

IZAUK Sesshin - Sheringham Feb 2022

Kusen & Mondo

Zazen 11:00 Saturday

It's because our zazen is a zazen without goal, that we can take the time to truly see the nature of things that arise and disappear within our own mind.

They disappear in arising. And so we let go of grasping all of that, and this is the true letting-go - *shin jin datsu raku* - disidentifying with everything which is body-mind.

"And it is when the bodhisattva is filled with this renouncing," says Vairocana Buddha, "that they reach the sublime turning-inwards in emptiness."

This way which Vairocana Buddha teaches is a Middle Way.

To accept the renouncing of nothing, inside or outside but nonetheless without taking hold of anything is a bit of a challenge! It's necessary to go beyond the discriminating mind, beyond dualism good & bad. So it becomes a zazen which is simply Presence: pure awareness which observes, which witnesses the ceaseless play of things inside and outside until there's no longer anything in this Presence - neither inside or outside. Everything is open, everything is *thus* and this is emptiness, which is also known as *thusness*.

The things in our mind are both existent & non-existent at the same time. They pass. This is what we must understand, realise deeply though the turning inwards of zazen. And for this it's necessary to be disciplined with oneself.

A child of Buddha - you, all of us - who has decided to respect the precepts is not opposed to discipline. What life could we have without this discipline? What could our practice be if not founded on ethics and morality? What truly deep joy could come from an unregulated or dissolute life?

"I do what I feel like" - who says this? What awakening can flourish if we remain attached to the world of desires?

Through realising the impermanence of things, we can understand emptiness without using words - directly, immediately.

...

When we understand what emptiness is, and are able to live it in our own bodies, we see that every act - whether positive or negative - which we do for our own personal good or for that of others doesn't really exist.

The smallest gift is not directed towards relieving misery - it's simply an arising in the theatre itself of original purity, and of the spontaneous perfection of every moment of life. This is how it is: ungraspable presence, *thusness*.

"And so," the sutra continues, "benevolence, purity, uprightness, honesty, right view, the joy that is born of renouncement (letting-go) - all this is the substance and essence of the precepts, of discipline."

Because all of these qualities which I've just quoted stop wrong-doing and everything that draws us away from the Buddha's Way. And it's in our own mind that all these qualities can be born. You can live them in each thought, in each letting-go, in each breath.

Zazen allows us to contemplate the theatre of impermanence without needing to grasp anything whatsoever. It's when we let go of grasping and rejecting in our zazen itself that we discover that all these qualities are our true nature.

Zazen 17:00 Saturday

During zazen, each time we learn to look within ourselves. Where one can see the world arise and disappear in the form of sensations, thoughts, images, perceptions, sounds.

If we want to contemplate this impermanence which is emptiness, we must keep our eye open. The eye is our own attention. So we must, equally, practise the paramitas.

In our meditation itself, perseverance, patience, discipline so that our eye, our attention is not captured by any object. So that our attention does not close in on an image, an opinion, a judgement.

Without patience, without perseverance, without discipline we quickly lose our inner light - it's covered by phenomena.

The patience which we practise during our meditation helps us to avoid fixing our gaze on anything in particular. It's because of this that we can see everything. The patience which leads us directly to the pure consciousness of the present of the self.

We see the fundamental unity between things and emptiness. *Ku soku ze shiki*

We cannot know the empty nature of things independently of the things themselves. Master Dogen said it in this way: "To see mountains and rivers is to see the nature of Buddha."

No need to think. Simply patience and perseverance in not grasping that which comes to us. We can do it like a game: don't let's get caught up in objects. Authentic contemplation - meaning to see and *only* see - attached to nothing, not even to the idea of nothing. There's nothing fixed.

"This contemplation," says Master Dogen, "is eloquence with neither voice nor colour, speaking to itself in emptiness."

...

Perseverance leads us to the vision of the true nature of things. We must also put a bit of order

in our minds. That means we need discipline.

Discipline is the precepts, respect for the precepts. And it's also that which activates the dynamism of patience and perseverance.

