



The Journal  
of the  
Order of Buddhist  
Contemplatives

*Serving Members and Friends  
of the Order Worldwide*

---

Volume 30, Number 2  
2558 B.E. (Summer 2015)  
ISSN 0891-1177

---

Copyright © 2015 Order of Buddhist Contemplatives  
All rights reserved



*Altar outside the new premises of Sitting Buddha  
Hermitage ([see full photo](#))*

Summer 2015 issue:

*Editor:* Rev. Alina Burgess

*Assistant Editor:* Rev. Berwyn Watson

*Journal Assistant USA:* Rev. Master Scholastica Hicks

*Production:* Rev. Berwyn Watson

*Proofreading help:* Eldridge Bultjens, Chris Hughes,  
Deb Smith, Rev. Daigen Weir, Sarah Whiteside

# CONTENTS

## Bowing

*Rev. Master Myōhō Harris* 5

## Renounce the World When Young

*Rev. Master Oswin Hollenbeck* 26

## (Re)Born into Buddhism

*Rev. Valora Midtdal* 29

## Seeking a True Refuge

*Rev. Vera Giordano* 34

## Training is the Heart of Training; The Heart of Training is the Heart

*Rev. Allard Kieres* 38

## News:

Europe 50

The Americas 64

Temples of the Order 78

Further information 81



*Parinirvana scroll found by Rev. Master Jiyu under the altar of her temple in Japan ([see Shasta news](#))*

# Bowing

Rev. Master Myōhō Harris

—*The Place of Peace Dharma House, Aberystwyth—Wales—*

*This is an assorted collection of reflections on the spirit and essence of Bowing.*

THE SCRIPTURES TELL US THAT WHEN THERE IS NO MORE BOWING there will be no more Buddhism. That statement makes plain how significant the heart and spirit of bowing is. Bowing may begin with a physical gesture but it certainly does not end there. Whilst we have life in us the meaning of bowing never ends; as dye permeates cloth so it fans out and changes, or reclaims, every part of us. We soon come to see that bowing continues even when there is no physical movement. And still it is good to make that movement.

When given meditation instruction the first thing we are shown is how to bow. We bow when we enter the meditation hall, bow to our seat then turn and bow to the room before sitting down to meditate.

**BOWING:** as we enter the room in which we sit.

The physical meditation hall is an external expression of the womb of the Tathagata, the hara, our internal sitting place. It is with us wherever we go. There is never a time (whether we know it or not) when we are not sitting within it. Bowing

acknowledges the preciousness of this place and it expresses our wish to knowingly enter it fully, in body, speech and mind.

BOWING: to our sitting place.

We offer ourselves. The place where we sit is nowhere other than within this body and this mind. The human realm is our training ground and the life we have is the specific set of circumstances that we have been given to work with. Bowing says please help me, please teach me, I am here and I am willing to look at anything, address anything and to be changed by this practice in any way that is good and in harmony with universal Truth. Bowing says, what is asked of me? How do I fulfil the potential of this life? It also expresses a total and unreserved giving of ourselves, we entrust ourselves to that which flows, we come as one who wishes to see clearly, to be taught by and to serve the Master in the Heart. It says 'I am here to listen'. It says, 'I am yours.'

BOWING: outwards to the room.

Only we can move our own feet, only we can resolve our karma and this is done within the context of living and training with others. We recognise the true wish of all who are present and show gratitude that there are others of like mind with whom we can practice. Our bow acknowledges that this world is a giant melting pot of karma where cause and effect is working itself out in endlessly different ways. Also acknowledged is that it is through our daily

interchanges with others that things we find difficult to look at may arise, and our bow says we are willing to train with and be taught by those circumstances; more than that, we actually *ask* life to teach us.

We are also bowing to the room, the place that gives us shelter whilst we meditate. Bricks and mortar, carpet and furniture are Buddha Nature too and a building can ‘know’ that it is being used as a place of retreat; that it responds with generosity of spirit is deeply touching. This bow helps us to take nothing for granted and to sense how all things sit with us and will help us along the way.

We then turn to face the wall and sit.

FULL BOWS: As done at Morning Service.

This is when we kneel and touch our foreheads to the ground then, with flat (not half closed) open palms, facing upwards, we lift our hands above our heads. As a postulant I was told that we are raising the Buddha's feet above our heads, an image that has stayed with me. We put the Truth above thoughts, feelings and emotions, we put the heart (the living Dharma) above the head (conditioned thought processes). We are saying I will value the clarity of true insight (the light that separates the murky from the pure)<sup>1</sup> above intellectual pondering and emotional reactions that come from, and entangle me more deeply in, painful confusion. This bow says, ‘I will seek for the Truth in all that I do.’

Buddhism is the path of awakening and, with this bow, we express our wish to fulfil that potential, and our willingness to do the work of training that will enable this to

happen. When we are going to act in harmful ways, our feelings can be very strong. If we bow to them there is a relaxed inner strength rather than tension. I see you (the arising of confusion), I acknowledge you and I respectfully decline to act upon you. There is no fight. We tame rather than suppress, face rather than avoid, transform rather than destroy our stubborn karma and old mental habit patterns. As Shakyamuni said, “Oh house builder of the house of ego, thou art seen and thou shalt build no more”. With this bow we ‘hold up’ (or offer) all that remains unconverted within us, that it may encounter the light of Truth so that we may see clearly how to help ourselves.

At Jukai we are asked, “Is it your wish to be a Buddhist?” the ordinand replies, “It is”. With these bows, and with every bow, we are reaffirming that wish each day.

---

It is a literal Truth that when there is no more bowing there is no more Buddhism. In bowing we ask to have our eyes opened and this unrestricted giving and opening up of oneself to the Master in the Heart is the seeking of the way forward and an acknowledgement of the source of the teaching. This can also be described as taking Refuge in Buddha (meditation). It invites and enables the calling forth, the path of awakening, to open up. When we ask for help, and offer ourselves to be taught, what flows back to us, with such tenderness and generosity of spirit, is guidance and insight in how to live our life, how to respond to what life brings, how to awaken.



From Refuge in Buddha, the source of enlightened insight, comes the activity of meditation within the everyday thoughts speech and actions of one who is training themselves in the path of awakening. Bowing in daily life can be described as ‘Buddha recognises Buddha and Buddha bows to Buddha’ in ordinary daily interchanges. We bow to the formless stream of meditation and the spirit and essence of that bowing is then shown within how we live our life. Thus our transient human body becomes the embodiment of the ‘always becoming Buddha’ as each of us seeks to serve the other (animate or inanimate) and make all a success, each in their own way.

Bowing unites body and mind, self and other, form and formless, in a very deep way that is “far beyond all common consciousness, beyond all thinking”.<sup>2</sup> When someone puts their hands together and, with sincerity and humility, bows, they are returning body and mind unto the source of all existence. This may not be immediately obvious but it is true. What begins as a ceremonial form or as temple etiquette fans out into every aspect of our lives. Rather than being something we ‘do’, bowing becomes what we are and opens up a vista of opportunities that enable training to deepen and a life to be transformed, as our individual life becomes all life. For this to be possible we need to be open to the ever flowing incoming Buddha. When everything has been stripped away and we stand in that Great Unknown, there is only the Master in the Heart, the Source of existence, the Truth endlessly manifesting; the living flow that we call meditation. It is to this that we bow. Taking Refuge in IT, in

all Its forms, must come first and it must remain so, if we are to fulfil our reason for training.

**BOWING:** as paying homage.

We pay homage to the Buddha by the way in which we live our life; how we treat and regard all that surrounds us and by the way we in which view ourselves. Trusting the meditation and trusting oneself I have found to be one and the same. The human will, or ability to choose, becomes as a child turning to its parent. That turning within (which is also a form of bowing) brings about a meeting in the heart and from that meeting love (or great purity, Truth...I do not know the word) comes forth. Recognising and becoming the living expression of that Truth is to take Refuge in the Dharma. Through this we unselfconsciously, naturally, become Dharma, as our everyday thoughts speech and actions pay homage to the Buddha. Surely this has to be the purpose of the human Sangha in our world.

**RESISTANCE TO BOWING:**

Perhaps you resent being asked to bow at a meditation event because you cannot understand why you should to do it. Maybe it feels like a strange unfamiliar action, something that is done in the East but which appears to have little relevance in our day and age.

If bowing seems like an alien gesture that makes you feel uncomfortable, yet you still want to practice Buddhism, you may find it helpful to try it at home, when you are on

your own and unobserved. In a quiet room, with no distractions, put your whole being into the bow, really give yourself to it and see what arises in your mind; can you understand why you do not want to bow? Within the resistance to bowing lies the next step in your training, which is being highlighted by those uncomfortable or resentful feelings. If you can be open to, and train with them, they will offer you a valuable insight into how you can help yourself in a wise and meaningful way.

Bowing will always make some of us feel uncomfortable or resentful because, like all forms of ceremonial, it calls forth the koan (the area of inner confusion and pain that we cannot understand and which still influences our actions). We do not always appreciate being reminded of our unresolved issues and can resent being disturbed by the Truth of what lies within us, but if we are able to welcome that disturbance, then we find we can learn much from it that will improve the quality of our life.

Perhaps your exploratory bow will reveal an inner connection to a deeper awareness that had previously evaded you and bowing will begin to make sense. Even if it does not, even if you still resent bowing, you are faced with an opportunity in the form of a feeling and a choice. Training is not based upon the transient world of like and dislike; I feel like doing it so I will, I don't feel like doing it so I won't. This way of thinking anchors us to, and continues, the world of suffering. Training is based upon something deeper than feelings. It is based upon the call in our hearts to come forth and receive the gift of Truth, and the Serene Reflection practice is there to help us find that inner freedom and joy.

Sooner or later we see that bowing is an entering into; it is not an act of subjugation. With each bow we recognise our own potential. It is an offering, an opening up, of ourselves that makes possible a receiving of Dharma, of teaching. It expresses a willingness to be changed by the power of Truth that leads us to freedom, the freedom of not being bound by inaccurate perception and confused thinking.

This freedom can also be called humility. Humility here means purity, it comes from knowing what we are and living from that inherent completeness, which can also be called our original purity. What prevents us from living from that pure place? The training will help us to understand and resolve those issues and this cannot be done without bowing.

What began as being hard-going gradually becomes our natural way of being; it is what we want to do. Bowing is a voluntary act, an act of devotion, of offering, done for no practical purpose other than the giving and opening up of ourselves, which is what makes it so precious and so bountiful.

It is understandable that some who are new to practice may think that bowing and the respectful behaviour that flows from it are repressive or that people are being asked to behave in a submissive manner, but this is not so. Bowing is the very essence of spiritual adulthood, adequacy and inner freedom. Just as we cannot have self-centred activity and enlightened action at the same time so one cannot be a spiritual adult unless one can bow and appreciate the spirit of bowing, in all its forms; there is never a time when this is not so. Bowing is not there to repress us but to make clear the great way of the Buddha's and Ancestors.

A PITFALL: trying to fill a need.

