How does this impact on social groupings?

### ACTIVITY Homes

Many people struggle to find a place for themselves in the world. To someone who is a migrant, or refugee, or someone living on the streets, the concept of 'home' can be very different to that of someone living in a stable family situation.

Students might like to produce a creative depiction of the concept of 'home', using the point of view of either a refugee, new migrant or a homeless person. The following points may stimulate discussion and ideas:

*Is your physical place of residence always your 'home'?*

*What defines a 'home'?*

*Does a 'home' always occupy a physical space?*

Identify scripture references to 'home' and 'houses' (e.g. *Psalm 84:3-4; Proverbs 15:30-32; Proverbs 27:8; Isaiah 32:17-19; Matthew 5:15; Matthew 7:23-28; Mark 10:28-30; John 14:1-3; John 14:22-24*). What imagery and descriptions are used in scripture? How do they compare to those chosen for the previous task?



**INSIDE**  
**In Depth**  
 PAGE 2  
**Activities**  
 PAGE 3  
**Reflection**  
 PAGE 4



The song, *I am Australian, by the Seekers*, includes the refrain, 'We are one, but we are many, and from all the lands on earth we come'. It recognizes the fact that the majority of Australians are descended from people who migrated to the country over the past two hundred years. At different points in Australian history, groups of migrants have arrived from diverse parts of the globe.

In building a home in Australia, each group has shaped the country in their own way. Their experiences challenge us, as Australians and as Catholics, to consider what it means to live in solidarity with others, to welcome strangers into our home, and build a community in Christ.

In these Teacher's Notes, we have provided some background material on migration and Australia, as well as class activities aimed at encouraging students to think more about some of the issues raised.

### Coming to Australia

People come to Australia for many reasons including employment, family connections, and humanitarian concerns. Immigration to Australia is regulated by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (<http://www.immi.gov.au/index.htm>). Detailed information about Australia's migration programs can be found on their website.

There are currently two immigration programs for permanent migration to Australia, the Migration Program, which includes skilled, family and

### MAIN COUNTRIES OF BIRTH OF THE POPULATION ('000s):

1901		2002	
AUSTRALIA	2,908	AUSTRALIA	15,075.2
UK/IRELAND	679.6	UK/IRELAND	1,179.8
GERMANY	38.4	NEW ZEALAND	413.7
CHINA	29.9	ITALY	235.2
NEW ZEALAND	25.8	SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO	207.5
INDIA	7.6	VIETNAM	171.6
USA	7.4	CHINA	164.9
ITALY	5.7	GREECE	131.2
		GERMANY	117.7

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

special eligibility migration, and the Humanitarian Program, which offers resettlement to refugees and to displaced persons who have suffered discrimination amounting to gross violations of human rights.

High Commissioner for Refugees. At least half the world's refugees are children: together with women they represent a significant proportion (75-80%) of the population. They are particularly vulnerable and invariably require outside help.

Australian

# CATHOLICS

MAGAZINE

[www.australiancatholics.com.au](http://www.australiancatholics.com.au)

## IN DEPTH

## Migration and Australia

### Humanitarian immigrants

In 2002/03, Australia received 12,525 humanitarian immigrants, of which there were 4376 refugees.

Under the law there is a very exact definition of a refugee:

**'Refugees are people who flee their country because of a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group. A refugee either cannot return home or is afraid to do so.'** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees—UNHCR)

The moment refugees cross the border into a foreign country, they fall under the mandate of the United Nations

Mandatory detention of illegal arrivals was introduced to Australia in 1992. Of those who have arrived illegally, there has been a great deal of media and social debate as to how Australia receives and processes those arriving illegally who are seeking asylum.

Recent proposed legislation to process all boat people asylum claims off shore has been met with criticism from many sectors, including the Australian Catholic Bishops, who urged Mr Howard to reconsider the legislation, and to show compassion for those genuinely seeking asylum.

Groups like the Edmund Rice Centre (<http://www.erc.org.au>) have done research looking at on the impact of Australia's detention policies on asylum seekers.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

<http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications.htm>

<http://www.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/abs@.nsf/0/OBD75000987B71A0CA256F7200832F19?Open>

<http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/ahric/>

Right: Albert Ankipi and his family arrived in Australia as refugees from Sudan, with help from the West Coast Refugee Sanctuary Group. See *New Land, New Hope, Australian Catholics* Christmas 2006.

### A Christian response

'The Church's social teaching supports the dignity and rights of people on the move and demands that adequate solutions be found for the suffering that forces people to flee their homes. It also demands that governments protect and care for foreigners in their nations. For Jesus, the stranger who asks for hospitality, or the immigrant who asks for acceptance, is a member of the same family.... to accept the other means to make space for him in one's city, in one's laws, in one's time, and in one's circle of friends.' (Pope John Paul II, at the Plenary meeting of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People — October 21, 1993.)

The Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office (<http://www.acmro.catholic.org.au/>) was established in 1995 to continue the Church's Mission of universal compassion for those in need, and work to accept and settle refugees and migrants to our country. Their website includes a number of resources, particularly around Refugee and Migrant Sunday.

A description of the Church's role in multicultural Australia can be found at <http://www.ncec.catholic.edu.au/multi.htm>. It includes the following:

'The Church should be a meeting place for different cultures, with an emphasis on a positive acceptance of their differences. This can lead to an environment where all cultures can dialogue with each other and where the dominant culture is willing to hear the values of others. Such an environment can lead to a sense of respect for all peoples with a hope of building up self confidence among all groups and individuals.'



