

SEVEN THUNDERS

newsletter

www.seventhunders.org

February 2021



SEVEN THUNDERS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Co-President

Matthew McTigue
503.548.7004
mattmctigue@hotmail.com

Co-President

Ed Glad
503.662.4265
eglad57@gmail.com

President Emeritus

Greg Smith
503.758.1020
gasmith@clark.edu

Secretary

Kailyn Kent
925.321.1704
Kailyn.kent@gmail.com

Treasurer

Jenny Brausch
541.971.1297
livinggreen@comcast.net

Director

Michael Seely
503.730.0821
ms452mss@me.com

Director

Dan Dickinson
503.632.5957
firfied@bctonline.com

Director

Dan Brown
503.504.2955
dcareybrown@gmail.com

Director

Beth Brenner
602.510.9178
mary_collins71@hotmail.com

Newsletter Editor

Greg Smith
503.758.1020
gasmith@clark.edu

Newsletter Layout

Teresa Marcel
503.534.2600
tdmarcel@mac.com

TEACHERS

Leonard Marcel Roshi
503.636.9009
LJMarcel@comcast.net

Sr Joan Saalfeld
503.347.4333
joansaalfeld@gmail.com

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THE TRUE EYE

IRON FLUTE CASE 19

by Leonard Marcel

Chao-chou was planning to visit a mountain temple when an elder monk wrote a poem and gave it to him:

Which mountain is not a holy place?
Why take walking stick and visit Mount Tai?
If the golden lion appears in the clouds,
It is not a happy omen at all.

After reading the poem, Chao-chou asked:
"What is the true eye?"

The monk made no reply.

The *Iron Flute* (*Tettekki Tosui*) is a collection of one hundred koan compiled in Japan in the eighteenth century by a Soto master named Genro (n.d.). The name is interesting. As you know, flutes can be made from any of several kinds of wood, including bamboo, as well as certain other materials, and they have a series of graduated openings and a mouthpiece to create music. A Zen flute, however, is different. It is made of iron and has no holes. So how does one make music with such a thing? Let us see what this case can tell us.

The protagonist in this case is the great Chao-chou Ts'ung-shen (Zhaozhou Congshen/Joshu

Jushin, 778-897). He is well known from his appearances in cases in other koan collections. At the age of eighteen, he met his teacher, Nanchuan (Nanquan/Nansen Fugen, 748-835) and trained with him for forty years until his teacher's death. Then, at the age of sixty he began to travel throughout China, visiting prominent Chan/Zen masters of the time He did that for

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SEVEN THUNDERS RETREATS & EVENTS

FIRST SATURDAY SITTINGS

Monthly "First Saturday" sittings have been transferred online until it is deemed safe to meet at the Trappist Abbey again. Up-to-date information and links to join the sitting can be found on the Seven Thunders website at seventhunders.org. The format remains much the same, with formal group sitting beginning 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 Seven Thunders via the website are gratefully accepted. The schedule through 2021 is (* indicates 2nd Saturday of month):

- February 6, Leonard Marcel
- March 6, Leonard Marcel
- April 3, Sr. Joan Saalfeld
- May 1, Sr. Joan Saalfeld
- June 5, Sr. Joan Saalfeld
- July 10*, Sr. Joan Saalfeld
- August 7, Leonard Marcel
- September 11*, Leonard Marcel
- October 2, Sr. Joan Saalfeld
- November 6, Leonard Marcel
- December 4, Sr. Joan Saalfeld

RETREAT SCHEDULE

- March 27 & 28 – Virtual Palm Sunday CIR at Stones and Clouds, on Zoom, led by Leonard Marcel. Registration information on page 12.
- April 10 – Virtual Zen retreat in Bend, on Zoom, led by Leonard Marcel. Registration information on page 11.
- June 18 - 19 – Virtual CIR on Zoom, led by Sr. Joan Saalfeld. Registration information on page 13.
- July 13 - 17 – Zen sesshin at Stones and Clouds (tentatively in person), led by Leonard Marcel. Registration information on page 14.



SEVEN THUNDERS REGULAR SITTINGS

PORTLAND AREA SITTINGS

■ Monday evenings via Zoom (until further notice) at Stones and Clouds (*Rai'un*) Zendo, 7:00 to 8:30 p.m., zazen & dokusan. Check SevenThunders.org for details. Contact: Leonard Marcel at 503.636.9009 or marcellj@hotmail.com.

SALEM SITTINGS

■ For Salem Zen Center's online offerings, email for the Zoom links:

SalemZenCenter@gmail.com. Wednesday evening meditation & Dharma talk from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. and a Saturday morning meditation & Poetry share from 7:30 to 8:30 a.m.

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: Leanne Latterell at leannelatterell@bend-broadband.com or 541.604.1739. ✎

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 Jenny Brausch at livinggreen@comcast.net. 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) are not received by March, you will be sent an announcements-only version of the newsletter. Please send membership dues to: Jenny Brausch, PO Box 3119, Albany, OR 97321. ✎

ZAZENKAI

Held at the Stones and Clouds (*Rai'un*) Zendo in Lake Oswego, led by Leonard Marcel. These will take place online until further notice.