Maybe you want to be the one who is bowed to. This is as much of a problem area as not wanting to bow. Needing to be important, the one who is in charge, in control and who is respected. If we look into this then, like any area of confusion, it contains insights that will help to resolve inner distress. My experience has been that we grasp at self-identification and the need for recognition for a reason and there is usually much grief and fear behind it. Whilst we need recognition of our worth, we are still suffering and remain vulnerable; this is because we doubt our inherent worth, our completeness. When we bow to our unresolved painful issues, by returning them unto the heart of stillness, what flows back to us is a response that is filled with tenderness and love, a love that melts the fear and sense of aloneness that gave birth to that confusion. Bowing turns the gaze gently within and we see how behaviour (desire for respect) that once filled a need within us, a need fuelled by unresolved sorrow, has become as a thief in the night that robs us of knowing that inner purity.<sup>3</sup>

Whilst we act upon desire for praise, fear of criticism or wanting to get something for ourselves, our actions are not pure and the physical fabric of our bodies is distressed because we are looking in the wrong direction, trying to satisfy an inner need by external means. Bowing (in the form of offering our thought processes) helps us to free ourselves from choices that cause us distress by highlighting them.

By 'not pure' I mean that we are still governed by inner confusion. Bowing to our suffering (in whatever form it

takes) enables it to open up and reveal its secrets. Bowing, standing up straight and humility are one and the same. The heart of bowing (please teach me, please help me with this) receives those insights and from them comes a clarity of understanding that dissolves the clouds of doubt and fear that have saddened us for so long, revealing the vastness and freedom that was always there, waiting for us to be able to see it.

**BOWING IS NOT RESTRICTED TO ANY ONE FORM:**

**GIVING:** Bowing is giving and receiving at the same time; it is one action with two aspects.

We give our life back to its source so that we can fulfil our purpose on this planet. We give by being willing to undergo the training that will enable us to be one who can receive what flows towards us from within that deep mystery. We give our bodies and minds so that the incoming Buddha can have form and voice in this world. We give through living a life of faith, through our unrestricted willingness to be taught by universal Truth. We give by being willing to resolve our karma, no matter how long it takes or how much it asks of us. We give by never turning away, by keeping training, no matter what happens. We give by being willing to blossom, willing to be all that we can be. These are all aspects of bowing.

## RECEIVING:

Bowing prepares the mind to receive; when we bow we open (give) ourselves to the great mystery of life, and as our offering flows out, so much flows in. As we inhale oxygen that maintains our physical life so a quality of being enters into us on the spiritual breath. In recent years I have come to see how important the aspect of receiving is. Everything we need is there within us from the start; some of it confuses us, some frightens us, some things remain hidden and unknown to us for many years. We have no more Buddha Nature after three decades of training than we did on day one, what changes is our ability to sit still and receive the Truth of what it is we are; to receive the unfolding of karma and the unfolding of the Buddha's teaching, knowing that both are Dharma; allowing whatever may need to reveal itself to enter our mind and welcoming it, is a form of bowing.

THE SILENT PARTNER: “form is only pure, pure is all form.”<sup>4</sup>

We should not forget our flesh and blood body in all of this. If mind is the forerunner of all activity then the physical body is its silent partner. The scriptures say that we must make the teaching our blood bones and marrow. I used to think that this meant we had to really, really understand things, now I know that there is more to it. When the spirit of bowing permeates our life, spirit and matter merge as one. This enables our ordinary human body and mind to undergo a

spiritual change or transformation. The body is limited by a certain lifespan, it needs food and water and will die if conditions are too hot or too cold. The eternal vastness of meditation, which is the true essence of both our body and mind, is not dependent upon anything, which is why it is the Refuge. Buddhism shows us how to accept our ordinary humanity, with its attendant limitations (another aspect of bowing). When we bow to the Truth the Truth enters into us and the silent partner is no longer restricted by any limitation. Our physical form will still age and die, we can still get a headache or feel tired, but rather than being a restriction or limitation it becomes part of existence, time, flow.<sup>5</sup>

Understanding that the human form we now have is transient and ever changing inspires us to use our time well by not losing sight of ‘the important thing’. Through many years of dedicated training the space our physical form occupies becomes the Pure Land as our inner organs, and the cells of our body, are freed from the confusion that saddened and weighed them down, and obscured their natural purity. Thus we pay homage by remaining true to our wish and our body fulfils its purpose by becoming the vessel within which conversion and blossoming takes place. It is no longer a karmic body but a body of Truth, of transformation. Through it we are able “to cherish the longing deep”<sup>6</sup> within us; we are able to love and care for this precious being we are, on every level of existence.



## BOWING THROUGH CONTEMPLATION:<sup>7</sup>

Doing nothing, in the right way, is to do a great deal.<sup>8</sup> It is the purest form of contemplation and is an aspect of bowing which offers body and mind in a total, unrestricted way with no thought of personal gain. The physical act of bowing lasts for a few seconds, the heart and life of bowing are ever increasing. With the physical bow we return body and mind unto the source of all existence, and this is exactly what we do when we contemplate. In contemplation all the transient, impermanent aspects of our individuality (preferences, personality, gender, opinions) fade within our original purity as we entrust ourselves to that inner abiding, for no reason other than that we want to, because it is the most natural of activities; it is where we belong.

**BOWING:** beginners mind.

It is said that the trainee should keep beginners mind (sometimes expressed as our initial humility) to the end. When we came to training we knew we needed help, as time goes on that knowing increases and it becomes easier and easier to not fill that space with our own thoughts and opinions. Nothing we create or imagine can ever match what meditation brings, it just gets in the way. Bowing helps us to not get stuck with what we think we know. The highest Precept is always the Dharma of this moment and bowing keeps us open and fully receptive to that inflowing teaching. It tunes our ability to hear the more subtle promptings and increases our trust in all that meditation offers.

---

EXTRACTS FROM A PERSONAL JOURNAL: The tender human aspect of bowing.

Bowing through and as the daily activities of a contemplative life:

When I first came to The Place of Peace my one thought was to take Refuge, to live from the refuge at all times, that everything I do would be done in the same way from the same source. Only the externals would change. I would (still do) regularly contemplate, giving myself to that abiding. This may be done walking by the sea, or relaxing in an armchair. What does life ask of me? Am I responding fully? Asked not in words but by the giving of myself (which is the spirit of bowing) to contemplative reflection. Releasing myself into that vast living stillness, turning to the Master in the Heart. I am yours. A longing to do the work of this lifetime, to make full use of all that has been given, to follow my Master all the way. It opened up a quality of being wherein I sense the true monk lies. Kind eyes rest upon me and I am as a traveller walking into an unknown...and yet it is known in the depths of my being. I feel that this 'non-being' and the contentment that accompanies it, is the heart of the temple. IT responds to needs, manifests as required by circumstances whilst having no fixed form. Perhaps I would call it the tender, human aspect of bowing. When there is no more bowing there is no more Buddhism. Bowing is the always becoming, and that always becoming is the fruition

of life in this moment and this moment and this moment and I feel it is the fulfilment of my vows. Reverend Master Jiyu told us to “hold out your faith for others to see.” I am filled with deep ease as this great mystery moves through me and this ordinary body and mind gives It form and voice. It is hard to put into words, and all the time I am learning, but I feel it is what I am meant to be doing here. Every day is different, and every day is the same as this tiny new being who I call me bows and listens, asking to be taught.

#### GIFTS OF GRACE:

There is so much more to Buddhist training than just dealing with suffering. One of the invocations says, “Our birthright to restore”.<sup>9</sup> Through bowing we surrender, allowing that which was closed to open up; we empty ourselves out, so that a new and better way of being, of living, can flow in. When bowing permeates to our core, the quality of our breathing changes. A stillness that has lightness and life (the life that is increasing in brilliance) settles within us, infusing our being. This quietens us, and draws us deeper into Its great mystery; we realise how small and temporary we are, how profound and generous is the help we receive. If we do our absolute best the meditation will do the rest. When we are not tampering with our mind, asking...forcing it, to go against its source, it soaks in this new living stillness, this expansiveness of being. We feel our senses merge within a completeness so exquisite that our only thought is to bow in gratitude and service. As life-giving oxygen is carried around our body through the lungs so the spiritual breath of

meditation permeates our entirety with the life of the great mystery. It changes us from within. Our commitment, our wish to serve the Truth of existence, deepens, the wish to let go and be absorbed into It fills us. This letting go is a joy, a setting free, an entering into life on a deeper level. At this point it is not a struggle, there is no resistance or uncertainty, just a YES. A giving of oneself that is a leap beyond all that is our consciously known world. The mind we once had becomes as an old coat that no longer fits or as a skin that sheds itself, quietly falling away, graciously knowing that its time is over.

BOWING TO LIFE: comes in many different ways.

Beginning the day with a bow.

If you have no time for morning meditation, if your day is filled with activity yet you take a quiet moment (maybe in the bathroom if privacy is in short supply) to put your hands together, palm to palm, feet firmly set upon the ground, and you say, with reverence and sincerity, “I come for Refuge”, then bow with all your being, you are paying homage to Buddha. You are inviting the path to open up before you, you are entrusting yourself to the Great Mystery, the Master in the Heart, and asking to be taught. Bowing like this is a ceremony and a meditation period rolled into one. A sincere bow can change a person’s life.

STANDING UP STRAIGHT: bowing to error.

When we have done something regrettable, rather than hiding behind excuses or self-judgement, we can ‘stand up straight in the presence of the Buddha’s and Ancestors’, which is another form of bowing, and say, “I did this, I am sorry, what can I learn from it, how can I understand myself more fully and, through that understanding, make my life better?” In standing up straight there will be no judgement. From within the great mystery, there is no condemnation, just helpful insight and an opening up of the way forward.

BOWING IS SEEKING THE WAY FORWARD: enabling life to teach us.

As young monks at Shasta Abbey we were encouraged to take everything that happens to us as being for our own good. At first I found this hard to understand because some things in life had caused me pain and distress. I had felt betrayed by the actions of others. What was good about that? When I cannot understand something, rather than dismiss it as being wrong, I just let it ‘be’, resting within my mind, and come back to it from time to time. How successfully we respond to situations is dependent upon our ability to bow to them. If I allow every situation to teach me then, no matter whether I see something as enjoyable, indifferent or very difficult, the way forward is always presenting itself; I just need to be able to see what life is asking of me in that situation, what opportunity is presenting itself. This is how it is good for me;

the Truth is always revealing Itself and so life is always teaching us.

Bowing to a situation, be it internal (as in troubled feelings) or external, enables us to 'enter into it', to see below the surface appearance of circumstances and emotions, and, eventually, to the very root of the matter. This is because we seek the truth. Rather than escape or avoidance we are looking for genuine understanding, and so there is no conflict. All conditions are working towards a common goal. This brings a freedom of inner movement and sense of purpose. Even if it is just 'sit still with this, be patient' we know our spiritual journey continues and no matter what feelings may be coursing through us, or how much work remains to be done, the way forward is wide open.

Sometimes we may feel stuck or that we are going in circles and do not know what to do. Perhaps we are afraid to look within, cannot keep our mind from wandering or just feel lost. Doing sets of three or six full bows two or three times a day, as we can manage, will be invaluable, especially if you feel unable to sit in formal meditation. Through these bows we are actively seeking the way forward, which demonstrates trust, faith and willingness. Bowing steadies us and gives clear direction and reassurance to all the confusion within us as our distress mingles with the ever present light of Truth. By bowing we are placing ourselves within that light. There is something very innocent and noble about saying "I don't know which way is up right now, but I know that if I bow, help will come." If I continue, patiently, day by day, then the way forward will beckon to me because I am

beckoning to it. One calls and one answers. Our bows say, ‘I need help and I am ready to listen’.

