Warm Light is Reaching Me in My Daily Life

When I was a child, my mother was always describing the first three months of the year in the following way: January will pass so fast; February will run away quickly; and March will go through like the wind. It is true. The first three months of a year will pass so fast. We just conducted the New Year Service – Shu Sho E, but it is already the end of January. I feel extremely cold this winter. Dear temple members, please do not catch cold and take good care of your body which is the place where the Buddha Dharma soaks in.

After many years of drought, it looks like it is over with all the rains this winter. Even with such cold winter days, surely, Spring is just around the corner. In our temple garden, white plum blossoms are now blooming beautifully. But, comparing it to last year, the tree seems weak and is not fully blooming. Only one or two honey bees can be seen around the tree. For over 32 years, the white plum blossom tree produced plums. I think the tree has grown old, and it looks like the end of the white plum tree is coming soon.

Looking at the aging white plum blossom tree, I am tasting the Nembutsu teachings in this way. Since I received birth in this human life, I know that aging, getting ill and approaching the close of my life are part of the natural rhythm of life. I know this law in my head, but I do not want to accept this law. This frustration between the reality of my aging and my denial of this reality creates my mental suffering. The denial of my mental problems is like the cold winter rainy days which I am now facing. But, even in such condition of my life, a little warm light is reaching me in my daily life.

Now, I am opening my eyes to accept the unchanging law of the four problems from a different angle. That is – illness is my companion, my aging is the rhythm of nature, and I should not resist the approach of my death. Then, I try to keep Namo Amidabutsu in the center of my life and hold the Pure Land as the returning place of my life. I cannot reach the Pure Land now, but living in the stage of the truly settled, I am walking the Nembutsu journey now.
When I have accomplished my Nembutsu life, I will become one hundred per cent free from the blind passions. Then, I will become a perfect enlightened Buddha, the same as Amida Buddha’s enlightenment. But, this is not my final goal. At the end of my Nembutsu life, at the same time, I will use a Buddha’s power to return to back into this world to serve other people. February 15, is Nirvana Day of Shakyamuni Buddha. As Shakyamuni Buddha experienced his pari Nirvana, beyond life forms, please keep the unseen but sure world of Enlightenment.

I need a little more patience to accept the cold, cold winter days of my daily life. The expected warm shining days are just around the corner. I just need to walk my Nembutsu path each day.

With Gassho,
Rev. Z. Tanuguchi

MONTHLY MEMORIAL SERVICES

The Monthly Memorial Service for the month of February will be held beginning at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, February 5th. The names of those listed on the Temple’s memorial list as having passed away during the month of February were listed in the January Upaya.

The monthly memorial service for those who passed away in the month of March will be held on Sunday, March 5th. The persons listed below are listed on the temple’s memorial list as having passed away during the month of March.

If 2017 is a special service year (as listed below) for a dear departed relative, please contact Rev. Taniguchi to arrange for special memorial arrangements.

Please inform Rev. Taniguchi of any corrections or additions to this list.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Special Service</th>
<th>Year of Death</th>
<th>Special Service</th>
<th>Year of Death</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>17 Year</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Year</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>25 Year</td>
<td>1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Year</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>33 Year</td>
<td>1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Year</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>50 Year</td>
<td>1968</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THE NAMES OF THOSE WHO PASSED AWAY DURING THE MONTH OF MARCH
(AS LISTED ON THE TEMPLE’S MONTHLY MEMORIAL LIST)

1916 Mr. Bunjiro Okamoto
Infant Masami Nakano
1919 Mr. Tadashi Tsuchiya
Mr. Shichibei Hirao
1920 Infant Ruriko Kitajima

1922 Infant Sadako Nishi
Infant Mitsue Mune
1923 Infant Masaji Tsuboi
1924 Mr. Jinzaburo Okami
Mrs. Takino Nishiyama
Learning To Do What Sensei Does (part 1)

Rev. Taniguchi will formally retire in May, and no one knows when we will be getting a new minister. While we should be assigned a supervising minister, and we can get some guest ministers, the everyday operations of the temple will fall on temple members. The Board has recognized this, and has started meeting with Sensei to try and “learn” what he does and the correct way of doing it. The first meeting was on December 20, 2016, when Sensei described all the items in the Onaijin. The altar area is “set up” in different configurations with different items depending on the occasion and season. It’s more complicated than you think.
The second meeting was on January 12, 2017. This was a “hands on” meeting with members practicing dusting and cleaning, and moving the altar objects around. It wasn’t actually hands on as we used special gloves or rubber gloves. Things have to line up, point in a certain direction wrapped and unwrapped and stored in a certain way. It’s more complicated than you think.