Without the paramitas, the attraction of the world of desires carries us away, because it's powerful and tyrannical. We see the point at which - even in our mediation - our dreams our illusions carry us off, impose themselves on us.

When our eye of wisdom remains open, whatever is going on, it breathes being and non-being. It sees that true that everything is emptiness. It's the same as the truth which actualises in each moment in the world.

And then our eye of wisdom closes again, then once again we're lost in Samsara.

And the Brahma's Net Sutra emphasises that it's the vision of emptiness, this continuous penetration of emptiness, that allows the bodhisattvas - us - to allow their own root of goodness to grow, to the benefit of themselves and others.

Zazen 06:30 Sunday

By looking at the movement of things in our own body, all around us, in listening to sounds - wind, birds, the voice of the godo, we see how emptiness is actualised. Emptiness is never separated from phenomena. That's why *Ku* is *Shiki*, *Shiki* is *Ku* as we chant every day at the end of zazen during the ceremony.

It's also because of this that our own body is also the body of Buddha. Essence, emptiness, the buddha-nature is actualised in each breath, in each sensation, in each perception, in each thought. Our own mind is the place where emptiness is actualised. Our problem is that we have added a 'me', a false identity which perceives the world as being outside itself. As soon as you lift off this 'me' then everything is perfect. And that's what naturally happens during zazen if we no longer continue to give life to this 'me' and its stories, but simply rest in

an open presence that hears the world, sees the world - the inner world as much as the outer world.

"And this vision," says Master Dogen, "is how to make the moon appear in its fullness." The moon that is the symbol of awakening, the light of the moon. "It's like endlessly pointing", continues Master Dogen, "to the preaching of the Law."

So Master Dogen implores us, "Look carefully now, quickly. You have everything. What more would you want? The form of the full moon - study it in its perfect roundness."

And this perfect roundness is Presence. Awareness itself of your own presence - freed from a tyrannical 'me'. Simply things as they are, now.

And this teaching of Master Dogen is an invitation to dwell in the perfect roundness [completeness] of your own posture exactly as it is now. It lacks nothing.

To contemplate the full moon in its roundness is just to dwell in the living sensation of your own body - perhaps tired, tense, painful. But simply Presence.

Master Dogen says, "In the final analysis, there is nothing other than the buddha-nature." And at the same time there is neither Buddha nor nature, neither subject, nor object, neither inner, nor outer. And it is *thus*.

This opening is thus what we must practise - the fathomless turning-within of the mind. This is the Brahma Net Sutra.

And this turning inwards - there is not one of us who cannot find it. But the wind of distraction unceasingly agitates and disturbs the mind which can no longer rest, which can no longer turn inwards, in the peace of emptiness. And that's why we need zazen, and zazen needs us.

Without vigilance, without discipline, dreams and agitation absorb us, and distance us from the perfect roundness of the moon.

And so we return to Presence, beyond the world

of thoughts and distractions.

Presence, where the moon shines in its perfect roundness. There, where the roots of goodness sprout. And the practice of the precepts in this presence finds the soil in which it flourishes.

When we breathe in full awareness, when we feel the life that vibrates in the sensations of the body, when we perceive sounds without leaving silence, when there's nothing more but Presence, without 'me' - then emptiness breathes and actualises naturally, all is in perfect oneness, and we are the children of Buddha.

Zazen Sunday 11:00

Each of our gestures, each of our breaths, and each of our illusions is the way in which emptiness - the very meaning of things - is actualised in each moment. Actualises by itself.

It's this that we must become aware of and not just remain attached to phenomena, to appearances.

All the reflections of the moon in water come from one single moon. The reflections are all manifestations of impermanence, of all that arises and disappears. We must turn our gaze towards the moon, become aware of what our homeland is, of our original source.

"So," says the Brahma Net Sutra, "all our painful emotions come from our belief that things are permanent, that we can grasp them to find happiness, that they have a real substance of their own." And all of this is created by our ignorance, which makes mistakes about the very essence of things & their emptiness. It's as if we want to take hold of the reflections of the moon.

