

SEVEN THUNDERS

newsletter

www.seventhunders.org

February 2025



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Many thanks to all who contributed their time and talents to this publication. Articles may not be reprinted without permission from the author.



ETERNAL LIFE

by Leonard Marcel

NOTE: *This piece appeared in the newsletter in 2011 and is being re-published at this time in a slightly revised form by special request.*

During the year 1577, when he had been imprisoned by members of his own order for reforms he was attempting to institute, John of the Cross wrote a number of poems. One of them was this, which he entitled Eternal Life:

Anchorless and yet anchored,
living in darkness although light...
My soul is unattached
to any created thing,
raised above itself
in delightful life,
anchored in its God alone.

The great reality of eternal life – the delightful life in God – is that we do not have to wait for it as something that will happen later. Eternal life is where God is, and God is always here now.

Henri Nouwen (1932 – 1996) wrote: “For most of my years, I have considered eternal life as the ‘afterlife,’ as ‘life after death’; but the older I become, the less interest my ‘afterlife’ holds for me. Worrying not only about tomorrow, next year

and the next decade, but even about the next life, seems a false preoccupation. Wondering how things will be for me after I die seems, for the most part, a distraction.”

A distraction, indeed. Jesus (Yeshua) says to us: “Dwell in me as I dwell in you.” (John 15:7). It is this divine in-dwelling that is eternal life. The living presence and our awareness of that

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SEVEN THUNDERS RETREATS & EVENTS

REGULAR SITTINGS

PORTLAND AREA SITTINGS

■ Monday evenings at Stones and Clouds Zendo, 7:00 to 8:30 p.m., zazen & dokusan. Hybrid events with both in-zendo attendance and online via Zoom. Further details at: seventhunders.org. ⚡

FIRST SATURDAY SITTINGS

■ Monthly "First Saturday" sittings have returned to the Abbey, with an online option. Links to join the sitting online 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, the Abbey and Seven Thunders are gratefully accepted. The schedule for 2025 is:

- March 1, Leonard Marcel
 - April 5, Fr. Casey Bailey, OCSO
 - May 3, Sr. Kathleen Pruitt
 - June 7, Sr. Kathleen Pruitt
 - July 12*, Sr. Kathleen Pruitt
 - August 2, Leonard Marcel
 - September 6, Leonard Marcel
 - October 4, Leonard Marcel
 - November 1, Sr. Kathleen Pruitt
 - December 6, Fr. Casey Bailey, OCSO
- (* = second Saturday)

RETREAT SCHEDULE

- April 5 & 6 – Bend Retreat, led by Leonard Marcel. For more information and to register, please contact Denise Fainberg at 541.213.8001 or dsfainberg@yahoo.com
- April 11 - 13 – Palm Sunday CIR at the Abbey only (no online), led by Leonard Marcel. Registration information page 11.
- July 15 - 19 – Summer sesshin, led by Leonard Marcel. Registration information on page 12.
- December 2 - 7 – Rohatsu Sesshin at Stones & Clouds, led by Leonard Marcel. Registration information in a later newsletter.

ZAZENKAI

■ Held at the Stones and Clouds (Rai'un) Zendo in Lake Oswego, led by Leonard Marcel. Unless otherwise noted, these will be hybrid events from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., with full in-zendo attendance available upon reservation. More details on page 10.

- February 15, 2025
- March 15
- September 20
- October 18



OTHER PACIFIC NORTHWEST DIAMOND SANGHA GROUPS

SALEM SITTINGS

■ Salem Zen Center. Offerings on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays. Teacher: LeeAnn Nail. For more information email SalemZenCenter@gmail.com or call 971.599.1488. ⚡

PORTLAND SITTINGS

■ Ring of Moss Sangha. Zazen: Wednesday evenings, 6:30-8:30 p.m. and Sunday mornings, 7:30-8:30 a.m.; virtually on Tuesday mornings, 6:00-7:00 a.m. Contact: Teacher Andrew Mason at andrewmasonpdx@gmail.com. ⚡

OLYMPIA SITTINGS

■ Contemplative Community at St. Michael's. 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. Contact: Mary Solberg, 360.250.6362 or msolberg2@gmail.com. ⚡

PORT ANGELES SITTINGS

■ NO Sangha. 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. ⚡

SEATTLE SITTINGS

■ Three Treasures Sangha. Teacher: Lee Shields. 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, go to their website at: www.three-treasures-sangha.org. ⚡

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 SevenThunders.treasurer@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) are not received by March, you will no longer receive the newsletter. Please send membership dues to: Jenny Brausch, PO Box 3119, Albany, OR 97321. ⚡



PRESIDENT’S REPORT: NEW YEAR, CONTINUED PRACTICE

by Jared Taylor

Happy New Year, everyone! As I look forward to our retreat and event schedule this year, I am grateful to be sharing this path with the entire Seven Thunders community. I am proud that our membership embodies a commitment to life shaped by dedicated practice, and as our teachers remind us, that dedication sends out ripples that benefit the entire world.