- February 20
- March 20
- September 25
- October 23 ✎

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 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, please contact Larry Keil at 206.322.8759 or go to their website at: <http://three-treasures-sangha.org/> ✎



BOB SMITH REMEMBRANCE

Robert Lloyd Smith, from Corvallis, was among the handful of original 1985 members of Seven Thunders. He died at the age of 84 on November 15, 2020— shy by about a month of his 85th birthday. Born and raised in Chicago, he moved to Portland to study physics at Reed College and afterwards made the Pacific Northwest his home. With his Reed bachelor's degree in hand, he began a graduate program in modern physics in 1958 at the University of Oregon. His studies in Eugene, however, were disrupted when his thesis advisor failed to be given tenure. Cast adrift, Bob found his way to Oregon State and a new program in oceanography in the fall of 1960. During his work in physical oceanography, Bob collaborated with fellow grad students to undertake pioneering measurements over the continental shelf as well as the seasonal monitoring of coastal upwelling and downwelling. Their investigations brought them international recognition.

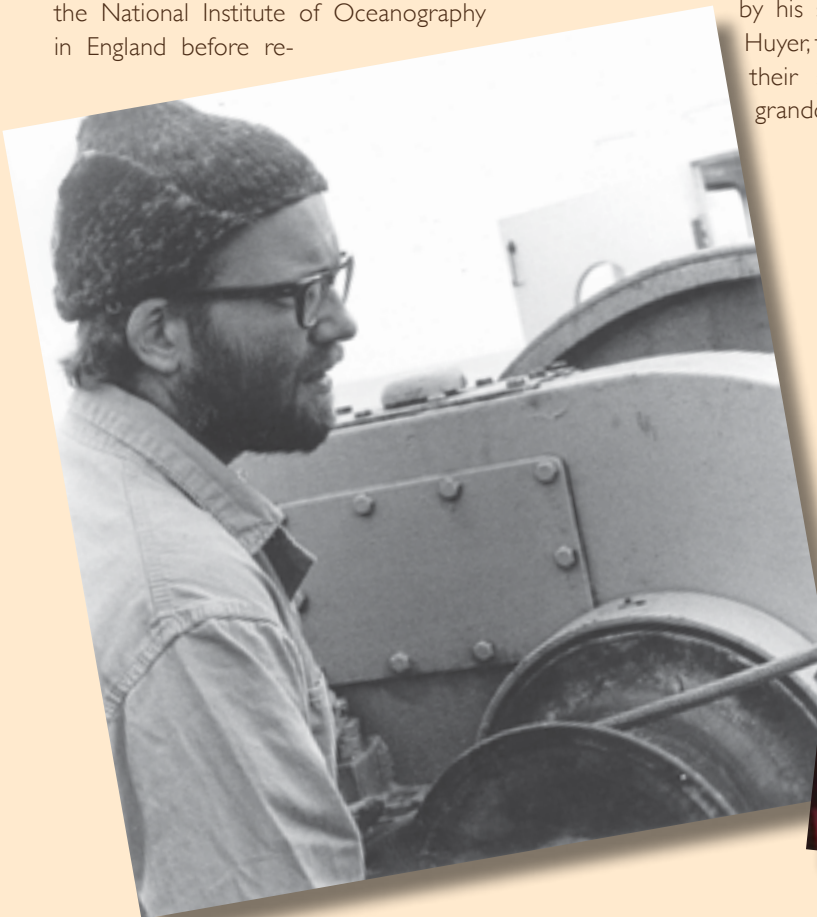
After completing his PhD in 1964, Bob took a NATO Postdoctoral Fellowship at the National Institute of Oceanography in England before re-

turning to Corvallis as an assistant professor. He was vital in OSU's participation and leadership in the many large-group, collaborative observing programs that followed, and he helped foster the tone for collaborative research in OSU's Oceanography Department. He was named a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1990, and he served as editor of *Progress in Oceanography* from 1984 to 2002.

Beyond oceanography, Bob enjoyed the good things in life: swimming, walking, wine, food, art, music, Shakespeare, religion, history, and his grandchildren. His friendly good nature extended into all these areas. He was a member of St. Mary's Catholic Church in Corvallis and was friends with monks of the Benedictine Abbey in Mt. Angel and the Trappist Abbey in Carlton. He is survived by his second wife, Jane Huyer, three children and their spouses, and six grandchildren.



Bob was a quiet, thoughtful and considerate man with a wry sense of humor and a soft and generous smile for everyone he met. His spiritual life and contemplative practice were serious matters for him. Even in his declining years, he managed to participate in Contemplative Intensive Retreats and occasional First Saturday offerings. He will be missed by all who knew him. ⚡



Photos courtesy
of Jane Huyer



CONTEMPLATIVE INTENSIVE RETREAT – JANUARY 22-23, 2021

by Nancy Roberts

Intrepid meditators sat for two days to re-center, regroup, open, and listen for God. Sr. Joan Saalfeld SNJM led our group with prayers, psalms, conferences, and interviews. With Sr. Joan serving as timekeeper as well as teacher, the retreat went off without a hitch thanks to her years of retreat experience and our stable internet connections. Strong sitting came from our retreatants: Beth Brenner, Pam Evans, Susan Freisinger, Gini Graham, Richard Lance, LeeAnne Latterell, Sr. Sandra Lincoln, Anna Lyons-Roost, and Eric Roost.

Even though the weather was crisp and cold, in the luxury of sitting in our warm homes, we attended to silence and surrender. The Friday conference focused on the illusion that we are separate beings when in reality, we are all interconnected. Here are a few key points, roughly summarized: What is perceived by the senses, can be wrongly interpreted by the

intellect as separateness, which feeds the agenda of the ego seeking individual “control.” We must pay attention because realizing that all are One is the entry to the kingdom of heaven. We cannot know what stage of the spiritual journey we are in but must settle into a process of gradual transformation.