So we see the moon and its reflections, we see emptiness in phenomena, we see emptiness in our own body, in our own mind. Thoughts pass; where do they remain after zazen?

We see and we live emptiness in our posture, in

our body, in our thoughts, in our illusions, in our beliefs. And to see this constitutes the real essence.

When we live Presence, with neither before nor after, we access true knowing. We take support from emptiness, without grasping anything. We see everything, but we don't intervene. We don't try to change the present moment.

It's also the way to deal with all negative acts, and the effects of bad karma.

"So," says the sutra, "the children of Buddha aspire to ceaselessly contemplate, to dwell in this turning- inwards, and to reveal the chain of karma and its effects. We see this in our own mind. How we create and get attached to trains of thought. How we imagine our life from our memories, and our past experiences.

The marvellous practice of Buddha is that which is maintained in this turning-inward where we taste Presence, the fact of being.

"So," says Master Dogen, "this child of Buddha in the conduct of their life is no longer chained to life. As death approaches, they are no longer disturbed by death. Nor do they waste their time through loving life or being so attached to it. They are no longer blinded by the fear of death, because of their knowledge of truth and the emptiness of all things. And this is what removes from them even the desire to be liberated itself.

"There is a path," says the Buddha, "to satisfy this aspiration to contemplate unceasingly and to dwell in this inward-turning that frees us. The child of Buddha preserves & protects the Three Treasures."

And for this it's essential to dissolve the 'me' and its false views in the contemplation itself of the mind.

This is zazen.

Mondo 17:00 Sunday

This is the moment when you can ask about something you worry about in the practice of Buddhism, of Zen. I'll do my best to give a clear answer. Sometimes it's a little difficult to come and face me, but it's a good thing to do anyway. And we've put down three zabutons so it will be comfortable...

Q1. I'm afraid it's the same question that I've asked before. The first part is 'What is contemplation'. Is it something you actively do, or is it letting go of other things? And who does it?

A. This is a good question. I came to this word 'contemplation' a while ago when I was reading and I thought it was appropriate because I've talked for a long time about looking at things, at the appearing and disappearing of things, so who - who sees that?. If I make any thought about this, I enter the world of words and I lose it - I'm no longer just looking, I'm no longer in the world of contemplation. Contemplating is just doing nothing and looking at things, which is what I mean when I use this word contemplation, which seems to me to be at the heart of our practice.

It's not nothing, it's not an absence of anything - because everything is there, everything can be seen, nothing can be grasped - sensations, perception... whatever it is; everything, the aggregates, passes. So what else to do than look at that. And when you look at that you realise that you are that which contemplates - but this is nobody, this is not 'me', this is not an ego, this is not a form, not an entity which would look at things - but things, phenomena are seen. So this is for me contemplation, with nobody contemplating.

Q1. So is this sort of like 'consciousness'?

A. There is awareness in this contemplating, awareness of being, of seeing, even of trying to name what is seen. But this is just without anybody. We lose the idea of a 'me', of an ego, when we enter this world of contemplation. Which is - (we were talking with the new

ordained people a short while ago) - which is also shikantaza is contemplation for me.

Shikantaza is also vacuity in a way, because everything is seen without grasping anything. As soon as there is 'this' coming - avidity or the temptation of saying "Ah, this is it!" - we lose it. So this is just staying in contemplation trying not to do anything against it, let the contemplation arise.

Q1. So it's not thoughts, you're not talking about thoughts

A. No, no, no. But thoughts could be present in this contemplation.

Q1. Is it contemplating the thoughts rather than contemplating with thoughts?

A. Two things. It can be contemplating thoughts. Generally when thoughts arise in the mind they have such a power of captation (capturing) that the mind immediately *'shooof'* - becomes a thought and a story. So the thing is to come back to contemplation by letting go of the thought, trying not to be taken by the next one.

Because they come and in each thought you have the arising of the next one. Something - an image, a word, a situation or a memory creating the next one, which creates ... and we are in a story. A story which - most of the time - is a story which is a little crazy. It goes from a situation to another... you can try to study that in your meditation - starting from an event you arrive at another and if you can come back & study how it came you will see that this train of thoughts was ...(sweeping hand gesture) ... just like this.

