

Pope Francis in America

*We come from everywhere
Africa, Europe, Asia, Latin America
We hide in the bowels of ships
And stowaway in the cargo of planes
Dodge bullets and run from dogs
And get nightmares about fences and walls*

*We do these things and more
To experience the land of liberty-and dreams
And to provide for our families
So they too can say they are Americans*

*We are no scum or dreg
We heal the sick, mop the floors
Tend the gardens, harvest the crops
Throw out the garbage, push wheelchairs
Babysit and become surrogate moms*

*We stack the shelves and cook for hundreds
And take abuse and get arrested
Just for the way we look
We do the gutter jobs that Main Street refuses
Yes, we bring many gifts to America*

*So please, Mr. President, sign that cedula
The stamp that says we are legal
Bring us from the shadows
Into the sunshine of a new day
So we can think and dream freely
Because we too are Americans*

'This system is by now intolerable: farm workers find it intolerable, labourers find it intolerable, communities find it intolerable, peoples find it intolerable. The earth itself-our sister, Mother Earth, as Saint Francis would say- also finds intolerable.' This was Pope Francis in Bolivia and this sums up the ideology of his papacy which is to tell it like it is, to touch on the issues that face humankind and to challenge the mentality of consumerism and profit that has led to the social and economic exclusion of the poor. This explains why the Pope matters, why he is relevant and why policy makers would do well to take notice.

Pope Francis is for real. He is shaking up the world. In an age where phoneyism is glorified and mediocrity is accepted as quality Pope Francis is a breath that flowers the golden champa. In an age of so-called God-men and women Pope Francis brings a reality and constancy that light the way.

When the Pope stopped his entourage and blessed a child in Philadelphia this was a parish priest ministering to the sick. It was a vocation with which he was familiar in the slums of Buenos Aires where he served the poor and the voiceless. As pontiff he

has a more powerful pulpit from which to transmit his message and the world takes notice.

Pope Francis addressed a joint session of Congress and said unequivocally that elected officials have a duty to include all in their development plans. According to Francis, 'A political society endures when it seeks, as a vocation, to satisfy common needs by stimulating the growth of all of its members, especially those in situations of greater vulnerability or risk.' The members of Congress listened and applauded and Americans hoped that the next day it would not be back to business as usual.

Inequality is the root of social ills. But the question is what opportunities exist in America for the poor to lift themselves out of poverty? A number of studies show that inequality in America is so endemic that it would take radical policies to overhaul it. Black and Hispanic homes tend to be in poor neighborhoods. It is no secret that neighborhood poverty can affect children negatively and discrimination in the housing market can lead to segregation in neighborhoods.

A study by Harvard University found that those areas with higher

rates of upward mobility shared five characteristics as follows: 'they have less segregation by income and race, lower levels of income inequality, better schools, lower rates of violent crime, and a larger share of two-parent households.' One of the conclusions is that children growing up in well-to-do neighborhoods have a better chance of earning more than those coming from poor neighborhoods. Paul Krugman says that dumb rich kids tend to earn more than their poorer counterparts since they get all the breaks.

By the time the Pope was done with his visit to Congress one powerful official had heeded the word. John Boehner, the Speaker of the House,

Luther King and related it to the dream of immigrants who want to build a better life in the United States and in other countries.

He said, 'In recent centuries, millions of people came to the United States to pursue their dream of building a future in freedom.' The Pope asked his audience and those in power not to be afraid of foreigners 'because most of us were once foreigners.' As far as policy is concerned the Immigration Bill sits in Congress gathering dust as millions live in the shadows in America. While politicians quarrel over terminologies such as 'amnesty' and a 'pathway to citizenship' millions are asking for the right to be

lion undocumented immigrants were deported by the Obama administration which is more than George W. Bush did in his two terms.

The Republican Party is divided over immigration. Donald Trump has drawn the ire of many immigrants by his anti-immigration stance and the other candidates have not come out in support of comprehensive immigration reforms. What seems likely to happen is that reforms will take place on a piecemeal basis. The presidential candidates for the 2016 elections will do well to realize the impact of the Hispanic vote.

In 2004 George W. Bush won 56 per cent of the Latino vote in Florida and carried the state but



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sional mess, as we have pointed out, is Speaker John Boehner who has decided to resign in October 2015. He said that the Pope influenced him when he asked Boehner to pray for him. The talk of a Congressional shutdown is another sign of the malaise that has befallen the august chamber.

Another theme in the Pope's message concerned the impact of climate change. He called for a 'conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all.' It is interesting to note that after his speech one of the most controversial and costliest of hydrocarbon fuel explorations came to an end. It was reported that after investing 10 years and \$7 billion in the American Arctic 'Shell said it would shelve plans to tap the potentially vast reserve, leaving for the foreseeable future after a disappointing drilling season.'

This project had the environmentalists up in arms against the Obama administration as environmentalists said that the Arctic wasn't about polar bears anymore 'but the survival of the planet, and the need to change everything in the face of catastrophic climate change.' The general consensus is that climate change is occurring and that excess greenhouse gas-emissions are caused by humans. The fluctuations in temperatures and weather conditions in various parts of the world show that the planet is getting warmer and that action is needed to stem the tide of greenhouse fluctuations.



Pope Francis: Peace, Peace and Simply Peace!

said that he had enough of the phoneyism. He said he was tired of the 'right-wing fanatics who have taken over the GOP, and who are bringing down the party.' Boehner said that after listening to the Pope he started to think about his message and he decided to quit as Speaker.

Pope Francis calls for a level playing field in which poverty and hunger must be attacked from all fronts. Clearly, there is more work to be done by Congress and other bodies to redress this imbalance. Pope Francis then turned his attention to immigration. It is here that he struck the deepest chord with many Americans. As a son of immigrants he knows their plight and the constant problems they face living in the shadows. Pope Francis spoke about the dream of Martin

considered legally permanent and to continue to make their contributions in the land of the free.

Immigration featured prominently in the speeches of the pontiff. When he spoke in Philadelphia Pope Francis said, 'do not be discouraged by whatever challenges and hardships you face. I ask you not to forget that, like those that came before you, you bring many gifts.'

Despite the papal pronouncements the dream of the immigrant is far from being realized. The United States is not close to comprehensive immigration reforms even though the Obama Administration pledged to fix immigration in its first term. After eight years the Administration appears to have forgotten its promises. The record shows that more than two mil-

in 2008 Barack Obama won Florida with 57 per cent of the vote. The key states with big Latino populations also went for Obama and they included New Jersey with 78 per cent, Nevada with 76 per cent and California with 74 per cent. One of the biggest victories occurred in the 2012 presidential elections when overall Obama won 71 per cent of the Hispanic vote as compared to Mitt Romney who won only 27 per cent. The Republicans immediately called for immigration reforms but as we have seen little has happened on both sides of the chamber.

In the meantime the approval rating of Congress has dropped. In a Gallup poll published in late September most people felt that Congress is out of touch and corrupt. One name in the Congress-

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