



IBMC Monthly Guide - October, 2006

108 Bows Ceremony

The first Sunday of the month we hold the 108 Bows Ceremony, from 10 to 10:30 am, honoring all the Buddhas that we know of who have existed. As we chant each of the 88 names we bow to each one in reverence. It is a good way of beginning the Sunday service. We invite you to join us on October 2 for the ceremony. It will be led this month by Rev. Sunya

Vimalakirti Nirdesa Seminar

On Saturday, October 23, Ven. Dr. Karuna Dharma will offer a day workshop/seminar on the Vimalakirti Nirdesa Sutra. The seminar will consist of reading and discussing the sutra and examining its difficulties, alternated with sitting periods to aid in understanding. The sutra is concerned with ultimate reality and humor as well as a feminist tinge. It is one of the three most beloved sutras in Mahayana Buddhism: the other two being the Lotus Sutra and the Diamond Sutra.

The workshop will begin at 10 am and go until 4 pm. A veg-tarian lunch will be served as part of the seminar. Call Ven. Karuna directly at 213 382-9972 to sign up for the workshop. There is a suggested payment of \$25 for the class. You should have a copy of the sutra ahead of time to read.

Room for Rent for Buddhist Practitioners

IBMC's Peaceful Buddhist community has a single semi-furnished room with shared kitchen and bath for rent to Buddhist practitioners. Because it is in the Zendo, only meditators will be considered.

IBMC Yard Sale

IBMC will be holding its yard sale Saturday October 30 in front of Thien-An House to help raise funds for IBMC's lawn renovation project. Please bring donations by October 25 to the office in Thien-An House, 939 S. New Hampshire Blvd. Also, if you can help to man the Yard Sale, talk to Douglas, who is in charge of the yard sale, at 213 384-0850.

Borobodur Stupa

The Borobodur Temple complex is one of the greatest monuments in the world. It is of uncertain age, but thought to have been built between the end of the seventh and beginning of the eighth century A.D. For about a century and a half it was the spiritual centre of Buddhism in Java, then it was lost until its rediscovery in the eighteenth century. The structure, composed of 55,000 square meters of lava-rock is erected on a hill in the form of a stepped-pyramid of six rectangular storeys, three circular terraces and a central stupa forming the summit. The whole structure is in the form of a lotus, the sacred flower of Buddha.

For each direction there are ninety-two Dhyani Buddha statues and 1,460 relief scenes. The lowest level has 160 reliefs depicting cause and effect; the middle level contains various stories of the Buddha's life from the Jataka Tales; the highest level has no reliefs or decorations whatsoever but has a balcony, square in shape with round walls: a circle without beginning or end. Here is the place of the ninety-two Vajrasattvas or Dhyani Buddhas tucked into small stupas. Each of these statues has a mudra (hand gesture) indicating one of the five directions: east, with the mudra of calling the earth to witness; south, with the hand position of blessing; west, with the gesture of meditation; north, the mudra of fearlessness; and the centre with the gesture of teaching.

Besides being the highest symbol of Buddhism, the Borobodur stupa is also a replica of the universe. It symbolises the micro-cosmos, which is divided into three levels, in which man's world of desire is influenced by negative impulses; the middle level, the world in which man has control of his negative impulses and uses his positive impulses; the highest level, in which the world of man is no longer bounded by physical and worldly ancient desire. It is devotional practice to circumambulate around the galleries and terraces always turning to the left and keeping the edifice to the right while either chanting or meditating. In total, Borobodur represents the ten levels of a Bodhisattva's life which he or she must develop to become a Buddha or an awakened one.

Is This It? - by Rev. Ksanti Karuna, Thich Tam Nhan Nhuc

Well, in a Clintonesque fashion, it depends on the meaning of THIS.

When Rev. Karuna called and asked the question: What are you going to speak on in July? I had been reading Pema Chodron's *When Things Fall Apart and Start From Where You Are*. So the, then obvious, question was: Is this it? And the equally obvious answer would be: Yes. Now, deal with it.

Pema Chodron is a firm believer in "dealing with it." No hope. No Fear. Face it. And learn from it. It works, too. Until you stop running away from whatever this is and really look at it you can never move on either in your life or your practice. It requires a lot of compassion for yourself and then for others. You begin to see that you are not alone in whatever hell you're in.