So, the thought comes with an object. With no object there is no thought.

So, of course when we contemplate things - to 'contemplate' for me is also listening, listening to the sounds of the world. You know, the birds... So when there is ... it can create a thought or a thought can be with because the mental, consciousness is always with any other perception - I mean, seeing, listening, tasting or touching. The mental is always with this, trying

to name things which are perceived in the mind. So this is very dangerous, to not let the thought take all the place. OK? Name the thing, but no more.

This is what I call in my kusen 'discipline', is the way of domesticating oneself in a way, domesticating ... conditioning oneself not to ... *'tschooo'* - to be catching things.

So, in contemplation, thoughts can come, can be seen - the danger is that it grasps our attention. At this moment, contemplation is ending. But if you let it pass you are not.. you say, well I know that.. back to my breathing, to my feeling, to my listening, observing. So it goes and contemplation again comes. But in your contemplation, well - I can talk of my experience ... I can say "Yeh, this is it" ... and that's all. I am just ... just aware of being. I don't use any words. I can listen to everything, there is no border between me and the world. All is my mind, in a way. This is what I feel in contemplation, a kind of a (gesture) ..*'hwooh'*.. no limit.

Q1. Yes. Pure awareness of the moment, being in the moment... to be in the moment

A. Yeh, if you are not in the present moment, there is no contemplation

Q1. But is contemplation different than awareness in the moment

A. Ah no, you could say it is the same, yeah, because continually being aware of what comes to us is being, contemplating. This is awareness. Contemplation is full awareness of the present moment which does not exist itself because it's (gestures) *chu..chu..chu..chu..chu*

So being continuously aware of what happens, what arises. This is really a pleasure, to be contemplating - a big joy

Q1. I think it's the word that stands in my way, and I never remember what you mean by it. So that's what I'm struggling with

A. Well, I use it but I don't think that many godos or teachers in AZI or those godos I know use this word. But this word is really for me 'talking' (this

word really speaks to me) It's very - talking of vision, you know. Contemplation is ... sometimes Christian people use this word, but I don't care. For me this also means this opening, which is freedom, too.

Q1. So would you consider contemplation 'active'?

A. Who is active? I mean, it's a quality of contemplation to be active in a way, but it continues to be by itself - not because I do something. I accept those things are there - the sounds, the thoughts, the feelings we have. And, OK, I stay with this. This is full acceptance of what comes to us.

There is nobody to: "Oh stop, I want it to stop." When you say that it continues, more. Because it's another part of us, the mentality which has taken the feeling of the perfection of the phenomenon.

This is really, really, really great to study that in this way.

Q1. It's this word 'study' as well. To me 'study' is a mental thing. This is really what confuses me.

A. Well, 'study'. I hear the 'study' in 'to be aware of it' if you want, but to study in the world, Dogen's study, is to forget oneself. Forget oneself.

Q1. Language is such a ...

A. Ah, language is a very limited thing, but we try

Q1. Thank you

A. A good question

Q2. I'd just like to clarify something I think you mentioned there when answering Q1's question, as something that's troubled me. I'm thinking here of one of the Buddha's teachings in the Bahir Sutra - a short sutra

A. I don't know it. No matter...

Q2. So what he says is, to paraphrase "When for

you in the seen there is only the seen; when in the heard, only the heard; when in the smelled, only the smelled, in the tasted only the tasted ... then everything will be OK."

And that 'only' has been intriguing me. I'm thinking, when I am seeing, mostly I see the human world, full of concepts. You know, everything is named. I can see you as my teacher, the dojo, the sangha...

At the other end of that, this is just patterns of colour. Is that really what the Buddha means? That I should be seeing just in terms of patterns of colour and as soon as I'm beginning to name, even at the simplest level of naming, I begin to miss the point.

It's just, when you mentioned with Q1, there was a sense there that something could name something

A. My point is, when you put a name on a thing you make it a concept

Q2. Yes.

