



# Shalom News North America

An instrument of hope, formation, and action concerning priority matters of social justice.

January 2015



[Human Life and Dignity](#)  
[Economic Justice](#)  
[Integrity of Creation](#)  
[Peace and Non-Violence](#)



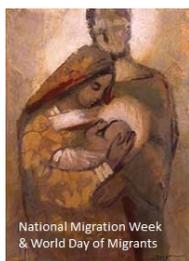
## Human Life, Dignity, and Economic Justice



### A Christmas Carol for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (CIW)

Charles Dickens penned “A Christmas Carol” following the publication of a report on the effects of the Industrial Revolution on

poor children. Fast forward 150 years... The *LA Times* publishes a blockbuster [investigative series](#) into human rights abuses in Mexico’s produce industry which revealed a world of greed and indifference that would make Scrooge blush. Like Dickens’ tour of the poverty and deprivation and the dire consequences that awaited society if it did not change, the *LA Times* series highlights forced labor, wage theft, child labor, physical violence against workers, and horrific housing conditions — and posed the challenge of reform to the food industry, specifically to the retail food giants that purchase Mexican produce. [Learn more, take action.](#)



### Focus on Migration

January gives us renewed opportunities to refocus our attention on the issue of immigration. January 4-10 is [National Migration Week](#) with the theme “We are One Family Under God”. January 18 is the World Day of Migrants and Refugees. Pope

Francis speaks of the [Church Without Frontiers, Mother of All](#), emphasizing the mission of the Church to love Jesus Christ particularly in the poorest and most abandoned, among them migrants and refugees who are trying to escape difficult living conditions and dangers of every kind. He stresses the need to spread a culture of acceptance, hospitality and solidarity.

Consider this [Reflection on Visit with Refugees in Jordan](#), by S. Martha Bertsch, SSND, this reflection on [Caring for Our Immigrant Brothers and Sisters](#), and this [corporate stance](#) taken by the SSND Atlantic-Midwest Province.

### Strangers No Longer

January 22 will mark the 12<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the release of [Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope](#), the Pastoral Letter concerning migration from the

Catholic Bishops of Mexico and the United States. The bishops called the community of faith to offer a moral framework for embracing rather than rejecting the reality of migration. Again we hear the message repeated anew by Pope Francis – we are judged by the way we treat the most vulnerable among us. “Regardless of their legal status, migrants, like all human beings, possess inherent human dignity and that dignity should be respected.”

### Preferential Option for the Poor Remains Strong

In January 1979, the Latin American bishops produced a document explicitly entitled “A Preferential Option for the Poor,” a term coined by [Gustavo Gutierrez](#) in 1967 and a concept that has become a central tenet of Catholic Social Teaching. Although some critics have argued that the very idea of the church having a “preference” for a given social class is antithetical to the universality of the Christian message and others fear the phrase suggests an overly sociological view of the Christian mission, it now serves as a cornerstone of official Catholic Social Teaching, reflected in papal and episcopal documents. The phrase remains a challenge to the church to actually empower the oppressed. [For further reflection.](#)



### January is Poverty Awareness Month

For our sisters and brothers living in poverty, tomorrow is a place of frightening uncertainty. The smallest changes can easily send them plummeting further into hunger and hardship. For the working poor, financial security – having the means to achieve a stable, fulfilling life for themselves and their families – is a tenuous proposition. Please use these [daily reflections](#), this [activity calendar](#), and this [resource page](#) to learn more and take action.

### January is also Human Trafficking Prevention Month

“Human trafficking endangers the lives of millions of people around the world, and it is a crime that knows no borders.

Trafficking networks operate both domestically and



transnationally... the victims of this ongoing global tragedy are men, women, and children of all ages...human trafficking leaves no country untouched,” President Obama *Presidential Proclamation*. In his [World Day of Peace Message](#), Pope Francis urges us 'not to become accomplices' to human trafficking. [Download a prayer service](#) for Human Trafficking Month. A variety of resources for reflection and action can be found [here](#).



### Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Remembered

January 13 - 20 [Pax Christi USA](#) will be featuring some of the best writing from the “Bread for the Journey” blog that references or is inspired by Dr. Martin Luther King’s witness. One article will be featured each morning through the King Holiday on Monday, January 19. The killings of Michael Brown in Ferguson and Eric Garner in New York have sparked a national

outcry to end the epidemic killings of black men. The problem goes far beyond the actions of any police officer or department. The problem is hundreds of years old, and it is one we must take on as a nation. [Read more](#).

### Prayer Vigil for Life

On January 22, there will be many [prayer vigils](#) and [demonstrations](#) in support of life, in opposition to abortion. But the right to life is so much more than just the right to be born. Pope John XXIII in his encyclical [Pacem in Terris](#) taught that the idea of the right to life included adequate food, clothing, shelter, rest, medical care, and necessary social services. The right to life is to quality of life from womb to tomb. May our prayer vigil for life be a constant vigil for that quality of life for all.