For several years I wrote a prisoner who was incredibly bright and thoughtful. Too thoughtful. He couldn't cut himself any slack, but, also, he couldn't let himself see that his actions kept bringing him back to the same spot. We would keep circling the same issues. Whenever I thought we had come to a new start he would go back and travel the same road. Finally I sent him *When Things Fall Apart*

and he got it. Which kind of made me feel foolish, but also incredibly happy that the right means had been found.

We hope for the best and we fear the worst. All the time life goes on and we miss it. So yes, THIS is it. But not always.

I then was reading the sutras and a favorite is The Vimalakirti Sutra which is as close to a comic sutra as you will find. Vimalakirti is a lay person and very wise in the Dharma. The Buddha hears that he is not feeling well and wants to send one of his followers to inquire about his health. No one wants to go. Everyone has a story about a run in with Vimalakirti. They always got tripped up because his understanding of the Dharma is better than theirs. Finally Manjusri is talked in to going and asking. But he is not going alone. Thousands of Bodhisattvas, hundreds of disciples, thousands of gods and goddesses follow Manjusri. (When I began studying Buddhism I thought it was going to be a simpler hierarchy. Was I wrong! But more on that later.)

Anyway S'ariputra is once again the fall guy. S'ariputra from the Heart Sutra. He is on the sidelines and looking around Vimalakirti's house. Well, first of all, Vimalakirti, hearing that a great multitude of VIPS was coming to visit, emptied his house. I guess he also must have made it bigger because they all fit in. Well, S'ariputra is thinking, "Where are they going to sit?" And Vimalakirti says "Venerable S'ariputra, did you come for the sake of the Dharma or did you come for the sake of a chair?"

There are two points to the sutra. One that form is emptiness, emptiness is form. That nothing is absolute. Vimalakirti shows time and again. There is a lot of "magic" in the sutra. And a lot of chiding about the way it's supposed to be, because the second point is that lay practice is as deep and profound as the practice removed from the mundane world. As he says:

"Noble sir, flowers like the lotus, the water lily, and the moon lily do not grow on the dry ground in the desert, they grow in the swamps in mud. In the same way, the Buddha qualities do not grow in living beings who are already awakened, but in those living beings that are like swamps and mud of negative emotions.

"In a similar way, a seed does not grow in the sky, but on the earth. Buddha qualities do not grow in those who are already saints, but in those who seek awakening after having built a mountain of egoistic views as high as Mount Everest.

"Noble sir, by the same token, one can understand that the family of the Tathagatas includes all our passions. Without going into the ocean of passions one cannot reach the mind of pure knowing."

Without experiencing or acknowledging this world in all of its possibilities, how can you reach nirvana?

So THIS is bigger than this. One taste. How can one drink the whole ocean? By taking one swallow. Form is emptiness, emptiness is form. This is THIS. Everyday mind is Buddha mind.

And I could leave it there and maybe I should but,

Srāddha believes our car is green. When I look at it it doesn't seem green to me. His green and my green are two different greens. As I look at you I have to ask: is your THIS my THIS? Is what you see what I see? Actually recent tests have shown that YES what you see is what I see. The brain actually registers everything that is going on. Or at least receives the sensation of it. Perception is an entirely different thing. I was backing out of a parking space at 7-11 and for some reason I was very paranoid about it. Actually, I've seen too many minor fender benders, so maybe it's just caution. Anyway, the mass behind me as I thought of the most recent incident morphed into three motorcycles with three cops having coffee. Sensation then perception. We see what we think we should see or what we want to see. Or the familiar story: There's a spot on the wall. If you name it, say Ralph, Ralph will always be immediately apparent when you walk in the room. But nobody else will probably see it.

And it is probably the same with everything in our lives. The habit energy gets well established and then it is utterly predictable and if uncomfortable it becomes unbearable. Like a job that gets too familiar, then too boring, then unbearable. Anger habits. Eating habits. Another study said that most Americans cook twelve different meals. That is it. Two hundred cookbooks on a shelf and only twelve recipes that come to mind for that Thursday stay at home meal. A member of this Sangha told me once that he decided to use his other hand for a while. Just to deal with things differently.