I am especially grateful to Tom Davies and Karen Beal for connecting us with the Franciscan Spiritual Center last Autumn. We were able to use their building on the former Marylhurst campus for Monday night zazen while Leonard and Teresa were abroad. The space was comfortable, and our hosts, gracious. I look forward to cultivating that relationship and to the continued use of their retreat spaces for our mutual benefit. I hope that in time our relationship with the FSC

allows our practice to touch other members of the larger contemplative community.

Finding ways to connect with others and to celebrate unity amidst diversity is important at all times, but seems especially vital in this moment. As political winds across the globe shift to promote isolation and the primacy of one’s own family, faith community, and culture over all others, it is all too easy to choose tribes, build walls, and seek the comfort of the echo chamber. I am grateful that our individual practices empower us to cut through the fear and vitriol driving this social retraction, and am hopeful that we can demonstrate the value of community based on compassionate action.

In any case, I am certain that the ecumenical nature of our practice will be increasingly important in the coming years. Here is a

community that focuses on the root instead of the branches, that acknowledges the singular wisdom of different religious traditions developed in different times and places, and that chooses to listen to diverse opinions and presentations of the truth with open heart-minds and sincere loving kindness. May our practice be an example of cooperation and wise activity in the midst of an increasingly divided world.

I hope that we can all commit sincerely to our practice and to engaging with the wider world this coming year. I look forward to seeing you all at sittings, retreats, and the annual meeting! I also encourage everyone to participate in person whenever your circumstances allow it, as your presence brings benefits to the entire group. May your year be peaceful, joyful, and deeply fulfilling!

Gassho. ✨

SEVEN THUNDERS MEMBERSHIP: TIME TO JOIN OR RENEW!

Seven Thunders is an organization formed to support growth towards a deepening spiritual awareness and appreciation of life. We believe each of us has a unique path and we benefit from teachers and companions along the Way.

Your membership is a vital part of this vibrant organization and a gift to all others in this faith community. Our practices support and sustain each other as we proceed on the path of an awakened and compassionate life.

If you haven't already done so, now is the time to renew your Seven Thunders membership for 2025. If you have been receiving complimentary copies of the newsletter this past year, and have not yet joined Seven Thunders, this is the last full newsletter you will be receiving.

Full membership dues are only \$30 per calendar year. With your membership renewal, please also consider any additional donation to help support the offerings of Seven Thunders. ✨

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ email: _____

Membership Type:

- Full member (\$30 per person)
- I am unable to send money at this time, but am an active participant and wish to be a full member.
- I am pleased to include a donation of \$ _____

Total enclosed: \$ _____

Please make out your check to SEVEN THUNDERS and send it with this form to Seven Thunders Treasurer:

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

Though payment by check is preferred, you may also go to <https://seventhunders.org/asp-products/donate/> to renew your membership and/or make a donation utilizing a credit card. ✨

**ROHATSU 2024 DEBRIEF***by Greg Smith*

This year's Rohatsu Sesshin took place between Tuesday December 3 and Sunday, December 8. The number of participants in the zendo was small, but people's energy and sitting were vigorous and strong.

We experimented with a shortened schedule and reduced number of meals, starting the day at 9:00 a.m. and concluding at 6 p.m., with in-person participants taking care of their own breakfasts and suppers. This significantly reduced the workload for Teresa, allowing her to sit more frequently in the zendo than she has been able to in years. Everyone was encouraged but not required to fit in additional sitting periods in the early morning and evening. As usual, people were urged to maintain the spirit of silence as

much as possible during this non-residential retreat, both at Stones and Clouds and at home.

We were graced with no p.m. rains between Wednesday and Friday, so were able to enjoy some time outdoors in the bracing air most afternoons. Teishos and a dharma talk about Bodhidharma, Huiko (the second ancestor), and the Buddha's own enlightenment experience served as beacons for our own sitting.