Saturday conference included quotes from *The Brothers Karamazov* and Chief Seattle, and the prayer from the Pope’s Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si*. Roughly summarized: Many people first experience the numinous when in Nature. We are all part of the web of life and this can be realized through intuition and wonder; the realization of complete interconnectedness includes the sacramental (epiphany) and the personal (experience of oneness). We are becoming aware

of the environmental crisis and changing our habits. As contemplatives we can forgive everyone and everything, ask forgiveness for all and for everything, and pour out love for the Earth.

One of the phrases in the morning and evening prayers could be a bookend to the two days: “Quiet our minds and enkindle our hearts, that walking the way of your truth we may leave the imprint of your goodness by the way we live our lives.” ✨





A WORLDWIDE ROHATSU SESSHIN 2020

by Greg Smith

Seven Thunders held a virtual Rohatsu Sesshin starting on the evening of Thursday, December 3 and finishing up Sunday evening on December 6. Fifteen experienced Zen students beamed in from Great Britain, Australia, Virginia, New Mexico, Washington State, and Oregon where we all sat from our homes while watching and listening to Leonard and Teresa as they opened and closed the zendo, kept time, rang the bells, led the sutra services and meal chants, delivered teisho, and propelled us though dokusan. They accomplished the work of five people with a combination of ease and skill, something that both awed us and elicited our gratitude.

Teisho and dharma talks during this dark time of the year drew on the words of Master Ma and the Buddha's enlightenment as captured in the *Transmission of the Light (Denkoroku)*. Case One of the latter is standard fare for the Rohatsu Sesshin and serves as a powerful reminder of what lies at the core of our practice.

Knowing that during the week before December 8, the day the Buddha is said to have recognized his true nature, tens or maybe hundreds of thousands are sitting just like us across the planet lends a sense of significance to the time we spend on our cushions. This sesshin provided an opportunity

to regroup our lives and resonate with the truth of Hakuin Zenji's assertion that "This very place is the lotus land; this very body the Buddha." Even though we were spread around the planet, we could feel our lives as they rang together thanks to our silent sitting. ⚡



Above, top row, left to right: Leonard Marcel, Teresa Marcel, Kailyn Kent, Josh Shindler, Tom Davies. Second row: Katy Bain, Greg Smith, Dan Dickinson, and Susan Brandon. Third Row: Eric Roost, Paul Birke-land, Nancy Roberts, Nancy O'Connor. Bottom row: Emma Stone. Not shown: Marian Morgan & Edward Lams.



SEVEN THUNDERS BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION VIA ZOOM

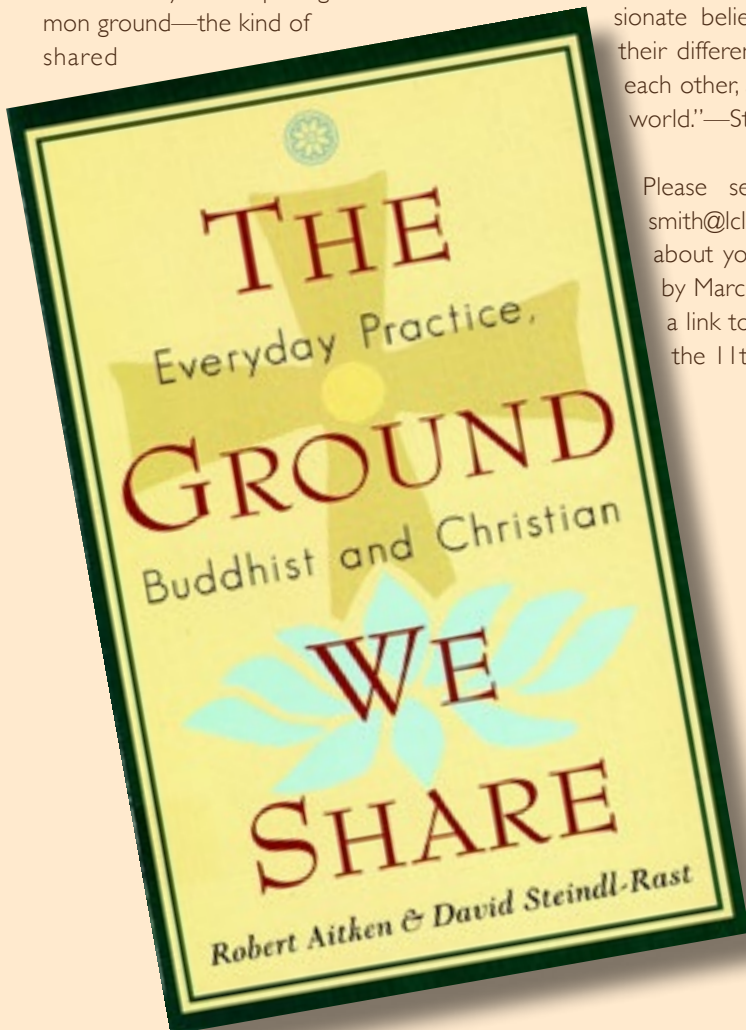
The next meeting of the Seven Thunders book group will be on Friday, March 12, at 7:30 p.m. We will discuss *The Ground We Share: Everyday Practice – Buddhist and Christian* by Robert Aitken Roshi and David Steindl-Rast (Shambala, 1996, \$14.22).