So my THIS is probably different but utterly the same as your THIS. At least, as far as we've taken THIS so far. But this is a talk on Zen and the purpose is to become awake. .

Robert Thurman wrote a book entitled Inner Revolution. He was upset about his THIS. The THIS that came from the habit energy that gets us to believe that THIS is what we are supposed to do. Like get a job, get a credit card, buy things, play on Saturday, and pray on Sunday. The habit energy that keeps everything going along the way it has. It is in a way enslavement. Willingly, and seemingly freely, entered into but which leads to Thoreau's declaring that most men live lives of quiet desperation and go to the grave with the song still in them. Buddha called it dukkha or suffering or on quiet Sundays unsatisfactory. The first noble truth. And I am not going to go through the other three. What Thurman says is try a "cool revolution." What if the goal was the individual's growth and liberation? What if we didn't buy into the THIS of a world of consumerism? What if our goal was the discovery of each individual's uniqueness and fulfillment? Then whatever happens on the outside just needs to be tolerated.

One of the poisons is anger. Anger comes from feeling uncomfortable because something you don't want to happen is happening or vice versa. Then you lose your joyousness in just being and start operating from a place of misery and anger. (That comes from a seventh-century Buddhist: Shantideva). The joyousness of just being.

The Dalai Lama says that the point of living is happiness. The obvious point being that credit cards, cars, and a low mortgage rate is not that but rather another of the poisons: delusion. In a way, any THIS is beside the point. If we get tied up with THIS, we actually miss it.

To face THIS is to see beyond it.

Or the big THIS is not the little this. Form and Emptiness. Emptiness and Form. I like to think of it as sand castles. A wonderful beach. You come and build a sand castle. You leave and the surf and wind take it away. A wonderful beach. Emptiness and Form. Form and Emptiness. All five skandas are empty. And you pass beyond suffering.

Thurman recounts that 2600 years ago while the Buddha was giving a teaching, he placed his big toe on the earth and revealed to his audience that the universe we live in is pure paradise. If we understood the true nature of reality, we would see that it is the perfect theatre for positive evolution.

A perfect playground.

If we allow this reality to be revealed who knows what delights we will find. Like the chairs for Manjusri's posse, like the devas, assuras, gods, and goddesses, or like the harmful spirits and ominous planets we ask the arahants, Buddhas, and Bodhisattvas to protect us from, like the discovery of freedom and happiness. As Hamlet kind of says of his ghost to Horatio-- "there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

May you be well and happy, peaceful, and free from suffering.

Koan Insights, given August 6, 2006 - by Rev. Vajra Karuna, Thich Tam Thi

As some of you will remember I have in the past pointed out that while koans have a reputation for being seemingly paradoxical statements that are not subject to intellectual or logical analysis this is only partially true. At their deepest levels they are trans-logical in the sense that their function is to get the Zen practitioner to transcend logical, or more to the point, the dual thinking that is the basis of logic. The reason for this is that while logical/dual thinking has its constructive function in our lives, in fact, we could not survive without it; nonetheless, we pay a severe price for this thinking to the degree that it is our exclusive way of thinking. Dual thinking is that which divides all reality into opposites, these can be hostile or complementary opposites, but Zen teaches that such an oppositional view is a major, if not the major, source of our dissatisfaction and distress in life. True satisfaction and peace with self, others, and the world comes from experiencing reality as having the more fundamental nature of non-duality. It is to try to attain this experience that one goes to a Zen master and takes up koan practice.

The koans that become the focus of that practice, however, did not miraculously arise out of nothing. Before they became mysteriously non-logical creatures they went through a stage of development in which they severed some far more mundane functions; and these functions can still be discovered by a careful analysis of most koans. In particular, among these functions was to teach general Zen historical, philosophical, and ritual elements. All of which, in turn, were expected to support the practitioner who was also using the koans in their more profound sense.

To further this understanding of koans in their more everyday practical support function I have chosen three koans from the collection called the Gateless Gate. I have chosen these three in particular to show that even on the mundane level different koans have different complexities. I will

start with the most complex and to the least complex.

Nan-chuan's Ordinary Mind is the Way (Tao) Everyday Life is the Way.

