

Reflection Paper 3: Spirituality

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In this paper, I will probe and discuss Donal Dorr's notion of Shalom as expressed in his Book, *Integral Spirituality: Resources for Community, Peace, Justice, and the Earth* and what this means for me in my ministry. I will include primary structural, personal and interpersonal issues which must be integrated in order for this Shalom to be possible and how this might benefit my surrounding community.

Donal Dorr's notion of Shalom is expressed in a diagram using three interconnecting circles to show three main areas of life. The relationships between these are shown in a set of actions and area combinations that need to be worked to achieve true Shalom. Table 1 pictures Dorr's interconnecting circles in a graph form. The main

Table 1

Shalom			
Areas	Structural Justice	Interpersonal Respect	Personal Integrity & Responsibility
Combinations	Ecological Sensitivity	Participative Community Building	Transparency
Actions	Act Justly	Love Tenderly	Walk Humbly
LIMEX Contexts	Institutional	Socio-Cultural & Traditional	Personal

areas are Structural Justice, Interpersonal Respect, and Personal Integrity & Responsibility. The combinations are Ecological Sensitivity, Participative Community Building and Transparency. The types of actions are to Act Justly, Love Tenderly and Walk Humbly. At the center of the diagram is the concept of Shalom (2). An interesting point I noted while studying Dorr's concept of Shalom is that it matches the LIMEX contexts of ministry. In this diagram all contexts of ministry are incorporated which I will include in this examination of Dorr's concept of Shalom when applicable. I believe this to be important because the benefit for the surrounding community is certainly related to how we minister to others in Church, work and the community at large.

I believe the underlying idea and start of Donal Dorr's belief that Shalom can be achieved in this world is his expression of the "web of relationships," or as stated in the Course Book, the "Web of Life" (Dorr 13, Course Book 37). I see in this concept more than simply having respect for all humankind, but an explanation that all creation is interrelated, and that we are "of the same origin and made of the same elements." He also expounds on this, informing his reader that "the Gaia hypothesis" put forth by James Lovelock means all life on the Earth is seen as a "single living organism which carefully regulates its environment and its different parts to ensure its own survival." Dorr points out the implication that if human beings are a threat to the earth in this understanding, the planet might get rid of humans to ensure its own survival (14). I understand the web of relationships to be the logical structure upon which Dorr's house of Shalom to be built. I find Dorr's expressions to be crucial and complete in that he includes the animal kingdom and the rest of creation since human beings live on the planet, breathe the air, obtain their sustenance and spend their entire lives on the Earth in the Solar System which is our planetary neighborhood in all creation. These ideas of the web of relationships and the Gaia hypothesis point to the areas, combinations and actions. The first quartet I want to discuss is Personal Integrity and Responsibility, Transparency, Walk Humbly and the Personal Context of Ministry.

One of the meanings of integrity is "the quality or state of being complete or undivided," of responsibility, "the moral, legal, or mental accountability" and of personal, "proceeding from a single person" (Merriam). Using these definitions, my initial understanding of this first area, Personal Integrity and Responsibility, is that each individual has to understand, evaluate and improve upon their own completeness and

consistency, minimize their fragmentation as a person and have to realize and take responsibility for the full scope for which they are accountable. Dorr goes even further to express integrity in terms of purity of heart, which he describes as “commitment to fundamental values such as truth and respect for others” (47). I believe the personal area is the most fundamental since every interaction with other people (interpersonal area) and with the institutions in the world (structural area) are directly affected by this first area. In the personal area, the ancient adage, “know thyself,” is implied and very important. I believe this is so because in order for me to be a whole person, I must know what I stand for and believe, what I am accountable for and how I live that out. While the extent to which I know myself is an important part of the equation, the other part is that I have a proper understanding of my place in creation. Understanding others, be they human beings or the rest of creation, in terms of relationship with the self, can help me to be more aware of why I should not throw beer cans in the street or on your lawn, why I should not harm or kill another. This realization points to a demand for consistency between knowledge of self and understanding of the relationship I have with all creation, such as other people, the trees, the ozone layer and existing institutions, resulting in a consistency between life and actions. Falsehood stated in terms of consistency of life is simply to believe one thing but to speak or act in contradiction with what I know to be true. As a human being, in order for me to fulfill Dorr’s prescriptions in the search for Shalom in the personal area, I must strive to be self aware. This means I must reflect upon my actions and the attitudes behind my actions. The Sacraments of the Catholic Church are quite well suited to this kind of life since I must, if I wish to be a good Christian, reflect and judge my own actions and inactions and their motivation. If I find

something contrary to the life I am called to as a Catholic, I need to bring these confessions to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This implies that praying is another part of living a life of integrity and responsibility. In praying, I do not pray to something I am superior to, but rather, to the one who is the Creator of all and who sustains my life every moment. Dorr even makes it clear that he believes that through honest prayer which includes whatever is in the heart of the pray-er, including hurt and pain, prayer is very healthy and can be healing and centering. I have found this in my own life. In one instance, when working on my Bachelor degree, I had lost my center and felt myself becoming more and more fragmented to the point that I could not keep up with my studies. It was at this point that I returned to honest, open prayer and admitted that which I had concealed from others and myself. In this honest admittance of shortcomings and sin in prayer, I experienced a turn around and I went from believing I was going to fail on to graduating with honors. My submission to God in these areas of my life through the prayer not only improved my grades, but more importantly healed fragmented parts of my life and made me more complete and whole.

