

Mt. Equity Zendo Zephyr- *February 2011*



Young pine trees near Shogoji Temple, Japan

Practicing Concretely 24/7

One day a farmer saw the Buddha walking. He said, “My job is to till the fields and grow food for people to eat. What do you do all day long?”

The Buddha replied, “I sit, I stand, I walk, and I lie down.”

The farmer further questioned the Buddha, “Well who doesn’t sit, stand, walk, and lie down?”

*The Buddha responded, “When I sit, **I know** I am sitting. When I walk, **I know** I am walking. When I stand, **I know** I am standing. When I lie down, **I know** I am lying down.”*

During the past three months I practiced traditional temple life at Shogoji, a Japanese training monastery, with 15 other monks and nuns from around the world. Every moment of our 24-hour day was carefully choreographed for the sole purpose of awakening in each of these four postures that the Buddha mentions above. “Sitting, standing, walking, and lying down” is a symbol for the whole of our life and it means that the utmost care and attention is given to the very fine details of our ordinary life. In order to live harmoniously together under one roof, there are rules for how to conduct ourselves. On first glance, these rules may appear cumbersome, however, they are the forms which support awakening moment after moment.

When we wake up in the morning, for example, we say, ***“Waking up this morning I smile, 24 brand new hours are before me. I vow to live deeply in each moment and to look at all beings with the eyes of compassion.”*** (Thich Nhat Hanh’s translation of Avatamsaka Sutra)

As we wash our face we say to ourself, ***“As we wash the face with water, may all beings behold the immaculate Dharma forever undefiled.”*** (Thomas Cleary’s translation of the Avatamsaka Sutra)

Before brushing our teeth we recite, ***“Brushing my teeth and rinsing my mouth, I vow to speak purely and lovingly. When my mouth is fragrant with right speech a flower blooms in the garden of my heart.”*** (Thich Nhat Hanh)

Upon sleeping we say, ***“The day has ended and our life is one day shorter. Let us look carefully at what we have done. Let us be diligent putting our whole heart in the path of meditation. Let us live deeply each moment and in freedom so that the time doesn’t slip away meaninglessly.”*** (Thich Nhat Hanh)

These verses are just one of the many concrete ways we practice awakening in the 24 hours of our day. They are intended to remind us of the teaching that in any activity we are always doing it together with all beings. Moreover, Zen Master Dogen says in *Shobogenzo*, “Remember, we attain the truth when listening to a four line verse, and we attain the state of truth when listening to a single phrase.”

These verses are applicable not only to the life of a monk but to anyone who sincerely desires to awaken. Just as the farmer in the above story said, “But who does not sit, stand, walk, or lie down?” Who does not “wake up” in the morning? Who does not wash their face and brush their teeth? Who does not go to bed at night?

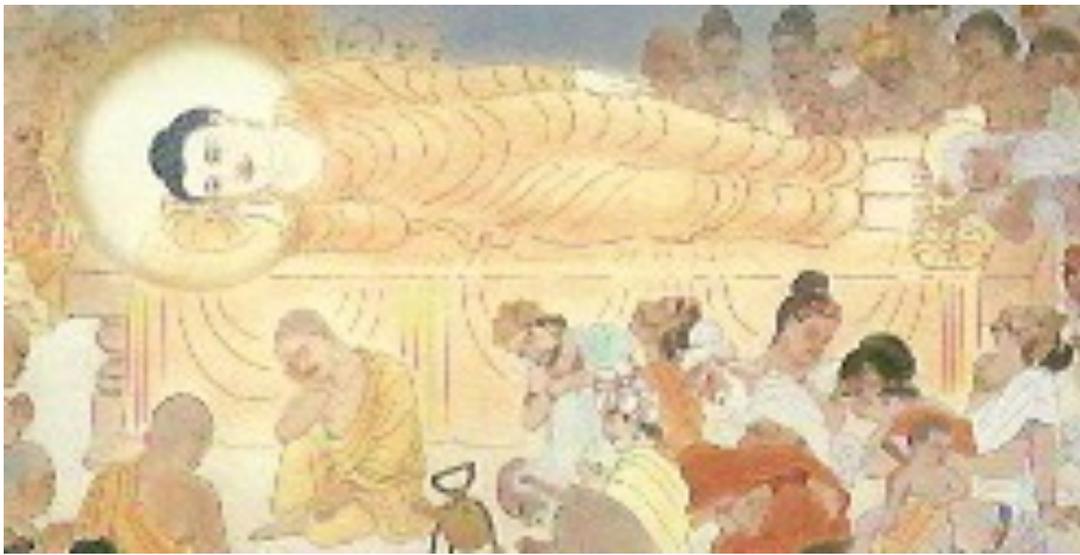
Furthermore, the quality with which we do the present activity is the same quality we will bring to the next moment’s activity. For example, brushing our teeth with attention may not seem like a significant thing to do, but if we’re going to drive a car right afterwards then we may want to take the present activity-brushing the teeth- more seriously. The quality of our attention to the present moment affects the future. The point of training in a temple, then, whether it’s for 3 months or 3 hours, is to be in a place that provides the many supports needed for living with awareness moment after moment, 24/7.