---

When we put our hands together and bow, the bending forward of the torso is a returning, the flowing of all that we are—flesh bones and marrow, thoughts and feelings, karmic history (all the conditions that have gone into making us the being we are)—unto to the great formless mystery of life, to the place from whence it came. When I complete the bow by raising my torso to the standing position, the formless is seen within and as the shape of a human being. Many conditions have come together to create the temporary form and figure we now have. These conditions are constantly changing. Training shows us how to work within the transient nature of a human life so that we can find the Truth of what it is we are, and in finding become that Truth.

How we bow shows our understanding of Buddhism and what it is that we are doing when we train. It is an act of devotion, of love and reverence, of offering all that we are, of recognising what we are; it is the most natural expression of gratitude and respect. Bowing is ceaseless practice. It is a giving and receiving as the truth of meditation enters into us and we enter into that truth. We bow publicly, as part of ceremonial, yet it is always, at heart, a private and intimate act. Through and within the essence of bowing we are constantly renewing our vow to live the Buddhist life. The scriptures say to “kindle light in the blessed country, ever close at hand”<sup>10</sup>...that land is the hara, the womb of the

Tathagata, wherein the heart of a bow merges with our humanity as Buddha recognises Buddha and there is nothing left to call either self or other.

At night I stand alone before the altar here at The Place of Peace and bow, quietly, gladly, offering myself to That Which Is; I am yours. There is tenderness to this; it is a beautiful thing to do. The walls of this little meditation hall fall away, as the limited reveals the limitless and the great mystery of life opens up. I feel so small, so new, so blessed. Bowing says thank you, it says 'Yes'. Barriers fall away, differences merge within the eternal heartbeat of IT. I do not know where I am going, just that I am in safe hands, willing and wanting to be called forth. A living stillness settles and infuses my being. This tiny little person knows she is but a novice in this vast and wondrous unknown....and bows.

*Notes.*

1. *The Scripture of Great Wisdom, The Litany of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives for the Laity*, (Shasta Abbey Press, 1990) p.73. This Scripture is part of our daily morning service.
2. *The Most Excellent Mirror Samadhi, The Litany of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives for the Laity*, (Shasta Abbey Press, 1990) p.61. (Also part of our daily morning service.)
3. For some of us, the need for recognition of our worth from our fellow humans will be one of the steps along the way. This is not a fault any more than it is a place to stay. It is part of what makes the 'going on' possible and I would like to say more about this in a future article.
4. From *The Scripture of Great Wisdom, The Liturgy of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives for the Laity*, (Shasta Abbey Press, 1990) p.73.
5. You can read more about 'Existence Time Flow' in the *Uji* section of *Zen is Eternal Life*, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed (Mt. Shasta, CA: Shasta Abbey Press, 1987) p. 198.



6. *The Scripture of Avalokiteshwara, The Liturgy of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives for the Laity* (Shasta Abbey Press, 1990) p.48. This Scripture is sung in our daily services.
7. Contemplation is a Refuge taking activity that is as a bridge between meditation and daily life. I have written about it in detail in two previous Journal articles, *Contemplation and the Mind that Seeks the Way*, Part 1 (Summer issue 2009) and Part 2. (Winter issue 2009/2010). These are on our website, should anyone wish to read them. <http://www.placeofpeacewales.org/>
8. If anyone finds this confusing please contact me directly, I shall be pleased to hear from you.
9. This is a line from a Wesak invocation, *Awake, all Buddhist people, The Liturgy of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives for the Laity*, (Shasta Abbey Press, 1990) p. 239.
10. Reverend Master Jiyu-Kennett, *How To Grow a Lotus Blossom* 1<sup>st</sup> Ed. (Mt. Shasta, CA: Shasta Abbey Press, 1977) p. 232.

# Renounce the World When Young

## Renunciation Stories from Shasta Abbey Novices: Introduction

Rev. Master Oswin Hollenbeck

—*Shasta Abbey, CA–USA*—

A SIGNIFICANT EVENT IN THE LIFE STORY OF THE BUDDHA IS HIS renunciation of ‘the world.’ On one level this refers to renouncing his family and kingdom; on another level it means turning away from one’s karmic inheritance and committing oneself to the search for Truth. The catalyst for Shakyamuni was the sight of a mendicant, a wandering renunciate, who was the last of the Four Guardian Kings in disguise. His earlier encounters with the other three ‘divine messengers’—old age, disease, and death—had primed him for this momentous and dramatic meeting. Seeing a renunciate sparked in him the fire-seed of compassion and knowledge that there is a way to resolve the suffering—our own, that of those we love, and by extension that of all beings.

I seem to remember the words of the title of this article being spoken by some great Buddhist master encouraging people to renounce the world—enter monastic life—while they are still young. Not only does one have more years of one’s life to give and train in this way, it can also be easier

to relinquish habits, views, opinions, and ideas more readily. A core principle of serene reflection meditation found within the formal meditation itself is letting go of craving, attachment, and aversion. This is essential, whether we practice as monk or lay, young or old, ‘brightly alive or dying.’ I think it is simply human nature that as we age, it feels more comfortable and secure to rely on and cling to our many years of reinforcement and habit. Therefore, regardless of our circumstances, are we not blessed with the Buddha’s teaching on impermanence and non-attachment? It may be a struggle, but what else is worth doing?

I was inspired to assemble these stories after reading a similar published collection from young Buddhists. In the book I was impressed by the sincerity in every account of how these young people had encountered the Dharma and began to practice the Buddha Way. Some were monks, others were lay people; what they had in common was the motivation to engage in practice. In the Mahayana branch of Buddhism we sometimes call that *Bodhichitta*, the aspiration to train for the benefit of all beings.

So I thought, why not let this new generation of OBC monks at Shasta Abbey—those on the younger side (near 30)—tell their stories? Why not let these ‘millennials’ be seen or heard and perhaps be the ‘divine messenger’ for someone else in turn? In response to my request three agreed. I am grateful to them for their articles (which follow) and to their respective Masters who blessed this endeavor.



*The five novices at Shasta in 2014, Rev. Valora, Rev. Trahearn, Rev. Vera, Rev Dilys and Rev. Allard (Rev. Valora has since become a Transmitted disciple of Rev. Master Meian)*

## (Re)Born into Buddhism

Rev. Valora Midtdal

—*Shasta Abbey, CA–USA*—

IN DECEMBER [2013] I CELEBRATED THREE YEARS AS A MONK. Knowing a little about my life, you might think the road to monasticism was pretty straightforward. 1.) Born into a Buddhist family. 2.) Raised at a local Priory. 3.) Throw in a little suffering and *voilà*, the arising of monastic aspiration. True on all accounts, but the road to becoming a monk was not as straightforward as it might seem. It took many years, a moment of great desperation, and a trip to Shasta Abbey to drag me out of a thick fog into the arms of something much greater.

Growing up, the place of Buddhism in our lives was very strong. There were always statues of the Buddha or Kanzeon around the house. My mother and sister meditated regularly, and as a family, we always said the ‘five thoughts’ together. It was common to have Sangha gatherings at our house and when travelling priests would come to Vancouver for retreats, they would often stay with us. In 1986 when Rev. Master Kōten moved to Vancouver and started Lions Gate Buddhist Priory, I began regularly attending the Priory with my mother on Sundays. As a child, I remember very strongly wanting to go to the Priory. My mother always gave us a choice though, (as to whether we wanted to come to the Priory) we were never required to attend. On Sundays after

morning service, my sister and I would do the Jizo ceremony. We would recite the following prayer: “Oh Lord Buddha, we pray that all that may perish throughout the day as a result of our breathing, walking, sitting, and lying down may be reborn to a higher life so that all may reach Nirvana”. Walking to the bus each morning, my sister and I would regularly stop and move aside snails and other creatures that might be crushed by pedestrians. I often couldn’t understand the Dharma talks given at the Priory, but the seed of Jizo’s prayer had nevertheless been planted.

Buddhism played an important role in my life as a child, and at the same time, for the most part life at home was chaotic. I was an extremely sad and angry child. I fought often with my siblings. My father drank heavily and was abusive. I learned very quickly how to anesthetize myself from the deep suffering I was experiencing. Distraction in any form, namely television, books and food became my means of coping. While I was turning outward to deal with my pain, my sisters and mother turned towards Buddhism in search of answers. I could see my family members working diligently on their training, and yet as I grew older I drifted further away from the Priory. By my teenage years, the fog of despair was deeply entrenched and would not shift even slightly until the age of 24.

The summer of 2004, I found myself in Portugal with my best friend. Things were not going well at all. At my very lowest moment, in complete despair, sobbing uncontrollably in a hotel room in Lisbon, it occurred to me that there had to be more to life than just this suffering. I knew there had to be something greater, another way. Reflecting back on this,

it was a pivotal moment in my life. I can see now that this moment was the conversion of the heart, the turning towards a true refuge. The key factor here was that I had to come to this decision on my own, I had to turn towards this greater refuge by myself. When I returned to Vancouver, I asked to take the Precepts and was given them in November of that year at Lions Gate Buddhist Priory.

After taking the Precepts, many good things started happening in my life. I received my teaching credentials and got a job almost immediately at a French school. Things were going much better in my life. I was living on my own, I had a good job and a measure of stability, and yet underneath it all the unsatisfactoriness remained.

The summer of 2006, my mother asked if I'd like to go Shasta Abbey for a short visit. I agreed rather apprehensively to attend a young adult's retreat. After a two day trip to the monastery, I was struck by how kind and welcoming everyone was. During the course of the retreat, during a Dharma discussion, I noticed myself sitting up much straighter in the presence of one monk in particular. Her words poked at something deep within. A peculiar thing happened. I went from being a brand new convert to recognizing almost immediately that I wanted to train with one of the monks. I came back to the Abbey two more times that year, and by November I had become a lay disciple. From that point on, I could see a real purpose in my life, the cultivation of my religious aspiration and practice. The desire to train in a formal setting was so strong that each summer I had off from teaching, I spent increasing amounts of time at the monastery. Over the course of several

summers, it became quite apparent that the place I really wanted to be was the Abbey.

Back at work teaching during the 2007-2008 school year, I thought a lot about the monastery. I enjoyed teaching, especially working closely with my students, but I kept having this strong sense that my life still wasn't what I wanted it to be. Practicing the Dharma, keeping to the Precepts as best I could, and meditating when possible (even if it was just five minutes) were all helping me; however, I slept so poorly so often that when I'd get home from work, I'd nap for several hours at a time and the entire evening would be gone. Though the aspiration was there, I was not devoting the time I wanted to my practice, and I was feeling the effects of it.

That year, all year long, I looked forward to the practice period I planned for the following summer at the monastery. Upon my return to the Abbey, I admitted to myself that what I really wanted to do with the rest of my life was to become a monk. It was both a difficult decision and an obvious one for me, one I cried a lot over. The decision seemed like such a frightening one for me because it meant giving up my family, my country, essentially everything. Growing up in an abusive situation had left me with a tremendous amount of fear and a kind of inertia born out of despair—a difficulty making and enacting decisions. Being around the monks, especially my teacher, helped me to see that by giving up 'everything', we gain something much greater. The proof was before my very eyes.