These dialogues between Robert Aitken Roshi, one of the first American-born Zen masters, and Brother David Steindl-Rast, the Roman Catholic monk and hermit, took place during a week-long retreat the two old friends undertook in 1991 in a remote part of the island of Hawaii. Their aim was to approach the dialogue between Buddhism and Christianity in a fresh way, one that takes as its starting point a comparison of the personal experiences of the dialoguers—as a Buddhist and as a Christian, respectively—rather than abstract concepts. The result is the discovery of a surprising amount of common ground—the kind of shared

experience that forms a solid foundation for further dialogue.

“This is a lovely, engaging, insightful conversation between two important contemporary spiritual teachers and practitioners, one (Aitken) an American-born Zen master and the other (Steindl-Rast) a Benedictine monk. The conversation is drawn from a week-long retreat that Aitken and Steindl-Rast shared in Hawaii in 1991. They agree quickly to focus on ‘everyday practice’ rather than on abstract conceptions of Buddhism and Christianity. The result is not a formal contribution to the growing body of Buddhist-Christian dialogue so much as an illuminating and multifaceted exploration of common ground—the sacred heart that beats at the center of a world shared by Christians and Buddhists. This volume offers a rare opportunity to eavesdrop on a conversation between compassionate believers comfortable with their differences, fully engaged with each other, and fully engaged in the world.”—Steve Schroeder, Booklist.

Please send Greg Smith (gasmith@clark.edu) a message about your interest in joining us by March 10, and he'll send you a link to the Zoom meeting on the 11th. ✍



I DREAM A WORLD REDUX

by Greg Smith



On Martin Luther King's Day, NPR put out a challenge to write a poem modeled on one by Langston Hughes entitled “I dream a world.” This is what came to mind.

I dream a world where people
no longer see themselves
as superior to other humans
or plants or animals,
where all beings are treated as family.
I dream a world where people are
content with sufficiency,
and all are provided
with adequate shelter, food,
and medical care.
I dream a world where children
are taught to discover
and develop their unique gifts
and offered pathways
to share those gifts with others.
I dream a world where
rivers and forests and plains
and oceans and tundra
damaged by human industry
are alive with insects and birds,
large mammals and fish,
their numbers restored to what they were
just a century ago.
I dream a world where all people
feel their lives and voices matter
and that at the moment of their death
they know fulfillment. ✍



OFF THE CUSHION: A TREE FELL IN THE FOREST

by Paul Birkeland

A treasured metaphor of mine came crashing down the other day. The dharma wheel rolled right over it. But it kicked up a small dust cloud of wisdom just the same. The metaphor consisted of two trees in Ravenna Park.

Ravenna Park is a wooded ravine about 100 yards from our house in northeast Seattle. I've been walking it for more than thirty years. First I walked it with a dog. Then I walked it with a different dog, then two dogs, then a dog and a child, then a dog and two children, and now mostly alone.

Years and years ago, I noticed two trees right along the footpath on the south slope of the ravine. One was a bigleaf maple that had obviously seen better days. It's a ragged hundred feet tall. It's perched at the lip of an embankment that drops down about twenty feet to the creek bed. The tree leans over the embankment pretty ominously. The trunk keeps it from falling, but the trunk is little more than agglomeration of parallel tendrils surrounding a hollow space where the core of the tree no longer was. A child could squeeze between the mossed-over tendrils and stand inside. It's that far gone.

This tree isn't unique in the park. A fungus infestation is ravaging maple trees. The old growth cedars and firs in the park were clearcut under mysterious circumstances during WWI. No one knows quite what happened, but the records show that the Superintendent of Parks retired wealthy. Maples were the first trees to grow back, and they came to dominate the ravine. Now, with their age and density, they are the perfect hosts for a spreading and opportunistic infection.

The other tree is a Pacific yew. Yew trees are understory trees, evolved for growing in the permanent, semi-twilight beneath other trees. They tend to spread, rather than grow straight up, and often grow multiple trunks right from the ground. They are often twisted and gnarly with mottled, flaky bark. Tradition associates them with death for a variety of reasons. This particular tree, however, had a straight trunk for at least fifteen feet. Quite a specimen for a yew tree! I always admired it.

Here's the metaphor: this yew tree was growing less than a foot downslope of the crumbling maple, right at its base. It grew directly under the maple tree's lean. It was pretty clear what was going to happen here sooner or later, and the yew tree was growing in a spot where it faced its imminent demise every moment of every day. With every drip of rain from the maple tree, with every dropped maple leaf, that yew tree would be reminded that its



erstwhile companion through all these years was also to be its violent destroyer. Could happen any time.

So, imagine my surprise on my walk through the park the other day to find the yew tree completely toppled over; its marvelously straight trunk pivoted parallel to the ground at the root. But its maple companion was still stretching its ragged rake of a crown to the sky! This was completely unexpected and perplexing. I still haven't figured this out!

But here's my takeaway: The mind sure likes to complicate things, doesn't it?

Ha!

A tree fell in the forest. Crash! ⚡



ABOUT "OFF THE CUSHION"

Off the Cushion is a regular feature of our newsletter. 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 Greg Smith at gasmith@clark.edu. ⚡



THE TRUE EYE, *continued from page 1*

twenty years before settling at the age of eighty in a ruined temple in northern China. There, for the next forty years he taught the Way. He is sometimes regarded as the greatest master during that golden age of Chan/Zen) in China. Dogen (1200-1253), admiringly called him "the old Buddha."