Being served/serving food.



Walking Meditation



Buddha in “Pari-Nirvana”, painting by Nousu Kosetsu

February 2011

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30	31	1 ● Evening zazen 7-9:15	2	3 ● Evening Zazen 7-8:30	4	5 ● 1/2 Day of Mindfulness
6 ● Day of Mindfulness 10AM-4PM	7	8 ● Evening zazen 7-9:15	9	10 ● Evening Zazen 7-8:30	11	12 ● Cedar Crest College
13	14	15 ● Evening zazen 7-9:15	16	17 ● Evening Zazen 7-8:30	18 ● Nirvana Sesshin	19 ● Nirvana Sesshin
20 ● Nirvana Sesshin	21	22 ● Evening zazen 7-9:15	23	24 ● Jesus and Buddha 7-8:30pm	25	26 ● Cedar Crest Snow Date
27	28	1 ● Evening zazen 7-9:15	2	3 ● Jesus and Buddha 7-8:30pm	4	5 ● 1/2 DoM

Upcoming Events

Nirvana Sesshin is a time to reflect on loss. All things that begin come to an end. We can witness this on a daily basis if we are mindful of our need to rest or take a break from activity. Daichi Zenji wrote, "Do not think of sleeping as a trifling thing compared to zazen." In this Sesshin we will look at how to practice while sleeping. Sesshin officially begins Friday evening at 7pm and ends Sunday at 3:30pm. Prior permission to attend from the Abbess is required. Early arrivals are encouraged on Friday to help with the preparations.



For the second time we will be offering a series of five classes on Jesus and Buddha. The classes will be held on Thursday evenings from 7-8:30pm beginning February 24th and ending March 24th. We will look at pivotal thinkers in each tradition such as Thich Nhat Hanh, Thomas Merton, Zen Master Dogen and St. Francis of Assisi. To sign up contact [Rev. Daishin](#).

*Note that from this year both Tuesday evening Zazen and Thursday evening zazen will begin from 7:00pm.

RECENT ACTIVITIES



Rev. Jisen Coghlan of Zen Center of Pittsburgh and Rev. Wakoh Hickey, Prof. of Religion at Alfred University practiced Mindful Eating with Oriyoki Bowls. Rev. Jisen and Rev. Wakoh will be joining us at the end of February for further advanced priest training.



Above: Dajun, Daisen, Meigetsu, Nanshin, Domon and NiOsho after New Year's Shosan (Tomei not pictured).



Left: Esho and Steve Gambert at their home in Baltimore. Daishin visited Esho and Steve to offer his thanks for sending him protein bars while he was practicing in Japan.

Gratitude to the following people for making offerings of food and other offerings the past 3 months: Nanshin, Tomei, Tokuen, Barbara Haines, Shudo, Koen, Donen, Annie Deighton, Eileen Georg, Jesse Hollifield, I'en, Daijun, Jusan, Fujiko and Frank Robbins, Patricia Carpenter, Rev. Jisen, Rev. Kyoki Roberts of ZCP, Dendo, Domon, Daisen, Ten Ryu, Susan Faeder, Renee Scholtz, Diane Hollis, Meigetsu, Esho, Ty Heineken, Keien and all others we may have inadvertently missed. Our heartfelt gratitude.