Twenty-nine years of sadness and despair in my life showed me over and over that I needed to look deeper for an



answer to my suffering. In truth, this was Great Compassion. Looking outwards for answers could never bring me the peace of heart I longed for. My life is proof that you can come through hard times if you are truly willing to look at yourself. For me, it was only by taking the medicine of the Dharma and a willingness to do something about myself that a path out of despair was found. Nobody could do this for me. When you are in the midst of despair, it can seem endless, that there is no way out. Suffering doesn't disappear overnight, it is something that continues to arise and pass in my life. However, I can honestly say that I have found more peace now, through the Dharma, than at any other time in my life.

On December 28<sup>th</sup>, 2010 I was ordained into the Buddhist priesthood by Rev. Master Meian. I am grateful for every day I have as a monk.

# Seeking a True Refuge

Rev. Vera Giordano

—*Shasta Abbey, CA–USA*—

WHEN I WAS A YOUNG ADULT, I HAD NO IDEA HOW TO LIVE MY life and came upon the idea that helping other people could give my life meaning. After college, I went to Ghana for a year to do volunteer work. My approach of helping other people did not go well at all, because I was using other people to give my life meaning. And, when I couldn't help people in the way I wanted (which was usually the case), I felt that my life had no meaning.

Since childhood, I had had an aspiration not to look good from the outside, but to really be good inside—an aspiration that had become twisted into a desire to be perfect. My life seemed fine from the outside; I was doing well in the graduate social work program I was attending, and I had lots of friends. But while I wanted to be compassionate, instead I found myself being selfish, angry, and judgmental. I had no idea either how to deal with the discrepancy between how I was and how I wanted to be, or how to cultivate the qualities I wanted to have. I fell into self-hatred and despair.

I got into a romantic relationship, thinking that even though I hated myself, maybe I could be okay if my girlfriend loved me. My girlfriend did love me; but when I tried to fill the emptiness inside me with her love, the emptiness just got bigger. I knew it wasn't good to be in this

relationship, since I was using my girlfriend to try to make myself happy. Eventually, I broke up with her and then was filled with guilt about the pain I had caused her.

Still at a loss about how to live, it seemed to me that life was constant suffering with no purpose, and jumping off a bridge appeared to be the best option. Contemplating this, it occurred to me how selfish I was being, and I realized that I couldn't do that to my family. I made a vow that I would find a way to live my life.

I started seeing a psychotherapist and took an antidepressant for a while; both were helpful up to a point but could not help with my real questions. Then I remembered that, a couple years before, I had read a book about meditation. I thought I would try meditating and soon found a nearby Buddhist center. From the first time I heard the Dharma, I knew it was my path. I started meditating regularly. I began to see how doing my best in each moment had meaning, and how this effort could actually be of benefit to others. I began to realize that what I was looking for could not be found in anything external and was already within myself. I began to see that there was something underneath the thoughts and feelings that had seemed so real and all-consuming. At the same time, my practice was more of a self-help program in a way, since I chose aspects of training that seemed helpful and turned away from some of the Precepts that would have challenged me too much.

Having finished graduate school, I came to Shasta Abbey and stayed for a year as a lay resident. I started to see how I was approaching training in a self-centered way, and began to embrace the Precepts more deeply. In the few years

since I had begun training, it had gradually become clear that it was my path to be celibate. I started to glimpse how, the more I let go of wanting something from another person, the more I could love them in a pure way. This pure love did not ask the person to be how I thought they should be, but was willing to be still with them however they were.

After my period of lay residency, I knew that I wanted to come back to live at the Abbey. Being attached to my parents and twin sister, I wasn't ready at the time to see the aspiration to be a monk, although it was there. I had to go to work to pay off my student loans. At this point, I could see how confused my initial motivation to do social work had been. A lot of inadequacy was arising about my ability to do this work, along with fear that I would inadvertently do harm. Social work, though, was my only job skill and so really my only option.

I found a job working with a program that houses homeless people. The work was very challenging and gave me the opportunity to face my fear and inadequacy on a daily basis. I did sometimes cause harm (in one instance even the death of one of my clients, which might have been avoided if I had made a different decision). Although the harm I caused was deeply painful, I found that I could work on accepting it and even forgiving myself. When I got out of the way, there was a place within me (which was definitely not me) where compassion flowed and that knew how to respond. It has become clear to me over time that training is the only thing that matters—which doesn't mean that it has been easy. I am often asked to step off into the unknown, with no certainty that there will be any ground beneath my

feet. I spend much of my time being afraid to let go and, yet, when I do, it is clear that there is nothing to be afraid of, and that there is something much deeper than the self to which I cling.

During the time I was working, I came to the Abbey once or twice a year for retreats. During one of these retreats, I was finally ready to see my aspiration to be a monk. It was not a decision that I made; I just knew it was what I had to do. Monastic training is a path through which I can realize my deepest potential as a human being. This path of wholehearted training—for which I am profoundly grateful—is open to all of us, both lay and monastic. I pray that all beings may find a true refuge and quickly realize Buddhahood.

# Training is the Heart of Training; The Heart of Training is the Heart

Rev. Allard Kieres  
—*Shasta Abbey, CA–USA*—

ONCE UPON A TIME, I WAS A JUNIOR IN COLLEGE, SITTING alone in a quiet part of the University of Oregon art library, trying to cram for an up-coming Japanese art history final without much success. I have never been a good student, let alone a studier for tests. I had been trying throughout the term to keep up with the material. But not only did I find it confusing, art history is about memorization; and being a ‘stoner’ did not help my memory.

To complicate matters further, during that spring term, a severely wounded 3 ½ year long relationship with a girl finally died. The prolonged back and forth breakup culminated one evening in a furious screaming crying throwing match between the two of us, where everything we’d ever tried to sweep under the carpet in the previous few years was revealed for the mess it truly was. Although I didn’t realize it at the time, I was really traumatized by this event because I am not a ‘screamy-throwy’ kind of person. Because I also didn’t know anything about true healing, I just drank and smoked away the pain without really looking at it. This had taken place two weeks previous to finals.

So in my sincere and hopeless attempt at studying, I flipped through my flash cards; one side a photocopy of the

art piece, and the back containing the who's and what's. Many of the pieces we were studying in this particular class were Buddhist statues and paintings, because Buddhism and Japanese culture have been intertwined for a good thousand years. And so it happened that I flipped to a picture of a statue called "Miroku, the future Buddha to come": and I *paused*. The first real pause I'd taken in a long time.

The statue is of a person sitting on a seat with one leg resting across the knee of the other, its right hand in a pondering gesture at its chin and the most sublime and subtle smile I have ever seen. It was the smile that shot a vibration through my Heart. It is a smile that knows. It is a smile that holds the 'what happened, is happening, and will happen' with perfect equanimity and love; silently testifying to the Truth that there is something more than just our turbid lives. So without knowing any of this except the simple fact that there was something about that smile, I abandoned all attempts at studying, put on my headphones, set Daft Punk's song 'Heroes' from their Discovery album on repeat, and just sat and stared at that smile believing that yes there *has* to be something more.

I have always considered myself to be a 'Truth seeker'. When I was thirteen or so, my parents divorced, leaving me and my two younger siblings to live with my mom. Since she was more relaxed about rules and bedtimes than dad, I encountered a new life of previously unknown freedom. I discovered drugs about a year later with the start of high school. Not the really hard drugs, which I've never gotten into, but drinking, smoking pot and taking psychedelics; and I entered into my philosophizing years.

During high school I developed strong friendships with a crew of guys who shared my trippy adventures and with whom I pondered the universe. We would talk about chaos theory, fractals, outer space, and everything scientific that felt like it pointed towards some hidden truth or was at least an interesting topic of discussion. Speaking for myself, I yearned to know what was True in a fundamental sense, even though I didn't really comprehend what I was looking for. Why am I here? What is here? What am I? Somehow, for me, there has always been this quiet pulse whispering, 'look deeper, look deeper, look deeper'.

Eventually we all went to the same college where we continued to exercise our minds with philosophy and drugs. At our best the drug use was a vehicle for the exploration of 'just what is this thing we call reality?' But increasingly more often as time went by, it was just to take the edge off. Sometimes I had experiences beyond just tripping out. Both during high school and college, I experienced things that I thought must be True. I felt like I was breaking through into these incredible insights as to what the universe really was, but it would all eventually fade in the mind's fog. I could never maintain any clarity with regard to the nameless puzzle I felt in my Heart or how to address it.

But when I met Miroku in the library—that was the point when things were able to start changing, and the puzzle pieces began to fit together.

After my moment of stillness in the art library, I went to Los Angeles for a summer internship as a production assistant, during which time I began to actively look into Buddhism. Out of that pause had come a strong sense that I



needed to change something in myself, and what came up was to be a more honest and good person. To my amazement, as a result of putting this into practice, I began encountering really interesting coincidences that helped move my life in a positive direction; and two very important things shifted for me that summer.

First, I began to *trust* that there is a flow to this seemingly chaotic unordered world. I opened up to the possibility that the universe was actually trying to get my attention—it was pointing to Buddhism. Second, I *knew* that the universe was cyclical and that karma existed. I learned this because, coincidentally, the apartment I rented just happened to be in the hometown of that girl. So of course, as is natural with someone we've been in a serious long term relationship with, when we found this out, we had to see each other. It was the first time I had seen her since our breakup, and I began to slip backwards toward the abyss; 3 ½ years of habit, confused further with broken love and a good helping of my own lonely neediness, were strongly pulling me towards her. But somehow I saw that I had a choice. Toeing the edge, and looking over that cliff, intending to jump; it hit me like a ton of bricks: this will only lead you to suffering. I was able to walk away and never go back. And *because* I was able to walk away and turn towards the Unknown that I was beginning to hear calling quietly in my Heart, I saw something that I had done to her during our relationship that was cause for much suffering; and I knew that the conditions of our break up were the karmic consequence of my own previous actions coming back at me.

The man I was renting the apartment from was a

spiritual old hippie and was a huge help in encouraging me to go deeper into this flowering new awareness. He lent me the autobiography of the 14th Dalai Lama, and reading this, I felt the same sort of thing I had felt when looking at Miroku's smile. Buddhism was beginning to feel like the way, and I now found that my search had a label: Enlightenment.

On paper these things can make a nice concise story, but this was a long and labored process. Though I was beginning to think about spirituality and the universe in new ways, I was still a drunk, I was still a heart-broken needy boy, and I still caused trouble. So, stagnant with the unknowing of how to proceed, I started my senior year and my insights faded to the backburner: but they didn't disappear.

That October I got a little help when the Universe banged me on the head. Two of my friends and I took an unintentionally strong dose of LSD and I experienced something I was not ready for. Alone, I innocently wandered off away from the house, having entered into some sort of mind state in which I had no discrimination. I drank muddy gritty water out of a sewer gutter and I felt no disgust: it was *just* muddy gritty water.

