

SEVEN THUNDERS

newsletter

www.seventhunders.org

Summer 2015



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THE SOUND OF GOD

by Leonard Marcel

In the Gospel of John we read: "The wind blows where it wills and you can hear the sound it makes, but you do not know from where it comes or to where it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." (John 3:8) Friends of God come to know in their hearts the "sound" of God. Having experienced the divine in their hearts as a result of contemplative prayer, they recognize the presence of the Holy One. This recognition is not at all intellectual, but rather a loving memory. In a fifth century text, Diadocus of Photice (c. 400 – 486) confirms that the soul "is able to hear the riches of divine consolation and to preserve through memory the sound."

God touches the soul in a unique and unmistakable way, which resonates in its deepest part. This is a source of much joy when it occurs. The sound of God stirs the heart. Like the wind, contemplatives do not know from where it comes and are most often surprised by these signs of God's presence. This can be difficult for people newly on the path to appreciate. When the God of surprises sounds to them, they believe that somehow they have contributed to this divine manifestation. They may recall the time of day when it occurred, the location, what they were doing, hoping to recreate or reenact the experiences. Alas, to no avail. It

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was never under their control from the beginning. Such manifestations are always a gift, a grace.

This may cause discouragement in some. However, it is most likely that a period of early consolation has ended and the more serious work of experiencing God in the darkness has begun. St. John of the Cross (1542 – 1591) says that at such times the contemplative must strive for a "deepening of faith and becoming detached and divested of apprehensions..." No need to worry. The God of mystery is ever present and, even in darkness, consoling.

Continued on page 6





SEVEN THUNDERS LOCAL SITTINGS, RETREATS & EVENTS

EVENTS & RETREAT SCHEDULE

■ June 25 - 28 – CIR at Our Lady of Guadalupe Abbey with Sr. Joan Saalfeld. Registration information on page 12

■ July 18 – Seven Thunders General Meeting. See page 5 for details.

■ July 18 – Seven Thunders General Meeting. See page 5 for details.

■ August 1 – Bethany House Anniversary Celebration. See page 9 for details.

■ October 16 - 18– Zen kosesshin at Stones and Clouds co-led by Leonard Marcel and Lee Ann Nail. To register, please contact Teresa Marcel at tdmarcel@mac.com or 503.636.9009.

■ December 4 - 8 – Zen Rohatsu sesshin at Stones & Clouds with Leonard Marcel. Registration information on page 5.



ZAZENKAI

Held at the Stones and Clouds (*Rai'un*) Zendo in Lake Oswego, led by Leonard Marcel:

- May 9
- September 19

Zazenkai, followed by a study group, take place on Saturdays, 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. In addition to formal zazen, there will be sutra service, teisho, and dokusan. Bring a brown bag lunch (eaten in silence). Teas and water will be provided. Please contact Leonard Marcel at 503.636.9009 or marcellj@hotmail.com if you are planning to attend and for more information about zazenkai and the study group. While there is no fee for zazenkai, a donation of \$20 will be very much appreciated to help cover costs. ⚡

FIRST SATURDAY SITTINGS

Monthly "First Saturday" sittings continue in Bethany House at the Trappist Abbey just north of Lafayette, OR. Orientation is offered at 8:15 a.m. and formal group sitting begins at 9:00 a.m. A talk by the teacher begins at 10:00 a.m., which is followed by opportunities for private interviews with the teacher. Formal sitting ends at noon. There is no charge, but donations for teacher support and for the Trappist Abbey are gratefully accepted. Here is the schedule for the remainder of 2015:

- June 13*, Brother Mark Filut
 - July 11*, Brother Mark Filut
 - August 1, Leonard Marcel
 - September 12*, Leonard Marcel
 - October 3, Brother Mark Filut
 - November 7, Leonard Marcel
 - December 5, Brother Mark Filut
- (* indicates second Saturday of month)

PORTLAND AREA SITTINGS

■ Monday evenings at Stones and Clouds (*Rai'un*) Zendo, 7:00 to 8:30 p.m., zazen & dokusan. Contact: Leonard Marcel at 503.636.9009 or marcellj@hotmail.com.