In this case, the monk is asking, in effect, "What are you seeking by going there? What are you hoping to experience, a vision of Manjusri in the mountain clouds? What an illusion! Such is of no use to a person of Zen. No seeking outside can bring true happiness." In other words, awaken to your own inner light and wisdom. See with your own true Dharma eye. As Hakuin Ekaku (1686 -1768) tells us, this very place is the Lotus Land. This very mountain, right where you are right now, is the abode of Manjusri.

Chao-chou (Zhazhou/Joshu) responds by asking the old monk, "What is the true eye?" This question, at once sincere and challenging, foretells the giant of Zen he will become.

We are all familiar with the deluded eye: the fundamental delusion of an independent self, separate from other selves and the resultant delusions coming from that, such as the fear of being found wanting, because we feel inadequate; the unfavorable self-comparisons, criticisms and evaluations; the old stories we tell ourselves and the old dramas we keep acting out in our lives. Our old dramas are convenient fictions so that we do not have to do the hard work of waking up. Instead, we stay with what

is familiar, such as our habitual reactions of anger and fear to anything that threatens our fragile egos. Me and mine as opposed to you and yours. My side versus your side. We may act as if we know what is going on, but because everyone and everything is filtered through our own personal agenda, we cannot see or hear anything as it truly is. Even some spiritual achievement, if we cling to it, becomes an impediment to true vision. There is an old saying: "Although gold dust is precious, in the eye it causes blindness."

Our old stories and dramas, of which we are always the star, also impede the development of compassion. When we feel threatened by another's attitude or behavior, we cannot see its source in the suffering that the other feels. Since we are so skilled and focused at keeping our own pain and suffering at bay, we know very little about another's. On this path we come to know the other's pain and suffering and to respond to it with compassion, but also to recognize our own suffering well enough to see from where it arises and what arises from it.

Because of the introspective process of our zazen, we see our lack of attention, lack of awareness, lack of kindness. We see more and more immediately our unskillful and unhelpful habits, the conditioning we have experienced throughout life, and with each complete exhalation we let go.

So how do we answer Chao-chou's (Zhazhou/Joshu) question? What is the true eye?

The verse to case 19 of the Wu-men kuan (Mumonkan) may help us here:

The spring flowers, the autumn moon,
Summer breezes, winter snow,
If useless things do not clutter your mind,
Every season is the best season.

In other words, when we see with a clear mind and true eye, whatever we see is It. And not-It. Both true at the same time.

After all, what are we doing in this practice? We are dropping all useless things. In fact, anything to which we are clinging is useless. This is the revolutionary nature of Zen practice. We are here to realize and experience this uncluttered mind. With the true eye of discernment, we clearly see all beings in their original state, right here and now. Then, every season is the best season, every day a good day.

This is why zazen and sesshin are so crucial to our practice. Daily zazen is essential; sitting regularly with the sangha is essential; but making the time for more intensive one day or multiple day practice is most crucial as well. The deeper we can go into our practice, the more open and awake to the truth of our interconnected experience we become.

When Chao-chou (Zhazhou/Joshu) asks, "What is the true eye?" the old monk does not answer. How do you see his silence here? There are several different kinds of silence on this path: one is the silence of be-

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THE TRUE EYE, *continued from page 8*


ing clueless (“I do not know, cannot say, am unable to respond”). Another is the silence of waiting to see what the teacher will do next; that never works. Another is silence as practice. And still another is silence as instruction, the most famous example of which is that of Vimilakirti when asked by Manjusri about the gate to non-duality.

Many years after the encounter which this case recalls and after Chao-chou (Zhaozhou/Joshu) had settled in his own temple, he did go to Mount Tai. This time, however, he was not seeking anything, but he was investigating an old woman who ran a teashop at the bottom of the mountain. The story is told in Case 31 of the Wu-men Kuan (Mumonkan), wherein we are told that there were always monks wanting to go to the sacred mountain to pay homage to Manjusri, perhaps hoping to see some vision or to have a spiritual experience in the mountain clouds. At a fork in the road, each one would stop at the teashop and ask for directions to Mount Tai. Invariably, the old tea woman would answer, “Go straight ahead.” The monk would walk on, no doubt thinking that the tea woman had merely been giving directions and completely missing her Mind. Expecting something else, we do not see what is right in front of us. After the monk had gone on a short distance, she would say, “A good, respectable monk, but he too goes on like that.”

Evidently the monks at the monastery of Chao-chou (Zhaozhou/Joshu) who had had encounters with this woman were quite distressed to be caught short by her. What did she mean? Why was she disrespecting them? When one of them told the teacher about this, he said, “I will go and investigate the old woman for you.” So, the next day he went and asked of the woman the same question and she gave the same response. Upon returning, Chao-chou (Zhaozhou/Joshu) said to his students, “I have investigated the old woman for you.”

What did he see? Who was the old tea woman of Mount Tai? Who are you? What is the one taste of truth? What is the true eye? When we are standing upright on our own two feet, and with an uncluttered mind, we see that right here is true north, right here is the summit of Mount Sumeru, the peak of Mount Tai.

Great master Hakuin posed the same question when he asked: “How can one penetrate to the True Face of the Lotus?” Then, he said: “It is nothing more than seeing into your own mind.... Courageously and firmly...investigating it to the end.... You will see right before you, in the place where you stand, the True Face of the Lotus, and at once your body and mind will drop away. Opening the True Eye is seeing that this very world is itself the brilliance of

Nirvana.” (Orategama letter)

This very world itself is the brilliance of Nirvana.