Turning around from that gutter, I was startled to see a dazzlingly bright white light about ten feet in front of me. As I experienced it, looking into the light felt like looking into awareness. But an awareness unlike anything I had ever dreamed of. It had a radiant, vibrating presence that was not necessarily physical or seen or even felt; though it was, too, all those things, but rather more like being known and

experienced on a level beyond anything I'd ever imagined possible. It was vast and boundless. The feeling of depth it had, along with this incredible 'knowing' that it emanated, made me think for sure—but again not in a calculated or intellectual way—that I was seeing the 'Source of all the Knowledge and Wisdom in the Universe': Enlightenment. It was so profound and precious, I cannot explain how intense and joyous it was to look at it; it felt like being complete. I couldn't believe It. Imagine the joy of being a crazy searching wandering 'puzzle-head' and then *actually* encountering the very thing you've been looking for, which you didn't really know you were looking for or even fully believe existed in the first place. I was compelled to run to it, jump into it, and become one with it. Imagine my confusion and despair when I realized that my sober friends were bandaging my gushing forehead and putting me into an ambulance bound for the hospital and stitches! I had run at full speed and leaped head first into a lamppost in a neighbor's front yard.

The danger and delusion with taking drugs, especially in an effort to investigate reality, I had now finally learned, is that I hadn't done the work. I had not earned the treasure: I was stealing It. What I experienced was so far beyond my untrained context that I just wound up banging my head on It. I thought certainly there has to be a better way to reach Enlightenment. I was finally fed up enough with drugs to open up to the idea that they were not the way to do it; and I never used psychedelics again.

I was deeply changed by this experience and was in total shock. I felt that I had experienced something really

important, but I never talked about it because I thought people were just going to think I was high and crazy. Thankfully though I didn't need to; a seed had been planted that only now can I reflect back upon and see. I knew from then on that Enlightenment was *real*; it wasn't something that people were making up. But what was It? Where had It gone? Why couldn't I get It back? How then does one become enlightened? I needed to learn how to practice.

I eventually got the idea that maybe if I looked closer at Buddhism it might help illuminate my way. For Christmas I had received a \$25 dollar gift card which I took to a book store and bought '*Buddha-Dharma: The Way to Enlightenment*'<sup>1</sup>, and it was exactly what I was looking for. It was the Buddha's teachings, starting with His birth and going all the way through to His death in chronological order. I read this slowly for the next few months.

Then sometime in March of '07, I got to the story where Ananda asked the Buddha if women could be admitted into the Sangha as ordained monks, to which the Buddha replied, "No". I thought, *what!?* The Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Path, meditation: it all made so much sense, it all felt so right! Why would he say no? It was obvious to me that there is no spiritual, universal, fundamental difference between male and female. How could something so biological and earthly have anything to do with the Universal Quest?

But this question was meritorious. It caused me to think that I must be misunderstanding something, and to seek advice. Something so new and bright in me was beginning to take root. I looked up 'Buddhism in Eugene, Oregon' on

the internet and found Eugene Buddhist Priory, which had a Buddhist monk in residence; and I thought, “Ah, maybe this monk can answer my question.” So I emailed the monk who suggested I do an introductory morning at the temple first and then get back in touch with him.

So, having long forgotten that Saturday mornings existed, I attended an 8:45am Intro to Buddhism and practice at the Temple. A lay practitioner gave us meditation instruction and talked about the practice of Sōtō Zen, or ‘Serene Reflection Meditation’. I enjoyed the class, but I was more interested in tea with that monk, which I had later that week. His name was Rev. Master Oswin, and he quietly and politely cut straight through my question about women and the Sangha. He definitely answered it, but I won’t even quote it, because what was really going on was his, unbeknownst to me, addressing of my True question. It is said that a good Zen master looks straight past the student’s spoken question, and the question beneath the question, going straight to the third question that lies beyond the first two which the student doesn’t even know they’re asking. All I know is, whatever he said to me that day worked: because I came back—I immediately became a biweekly regular.

I felt such a strong connection with the practice. I knew it was what I had been looking for. It was like remembering an old friend. But I still had my old habits too, I certainly didn’t drop them overnight. I don’t remember meditating that much at home, but I definitely put whatever stillness I attained at the Priory into my daily life. My natural tendency towards pondering now had a container with which to hold it; in that now I would think about the Dharma talks and try

to understand them; to prove the teachings true for myself. Most importantly, my Heart was saying ‘Yes!’

One Sunday morning at the beginning of June, after a couple of months of practicing at the Priory, a novice monk from Shasta Abbey visited. He had trained for a few years in Eugene at the Priory with Rev. Master Oswin and was back to say hello for the first time since his ordination. He seemed very nice to me and during tea the congregation was asking him questions about his new life as a monk and how he liked it at Shasta Abbey. Someone asked him the very natural question of why he had wanted to become a monk? He said that he couldn’t say why, he just felt it. He knew it was right. When he said that, it was like a bell sounded within my Heart. For the first time in my life I became aware that being a monk was an option. My Heart smiled and very quietly said, ‘Yes. We should become a monk.’

Over the next few years this calling slowly increased as my roots in the Dharma grew stronger—but this meant I had to give up my fast and distracted lifestyle. The important thing to know about my journey from here on was how I learned to let go.

During those years, I spent time living as a layperson at the Monastery in Mt. Shasta, and in Eugene at the Priory, and the peace and purpose I experienced was so fulfilling. Every day my Heart leapt for joy even though I was never really doing anything. Morning meditation, breakfast, working, evening meditation; whenever anyone from home asked me what I liked about it, I couldn’t ever say. I just knew. But then I’d go back out to work in the world, the fast lifestyle would be there waiting for me, and I was a slave to

it. I kept getting stuck, wandering nowhere. I kept smoking and drinking away my dis-ease rather than looking at it. My problem was that I wasn't meditating. I was not looking within. I wasn't doing the work that it takes to go deeper into this practice, to let go. Since then I have learned for myself that meditation is *essential*; like water for a flower. It takes as long as it takes for an individual to let go; and, we have a direct influence on that length of time. It is always a choice.

Eventually I left home for good and moved permanently to the Eugene Priory. I had decided that if I was going to be a monk, I'd like to study with Rev. Master Oswin, who had all along been a kind and helpful teacher to me. Finally, having removed myself from the endless distraction of home, I could take a good look at myself and there was nowhere to escape. I finally had the quiet environment I needed to sit and do the work. There was nothing to numb the dullness, the agitation, the greed, the self. When I sat and meditated, the self would panic like a bat trapped in a shed in which I had turned on the light. Everything passed through my mind trying to take on form, to become. And so I sat and sat and sat. This is a sitting on the cushion and off the cushion. Every breath, every heart-beat, dedicated to the effort of letting go this thing we call the self. To let go, to let go, what a seemingly simple act. How can so much greed, hatred and delusion come forth from something that doesn't even exist? But this self is precious to us. It is something we've carried for so long we have forgotten what it is like without it. We believe we *need* it. The longing I felt for it was so great; to go and be that boy, to go and do those things. The self feels so real. The Heart

just sat quietly, smiling patiently; and one evening it finally clicked.

On a Wednesday night, seven months into my lay residency, Rev. Master Oswin gave a Dharma talk in which he said that the ‘puzzle’ was actually three dimensional, and that ‘training’, the practice, was the center piece, ‘The piece that holds the whole puzzle together’. Boom! Not flashy white light, not blissful samadhi, not profound infinite wisdom: just the quiet every moment training. The training *is* the Enlightenment! Enlightenment *is* the training! I saw with my whole Heart that the practice is the gravitational center around which the entire Universe revolves. I was suffering and searching because I was looking outside myself for peace and happiness. I was looking to things for my peace of mind. I was beginning to see how, as Buddhism teaches, all things are fundamentally Empty. There is no inherent suffering in any external condition. I was creating the suffering when I placed external things as this gravitational center. Anything I place at the center of the Heart is bound to fade away and disappear, because all things are bound to fade away and disappear. Realizing this, I opened the doors of my Heart, which was billowing over with junk, and finally made an Empty space on the shelf: and didn’t fill it back in.

Training is the Heart of training; the Heart of training is the Heart. Let the Heart reside within the chamber of the Heart. For that Empty center contains and *is* the whole Universe. This is the Heart’s True Nature. The Heart is Buddha. Though we might keep ignoring It, the Heart simply waits and waits and waits. Anyone at any time can let go,



turn towards, and listen to this Heart, this Light. All our suffering comes from this ignoring. I have personally proven this true for myself by doing the practice and listening to my Heart. From this placing the Heart at center and listening to It, I have found a profound peace, joy and gratitude. The rest of my days since, have been spent doing my best to put this into practice, go deeper into Its meaning, and pick myself up when I fall down. Getting up in the morning with palms together, lying down at night upon my right side: I pray that all may quickly prove this true for themselves.

*Notes*

1. Numata Center for Buddhist Translation, *Buddha-Dharma: The Way to Enlightenment*, (Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., 2004).

# NEWS OF THE ORDER

---

## Europe

### Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey

—*Northumberland, England—UK—*

#### **Monastic news:**

We are delighted that Rev. Master Daishin has come back to the community more frequently from the Hermitage in Wales where he has been staying. He was here for both Wesak weekend (see below) and for monks' sesshin, giving teaching on both occasions.

We are fortunate to also have Rev. Master Mugō resident with us at present. She is conducting her lay ministry work from here and joining in community life.

#### **Manjusri Festival:**

Rev. Gareth led our Manjusri Festival at the beginning of March. His talk afterwards, 'The Wisdom of Silence' is now available to listen to or download on our website <http://www.throssel.org.uk/dharmataalks/wisdomofsilence>.

#### **Memorial for Rev. Master Daizui:**

On 3rd April, Rev. Master Hugh offered a small memorial for Rev. Master Daizui on the 12th anniversary of his death. Rev. Master Daizui began his monastic life at Shasta Abbey in 1973, was a monk for 30 years and became Head of our Order on Rev. Master Jiyu's death in 1996.

#### **Lay Ministry Retreat:**

In mid-March Rev. Master Mugō, who returned from North America earlier in the month, and Rev. Master Saidō, from

Telford Buddhist Priory, lead the lay ministers' retreat. Upwards of a dozen people came for the three day retreat of informal meetings, meditation and catching up with each other. It was a relaxed and sustaining retreat and appreciated by all who attended.

### **Hebden Bridge Retreat:**

In March Rev. Leandra travelled to the Huddersfield area in response to an invitation from the Hebden Bridge Zen Group (Dancing Mountains Sangha) to a day retreat. She was warmly welcomed and responded to questions, and in return, invited the group to come up to Throssel.

### **Jukai week:**

We had a wonderful week of mild sunny weather for our annual *Taking the Ten Precepts* retreat (Jukai). This year, eleven people took this step of commitment in training, being ordained as Buddhists and expressing their wish for the ongoing process of finding how to live a preceptual life. We congratulate Neil Ambrose, Steve Asling, Catherine Burns, Joshua Darby, Naomi Engelkamp, Will Dee, Karan Fairley, Christele Geuffroy, Val Lilof, Thomas Martin and Louise McDermott; all our good wishes go with them as they continue their training.

Rev. Master Leandra was the main celebrant for the ceremonies, joined by Rev. Master Hugh and Rev. Finnán, and the whole community worked together with the retreatants to make this an inspiring week.