## Integrity of Creation

### Climate Talks Bring Deal on Country-Level Emissions Plans



The UN climate talks in Lima reached agreement on defining obligations of rich and poor countries, “a very important breakthrough,”

according to UN climate chief Christiana Figueres. The bigger issue of how to slow down climate change must still be tackled at the 2015 Paris talks. UN members did adopt a format for national pledges to cut greenhouse gases; governments will submit these plans by an informal deadline of March 31 to form the basis of a global climate deal in 2015. Environmental groups fear the agreement is still too weak. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told delegates, “This is not a time for tinkering; it is a time for transformation. I am deeply concerned that our collective action does not match our common responsibilities.” Read summaries at [Reuters](#) and [Inter Press Service](#). Also see [LCWR Resolutions to Action -- Fall 2014](#)

### Catholic Bishops Call for an End to Fossil Fuels

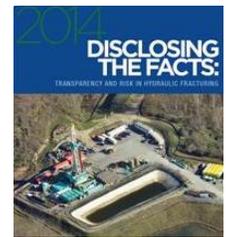


Catholic Bishops from around the world have called for an end to fossil fuels in an urgent plea to address the crisis of climate change. They place “responsibility for this

situation ... with the dominant global economic system...” and call for “a fair and legally binding global agreement based on the universal human rights applicable to all in Paris in 2015.” [Learn more](#).

### New Fracking Scorecard

As You Sow, Boston Common, Green Century, and the Investor Environmental Health Network recently released their second annual fracking scorecard which benchmarks companies' disclosures about their practices for managing the risks of their hydraulic fracturing operations. The report, *Disclosing the Facts 2014: Transparency and Risk in Hydraulic Fracturing Operations*, found that a handful of the 30 largest oil and gas companies are doing a better job of identifying and addressing risks, but most continue to receive failing scores. [Learn more](#).



### 2015 Declared International Year of Soils

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has declared 2015 the [International Year of Soils](#), paying tribute to the life-giving ground beneath our feet. “We need healthy soils to achieve our food security and nutrition goals, to fight climate change and to ensure overall sustainable development,” says José Graziano da Silva, FAO Director-General. Soils host at least one quarter of the world’s biodiversity, are key in the carbon cycle, and play a role in water management and resilience to floods and droughts. [Learn more](#).



### South Sudan Crisis: One Year On

December 15, 2014 marked the [first year](#) since the outbreak of conflicts in South Sudan, following a political crisis and power struggle within the governing party (SPLM), leading the world's youngest nation to a violent civil war. What impacts has this yearlong brutal conflict made on the country and what are the prospects for peace? [Learn more.](#)



recent examples of persecution of African Americans and Muslims and immigrants, but the core message is still relevant. We must be willing to stand up for those who are unable to stand up for themselves.

### Ban on Fully Autonomous Weapons

The Interfaith Declaration in support of a Ban on Fully Autonomous Weapons has been signed by the SSND International Shalom Network. The interfaith declaration is an initiative of PAX in cooperation with Pax Christi International. More than 70 religious leaders and organizations have given their support. Read the press release [Religious leaders call for a ban on killer robots.](#) You can find the declaration [here](#) and the factsheet [here.](#)



### One of Worst Years on Record for World's Children

The year 2014 was one of the worst on record for the world's children, according to a UN report

that chronicles a litany of war, violence, atrocities, and disease, mostly in the Middle East and Africa. An estimated 230 million children live in countries and areas torn by armed conflicts. "Children have been killed while studying in the classroom and while sleeping in their beds," said Anthony Lake, the executive director of UNICEF. "They have been orphaned, kidnapped, tortured, recruited, raped, and even sold as slaves." [Learn more.](#)

### Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

The week of January 18-25 we pray to bring unity to our human community. We ask that we be healed and made whole as the family of God; we pray to draw deeper into communion with God and one another. [Learn more, prayer resource.](#)



### 100th Anniversary of Thomas Merton's Birth

January 31, 2015, marks the 100th anniversary of the birth of Thomas Merton, one of the most influential Catholic voices in the 20th century. Large numbers were deeply influenced during the 1950s and 60s by Merton's *The Seven Storey Mountain*, *Seeds of Contemplation*, and *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, among many others of the more than 50 books that he wrote.

### Torture as Counterterrorism Technique



In early December the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence released a [report detailing some of the C.I.A.'s torture practices.](#) News media, politicians, world and church leaders expressed

publicly the shock we all felt and there were many calls for a "necessary accounting of our misdeeds" according to one OpEd piece. While those most responsible must be held accountable, we must also be accountable for the damage done to the victims. Pope Francis reminds us that we cannot be "that kind of Christian who keeps the Lord's wounds at arm's length".

Both of his time as well as *ahead* of his time, he was drawn to Eastern mysticism, endorsing and practicing ecumenical and interfaith dialogue. A strong critic both of racism and of militarism, Merton was an inspiration and a support to the civil rights and peace movements. Finally, even lacking the science available today, he had a mystic's sense of the inherent unity of all beings. "We are already one, but we imagine that we are not.

So what we have to recover is our original unity. What we have to be is what we are." With deep insight, Merton articulates what modern science has discovered and what School Sisters of Notre Dame express in their charism.



### No One Left to Speak

January 14 is the anniversary of the birth of Martin Niemoller, German theologian and Lutheran pastor, an outspoken foe of Adolf Hitler and critic of the complicity of so many Germans in the Nazi persecution of so many groups. His poem [First they came for the Socialists...](#) has been edited often to include more

