



Shalom News North America

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

January 2019



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



Integrity of Creation

COP 24 Outcomes

Last month's COP 24 global climate summit gathered around 23,000 delegates to work out clearer mechanisms for implementing the Paris Agreement once it enters into force in 2020. The "rulebook" finalized during the last day of the summit provides common guidelines for climate action by signatories. It covers issues like setting and revision of climate goals, emissions tracking, and climate finance, among others. However, several issues remain, such as rules for carbon markets and trading, which have been deferred until next year. Some critics contend that the text was not forceful enough in demanding more urgent and ambitious action. [Learn more.](#)



EPA Rule Changes Could be Toxic

On December 28, the Trump Administration proposed new rules designed to make it easier for coal-fired power plants to release more mercury and other pollutants (linked to developmental disorders and respiratory illnesses) into the atmosphere. The long-term impact of the proposal would be significant: It would weaken the ability of the E.P.A. to impose new regulations in the future by adjusting the way the agency measures the benefits of curbing pollutants, giving less weight to potential health gains.

In announcing the proposed rule, the Environmental Protection Agency said that the cost of cutting mercury from power plants "dwarfs" the monetary benefits.

[Learn more.](#)

Human Dignity

UN Global Compact for Migration Approved

The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) is an intergovernmental agreement prepared under the auspices of the United Nations that covers "all dimensions of international migration in a holistic and comprehensive manner." The non-binding compact provides some guidelines on how states can respond well to migration, both by addressing the reasons why people are migrating, and providing avenues on how migration can be safer and regulated. On December 10, 2018, the document was approved by 164 nations despite fierce opposition from the United States. [Learn more.](#) Relatedly, on December 17 the UN General Assembly [overwhelmingly approved](#) a non-binding compact that provides more robust support for countries where most of the world's more than 25 million refugees live. Only the U.S. and Hungary voted in opposition. [SSND Solidarity Reflection.](#)



Welcoming communities do not emerge by chance but are established through the hard work and conviction of people on the ground through direct service, shared experience and faith, advocacy, and institution building. Our Church invites us to reflect on the circumstances confronting migrants, including immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, children, and victims of human trafficking. [Toolkit of resources.](#)

Letter Against Racism – Resources for Reflection

The USCCB Office of Education and Outreach is excited to present [educational resources for grades K-12](#), [higher education](#), and [parish based resources](#) including a bulletin insert, prayers of the faithful, scripture reflections, and a series of [backgrounders](#). These resources give ample opportunity for communities to come together and heed the call of the pastoral letter, find conversion in our hearts and communities, and educate ourselves and our children about God's love for each of us which demands dignity for each person, regardless of their race, identity, or gender. [Full text of the pastoral letter.](#)

National Migration Week

Building Communities of Welcome is the theme for National Migration Week 2019, emphasizing our responsibility as Catholics to engage and welcome newcomers on their arrival, and help to ease their transition into a new life in the United States.

Human Trafficking Prevention Month

In 2011, Barack Obama issued a Presidential Proclamation designating each January to be National

Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month. The anniversary of this proclamation, celebrated on January 11, became known as National Human Trafficking Awareness Day. While slavery was officially abolished in the U.S. by the thirteenth amendment to the Constitution in December 1865, it continues to exist in a variety of forms today. The U.S. is a source, transit, and destination country for modern slave labor and the sexual exploitation of women, men, and children. [Learn more](#), [prayer resource](#).

Trafficking Legislation

Before concluding their session, Congress passed the new Frederick Douglass Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Reauthorization Act. The legislation preserves and expands essential services and protections for survivors of trafficking. It includes training and education so employees of the travel and hospitality industries can better recognize children and adults who may be trafficked; provides for reintegration programs for the victims of trafficking; and creates a new grant program to help bring anti-trafficking educational outreach to America's schools. [Learn more](#).

Poverty Awareness Month (January)

During Poverty Awareness Month, join the U.S. Bishops, the [Catholic Campaign for Human Development](#) and the Catholic community in the United States in taking up Pope Francis' challenge to live in solidarity with the poor! In addition to this daily [calendar](#), [longer daily reflections](#) are also available. Share [this liturgical aid](#) with parish leaders to incorporate Poverty Awareness Month into the liturgy. All of these resources are also [en Español](#). You can [sign](#)



[up](#) to have the daily reflections emailed to you during Poverty Awareness Month. Did you know PovertyUSA has a curriculum for talking to kids and young adults about poverty? [Check out the ready-made handouts, lessons, reflections, and exercises \(en español\)](#) to help introduce the root causes of poverty, how it impacts real people every day, and how we are called to work for an end to poverty together.

National Religious Freedom Day (1/16)

Part of the first amendment to the U.S. Constitution says that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of a religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." The Constitution and laws guarantee Americans the right not just to believe as they see fit, but to freely exercise their religion. Religious diversity strengthens our communities and promotes tolerance, respect, understanding, and equality. Faith breathes life and hope into our world. We must diligently guard, preserve, and cherish this unalienable right.

March for Life (1/18)

The annual March for Life in Washington, DC is promoted as the world's largest pro-life event. While the overall vision of the organizing groups is "a world where the beauty and dignity of every human life are valued and protected," the focus of the march is most often limited to opposing legalized abortion – pro-birth. While that is important, it is only one aspect of pro-life which should also include prenatal counseling, affordable child care, affordable health care, early childhood education, even elder care in a world where every human life is valued and protected, from womb to tomb.

Peace and Non-Violence

Pope Francis' World Day of Peace Message

Good politics is at the service of peace. Pope Francis begins his World Day of Peace message with this title and the quote from Luke's gospel, "Peace be to this house!" He then presents the challenge of good politics, political vices, participation of the young and trust in others, and finally a no to war and to the strategy of fear. Pope Francis says the challenge of peace "entails a conversion of heart and soul; it is both interior and communal; and it has three inseparable aspects - peace with oneself, peace with others, and peace with all creation." [Reflection resource](#), [full Peace Day message](#).



Martin Luther King Jr. Day

On January 21, we will celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr. Day in the United States. Dr. King's example of non-violent protest and the peaceful pursuit of justice reminds us all that justice is not simply the existence of equal rights – it is a matter of the heart, and of encountering others with dignity. As Coretta Scott King has shared, "The Holiday provides a unique opportunity to teach young people to fight evil, not people, to get in the habit of asking themselves, 'what is the most loving way I can resolve this conflict?'" May we all learn to expose and counter injustice with love, for that is the only way to peace. [Prayer service](#).

