



# Shalom News North America

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



March 2015



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## Human Life, Dignity, and Economic Justice

### International Women's Day – March 8

International Women's Day is a day when women are recognized for their achievements. It is an occasion for looking back on past struggles and accomplishments, and more importantly, for looking ahead to the untapped potential and opportunities that await future generations. During this year's commemoration of International Women's Day and the annual [Commission on the Status of Women](#), the UN will highlight the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, a historic roadmap signed by 189 governments that sets the agenda for realizing women's rights. Consider reflecting on [12 areas of concern](#) for women, the status of women and girls in [Canada](#) and the [U.S.](#), this [infographic](#) about education and training of women, and this [prayer service](#).

### Voices of Faith at the Vatican – March 8

To celebrate International Women's Day, and to highlight the contributions of women in the church, Catholic women of faith from around the globe will come to the Vatican to share their inspiring experiences in reaching out to the world's poor and marginalized in the second edition of the Voices of Faith storytelling event. The event will be [live streamed](#) starting at 8 am (Central Time).

### Girls Seeking Education Face Persistent Attacks

Girls in at least 70 countries have faced threats, violent attacks, and other abuse for trying to go to school over the past five years according to [a new report](#) by the UN Human Rights Office. "Attacks against girls accessing education persist and, alarmingly, appear in some countries to be occurring with increasing regularity," the authors found. [Learn more](#).

### Debt Relief for Poorest Countries During Crises

The International Monetary Fund is providing financing to aid Ebola-impacted countries including \$170 million of debt relief and grant-like aid. The new plan also expands a debt relief facility, the Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust (CCR). "Essentially, a global social safety net is now in place to protect the least developed countries when they experience disasters," explained Eric LeCompte of Jubilee USA Network. [Learn more](#).

### Elimination of Racial Discrimination

In 1966 the UN General Assembly declared that each year on March 21, the International Day for the

Elimination of Racial Discrimination should be observed as a symbol of the worldwide need to end racism. That particular date commemorates the anniversary of the Sharpeville Massacre in South Africa in 1960 when peaceful demonstrators against apartheid were killed. In 1979 the UN decided that a week of solidarity with peoples struggling against racism and racial discrimination, beginning on March 21, would be organized annually. What changes have been made in the last 36 years? Have we become more tolerant, more accepting?

### Farmworkers

March 24-31 is Farmworker Awareness Week. An estimated 2 million men, women, and children work in the fields in the United States. Farm work is a dangerous job resulting in the highest rate of toxic chemical injuries and higher incidences of many illnesses than any other wage earners. Benefits such as minimum wage, overtime pay, unemployment insurance, and even protection when joining a union are not guaranteed to them under federal law. A majority of farmworkers are undocumented, living in fear of deportation and isolated from the wider community. [Click here](#) for two ways to support farmworkers.

### Si, Se Puede!

March 31 is the anniversary of the birthday of Cesar Chavez, farmworker, labor leader, and civil rights activist. His public relations approach to unionism and aggressive but nonviolent tactics made the farm workers' struggle a moral cause with nationwide support. By the late 70s, his efforts had forced growers to recognize the United Farm Workers as the bargaining agent for 50,000 field workers in California and Florida. Chavez is also known for popularizing the slogan still used today in rallies and response to action alerts – Si. Se puede! Yes. It can be done!

### Sex Trafficking of Children in the U.S.

The trafficking of individuals within U.S borders occurs in every state of the nation. Domestic sex trafficking, including the prostitution of children, is the focus of [a new report](#) from the Congressional Budget Service. Experts widely agree that any efforts to reduce the prevalence of child sex trafficking must address not only the supply, but also the demand. [Learn more](#), [take action](#).