In our debrief on the final day, we commented on how much this sesshin felt like every other sesshin we've experienced. When Leonard and Teresa added up the number of sitting periods associated with the revised schedule, they discovered that we were

only shy a couple compared to the norm, thanks in part to our having added two periods at the end of the afternoon, something our bodies noticed but our minds accepted. Continuing to hold hybrid events like this, as members age, and when many others live at a distance, has been a real blessing. And modifying things like the schedule to accommodate aging bodies and the challenges of driving in the dark promises to make it possible for us to continue holding more extended retreats moving into the future. ⚡



Rohatsu attendees, from left to right: Chris Bell, Greg Smith, Leonard Marcel, Jared Taylor and Dan Dickinson. Online: Lisa Rosser, Pam Evans, Paul Birkeland and Marion Morgan. Not shown: Teresa Marcel.



GOING FORWARD: ANNIVERSARIES & TRANSMISSION

by Leonard Marcel



Clouds Zendo opened for training. This past October, many long-time and some new members gathered in the zendo for zazen, followed by tea and sweets and lively reminiscences to honor the devoted practice of the many people who have passed through the zendo portals over the past twenty years.

you are familiar with Greg, who has been an assistant teacher in our lineage for the past five years, and have benefitted from his wise Dharma talks and counsel. I hope that you will **join us for summer sesshin and for Greg’s transmission ceremony.** ♯

On the first Saturday of August of 1985, at the generous invitation Fr. Bernard McVeigh, then abbot of the Trappist Abbey in Carlton, Oregon, a group of people gathered at the abbey for a day of contemplative prayer. That group coalesced and became the nucleus of Seven Thunders whose members have been sitting at the abbey for contemplative prayer on the first Saturday of every month since then, with the exception of the Covid years. **This coming August, then, will mark forty years** of consistent and diligent contemplative practice by Seven Thunders members. I and the Board of Directors hope that you will **join us on that day (August 2) to celebrate the occasion.**

During those twenty-plus years of my guiding others on the path of Zen, three people have shown through their training an outstanding degree of insight, wise minds and compassionate hearts and an ability themselves to guide others on the path. Consequently, I have felt confident enough in their abilities to authorize them as independent Zen teachers.

In July, 2018, Lee Ann Nail, now the guiding teacher at the Salem Zen Center received such authorization in the zendo. And last March, 2024, Marian Morgan, who guides sanghas in Virginia and Pennsylvania, received that authorization in a ceremony in Virginia.

Nineteen years after the sittings at the abbey began, in October of 2004, Stones and

This coming July, at the end of summer sesshin in the zendo, **Greg Smith will also receive that final authorization.** Many of



Above: Greg Smith.
Above, left: An early Seven Thunders First Saturday sitting with Abbot Bernard McVeigh.
Below: Enjoying tea and sweets at the 20th anniversary celebration at Stones & Clouds.





ETERNAL LIFE, *continued from page 1*

presence, at the center of life, touches eternity. When we are united to that presence in heart and mind, we live in the eternal now, where there is no “before” or “after.” Death has lost its power over the soul living in God, because God is the I AM present, the God of the living.

We have read and heard many times that the only time we really have is the present moment. We know this to be true, and yet it is so hard to live this truth. We are constantly distracted by regrets or guilt of the past or anxieties, fears or plans for the future. It is not easy to keep our attention present, which is what makes our prayer practice so important. Our prayer practice is the discipline of the moment, the sacrament of the present moment. Each day when we sit down for contemplation,

straighten the back and enter into the stillness and silence of body and mind, we enter more deeply into the life of God, whose name is God-with-us (Isaiah 7:14).

The very act of sitting down, assuming our posture and following the breath or sacred word, whether we think anything is happening or not, is pleasing to God. To do this is to enable ourselves to listen attentively to the one who is always speaking, always guiding. When we dare to trust this, then we can gradually detach ourselves from the regrets, guilt, fears and anxieties, and dwell fully in the eternal present moment, the point of no dimension, with “soul unattached to any created thing... anchored in its God alone.”