This path is the Buddha Way, the path of the awakened one. And on this path we begin with zazen and go straight ahead. We come together in harmony, which is the very definition and life of sangha, and engage in zazen, which is not a process of becoming someone else, but of becoming less and realizing who we really are. Zazen strips us bare. No self, but also no no-self. Both are constructs and concepts.

When Shakyamuni Buddha sat down under the tree and committed himself to stay there until he realized something, he was just as we are – a simple human being, wounded and vulnerable, and who needed to awaken. His not knowing mind investigated and penetrated to the deepest extent, so that everything fell away and the true eye opened.

What had become clear to him? The same that had become clear for Chao-chou (Zhaozhou/Joshu) and Hakuin. There is no secret to it. All we have to do is sit down as they did, become quiet, let go and prune away all that is extraneous. No inside, no outside. And then manifest that mind in

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THE TRUE EYE, *continued from page 9*

everything we do – completely, throughout life, with nothing left out. Do not let even a little bit slip past un-lived, unattended, neglected. Every tiny bit of your life is all of it at every moment. None of it is hidden anywhere.

In case 23 of this *Iron Flute* (*Tettekiki Tosui*) collection, master Hsueh-feng (Xuefeng/Seppo Gison, 822 – 908) says to a student: “Do not stop until your axe cuts to the very center of the tree.” Each of us is using our axe and our shears, cutting and pruning. This is assiduous daily practice – cutting and pruning away this powerful delusion of a separate self, an individuality which asserts itself so imperiously at the slightest threat to the well-defended ego. It is a thick tree and needs to be cut through to the center.

This intensity of practice is for every moment of every day. In our culture, which is so geared toward achievement, possession, entertainment, distraction and the five second sound-byte or image, every one of us has at some level pressing questions about life, death, change and loss. These questions demand our attention and resolution. It is these questions which most often bring us to submit ourselves to the rigors of Zen practice. We hope and eventually trust that there is a solution to this dis-ease (*dhukka*). So, we sit down – every day – and come to *zazen* and *sesshin* whenever possible. Yet, we find that sitting down and becoming still and silent can be difficult and frustrating, not because that is the nature of Zen practice but because it is the nature of the conditioned mind. The untangling of the mental and emotional webs we have been weaving for so long takes commitment, persistence and patience.

It seems counter-intuitive that such constraint and restriction leads to real freedom. Yet, when

we submit to the discipline of the practice, there is a very deep kind of liberation. By giving ourselves to the practice and committing ourselves to it, we confirm it for ourselves. Then we can do it completely, day after day, and nothing can impede us. Whatever arises in our day is not an obstacle, not an impediment, but just grist for the mill of practice, another dharma gate, another opportunity for insight and change.

In his commentary on this case, Nyogen Senzaki (1876 - 1958) quotes a Chinese poem of the Tang dynasty:

All mountains are the temple of Manjusri.
Blue ones are far and green ones near.
Each has the Bodhisattva enshrined.
Why climb Mount Tai?

The sutras depict Manjusri riding a golden lion.

You may see such an illusion in the mountain clouds,
But it is not real to the eye of a Zen person.

It does not bring the happiness that is sought.

He then quotes another koan: “Avalokitesvara has a thousand hands and on each one of them is an eye?” Which one of them is the true eye? Which is the true eye of the Bodhisattva of Compassion? Avalokitesvara (*Kuan-yin/Kanzeon*) is not only the Bodhisattva of Compassion but is also known as *The One Who Gives No Fear*. To give no fear also means having no fear. No fear, no anger, no worry, no greed, no delusion. You, as *Kanzeon*, practice deep *prajna paramita*, the wisdom of going beyond duality, the wisdom of the other shore, and see that all forms are empty of independent existence, that whenever greed, anger and delusion arise, they are seen for what they are. They arise endlessly. We vow to abandon them – endlessly.

Every koan is a metaphor for your life. Each one is about you yourself. If you can penetrate this *Kanzeon* koan, you will also be able to answer *Chao-chou's* (*Zhaozhou/Joshu*) question. What is the true eye? ⚡





CALL FOR DHARMA BOOK DONATIONS

by Lisa Kochinski

At the *Joya no kane* ringing of the bell on New Year's Eve, we listened to Roshi intone the 108 afflictions that cause one to fall off the path of virtue. A sangha member remarked afterwards that even during Covid lockdown, there were plenty of opportunities to fall off the path of virtue. As I reflected on my actions over the last year, I had to agree. Even with an established meditation practice, it is easy to fall off the path of virtue. How much more so for those less fortunate than ourselves, especially the incarcerated in prisons across America.

The Prison Mindfulness Institute (PMI), also known as the Prison Dharma Network, was founded to bring the benefits of meditation to the incarcerated. PMI serves prisons in every State and their programs have helped thousands of incarcerated prisoners. PMI instructors teach a program called the Path of Freedom that incorporates mindfulness meditation, emotional intelligence, communication, conflict resolution, and various resourcing and resiliency building skills. Mindfulness gained through meditation is a cornerstone of the program, helping inmates to become aware of greed, pride,

anger, and all the other 108 afflictions as they arise in order to help break ingrained patterns of negative behavior. This helps inmates not only to deal with prison life while they are incarcerated but also to lead better and more productive lives when they are released.