Chao-chou asked Nan-ch'uan, "What is the Way?" Nan-ch'uan said, "Ordinary mind is the Way" Chao-chou asked, "Should I try to direct my mind towards it?" Nan-ch'uan said, "If you try to direct your own mind, you will become separated from it." Chao-chou asked, "How can I know the Way if I don't direct myself?" Nan-ch'uan said, "The Way is not subject to knowing or not knowing; knowing is delusion, not knowing is blankness. If you truly reach the genuine Way, you will find it as vast and boundless as outer space; it has the same freedom as the sky. How can this be discussed at the level of affirmation and negation?" With these words Chao-chou had a sudden realization.

Comment. Everyday Life is the Way. Should I try to direct my mind towards/seek after it? If you try to direct your own mind, you betray your practice and become separated from it. If I make the way something outside myself, something that is not already a part of me, I will only further feel alienated from it.

How can I know the Way if I don't direct myself? How is ordinary mind - not subject to knowing /does not belong to the perceptual world, or not knowing/non-perceptual world? How is ordinary mind a- knowing is delusion, not knowing is blankness/confusion/senseless? How is ordinary mind - as vast and boundless as outer space/has the same freedom as the sky? How is ordinary mind "something that can not be discussed/named at the level of affirmation and negation?"

The ordinary mind or mind of every day is not the mind we think it is. It is actually the mind in which mind we daily avoid being. The Chinese Character here translated as ordinary can also be translated as constant or eternal. This tells us that the ordinary mind here is the mind of the here and now, even the eternal now, and not the busy world-oriented mind of dwelling in the past and future. It is also the mind that is beyond all the dual concepts: perception & non-perception, knowing & not knowing, yes & no. It is mind in absolute liberation or boundless freedom. Some of this sounds like the Heart Sutra. Everyday mind is the way, but we can never truly recognize this until we have tried our best to find a different and non-existing mind. We can not really appreciate our everyday mind that we have temporarily given up, just as we often can not appreciate home until we have left it.

Hui-neng's Think Neither Good nor Evil.

When the 6th patriarch Hui-neng after secretly receiving the robe and bowl of succession from the 5th patriarch fled his envious monastic competitors, he was chased by the monk Ming as far as Ta-yu Peak. The 6th patriarch laid down the bowl and robe to allow his pursuer to take them, but Ming miraculously could not lift either of them. At this he realized that only the true holder of the items could carry them, and begged the patriarch to teach him. The patriarch said, "Think neither good nor evil. At this moment what is the original self/face of the monk Ming?" At this, Ming was greatly enlightened. His whole body was covered in sweat, and weeping, he bowed. He said, "Besides the secret words and meaning you have just given me is there anything else that is still deeper?" The patriarch said, "What I have told you is no secret at all. When you look into your true self, whatever is deeper is found right there." Ming said, "I was with the 5th patriarch for many years, but could not realize the true self. But now, receiving your teachings I know it like a man drinking water and

knowing whether it is cold or hot. My lay brother, you are now my teacher." The patriarch said, "If you say so, but let us both call the 5th patriarch our teacher. Be mindful to treasure and hold fast to what you have attained."

Comment. This encounter dialog has a number of Zen doctrinal lessons or messages. 1) It serves to remind the reader about the Zen legend of the monolineage of patriarchal succession; as the 6th patriarch succeeded the 5th, so he the 4th, and so on before that. 2) The legend of the bowl and especially the robe is brought up here. This presumably is the same robe as mentioned in Gateless Gate 22. 3) Think neither good nor evil. Absolute reality is beyond all dualities like good and evil. 4) You can only discover the truth within your true (original self, self before discursive thinking arises). 5) This is not a secret in the sense that it has not been taught before by all the former patriarchs. 6) Anything deeper than this only you alone can find within yourself. This is because the Zen master is only a mid-wife who can help you give birth to enlightenment up to a point, after which it is entirely up to you. 7) Hui-neng is called a lay brother which goes with the legend that he had attained to the truth, and even succeeded to the patriarchy before he became a monk, and so presumably enlightenment is not the exclusive property of monastics. Everyone can discover their Buddha-nature if they are so inclined. 8) Technically the 6th patriarch could not take private students until he had been publicly recognized to do so.

Hui-neng's Not the Wind, Not the Flag.