Trust in God. Radical trust. Not easy. Most of us do not trust God, at least not fully. Our egos tell us that we know how to run our lives better than some remote God, who may or may not hear our prayers. Yet, one thing that all the great contemplative traditions teach is that the ultimate reality we call God is not at all remote, but intimately present and is a Source of unending love. To sit in contemplation is to listen to that voice of love. This is obedience in its purest form, which comes from the Latin *ob-audire*, which means “to listen with great attentiveness.” When we do not listen, we become deaf to that voice. The Latin word for deaf is *surdus*. To be completely deaf is

absurdus – absurd. When we do not enter regularly into contemplative prayer, do not quiet ourselves, do not listen to the voice of love that speaks to us in each present moment, our lives become absurd lives which vacillate between past and future.

St. Teresa of Avila (1515 – 1582) writes that “It can never be said too often that God is always present, always bestowing in the measure that...can be received.” On God’s side, it is a total gift; it is on our side where the impediment lies. Any lack of intimacy, she writes, is due to the noise with which we surround ourselves and to what she calls the “pernicious reptiles” which invade the outer courts of our interior castle. These “reptiles” are the busy concerns and activities with which we clutter our days. Such busyness may not only be secular. Spiritual busyness, such as continually changing prayer practices or prioritizing reading and attending workshops over sitting down in silence and stillness, can equally be an impediment. Thus, we cannot hear the voice within nor see the radiant light which is ever streaming. The step from distraction to attention only takes a moment, however, so that at any moment we can turn to God whose indwelling intimacy is closer to us than we are to ourselves.

How can we maintain our mindful attention to God, and to live the life eternal, more regularly? Practice. Practice. Practice. Practice following the breath and repeating the sacred word not only during contemplation, but also as you go through your day. Always there will be continued distractions. There will be thoughts about what happened yesterday or last week or what is planned for tomorrow. There will be long, imaginary discussions with friends or enemies (if you have either). Just remember that your contemplative TV only shows fuzzy images on the re-run channel and only fuzzy images on the teaser/preview channel, but when you press the remote for the present moment channel, the image is clear and vivid.



**ETERNAL LIFE**, *continued from page 6*

So, do not be discouraged. Whatever you are doing throughout the day, caught in the past or future, keep returning to a straight back, following the breath and repeating the sacred word – again and again and again.

A sacred word can be any one to four syllable word with long vowels, such as ab-ba, sha-lom, je-su, om, mu, ma-ra-na-tha, among many others. The word need not have any special meaning or connotation; in fact, it is better when it does not.

As the late Cistercian monk, Fr. Thomas Keating (1923-2018) noted: “The sacred word...is sacred not because of its meaning but because of its intent. It expresses the intention to open to God, the Ultimate Mystery...” It is a mental focal point to which to return whenever thoughts intrude.

We enter eternal life through this diligent practice of returning to the breath and the sacred word for the umpteenth time, doing that one simple thing which is the centerpiece of the contemplative life.

T S. Eliot (1888 – 1965) wrote:

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And to know the place for the first time

In other words, the contemplative path does not take us to a different place; rather, it brings us back to the original place. It does not take us out of the world but brings us back to the world with feet planted firmly on the ground, but now knowing ourselves and the life of God “for the first time.”

This is completeness in the present moment – a sharp and clear and completely attentive state of mind. Listening to the voice of divine love which has been present from the very beginning. Everything is given to us when we recognize that the Presence has been with us all along. We simply need to awaken to that Presence and be attentive to it. At each moment, we are called to be enfolded into trinitarian life.

With practice comes ripeness. With practice comes insight, following the breath and sacred word until we become completely one with them, completely pervaded by them. When completely pervaded by them, the contemplative breathes the life and presence of God throughout the day. Such a person does not become special but rather becomes real. A taxi driver who once drove Saint Mother Teresa in his cab from an airport to her hotel said later that she was the most “real” person he had ever met.

The contemplative life is efficacious because of this inherent spiritual power. It is a hidden life, a life hidden in God. It flourishes best when not displayed for public consumption. Its struggles with its own flawed humanity are lifelong but mostly unnoticed. Its increasing awareness and inner fullness of the divine presence are largely concealed, except for an occasional radiant face or joy-filled smile.

Practice on this path will not always be satisfying, will often not be satisfying. Many times, there will be so much restlessness that the only solution will seem to be to get on with the busyness. Do not succumb to that temptation. By remaining faithful to a daily discipline and to attentive listening, there will be an experience, more and more frequent, of the indwelling Presence, of a holy and eternal place in which to be anchored.

