

SEVEN THUNDERS

newsletter

www.seventhunders.org



May 2025

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GRACE BEFORE MEALS

HEKIGAN-ROKU CASE 74

by Leonard Marcel

Before each meal, Master Chin-niu/Jinniu would bring the rice bucket to the monks' hall, do a dance, laugh loudly and say, "Little bodhisattvas, come and eat your rice."

Hsueh-tou/Xuedou commented: "Although he did it like that, he was not being cordial."

Later, a monk asked Ch'an-ch'ing/Changqing, "Long ago, when that monk said, 'Come and eat your rice,' what was his meaning?"

Ch'ang-ch'ing/Changqing replied, "It was a kind of grace before meals."

With this case, we make the acquaintance of Chin-niu/Jinniu (Jp: Kingyu, n.d.), who lived at the end of the eighth century in China. Very little is known about him other than that he was a student and one of the many Dharma heirs of Ma-tsu Tao-i /Mazu Daoyi (Jp: Baso Doitsu, 709 – 788), but from this koan we can see that he must have been a very unusual, but insightful, master.

The Introduction (Pointer) to this case reads:

Wielding the sharpest sword horizontally, he cuts through the nest of entangling vines before its point. Hanging a bright mirror on high, he brings forth Vairocana's seal with a phrase. Where the heart field is secure and most intimate, he dons his robes and eats his food. Where heavenly powers have free play, how can one linger? Have you understood?

So, the sharpest sword is held horizontally, and all vines and branches immediately give way and are cut before its point. "Entangling vines" (*katto*) is a phrase usually used in Zen literature to refer to koans, but in this instance it refers to our delusive thoughts and concepts, which entangle us and deprive us of our freedom. A newborn baby does not think, but as the baby grows older she develops the power of thought

IN THIS ISSUE:

Grace Before Meals	pg 1
7 Thunders retreats & events	pg 2
7 Thunders sittings	pg 2
Other Pacific Northwest Groups	pg 2
President's Report	pg 3
Upcoming Zazenkaï	pg 3
Palm Sunday CIR Report	pg 4
Upcoming Events	pg 5
Shoveling Snow with the Buddha	pg 8
Refugees	pg 8
Self Channels	pg 9
Summer Sesshin Registration	pg 10

Continued on page 6



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:

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

RETREAT SCHEDULE

- July 15 - 19 – Summer sesshin, led by Leonard Marcel. Registration information on page 10.
- 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 3.

- August 16
- 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: MEDITATING ON LIFE AND DEATH

by Jared Taylor

Warming weather and longer days have brought forth the bees and birds to practice with us as we head towards summer. Each year, the reawakening of the robins, the apple trees, and the ever-growing colony of rabbits on my property presents a poignant reminder that every being is sitting, walking, and standing with us. It is also a good time to acknowledge the important role our human community plays in supporting each other as we continue down the spiritual path together.

The pace of change in the United States over the last few months has been shocking; the dismantling of government programs, the eroding of social norms, and the volatility of financial markets have impacted our Seven Thunders community no less than others. Yet, together we have made time to join weekly Zen sittings, First Saturdays, CIRs and

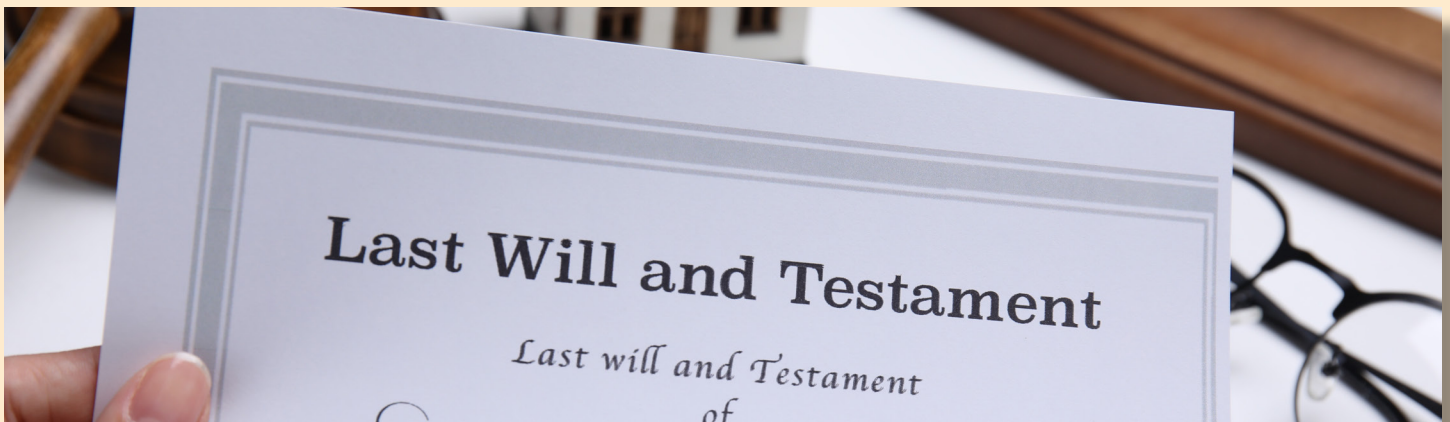
Zazenkai, both in person and online. Sitting together reminds us that we do not face uncertainty alone, and that we are surrounded by a community that is committed to aiding each other in difficult times.

