



Shalom News North America

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



January 2014



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Human Life and Dignity

UN Areas of Focus for 2014

The United Nations (UN) has designated 2014 the [International Year of Family Farming](#) in recognition that family farming and smallholder farming are important for sustainable food production to achieve food security. The hope is to stimulate policies that promote [sustainable development](#) based on respect for the environment and biodiversity. The goal is to combat poverty and hunger. The UN has also designated 2014 the [International Year of Small Island Developing States](#), aiming to increase recognition of the environmental problems that small island states face.

Human Trafficking – Creating Awareness, Taking Action

President Obama has [designated](#) January as National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month. It is important that businesses, national and community organizations, faith-based groups, families, and individuals recognize the vital role we all can play in ending modern slavery. The USCCB is using this year's [National Migration Week](#) materials to educate parishes about human trafficking. In addition, they have set aside [February 8](#) as a national day of prayer for survivors and victims of human trafficking. [Learn](#) what women religious around the world are doing to address trafficking. What can you do to help? Follow these links for a wide-variety of [reflection/action resources](#) and for a [prayer service](#).



Challenging Corporations to Confront Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery

Members of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR) have [launched a campaign](#) to get companies to implement policies that will prevent human rights abuses in their global supply chains. The initiative will first focus on companies in the food-

agricultural and hospitality sectors and then move on to companies in the electronic and retail sectors. The foundation for these corporate dialogues will be the recently published [Statement of Principles and Recommended Practices for Confronting Human Trafficking and Modern Day Slavery](#) which has been endorsed by nearly [500 organizations and individuals](#) from all over the world including SSNDs from the AM and CP Provinces.

Religious Freedom Day

Each year the President declares January 16 as Religious Freedom Day, the anniversary of a 1786 Virginia statute on religious freedom which encouraged appropriate activities in homes, schools, and places of worship. This is not a parade of religions, not a celebrate-our-diversity today, but a time to acknowledge freedom to express religious beliefs without suffering discrimination, a time to foster peace with those whose beliefs differ from our own. How might you celebrate the spirit of this day?

Prayer Vigil for Life

On January 21-22, thousands will gather for [prayer vigils](#) and marches to reinforce the belief that life begins at conception and that abortion is murder. Pope Francis denounced abortion as a symptom of today's throw-away culture, but he also cautioned that the church must find a balance. Being pro-life means a focus that is womb to tomb, from pre-natal and post-natal care to elder care – throughout all stages and circumstances of life. That is the balance Pope Francis called for. Let us pray and advocate for quality of life for all.



Poverty, Economic Justice, and the Integrity of Creation

More than 46 Million Americans Live in Poverty

Families were having a difficult time making ends meet before the recession. With continuing unemployment and increasing costs of living, more and more families have to choose between necessities like health care,

child care, and even food. You can help magnify the voice of the poor and vulnerable. Work to [understand the issues and help others](#) understand as well. Pray for change. Use [this calendar](#) throughout January for daily reflections and resources for action.



Pay Attention to the Trans-Pacific Partnership

The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) Agreement is a massive trade pact being negotiated

between the United States and 11 countries across the Pacific Rim. The agreement would have significant impacts on our climate, air, and water, as well as on labor and food safety, but civil society has been excluded from TPP negotiations. Labor, environmental, consumer, and Congressional leaders are concerned about the threat to jobs, the planet, and consumer safety. They have called for the release of TPP information and have voiced strong opposition to “Fast Track” authority for the pact. [Learn more/take action.](#)

Celebrate Forty Years of ESA – Protect the Law that Protects Creation

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) turned 40 on December 28, 2013. Many consider the [Endangered Species Act](#) the strongest law for protecting biodiversity passed by any nation. On the occasion of its passage, President Nixon said “Nothing is more priceless and more worthy of preservation than the rich array of plant and animal life with which our country has been blessed.” The ESA has been more than [99 percent successful](#) at preventing extinction; without it, scientists estimate that at least 227 species would have likely gone extinct since the law’s passage. Unfortunately, as we celebrate four decades of ESA success, a bill that could gut the ESA and put imperiled species at great risk has been introduced in Congress. [Learn more/take action.](#)

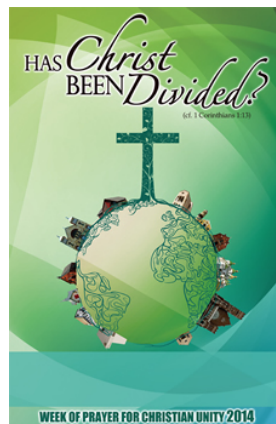
Peace and Non-Violence

Pope Francis’ World Day of Peace Message

In his [World Day of Peace Message](#), Pope Francis calls us to overcome indifference and choose the pathway to peace—“an opus solidaritatis,” in order to build a more just and peaceful world. Underscoring the *critique of globalization*, he observes that the “ever-increasing number of interconnections and communications in today’s world makes us powerfully aware of the unity and common destiny of the nations.” But this unity, he writes, is “still frequently denied and ignored in a world marked by a ‘globalization of indifference’ which makes us slowly inured to the suffering of others and closed in on ourselves.” [Reflection/action resources.](#)

Epiphany

Although the image of Wise Men bearing unusual gifts is woven into our carols and traditional interpretation, and while more recent inclusive interpretations tell us that Wise Women would have brought more practical essentials, the meaning of epiphany is ‘an enlightening realization understood from a new and deeper perspective’. On this feast, let us remember that Wise Ones still search for the many names and faces of the Divine, still strive for that realization of Peace on Earth. What is your Epiphany, your enlightening realization at this time?



Week of Prayer for Christian Unity – January 18-25

Being faithful to Christ’s desire for the unity of his disciples, has led to this year’s theme *Has Christ Been Divided?* which focuses on the provocative question raised by St. Paul in 1 Corinthians. The roots of the [Week of Prayer for Christian Unity](#) go back to the 1800s; it is one of the oldest, most widely observed ecumenical events in the world. The initial work on the theme for this year’s week of prayer was prepared by a group of representatives from different parts of [Canada](#). The texts were later approved by the World Council of Churches and the Pontifical Council for Promoting of Christian Unity. Again this year, let us pray together that we may be more fully united one with another, and all of us with Christ. [Learn more/resources.](#)

Martin Luther King Jr. Day January 20, 2014

As early as 1956, Dr. King spoke of “The Beloved Community” as the end goal of nonviolent boycotts to dismantle racism in the United States. As he said in a speech at a victory rally following the announcement of a favorable U.S. Supreme Court Decision desegregating the seats on Montgomery’s busses, “the end is reconciliation; the end is redemption; the end is the creation of the Beloved Community.” As we begin 2014, joining Pope Francis in a prayer for world peace, let us remember Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the wisdom and vision he continues to share with all who dream of shaping “the Beloved Community.”

[Resources for reflection.](#)



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