A. You don't see the thing any more, really. You have put a name and the computer here (points to head) has ... 'boh, clack' ... has put that in a drawer, or a file, or, you know, some place It has recognised, 'OK'. So you don't see, generally, you don't see any more the thing when you have named it.

Anyway, maybe I'm mistaken, but I heard something else in your question which I find I should talk a little about.

In Nagarjuna, but the main great philosopher and the school of Yogacara, I mean the Lankavatara Sutra, they say that the only reality is Mind - Mind with a big 'M'. And nothing else - everything is Mind. And I find that very helpful. Because in fact, when you see the world - for example when I touch the ground I have a sensation. When I see the floor, I have a vision, OK? As well, the sensation of the floor and the vision of the floor, the vision of the colour of the floor - it is something which is passive in my mind. This is a perception.

The floor is solid because my arms, my hands, feel something solid. It is the sensation of my hand which makes the floor solid. So everything is - I don't know if you understand me, it's not a little too complicated - but everything is perceived in Mind. When I see you, do you exist or don't you? Who are you?

I see a form in my mind, in here (points). And this perception in Mind, my body is working but having 'doors' to perceive the world. And this perception comes through the five senses and goes to the mind behind... I say behind, but I don't know where exactly ...

But all the perception I have of the world, of other people, *IS* in my mind. And when my mind, the body dies - the perception ends.

So when you say you name things, OK, I name the ground I don't see it any more. It's OK, but also when I name it's a kind of concept. The thing itself does not exist outside my mind.

Q2. Yes

A. That's what I wanted to add to your question. It exists in my mind and if I put - in my mind - I put a name on it, most of the time the perception of this thing disappears. And I keep the word, and I continue to work on the world and the world it says.

Q2. Yes. So, you said there, when I name it I no longer have the perception of the thing.

A. Yeah

Q2. but the 'thing', is to draw a line around it, to say '_this_ thing, and not everything else'. Do you see what I mean?

A. No.

Q2. If there can be 'a thing' as opposed to not 'everything'. It's difficult to explain. So, is there a sense in which I can perceive 'Guy' now, or am I just perceiving colours? And it is my mind that picks you out from the background. So, let's not think about the concept

A. You perceive Guy, you perceive a form, you perceive me seated, but you perceive something

else which is invisible. You perceive another thing of what you see. You get another [more] information which is not passing through the world

Q2. Yes, the history of my knowing that I also bring to it, of my having seen you a year ago

A. Yes, but also you get other information already - past or just right now - about who I am. In fact, the characteristics, the way I use words, the way I talk, the way I move, you get a lot of information on me rather than a colour, a black colour and a form like this.

When I look at you, I get a perception of the whole world with many things that I don't understand quite well, I feel. I'm not sure if it is this or this - like the feeling of somebody for you, you never know exactly what it is, even if this person uses words. So, with words we hide the thing and the best if possible is to feel without words.

But we need words, too, to communicate so we try & most of the people, all people try all their life to communicate without really doing it. Because behind the words you have concepts, you have a conditioning and each one has a conditioning. When we talk about loving, love or benevolence or violence, or anger - each one puts behind a word their own experience.

So this is what we communicate with. But language is never without what we perceive. This was the answer to Q1, too. We put names on our perception, and when we put names the perception disappears.

Q2. Even if I'm just leaving that name alone? So, sitting contemplating in Brighton, I will hear the seagull invariably. And I will name it 'a seagull'. But I can let go of it, it doesn't disturb my contemplation, but I did know that it's a seagull.

A. Ah, you should read Bankei's *'The Unborn'*. Bankei says, "Even if we are talking together and there is a crow which goes *'aaah, aaerh'* we know that this is a crow. You don't need to *say*, "This is a crow", you just *know* it is a crow, you have the information. So, *who* knows that this is a crow when we are busy talking together? This

is your buddha-nature. This is the answer. I believe it is.

Do you know Bankei? I have the book in English. It's nice, it's really nice.¹

Q3. It's not exactly a question. It's to ask about your experience in letting go of attachment and suffering.

