

MOUNT EQUITY ZENDO ZEPHYR



Rev. Jisen explains the “Alexander Technique” to the group during this months Sesshin.



Jizo Bodhisattva Bundles up in the snow. Jizo is symbolic of the energy within us that protects children, travelers, and the incarcerated.



Nirvana Sesshin Participants: Back Left- Jido, Dokai, Rev. Daishin, Koen, Kevin, Susan. Front Left- Rev. Tenryu, Rev. Jisen, Dendo, Choen, Mike. Not pictured- Daijun, Misho, Diane, Allen Richardson



4 week class on Jesus and Buddha Completed

For 5 Thursday evenings in the months of January and February people came together to study Thich Nhat Hanh's book, Jesus and Buddha as Brothers. Many of us came to see that in studying Buddhism, our "Spiritual Roots" became exposed. What are the teachings of Jesus and Buddha and how do they inform our everyday life? Mary "Keien" Boutselis offers us her impressions of the class:

Jesus & Buddha as Brothers

Zen practice has been a part of my life for 15 years. Involvement with this practice came by way of an interest in Eastern Mystics and before that, 22 years of devotion to Catholicism. Thus, my spiritual roots or heritage are of a Christian (Catholic) faith onto which I have grafted the practice of Zen.

While many in our Western culture have come to Zen from or with different Christian perspectives, a subset of us comes as "seekers." I would consider myself a "seeker." My seeking is driven by a desire to settle into "home" which, I have realized, requires that my spiritual roots be honored and, in a significant way, integrated into whatever spiritual life I have.

Perhaps out of necessity, this journey has been relatively solitary and personal. I have found my way, identifying and integrating as best I can what felt like the "next step." Along the way, I have read, prayed, meditated and spoken to priests (both Buddhist and Catholic) about what had felt like a disjunction within my spiritual life. While I

have worked at integrating what felt true about Zen practice with what felt familiar in Christianity, it still seemed as though I was holding two different entities...one in each hand. It is within this context that Rev. Daishin's offering of the "Jesus & Buddha as Brothers" course came. It was deeply appreciated that someone was explicitly offering a dialogue and exploration of the two worlds which I had been straddling. 18 of us came together across 5 meetings to discuss the teachings of Jesus and Buddha using the Bible and Thich Nhat Hanh's Going Home: Jesus and Buddha as Brothers.

The "Jesus and Buddha" course undoubtedly held different meaning for each of us. For me, a portion of the meaning was related to my Catholic roots. Within the Catholic faith, priests are held as gatekeepers or the intermediary between self and God. Thus, the fact the dialogue and exploration within the course was offered by a priest was akin to a door being **held** open (as opposed to my experience of prying a door open). In addition to this personal meaning which is a vestige of Catholic roots, the course was valuable in its recognition of the parallels of two great paths. The homework assignments offered throughout the course invited deep exploration and experience of the reality that all paths lead to the top of the mountain...that it was possible to consider Jesus and Buddha as brothers who both taught the Truth. In one homework example, Daishin noted that "Thich Nhat Hanh talks a lot about the 'Holy Spirit.' This can be translated in many ways, but one way spirit has been translated is 'breath'...God breathes life into our nostrils. ...sit with the breath that God has breathed into you. What is it? How

did it get there? Where did it come from?" Another assignment offered by Daishin was "When you sit down to have a meal today, eat in such a way that you are able to touch God or Nirvana. See the bread as the body of Christ, but see also the other food as Christ's body. See the water as cloud and as river." No need to maintain dual mind... no need to think **either** "mindful eating" **or** "being with the living Christ." For these explicit invitations, I am grateful.

Most of us raised within the Catholic faith share some experience of needing to know God through a priest. No matter how devoutly we prayed or followed the rituals of the Church at the time, there was no emphasis placed on the **experience of** God or Oneness with the Holy Spirit. This experience is what felt missing for me as I moved into young adulthood and beyond. Deep practice within Zen led me to knowing that it was possible to experience Oneness, to experience the dissolution of perceived separateness...to touch all and to feel deeply compassionate for all life. Yet in this, something was missing.