CORVALLIS SITTINGS:

■ Monday evenings, 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. (except Labor Day) at CMLC, 128 SW 9th St, Corvallis. Contacts: Jane Huyer, 541.752.6597, ahuyer@comcast.net, or Glenna Pittcock, 541.752.6139, gpittcock@yahoo.com

OLYMPIA SITTINGS

■ Monday evenings, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m., and every Saturday morning from 6:00 to 8:00 a.m. in the Chapel at St. Michael Church, 1021 Boundary St. SE, Olympia, WA 98501. Three rounds of sittings (from 6:00 to 7:30) are followed by a reading from contemplative writers and a questions and comments period. Contact: Pat Harvey, 360.357.8401 patriciamharvey@comcast.net

REDMOND SITTINGS

■ Monday evenings, 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. at 529 NW 19th, Redmond, OR. 97756. Contact: Richard Lance or Leanne Latterell at 541.923.7607. ⚡

NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIPTIONS

Published three times a year, our newsletter is a benefit of Seven Thunders membership. Prospective members who would like to receive the newsletter can be added to the mailing list by contacting Doug Speers at ddspeers.38@gmail.com. Complimentary copies will be sent for up to one year or until January dues requests are mailed. After that, if membership dues (full membership currently \$30 per year, associate membership \$15 per year) are not received by March, you will be sent an announcements-only version of the newsletter. ⚡

OTHER PACIFIC NORTHWEST DIAMOND SANGHA GROUPS

NO SANGHA, PORT ANGELES

■ Teacher: Kristen Larson. Zazen: Saturday mornings, 8:00 to 9:30 a.m. For more information, please contact Kristen & Bill Larson at 360.452.5534 or NOSangha@aol.com.

THREE TREASURES SANGHA, SEATTLE

■ Teacher: Jack Duffy. Zazen at *Dharma Gate* (1910 – 24th Ave S.) on Wednesday evenings 6:30-8:30 p.m. and Friday mornings 6:30-7:30 a.m., followed by breakfast. For more information, and for a schedule of zazenkai and retreats, please contact Larry Keil at 206.322.8759 or go to their website at <http://three-treasures-sangha.org/> ⚡



A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT: RHYTHMS & RITUALS

The fresh cut flowers that become abundantly available from a master gardener just down the road is one of the signs in our household that Spring has truly arrived. For many years her garden has provided dozens of daffodils, which are followed a few weeks later by the grandest of grand calla lilies. There is a sense of ritual associated with the colors, smell and beauty of these flowers that provides a rhythm and routine for our lives at this time of year. It is a sure harbinger of the summer months ahead and its many activities, many of which have their own ritual and routine. In Seven Thunders, one such event is the annual board and membership general meeting in July.

In mid to late Spring the board prepares for this important gathering of the membership. A nominating committee has been formed in the hope of identifying potential board candidates who will proactively enrich the process and support the needed fluidity that keeps our board viable – being consistent and attentive to board development is essential.



For many years Leonard and Teresa Marcel have graciously hosted this gathering at the conclusion of summer sesshin at Stones and Clouds. You will find an announcement in this issue of the date and details (see page 5). We hold a brief business meeting, which includes the election of new and renewed board members and a report of board activities in the past year. This is followed by a potluck picnic in a splendid context of community and fellowship. We have been fortunate each year that the salmon run has been congruent and timely with this meeting, so cedar planked salmon often appears as an added dish for all to enjoy.

I strongly encourage members to attend if you are so inclined and able – it is an important part of our routine and ritual as a community. ⚡

Faithfully,
Mike Seely



**FROM
BROTHER MARK**





SPRING SESSHIN AT STONES & CLOUDS

There's soft anticipation in the air before the sesshin. The densho rings. Anticipation softly vibrates. We settle on cushions and wood. Cautions. Evening settles. Dark comes. Sesshin begins.

A baritone Ino brings the chants up from their roots, makes them sound ancient. And thus new, like I've never heard them before. Chanting thrums the walls, scatters harmonics across the zendo, and maybe the ages, but in the end is just a sound.

Breathing, the breathing. The densho bell again. Dark, light. clouds, rain, sun. A crescent Moon lifts off Mt Hood in the pre-dawn. Hot tea in cold hands. The scrape of plates into the compost container.

The altar kyo-saku is engraved "Mind Empty, Heart Open." So when tanto comes by, I raise my hands in gassho. I mean, who knows, right? My mind might empty with the WHACK-WHACK, WHACK-WHACK. My heart might open.

The dokusan doors creak their ancient mantra over and over.

How many times have they creaked in all their years? How many Buddhas have passed? At least ten thousand. Or maybe one.

I take a wayward glance out the zendo door during kinhin. Raked gravel pinned in place by a mossy rock. Red azaleas mark the end of the world. Stop! Go no further! But the river and valley and mountain heights beckon beyond. Perfect! Perfect! Until, in the same glance, a robin lands on the gray gravel. More perfect! More perfect!

Densho, densho, breathing, breathing. I play the ghost bringing the evening message. I AM the ghost bringing the evening message. Over and over, each of us must be completely alert. In the end, samadhi might be found in the smell of French Toast, I thought. And thus the problem.

A last round of sitting, a last cascade of percussion, words from the Roshi, and it is finished.

And it is as if it had just begun.

Paul Birkeland ⚡



Words!