### ACTIVITIES:

**1** Students could use the Australian Bureau of Statistics site (<http://www.abs.gov.au/>) to find data on how migration has changed Australia's population. They might want to consider: *How has the country of origin of people in Australia changed over the years? What are some of the factors that contributed to that change?*

*Australian Catholics* looks at the West Coast Refugee Sanctuary Group. Students might like to read that story, then develop a list of ways that your school might help new migrants.

**5** Students could put together an expository essay on the topic 'Australia's migration intake should be increased', from the perspectives of two of the following:

- An unemployed citizen of Australia*
- A spokesperson for a Catholic Church group which has sponsored several refugees as part of a community effort*
- An economist for the government*
- A naturalised citizen whose parents were migrants*
- A counsellor who has just returned from working with refugees in Afghanistan*
- A refugee waiting in a camp to be resettled*

**6** The class could hold a debate on one of the following topics:

- That multiculturalism is a myth*
- That social justice is the responsibility of every Australian*
- That all migrants should speak English before receiving citizenship*

Australian  
**CATHOLICS**  
MAGAZINE  
[www.australiancatholics.com.au](http://www.australiancatholics.com.au)

**ACTIVITIES  
for students**

**2** Students might like to do some research on one group of migrants to Australia—either their own ancestors or another group—and put together a country profile of the place where those people came from. They might want to consider: *What was it like in that country when those people emigrated? What do you think they were looking for in Australia?*

**3** Sudan was the largest source of offshore refugees to Australia in 2004/05. Students might like to research the situation in Sudan that has led to people becoming refugees.

**4** Some Australian parishes have gone out of their way to help refugees settle in Australia. One story in the latest

### OTHER TEACHING RESOURCES

[http://www.hreoc.gov.au/info\\_for\\_teachers/index.htm](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/info_for_teachers/index.htm)

<http://www.tear.org.au/resources/teacherslist.shtml>



In the Christmas story, we are reminded of the dire circumstances facing many people forced to leave their homes. In Matthew's Gospel, Mary and Joseph and their newborn son are forced to flee to Egypt to escape persecution from Herod. Stories of the Jewish people fleeing Egypt in the Old Testament remind us that many groups of people in history have been forced to leave their homes in search for a better life.

The following reflection from the National Council of Churches website looks at why we, as Catholics, should be compassionate and welcoming towards refugees and other strangers in our homes.

Source:

[http://www.ncca.org.au/cws/rdp/worship\\_resources/extra\\_worship\\_resources\\_h2003](http://www.ncca.org.au/cws/rdp/worship_resources/extra_worship_resources_h2003)

### Why worry about refugees?

The Scriptures begin with the story of creation. And by the end of that story, all that needs to be said about refugees has been said. We learn these things: the world is God's gift, given to us all; God loves each human being who is ever to come into the world; therefore all human beings matter. And so refugees matter. We are all made in God's image. So, when another human being is exiled or abused, God's image is not treated with due respect.

Because God loves each of us personally, what we share as human beings is much more important than our differences. The communities to which we belong—our families, towns, states and nations—help shape who we are. But we also have responsibility to strangers who do not belong to those communities. When someone who is starving or at risk of their life knocks on the door of our family house or of our nation, we may not simply ignore their plight. They may not belong to our family or our nation, but they are our fellow human beings also loved by God.

We find this insight enshrined in the laws given to the people of Israel. They are instructed to welcome strangers. For God had been with them when they wandered as strangers through Canaan. Because God had chosen them as friends, they were to befriend other strangers who were also God's friends.

In his teaching, Jesus also insisted on hospitality to strangers. He shocked the Pharisees by welcoming people

whom they excluded from their meals: Romans, tax collectors and prostitutes. When Jesus was asked who is our neighbour, he told a story about a Samaritan, a member of a despised group. In his story the Samaritan was the one who showed neighbourly love.

Australian  
**CATHOLICS**  
MAGAZINE  
[www.australiancatholics.com.au](http://www.australiancatholics.com.au)

## REFLECTION Welcoming strangers

Jesus also died as a stranger to reconcile strangers. When he rose from the dead, Jesus proved that God's love is stronger than our self-centredness. He also gave us hope that our world could be different. Instead of pushing away and punishing the stranger, we can imagine a world in which the differences between people are a source of life and where we share our resources with those most in need. This is a world in which refugees are not made, and when they come they are made welcome.

The church, where Paul says there is to be no difference made between Jew and Greek, between men and women is called to be the kind of community we would like to find made between nations. It is one where

asylum seekers and refugees should find a welcome.

So in Christian faith, refugees and asylum seekers are important because in them we welcome Christ who comes to us in the stranger. We live out our faith in our face to face meeting with asylum seekers. Nothing is more encouraging than to meet someone who will walk with you and look you in the eye.

We also live out our faith in making some of the energy and resources of our church communities available to refugees and asylum seekers. This is a very practical way of respecting the image of God in our brothers and sisters.

We also live out our faith by working with others to make our nation more hospitable. In forming a refugee policy, government leaders have to take into account the needs of asylum seekers and the capacity of the nation to accept new arrivals. But it is the responsibility of citizens to see that our government policies are not brutally excluding. In times of insecurity and fear, refugees act as scapegoats. It is our responsibility to press for a better and more welcoming policy.

Notes compiled by:

Kay Cantwell, Carmel Cranitch, and Michael McVeigh.

**Do you find our Teacher's Notes useful in the classroom?** Please e-mail any ideas or feedback to [auscaths@jespub.jesuit.org.au](mailto:auscaths@jespub.jesuit.org.au)