Additionally, PMI sends thousands of donated dharma books, free of charge, to prisoners and to prison libraries. They welcome donations of new and used books on contemplative spirituality, meditation, Buddhism, and related topics. If you have books that you no longer need, please consider donating them. Those books can do a lot of good out in the world. Please send your books (no hardbacks, magazines, newsletters, cassettes, CDs, or pamphlets) to:

PMI
PO Box 206
South Deerfield, MA 01373

For further information on the PMI, please visit their website: <https://www.prisonmindfulness.org/projects/books-behind-bars/> ✨

BEND SPRING RETREAT

On April 10 from 8:45 a.m. to 4:15 p.m., Leonard Marcel will offer his usual Spring retreat for Bend Zen. This retreat will be given on Zoom, so it's open to practitioners anywhere – you don't have to be in Bend.

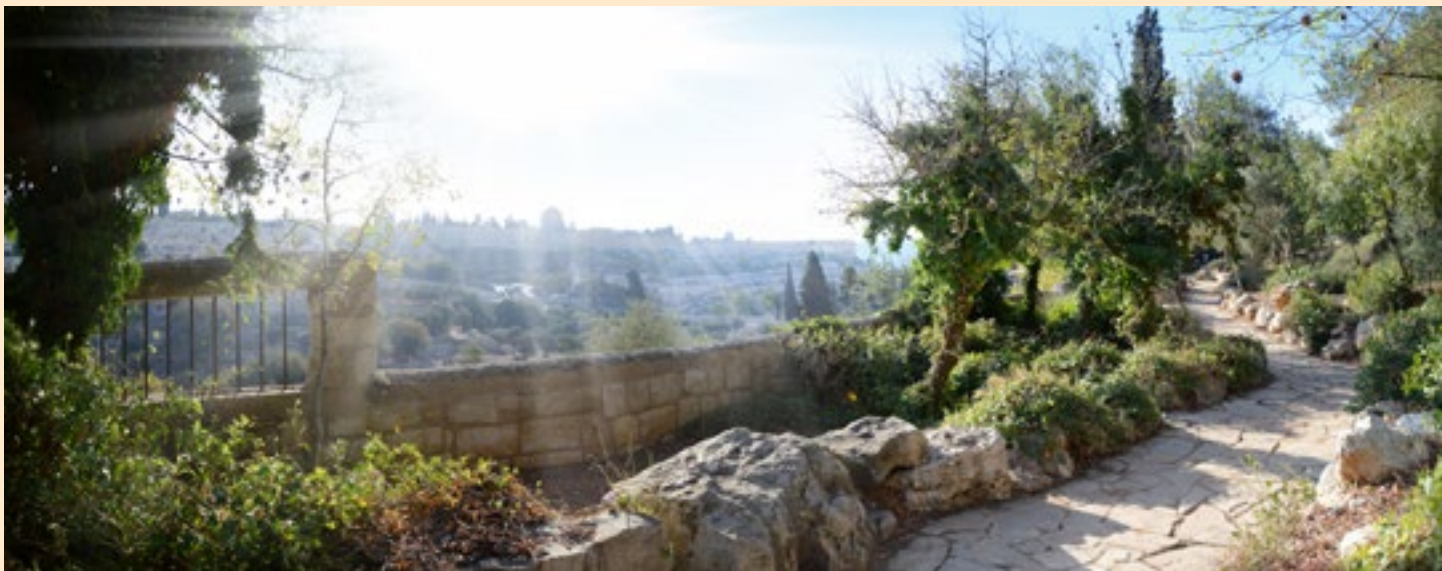
It will include sitting, two talks, and a phone interviews with Leonard, with a break for lunch.

For further information and registration, please contact Denise at dsfainberg@yahoo.com. ✨





PALM SUNDAY CONTEMPLATIVE INTENSIVE RETREAT (CIR) – MARCH 27 & 28, 2021



Above: Approaching Jerusalem.

The 2021 Palm Sunday CIR will be held virtually via Zoom, starting at 9 a.m. on Saturday March 27 and end at 5 p.m. on Sunday, March 28. Timed with Palm Sunday, it is an opportunity to deepen your contemplative practice by sitting intimately in preparation for Holy Week. Leonard Marcel will lead our retreat, sit with us, present a talk and offer interviews. He has studied both Zen and Christian Contemplation for more than 35 years and has been teaching since 1996.

The retreat will take place from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. on Saturday, and 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Sunday. You will sit in your own space, access the retreat via Zoom on your

own device and provide your own meals. Once your registration has been received and accepted, you will be sent a link for the retreat as well as a PDF containing the retreat schedule and all retreat prayers.

The retreat is open to a maximum of 15 attendees, and the total fee is \$75 for Seven Thunders members, \$105 for non-members. Please notify registrar Teresa Marcel at tdmarcel@mac.om of your intention to attend this retreat. You may then register by sending your check to: Teresa Marcel, 1333 Skyland Dr, Lake Oswego, OR 97034. Please make out checks to SEVEN THUNDERS. Or,

you may pay the fee online at SevenThunders.org (click on the 'Contribute' tab and follow the donation process.

Fees are payable in full to confirm your registration. Should you need to cancel, all but \$30 will be refunded for cancellation requests received by retreat registrar on or before March 13; half the fee (\$38/\$53) will be refunded if received by March 20; no refund in the last week before the retreat. Partial scholarships are available to Seven Thunders members. Registrations will be made in the order received by registrar. ⚡

REGISTRATION FORM

PALM SUNDAY CONTEMPLATIVE INTENSIVE RETREAT (CIR) MARCH 27 & 28, 2021

Name: _____

Full payment of \$105 enclosed

Address: _____

\$75 (Seven Thunders members)

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Donation for Scholarships \$ _____

Special needs _____

Request a Scholarship of \$ _____

I commit to participating fully in the entire schedule of formal group contemplation.