A. It's a long story and I don't know where to begin.

I still feel attachment for things, you know, but I'm not really disturbed by that. I feel attachments you know sometimes for something and if I wait, if I'm patient it goes, I lose the attraction of it or I forget the desire. But I am becoming old, this is an advantage (laughs).

When you are young you need to satisfy many, many things. When you are old ... less. So my experience is, it's part of the human life, you know, to try to attach, to get for nourishing the 'me', the wrong idea of what we are, or the false belief in this 'ego' - we want to satisfy it, we want to nourish it.

So when you study the ego a little more, the 'me', the old facets of it, how we lie to ourselves, how we manipulate.. we manipulate ourselves. We find justification for this or an excuse for that. We are very clever to escape from the truth or freedom. So we just get attached each time.

But the Buddha said, "What you have done, the knots you have made you are able to undo." What you have [twisted] you can open. This is your work. And this is the work of any human being.

From the baby age we are conditioned anyway. Sometimes some people are lucky because they can grow in love. Sometimes it's not at all the case. They grow in violence and denial. But anyway, each of us has to see what those

¹ *Bankei Zen - Translations from The Record of Bankei*, Peter Haskel, Grove Press 1984

attachments mean

Because each time we are attached to something, we suffer and I would say that suffering is a teaching. If we can understand the root of our suffering, which is the self, not the truth - then one OK, we progress.

We progress and I've tried to do that in my life. Each time I was meeting suffering, I was working on it. You know, too, I can have help from someone, a specialist. Sometimes, some specialists can help you to open the knots.

And I did it also by myself, you know - sitting, sitting, sitting and looking and looking again and looking again and looking again until I see how it came. Is there someone's suffering behind this or is it an idea? What is the 'me', the ego? What is this?

And when we work on it we give it less importance I would say. And in zazen we forget it, so it decreases in importance. This is my experience, but this is the experience of any human being. I'm not different from any other people.

My difference is that I was lucky to be able to continue this practice for so long. I decided one moment I would not change any, I would not change. I would go on until death with this practice, to deepen it completely. Whatever had been my attachment, or whatever had been my laziness or my unskilfulness, I decided I would continue zazen. Sometimes I feel a little lazy now, but I am old - I like my bed (laughs).

But this is also part of the work. Get up, go to the dojo. This is a way of ending with attachment.

"And be attached," Deshimaru told us always, "be attached to *only one thing* - zazen!" OK, OK, but it's not so obvious, huh?

Q3. Just to say, relating to fear, sitting with fear, torment, trauma, sitting with deep emotion, I read something years ago, when I first started sitting I haven't had a sangha until now, so doing sitting alone - a lot of fear, terror, whatever, Then I read one sentence, "Buddha sat, the

swords were coming at him, under the tree, and they turned into flowers. Have you heard that one? And that helped me when I first started sitting

A. Yes, that's it. You change bad into good by your practice. And your faults become your qualities, too, because you've recognised them and accepted them.

Q3. I think that was the only way I was going to sit through that fear was by changing them, changing it into love.

A. We can be helped by tales and stories of the Buddha and know that the attacker... the previous life of the Buddha when he says, "I have seen all my past lives." And when he was an animal, when he was a tiger and giving his body to the female tiger for nourishing the babies ... and so it is very interesting to see that because it's also the work we have to do when we study oneself. It is not to maybe see the previous life or past lives - OK, but coming back to see the root of our suffering is very like, since we are born now, this is working on the past to make it clear.

And when it's become clear you are not afraid any more. You say, OK - it was this. I did that, I made a mistake or it was because the circumstances were that, and now if it happens again I will not react the same, I will take the time, I will be patient, I will be benevolent, I will be compassionate, I will be accepting. Acceptance is for me really important. We cannot change what happened in the past, but because we can use it to grow, I mean it's a good teaching, to make it clear.

Q3. So just relating to fear, would you say to go beyond fear is to go through the fear?

A. NO, no! beyond fear. This is an emotion you feel, FEEL it! Accept it! Most of the time when we have fear we will take a glass of wine and ... *hweh!* (mimes) Yes? Understand?