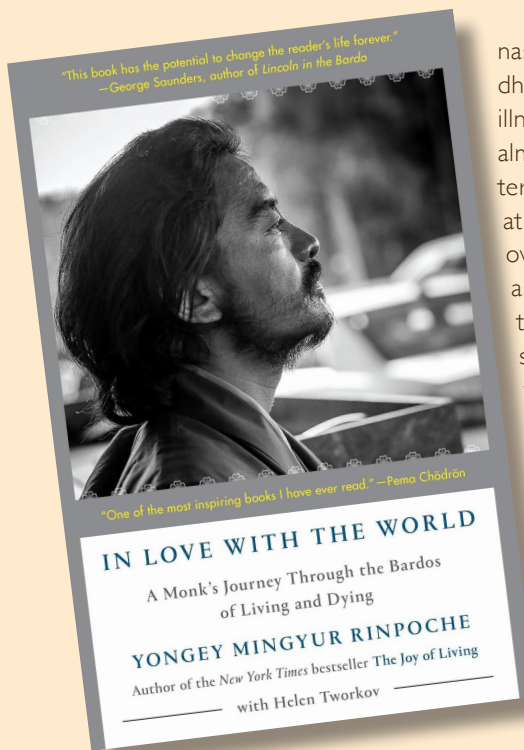
Abide there. Rest there. Anchorless, yet fully anchored. ⚡





IN LOVE WITH THE WORLD

by Greg Smith



Seven of us gathered in person or on-line on Friday, December 13, to discuss the Tibetan Buddhist teacher Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche's 2019 book, *In Love with the World: A Monk's Journey through the Bardos of Living and Dying*. This volume describes the first three weeks of a wandering retreat Mingyur Rinpoche started when he was 36. He was already the abbot of three monasteries in India, Nepal, and Tibet as well as the leader of scores of meditation groups around the world. The son of another noted Tibetan teacher, he had grown up as a privileged and honored member of the Tibetan community. Aware of this privilege and the comfort and safety associated with it, he was curious about how his long-standing and extensive training in Buddhist meditation would serve him outside the protection and support of a monastery. He had spoken with his father about his wish to embark on an extended retreat while living as a mendicant. His father recommended that he not tell anyone about the specific nature of his intended retreat, suggesting that if he did, it would be prevented. So one night in early June, he left his monastery in Bodh Gaya in India, eluding the watchman and taking a taxi to the train station where he purchased the cheapest ticket to Vara-

nasi. There he encountered – as the Buddha did – the reality of poverty, hunger, and illness. After contracting food poisoning, he almost dies, but recovers thanks to the intervention of a stranger he had spoken with at a park located at the site of the Buddha's own death. He then spends the next four-and-a-half years alternating between life in the Himalayas in Nepal and Ladakh in the summer and at important holy sites on the Indian plains during the winter.

Our conversation opened with a question raised by Leonard about what the equivalent of a wandering retreat might be for people living in the West, where a tradition of alms-giving to religious mendicants is not part of our cultural heritage. The answers that emerged spoke to experiences that resonated with what this noted Tibetan teacher encountered. One of us had travelled to Korea as a seventeen-year-old to visit his brother the summer between his junior and senior years. Things didn't go as planned, and he ended up fending for himself for much of the time in what was a minimally developed country in the 1970s. He hitchhiked, slept where he could, and lost forty pounds during an adventure that turned out to be more strenuous than he had anticipated. When he got back to the U.S., his football coach was not pleased, but he had one of his best seasons ever, enough to get him a scholarship to college.

Another of us was given access to one of the family cars when he was 16 and told by his father to head out with his brother and two friends to explore the Boundary Waters of northern Minnesota. His father had dreamt up a plan that involved going to the Old Town Canoe factory in Maine, buying canoes with the option of returning them at the end of the summer, and then making their way to the Boundary Waters.

A third spent fourteen weeks hitchhiking around Europe as a freshly minted 21-year-old, sleeping in hostels, apartment buildings under construction, or on beaches, living close to the bone on the \$300 he had to

support himself from mid-June to mid-September. For all of us, the experiences thrust us out of our comfort zones and forced us to confront aspects of ourselves and our lives that were not that different from what Mingyur Rinpoche knew when he left what was familiar and comfortable.

