

Zen Heart Sangha

Issue 16

Spring/Summer 2009 Newsletter

Special Upcoming Events

Guest Speakers:

Mar. 16: Angie Boissevain
(Floating Zendo, Santa Cruz)
Apr. 27: Tai Sheridan (SFZC)

Special Events:

Four Noble Truths Class

1st Saturday of Month, Beginning
Feb. 7 (Zenshin Do)

Annual Meeting

Mar. 23

Vajrapani 3-day Retreat

Apr. 10-12
(Starting Friday at 9:00 am;
Jukai on Sunday)

Day-Long Retreat

June 28 (Jikoji Zen Center)

Monthly Schedule

Monday evenings*

Welcome/Instruction	6:30 pm
Zazen	7:00
Service	7:40
Lecture	7:50
Final Bows	8:45
End Evening	9:00

* except 1st Mondays

1st Monday of month: Retreat

Welcome/Instruction	6:30 pm
Zazen	7:00
Kinhin	7:40
Zazen	8:00
Three Bows	8:40
End Evening	8:45

1st & 3rd Saturdays of month

Zazen	5:50 am
Kinhin	6:20
Zazen	6:30
Service	7:00
Community breakfast	7:20
Soji (Cleanup)	8:00
Zazen	8:40
Study/Tea	9:10
End program	10:10

Zazen – sitting meditation
Kinhin – walking meditation

Hope and Virtue

Let it be told to the future world, that in the depth of winter, when nothing but hope and virtue could survive, that the city and the country, alarmed at one common danger, came forth to meet it and repulse it. (Thomas Paine)

The above words, part of President Obama's inaugural address, were spoken by George Washington as he crossed the Delaware in the middle of winter, during our country's desperate struggle for independence. Washington was himself quoting Thomas Paine's essay, "The Crisis" which begins with the well-known line, "These are the times that try men's souls." Every generation claims these words as their own; even in the time of the Buddha, the Indian states were plagued by war, corruption, and scandal. In fact, as long as human beings do not understand the affects of greed, hatred, and delusion, we will always have these terrible times and bemoan them. This understanding formed the Buddha's first teachings of the Four Noble Truths: the truth of suffering, the causes of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the eight-fold path of awakening from suffering.

Even in the midst of danger, despair, and disillusionment, human beings seem to find a way to meet difficult times with hope and virtue. Hope is the belief that there is good in the world and that we can obtain it; virtue is the wisdom by which hope is brought to fruition. By practicing the old-fashioned virtues of general moral uprightness, we give our hopes a foundation upon which to rest and grow strong. These are the very qualities that form the heart of Buddhist teachings as expressed in the Ten Precepts, the Six Paramitas (Perfections), and the Eightfold Path.

Sometimes the crisis is worldwide, sometimes it is in our own country. Most of the time, the crisis is within our own hearts--in the daily indignities, humiliations, pettiness, and inconsideration that mark our relations with each other. If we wish for a more hopeful future, a world in which honesty, integrity, and moral uprightness are considered the norm rather than the exception, we must practice virtue in each and every moment.

Paine's essay continues, "The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country, but he that stands by it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman." Our commitment to practice cannot be just when the proverbial sun is shining. We must practice during the difficult times, the boring times, the times when the question arises, "Why am I doing this?" If we stand by our practice through good, bad, and indifferent, we will not only be serving ourselves but everyone with whom we speak, work, play, and bow each day. Even if no one else knows of our virtue, we will become a beacon of hope and anchor of strength in difficult times. May hope fill your hearts in the days and months ahead.

With Many Bows, Misha Shungen