Two monks were arguing about the temple flag waving in the wind. One said, "The flag moves." The other said, "The wind moves." They argued back and forth, but could not agree. Hui-neng (the sixth patriarch) said, "It is not the wind that moves, it is not the flag that moves, it is your mind that moves." The two monks were struck with awe.

Comment. Is Hui-neng's point to settle an argument over the physics of flag and wind; is he trying to expound some sort of Yogacara philosophy in which everything is (universal) mind. Certainly his answer is correct when it can be interpreted through that philosophy. Or is Hui-neng trying to deliver a less metaphysical and much more spiritually practical message such as, why are you wasting your time on arguing this meaningless issue? It is your minds (read egos) that are moving here, each of which wants to win over the other.

How to Be Happy - by Ven. Dr. Karuna Dharma

When I was young I used to say, "I don't want much. I just want to be happy." And you will still hear people saying, "I don't want much. I just want to be happy." But what does that really Mean?

In order for me, for instance, to be happy means I want all my wishes to be granted; everything I want I need to have. How ridiculous. Because for me to have my dreams come true means that someone else will have to be unhappy: miserable, if you will. For instance, if I want to possess a certain person, I need for that person to adore me, to think that I am the "cat's pajamas." But even if I win that person, how long will it be before he starts seeing my flaws? my inconsistencies? How long before he becomes disillusioned? Even more important, how long before I become disillusioned. That cute little trait he had I interpret differently now and it needles me. I am no longer as happy

as I was. For me to be happy, he needs to change that characteristic. But will that make me happy? And what about him? I thought his watching Monday night football was cute. I now dislike watching him sitting glued to the tv, snacking on chips and drinking beer. Soon I will loathe that. But do I have the right to make him change his cherished relationship with the tv and sports stars? He will be unhappy. And then what happens to my happiness?

Or suppose that I get that job that I was pining for? How many other people will be unhappy because they thought it should go to them?

But our Declaration of Independence grants us the right to have "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." That is why we broke away from Great Britain and declared our freedom. We wanted to be free and in control of our own lives. Did that bring us happiness?

Our country is the wealthiest in the world. But the more wealth we gather, the more unhappy we become. Mental illness is rampant. We have a horrendous divorce rate with nearly half the marriages breaking up. Not indicative of happy marriages. We have more juvenile delinquency and gangs: not a sign of happy children. We have road rage and drive-by shootings: Not the hallmark of a happy people. All our societal problems are increasing. No wonder there are people who want to return to a "simpler time when people were happy." As if such a time ever existed.

For me to declare, "All I want is happiness" is the biggest ego statement I can make. Because then I will make more people unhappy. For me to gain anything, somebody else has to lose out. Is that what I really want? Many people will say yes to themselves.

I remember thirty years ago when David Snellgrove, a prominent Tibetan scholar, was talking at I.B.M.C. He said that if we wanted more money, it was easy to achieve, "Just cut your desires in half." I think that is also true of happiness. If you want to be happy, just cut your desires in half. The more I am satisfied with what I have, the happier I will be. Instead of getting more things to make me happy, I should be happy with what I have. I remember back when an arsonist was going around the city, setting garages on fire. At that time we had two Zen huts: single car garages. They were changed into living quarters and decorated very cutely. We had residents living in them. One night the arsonist set them both on fire. Fortunately, the residents all escaped without harm. One of them was a young mother with a baby. When someone said to her, "How terrible. You lost everything." Her answer was, "What do you mean everything? We all got out safely." You will see after a disaster the same type of response. There are people who will moan, "I've lost everything. How can I start over again?" and then there are some people who will say, "We are lucky. We all survived." This second group of people know what is most important. They are the happiest of human beings.

So you can be happy also, if you cut down what you want: what you think you need to be happy.

I am sure most of you have heard the Dalai Lama say that the goal in life is to be happy. You should be happy. But what he means by happiness is not what most people think is happiness. I think that his meaning of happiness is more contentment. When we are content with our lives, we are happy. So the way to become happy is to become content. And what is contentment? Contentment means that you accept what you have and who you are. It gives pleasure. But still, most of us think, "I will be happy

as soon as I get that new car, or that beautiful girl, or that good job." But how long will that happiness last? How long before we see a newer, sportier car, or a more beautiful girl, or a more challenging job?

