

# ON NOT LOSING HEART

**T**HERE IS MUCH to depress us these days. The cruel treatment of asylum seekers is depressing, especially as it is a course of action that still has majority support in the Australian population. Despite the fact that anyone whose life is threatened has the right to protection and the right to seek asylum rather than migrate through ordinary channels, asylum seekers are branded ‘illegals’ and denied the protection they seek. And in labelling them as ‘illegals’ we do not see them as vulnerable and needy human beings. And what is more, the present policies of our government bear signs of racism.

To lift our spirits we have the hopeful signs of rejection of these policies and efforts to influence Catholics and the Australian population at large to oppose government policies and influence our political leaders to show more decency and humanity. The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference statement of 9th May, endorsed by the National Council of Priests, is very welcome. The Catholic Religious of Australia’s National Lament Campaign is likewise welcome. See their website: [www.catholicreligiousaustralia.org](http://www.catholicreligiousaustralia.org).

Also depressing are many aspects of the proposed budget. Caritas points out that Australia is a wealthy nation—we are ranked 13<sup>th</sup> out of the world’s richest nations—and we have a history of generosity, but we are backing away from our commitments, cutting almost \$8 billion from

Australia’s Overseas Development Assistance. And the poorer within Australia are the ones who will suffer most from this budget, while the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have been judged to have fared the worst across every social and economic indicator, despite all the national efforts to ‘close the gap’. This budget, it has been claimed, ‘amounts to an appalling deal for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’ (Andrew Meehan, the National Director of ANTaR).

The news is not all bad. The ecumenical movement is good news—though it is difficult to sustain. Many feel that it has reached a stand-still. So we cannot allow ourselves to get carried away.

But we must not lose hope—the Kingdom of God, Jesus tells us, is in our midst.

We had the gospel recently of the disciples on the road to Emmaus. They were fast losing hope. They were going in the wrong direction—away from Jerusalem where everything they hoped for was yet to happen. Jesus joined them as they walked away and gently turned them around. We need Jesus to walk with us and make sure we are walking in the right direction.

The promised Kingdom of God is not a forlorn hope. We must not lose hope that it will be established and we must keep praying and working to do our part to make it happen. But the Kingdom is God’s achievement.

—Barry Brundell MSC, Editor.

*Only in the darkness can you see the stars.*

—Martin Luther King Jnr.