

Mt. Equity Zendo Zephyr- April 2012



Abess Leaves Behind the Fragrance of Flowers - by Daishin

Upon completing Basic Teacher Training in Yoga at Yogaville in Virginia on March 25th it was wonderful to see so many trees and flowers in full bloom on the seven hour car ride back to Pennsylvania. I returned late Sunday evening to find a vase full of the above flowers on the altar in the Arhat hall. The next morning and into the afternoon NiOsho and I had a chance to catch up, clean out Rakuen's old bedroom in preparation for our next insulation project, and, without delay, drive to the airport in State College. We met Keien, her husband Jeff, and her son Will at the airport. Keien is accompanying NiOsho on her trip to Florianopolis, Brazil, where NiOsho will be leading retreats offering Dharma words, and presiding over a precepts ceremony before returning on April 3rd. We wish them a safe and enjoyable journey as the Dharma blooms in Brazil and as the flowers on the altar continue to offer their fragrance right here and now.

Practicing with Addictions - by Daishin

The past year I've been offering Zazen to patients at a drug and alcohol rehab center. It's wonderful to share the Dharma with those who are really hungry for it. I've heard comments time and time again of how much each person

enjoyed meditation and were able to relax and let go of anxiety. What I've learned most from working with addicts is that they simply need space to be without being judged as good or bad. Zazen and guided meditations create that space.

I recently read a book called, “In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts,” by Gabor Mate, MD, a physician in the Portland area of Canada who has chronicled his work with drug addicts over a twenty year period and has proposed several reasons for the problem and what we can do individually and collectively about it. I highly recommend reading this book whether or not you are dealing directly with addicts. This is a problem that affects all of us. You can borrow MEZ’s copy if you wish (donated kindly by Mitchell Ratner).

I won’t go into detail here but I will briefly share some of the causes of addictive behavior and how practice can help us work with addicts in a way that is proposed by Mate. Drugs do not cause addiction. Mate suggests that the idea that drugs are the cause of addictions is a myth. Ample scientific studies show that an addictive tendency is in a person well before that person begins abusing drugs. Statistics show that over 90% of women with drug addictions, for example, have been repeatedly sexually or physically violated at a very early age. The pain of those assaults does not go away just because the person is no longer being assaulted. It leaves a deep pain in the person for life. While an addict may not be able to make the connection between the source of her or his distress and the need for drugs, it is this original pain that the addict is attempting to deal with. The child does not receive the support and love that is needed at the time. As the child aged this affliction is present and unaddressed, drugs become a poor substitute for needed love.

Knowing that abuse and addiction are linked helps me soften and open my heart. People

do drugs because they have very deep torment within themselves. They are trying to find the cure for this torment and drugs seems to eliminate it for the moment. This process of addiction becomes an endless cycle of suffering until the addict gets curious enough to look for other ways to address their ordeal.

The pain of the drug addict is, at its root, the same suffering shared by all people around the globe. It comes in many forms such as excessive gambling, sex, shopping, eating and working to name a few. Drug addiction is seen as particularly destructive not because it is more so than other addictions but because of the stigma placed on it by society.

Remembering that the distress the drug addict is running away from is the same distress that we all are running away from when we do something, even “good” things, to excess, brings about compassion in the heart.

The first noble truth is that no one can escape suffering in this life. This is what prods us on to the spiritual journey.

Rather than judging others for not being able to deal skillfully with torment, we can look at how we ourselves are not skillful with what torments us.

As Buddha taught:

“Think not of the faults of others, of what they have done or not done. Think rather of your own sins, of the things you have done or not done (Dhammapada 4.50).”

Special/Upcoming Events

Half Day of Zen (1:30 - 4:30 pm)

Buddha's Birthday, May 6th **10am - 2pm with potluck lunch**

Zen and Yoga: Freedom in Body and Mind, July 7th

Beginner's Mind Zen, August 4th

Foundations For Meditation, September 1st

Full Day of Zen (10:00 am - 4:00 pm)

True Freedom, July 8th

Heat that Burns away Defilement, August 5th

Cooling Down the Mind, September 2nd

Work Practice Days

*** come for all or part of the following days - overnight stays are welcome***

Saturday, April 7th and 28th, 9 am - 5 pm

Saturday and Sunday, May 19th and 20th, 9 am - 5 pm

Saturday, May 26th, 9 am - 5 pm

Sesshin Schedule

Earth Day Sesshin (Celebrating MEZ's 21st anniversary), April 20th - 22nd

Long Summer Sesshin with Doyu Roshi and Rev. Tom Wright, June 1st - June 9th

Mid Summer Sesshin, July 20th - 22nd

Obon Sesshin, August 17th - 19th

Early Fall Sesshin, September 14th - 16th

October Sesshin, October 19th - 21st

***Note that there will be no Sesshin in May due to the Long Summer Sesshin beginning earlier in June than past years.**

Registration for Special Events: daishin@mtequity.org or (570) 546-2784

Note that Sesshin requires prior approval by the Abbess.

Weekly Practice Schedule

Tuesday Evening 7 - 9:15pm
(Includes prayer service*, zazen, reading and discussion)

Thursday Morning 6:30 - 8:00am
(Includes breakfast with Gyohatsu, or “The Practice of the Bowls”)

Thursday Evening 7 - 8:30pm
(Includes zazen, reading and discussion**)

***On the first Tuesday evening of the month we recite the precepts and do the Beginning Anew ceremony in lieu of evening service. This is followed by two sittings, and ending bows. On the third Tuesday evening of the month we recite “Invoking the Bodhisattvas' Names”, followed by three 30 minute sittings and closing with three bows.**

****On the first Thursday of the month we study the Five Wonderful Mindfulness Trainings, reading them and fielding questions about them. On the third Thursday of the month there will be three 15 - 20 minute sittings including one guided meditation based on Thich Nhat Hanh’s teachings.**

5th Tuesdays and 5th Thursdays are reserved for other events. On May 29th and May 31st there will be no evening meditation.

Up-Coming Yoga Schedule at MEZ

8:30 -10am on Friday the 6th, 13th and 27th

10 - 11:30 am on Sunday, April 8th, and 29th

5:45 - 6:45 pm on Thursday, April 19th and May 3rd

***This is a very gentle form of Yoga designed especially to lead the body and mind to meditation. All ages and body types are welcome to participate. No prior experience is necessary.**

Gratitude to the following people for making offerings of food and related items the month of March: Jido, Keien, Dendo, Shudo, Domon, Donen, Susan Gresens, Nanshin, Itay, Rose Hessler, Koen, Ayeko-San, and all others we may have inadvertently missed. Our heartfelt gratitude.