Two of the most difficult times we are likely to encounter are the death of a loved one and the moment when we face our own imminent death. There is much that we can do for each other during those times, and I hope that you consider joining the special gathering either online or in-person at Stones and Clouds Zendo on **June 29th to discuss these and other issues relating to old age, sickness, and death.** One important discussion topic is whether, and to what extent, we may want the support of our spiritual friends as we face the end of our lives. Perhaps squarely facing infirmity and death in this way, and making plans to help ourselves

and our loved ones navigate those times, will provide a measure of comfort. It may even assuage some of the additional anxiety many of us are experiencing in these chaotic times. In any event, it promises to be a rewarding discussion among good spiritual friends.

As a final note, thanks to the efforts of Karen Beal and Tom Davies, we are again using the San Damiano room at the **Franciscan Spiritual Center for Monday Night Zazen** while Leonard and Teresa are in France – thank you Karen and Tom! As always, I encourage everyone to participate in person whenever your circumstances allow, but invite you to join via Zoom whenever it makes more sense. I look forward to seeing you all at sittings, retreats, and the annual meeting!

Gassho. ㇏



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 second half of 2025 are:

- August 16
- 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 RETREAT

by Mike Seely

Seven Thunders held its Palm Sunday contemplative intensive retreat at the Bethany House at the Abbey of Our Lady of Guadalupe on April 5th. This was an in-person, non-hybrid gathering of seven well established contemplative practitioners led by our teacher Leonard Marcel. The beauty of this retreat is its simplicity and depth coupled to its integration of the monastic schedule of offices. It culminates on Palm Sunday with the blessing of the palms and celebration of the Eucharist.

We broke bread together upon arrival at dinner on Friday, followed by orientation guidance from Leonard, a nightly service known as Compline, finishing with two rounds of meditation and prayer before retiring. The

evening sky was clear with distant calls from our coyote friends and a choir of monastic bull frogs who emulate the monks by conducting antiphonal chanting from one side of the pond to the other. Truly a cacophony of wonderment and joy.

In the morning we were greeted with a pink, nearly full, moon setting in the west. Saturday held a solid schedule from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. We all settled into the stillness while supporting each other in our collective practices. Leonard's talk was rich with insights into the significance and importance of the ritual of Palm Sunday in the liturgical calendar.

As contemplatives we are lead to a deeper understanding of authentic worship that

goes beyond mere celebration. It is an invitation to reflect on the significance of suffering, sacrifice, and redemption. It presents us with an opportunity to engage with the complexities of faith, preparing the hearts for the profound events of Holy Week. We are encouraged to hold both joy and sorrow in tension as we prepare for the journey toward Easter and the hope of a resurrected and transformed life. Sin is a matter of turning away from the presence of God within each of us. Dropping deeply into our practice brings light and the release from sin.

The high point of the retreat was the Palm Sunday Mass, with the blessing and distribution of the palms. Each Palm branch expresses adoration and the hope of peace. We concluded with one last round of sitting. Many thanks to the Abbey for their hospitality, to each other for steadfast practice, and to our teacher Leonard for his guidance, wisdom, and teaching. ⚡



Above: CIR attendees, from left to right, kneeling: Chris Bell, Jenny Brausch, Anne Caruso. Back row, standing: Kent Kreiselmeier, Leonard Marcel, Mike Seely and Jane Huyer. Not shown: Barbara Tracy. **Right:** Monks at Palm Sunday Service. Photos by Mike Seely





