



Shalom News North America

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



January 2012



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Economic Justice

Food and Beverage Companies Can Help Reduce Global Poverty

January may be “[Poverty in America Awareness Month](#),” however, we all know that poverty and hunger have no national boundaries. Jordan Dey, former U.S. director of the UN World Food Program, suggests that food and beverage companies, yes, *food and beverage companies*, can take steps to significantly help reduce global poverty. These large companies generally buy ingredients such as corn, rice, wheat, and cocoa, from wealthier countries when they could buy them from small farmers in the developing world, providing subsistence farmers, who make up 70% of the world’s poor, with dependable buyers who could give them fair prices and a consistent market. [Click here](#) to learn more about this and how some in the corporate sector

are starting to change, realizing that they can earn a profit while having a positive social impact.

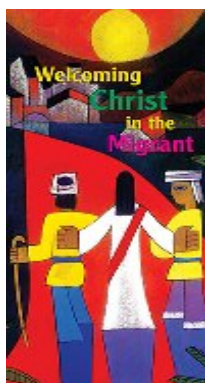
“Land Grabs” in Mali

Some two dozen foreign agri-investors have been leasing greater and greater swaths of arable land in Mali; they now possess an area large enough to sustain more than half a million small farmers who are credited with producing as much as 80% of Africa’s food according to [this report](#) by the U.S.-based Oakland Institute and the Malian national farmers organization. “Corporations, fund managers, and nations anxious to secure their own future food security have sought and secured large landholdings,” says the report, adding that such investment often leads to environmental and social problems. Please [click here](#) to read more about this disturbing trend toward global land grabs and its implications for the poor and marginalized.

Human Dignity

Welcoming Christ in the Migrant

[National Migration Week](#) will be observed in dioceses throughout the U.S. January 8-14. This year’s theme, “Welcoming Christ in the Migrant,” and the artistic renderings in the week’s materials depict the disciples welcoming a stranger on the road to Emmaus. Catholics are encouraged to continue advocacy efforts for comprehensive immigration reform. Visit the [Justice for Immigrants Campaign website](#) for more information.



The Hispanic/Latino Bishops of the United States have issued their own very special version of the “Mañanitas,” a letter to immigrants. Signed by 33 bishops, the letter was released simultaneously from Los Angeles and San Antonio. “We the undersigned Hispanic/Latino Bishops of the United States wish to let those of you who lack proper authorization to live and work in our country know that you are not alone, or forgotten. We recognize that every human being, authorized or not, is an image of God and therefore possesses infinite value and dignity. We open our arms

and hearts to you, and we receive you as members of our Catholic family.” [Click here](#) to read the rest of the letter.

How Many Slaves Work for You?

In his sobering and challenging January 2012 *U.S. Catholic* [magazine article](#), Kevin Clarke points out that while we may not be slave owners, we probably have dozens and dozens of slaves who work (indirectly) for us. They are often children and other enslaved laborers buried at the bottom of the global manufacturing supply chain—from farmworkers picking cotton in Uzbekistan for your clothing to tantalum miners in the Democratic Republic of Congo collecting mineral for your phone and computer.

Clarke notes that one of the major contemporary excuses for slavery from manufacturers, retailers, and, let’s face it, consumers is: “I didn’t know.” But with websites like [slaveryfootprint.org](#), that excuse no longer holds water. By answering a few simple questions, [slaveryfootprint.org](#) will tell you how many slaves work for you, explain how your purchases contribute to modern slavery, and offer practical suggestions for

what you can do to end it. How many slaves work for you and what can you do about it? [Click here](#) to find out.

The School Sisters of Notre Dame (Shalom North America) are one of the sponsors of the internationally known **Stop Trafficking!** Newsletter. [Click here](#) for the latest edition of the newsletter and for resources you can use for January 11, Human Trafficking Awareness Day (U.S.).

Pro-Life Womb to Tomb

The National Prayer Vigil for Life, sponsored by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and other organizations, will be held at the National Shrine of the

Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC, January 21-22. The [website](#) for the event advertises a focus on pro-life activities, including a public rosary for life and holy hours for life.

But since this vigil is held annually on the anniversary of Roe vs. Wade, the controversial decision by the U.S. Supreme Court allowing abortions up until viability, the pro-life focus has been very limited in scope – life from conception to birth. What about life after birth, life until death, quality of life, life without poverty or racism, life with affordable health care and child care and a good education? What about the pro-life issues like war and capital punishment? Can these also be part of a prayer vigil for life?

Integrity of Creation

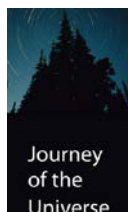
Climate Delegates Strike a Deal in Durban

The deal reached at the UN-sponsored climate talks in Durban, South Africa, could lead to a major climate treaty by the end of the decade, exceeding expectations for the two-week summit. Delegates also agreed to create a Green Climate Fund to help developing countries adapt to climate change and to initiatives to preserve tropical forests and boost clean-energy technology. Under the Durban agreement, governments will now spend four years working toward the first legally binding global agreement on climate change that covers developed and developing countries and negotiating how far and how fast each country should cut carbon emissions. [Read more.](#)

Elizabeth Groppe writes in America that climate change is a pro-life issue. “In the coming

decades, climate change can bring deadly famine, displacement and disease to large sectors of the human population and spawn mass extinctions of other species. . . . In this sense, caring for the climate and the biosphere is a paramount pro-life issue.”

Theologian Sallie McFague agrees: “Climate change is the central issue of the 21st century. It is not one issue among many. . . . All the other issues we care about – social justice, peace, prosperity, freedom – cannot occur unless our planet is healthy. It is the unifying issue of our time.” [Read more.](#)



Journey of the Universe

Journey of the Universe, hosted by cosmologist Brian Swimme, is now being aired on PBS stations. Check local listings for dates and times to see this inspiring story of the cosmos, Earth, and humankind.

Peace & Non-Violence

Peace on the Earth, Good Will to All?

No peace in Syria or Egypt or Iraq or Pakistan or Afghanistan or the Sudan or Nigeria. No peace in Iowa this week! No peace in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem where, at an annual Christmas cleaning ritual at the site last week, priests and monks from rival denominations began attacking each other with shouts and fists and broomsticks.

Why, when so many of us want peace, is it so hard to find? [Pope Benedict's 2012 Peace Day message](#) offers a clue. “Peace is not merely a gift to be received; it is also a task to be undertaken. In order to be true peacemakers, we must educate ourselves in

compassion, solidarity, working together, fraternity, in being active within the community and concerned to raise awareness about national and international issues and the importance of seeking adequate mechanisms for the redistribution of wealth, the promotion of growth, cooperation for development and conflict resolution. Peace for all is the fruit of justice for all, and no one can shirk this essential task of promoting justice, according to one's particular areas of competence and responsibility.”

January 16 is Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. [Click here](#) for a reflection on Dr. King, peace, and the true cost of war.



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