

January 8, 2010

MOUNT EQUITY ZENDO ZEPHYR



Above: Ryosen San (left) and Fukan San show their Rakusu t-shirts.

Above Center: Ryosen San serving Tea

Right: Participants enjoying the Tea Ceremony.



Two Japanese Nuns from the NiSodo assist NiOsho in Her Travels to California

In November and December of 2009 Rev. Fukan and Rev. Ryosen from the NiSodo (NiOsho's training monastery in Japan) stayed with us for 3 weeks. In addition to teaching us several Japanese meals, they served a group of about 20 students omatcha, ceremonial green tea, on the tatami mats in our Library. Their presence was a great inspiration to all of us.

NiOsho is taking on the role of “jun-shike” or 2nd Rank Master Teacher at the 3 month practice period being held at Yokoji Zen

Mountain Center in Mountain Center, California. This is the first official practice period that the Japanese Soto School is hosting on American soil. NiOsho's role is to teach and help certify non-Japanese priests so they can be officially recognized through the Japanese lineage as Zen Teachers. It is an honor for NiOsho to be invited to officiate at this angō and reflects her many years of carrying our Soto tradition back and forth between Japan and the US and we look forward to her teachings when she returns in March.

Esho Gambert Receives Dharma Holder Rakusu and Certificate

NiOsho and Esho are in the living room of the Baltimore Dharma Group.



In October of 2009, NiOsho, Daishin, and Jikan, drove down to the Baltimore Dharma Group to visit with Esho and Steve and to offer Esho the Dharma Holder Certificate and Rakusu. This was done to acknowledge Esho as a Lay Dharma teacher through our Soto Zen lineage.

We also acknowledge all the work Esho has done to create the Baltimore Dharma Group and in sustaining a strong prison practice at the Baltimore Women's prison.

MEZ is currently scheduled to visit BDG on the 24th of April this year for Zazenkai.

On the way down to BDG we had the good fortune to have dinner with Daishin's parents and to stay overnight before leaving the next morning for BDG. We are very grateful for all the hospitality shown to us during our travels down to Maryland.

In Gratitude To Jikan Quitaro for All Her Help This Fall

We'd like to thank Rev. Jikan Quitaro from Great Vow Zen Monastery for so much sharing of the Dharma. From curried Butternut Squash to Ramesco Sauce, from Holly Hock Dressing to sewing multiple Juban's, robes, and a cloak, Mt. Equity Zendo is very grateful for all her practice. Rev. Jikan practiced at MEZ for two months from October through December. May all beings benefit.

We'd also like to thank Rev. Teiho Jill Wagner from Daifukuji in Hawaii for her 10 days of practice at Mount Equity. Rev. Teiho is a disciple of Rev. Jiko Nakade, the Abbess of Daifukuji. Rev. Jiko practiced with us about 6 years ago and it is so wonderful to now have her disciple practice with us as well. It is also thanks to Rev. Jiko for all her patience in training Daishin on computers that this newsletter is able to be posted.

Other News

This Winter we will be having our usual schedule of Days of Mindfulness during the first weekend of the month and Sesshin during the third weekend. The only exception to this is January Sesshin which will be held the 4th weekend. Tuesday evening classes are continuing as we finish up Lin Jensen's book, Together Under One Roof. From January 7th through February 4th we are having a special class on Thursday evenings about the teachings of Jesus and Buddha. We are reading from Thich Nhat Hanh's book, Jesus and Buddha as Brothers, sharing in deep listening and practicing



meditation exercises to help us unravel this fascinating topic.

During this Winter Practice Period at MEZ we invite students to take on the practice of concentrating on one practice. In Dogen Zenji's Shobogenzo Zuimonki he writes,

“It is not possible to study extensively and obtain wide knowledge. Make up your mind and just give up trying to do so. Focus your attention on one thing. Study the things you have to know and the traditional examples of them. Follow the way of the practice of your predecessors. Concentrate your efforts on one practice. Do not pretend to be a teacher or a leader of others.”

In this Age of Information Dogen's words ring out louder now than they did in the 13th Century. May we take this passage to heart as we are inundated by emails, junk mail, advertisements, and the pull of the internet to “find out more about it.” We may ask ourselves at this time, “Do I really need to know so much?”



We welcome our newest family members to Mt. Equity Zendo.

Left is pictured “Jakusho” Janice Belgraden. Below is pictured “Choen” Chawnda Blake. Jakusho and Choen received the 5 precepts this past year.



Back Row:
Sarah, Jikan,
Gita, and Kyla

Front Row:
Anjali and Grace



Dharma School Continues to Grow Grow Grrrow!

Can you guess who's who? Until we take our own masks off, it's difficult to know who we are. How can we expect our children to take off their masks if we have not yet done the same?

“Wisdom is not the Way”
(Dharma Hall Discourse #381)

This past Year-End Sesshin we studied Dogen's Extensive Record, a book of Dharma Talks given by Zen Master Dogen. He begins this talk with, “Buddha Dharma is not something that can be understood depending on brilliance and keen wisdom.”

If we think we need to be smarter to understand Zen, we fall into a pit of Vipers called

“The inferiority complex.” If we think we don't need to hear the spoken Dharma because we already know what's being said, then we fall into a pit of cobras called, “The superiority complex.”

If we find that we don't fall into either of these pits we get smashed like a cockroach in mom's kitchen cupboard!

While wisdom and/or knowledge may be helpful in navigating through the

phenomenal world, it's of no use in understanding the noumenal world. Gabeesh?

At the end of our Year End Sesshin we celebrated New Year's Eve by burning up our regrets, enjoying Yogi Tea and sweets, and then ringing the bell 108 times offering our heart-felt prayers out into the New Year. It is our prayer here at MEZ that all of you have a fun and meaningful New Year of the Tiger! Show'em whatchoo can do!! Go Tony!