



Shalom News North America

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



May 2013



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

Human Life and Dignity

The Cost of Low Prices

Workers were told they would lose a month's pay if they didn't report to work the day after cracks appeared in the walls on the Bangladesh factory. The following day, an hour after the workers were coerced into entering the building, it collapsed upon them. The April 24 factory collapse is now the deadliest disaster in the known history of the garment industry with over 400 deaths. How many more deadly fires and building collapses must there be before steps are taken to protect the life and dignity of garment workers? [Learn more](#) (1), [learn more](#) (2), [reflection](#), [take action](#).

Immigration Update/Postville Remembered

S744, the Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act, 844 pages long, has been introduced in the Senate. This is a promising first step to creating an immigration process and a roadmap to citizenship for new American immigrants. The next steps will bring many challenges as senators offer amendments, pro and con, to many of the details of the bill. As this important legislation moves forward we will keep you up-to-date with the [latest information](#), as well as resources for [reflection and action](#).

May 12 is the 5th anniversary of the immigration raid in Postville, Iowa, by the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) of Agriprocessors, the main producer of kosher meats in the U.S. Almost 400 undocumented workers, most of them from Guatemala, were arrested, charged with identity theft, and shipped to prisons across the country before being deported. Check out this [YouTube video](#) to see the devastating effects of that raid, both on those deported and on the town of Postville. [Prayer Service](#).

International Day of Families – May 15

Families are the foundation of society. Over time the make-up of the family has been changing. Understanding the impact of these changes is important for both family functioning and societal planning. This year the International Day of Families focuses on

“Advancing Social Integration and Intergenerational Solidarity.” Please follow these links for a reflection [video on intergenerational dialogue](#), a reflection [video on inclusion](#), and [family reflection resources](#) for the church's *Year of Faith*.

UN World Day for Cultural Diversity – May 21

The UN World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development hopes to deepen understanding of the values of cultural diversity, raise awareness about the importance of intercultural dialogue and inclusion, and combat polarization, homogeneity, and stereotypes. Under the terms of the UN Resolution, the proclamation of the Day is based on the principle that “tolerance and respect for cultural diversity and universal promotion and protection of human rights, including the right to development, are mutually supportive.” [Learn more/take action](#).

Africa Day – May 25

While not widely recognized, this is an annual commemoration of the 1963 founding of the Organization of African Unity when leaders of 30 of the 32 independent African states signed a founding charter to collectively address the challenges of armed conflict, climate change, and poverty. Each year, Africa Day provides an opportunity to acknowledge the achievements of the peoples and governments of Africa and to reaffirm the support of the United Nations for their efforts to build a better future. Observed as a public holiday in five African countries, celebrations are held by Africans throughout the world, including in the United Kingdom, U.S., Australia, and Europe.

The Epidemic of Land Grabbing

Land grabbing has become one of the most pressing problems affecting [communities in Africa](#) and throughout the developing world. Investors from the U.S. and elsewhere are taking advantage of irresponsible, weak, and corrupt governments to acquire vast tracts of fertile land without consulting local communities to whom the land belongs. The local



governments are complicit in this theft from the people. [Learn more](#), [take action](#).

Global Food Aid and the U.S. Budget

A change in how the U.S. procures and distributes food around the world is being proposed by President Obama. Congress will be taking up this item as it

debates the Federal budget for FY 2014. The changes in the \$1.5 billion *Food for Peace* program involve a significant decrease in grain purchases from US farmers while increasing food purchases from local food producers in or near countries experiencing food insecurity. [Learn more](#).

Integrity of Creation

Canada's Bishops Issue 'Call to Action' on Environment

In their recently released document, *Building a New Culture: Central Themes in Recent Church Teaching on the Environment*, the Episcopal Commission for Justice and Peace of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB) outline eight central themes found in recent Church teaching on the environment. It is hoped that these themes will serve as a guide to discussion, reflection, and decision-making on the very real environmental problems we face today. "It is a call to action" emphasized Bishop Donald Bolen of Saskatoon. [Document](#), [bulletin inserts](#).

International Day for Biological Diversity



International Day for Biological Diversity

Water and Biodiversity is the theme of the 2013 International Day for Biological Diversity on May 22. The theme is a reminder that water is essential for all life and challenges countries to protect not only marine and coastal species but also inland water ecosystems, which are often extensively modified by humans. Physical alteration, habitat loss and degradation, water withdrawal, overexploitation, pollution, and the introduction of invasive species make these ecosystems among the most threatened of all. Visit www.cbd.int/idb to learn more about the impact of climate change on diverse species, including island, polar, forest, and mountain biodiversity.

Peace and Non-Violence

Wars Boost Number of Internally Displaced People to Record Levels

The wars in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Syria have caused the total number of internally displaced people (IDP) to exceed 28 million, a record high number. Since IDPs have not crossed a border they are generally considered more vulnerable than international refugees because they are not covered by the various international legal conventions that address international refugees. [Learn more](#).

Support Vieques

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the closing of the U.S. Naval bombing range in Vieques, Puerto Rico. For six decades prior to 2003, approximately one trillion pounds of explosives were dropped there in practice exercises. After decades of protest and a campaign of non-violent civil resistance, the Navy agreed to close the bombing range on May 1, 2003. However, the Navy's presence and the environmental damage it created continue to afflict Vieques. People around the world have been asked to stand in solidarity with the people of Vieques and insist that promises are kept. [Learn more](#), [take action](#).



Gun Control Efforts Stall

A minority of Senators recently prevented the passage of the bipartisan Manchin-Toomey amendment which would have made it more difficult for criminals and those with mental illnesses to purchase guns. Its defeat signals greater difficulty for any significant Congressional action on gun violence prevention. Please continue to let your voice be heard on this important pro-life issue. Find out how your senators voted and thank them for their "yes" vote on Manchin-Toomey or ask them to explain their "no" vote by clicking [here](#).

Mothers' Day – May 12

Card shops, florists, and jewelers have commercialized this day into a billion-dollar industry celebrating mothers' devotion to their families. But its original purpose was to commemorate women's public activism. Anna Reeves Jarvis and, several years later, Julia Ward Howe dared to dream of a day when women's activism would be recognized and honored. While some may think it insulting to our current celebrations of Mother's Day, perhaps we need to inject a bit more of [the vision of Jarvis and Howe](#) of what motherhood might include.