The Way is beyond language,
for in it,
there is no yesterday,
no tomorrow,
no today.

The above lines especially touched me during our afternoon readings at Stones and Clouds Spring Sesshin.

I have often wished I had a greater vocabulary so that I might better express a certain thought or feeling I was having. I see now that it's not my lack of words, so much as a reliance on words, to express that which can only be experienced. Sesshin allows me to tap into my being-self and rely less on words. I can share my experience at sesshin with words, but the actual experience is intimate and inexpressible. Poetry comes closer. Zen writings taught me an appreciation of poetry that I never had before. My husband used to ask me to explain what I was reading, I told him it was like poetry, I just liked the way it sounded and made me feel.

Returning home to an empty house
Black night sky draws me
to my cushion
Where does sesshin begin and end?

Lisa Unger ⚡





SEVEN THUNDERS GENERAL MEETING JULY 18

The Seven Thunders annual meeting will once again be held at the Marcells' home in Lake Oswego, starting at noon on Saturday, July 18, 2015.

All members are invited! It is an opportunity come together and break bread, catch up on the activities of the organization over the last year, and have a voice in the annual business meeting. Please bring your favorite potluck dish and join the conversation.

- Location: Stones & Clouds Zendo, Lake Oswego
- Date: Saturday, July 18, 2015
- Time: Noon - 3 p.m.

For directions, and to RSVP, please contact Teresa Marcel at 503.636.9009 or tdmarcel@mac.com. ⚡

2015 FALL - WINTER ZEN SCHEDULE AT STONES AND CLOUDS ZENDO

KOSSHIN:

In lieu of Seven Thunders' Fall sesshin, kosseshin will be offered in October this year. This weekend sesshin will begin Friday, 16 October, 7pm to 9pm, continuing Saturday, 17 October, 6am to 9pm, and concluding Sunday, 18 October, 6am to 10am. As in previous years, kosseshin will be co-led by Leonard Marcel and by guest teacher Lee Ann Nail, Diamond Sangha apprentice teacher and teacher in the Maria Kannon zen tradition.

ROHATSU SESHIN:

For the first time in 14 years, Seven Thunder will be offering Rohatsu sesshin, a celebration of Buddha's enlightenment. The retreat will be led by Leonard Marcel Roshi at Stones and Clouds Zendo. It will begin with dinner at 5 p.m. on Friday December 4, and end mid-morning on Tuesday December 8.

RETREAT FEES:

Kosseshin: \$75 members, \$95 non-members. Includes all meals (vegetarian) on Saturday and Sunday breakfast.

Rohatsu Sesshin: \$180 members, \$210 non-members (includes Seven Thunders membership). Includes all meals (vegetarian) from Friday dinner to Tuesday breakfast.

A deposit of half the retreat fee is required with your registration; payment in full is appreciated. Any balance is due no later than two weeks before retreat begins. Should you need to cancel, all but \$25 is refundable until that time; after two weeks prior to the retreat, all but \$80 for retreats and \$35 for kosseshins is refundable. You will receive a confirmation from the registrar. If for any reason you find the full fee a barrier to attending, please contact the registrar requesting a scholarship. Affordability need not be a deterrent to attendance. Full or partial scholarships are almost always available. Donations for such scholarships are both appreciated and tax-deductible.

RETREAT REGISTRATION:

To register for the retreat, please either pay your fee or deposit online at www.SevenThunders.org or send a check (payable to **Seven Thunders**) to retreat organizer and registrar Teresa Marcel, 1333 Skyland Drive.

Lake Oswego, OR 97034. Questions? Please contact Teresa Marcel at 503.636.9009 or tdmarcel@mac.com

RETREAT DETAILS:

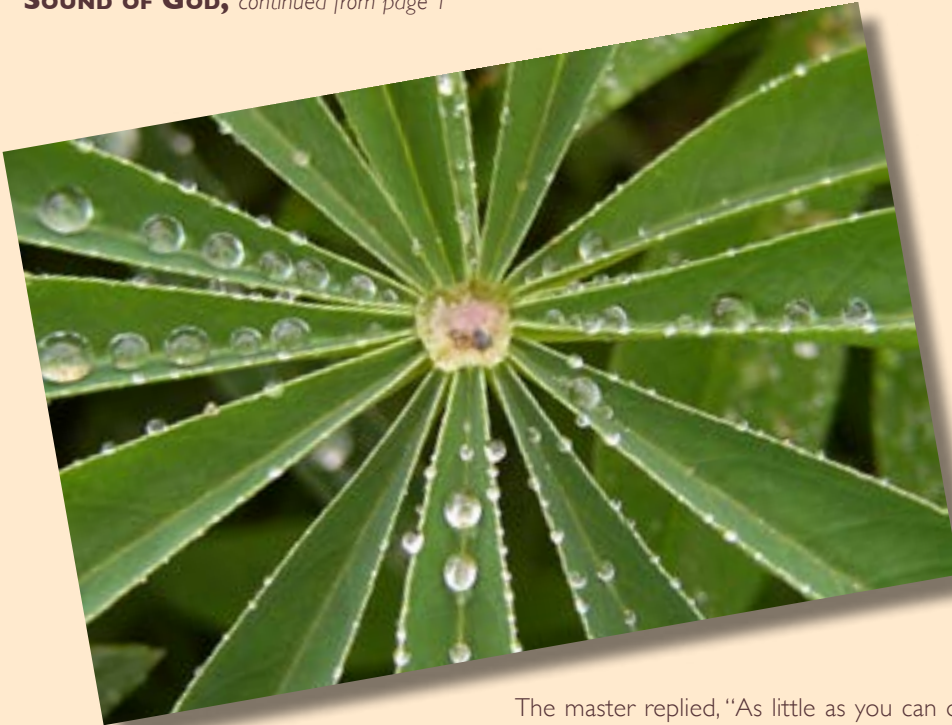
Space is limited to a maximum of 16. Additional applicants will be wait-listed in case of cancellations.

These are non-residential retreats. For non-commuter participants, limited accommodations in members' homes may be available. Information about local accommodations and carpooling will be sent to out-of-town registrants upon receiving your registration and deposit.

As always, total silence will be observed for the entire sesshin. All attending are required to participate fully in the daily sitting and work schedule, including cleanup at the end of the retreat. You are asked to wear plain conservative clothing of dark or subdued color during sesshin. No shorts or sleeveless tops, please. Zabuton, zafu, low and high benches will be provided, but if you have a favorite zafu or bench (no chairs) please feel free to bring it. ⚡



SOUND OF GOD, *continued from page 1*



Contemplatives learn to accept God's consolations with open hearts and to give thanks when they come, but also to relinquish them when it is time for them to pass. Just as we do not know from where they come, we also do not know where they go. The surprise of God's voice almost always comes gently, however, usually with such harmony and subtlety that, quite often, it is not at first recognized. Of this, St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491 – 1556) writes:

The good angel touches the soul lightly, pleasantly, like a drop of water that is absorbed by a sponge....The good spirit enters silently as into its own dwelling, the door being open.

The door being open. That is crucial. Although we cannot make any experience of divine presence happen, we can set the stage by leaving the door open. We do that by our continuous daily practice of the contemplative way.

Continuous daily practice. Why is it so important?

A monk asked the master, "Is there anything I can do to make myself enlightened?"

The master replied, "As little as you can do to make the sun rise in the morning."

"Then," said the monk, "of what use are the spiritual exercises you prescribe?"

The master replied, "To make sure you are not asleep when the sun begins to rise."

Continuous daily practice on this path enables us to be awake to the sacredness of the present moment and to live as fully as possible in this present moment. The present moment is not as frightening as some fear it to be. It contains all of life, right here and right now. It is, after all, all we have. The past is gone and the future has not yet arrived. The Ultimate Mystery, which we call God, can be experienced only in this present moment. God's identity is Presence – I Am. Fully present in a loving, compassionate and forgiving way.

God is either in the present moment or not at all. If the present moment is not full or sufficient for someone, that person will probably be grasping, perhaps even craving or addictive, in some way or another. Know that the present moment is full and complete, with nothing lacking and nothing in excess. This is the reason it has been called a sacrament, the "sacrament of the present moment."

To be fully in the present moment, we need, in solitude and silence, to open to a deep inner spaciousness. In that silent spaciousness we find the Presence of the loving, compassionate and forgiving Holy One who supports us and is not against us. So many saints report feeling held, supported, believed in – an echo in their own ways of Meister Eckhart (1260 – 1328), who said: "God is closer to me than I am to myself."

When we are fully present to just this moment, the sound of God is able to touch the soul with great gentleness, because the soul's center is God's proper home. As St. Augustine (354 – 430) famously put it: "Our souls are restless until they rest in Thee." Although the sound is soft and the touch gentle, God's presence also wounds us in an unforgettable way. John of the Cross himself cried out:

- sweet cauterly,
 - delightful wound!
 - gentle hand!
 - delicate touch
- That tastes of eternal life.

