



Shalom News North America

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



February 2016



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Integrity of Creation

Laudato Si' Quote for Reflection

"A sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings...Everything is connected. Concern for the environment thus needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society." (91)

Record Heat in 2015

[Global climate scientists](#) have reported that 2015 was the [hottest year in the historical record](#) by far, breaking a mark set only the year before. While an historic El Niño weather pattern played a role, the bulk of the record-setting heat was a consequence of the long-term planetary warming caused by human emissions of greenhouse gases. [Three things you should know.](#)

World Wetlands Day – February 2

Wetlands are vital to us in so many ways. They host a huge variety of life, protect our coastlines, provide natural sponges against river flooding, and store carbon dioxide to regulate climate change. In addition, more

World Wetlands Day
Tuesday, 2 February 2016



Wetlands for our Future
Sustainable Livelihoods

than a billion people make a living from wetlands. This year's theme, [Wetlands for our Future](#), was selected to demonstrate the vital role of wetlands for the future of humanity and specifically their relevance towards achieving the new Sustainable Development Goals.

[Learn more.](#)

Enlisting Religious Groups to Fight Food Waste

The Environmental Protection Agency recently launched the [Food Steward's Pledge](#), an initiative to engage religious groups of all faiths to help redirect the food that ends up in landfills to hungry mouths. It's one piece of the agency's [larger plan](#) to reduce food waste by 50 percent by 2030. Food waste is reportedly the single

biggest material in U.S. landfills. As food waste decomposes, it releases methane, a powerful greenhouse gas with 25 times the global warming potential of carbon pollution. Much of the food that is discarded in landfills is actually safe, wholesome food that could be used to feed vulnerable populations.

[Learn more, take action.](#)

Human Dignity and Economic Justice

Reflecting on Racial Segregation

A recent article in the Washington Post highlighted how U.S. housing segregation has led to racially distinct social spaces even in the nation's most ostensibly diverse cities. A BBC report cited in the article noted that "people of different races simply don't mix," highlighting the fact that white Americans have an astonishing *91 times as many* white friends as black friends. "Decades on from the civil rights movement, many black and white Americans simply don't mix. If there's no interaction between races, it's harder for conversations on how to solve race problems to even begin." [Read more.](#) [Racism Unit](#) [Reflections on Ending Racism](#) [Racial Divide Study Guide.](#)

February is African American History Month

Today we experience an ongoing civil rights movement that focuses more on what is perceived by many as institutionalized racism and has often been demonstrated by rage against injustice in areas such as education, employment, housing, and voting rights. All

lives matter, but Black Lives Matter says that, in so many ways, black lives seem to matter less than others. [Prayer/reflection for African American History Month](#)

International Day of Prayer and Awareness Against Human Trafficking

The Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and the International Union of Superiors General have designated February 8, the feast day of [St. Josephine Bakhita](#), as an annual day of prayer and awareness against human trafficking. Catholics all over the world are encouraged to host or attend prayer services to create greater awareness about this

phenomenon. Through prayer, we not only reflect on the experiences of those that have suffered through this affront to human dignity, but also comfort, strengthen, and help empower survivors. [Prayer/reflection resources.](#)

Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking – Call-in Day

The US Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking has organized a "Call-In Day" asking us to call our



representative and senators in their Washington DC offices on February 8. “On the day that we commemorate St. Josephine Bakhita’s struggle and triumph, we remember all those caught in slavery and we renew our commitment to abolish all forms of human slavery. We hope to direct thousands of calls to members of Congress asking them to support legislation that moves us closer to ending slave labor. Please join us in asking your Senators and Representatives to co-sponsor *the Business Supply Chain Transparency on Trafficking and Slavery Act of 2015*.” [Learn more/take action](#).

Global Migrant & Refugee Crisis

We are currently witnessing the largest and most rapid escalation ever in the number of people being forced from their homes. Millions of people are fleeing conflict in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Ukraine, as well as persecution in areas of Southeast Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, creating the highest level of displacement since World War II. Why are people fleeing? Where are people going? How are host countries responding? [On this page](#), you can find the latest coverage, the background behind the crisis, and interactive maps. Also check out these six [under-reported migration stories](#).



Undocumented Population Declines

In [this new report](#), the Center for Migration Studies of New York (CMS) finds that the U.S. undocumented population has fallen below 11 million for the first time since 2004. The report also offers evidence that the Mexican-born undocumented population continues to decline, falling by more than 600,000 since 2010. The paper further describes trends in the undocumented population over the past few years for selected countries of origin and states of residence.

HRW – World Report 2016

In their 2016 report, Human Rights Watch (HRW) reviews human rights practices in more than 90 countries highlighting how the ‘politics of fear’ threatens the rights of all. In his introductory essay, Executive Director Kenneth Roth writes that the spread of terrorist attacks and the huge flows of refugees spawned by repression and conflict led many governments to curtail rights in misguided efforts to protect their security. “The wisdom enshrined in international human rights law provides indispensable guidance to governments that seek to keep their nation safe and serve their people most effectively,” Roth said. “We abandon it at our peril.” [Learn more](#).

Peace and Non-Violence

Educating Children in Conflict Zones

Nearly 24 million children living in crisis zones are out of school, according to UNICEF. South Sudan is home to the highest proportion of out of school children with over half (51%) of primary and lower secondary age children not accessing an education. Education continues to be one of the least funded sectors in humanitarian appeals. UNICEF warns that unless the provision of education in emergencies is prioritized, the development of these children and their countries will be severely stunted. [Learn more](#). SSND has served in the [Solidarity with South Sudan](#) initiative since its inception. We continue to pray for all those young people whose lives and education have been disrupted by conflict.



[unemployment numbers](#) are projected to increase globally in the next two years. The UN has identified the creation of quality jobs as one of its [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs). Consider this [SSND Solidarity Prayer Reflection](#) on sustainable development and the SDGs.

Have you ever used the daily news as the source or focus of your prayer? This day also reminds us that, all around the world, there are injustices which cry out for our attention. As Pope Francis reminds us: “We need to strengthen the conviction that we are one single, human family. There are no frontiers or barriers, political or social, behind which we can hide. Still less is there room for the globalization of indifference.” (*Laudato Si’* 52) [Prayer resource](#).

World Day of Social Justice – February 20

Through the World Day of Social Justice, the UN promotes poverty eradication, full and productive employment, and social integration. Access to safe, productive, and fairly compensated work is a basic human right. Yet it is estimated that three quarters of workers are employed in jobs that do not provide livable wages or income security. In addition,

Lenten Resources

With Ash Wednesday just around the corner, we wanted to highlight a couple Lenten reflection resources for your consideration – the [Following Jesus on the Path of Nonviolence](#) series of reflections by John Dear, the [Tread Lightly Lenten Reflection-Action Calendar](#), this [Lenten Devotional](#) focused on *Laudato Si’*, and NETWORK’s [Lenten Toolkit](#).



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