With this as a springboard we then jumped into a conversation about passages that had caught our attention throughout the book. A few of these follow:

Pure Awareness

This clear mind of awareness is always with us, whether we recognize it or not. It coexists with confusion, and with the destructive emotions and cultural conditioning that shape our ways of seeing things. But when our perception shifts to meditative or steady awareness, it is no longer narrowed by memory and expectation; whatever we see, touch, taste, smell, or hear has greater clarity and sharpness, and enlivens our interactions. (p. 8)

Too often enlightenment is understood as some new state of consciousness that is achieved, as though it is an object to be obtained, or something to strive for, outside of ourselves. Yet the Buddha saw that his grasping mind was the problem. He had gotten reality upside down. After years of trying to control the mind and deny the most basic needs of his body, he made a decision to stop trying to get enlightened, and to simply sit down and experience the present moment. That is what he did under the bodhi tree. What he discovered is that our true nature is already aware, already perfect as-it-is; and that what he initially sought to attain was already within him. (p. 125)

Ego

... the common usage of ego, both within Buddhist teachings and in the world at large, makes ego sound like an entity that has a shape and a size, and that can be extracted

Continued on page 9



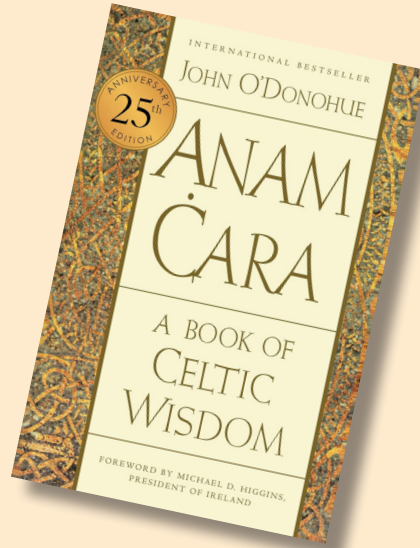
IN LOVE WITH THE WORLD, *continued from page 8*

like a tooth. It doesn't work that way. Ego is not an object; it's more like a process that follows through on the proclivity for grasping, and for holding onto fixed ideas and identities. What we call ego is really an ever-changing perception, and although it is central to our narrative story, it is not a thing. It therefore cannot really die, and cannot be killed or transcended. This tendency for grasping arises when we misperceive the constant flow of our body and mind and mistake it for a solid, unchanging self. We do not need to get rid of the ego – this unchanging, solid, and unhealthy sense of self – because it never existed in the first place. (p.39)

The gap between thoughts – like the gap between breaths or moods – allows us to glimpse the naked mind, the mind that is not obscured by preconceptions and patterns of memory. It's that fresh glimmer that startles us into wakefulness, and reminds us that clouds are temporary surface concerns and that the sun shines whether we see it or not. Noticing the gap introduces us to the mind that does not reach out to grasp a story of loss or love, or a label of fame or disgrace, or a house or a person or a pet. It's the mind liberated from those misperceptions that keep us stuck in repetitive cycles. (p. 75)

Basic goodness

The universal constancy of this orientation toward happiness is a reflection of our basic goodness. However misguided the expression of happiness might be, the yearning draws on an inherent desire for care, comfort, and a sense of well-being, and indicates that the wish for happiness arises from the core of our being. It could not arise from a belief in goodness, or an imposition of religious dogma, or of social values. Beliefs and values are concepts and therefore subject to change and whim. This orientation to be kind to ourselves – or to what we call basic goodness – is with us just as awareness is, recognized or not. We never live without it. (p. 106)



Exploring texts like these has proven to be a rich source of conversation and collective sharing. The Irish contemplative and poet John O'Donohue's *Anam Cara* will provide the basis for our next gathering on Friday, February 21st. In it, O'Donohue considers the nature of spiritual friendship – or what we Buddhists call sangha. We invite you to join us either in person or virtually. Please contact Greg Smith at gasmith@clark.edu if you would like to attend. ✨

LETTER FROM KEAP SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT





COUNTING, THIS NEW YEAR'S MORNING, WHAT POWERS YET REMAIN TO ME

by Jane Hirshfield

The world asks, as it asks daily:
And what can you make, can you do, to change my deep-broken, fractured?

I count, this first day of another year, what remains.
I have a mountain, a kitchen, two hands.
Can admire with two eyes the mountain,
actual, recalcitrant, shuffling its pebbles, sheltering foxes and beetles.

