F : What is the religious landscape of Australia, and where do Catholics sit in that space?

: Australia was founded originally as six British colonies, and though we didn't have an established Anglican church as such, there was definitely a sense that the Anglicans or Episcopalians and the Presbyterians were the establishment. Often in the early days, Catholics were rebellious Irish who tended to be convicts rather than o cers; the Catholics were, if you like, the lower classes.

The story is nicely told if you look at the history of the Jesuits in Australia. The first Jesuits to come to Australia were Austrians. They came, they planted the vineyards, they started ministering in the country areas, and they went on ministry to the Aboriginal peoples. Some years later, the Irish Jesuits turned up. It's no disrespect to my Irish forebears to say they weren't much interested in ministering to the Aborigines, but were instead interested in trying to improve the lot of the Irish. So increasingly the Catholics became upwardly socially mobile. At the same time, with increased migration since World War II, it got to the stage probably a generation ago where Catholics were actually the largest grouping in the Australian community: about 25 percent. In 1995, the chief justice—who happened to be my father—was swearing in the new governor general in the presence of the prime minister, and all three were Catholic. Now, that would have been completely unimaginable in earlier times.

So it's your classic Irish Catholic story, supplemented with that of Catholics coming from countries like Italy. Now Catholicism is very much mainstream in Australia. But I think for Americans, the biggest surprise about Australia would be just how thematically and dramatically secular we are in our public square. As a result, particularly when an issue has come up like child sexual abuse within churches, there's been a lot of antagonism towards the churches and particularly towards the Catholic Church in terms of its handling of that situation—understandably, because of the clericalism and the numbers.

F : Can you explain a bit about the legal provisions for religious freedom in Australia?

: For Americans, it's important to understand that Australia is a

would say that all treaties with Native Americans were honorably complied with, but to have a treaty, even if it's broken, is a better starting point than no treaty at all. So a lot of my work has been involved with issues to do with Aboriginal land rights and issues of self-determination. In 1992, the Australian High Court for the first time recognized the rights of Aboriginal people to their traditional lands. So there's been a need for a whole statutory structure for dealing with that.

One of the issues presently occupying us in Australia—and it's the topic of one of the books I've been working on while here at Boston College—is how do we best recognize Aborigines in the Australian constitution. We now do have an Aboriginal middle class, thank God. There are now Aboriginal law professors, there are now Aboriginal doctors, there are now senior Aboriginal civil servants. These educated, middle-class indigenous Australians look at our constitution and ask how can this be a self-respecting nation when the constitution doesn't even mention those people who are the proud inheritors of what, admittedly, is the oldest recorded culture in history?

One of the other problem areas for us is that, Australia being such a vast country, we still have Aboriginal communities in very remote areas. These isolated communities are living in situations where the delivery of services by government is still very problematic, and where the social conditions are still appalling. So there's still much work to be done there.

With regard to the issue of asylum and refugees: Australia, like the United States, has been a generous country in terms of cooperating with the UN High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR) for placement of people who are proven to be refugees. But as a country we have become increasingly unsympathetic to people who turn up in Australia by boat without a visa seeking asylum. I think for Australians, there's something about the deep psychology of people who live on an island nation continent. There's always a fear about "the other" who's going to come across those waters. And so we've had increasingly restrictive policies imposed by government. The moral quandary has been this: The government has said, "we want to stop the boats coming from Indonesia, because if we do that, we can make more places available for the neediest people who are now in refugee camps in Africa, for example, where there are people who could never a ord to employ the services of a people smuggler." So the moral calculus of that has been very di cult. The other thing is that Australia has engaged in wanton exceptionalism because we're one of the few signatories to the Refugee Convention in Southeast Asia. We do the special pleading of saying, "we've got to find unilateral solutions to us being a honen0 tmuho coeg be4plg fr510.6(o)9(m I)-5.2(r)-6.4(a)q.9(o),
hnvs eg7-4.6(a)-14.8(g)4.5(e)-10.5(d i)-14.5(o t)-3.5(h)7.4.9(l)5.9(e)-4.8g7-4.6(a)-22.20.8(g b))-19.1(r)-3n
t imeak)t.(t s)0k9(e)6(h)a(m)2(?)8.5(T)-42.8(h)7.4(u)-4.6(l)-36.6(e)-3.6(e)unieldr o
itainoa710.215id haiglis tha5(e)2.6(, S)4.j[3u(g u)-11.55.)10.1(m b)-12.2(1)39(e)-5 6(d)]
n0 t1.8 Td(-)Tj-t6e04339(h)7.6(o c.3n)-1a.2(1-5.3y)-3 w)5 S)2.2.1-rh6(k)t 91f b.82(o)3

are indigenous or those who have come seeking asylum.