Ms. Jane Naito has agreed to assume the responsibility for the altar flowers, but she needs help. She and Sensei will go to the Oakland Flower Mart along with other interested members to learn where our flowers come from, what to buy. They will return to the temple, and Sensei will demonstrate his style of arrangements. There should be a few more opportunities to learn the style before Sensei leaves for Japan to lead the Ascension tour group.

The next meeting will be on January 25, 2016. Sensei will explain the security system, watering and lighting system, garbage pick ups, etc., and try and remember all the things he routinely does that no one else knows about. The Board will have to figure out how we will get all the things done after he leaves. There is no question that we all need to stand up and volunteer more hours to keep the temple running.

zensho
Dates To Remember

Thursday, February 2, 2017, from 7:00 p.m.
Adult Dharma Study Class
Rev. Dr. Shoyo Taniguchi

Sunday, February 5, 2017, from 10:00 a.m.
Dharma School Service
February Monthly Memorial Service
BWA Meeting at 11:00 a.m.

Tuesday, February 7, 2017, from 10:00 a.m.
Japanese Language Monpo Service

Sunday, February 12, 2017, from 10:00 a.m.
Nivana Day and So-Eitaikyo Perpetual Memorial Service &
Late Ladies Takeko Kujo & Yoshiko Ohtani Memorial Services

Sunday, March 5, 2017, from 10:00 a.m.
Dharma School Service
March Monthly Memorial Service

Thursday, March 2, 2017, from 7:00 p.m.
Adult Dharma Study Class
Rev. Dr. Shoyo Taniguchi

Dharma School News

A severe flu season forced the Dharma School to be postponed for one week, so the second Sunday was the January Dharma School. We were very happy to see almost all the students in good health and spirits. In addition, we were so happy to welcome Kimberly Kato Chambliss, a mother of Fletcher and Nash, as our new Dharma School teacher. Now, we have a stronger Dharma School team: Andrew, Yumi, Kimberly and myself.

Our regular first session was opened with Mindful Breathing on Zafu cushion: Breathe-in, Pause, and Breathe-out. Then all focused on Yummy Emotions: joy, calmness, peacefulness, happiness, quietness, freedom, relaxedness, smile, easiness, coolness, and composedness. Then, we did
Family Metta: visualize each family member, including pets, being surrounded by the golden light of the Buddha.

Then, we shifted from Yummy Emotions to Yucky Emotions: The Buddha taught us Yummy Emotions make everyone happy and Yucky Emotions make all unhappy. So, we focused on one of the most powerful Yucky Emotions, Anger. We briefly explained that the very first psychoanalyst in human history, the Buddha, taught that Anger is caused by one’s own Selfishness. Then, we taught the Buddha’s very first teaching, “The Four Noble Truths.”

The Four Noble Truths are the essence of Buddhism that we should understand and practice regardless of age: They are the Buddha’s most basic theory and practice to carry on in our daily everyday lives which are filled with sufferings, pains, troubles, and other issues. Indeed, the Buddha said, “I teach only one thing, that is, sufferings, their causes, their reduction and elimination, and methods of elimination. That is why, unlike any other religions, Buddhism offers so many various valuable practices that can be utilized by anyone, including small children.

The Four Noble Truth are the “Four Steps of Solving Troubles in our Life.” They consists of four steps:

1. In our lives, there are Sufferings (Unhappiness),
2. Sufferings are caused and conditioned by our own Self-centeredness,
3. Sufferings can be reduced and eradicated, and
4. There are methods to eradicate Sufferings.

Seeing each of the four truths is regarded “Noble.” This can be taught to young and old, gradually, step by step, including even to a two-year-old child. And this is what we did at Dharma School.

In teaching this, I shared an actual case that had happened several years ago after we taught Family Metta and Anger on one Sunday. The next day, one mother e-mailed me how her son (age 5) saw his own Anger and began to extend Metta (loving-kindness) to each one of the family members.