## Speak Out Against Qatar World Cup slavery

Although the [Trans-Atlantic slave trade](#) was abolished in 1807, slaves are still among us as the human family continues the abhorrent practice of slavery. One example underlies the upcoming hoopla and glamour of the sports world as Qatar prepares to host the 2022

World Cup. By that time, at least 4,000 migrant workers will have died to make the city ready. Since 2012, roughly 900 workers have already been killed working on infrastructure for the event; never before in modern history have so many people died in a construction project. [Learn more](#), [take action](#).

## Integrity of Creation

### World Water Day – March 22

World Water Day is a day to celebrate water. It's a day to make a difference for the members of the global population who suffer from water related issues. It's a day to prepare for how we manage water in the future. Since 1993, UN has recognized March 22 as World Water Day, spotlighting a [different issue](#) every year. This year's theme is *Water and Sustainable Development*. [Learn more](#), [prayer resource](#).

### Celebrate the Spring Equinox

The vernal equinox on March 20 is the beginning of spring, a celebration of Nature's inherent balance when the sun shines directly on the equator, and day and night are of almost equal duration. The equinox reminds us of the need for balance in our own lives and for a balance among the needs and rights of all members of the Earth community. It reminds us that we are part of a universal biocracy, as the sun generously

pours out its light in equal measure on all planetary life. It is a day for ritual and reflection, for according to Edward Hays, "A true planetary pilgrim experiences this feast not as a spectator but as a concelebrant with Earth and all creation." (*Prayers for a Planetary Pilgrim*)

### Remember Earth Hour – March 28 at 8:30 pm

Earth Hour, which started in 2007 as a lights-off event to raise awareness about climate change, has grown to engage more than 162 countries and territories worldwide. The hour-long event starts on March 28, 2015 at 8:30PM local time. Join millions of people around the world and turn off your lights for one hour to show your commitment to climate change action and demand strong action from world leaders. What starts as a simple flick of the light switch for Earth Hour brings us all together in a collective display of our commitment to creating a better future for the planet. [Learn more/take action](#).

## Peace and Non-Violence

### Remembering Martin Niemoller – March 6

A German anti-Nazi theologian. His provocative poem "**First they came...**" shines a light on the indifference and cowardice of German intellectuals until it was too late. Read the poem [First They Came](#) and follow it up with Pope Francis' Lenten Message: [Overcome Globalization of Indifference](#).

### Saints Perpetua and Felicity – March 7

Saints Perpetua and Felicity are Christian martyrs of the 3rd century. Perpetua was a married noblewoman said to have been 22 years old at the time of her death, and mother of an infant she was nursing. Felicity, a slave imprisoned with her and pregnant at the time, was martyred with her. Read more: [Saints](#). Also see [War Children](#).

### Father Rutilio Grande, SJ – March 12

In 1971 the Synod of Bishops on Justice in the World declared: "Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation." Six years later, Father Rutilio Grande, S.J., a parish priest in El Salvador, was assassinated along with two co-workers. He had taken the bishops' statement seriously, and was supporting the efforts of the poor to organize themselves and to

struggle for justice. He was the first of 17 priests to be martyred in his country. [Learn more](#).

### Archbishop Oscar Romero – March 24

[Archbishop Oscar Romero](#) was a significant figure in El Salvador's history. He began to speak out on behalf of the poor and the victims of repression after witnessing numerous violations of human rights including the assassination of his old friend, [Fr. Rutilio Grande](#). In a country whose rulers regarded dissent as subversion, Romero used the moral authority of his position as archbishop to speak out on behalf of those who could not do so for themselves. He soon came to be known as the "Voice of the Voiceless." Learn more [about Romero](#) and his [cause for sainthood](#).

### Are You Happy?

It is somewhat ironic that March 20, the National Day Against Bullying and Violence is also the International Day of Happiness. A resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2012 states the need for recognizing a more inclusive, equitable, and balanced approach to economic growth that promotes sustainable development, poverty eradication, happiness, and the well-being of all peoples and invites member states and organizations as well as civil society and individuals to observe the day "in an appropriate manner, including through education and public awareness-raising activities". [Learn more/take action](#).