As implied in the last paragraph, this praying means I must walk humbly in deference to this Divine Being. Humility means I am not proud, haughty, arrogant or assertive, but deferring or submitting to another (Merriam). This humility is the action related to the personal area by Dorr and requires me to live in deference to God, which, mean that, because he is the Creator of all, I respect other people and the rest of creation. This must be translated into not acting arrogantly toward others or the rest of creation from a over-valued image of self, what one gets from being proud or haughty. Walking humbly means when I teach, my attitude must not be such that I believe myself more

important or knowledgeable about the subject, but rather that I bring out their thoughts and ideas and then give them a chance to see the Church's ideas so they might accept and incorporate its teachings into their understandings as they search in prayer and study the direction God wants them to follow as they serve the Divine and His creation. In other words, to find their identity and to become more complete, to be accountable people who can do some good in this world and further the Shalom to which we are all called to build by our very lives. All this points to the transparency Dorr summarizes in coupling the discussion with integrity by pointing out that most disagreements are personality clashes and seems to indicate transparency is the sincerity and integrity that are seen by others in these disagreements. He seems to indicate that the way to be transparent is, by prayer, to accept and live by four ideals: truth, emotional honesty, respect for others and acceptance that social justice sometimes requires changes in the structures and rules of society (48). Disagreements are one part of social interaction, the next area for examination.

Interpersonal respect involves *consideration of others*, respect *indicating the act of giving particular attention, high or special regard or deference to another*. This means interactions between people and creation is characterized by attention or deference. When an area has been built up in such a way that the eco-system is being destroyed, the razing of the meadow or swamp is not allowed after the commission learns that eliminating these areas will actually damage or destroy the eco-system of the area. While this decision would deny a business or construction company access to land for the making of money, arguably not respecting their right to do so, it reflects respect for the eco-system and so a balance of the need for development and the need to preserve the eco-system and to be true stewards of the creation God gave into human care (Gen 1:28,

2:15). When my wife and I are planning to go see a movie, my respect for my wife expects me to see the movie she wants at least some of the time. Since we respect each other, mutual respect causes each of us to defer to the other. This does not leave us both starring starry-eyed at one another insisting the other get his or her way, but it is the respect and willingness to defer to the other that permits the freedom and openness we share. This kind of respect, when coupled with tender loving allows us to build the community of the family in a way where each person participates. While love has many meanings in our society, I believe Dorr means the “unselfish, loyal and benevolent concern for the good of another,” or as St. Paul wrote, “Love is patient (and) kind...rejoices in the truth...there is no limit to its forbearance...trust...hope...power to endure” (Merriam and 1 Cor 13:4 & 6-7). Good examples of this are the Maternal and Fraternal love for children. When love is tenderly expressed, it is done so with an expression of the “softer emotions in a delicate or soft quality or tone” (Merriam). An image I understand to convey this kind of tender love is my wife or I comforting our child when she is scared of something in a very gentle, mild way, with a tone of voice that conveys soft-spoken feeling of concern and protection. This can also be seen by the sensitivity I use when dealing with people of differing socio-cultural or traditional backgrounds from mine. This happens many times in RCIA, when people of different or no religious traditions are considering God’s call to enter the Catholic Church. There are those under considerable pressure to enter not into the Church because of the anti-Catholic bias in many people. Answering their questions and objections in a respectful way, they grow in knowledge of the Catholic Church in a very mild, gentle manner, showing respect for their questions instead of lack of patience or some other rough way is

to love tenderly. In another example, those without a religious tradition approached the class and teachers as if they were aliens in a strange land. Tender loving in this example calls me to make them feel welcome and part of the group with every right to be there. At times, I would call from the inquirer general life experiences which provide the bridge to things religious. A friend of mine without a religious tradition once told me if we hung around much more, I would make a Christian out of him. When talking about God, religion and church attendance near his home in the mountains of New Mexico, he once said, "Being here on this mountain is my church" (Martin). Sensitivity to my friend called me to accept his assessment of the situation and respect his views as valid. Challenging his statement can be an expression of love if I am revealing truth I see, but if I were to argue with him that he were wrong and then proceed to tell him what he should believe, for example, this would reflect the opposite of tender love.