When Jesus walked the earth, it was easy for his followers to recognize his voice. They would hear it as they chatted with him along the dirt roads of Galilee and Judea, and as they bantered over bread and olives at mealtime. But when he was no longer with them, they could no longer sit with him at table, nor hear him teaching in the synagogue. It would be better, he said, if he left (John 16:7). Then his voice would be able to go beyond the streets and byways and temple precincts. His voice would go where he could no longer go, because it would come via the Spirit. It would come to all who wanted to hear it. We are told that at times God can speak with an audible voice. It seems to happen rarely, on enormously monumental occasions: it happened when Jesus was baptized in the Jordan; it happened to Mary during what we call the Annunciation, and her "fiat" ("let it be done") is a model for our response as well; it happened to Abraham and to Moses, and it



SOUND OF GOD, *continued from page 6*

happened when Saul/Paul heard the voice in the blinding light on the road to Damascus (Matthew 3:17, Mark 1:11, Acts 9:7).

Beyond the rare instances, God speaks to us most often with an inaudible voice, a voice which may sound like one's own thoughts. It is a "still, small voice" that can be easy to miss (1 Kings 19:12). Hence the reason interior silence and stillness is so important. Samuel found it difficult to notice when he first heard it in the middle of the night (1 Samuel 3:1-10) "Is that you, Eli?" he asked. "No," answered Eli. Then Samuel heard it again: "Are you calling me, Eli?" Eli replied, "No." And then Samuel heard it yet again. It was not Eli's voice, but it sounded as though it could have been. There was no angelic song accompanying it. No heavenly music. Nothing extraordinary. It just sounded to him like an ordinary voice.

Initially, it was difficult for Samuel to recognize the voice of God, the sound of God. Eventually, his interior disposition enabled him to discern that sound from all others. Like Samuel, contemplative practice will enable hearing God's voice and sound easier over time. To those who are attuned, it is steady and strong. It speaks in ways that make us stronger and filled with hope (1 Corinthians 14:3). It is a sound that brings life to all who hear it. It is always present, always sounding. The English contemplative, William Law (1686 – 1761) said: "The book of all books is in your own heart, in which are written the deepest lessons of divine instruction. Learn, therefore, to be deeply attentive to the presence of God in your heart, who is always guiding, always instructing, always illuminating the heart that is attentive."

Attentive. Attention. Presence. The interior silence, attention and getting our self out of the way are all important, for as Merton (1915-1968) wrote: "(God) is heard only when we hope to hear (God), and if, thinking our hope to be fulfilled, we cease to listen, (God) ceases to speak. (God's) silence

ceases to be vivid and becomes dead, even though we charge it with the echo of our own emotional noise."

Yet, perhaps the sound of God is even more intimate than that. The Hebrew word, *ruah*, and the Greek word, *pneuma*, both mean breath and by extension *spirit*. What if the sound of God, the Spirit of God, is as close to us as our own breathing? Take a breath and breathe it out. Do it again, slowly.

When we are sad, we breathe heavy sighs. When we are happy, our lungs fill to bursting. In fear, we hold our breath. When we are about to do something hard, we take a deep breath to find our courage. St Augustine (349-430) said that "prayer is the soul breathing." He might just as correctly have said that mindful breathing is the soul praying.

When Moses had the nerve to ask God about a name, God was gracious enough to answer, and the name given is recorded in the original Hebrew as YHWH and pronounced yod, he, wen, he. Over time, in Lati-

nizing it, we have added a couple of vowels in order to pronounce the word as Yahweh. In the original Hebrew, however, there are no vowels, just four consonants which are aspirated; that is, breathed. How intimate! How generous of God, how gracious of God, to give a name we cannot help but speak every moment we are alive. For each of us, always and everywhere, waking and sleeping, the name of God is on the lips. When a baby is newly born, newly arrived on planet Earth, and takes the first breath, it speaks the name of God. On our deathbed, with our last breath, we breathe the sound and name of God. There is perhaps no more intimate experience of the presence of the Divine Mystery than this.

Breathe in. Breathe out. Slowly. Do it again. Slowly. And listen. ⚡





OFF THE CUSHION: ANXIETY, ETERNAL SPRING, AND DEMENTIA

by Nancy O'Connor

Too often my life seems to hide behind a veil of language. Even before I get out of bed, the mental commentary starts—the list of things to do, the worries about the things I haven't done, the anxiety about what might happen if I fail or even if I succeed. Focus, I tell myself, pay attention. I shower, get dressed, make a cup of tea; then the fog descends and again the words pour forth. The deadline is tomorrow. I'm behind schedule, the car needs gas, my mother's hearing aid is broken, I'm out of coffee, and the coral reefs are dying. My stomach churns, and I feel like gravel is sloshing around in my stomach. There's a word for this feeling. We call it "anxiety" and classify it as a disorder.