*This year's Jukai retreatants, with Rev. Master Leandra  
and Rev. Berwyn and Rev. Elinore*

**Wesak:**

A small number of families came on Saturday of our family weekend, and the young people helped decorate the altar and made and iced cookies for the Wesak gifts on Sunday. We were joined by a large group for the festival day on Sunday, a full hall for the celebration of the Buddha's birth and life. Rev. Master Daishin was celebrant for the ceremony, afterwards giving cookies in colourful paper lotuses to the young people before ringing the bell. We all gathered in the Ceremony Hall for his talk 'Selflessness and the Middle Way' which is now on our website:

<http://www.throssel.org.uk/dharma-talks/selflessness>



*Rev. Master Olwen with young helper set up a canopy above the baby Buddha*

### **Garden news:**

This spring we held a ‘garden weekend’ for which we were joined by Julia who organised the event with Rev. Berwyn and a small team who came to help. The weather remained dry as work progressed through Saturday to complete the job, digging a drainage trench in the lower part of the garden and installing a porous pipe and gravel to help drain away the excess water which has waterlogged the ground. It was successful and with the turf relayed, there was remarkably little sign of the work having been done. By the end of May the garden is fresh green and blossoming and we have had our first two crops of rhubarb already.



*A corner of the public garden at the end of May*

*—Rev. Alina*

## Norwich Zen Buddhist Priory

*— Norwich, England—UK—*

The highlight for the Priory in recent months was the day retreat that we held in April. We hired a hall in the nearby town of Wymondham, in order to accommodate more people than can comfortably fit into the Priory. It was lovely to see so many people coming together as a Sangha, to meditate, share the Dharma and get to know each other better. It was particularly good to welcome congregation from beyond Norwich, with several members of the Cambridge meditation group making the journey.

A big thank you to everyone who helped with organising the day and enabled it to run so smoothly. The plan is to hold a large retreat like this a couple of times a year.



### *Evening Service at the Retreat*

The Priory Sangha is growing steadily. We are now offering meetings on three evenings each week, as well as events every Saturday and on Sunday mornings. More informally, we enjoy coming together for a Cooking Morning once a month.

My thanks to all who support the Priory, whether financially or in other ways, such as offering time and expertise with tasks that need doing. I am particularly grateful for the following help in recent weeks: looking after the Priory when I am away; making a bowing seat for use at funeral ceremonies; production of the Priory's Wesak card; ongoing work on the Priory's book-keeping and accounts; help with cleaning and housework; garden maintenance; and stripping and varnishing a set of tables. Thank you also for the generous donations of food and plants.

—*Rev. Leoma*

## The Place of Peace Dharma House

—*Aberystwyth, Wales–UK*—

April marked the 14th anniversary of The Place of Peace. Thank you to all who have helped us, in so many different ways, during those years.

Gratitude was offered to Reverend Master Jiyu-Kennett, who is the Founder of the temple and of our Order. Her example stands as a beacon of light. Offerings were also made to the late Dilys Harris, whose generosity made it possible for us to have our own property.

On an anniversary issue of the regular monthly Dharma Reflections CD, Rev. Master Myōhō offered talks on how the vow to train rises up from the depths of our being and calls us forth, and on how The Place of Peace acquired its name. She also spoke of how a small temple comes into existence because the time is right for a monk to start such a venture and there are sufficient lay people who wish to support them. A monk ‘spreads’ their mat, entering into the contemplative life in that location, and those inclined to take refuge and train there, do so. The history of a temple is not about facts, figures and dates; it is about ceaseless practice, and all that comes forth, as the roots of the temple grow stronger and its heart increases in brilliance.

The Dharma Reflections project began in 2001. These CDs, which offer insights into the life of faith within a small contemplative temple, are now taken by groups, temples and individuals, in four different countries.

In April, guests from Talybont and Huddersfield came to take part in the Avalokiteshwara Spring Festival retreat. Many images and statues of the Bodhisattva were placed throughout the temple. During the ceremony we processed around, in a clockwise direction, bowing to each in turn, whilst singing the ‘Oh Hail to Kanzeon’ chant. Traditional Welsh cakes, from the local bakery, were offered at the altar, and finds from the beach, along with



potted plants from our garden, were added to the sacristy decorations, enabling all that surrounds us to be included.



*The Spring Festival Ceremony of Avalokiteshwara at The Place of Peace Dharma House*

*—Rev. Master Myōhō*

## Portobello Buddhist Priory

*—Edinburgh, Scotland—UK—*

There is not much news to report from the Priory this time, though good to mention our enjoyable Wesak day celebration at the Priory. The photo below shows the sangha gathered in the meditation hall along with the Prior.



—*Rev. Master Favian*

## Sitting Buddha Hermitage

—*Cromford, Derbyshire-UK*—

On March 10, the Hermitage moved to its new location in Cromford. We were blessed with the only dry and sunny day that week and the move went very smoothly. Huge thanks go to Rev. Master Saidō, Rev. Aiden and Kevin Commons who actually did all the hiring of a transit van and lifting of boxes and furniture for me.



*The main altar*

Local Sangha now meet here for meditation on Wednesday evenings, and the Hermitage is also open for meditation on other weekday evenings and offers introductory sessions on Saturday afternoons. The guest accommodation in the annex has already been made use of by retreat guests. Cromford is a friendly, neighbourly village and I was quickly accepted as part of the community here.

Sitting Buddha Hermitage is little more than an hour's drive from Turning Wheel Buddhist Temple in Leicester, and on May 9<sup>th</sup> I joined Rev. Aiden there to celebrate Wesak along with 20 Sangha members and friends.



*The altar in the courtyard*

Early spring is a good time for moving to a new place, with the days getting longer and lighter and gardens blossoming and trees leafing out. Thank you so much to everyone who supports the Hermitage, giving time, expertise, donations of money and needed items, coming to sit, coming to visit and generally cheering us on!

—Rev. Alicia

## Sōtō Zen Riga

—Riga-Latvia—

There are a total of 6 ordained Buddhist monks in Latvia and five met of us met on April 23 to get acquainted at the Potolaka Center (unaffiliated) in Riga. We shared tea and cake and felt very much at home with each other. We decided to organize a monks retreat in August where each of us will take responsibility for planning a day's practice according to our tradition. I am the

lone Zen monk in the midst of various Tibetan lineages. We are looking for ways to help each other, and plan to hold one festival a year when all the sanghas come together for practice.

The temple is continuing to grow slowly. May saw the weekly schedule extended to include morning meditation on Saturday and a one day retreat. On our May 9 retreat, we held a small Wesak ceremony, where each participant brought a small potted flower for the altar, and we chanted *The Scripture of Great Wisdom* and ‘May All Beings Be Happy’ in Latvian. Translation work on scriptures and verse is proceeding slowly, and I am still working on improving my language skills before I schedule formal Dharma Talks. I have been giving small talks during retreats to get more comfortable in speaking about the Dharma.

I was interviewed for a major magazine here, “IR” (translated “Is” or “To Be”). The journalist conducting the interviewer was interested in how people find the courage to make big changes in their lives. The other female monk, Margarita Putnina, was also interviewed for this article. Anyone interested in reading this is welcome to email me and I will be happy to forward an English translation.

I offer my gratitude to all the sangha who have been giving me moral support in this new endeavor. I appreciate it very much.

—*Rev. Bridin*

## Turning Wheel Buddhist Temple

— *East Midlands—UK—*

The temple is gradually establishing itself here in Leicester, and we are continuing to develop our programme of regular Dharma Evenings, festivals and day retreats. We have also started to have Basic Buddhism Evenings on Thursdays each week, which so far have been well attended.

In mid-April it was a great pleasure to welcome to the temple three Sri Lankan monks from the nearby Leicester

Buddhist Vihara. Four of their lay supporters also came along, and very generously provided a wonderful meal for all of us.

A couple of days later we had a gardening day, as with the arrival of some warmer weather the weeds in the garden were beginning to take over. We started with a meditation period, and then spent most of the morning working in the garden. We managed to clear the weeds from all of the flower beds, trim the edges of the lawn, and also cut back many of the small bushes which had been blocking the paths. The garden is now looking much smarter as a result.



On the 9th of May we held our Wesak Festival jointly with Rev. Alicia from Sitting Buddha Hermitage. There were 21 of us altogether from across the region, including Sangha members from Leeds, Lincolnshire, Chesterfield, Loughborough and Nottingham, as well as several from Leicester. Rev. Alicia was celebrant for the ceremony, and Rev. Aiden gave a Dharma Talk afterwards. Following this we had a bring-and-share vegetarian feast, and it was nice to be able to catch up with friends old and new. Unfortunately the weather was quite chilly and windy, so we weren't able to use the garden, which was a shame. Thank you to

all those who made the journey to the temple to help us celebrate this joyful occasion.

—*Rev. Aiden*

---

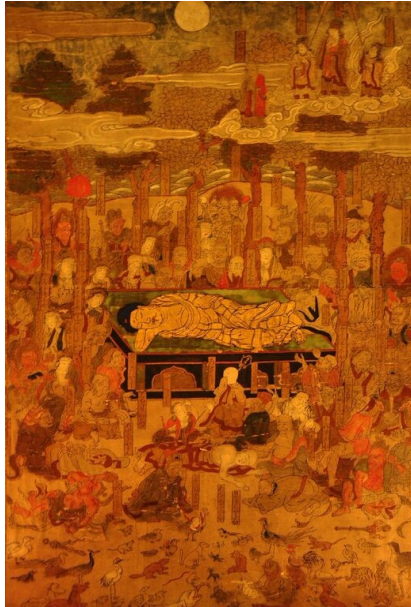
## The Americas

### Shasta Abbey

—Mt. Shasta, California—USA—

Birth and death have inspired a number of ceremonies at Shasta Abbey in recent months. On April 12 we celebrated the Festival of the Buddha's Birth. Shakyamuni Buddha was born and died as a human being to show us that we can all awaken as he did, and we bow in gratitude for this great offering.

February 15 marked the Festival of the Buddha's Parinirvana. The community gathered to read *The Scripture of the Buddha's Last Teaching* over the course of two evenings. The festival ceremony altar was graced by the beautiful Parinirvana scroll that Rev. Master Jiyu found in disrepair under the altar of her small temple in Japan and saved from ruin.





Last year it was restored with care by an expert in the Bay Area, who obtained from Japan some new silk to frame the picture. The scroll depicts celestial beings, disciples and animals gathered to pay their last respects around a golden reclining Buddha, who is ready to enter Parinirvana.

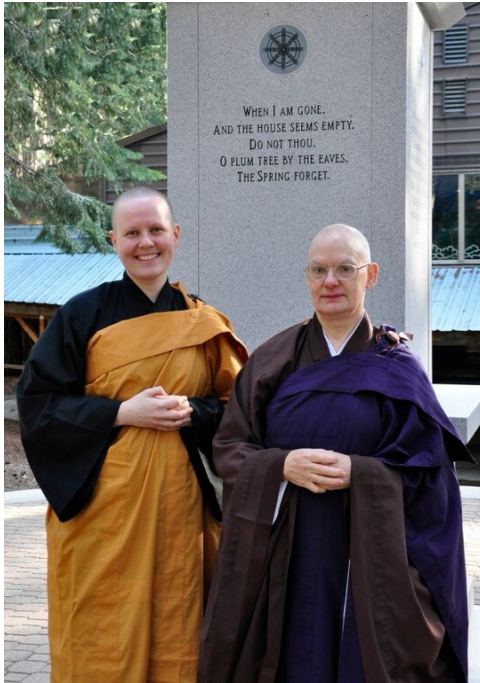
Rev. Master Jishō Perry was the celebrant at funeral ceremonies for Anna Lucas, who died at peace on March 2 after years of illness. Rev. Masters Meian Elbert and Kōdō Kay and Revs. Amanda Robertson and Valora Midtdal traveled to Madrone Hospice in Yreka for the private funeral. Rev. Master Jishō also celebrated Anna's public funeral at Shasta Abbey on March 20. Many of our local congregation who had known Anna over the years were present in addition to neighbors, friends and caregivers, including the arborist who had cared for Anna's trees. Rev. Master Jishō celebrated the final memorial ceremony on the 49th day after Anna's death, followed by a memorial meal. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Rev. Master Jishō for ministering to Anna during her long illness and at the time of her death, and for his weeks of painstaking work in clearing and selling the house which Anna had kindly bequeathed to the Abbey, and in wrapping up the business of her estate.