The most descriptive words for what felt missing would be "a relationship with"... My experience with Zen does not include a relationship with a Being or presence...something which was imprinted as part of my root faith. This relationship with God is something which has uniquely shaped my journey as it does for many Christians. Raised within a Christian faith, I was imprinted to God and without a way to live within a relationship to God/Jesus/Holy Spirit, something feels missing. In Zen Buddhism, there is no incorporation of God. I deeply appreciate

that Zen is inclusive. This inclusivity has allowed a wide berth for concepts such as our “true nature,” “Buddha nature,” “Great Mind,” and “where all concepts fall away” to be translated into my “first language.”

From an inclusive perspective, it is not difficult to intellectually appreciate the Truth of all. However, in practice, what has felt missing for me within Zen is the actual experience of God and a relationship to a Divine Being/ Source...a sense that as I move through my daily world, I go with God. Even in saying this, I recognize that from a Zen perspective there is no separation, no Other to be in relationship to. (Maybe this means that I am not far enough along on the Zen path... that if I were, there would be nothing missing. Regardless, given early spiritual roots, this is the understanding of my experience.)

There is comfort in finding universal metaphors being used by both Zen and Christian teachers. For



example, Thich Nhat Hanh often invokes the metaphor of the relationship between wave and water in describing the nature of the relationship between a perceived separate self and our true, Buddha nature. Similarly, L.M. Richardson offers the following on the relationship between the soul and God in *Contemplative Prayer, the Holy spirit and the Deep things of God: Lessons in Contemplative Mysticism:*

“Is the wave (the soul) the whole of the ocean (God) or is the whole of the ocean the wave? After all, they are the same light, the same substance, the same being and consciousness. When I have rested in any of the three aspects of the trinity, that is the Father, Christ or Holy Spirit, it has been like being a wave resting in an infinite ocean of light. This light of

Divine Consciousness appears continuous and infinite, enveloping all things. In my own humble experiences with the three different aspects of God, I have never found that there is a point where the light that is the soul ends and the light that is God begins. It seems to be one continuous light whose understanding and direct experience of is only limited by how much we have limited our own consciousness.”

Zen has provided a path towards dissolving the limits of mind and thus, towards experiencing being one with God, my true Buddha nature.

During the Jesus and Buddha course, Daishin encouraged us to graft to our roots. Turning away from roots is not possible. Our roots are where we begin and they shape our growth. Longing for God is part of my roots and, while Zen does not directly speak to this, it provided an open and accepting path for a return to roots through deep stillness, compassion and dissolving the limits of consciousness so that an experience of God is possible.

Gratitude

Woodpecker enjoys suet-seeds caked in animal fat-for its Winter meal.



A special thank you for all that donated books, CD's and tapes to Brittany Bridges. Brittany is recovering quite well and is very appreciative of the out-pouring of generosity from the Sangha. We send our gratitude to all of you for keeping her in your prayers, and want to recognize those who donated reading or audio material, especially: Meigetsu Robishaw, for "Anger", by Thich Nhat Hanh (TNH),

Keien Boutselis for "True Love", by TNH, Steve Marks for "Creating True Peace", by TNH, Nanshin White and Tomei Knapp for "The World We Have" and "The Miracle of Mindfulness", by TNH, Tokuen Gray for "Practicing Peace in Times of War", by Pema Chodron, Daifukuji Temple for "Everyday Zen", by Joko Beck, "Who Dies?", by Stephen Levine, "No Death, No Fear", by TNH, and "Zen Mind, Beginners

Mind", by Suzuki Roshi, Kathy Martin for a Thich Nhat Hanh CD, and James and Lee Oatey-Crouse for "Looking Deeply", by TNH, Michel Lau for "Wherever You Go There You Are" by Jon Kabat Zinn. May we all be reminded of our gratitude for having this precious gift of life, having mobility, and being constantly surrounded by those who care deeply about us. Healing takes place in this space.

Thank You List

Young Plotts- 5 boxes brownie mix, 1 box icing.

Diane Hollis- Brown Rice, vegetable stock, chicken stock, cauliflower soup, vegetable soup, soup bowl, cookies, rice noodles, veggie burgers, waffles, stir fry sauce, apples, lemons, broccoli, zucchini red peppers, mozzarella, sunflower seeds, box grater, potato casserole, spinach, mandarin oranges, pineapple

Dan Washington- English Muffins

Ruth Steck & Luanne Potter- 1 dozen free range eggs

Annie Deighton- oatmeal cookies

Misho Indelicarto- scones

Chad Little- Helping with shoring up a cellar wall.

We wish to acknowledge Michel Lefevre for his generosity towards the future replacement of the West Porch Storm Door.

