



Shalom News North America

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



December 2017



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Integrity of Creation

COP 23 - UNFCCC

The 23rd annual Conference of the Parties (COP23) brought representatives from cities, states, companies, as well as delegates from over 190 countries to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change to come to agreement on a 12-month engagement focusing on keeping the global temperature rise below 2 degrees Celsius, [a limit deemed critical](#) for survival by many in the scientific community. Two outcomes touted as significant achievements were a Gender Action Plan which highlights the role of women in climate action and promotes gender equality in the process, and Indigenous Peoples Platform which aims to strengthen the inclusion of oceans within the process. [Learn more](#). Read about the [Canada/UK alliance](#) to address climate change by phasing out coal.



Scientists Issue Warning to Humanity

In late 1992, 1,700 scientists from around the world issued a dire [warning to humanity](#). They said humans had pushed Earth's ecosystems to their breaking point and were well on the way to ruining the planet. Twenty-five years later, researchers have issued a sobering new [letter to humanity](#). In it, over 15,000 scientists from 184 countries warn that "Humanity has failed to make sufficient progress in generally solving these foreseen environmental challenges, and alarmingly, most of them are getting far worse." More must be done or "soon it will be too late to shift course away from our failing trajectory." For your further reflection, explore

climate change told through [360-degree video, interactive graphics and more](#) courtesy of the NY Times.

Advent Resources

Pope Francis said that Advent is a journey of hope, when we "rediscover the beauty of being together along the way." During the season of Advent, we have the opportunity to deepen our own sense of love for the world. Protecting creation and vulnerable people is an important way to love. The Catholic Climate Movement has produced a [brand-new Advent resource kit](#) to help you to reflect on the call to care for our common home and to live out your call through concrete actions. You may also wish to check out the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns [Welcome the Stranger](#) Advent Reflection Guide and resources found in the Education for Justice [Toolbox of Advent Reflections](#).

Winter Solstice – 12/21

The winter solstice marks the day with the shortest period of daylight and longest night of the year. Interpretations of this event vary across cultures, but many have held a recognition of rebirth, hope, new beginnings. Again we can hear the General Chapter call to be women of peace, hope and love in the heart of the world. How might we be a light in others' darkness, hope in the face of despair, a love that gives everything when fear and hatred are so prevalent?

Human Dignity



World AIDS Day – 12/1

UNAIDS has launched [a new report](#) showing that access to treatment has risen significantly. In 2000, just 685,000 people

living with HIV had access to antiretroviral therapy. By June 2017, nearly 21 million people had access to the life-saving medicines. We invite you to check out this [Global AIDS Factsheet](#), learn about World AIDS Day activities [in Canada](#), and make use of this [prayer resource](#). For those in the U.S., the ONE Campaign invites you [to call on Congress](#) to continue global funding efforts.

International Day for the Abolition of Slavery – 12/2

Slavery is not merely an historical relic. More than 40 million people worldwide are victims of modern slavery. This includes practices such as forced labour, debt bondage, forced marriage, and human trafficking. [Learn more](#). See also [Child Slave Labor and Smartphones](#), [Pope Francis on New Form of Slavery](#), and [An inside look at how police find human trafficking victims](#) (Canada). The U.S. Senate Commerce Committee recently passed on to the full Senate the Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act, a bipartisan bill that targets websites that knowingly facilitate sex trafficking. [Learn more/take action](#) on this and other anti-human trafficking legislative efforts.

Human Rights Day

December 10, 2017 begins a one year observance of the 70th anniversary of the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights. The document that proclaimed the inalienable rights which everyone is inherently entitled to as a human being – regardless of race, color, religion, sex, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. It is the most translated political document in the world, available in more than 500 languages. [Learn more, resources, prayer/reflection materials.](#)

International Migrants Day – 12/18

Throughout human history, migration has been a courageous expression of the individual's will to overcome adversity and to live a better life. Consider the story of Ahmed Hussen, who entered Canada as a child refugee, and today is Minister of Immigration and Refugees. In [this video](#), he shares his experience of Canada: a country of immense generosity, but also one that struggles with systemic racism, and paints a bold picture of how a country can become truly great. Resources for reflection – [Migrants being sold as slaves in Libya](#), [Five Ways You Can Share the Holiday Spirit with Refugees](#), Pope Francis' recently released reflection [Migrants and refugees: men and women in search of peace](#), and the U.S. Bishops'



[2018 National Migration Week resource kit](#). [Urge Congress](#) to support refugee and migrant families.

Where is the Christ in Christmas?

According to urban dictionary.com, consumas is a term for the annual shopping/consumption frenzy occurring annually in the weeks before the winter solstice, exhibited most frenetically on Black Friday, the day after Thanksgiving. Consumas seems to consume us. For many, the drive to have, maybe hopefully give, the

biggest, the newest, the most popular becomes an obsession, almost replacing the true spirit of Christmas. [Resources to help us remember the Christ in Christmas.](#)

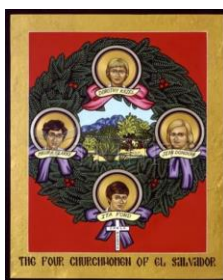
Consider a Viewing Party for *The Sultan and the Saint* – 12/26 on PBS

On December 26 at 8 pm (check local listings to confirm time) PBS will air *The Sultan and the Saint*, a film that tells the story of the friendship between St. Francis of Assisi and Sultan Malek al-Kamil. The film models an example of interfaith dialogue that can help foster understanding among peoples of different faith traditions, cultures, and ethnicities. Many groups are organizing viewing parties to enjoy the film and dialogue with others. [Learn more](#), download [film discussion guide](#).

Peace and Non-Violence

Four Church Women of El Salvador

A few days before her death, Sr. Ita was asked to read a quote from martyred Archbishop Oscar Romero, "...he who is committed to the poor must share the same fate as the poor...to disappear, to be tortured...and to be found dead by the side of the road." On December 2, 1980, this became the fate of four women; Maryknoll sisters Ita Ford and Maura Clarke, lay missionary Jean Donovan, and Ursuline sister Dorothy Kazel. In this icon, they stand as reminders of the dignity and beauty of all those innocent victims of greed and oppression. The Advent wreath serves to commemorate not only when they died, but also to remind us of this season of hopeful expectancy, yearning for the arrival of Christ's presence on Earth. [A reflection.](#)



nuclear weapons. He said, "Weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, create nothing but a false sense of security. They cannot constitute the basis for peaceful coexistence between members of the human family." [Prayer/Study/Action Guide.](#)

National Vigil to #EndGunViolence

December 14, 2017 marks the 5 year anniversary of the Sandy Hook tragedy. Since that heartbreaking day five years ago, half a million Americans have been killed or injured by guns. We have witnessed mass shootings in churches, schools, at workplaces, in a nightclub, at an outdoor concert festival and elsewhere. It has to stop. The Newtown Foundation in partnership with Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence and other groups will host the annual national vigil service of mourning and loving remembrance for all who have fallen victim to the ongoing epidemic of gun violence in America on December 6 with nationwide vigils continuing through December 17. [Learn more/get involved.](#)

Pope Francis on Nuclear Disarmament

The largest international conference on nuclear disarmament since the Nuclear Ban Treaty was adopted this summer was recently held at the Vatican. Out of this conference came Pope Francis's condemnation of

