

May 2017

From the Abbot, Shinge Roko Roshi Sherry Chayat
Jukai Sesshin, Dai Bosatsu Zendo

At last we have come to this day of jukai. Five of you are taking the Buddhist precepts today—but we are all in this together, we are all doing jukai with you. We speak of taking or receiving, but what you are in fact doing is, as you said in your English recitation of Tisarana, giving. You are giving yourselves to the precepts, to a life of attention and attending, awakening and compassion. You are letting go of all your conditioned orientation of separate selfhood; letting go into this endless dimension universal life, revealing right here now.

You are being supported by everything. Thirty-nine of us have sat sesshin together, have become intimate spiritual friends even though we may not know each other's names. We have felt the strong encouragement of each other's silence and commitment.

You have been held in Nature's unfolding: the daffodils and new leaves, the gentle rain, the spring snow, the radiant sunlight; the rigid ice formations of old melting away. Last night's full moon illuminating the lake and mountain, our hearts—inside and outside, One.

All buddhas, bodhisattvas, great ancestral teachers, past, present, and future, are guiding and protecting you as you take this life-transforming step.

You are doing so at one of the gravest times in our nation's recent history, when avarice, racism, and xenophobia are at record levels, when the very earth we're standing on is threatened by human exploitation and disregard.

At such a time you cannot sink into numbness. You can't ignore the suffering, within and around you. Nor can you be held hostage by enmity and rage. You cannot afford to be caught up in small-minded, dualistic views.

What can you do? What must you do? Offer yourselves, from the heart of your practice. The greatest act of resistance is to awaken! To sit with Kanzeon Bodhisattva flooding through you, responding to all cries, extending the wisdom Mind that comes forth from this practice.

Remember, the process of saving others is the very same process of liberating oneself; they are not two. As the Mahayana principle puts it, "Ascend to seek Bodhi; descend to save all beings."

From the fundamental perspective, there is no need for precepts; they are simply expressions of how it is to live in true freedom. But since, as we know, there are times when our mirror mind seems not only very cloudy, but covered with a layer of thick spring mud. When we forget that it's just a reflection, we can turn to these important precepts to guide us.

On the fifth day of Nyogen Senzaki Sesshin, deeply aware of your interconnectedness with all life, you are receiving these precepts with the understanding that they are not rules that circumscribe you, but an invitation to live in ultimate freedom.

The Six *Paramitas* are the underpinnings of the commitment you are making today. Paramita means Perfection, and refers to crossing over the sea of samsara to the Other Shore of awakened mind. To live by the paramitas is to transform the Three Poisons: greed, anger, and folly—into the Three Virtues: generosity, love, and wisdom.

The first paramita is *dana*: giving. Giving yourself to a life informed by the precepts; giving your loving concern and support to this monastery, to New York Zendo Shobo-ji, to Zen Center of Syracuse Hoen-ji; to all your sisters and brothers in the Dharma; to the Four Great Vows. Giving is the foundation of our practice. Coming from the loving and generous heart/mind of *dana*, your thoughts, words, and actions will be in tune with entire universe; you will find yourself experiencing the whole of life, not just your own small view based on individual preference and satisfaction.

The second paramita is *sila*, the precepts. The more we examine each one, and the interrelationship of all ten, we find that they are a many-faceted koan. Examine each from the fundamental perspective of non-duality. Notice when a view of self and others arises, which is exactly what leads to the violation of the precepts.

Master Bassui said, “When your mind is deluded, you are breaking all the precepts, and when you see into your own nature, you are at once keeping all the precepts perfectly.... One who outwardly keeps the precepts while inwardly seeking his or her own true nature will attain the Buddha Way as surely as water combines with water.”

The third paramita is *kshanti*, patience. You are the owners of your karma. So embrace whatever comes as the transformative experience it can be. Through the practice of patient forbearance and endurance, you are purifying your karma, learning the lessons that must be learned through difficult circumstances. Know the joy of living with no complaints, with gratitude for everything.

The fourth paramita is *virya*. Be diligent; practice with dedication. Remember, life is short; mystery, profound. Take no one and nothing for granted, particularly this rare human birth, which allows you to devote yourself to walking the endless path of Buddha. As we recited earlier today in the Dedication that follows our chanting of *Ryogonshu (Surangama Sutra)* “Cherish the higher aspirations to go beyond the ten stages with a leap!”

The fifth paramita is *dhyana*: Zazen! Hakuin says in the Song of Zazen, “Just one sitting, and all our harmful karma is erased.” Sit down and let go; let go into the whole universe. “Let go and let God.” Enter into Samadhi. Trust in the stillness at the center of the wheel.

The sixth paramita is *prajna*. Cultivate wisdom. Hakuin said, “If you want to save all sentient beings, you must arouse a spirit of dauntless courage and push yourself forward mercilessly until you can see your true nature as if you are looking at it in the palm of your hand. If you want to attain a *kensho* of such clarity, you must hear the unborn sound of the one hand.... You must begin accumulating a great store of knowledge and Dharma wisdom by reading deeply in the sutras and commentaries.... Then you must work unstintingly to impart the great Dharma gift. This is what is called the ‘solemn and dignified conduct’ of the Bodhisattva.” *Atta dipa*, You are the light; *atta sarana*, you are the refuge; *dhamma dipa*, light of dharma; *dhamma sarana*, refuge of dharma. Let your light shine. Radiate.

The Dharma name I have chosen for you is not yours alone; it brings you into the vastness of Indra’s net, in which each of you is a many-faceted jewel reflecting each other and all beings simultaneously.

Richard Massen	KyoSho	Sutra Realized
Sean Crellin	MuKyo	Nowhere Abiding
Carol Biesemeyer	ChoEn	Serene Garden
Kevin Zych	ShoGan	Manifest Vow
Karen Rizvi	SeiJun	Energetic Resolve

In closing let me offer something by one of my favorite poets, Mary Oliver. It's called "The Summer Day," and even though summer seems far away on this cold mountain, it will be soon upon us.

Who made the world?

Who made the swan, and the black bear?

Who made the grasshopper?

This grasshopper, I mean--the one who has flung herself out of the grass,

the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,

who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down—

who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes.

Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.

Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.

I don't know exactly what a prayer is.

I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down

into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,

how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,

which is what I have been doing all day.

Tell me, what else should I have done?

Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?

Tell me, what is it you plan to do

with your one wild and precious life?