Nanso- flameless candle

Gyokuen Lucine Folgueras continuing teachings of The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, to Daishin

Nanshin White & Tomei Knapp- English Muffins, tea, blueberry jam, newspapers for Yuki

Rev. Jisen- chili, bread, chips, cheese, cookies, eggs

Dokai- flowers, bread, cheese

Daijun- coffee maker, coffee, bread, jam, apple-pecan salad

Koen- coffee maker (w/Daijun), bread, fruit

Dendo- Bread, brownies

Tenryu- Toilet paper

Susan Gresens- oranges



We also want to offer a special thank you to Sonnie for doing such a wonderful job clearing the snow this past Winter. Sonnie has been instrumental in keeping the driveway and walkways clear of snow and ice.



We send a special thank you to all of you who participated in the garden this past year. Even into February the garden has been giving us delicious kale. This kale is wonderful sautéed in olive oil and added to any kind of pasta with a little garlic and parmesan cheese. It has ten times the nutrition of spinach. Being out in the Winter's cold forces sugar into its leaves giving it an especially sweet taste.

Upcoming Events

***1/2 Day of Mindfulness, March 6th
1pm-4pm .***

Full Day of Mindfulness, March 7th

***Abbess Dai-En Bennage Returns on
March 11th and will be with us for our
March Sesshin.***

***Alexander Technique, March 18th
Rev. Jisen Coghlan returns this month to
do a second class Thursday evening
from 7PM - 8:30PM.***

daishin@mtequity.org

Suggested donation is \$8.

***31st Anniversary Sesshin, March
19th-21st***

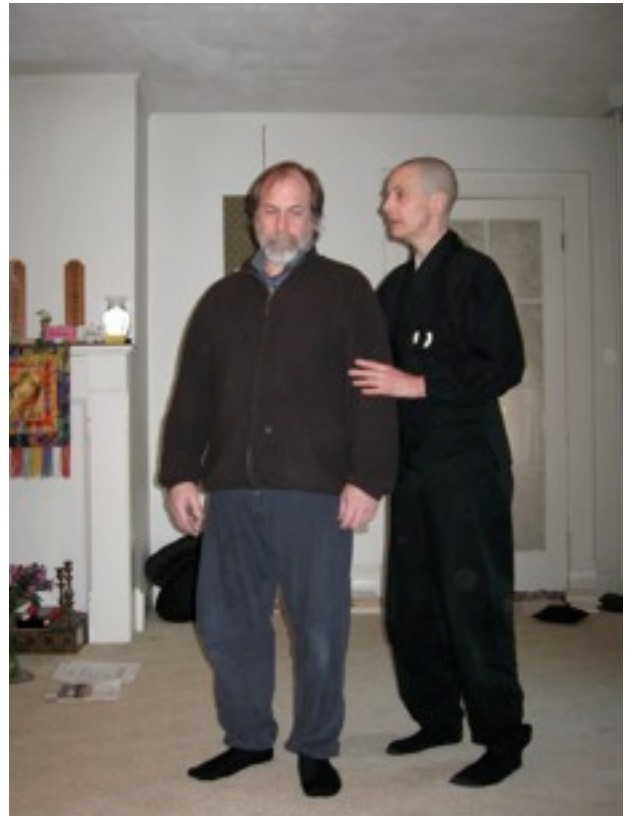
***Pot Luck Lunch- Gardening Party
March 27th, 10-3 (come for any or all).***

To register for these events visit:

www.mtequity.org/register.php

After 90 days of training novice priests at Yokoji Zen Mountain Center through a very bracing Winter, Abbess Dai-En will be taking advantage of her frequent flyer miles. She'll be visiting her long time Belgian friend in Tucson, Arizona from the 25th through the 29th of March, and then be flying to Kona, Hawaii to spend time at Daifukuji Temple with Jiko Nakade Sensei and Rev. Teiho Wagner from the 29th of March until the 2nd of April. She will then fly on to Tokyo, Japan with plans to attend the NiSodo's entrance ceremony and to encourage her Dharma Sister, Daitei. Daitei will be entering the NiSodo for 3 years of training. She hopes also to attend this ceremony with Rev. Yuko Wakayama, an old time resident of MEZ. She'll be returning on the 12th of April.

Abbess Dai-En looks forward to seeing everyone upon her return from Yokoji on the 11th of March and sends her love to all.



Rev. Jisen working with Dokai on the Alexander Technique.