Rev. Master Kōdō was the celebrant for memorial ceremonies in honor of two members of Rev. Vera Giordano's family who had died earlier in the year. Rev. Vera's aunt, Virginia Giordano, died in January after a sudden, brief illness and her grandmother, Lois Clack, died in early April after a stroke. We were pleased to welcome Rev. Vera's mother, father and sister for the ceremonies and tea afterwards, where we enjoyed a heart-shaped cake baked from her grandmother's recipe.

### **Monastic Retreat and Ceremonies:**

In the night of April 17, Rev. Valora Midtdal received Dharma Transmission from Rev. Master Meian. Dharma Transmission occurs when the Master recognizes that the disciple has grown sufficiently mature in training to take spiritual

responsibility for herself. Congratulations to Rev. Master Meian and to Rev. Valora on this joyous occasion.



*Rev. Valora with Rev. Master Meian*

The monastic community closed its doors to the public and sat in an intensive weeklong meditation retreat from April 22-29. In her first Dharma talk of the retreat, Rev. Master Meian reminded us that the spring retreat was traditionally a time to study the *Denkōrōku*, in which Great Master Keizan relates the Transmission of the teaching of our tradition from Shakyamuni Buddha through Keizan's own Grand-Master Koun Ejō. Retreat talks pointed to ways in which our training resonates with that of the ancient Masters and how we can use their examples to inspire and enrich our daily practice.

We are grateful to our congregation and donors for providing the support necessary to sustain these monastic retreats so that we may deepen our training for the benefit of all beings.

**Head Novice Ceremonies:** During our monastic retreat, Rev. Dilys Cromack completed her term as Head Novice by offering her Presentation of a Fundamental Doctrine in the meditation hall and by responding to questions from the place of meditation during the Head Novice's Dharma Ceremony later that day. Rev. Dilys chose to answer questions on a teaching of Bodhidharma:

The wise wake up.  
They fix their minds on the sublime  
and let their bodies change with the seasons.  
All phenomena are empty.  
They contain nothing worth desiring.  
Those who understand this  
detach themselves from all that exists  
and stop imagining or seeking anything.

We are grateful for Rev. Dilys' patience and compassion in leading all trainees during the term just ended, and to Rev. Veronica Snedaker, her Advisor and Rev. Allard Kieres, Head Novice's Assistant. We offer congratulations and best wishes to Rev. Dilys as she continues on in her monastic life.



*Rev. Dilys and Rev. Master Meian in front of Rev Master Jiyu's Stupa.*

**Retreats:** It was our pleasure to welcome a total of more than 50 guests to Introductory retreats in February and April this year. Also in February, some two dozen guests joined us for a Continuing Practice Retreat. These retreats have been added to our schedule in order to offer an opportunity for those who have at least the experience of an Introductory Retreat as well as long-time lay trainees to explore ways of taking further steps in their training, and they are proving to be well attended and of benefit. Participants in this retreat met with Rev. Master Haryo Young for a fruitful Sunday morning question-and-answer discussion that helped them widen their perspectives on practice within the Order.

Our three-day Silent Meditation Retreats continue to draw experienced trainees who wish to join the monastic community in an intensive period of meditation and silence, hearing recorded Dharma talks and participating in community meal preparation.

We will be adding a weekend retreat of this type in the coming year.

March brought the Keeping of the Ten Precepts Retreat, the most joyous and solemn occasion in the life of lay Buddhists in our tradition.



*Rev. Master Meian leads the Ketchimyaku procession during the Jukai Retreat*

During this year's retreat, Nona De Rosario Refi, Diana Holt, Kate Mehler, Colette O'Keeffe, and Maria Van Gool committed themselves to the Precepts for the first time. Four of the new ordinees were from the Berkeley Buddhist Priory, and another had a connection to our lay sangha through a friend, which added to the familial feeling of the occasion. An additional sixteen

retreatants came to renew their commitment to the Precepts, and we are grateful for their assistance in the preparation which makes the beautiful ceremonial possible, and for the support of their presence. We are happy to offer congratulations to the new ordines and welcome them to the family of the Buddhas.

### **Monastic Visitors:**

Springtime has brought us the pleasure of visits from monks of our Order and from other Buddhist traditions. Rev. Oriana LaChance, Prior of the Eugene Buddhist Priory, visited for a few days in mid-April, and Rev. Master Meikō Jones traveled from the Portland Buddhist Priory to join us for the April monastic retreat.

Venerable Hyung Jeon and Venerable Kem Sun of Mountain Spirit Temple (Korean Zen tradition) in Tehachapi, California paid us an overnight visit in March, bringing a gift of paper lanterns at the request of Ven. Sun Moon, who stayed with us for a few months last year.

Venerable Vinh Minh, a monk in the Vietnamese tradition who is pursuing a degree in Buddhist Studies at a university in Thailand, visited for a tour and lunch in early May with three lay friends. While in the United States, Ven. Minh is staying at the Mt. Adams Zen Buddhist Temple at Trout Lake Abbey in southwest Washington State.

Brother Troi Tai Sinh of the Order of Interbeing arrived in mid-April, in time to join in our monastic retreat. Br. Tai Sinh has trained in the Vietnamese Zen tradition of Ven. Thich Nat Hanh at Plum Village in France and Deer Park Monastery in southern California. He will be with us for three months before undertaking a course in hospital chaplaincy at St. Francis Hospital in San Francisco.

Eido Carney, Roshi, Abbess of the Olympia Zen Center in Washington State made an overnight stop while traveling in April. We enjoyed a fascinating and wide-ranging discussion with her over tea that evening and the following morning at breakfast.

We are grateful for visits from priests and monks from other temples in our own Order as well as those who train in other traditions, as they offer insight into differences and similarities in the various forms of Buddhist practice.

### **Classes and Retreats:**

Rev. Master Kōdō and Rev. Amanda accepted an invitation to give a day retreat in Klamath Falls, Oregon on May 2. They offered meditation and a Dharma talk and discussion on the topic of ‘Sorrow, Loss and Grief’ to 24 people, many of whom had experienced recent multiple losses of loved ones. They also shared a delicious potluck meal as the discussion continued.

Rev. Master Astor Douglas spoke to the World Religions class at Rogue Community College at the invitation of teacher Marty Zottola, and she commented that the students engaged in a lively discussion with many thoughtful questions after her presentation.

—*Rev. Margaret*

### **Berkeley Buddhist Priory**

—*Berkeley, California—USA—*

Four members of the Priory Sangha, Kate Mehler, Nona Refi, Diana Holt and Colette O’Keeffe took the Buddhist Precepts and became lay Buddhists at this March’s Keeping of the Ten Precepts Retreat at Shasta Abbey. A deep commitment to follow the Buddha is the lifeblood of the Sangha and we rejoice and are grateful for all who have vowed to seek the Way and be part of the Buddhist Sangha.



*Diana, Kate, Nona and Colette of Berkeley Priory in front of Rev. Master Jiyu's stupa at Shasta Abbey*

## Eugene Buddhist Priory

— Eugene, Oregon—USA—

In early spring the priory had a lovely visit with Rev. Master Mugo, who was on her way up to Canada and then back to the UK. Rev. Mugo was here four days and used the time to visit with lay friends and Rev. Oriana.

**Retreats and Festivals:** In March we had one of our day retreats which begin at 7:00am with meditation and end after lunch. We manage to fit in 3 meditation periods, short morning service, a dharma talk, some work on the priory grounds and a formal lunch. It is a good opportunity for the congregation to work and meditate together in a way that is a bit different from our usual weekly schedule.



On April 5th the priory celebrated our Manjusri Festival followed by watching *A Zen Life*, an excellent documentary on D.T. Suzuki. In late April, Rev. Oriana, Nancy Fletcher, Martha Welches, Ernie Rimerman and John Henry took part in a celebration of the Buddha's Birth at the Unitarian Church that was organized by Zen West. This gathering was an opportunity to meet people from some of the other Buddhist groups in Eugene. We celebrated Wesak at the temple on May 3rd with a potluck following the festival.



*Wesak festival gathering*

**Teaching at the Local High School:** Several times a year we are asked to come to Thurston High School to speak with students about the practice of Buddhism. This is for a sociology class on comparative religion. In April, Doug Carnine gave the teaching—a somewhat difficult task as the students haven't yet had any exposure to Buddhism. We have an hour and a half to give the 'broad strokes.'

**A Special Work Day:** In early April we had a special work day to clean the priory's stupa for our founder, Rev. Master Jiyu. As the climate in Eugene can be cold and damp, the stupa needs a good clean each year. We also cleaned the stone area around the stupa and cut back the plants that border it. The stupa and surrounding area looks wonderful after the clean-up and we will be having a memorial festival for Rev. Master Jiyu at the stupa later in May.

## Lions Gate Buddhist Priory

—Lytton, British Columbia—Canada—

We have enjoyed an early, warm and sunny spring here on the mountain. Flowers and leaves appeared a month earlier than usual. As the seasons turn, we have increased our activities, and visitors have come from near and far.

In May we welcomed Andrew, a young man from Ontario who has come for an extended visit, and we said goodbye to Herb, who has been with us for a year and is headed for Ontario. We have also had visitors from other parts of Canada. “What joy it is to welcome friends from afar!”

In late March we held our Spring Monastic Retreat. We're grateful to everyone for allowing us to have this time to deepen our meditation practice and training. Shortly after the retreat, we were welcomed Rev. Master Kōten back. He had been away for several months.

At the time of this writing we are holding our annual May week-long retreat. We are happy to welcome guests who have put aside their worldly concerns for the week in order to deepen their practice and training.

We have initiated a number of small projects around Bodhidharma Hall (our residence) and on the land, such as placing and replacing outdoor statues, repairing and constructing steps,

getting and splitting firewood, planting flower beds, etc. We are really grateful for all the help we have received for these projects.

On Saturday, May 16 we held our Annual General Meeting for the registered society which incorporates and supports the Priory. Financial statements for 2014 were presented, discussed and accepted, and new Board Members were elected. (The financial documents are a matter of public record and are available to view upon request to the Priory).

From the 1880's until 1928 the village of Lytton had a 'Joss House,' i.e. Chinese temple, to serve the Chinese immigrant community who came for the gold rush and to work on the construction of the Trans-Canada railroad. These joss houses were found in many of the pioneer communities throughout Canada and the U.S. The one in Lytton was unusual in that it contained an image of Kwan Yin (Skt: Avalokiteshwara J:Kanzeon), the Bodhisattva of Great Compassion. There has been increasing interest lately in this and other Joss Houses. The present owner of the site is intending to build a replica of the temple as a museum dedicated to the Chinese presence in the area. The Vancouver-based Chinese-language daily newspaper Ming Pao recently did a two-part article on the site, and because our Prior, Rev. Master Kōten, has been involved in researching the history of the temple, he was interviewed and figures prominently in the article. The Priory holds a Kanzeon Festival ceremony every year in June at the Joss House site.