For the last several years anxiety has become one of my most reliable teachers. When I'm calm, I can walk around in a dreamy state, barely present, unaware that I'm sleepwalking; but anxiety doesn't hide itself. One of its virtues as a practice is the definitive way it announces its presence and demands attention; the heart pounds, the stomach heaves, the entire body tightens. These familiar physiological signals trigger an equally familiar reaction—aversion. I don't want to feel this. In response to this thought my body contracts even more. I need to fend off this anxiety, get rid of this alien intruder. No sooner do these thoughts arise than I agree with them and identify them as "me." Now I've set up a state of war, pitting one neurological pattern against another—it's "me," the defender, pitted against the enemy, "anxiety." A moment of awareness arises. I'm doing it again. I breathe in and focus on putting on my jacket.

Then the next wave of thoughts starts up. Why do I set up this struggle. Don't resist. Just relax and become one with the anxiety. Embrace it, it's all empty. But, this well-

intentioned piece of received wisdom is just one more pattern of thought, an ideal, a preconceived strategy of how "I" should deal with "it." I stop again. What is this? What's going on right now? Pay attention. I close my eyes for a minute and focus on my body. When I drop the commentary and experience the sensation in my stomach, nothing remains but waves of vibration. I open my eyes and notice the carpet in the hallway is starting to fray; Then, I walk out the front door and head up the sidewalk, pulled into the present by the cool morning air.

Somewhere spring is always blooming; and here in Portland it's been erupting for months, as tiny purple crocuses give way to daffodils and tight rhododendron buds eject enormous fluffy clouds of flowers. I turn the corner and an assault of color—in the form of glowing red tulips—blasts everything away. A car honks, an enormous crow lands on a nearby tree. Then a thought intrudes, I'm not feeling anxious. Where is anxiety? Who am I without anxiety? I look back at the tulips who are clearly not anxious. No matter how constricted my thoughts, the tulips just stand in silence, confident in their redness.

In the afternoon I go to visit my 101-year-old mother who supposedly is dying. Ten years ago she was diagnosed with something called "dementia," and over the last decade much of what she once knew has slowly slipped away. She has forgotten my father, who she lived with for over sixty-five years; and she has forgotten her great-grand daughter's name even though I just reminded her of it—two seconds ago. She has no idea who the president is, what year it is, what time it is, or where she lives. She also has forgotten how to worry.

When I think about my mother's frailty I feel anxious, but once I see the joy in her face as I enter the room, my fear evaporates. One of our favorite things to do together is to tour the garden around the house where she

lives. I push her in the wheel chair; then we stop for a few minutes to take in whatever is in front of us.

Now, we stop in front of a Japanese maple. "Maple," I tell her. A few years ago, when she knew she was losing her language, she liked me to remind her of the names of things; now she doesn't care, but I've hung on to the habit.

"Beautiful," she replies using one of her favorite remaining words. She smiles. "So beautiful." I sit on a bench next to her and we hold hands, savoring the beautiful maple in silence.

We start back up the path. "Snowdrops," I say.

"Beautiful"

"Cherry blossoms," I tell her.

"Beautiful, beautiful, so, so beautiful. We stop again for a moment before heading up the hill.

Next to the neighboring house a huge rhododendron bush appears, covered with white flowers. Rhododendrons were always one her favorites.

"Beautiful," I say, stopping again. She smiles at me and says nothing. There is nothing to say. Right now we are here together—me, my mother, dementia, every word in the universe, anxiety, joy, the rhododendron bush. ✎

ABOUT 'OFF THE CUSHION'

Off the Cushion is a new feature in our newsletter, in which we invite you to submit articles about what your practice means to you, of activities off the cushion which feel like an extension of your practice. Please e-mail your submissions to newsletter editor, Joshua Lipps, at joshualipps@gmail.com. ✎



SEVEN THUNDERS ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION AT BETHANY HOUSE AUGUST 1ST



On the first Saturday of August 1985, the handful of original Seven Thunders members responded to an invitation from the late Abbot Bernard McVeigh, OCSO, to use the facilities of the Trappist Abbey in Lafayette for monthly contemplative prayer sittings. For the past thirty years

without interruption, Seven Thunders members and guests have enjoyed the gracious hospitality of the Abbey and the fellowship of its community.

In gratitude for that hospitality and in celebration of thirty years of devoted contemplative practice, there will be a special first Saturday sitting at the abbey on August 1.

Contemplative prayer will be held from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m., followed

by a short talk and then 'work practice' from 10:30 a.m.

until noon, as we

give Bethany

House a

good clean-

ing. We shall

end with

a potluck,

cake and

ice cream.