All during the time when this episode was introduced, every child listened to it keenly with full attention and sparkling eyes! Then, we talked about the danger and damage of having Anger. I asked them, “Who gets the damage most from Anger?” Then one older student answered, “It is me!.” Wow. This was exactly what the Buddha taught 2700 years ago. We could clearly know that our children understood the Buddha’s teachings of our own Selfishness and Unhappiness.

Then, with the help of older students, each child drew her/his situations when conflict, arguments, or sad relationships with her/his siblings or friends that had occurred were caused by her/his selfishness at home or at school. One only-child student drew the situation when she had experiences with her mother regarding her homework issues. It was wonderful to know that our children got the Buddha’s teaching: The more Selfishness, the more Troubles.

Thank you, Kimberly Kato Chambliss, for so many great snack donations: Organic Bunny Snacks, Organic Cheddar Bannies, Meiji Panda Chocolate Cracker, and Fruit Snacks.

Metta,
Shoyo Taniguchi, Ph.D.
Buddhist Temple of Alameda Dharma School

Thank You

New Year Day – Shu Sho E Service

Special Altar Flower Donations
  Mrs. Joyce Terao
  Mr. Masaki Takano
  Mrs. Cookie Takeshita

Special thanks to Mr. Ken Narahara for beautification of the temple by cutting the lawns on December 20, 2016, for the New Year Service.

Reminders

1. If you haven't paid your dues for 2017, please fill out the membership form and send it in with your check. We are in the process of compiling a new temple directory
2. When you receive your invitation to Rev. Taniguchi’s Retirement Party, please return it as soon as you can. It will make the party planning much easier.
3. Rev. Zuikei Taniguchi and Rev. Dr. Shoyo Taniguchi will be on vacation after the Japan tour. They will not return until April 26, 2017. For religious emergencies, contact Rev. Harry Bridge at the Oakland Buddhist Church (510-832-5988.

Shin Buddhism Study Notes

COMPASSION (?)
By Shigeki Sojo Sugiyama

Amida Buddha is the embodiment of wisdom and compassion. Wisdom and compassion, are abstract concepts that describe desirable human qualities that are given a form as Amida Buddha. However, there is nothing, to my knowledge, in the Collective Works of Shinran that explains what wisdom and compassion mean. Nevertheless, I believe that wisdom can be thought of as the result of Right View and Right Thinking.

Writing about compassion is difficult for me since I am not sure what it means or how to describe that human quality meaningfully. A simple dictionary definition of compassion says that it is a "sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it." Also, "Sometimes 'compassion is used to refer to sympathetic understanding." And, "In some cases, compassion refers to both a feeling and the
action that stems from that feeling." I have also asserted before that compassion means to be helpful, more so than simply doing something to help another person. Being helpful necessitates greater understanding of another's difficulty or pain to be able to help that person. Still, there are some people that believe you must do something to show that you are kind and compassionate. But, in helping another, are you really helping the other, or yourself. I recall that in 1965 I did something that others might consider as being kind and considerate of another. However, it was simply a self-serving act. It was when I was putting together a new Army unit preparatory to deployment to Viet Nam. One of my men asked me not to take him to Viet Nam since his family would have financial difficulties if he went. I listened to his plea, then decided not to take him with us and had him transferred out of my unit. However, my decision was not altruistic. It was because I concluded that the man’s personal problem would be troublesome to me just when I would be facing many uncertainties in an unprecedented situation leading men that I did not know and who had no previous combat experience. Essentially, I did not need another headache that I could avoid by leaving one man behind.

Thus, it seems to me that to be truly compassionate, one needs to be totally selfless. That is, one should not be concerned about "being kind", or being thought by others as being a "good" or "kind" person. A recent incident in my home convinces me that a devout Buddhist devotee can be that kind of a person. A visiting nurse has come periodically to check on my recovery from the flu. The other day, I had burned incense before the nurse’s arrival and she noted the scent of the burning incense. So she told me about her morning ritual as a Buddhist from Nepal. In the ensuing conversation, I told her that I had left my family to go to school to become a doctor. But instead of becoming a doctor, I had become an Army officer. She responded quickly, "From saving lives to protecting lives." Her remark startled me since she had sensed instantaneously that my role as a soldier was to protect the people of my country whereas the conventional wisdom is to view soldiers as being trained to kill others. The few words spoken by my nurse revealed to me how a devout Buddhist can sense the positive attributes of another, rather than just the negative calling of another. And of course, my nurse was committed to helping the sick in need of help.