

## **The Deeper Meaning of “Peace” For Rotarians.**

Peace is usually translated as a state without disturbance, or an absence of war (Oxford Dictionary).

So, now that the kids are going back to school, without any home schooling, many parents are looking forward to some “peace”.

And according to this definition, the Ukraine is “at peace” at the moment.

Unfortunately, this rather passive definition doesn’t do justice to the rich layers of meaning that are embedded in that word, but thanks to the Judeo/ Christian tradition, we

have available to us a far more dynamic and rich definition of peace that can inspire us all.

The ancient Hebrew word for peace is “shalom”, and shalom means much more than the absence of disturbance, or not being at war.

Shalom refers to a dynamic state of balance and growing towards wholeness, where all things are working together in harmony for good, or the benefit of all concerned, on four interacting levels.

On the individual level, a person in a state of peace or shalom is growing towards wholeness and health spiritually, mentally, physically and in

all other areas of their life. And all of those areas of the person's life are working together in harmony and balance for the good of the whole individual, and ultimately for the benefit of all concerned.

On the second level of inter-personal relationships, shalom or peace refers to a dynamic state of honesty, openness, and trust between individuals, so that they, family members and others around them may work together in harmony and balance for the good of the relationship, and ultimately for the benefit of all concerned.

On the third level of the wider community, shalom or peace refers

to a dynamic state of justice, fairness, and equal opportunities in “the marketplace” so that members of communities or tribes might work together in harmony and balance for the good of the community, and ultimately for the benefit of all concerned.

On the fourth level of the world and cosmos, shalom or peace refers to a state where nation states and tribes might work together in harmony and balance for the good of the planet.

And where human groups may work together in harmony and balance with nature for the good of the environment.

And where human beings might work together in harmony and balance with God, however God may be conceived for the ultimate benefit of all concerned.

In the Judeo/ Christian tradition, shalom or peace is synonymous with the concept of the “Kingdom of God” or the “era to come”, which was also the stated purpose of Jesus of Nazareth.

So, peace is not just a bit of a break from the kids, but something all human beings and all communities can strive for throughout their lives.

If we’re fortunate, we might experience that state of wholeness,

harmony and balance for short, glorious moments, but shalom is just as important as an aim for which we can strive.

Now Rotary has been on about shalom or this kind of peace ever since it shaped it's set of objectives, and placed peace as an integral part of its set of aims. ("the advancement of international goodwill and peace")

In fact, you could say that the Telos of Rotary, or its ultimate purpose is in fact, to help bring about a state of Shalom or Peace in the world.

It was this desire for shalom that motivated Rotary leaders to get involved in the formation of the

United Nations – the only service club to have such an honour.

It is this desire for shalom that drives Rotary's ongoing commitment to the training of Peace scholars who will work for shalom in troubled spots around the world. Peace Fellowships have been established at six universities around the world: the University of Bradford, (England), the University of Queensland, (Australia), Uppsala University, (Sweden), Chulalongkorn University, (Thailand) University of North Carolina, (Chapel Hill, USA) and the International Christian University (Japan).

The elements of shalom are integrated into the Four-way test of all that Rotarians say and do - adopted by Rotary in 1943 - honesty and truth (1 - Is it the truth?); justice and fairness (2 - Is it fair to all concerned?); the process of working together for good (3 - Will it promote good will and better friendships?) and the pursuit of goodness for everyone (4 - Will it be beneficial for all concerned?).

Shalom is at the heart of the Rotary Foundation's goal to "do good in the world", and Peace is the first of the Foundation's seven areas of focus: 1 - Peacebuilding and conflict prevention; 2 - Disease prevention and treatment; 3 - Water, sanitation,



and hygiene; 4 - Maternal and child health; 5 - Basic education and literacy; 6 - Community economic development and 7 - Supporting the environment.

It is the reason why many people joined Rotary, and it serves as a worthy telos or purpose for every human life.

May we all strive for shalom in our own lives, our relationships, our community, and the world.