I believe structural justice is more accurately expressed with the LIMEX verbiage, the institutional context. Both convey similar meanings, but what Dorr is writing about is the institution of any large organization which can stymie a person into believing they can do nothing against the monolith. I get this impression because he writes of political and economic oppression, discrimination such as the sign that read *Europeans only*, referring to the marginalized, where people are left voiceless and powerless in a stratified society (138-146). In an example of ecological justice dealing with structures and institutions, there was recently an incident in Albuquerque, New Mexico, concerning water rights of the city and the existence of the silvery minnow, an endangered species. We in the West have been in severe drought conditions for about a decade from the time of this writing and much of the Rio Grande is drying up in the summer "forcing

intermittent fish rescues” (ELP). Under these conditions, people made impassioned arguments to ensure they had enough water, even at the cost of the minnow. Due to this problem, several actions have been discussed to solve the problem. The city of Albuquerque’s aquarium opened a 3,000-square-foot breeding and rearing facility as a temporary solution to increase the numbers of this fish (ELP). Another story reported Albuquerque Mayor Martin Chavez and U.S. Representative Heather Wilson announced the final installment of \$15.6 million in federal funding for a water reclamation project. The story also relates that President Bush signed a bill reversing the “10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruling which would have allowed San Juan-Chama water to be used to preserve the habitat of the Rio Grande silvery minnow.” The intent of this bill is to assure Americans the Federal Government does not have authority to seize water throughout the country (Asher). Senator Pete Domenici announced he will be supporting the development of near-natural sanctuaries adjacent to the Rio Grande North of Albuquerque which would solve the conflict between the need of both Albuquerque residents and the silvery minnow for water (KOBTV). In this case concerning water rights and the silvery minnow, it can be seen how complex the situation is and how the only solution to the problem was based on more than just a simple answer of drying up the Rio Grande and allowing the silvery minnow to perish or of protecting the silvery minnow in such a way that the residents of Albuquerque cannot use this as a source of water. This also points out the enormous costs of maintaining a real balance between the eco-system and developments so that both can coexist. This is an instance where everyone is working together to ensure a workable solution is enacted that ensures justice for people and environment and is a good example of what can be expected if we are

going to maintain a balance in our country, preserving the eco-system while simultaneously taking care of the people who live in the affected locale. This kind of structural or institutional justice is sorely needed in the present crisis in the Catholic Church in which it has come out that many priests sexually abused children and the responsible Bishop many times covered it up, reassigning the priest and never informing the parishioners of the parish to which he was reassigned. This is a good example of injustice, criminal neglect and abuse perpetrated by the people who were supposed to be the spiritual leaders and servants of the People of God. While it has become clear that not all Bishops are complicit in this and that many of them have dealt with this serious problem in their dioceses in a just manner, the mention of such a thing reminds me of the redemption and justice all creation cry out for as mentioned by St. Paul in his letter to the Romans (8:22). In my teaching ministry, I must be sensitive to feelings on these and other issues which are fundamentally religious in nature because how we treat other people and our environment goes to the underlying philosophy and basic values by which we live in this world. I have noticed that most subjects can be related to other subjects differently by different people. When I teach, I have to be careful not say anything that could be construed as denigrating any group, action or lifestyle because the people to whom I minister are so diverse, that I cannot possibly imagine all the ways something I might say could be taken. In terms of Dorr's areas, I see the areas of structural justice and interpersonal respect overlapping, because even though our church is made up of predominantly half Hispanic and half Anglo-American, our community also has German Air Force members and their families, Mescalero Apache, among small numbers of other cultures. In my work in RCIA, there's no way I can know by looking at the people what

their backgrounds are, just as they cannot tell by looking at me where I come from or what my experiences in life have been that have formed me into who I am.

The notion of *shalom* Donal Dorr has expressed in his book that I have attempted to express in this paper, have certain distinct repercussions for my surrounding community. The following are three of ways my community would benefit from applying his notion in personal growth and self-improvement, interpersonal relations and societal justice. I live in a small town in Southern New Mexico with a mixed population, the majority of which consists of those of Mexican Hispanic and Anglo American backgrounds. We have grown to about 35,000, due to a nearby Air Force Base which employs many, a great percentage of the population related to the military in some way, including the German and Taiwanese Air Force training contingents. With the international flavor of our small community, I believe the better the people know themselves, the better equipped they will be to deal with the great variety of cultures and peoples. The personal area cannot be expressed without speaking in terms of interpersonal relations. There is often a person who writes a letter to the editor telling of experiences when the people in this town were friendly, helpful and welcoming. These letters reflect my experience in the town, though there are problems that can be helped by individual maturity. One problem when I originally wrote this paper was the basic ransacking and destruction of school equipment and grounds in a nearby smaller town (Österreich). While this is a very rare incident, the damage reflects problems that do exist in some people. Some people are apparently so poor they sit at the exits of the Wal-Mart or on the busy intersection in town to request assistance. One response to this need is the food kitchens two of the 72 churches in town have. People from the other churches

come together to provide meals for those in need. It is easier in a small town to feel I can make a difference in the establishment of laws, for example, when legislation passed addressing solicitors and panhandlers. I had the opportunity to converse with my district representative who lives in our neighborhood about the issue and was pleased when he informed me he had no intention of allowing a law to be passed if it would bar people in need from making appeals for assistance. He went on to tell me he was from a small town in Texas where the only way to accomplish anything was to help one another and he felt this was imperative for this town. I further met with the town attorney to interview him about the issue. A law was passed which protected a person's right to ask for assistance and protected the citizen from harassment by the people requesting help, should that ever occur.

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