

# Mt. Equity Zendo Zephyr- March 2011



## **Last of the Arhats Are Now at Mt. Equity**

*Arhat* is a sanskrit word meaning “one who is worthy of alms.” The original disciples of the Buddha, they have reached the state of ultimate freedom. Traditionally, there are sixteen of them and they can be found as carvings in rocks at various temples in China. The above three came from just such a place, though they were originally rubbings on rice paper.

In 2000, Nanso Cleaver, a Zen practitioner at MEZ and artist in Lewisburg, told us of an exhibition of these rubbings while she was working on an art project at Bucknell University. Because they were given to Bucknell as an endowment, MEZ was not permitted to purchase them. But they were generously loaned to us and permission was granted to copy them. They were put into frames and hung in what is now known as “The Arhat Hall.”

Though MEZ was so grateful to have thirteen Arhats, the missing Arhats remained a mystery. Just recently Nanso came across the other three sages and loaned them to MEZ to be copied.

Zen Master Keizan Jokin, considered the second founder of Soto Zen in Japan, has this to say about the Arhats in the ceremony which venerates them:

*According to the Sutras, every Arhat is in possession of three supernormal visions or six supernormal powers, and has gone through the experience of the eight levels of deliverance. If one respectfully serves meals to them along with incense and candle light and if one sincerely prays before them to realize a certain wish, it will surely be granted. There is nothing that is beyond their power. Despite a distance of millions of millions of miles, they can descend into the hall of this rite at once within a second as short as the moment in which a wrestler bends and stretches his arm, receiving the alms offering like this.*

May all who come to MEZ benefit from the example, inspiration and presence of the sixteen Arhats.

## Special Events

The Teachings of Jesus and Buddha

Thursday evenings from 7-8:30pm- March 3rd through March 24th (\$5 suggested donation)

Half Day of Mindfulness

Saturday, March 5th, 1:30-4:30pm (\$12 suggested donation, \$10 for Friends)

Full Day of Mindfulness

Sunday, March 6th, 10am-4pm (\$25 suggested donation, \$20 for Friends) Soup and oriyoki bowls will be provided. Please bring a vegetarian sandwich and side dish for yourself.

Registration for Events

[daishin@mtequity.org](mailto:daishin@mtequity.org)

or

(570) 546-2784



Thomas Merton, O.C.S.O. (1915-1968) was a Catholic monk in the Trappist order and wrote extensively not only about issues such as nuclear war and social justice, but about the importance and need for inter-faith understanding between Christians and Buddhists. In an address to the Fellowship of Reconciliation he called the Buddhist teacher Ven. Thich Nhat Hanh his brother.

There is a picture hanging on our wall of Thomas Merton meeting with H.H. The Dalai Lama on his famous trip to Asia.

# RIVERS, TREES AND PEOPLE

## Inter-Connection Ceremony on Susquehanna River May 15th



Up until World War II, Thailand's forests covered 75% of the total country. Today, just 60 years later, the forests have dwindled to 15% of the total country. Thai Monk Phra Prayudh believes this rapid destruction is due to three wrong assumptions regarding nature which were introduced to Thailand by Westerners. The first wrong assumption is that humans are separate from the environment. The second is that humans are in control of nature. The third wrong view is that happiness comes from material possessions.

Because Thailand is a predominantly Buddhist country, some monks, particularly those who live in the forest, have protested the destruction of the forests by "ordaining trees." Saffron-colored Buddhist robes were draped over the trees as a way of saying, "What you do to these trees is what you do to the Buddha." In other words, our world is so inter-connected that what we do to something else is, in the end, what we do to ourselves.

But we don't need to go to Thailand or the Amazon Rain Forest to witness environmental destruction. We only need to look out of our windows on to the gas wells in our backyards. When we look at the tremendous amount of fresh water needed for the wells, most of which is not recoverable, and the invasion into our state forest land, is what we are seeing any different than what the Thai people see? As Buddhist priests, Abbess Dai-En and I feel a deep concern about the rapid rate at which changes are taking place in our local area because we wonder how sustainable such quick growth is and how it will affect not only the future landscape but the health of the people who live here.

It is doubtful that these problems in our local environment will be going away anytime soon, or that everything is going to be okay. Moreover, solutions do not lie in pointing our fingers at "this company" or "that legislation." What is needed is deep thinking, or re-thinking about our place in nature and our cultural norms. The environmental crisis is not something that can be addressed simply by one person, one action, or one religion. Though ethical inspiration and action from individuals and religious communities is important, on-going attention and cooperation from many fields including politics, economics, and science is essential.

For our part, Mount Equity Zendo will be planning a ceremony on the Susquehanna River to acknowledge, one, our deep gratitude to the river for giving life to this area and, two, to promise to protect the river now and into the distant future. Inspired by the Thai monks who have begun the practice of ordaining trees, Abbess Dai-En is planning a ceremony at the river to recognize our deep interconnectedness. You are all welcome to join us at the river. More details will be given later.

May all beings enter the pure stream of Buddha-wisdom.

## *RECENT ACTIVITIES*



### **VISIT FROM CEDAR CREST COLLEGE**

Prof. Alan Richardson of Cedar Crest College's Department of Religion and his class made their annual sojourn to MEZ for a Day of Mindfulness. Instructions were given in sitting and walking meditation as well as mindful eating.



### **FEBRUARY NIRVANA SESSHIN**

Participants included Tokuen Gray, Zach Feltey, Koen Hunter, Mike Messmer, Daijun Brenner, Susan Gresens, Meigetsu Robishaw, Gyokuen Folgueras, Nanshin White, Kevin Gaughen, Tomei Knapp and Dendo Brocht.

### Other News...

Karen Frock, our Quaker Friend and website designer will be helping MEZ make major changes to our website. Daishin will be leading meditation at White Deer Run, a chemical dependency treatment center in Allenwood, once a week for an hour on Wednesdays.

**Gratitude to the following people for making offerings of food the month of February:** Rev. Kyoki Roberts of ZCP, Rev. Jisen, Rev. Wakoh, Deb and Don Weiskopf, Meigetsu, Nanshin, Tomei, Tokuen, Mike and Prudence McCabe, Dendo, Gyokuen, Susan Gresens, Misho, Daijun, Susan Faeder, Keien, Koen and all others we may have inadvertently missed. Our heartfelt gratitude.

**Becoming A Friend of Mt. Equity Zendo** Thanks to the donations of many people in the past we are able to provide Zen meditation retreats today. Mount Equity Zendo is a 501(c)3 religious organization and all offerings made beyond the suggested donations are tax deductible. Friends receive discounts on retreats, free Tuesday/Thursday evening meditation, access to our library and past Dharma Talks. To become a Friend, please consider the level of monthly support you feel most comfortable with:

\$20 (Mindful Friend), \$30 (Concentrated Friend), \$40 (Insightful Friend), or other (Flexible Friend) and email us at [daishin@mtequity.org](mailto:daishin@mtequity.org) or mail us at Mt. Equity Zendo, 280 Mt. Equity Rd., Pennsdale, PA 17756.