Come and

join the ce-

lebration, and

if you can

contribute to

the potluck,

so much the

better! ⚡

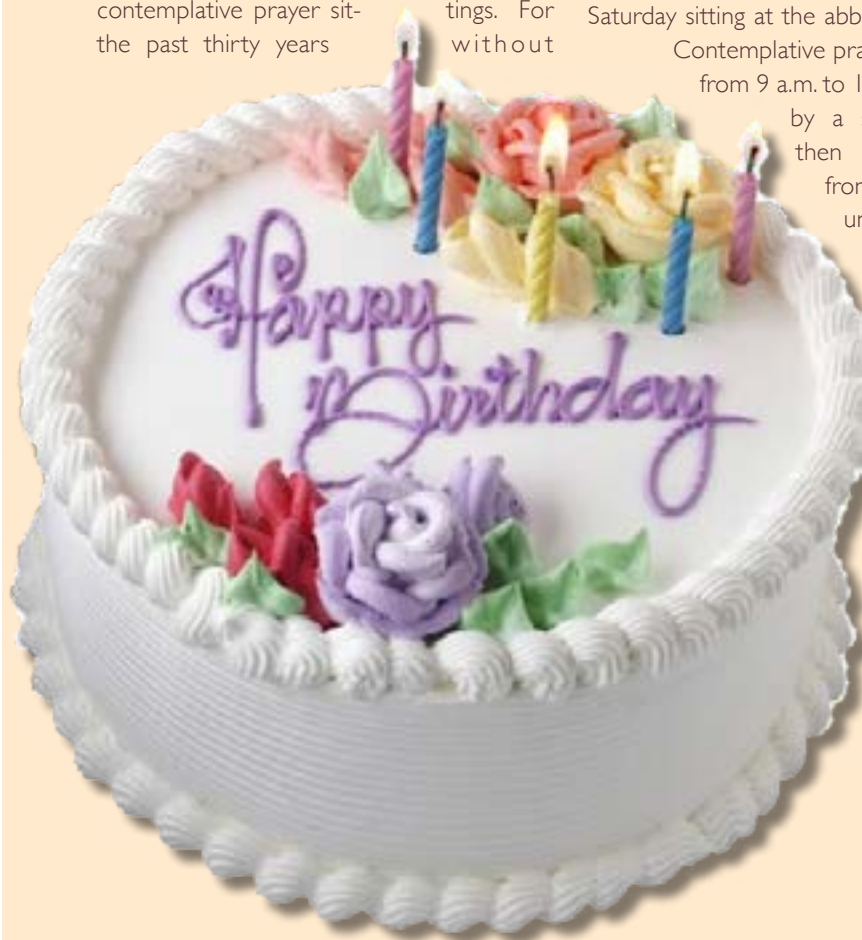
DANA – THE PRACTICE OF GIVING

Dana, the practice of giving, is universally recognized as one of the most basic human virtues, a quality that testifies to the depth of humanity and capacity for self-transcendence. Most generally, it is the spirit and act of generosity, and its beneficial effects beyond measure.

e form of giving money, although at times it may be in the form of goods or services. In the teachings of the Buddha, the practice of giving is one of the six paramitas and is given a place of special eminence as being the seed and foundation of spiritual development. It is with the dana paramita that the Buddha's teaching of universal harmony is practiced. Mutual interdependence becomes mutual inter-support.

It is a practice that is not only Buddhist, but perennial and found in all major spiritual traditions. In the New Testament, Jesus says to "give to all who ask of you." (Lk 6:30) Christian teaching emphasizes all as members of the body of Christ. And St Paul echoes this in several places (1 Cor 9:3-15, 2 Cor 5 and 1 Tim 5:17-8)

Seven Thunders has been in existence for the past thirty years to provide opportunities for members and others to deepen their practices of Contemplative Prayer and/or Zen training. Funds for the many practice opportunities come from membership dues and contributions, but are not always sufficient to cover all expenses, particularly those events for which no fees are charged. Please keep this in mind when attending various Seven Thunders events. ⚡





CONTEMPLATING: I AM THE GATE...

by Lisa Rosser

Jesus says "I am the gate....I am the good shepherd...." [John 10:7-18]

He is not saying, only if you believe in me will you be allowed into heaven when you die. He is not saying, transfer your need for rules and regulations, your legalistic devotion to exact rule following, to me, to be considered worthy by God.

He is saying, your need for a literal explanation prevents you from hearing my voice, from experiencing my safety, that is always available to you.

He is saying, I AM the way. Do, be, as I AM and you will know peace and eternity in the now that contains all time: past, present and future.

Jesus is the gate because he knows this and lives this. When we live as he does, he becomes our path, the gateway, to experiencing our lives as God-in-each-moment.

Jesus is not offering us a different set of rules to replace the old rules. He is asking us to recognize that our selves are completely known by God. Just as a sheep is known by its shepherd. Just as a child is known by his or her parents. There is no worry. Listen for my voice, and you will find the way. There is no do this, not that. There is only be.

Jesus is not promising that the sheep will not fall, be hurt, get lost, or go hungry. In the parable, the good shepherd looks for his lost sheep. In the reality of Jesus as the way, the sheep are already found, they have never been lost. Sheep don't know this, and people forget this.