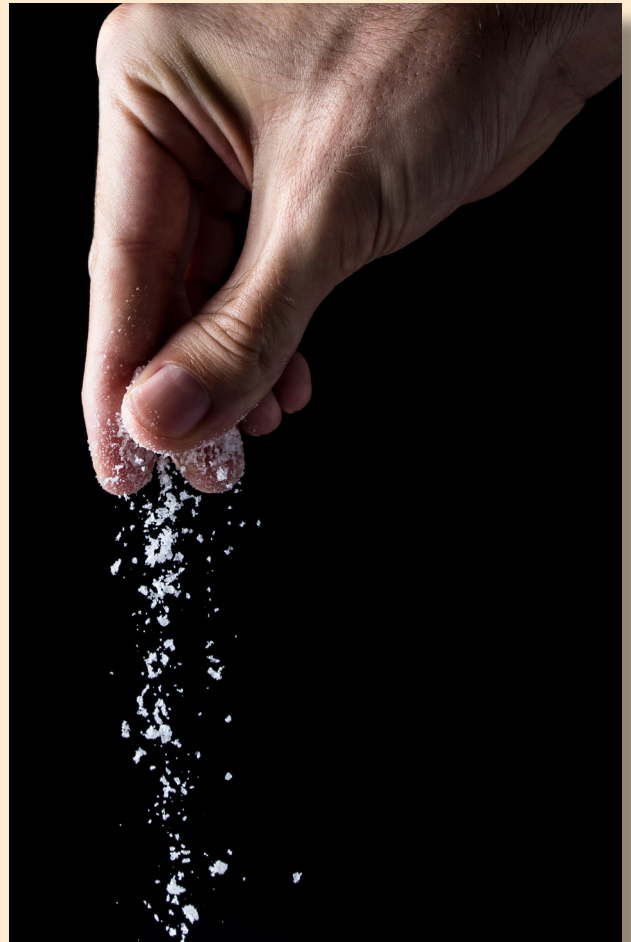
Can make black-eyed peas and collards.
Can make, from last year's late-ripening persimmons, a pudding.
Can climb a stepladder,
change the bulb in a track light.

For four years, I woke each day first to the mountain,
then to the question.

The feet of the new sufferings followed the feet of the old,
and still they surprised.

I brought salt, brought oil, to the question. Brought sweet tea,
brought postcards and stamps. For four years, each day, something.
Stone did not become apple. War did not become peace.
Yet joy still stays joy. Sequins stay sequins. Words still bespangle, bewilder.

Today, I woke without answer.
The day answers, unpockets a thought from a friend
don't despair of this falling world, not yet
didn't it give you the asking ✨



UPCOMING ZAZENKAI

Zazenkai are an opportunity for intense practice with the sangha in a shorter time-frame than either a kosesshin or a sesshin, as they are limited to one day only.

Zazenkai dates for the first half of 2025 are:

- February 15, 2025
- March 15
- September 20
- October 18

Zazenkai take place from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. In addition to formal zazen, the day includes a sutra service, teisho, and dokusan. **Please contact Teresa Marcel at**

StonesCloudsZendo@icloud.com

to reserve a place for Zazenkai. She will confirm your reservation and send you the zazenkai schedule and guidelines a few days before the event.

While there is no set fee for zazenkai, a **donation of \$20** is requested and much appreciated to help cover costs. To offer a donation, please either leave it in the donation

basket in the zendo hallway, or send a check to Seven Thunders Treasurer:

Jenny Brausch
PO Box 3119
Albany, OR 97321

**Please make checks out to
"Seven Thunders."**

Zazenkai are usually followed by a study group, to which all are invited. Study group lasts approximately one hour and is centered on a reading agreed upon at the end of the previous meeting. ✨



**PALM SUNDAY CONTEMPLATIVE INTENSIVE RETREAT (CIR)
APRIL 11 - 13, 2025**

This annual retreat will be held at Our Lady of Guadalupe Trappist Abbey, Lafayette, Oregon. Timed with Palm Sunday, it is an opportunity to deepen your contemplative practice by sitting intimately with the experience of 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 begin with supper at 6:00 p.m. on Friday, April 11th, and continue all day Saturday. It will end at noon on Sunday, April 13th. Retreatants are invited, but not required to attend the Palm Sunday Mass in the Abbey church.