VIRTUAL CONTEMPLATIVE INTENSIVE RETREAT (CIR) JUNE 18 & 19, 2021

As have all other Seven Thunders activities, the Contemplative Intensive Retreat (CIR) usually held at Our Lady of Guadalupe Trappist Abbey in June has been changed to a virtual retreat on Zoom.

Sr. Joan Saalfeld, SNJM, will lead the retreat, present talks and offer interviews. Sr. Joan Saalfeld is a member of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, a retired professor of literature, and is currently living in West Linn, Oregon. She has studied and practiced Zen and Christian Contemplation for over 40 years, first with Robert Aitken Roshi, then with Willigis Jaeger, OSB, Roshi, and lastly with Pat Hawk, C.Ss.R., Roshi, who encouraged her to be a teacher in our Contemplative Intensive Retreats. She has been doing so since 2012.

The retreat will take place from 8:45 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. on Friday, June 18, and from 9:00 am to 5:00 p.m. on Saturday, June 19. You will sit in your own space, access the retreat via Zoom on your own device and provide your own meals. Once your registration has been received and accepted, you will be sent a link for the retreat as well as a PDF containing the retreat schedule and all retreat prayers.

The retreat is open to a maximum of 12 attendees, and the total fee is \$75 for Seven Thunders members, \$105 for non-members.



Please notify registrar Jenny Brausch at livinggreen@comcast.net of your intention to attend this retreat. You may then register by sending your check to:

Jenny Brausch,
P.O. Box 3119
Albany OR 97321

Or, you may pay the fee online at seventhunders.org (click on the 'Contribute' tab and follow the donation process, leaving a note

in the last window saying that this is your CIR fee payment.)

Fees are payable in full to confirm your registration. Should you need to cancel, all but \$30 will be refunded for cancellation requests received by retreat registrar on or before June 4; half the fee (\$38/\$53) will be refunded if received by June 11; no refund in the last week before the retreat. Partial scholarships are available to Seven Thunders members. Registrations will be made in the order received by registrar. ⚡

**REGISTRATION FORM
CONTEMPLATIVE INTENSIVE RETREAT (CIR) JUNE 18 & 19, 2021**

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Special needs _____

- Full payment of \$105 enclosed
- \$75 (Seven Thunders members)
- Donation for Scholarships \$ _____
- Request a Scholarship of \$ _____

I commit to participating fully in the entire schedule of formal group contemplation.



HYBRID SUMMER SESSHIN AT STONES AND CLOUDS ZENDO JULY 13 - 17, 2021



The 2021 Seven Thunders Zen Summer Sesshin, led by Leonard Marcel, is tentatively planned as a **hybrid event** to take place from 7 p.m. Tuesday evening, July 13 to 10 a.m. Saturday morning, July 17. This arrangement involves a maximum of 7 attendees in the zendo, and 9 online, via Zoom, all following the full in-person sesshin schedule (6 a.m. to 9 p.m. on full days).

This plan will be reassessed in June to determine if it is a safe option. If it is decided it is not safe, the retreat will be held fully online and the schedule changed to 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. on full sesshin days.

To attend sesshin at the Stones & Clouds zendo you will have to be fully vaccinated for Covid-19, be in good health and wear a mask the entire time. If attending via Zoom, you will sit in your own space, access the retreat on your own device and provide your own meals. The fee for in-person attendance is \$180 for members, \$210 for non members,

and includes all meals from Tuesday evening to Saturday breakfast. For online attendance, the fee is \$115 for members, \$145 for non-members.

The extra \$30 of the non-member fee can be applied to your Seven Thunders membership, should you choose to do so, which then qualifies you for the member rate for all other Seven Thunders regular retreats and sesshin through the remainder of the calendar year. Registration deadline is June 22. Should you need to cancel, all but \$30 will be refunded for cancellation requests received by the retreat coordinator on or before June 29; half the fee will be refunded if received by July 6; no refund in the last week before the retreat.

Registrations will be accepted on a first come basis. As this sesshin is usually well subscribed, early registration and payment is encouraged. Part-time attendance may be possible as schedules permit.

Once your registration has been received and accepted, you will receive a confirmation from the registrar. If for any reason you find the full fee a barrier to attending, please check the box on the registration

form requesting a "scholarship" or contact the registrar. 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.

Silence will be observed in the Zendo. For those attending online, please make every attempt to maintain silence to the extent possible, as your circumstances permit.

To register for the retreat, please email registrar at tdmarcel@mac.com to signal your intent to attend, and then complete the form below and send it with your fee to:

Teresa Marcel
1333 Skyland Drive
Lake Oswego, OR 97034.

Please make checks payable to **Seven Thunders**. Alternatively, you may pay the fee online at SevenThunders.org (click on the 'Contribute' tab and follow the donation process).

Questions? Please contact Teresa Marcel at 503.636.9009 or tdmarcel@mac.com

REGISTRATION FORM STONES & CLOUDS SUMMER SESSHIN, JULY 13 - 17, 2021

Name: _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____ Email: _____
Emergency contact name & Phone: _____

- I would like to **attend in person**, and enclose full payment of \$180 (the member rate).
- I would like to **attend in person**, and enclose \$210.
 - please apply \$30 to my Seven Thunders member dues.
- I would like to **attend online** and enclose full payment of \$115 (the member rate).
- I would like to **attend online** and enclose \$145.
 - please apply \$30 to my Seven Thunders member dues.
- I request a scholarship of \$ _____
- I enclose a donation of \$ _____

Please make checks payable to Seven Thunders