Rev. Vajra told me after the service that one person he knew had remarked, "Happiness. If we want to be happy, we need to let others also be happy. So, that would mean that we should allow the serial killer to kill again and again, because that makes him happy."

I have received letters from several prisoners who have said to me, "I am quite lucky that I was put in prison. Because I met the Buddha there. If I had not been in prison, I would never have become Buddhist. Thank you for giving me that chance."

So, you see, that even being in prison can also bring happiness

"Prison Dharma, a column devoted to writings from prisoners from around the country."

Venerable Dr. Karuna:

One has to work toward "the Leap of Faith," I would say, to reach the realization that the "self" which one cherishes does not inherently exist! It is all imputed by labels and mistaken conceptions. Do not misunderstand, I do not profess to have fully realized this stage. However, I am clearly aware of it being true. My meditation indicates this state, however outside of meditation I am not always able to sustain these facts so clearly. Ah, thus mindful effort is needed on a constant basis! Actually, it goes a whole lot further than my halting comments describe. And perhaps it is best to bite off and chew only so much at once. Yet I have to be watchful that I don't develop a habit and stagnate at what I feel is a "comfortable acceptance" which would hinder progress. As always I respectfully request your comments and instruction when you may have the time to reply. I trust my attempts to explain on these points lets you know what point I am at. - Your student, Dale

Dear Ven. Karuna:

I have really been enjoying studying and meditating on the Diamond Sutra. It is quite challenging and thought provoking. The Heart Sutra has always been my favorite sutra and has been such a big part of my daily practice and the Diamond Sutra seems to fit hand in hand with it. I read the chapters over and over again and contemplate and meditate upon them. I find that it may take me a while, but it's like striking gold when I get beyond the words of the sutra and discover the meaning behind them. Sometimes it seems to be my nature to try to over complicate things which are profound, yet in an ultimate sense are so pure as to be the ultimate in simplicity if I can get past my "self". Thanks so much for sending me the two translations and study questions; they are a real blessing.

I wanted to write you to let you know what happened in regards to my taking the Refuge Ceremony you sent me. Ven. Ani Rinchen, a Nyingma Tibetan nun from a meditation center in Poolesville, MD, did the ceremony with me here at Roxbury in the presence of our little Sangha. Ven. Karuna, it was the most beautiful and profound experience of my life. The day before, I did the 108 Bows

ceremony in my cell as per your recommendation. I so wanted to do the ceremony with you over the phone, as you are my first Dharma teacher and guide, but I guess things worked out as they were supposed to. In the long run I think it was important and meaningful to do the ceremony in front of my peers here at Roxbury. Upon reflection after the ceremony and after talking to several sangha members who had never seen a Buddhist ceremony it became apparent just how meaningful this was for me and my brothers. I think it was most fitting to make a public commitment, an acknowledgement of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, to make a statement saying this is what I believe to be the truth; this is how I am going to try and live my life, and that the Buddha is the greatest teacher in recorded history. I honor this Prince of Truth and Peace. I also think it was a good lesson in the unity which the different Buddhist traditions have with each other. I don't know how often a Tibetan nun has used a Zen Refuge Ceremony for a Zen practitioner, but everyone here thought it was good. By the way I'm probably your only student who has a Tibetan Buddhist name; it is Jampa Thogmed (Unhesitating Spontaneous Kindness). The night before the ceremony, I placed your photograph and Dr. Thich Thien-An's picture, my parents' picture, and a picture of a good Buddhist penpal friend of mine in Canada, upon our altar. To top it off, July 3 was my grandmother's birthday. My grandmother and I were very close and I stayed with her for most of my teenage years. She passed away several years ago at age 98, but it made the day all the more meaningful for me because it was her birthday.