In circumstances of brokenness, Jesus is already with us, helping us, tending to us.

In circumstances of joy, he is rejoicing with us as well. It's easy to forget this and only call for Jesus when we are lost.

It is this, the relentlessness of his presence that makes Jesus the gate. The gate to the kingdom of heaven within and without, right here, right now, always. ⚡





**CONTEMPLATIVE INTENSIVE RETREAT (CIR)
OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE ABBEY, JUNE 25-28, 2015**

Sr. Joan Saalfield, SNJM, will lead our Summer Contemplative Retreat at Shalom Prayer Center at Our Lady of Guadalupe Trappist Abbey, Lafayette OR, June 25-28. Sr. Joan is a member of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary currently living and working in Portland, Oregon. She has studied and practiced Zen and Contemplation for 35 years, first with Robert Aitken, then with Fr. Willigis Jaeger, OSB, and most recently with Fr. Pat Hawk, C.Ss.R., who encouraged her to teach in CIRs.

This retreat is especially designed for those who desire the opportunity for intensive sitting during a long weekend type of retreat. It begins with supper at 6:00 p.m. on Thursday and ends after clean-up and lunch on Sunday (by 1:30 pm). Please arrive between 2 and 6 p.m.

Our daily schedule includes about six to eight hours of sitting contemplation and an hour of assigned work. Sitting contemplation occurs in 25-minute periods separated by 5 minutes of walking contemplation. Total silence will be observed during the entire retreat. Everyone participates fully in the daily cycle unless prior arrangements are made.

Each of us has a private room, with access

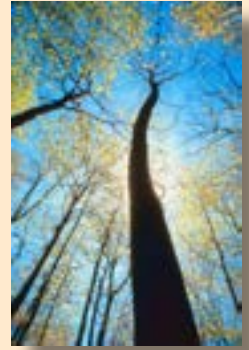
to shared bathrooms with showers. Bedding and bath linens are provided. Meals are the same as those eaten by the by the Trappist monks. The fare is vegetarian, simple, and balanced. It is possible to bring foods that you require for other special diets, but no cooking facilities are available. A refrigerator is available.

Please bring your own cushions or prayer bench, if you desire. Some will be made available. Chairs are available. During the retreat you are asked to wear conservative clothing of dark or subdued color. No shorts or sleeveless tops please. Bring additional clothes suitable for walking outdoors (possibly in the rain) and for work (gardening, washing dishes, cleaning, etc).

The fee for the retreat, including lodging, meals and tuition is \$310, with a \$30 discount for members. A \$75 deposit is required with your registration, and full payment is due by May 26, 2014. All but \$75 is refundable until May 26. If you cancel after that date all but \$75 is refundable. Part-time, commuter attendance is possible.

If the retreat fee is a barrier to your attendance, please check the box requesting a "scholarship" or contact us. Although we

need to balance our financial books, we also need and deeply appreciate your presence. Donations are appreciated and tax-deductible. To register for the retreat, send the form below with your deposit to **Doug Speers, 7111 SW 14th Ave., Portland, OR 97219**



You will receive a confirmation email. Questions? Please feel free to contact Nancy Roberts (nroberts@peak.org) or Doug Speers (ddspeers.38@gmail.com).

DAILY SCHEDULE
Thursday will include dinner, an orientation, and contemplation until 9 p.m. On Friday and Saturday, we will rise at 5:30 a.m. for intensive contemplation, breakfast, lunch, and dinner, an optional opportunity for the Eucharist with the Trappist monks, conference, and interviews with Sr. Joan. These days will end with contemplation until 9 p.m. On Sunday, we will rise at 5:30 a.m. for contemplation, breakfast, lunch, an optional opportunity for the Eucharist, and cleanup. We will complete the retreat with lunch at 1 p.m. on Sunday.

REGISTRATION FORM

CONTEMPLATIVE INTENSIVE RETREAT (CIR), OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE ABBEY, JUNE 25-28, 2015

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

First Seven Thunders retreat? yes no

I will bring my own pad (zabuton) and cushion (zafu) or bench.

I might be able to give someone a ride from Portland _____ or Eugene _____

I need to borrow: _____

Other needs (rides, food, etc.) _____

I request a scholarship of \$ _____ I enclose a donation of \$ _____

Please make checks payable to Seven Thunders.

Current Seven Thunders members:

- I enclose full payment of \$280 (the member rate).
- I enclose a \$75 deposit (balance of member rate due by May 26).

Not a current Seven Thunders member:

- I enclose \$310, please apply \$30 to Seven Thunders member dues.
- I enclose a \$75 deposit (balance of non-member rate due by May 26).
- I enclose \$105, deposit & member dues (balance of member rate due by May 26).