This retreat integrates most of the monastic liturgies into our schedule – from Lauds and Mass (6:30 a.m.), through the Day Hour (12:30 p.m.), Vespers (5:30 p.m.), and Compline (7:30 p.m.). Vigils (4:15 a.m.) is optional. Our normal sitting schedule will begin at 6:00 a.m. and conclude at 9:00 p.m.

The Abbey's guest facilities limit overnight attendance to 8 people. Each retreatant will have one of the two private rooms in a guest unit, the two sharing a toilet and shower. Bed and bath linens are provided. Rooms at the abbey are in great demand for that weekend, so **we need to know by March 7 if you plan to attend this retreat** and stay at the abbey. Meals are included; the fare is mostly

vegetarian, simple, and balanced. If you are staying at the Abbey, please arrive well before 6:00 p.m. on Friday night in order to check in and get your room assignment at the Porter's Lodge.

Contemplation periods will be conducted in Bethany House, which is big enough to seat about 20 of us. This means that 10 to 12 additional retreatants can be accommodated as commuters who have a place to sleep outside the monastery and who will provide their own (brown bag) meals. Commuters are expected to attend all sitting periods.

The total fee for the 8 overnights is \$260 for Seven Thunders members, \$290 for non-members. The commuter fee is \$80. Fees are payable in full with your registration. Should you need to cancel, all but \$30 will be refunded for cancellation requests received by the retreat coordinator on or before March 14 half the fee (\$130/\$40) will be refunded if received by March 21; no refund in the last 3 weeks before the retreat. Partial scholarships are available to Seven Thunders members.

Registration process:

1. Please contact retreat registrar **Jenny Brausch** at **seventhunders.treasurer@gmail.com** to reserve a place. Please indicate whether you wish to stay at the abbey or will be a commuter.



2. Once she confirms a place is reserved, send the completed form with your check to:

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

Alternatively, you may e-mail your registration to her and pay the fee online at **Seven-Thunders.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.)

Registrations will be made in the order received. When the 8 overnights places have been filled, all remaining registration applications will be placed on a waiting list. A similar process applies to those who choose to register as commuters.

Please note: since the rooms will be available, the Abbey invites any 8 of us to stay on another night (Sunday night) and leave the next morning by 10 a.m.; Sunday supper and Monday breakfast included for **\$35** total. This opportunity is available to retreat commuters as well as overnights. ⚡

REGISTRATION FORM

PALM SUNDAY CONTEMPLATIVE INTENSIVE RETREAT (CIR) APRIL 11 - 13, 2025

I wish to register as a full-time overnight guest of the abbey.

I wish to register as a day commuter.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Special needs _____

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

Full payment of \$290 enclosed
 \$260 (Seven Thunders members)
 Commuter fee of \$80 enclosed

Donation for Scholarships \$ _____

Request a Scholarship of \$ _____

I wish to reserve a room for Sunday night, April 13th, and will pay then.



HYBRID SUMMER SESSHIN & TRANSMISSION CEREMONY AT STONES AND CLOUDS ZENDO JULY 15 - 19, 2025



For online attendance, the fee is \$130 for members, \$160 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 24.** Should you need to cancel, all but \$30 will be refunded for cancellation requests received by the retreat coordinator on or before July 1; half the fee will be refunded if received by July 8; no refund in the last week before the retreat.

Registrations will be accepted on a first come basis. 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 StonesCloudsZendo@icloud.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 StonesCloudsZendo@icloud.com ⚡

The 2025 Seven Thunders Summer Zen Sesshin, led by Leonard Marcel, is planned as a hybrid event to take place from 7 p.m. Tuesday evening, July 15 to 10 a.m. Saturday morning, July 19. At the end of sesshin there will be a transmission ceremony for Greg Smith.

Both in-person and online attendees will follow the *revised sesshin schedule (9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on full days)*. The fee for in-person attendance is \$210 for members, \$240 for non-members, and includes only the midday meal. As this is a non-residential event, accommodations are not included.

If attending via Zoom, you will sit in your own space, access the retreat on your own device and provide your own meals.

REGISTRATION FORM

STONES & CLOUDS SUMMER SESSHIN, JULY 15 - 19, 2025

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

- I would like to **attend in person**, and enclose full payment of \$210 (the member rate).
- I would like to **attend in person**, and enclose \$240.
 - please apply \$30 to my Seven Thunders member dues.
- I would like to **attend online** and enclose full payment of \$130 (the member rate).
- I would like to **attend online** and enclose \$160.
 - 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