Ven. Karuna, I can never thank you enough for all you have meant to me and my practice. There would have been no Refuge Ceremony if I had not had the good fortune to have met you. You and everyone at I BMC have been such an inspiration to me. Lastly, let me say that although Karuna may not be part of my name, it is because of you that I carry Karuna in my heart. You have been and remain a constant source of wisdom and compassion and understanding in my life. Thank you so much for being there for me and so many others. May you always be blessed with peace, happiness and be free from suffering. - Yours in peace, Irving (Jampa Thogmed)

Ven. Karuna:

Thank you so much for the study course. All I can say is that I feel I am traveling in the right path for the first time in my life I patiently await my review and advice/correction. - Yours, Ed

Ven. Karuna Dharma

Your article on Anitya in the August issue of the Monthly Guide is helpful. Understanding and meditating on nothing stands alone; impermanence gives me some kind of x-ray vision on things and people. I want to say it's wisdom when I see things as they are and not judge first handedly, and compassion when I'm able to act by it. I see the correlation of anitya and between wisdom and compassion as you explained in the two wings of a bird. It is very beautiful how it all comes together. I only wish I could explain that to my mom in particular. I think she will be ok. She worries about Buddhism because she has no idea what it's about. I try to tell her about it. She seems to understand some times, but her worries take over. I can understand though. - In the Dharma, Hector

Dear Ven. Dr. Karuna Dharma

Thank you for your letter of July 21 and the enclosed pictures. I enjoyed them vvvry much. I have been doing a lot of meditating about emptiness of the I/my/self and the body, and I feel I understand it on an intellectual level, but I can't seem to get it to fit into my life. (Does that make any sense?) My 4 daughters all had birthdays over the last 3 weeks and despite all the meditation on emptiness, they were the most painful of days, I just couldn't get past not being with them on those days. How do you get past missing your children? This is one thing I have the biggest problem with. I look forward to hearing from you soon. May you be well, happy, and free from suffering. - Sincerely, Tom

Ven. Dr. Karuna Dharma:

Fitrst of all, I would like to thank you for promptly responding to my request for information. I immediately began reading these publications and have now begun the course and have already felt that these teachings will help me. I was raised Catholic and have always had a belief of a Higher Power. I need not tell you that Christianity is booming in prison. I have participated in some activities held, but always felt incomplete. I have studied the Rosecrucian Way, Theosophy, and others, but none seemed to fill my feeling of emptiness. I went to my Bible to seek for answers but was not saatisfied. I came to a scripture that I know I have read many, many times "Study to show thyself approved. . ." (2 Timothy, 2:15) which led me to John 8:32, "And ye shall know the truth and the truth will make you free." So I did what has been taught to me for many years. . . sought the truth. I came across your asddress and wrote requesting literature. You sent me a few Monthly Guides, which I glanced through and began to study the publications: Zen Buddhism: Awareness in Action and Concepts of Buddhism by American Disciples. This second publication is very informative for my situation. My main concern is that while I meditate, which I have practiced for five years as a way to relax, I still have the the Christian teachings running through my mind, a sort of focus point that calms but does not fully satisfy. Have you had other students with this problem and how is it overcome once it has been a focal point for so long? As I have practiced this past week since receiving your information, looking into myself to seek enlightenment rather than seeing outside has been a most comfortable change in my state of mind. Now believing that I control my level of enlightenment and bliss rather than subscribing to the belief that I must wait for death or the belief that I must "Bear my cross" in life to hope to gain eternal life I am taking extra time to complete the studies you have sent, and look forward to continue to study with you. - Yours in Peace, Patrick

October Events

Sunday Talks

- 10/1 - A Buddhist Look at Christian - 11am - "Intelligent Design" - Rev. Vajra Karuna, Thich Tam Thi
- 10/8 - A Look at Buddhist Art - 11 am - Rev. Sunya Vajra Karuna
- 10/15 - Bhikkhunis Today - 11am - Ven. Karuna Dharma, Thich An-Tu
- 10/22 - The Buddha's Daily Routine - 11am - Ven. Havanpola Shanti
- 10/29 - Morning of Meditation and Chanting - led by Ven. Karuna

Dharma Classes at IBMC

Tues - Investigating Koans - 7 pm - Rev. Vajra Karuna, Ananda Hall
Wed - Every Day Buddhism, Zendo - 7 pm - Rev. Kusala Ratna Karuna

Special Events

Oct 1 - 108 Bows Ceremony - 10 am - led by Rev. S'unya Karuna
Oct 28 - Vimalakirti Nirdeśa Sūtra - 10 am - Seminar - 4 pm - Ven. Dr. Karuna Dharma

Meditation - Fridays, 7-9:30 pm, led by Rev. Kusala

Web pages and email addresses

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