So, this is escaping from the suffering and the cause of suffering and it's not useful. But accepting is sometimes ... difficult

Q3. *Through* the fear?

A. Not *through*, no! *SEE* it! Accept it. OK? "I'm afraid now. I'm afraid" and well, accepting it makes it lower, farther away. When you accept the fear, it loses its importance. OK...

Acceptance is really a practice of the bodhisattva. What comes? Everything. Added to that, there is no bad, no good - this is what happens, what arises. The good and bad is the notion that we put on things when we like or dislike [them], but things are what they are.

People *are* what they are. So acceptance is the best attitude. And for feeling, this is the same.

Q3. As you said earlier, if we don't accept it gets worse.

A. Yes, most of the time, yes. When we reject something we give it more power to come back and disturb us. I'm sure that the emotion of anger, if you keep it, you don't want to let it go, it destroys you inside because you keep it and say, "Oh, I hate this. Next time I see her, I'll..." You create karma, you create something. It's bad for *you*, not for the other [person].

It's bad for you. So the thing is sometimes to accept to be angry, because it's given freedom to this emotion you keep for a long [time]. So, OK ... (yelps) .. and after you go and you say, "Sorry. I did my best but I was really angry, and violent with you and I'm sorry."

But sometimes it's good to be angry. We can't keep our poison always in our mind and in our body. We have to let them clear and go out - and *see* them.

This is a study. Zen study is this. Study oneself. OK?

Thank you. We'll go for dinner...

Zazen 06:30 Monday

So today, seven children of Buddha will receive the Precepts. And if you've already received them, it's good to do it again. Many ceremonies include this receiving of the Precepts: the monk ordination ceremony, the shiho ceremony, the transmission between master and disciple. We must receive them and transmit them in our own turn. And for that we must keep our faith pure. Not let doubt invade us when the circumstances of our lives are difficult. This faith, which gives its greatness to this taking of refuge, signifies that there is no separation between yourself and Buddha. This is the only realisation that can satisfy a human being. Can there be anyone who doesn't accept the precepts with joy and search for this realisation?

We will have a beautiful ceremony to celebrate this event. It's not only a religious act; it's a way of saying that we commit our life to a path of Truth. The value of the bodhisattva is in fact beyond all religious form, even of Buddhism. These are the values which are the foundation of our own humanity.

These Precepts are already in our mind, in our heart from the very beginning. Because our child of buddha nature already knows the difference between good and bad. And knows already that there is a way of non-dualism. But we're always forgetting this fact, we repeat the same mistakes.

So, Master Dogen tells us, "To get rid of one's errors and avoid bad conduct is what the study of Zen and the search for the Way are about." What matters, what is most important, is nothing other than the precepts and discipline.

In general, it's during the ceremony that the poem written on the rakusu is revealed, but I'd like to disclose it now. I've simply calligraphed the Three Pure Precepts. They are the true guide for all existence:

- *Cease from evil*
- *Do only good*
- *Do good for others*

Yesterday evening we chanted the *Sangemon* - the sutra of repentance - and we renounced all that is twisted, deceitful, false and took refuge in that which is correct.

We consciously accept to receive the Three Pure Precepts.

The formula during the ceremony is this:

"From now on, with your body itself, until you realise the body of Buddha will you keep the precept of ceasing to do evil?"

And you reply in a loud voice, "I will keep it". In fact you say, "Yes! Yes! Yes!"

And so this questioning during the ceremony, is the abbreviated manner of expressing what discipline is.

"Will you maintain the precept of practising good?" - "Yes! Yes! Yes!"

This is the abbreviated manner of expressing practising good actions

"Will you maintain the precept of doing good for all beings?" - "Yes! Yes! Yes!"

To keep these Three Pure Precepts is to keep them at the root of the actions we take, even the very smallest actions, even the smallest movements, even the smallest emotions - because all of this is the manifestation of emptiness, of truth, of buddha-nature. And it's this continual attention to everything that we do that allows us to progress towards our own truth, towards our own greatness, towards Great Wisdom, without being afraid, without weakness, without lying.

To become truly a Buddha in form and behaviour.

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