



Shalom News North America

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



April 2020



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Integrity of Creation

The Climate Crisis and COVID-19

While there is no evidence that global warming activated this virus to jump from animals to humans and helped its spread, there are enough scientific studies that indicate that a warming climate, along with a host of other factors, exacerbates the emergence of new infectious diseases. [Click](#) here for an excellent article by Chandra Bhushan, foremost environment and climate change expert. And [here](#) for a thoughtful reflection by Meehan Crist from Columbia University.

Environmental Protection and COVID-19

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has announced a sweeping relaxation of environmental rules in response to the coronavirus pandemic, allowing power plants, factories and other facilities to determine for themselves if they are able to meet legal

requirements on reporting air and water pollution.

[Learn more.](#) Read also, [EPA suspends enforcement of environmental laws amid coronavirus](#). Concerned? [Let your voice be heard.](#)



Earth Day and Laudato Si'

This year we celebrate the 50th anniversary of Earth Day and the 5th anniversary of Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*. Saying he wanted to renew his "urgent call to respond to the ecological crisis," Pope Francis has asked Catholics around the globe to participate in the international observance of "*Laudato Si'* Week" May 16-24. In solidarity with people

all around the world, SSND invites you to commemorate these anniversaries with prayer and other actions with the help of a variety of resources – prayer service, webinar, and *Just Act* reflection – [all found here](#). Be sure to share these resources with family, friends, and contacts.

Human Dignity

Human Trafficking and COVID-19

With so many people isolated in their homes, access to and use of the internet and social media has skyrocketed. While these are critical tools for learning capabilities and contact during this time of social distancing, it also [increases the risk of people for online sex trafficking](#)—especially that of children, who are already [prime targets for cyber-traffickers](#).

For tips about how to keep kids safe online, [click here](#). For materials related directly to online safety during this pandemic, [click here](#).

Racism and COVID-19

Since the novel coronavirus, which originated in China, became a global pandemic, there has been an [uptick in xenophobia and racially-motivated aggression](#). Xenophobic tendencies that are often dormant are on display: from leaders labeling the virus the "[Chinese virus](#)" and closing borders to asylum seekers, to citizens being verbally maligned, physically attacked, or unjustly discriminated against on account of their phenotype. Let us pray for a change of heart for all who turn their fear of this virus into hatred for their fellow

human beings, and for unity and solidarity among us all as we address the health crisis and the underlying social ills it has revealed.

Stations of the Cross: Overcoming Racism

This new [Stations of the Cross](#) resource on overcoming racism can help you reflect on the pastoral letter against racism, [Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love](#). A rich Lenten reflection, this prayer resource can help open our hearts to the persistent sin of racism and the call to help overcome it.



Immigration and COVID-19

As we navigate this global health crisis, we invite you to consider the pandemic with our [immigrant neighbors](#) in mind. For important facts, suggested actions, and a thoughtful prayer resource, check out SSND's "[Loving Our Immigrant Neighbors during the Coronavirus Pandemic](#)." For those in the U.S., consider [urging Congress](#) to provide resources to protect detainees from the current threat, and to develop alternatives to detention to avoid putting them at risk in the future.

Human Rights and COVID-19

Governments should respond to the COVID-19 pandemic by prioritizing the right to health for all and respect for human rights, according to a new report from Human Rights Watch, “Human Rights Dimensions of the COVID-19 Response”. The report includes recommendations for governments to address the outbreak while respecting fundamental human rights, including the rights to health, education, free expression, nondiscrimination, and freedom of movement. [Learn more.](#)

Forced Labor in Supply Chains

The U.S. China Commission [reported that](#) political, ethnic and religious prisoners are being used as forced labor in China, making goods that end up in U.S. supply chains. Members of Congress condemned the abuses and introduced legislation to hold US companies accountable for their supply chains. The new bill, [Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act](#), sets up accountability to ensure US supply chains are free of forced labor. [Learn more.](#)



Labeling for Lent Campaign Continues

We are reaching out to Sysco Corporation (a major wholesale company that provides food services to over 650,000 restaurants, schools, and health care facilities - many of which are Catholic) urging them to better inform their customers about their efforts to ensure their supply chain is free of forced labor. Even with social distancing you can participate and promote the campaign. Simply [sign and share this online petition](#) provided by U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking. The petition will stay up until after Easter.

World Health Day (4/7)

World Health Day is an annual event on April 7 to draw attention to particular priorities in global health. The focus this year is appreciation for the countless nurses, midwives, and other healthcare persons who are on the frontline in coping with the COVID-19 pandemic. Check out the following for relevant information for this time. See: [Get the Facts](#) Also: [Social Distancing and Social Justice](#) and [Compassion and Community](#).

Peace and Non-Violence

Calling for a Global Ceasefire

Both Pope Francis and UN Secretary-General António Guterres have called for the cessation of armed conflicts “in all corners of the world.” In his call for a global ceasefire Guterres said, “It is time to put armed conflict on lockdown and focus together on the true fight of our lives.” The ceasefire would allow humanitarians to reach populations that are most vulnerable to the spread of COVID-19, which has now been reported in more than 180 countries. [Click here](#) to add your voice to this call for a global ceasefire.



Nuclear Weapons and COVID-19

The 191 parties to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty postponed a conference (originally scheduled for April 27-May 22) to review its implementation because of the Coronavirus pandemic, the United Nations has announced. The treaty is considered the cornerstone of global efforts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons. While delaying the conference for health reasons makes sense, we cannot let momentum for addressing nuclear weapons fade

away. Consider [adding your signature](#) to the Hibakusha Appeal calling for an international treaty to ban and eliminate nuclear weapons. For those in the U.S., consider [urging Congress](#) to support S 2394 and HR 2529, two bills that would extend the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START), a vital step towards nuclear disarmament and towards avoiding a nuclear arms race.

Religions for Peace Adopts New Strategic Plan

[Religions for Peace](#) is a multi-religious peacebuilding coalition that has been operating since 1970. Its Tenth World Assembly meeting led to the group’s newly published [2020-2025 Strategic Plan](#). The plan aligns itself with the UN’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and focuses on six strategic goals: promote peaceful, just, and inclusive societies; advance gender equality; nurture a sustainable environment; champion freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; strengthen interreligious education; and foster multi-religious collaboration and global partnerships.



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