—*Rev. Master Aurelian and Rev. Valeria*

## Wallowa Buddhist Temple

—*Joseph, Oregon-USA—*

During an unusually early and lovely mountain springtime this year, we welcomed five different guests for individual retreats of varying lengths. Two were local people, one was from La Grande, one from Walla Walla, Washington, and one was lay minister Helmut Schatz from the Bay Area. It was a joy to train

with these retreat guests and heartening to discover the many ways in which our new retreat accommodations make it possible to meet the different needs of our guests. Several more have already made arrangements to come this summer from around the Pacific Northwest, California, Canada, and the U.K.

During times between retreat guests, the monks continue to work away on the finer points of finish work in the new guest house. Together with help from a neighbor who is a retired cabinet maker, Rev. Clairissa designed and installed shelving in the kitchenette. Our neighbor also built a corner mirrored medicine cabinet to match one of the three custom cabinets he created for us last year. We are replacing temporary spring-loaded curtain rods with more permanent ones, and have refinished some used furniture for the rooms. Heavy exterior doormats and snow-and-water-proof interior ones are now in place at the three entrances to the guest house.

In March we celebrated Rev. Master Meidō's 35th monastic ordination anniversary together with the congregation during a Sunday morning retreat, with a homemade ginger pound cake and a Dharma talk by Rev. Clairissa on "The Alms Bowl of Pure Compassion." On March 28th, we held a simple memorial for Mamie, a congregation member's young tricolor corgi, who died after ingesting chewing gum which contained Xylitol, an artificial sweetener which can be fatal for dogs.

During the Sunday morning retreat on Mother's Day, May 10th, Rev. Meidō offered merit for the benefit of all mothers, including the recently deceased elderly mothers of three friends of the temple.

We are now in the process of researching how best to provide for the temple's water needs while ensuring the long-term viability of the temple's well. Currently, a well manager system is being considered which would both provide ample water for daily uses throughout the year and allow us to adjust the frequency and

rate of harvesting water from the well in accord with seasons and the number of guests.

One of the temple's main purposes is to offer a place where both congregation and monks of our wider Sangha can come for individual retreats. Those interested in arranging such a retreat are welcome to call or write for more information.

—*Rev. Master Meidō and Rev. Clairissa*

## TEMPLES OF THE ORDER—THE AMERICAS

### **Shasta Abbey**

Rev. Master Meian Elbert, Abbess  
3724 Summit Drive  
Mt. Shasta, CA 96067-9102  
Ph: (530) 926-4208 [Fax: -0428]  
shastaabbey@shastaabbey.org  
[www.shastaabbey.org](http://www.shastaabbey.org)

### **Berkeley Buddhist Priory**

Rev. Master Kinrei Bassis  
1358 Marin Ave.  
Albany, CA 94706  
Ph: (510) 528-1876 [Fax: -2139]  
prior@berkeleybuddhistpriory.org  
[www.berkeleybuddhistpriory.org](http://www.berkeleybuddhistpriory.org)

### **Columbia Zen Buddhist Priory**

Rev. Master Rokuzan Kroenke  
426 Arrowwood Road  
Columbia, SC 29210-7508  
Ph: (803) 772-7552  
[www.columbiazen.org](http://www.columbiazen.org)

### **Eugene Buddhist Priory**

Rev. Oriana LaChance  
85415 Teague Loop  
Eugene, OR 97405-9536  
Ph: (541) 344-7377  
info@eugenebuddhistpriory.org  
[www.eugenebuddhistpriory.org](http://www.eugenebuddhistpriory.org)

### **Idaho Panhandle area and Sandpoint Meditation Group**

Rev. Master Zensho Roberson  
P. O. Box 74  
Saint Maries, ID 83861  
Ph: (208) 245-4950  
RevZenshoR@gmail.com

### **Pine Mountain Buddhist Temple**

Rev. Master Phoebe van Woerden  
941 Lockwood Valley Road  
Maricopa, CA 93252  
Ph: (254) 241-6102  
pmbt@pinemtnbuddhisttemple.org  
[www.pinemtnbuddhisttemple.org](http://www.pinemtnbuddhisttemple.org)

### **Portland Buddhist Priory**

Rev. Master Meikō Jones  
3642 SE Milwaukie Avenue  
Portland, OR 97202  
Ph: (503) 238-1123  
prior1@portlandbuddhistpriory.org  
[www.portlandbuddhistpriory.org](http://www.portlandbuddhistpriory.org)

### **Wallowa Buddhist Temple**

Rev. Master Meidō Tuttle  
62916 Hurricane Creek Road  
Joseph, OR 97846  
Ph: (541) 432-6129  
temple@wallowabuddhisttemple.org  
[www.wallowabuddhisttemple.org](http://www.wallowabuddhisttemple.org)

## CANADA

### **Lions Gate Buddhist Priory**

Rev. Master Kōten Benson  
P. O. Box 701  
Lytton, B.C. V0K 1Z0  
Ph: 250-455-0344  
lionsgatebuddhistpriory@lyttonbc.net  
[www.lionsgatebuddhistpriory.ca](http://www.lionsgatebuddhistpriory.ca)

### **Affiliated Meditation Groups**

**CA:** Auburn, Chico, Fresno,  
Morro Bay, Ventura, San Jose

**ID:** Sandpoint

**MT:** Whitefish

**WA:** Bainbridge Island

**CANADA:** Edmonton

## TEMPLES OF THE ORDER—EUROPE

### UK

**Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey**  
Rev. Master Daishin Morgan,  
Abbot  
Carrshield, HEXHAM  
Northumberland NE47 8AL  
Ph: 01434 345 204  
gd@throssel.org.uk  
[www.throssel.org.uk](http://www.throssel.org.uk)

**Dragon Bell Temple**  
Rev. Master Myfanwy McCorry  
78 Queens Rd,  
EXETER EX2 9EW.  
Ph: 01392 479 648  
dragonbelltemple@gmail.com  
[www.dragonbelltemple.org.uk](http://www.dragonbelltemple.org.uk)

**Great Ocean Dharma Refuge**  
Rev. Master Mokugen Kublicki  
Penwern  
Felindre Farchog  
CRYMYCH, Pembrokeshire  
SA41 3XF  
Ph: 01239 891 360

**Norwich Zen Buddhist Priory**  
Rev. Leoma Hague  
NORWICH,  
Ph: 01603 457933  
info@norwichzen.org.uk  
[www.norwichzen.org.uk](http://www.norwichzen.org.uk)

**The Place of Peace Dharma House**  
Rev. Master Myōhō Harris  
P. O. Box 207  
ABERYSTWYTH  
SY23 1WY  
Ph: 01970 625402  
[www.placeofpeacewales.org](http://www.placeofpeacewales.org)

**Portobello Buddhist Priory**  
Rev. Master Favian Straughan  
27 Brighton Place, Portobello  
EDINBURGH EH15 1LL  
Ph: 0131 669 9622  
favian.straughan@homecall.co.uk  
[www.portobellobuddhist.org.uk](http://www.portobellobuddhist.org.uk)

**Reading Buddhist Priory**

176 Cressingham Road  
READING RG2 7LW  
Ph/Fax: 0118 986 0750  
rpriory@yahoo.co.uk  
[www.readingbuddhistpriory.org.uk](http://www.readingbuddhistpriory.org.uk)

**Rochdale Zen Retreat**  
Rev. Master Peter Bonati  
The Briars, Grange Lane  
Hutton  
PRESTON  
PR4 5JE  
Ph: 01772 612 112

**Sitting Buddha Hermitage**  
Rev. Alicia Rowe  
CROMFORD  
Derbyshire  
Ph: 01629 821813.  
alicia@fieldofmerit.org  
[www.sittingbuddhaheritage.fieldofmerit.org](http://www.sittingbuddhaheritage.fieldofmerit.org)

**Telford Buddhist Priory**  
49 The Rock  
TELFORD TF3 5BH  
Ph/Fax: 01952 615 574  
[www.tbpriory.org.uk](http://www.tbpriory.org.uk)

**Turning Wheel Buddhist Temple**  
Rev. Aiden Hall,  
51 Lamborne Road, Leicester  
LE2 6HQ  
0116 210 3870  
[www.turningwheel.org.uk](http://www.turningwheel.org.uk)

*Affiliated Meditation Groups*  
UK: Aberdeen, Aberfeldy,  
Birmingham, Cambridge,  
Carmarthen, Chichester,  
 Cirencester, Cornwall, Dundee,  
Galloway, Hexham, Huddersfield,  
Hull, Inverness, Jersey, Lancaster,  
Leeds, Leicester, London, Matlock,  
Milton Keynes, Newcastle-upon-  
Tyne, North Lakes, Norwich,  
Nottingham, Preston, Sheffield,  
Teesside

## GERMANY

### **Dharmazuflucht Schwarzwald**

Rev. Master Fuden Nessi  
Wonnenbach 4  
77793 Gutach  
Phone: +49 (0)7833 - 96 56 408  
[www.dharmazuflucht.info](http://www.dharmazuflucht.info)

## THE NETHERLANDS

### **De Dharmatoevlucht (Dharma Refuge)**

Rev. Baldwin Schreurs  
De Heze 51  
7335 BB, APELDOORN  
Ph: +31 55 542 0038  
info@dharmatoevlucht.nl  
[www.dharmatoevlucht.nl](http://www.dharmatoevlucht.nl)

### **Wolk-en-Water Hermitage**

Rev. Master Hakuun Barnhard  
Kievitslaan 14,  
3645 KL VINKEVEN.  
Ph nr: 00 31 297 261812;  
[www.unsui.eu](http://www.unsui.eu)

## LATVIA

### **Sōtō Zen Riga**

Rev. Bridin Rūšins (Elga )  
Baznicas Street 13-29  
RIGA LV1010  
Latvia  
phone: +371 259 563 40  
email: elgarusins@gmail .com

*Affiliated Meditation Groups:*

### **The Netherlands:**

Groningen, Utrecht.

*For details of meditation groups in Europe, please contact your nearest priory, or the Guestmaster at Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey.*

*For details of meditation groups in the US and Canada, please contact your nearest priory, or the Guestmaster at Shasta Abbey*



## Further Information

This Journal is published quarterly by the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives, which was founded by the late Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett. The Order is dedicated to following the tradition of Serene Reflection Meditation. The main offices of the OBC are at Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey in England and Shasta Abbey in the US.

As Buddhism grows in the West, we wish to share the Buddha's Teaching through our Journal; we also share our experience of practicing the Buddha's Way, thus encouraging and supporting each other's training. Lastly, the Journal helps to keep friends and members informed of activities and events.

The views expressed in these pages are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the Order as a whole.

*The Journal of the OBC is administered through the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives Activities Trust (reg. No 1105634 in the UK), and the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives, a non-profit corporation, in the USA.*

*Information on the OBC generally is available on the website: <http://obcon.org/>*

*To subscribe to the OBC Journal newsletter for a quarterly update on when the Journal is available to download go to: <http://journal.obcon.org/e-newsletter-sign-up/>*