UPCOMING EVENTS: BOOK CLUB & TRANSMISSION CEREMONY

Book Club

The Seven Thunders book group will next meet on Sunday, May 18, at 1:00 p.m. at Greg and Becky Smith's home at 2140 Volpp Street, West Linn. It will also be available via zoom to people who let Greg know they're interested in participating by Friday, May 16. We will be discussing French theologian and scientist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's *The Divine Milieu*, a volume in which he strives to explain his love for both God and the earth. The Internet Archive presents the following summary of the book:

The Divine Milieu is a . . . treatise on how to live the Christian life in the modern world. Teilhard de Chardin explains how both one's actions and passivities can be 'divinised' by recognizing that Christ lies at the heart of the world which has brought your being into existence, and which will bring it to fulfillment. One's being is not fulfilled in isolation, but in communion with God, the earth, and humanity.

We will explore what this book has to offer us as Christians and as Buddhists. If you plan to attend either in person or on-line, please send a message to gasmith@clark.edu.



Transmission Ceremony Reminder

As mentioned in the last newsletter, this coming July, at the end of summer sesshin in the zendo, **Greg Smith will receive his final teaching authorization.** Many of 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. We hope that you will join us both for summer sesshin and for Greg's transmission ceremony. It is also possible to attend only the ceremony. ⚡



GRACE BEFORE MEALS, *continued from page 1*

and reflection. We are happy to see the child doing so, but it is this same power of thought and conceptualization which will later cause suffering. When this suffering becomes sufficiently troublesome and unbearable, some of us begin Zen practice. Master Jinniu (Kinyu) appears in this case as a teacher who is able to wield the sharpest sword to slice through the thicket of entanglements. This is acting with *shinken*, blade mind.

A “bright mirror” is one which has been polished to crystal clarity and which reflects everything that comes before it, just as it is. This is the state of our original mind, the state of consciousness of an enlightened person. Commenting on this, Hakuin (1684 – 1768) says: “With your own fine sword at your side, before even leaving your room, you must cut away the totality of myriad forms, even down to an ant’s whiskers. The nest of complications includes the complications of confusion, the complications of enlightenment, the complications of Buddhist doctrines and the complications of Zen records. The clear mirror... is the sharp sword.” In other words, our original clear mirror mind is the sharpest sword to cut through delusions.

Sometimes this state is called “The Great Round Mirror Wisdom.” When such a mirror reflects a word or two from a master, each word is a perfect expression of the essential realm. This is what is meant in the Introduction by “he brings forth Vairocana’s seal with a single phrase.” Vairocana is the pure and clear fundamental Buddha. The Sanskrit words mean “the one who is like the sun.” Vairocana is also known as the transcendent Buddha and as the Buddha of the Absolute Three Treasures. The seal of such a one is the seal of perfect enlightenment, sometimes known as the Buddha Seal or the Patriarch’s Heart Seal. In simpler terms, a true Zen person can, with one word or phrase or presentation, give witness to the form and aspect of the most essential truth in the universe. So, these first two lines of the Introduction are address-

ing the incisive and accurate judgment of an outstanding Zen person like Jinniu (Kinyu).

The Introduction continues: “Where the heart field is secure and most intimate, he dons his robes and eats his food. Where heavenly powers have free play, how can one linger?” The “heart field” refers to the innermost heart, your heart of hearts – that which is most intimate, your essential nature. This is the absolute empty realm, a realm which even Shakyamuni has never seen, because there is nothing to see. It is in this realm that the true Zen person dons robes, puts on clothes, eats food, washes dishes, uses the toilet. This is the everyday life of the enlightened person. Having seen and experienced, even for a moment, this realm brings wonderful peace and joy and changes life irrevocably. Such a person can manifest essential nature with complete freedom – the *samadhi* of innocent delight. This is how we are all called to become on this path. The challenge for us on this path is this: by continuous daily practice, to be able to be at deep peace within ourselves, yet completely free, even in times of great suffering.

When an awakened person is enjoying complete freedom, the *samadhi* of innocent delight, do you know how to approach and linger with such a person? Let us see what Master Jinniu (Kinyu) has to teach us about this.

Before each meal, he would bring the rice bucket to the monks’ hall, do a dance, laugh loudly and say, “Little bodhisattvas, come and eat your rice.”

Xuedou commented: “Although he did it like that, he was not being cordial.”

Later, a monk asked Changqing, “Long ago, when that monk said, ‘Come and eat your rice,’ what was his meaning?”

Changqing replied, “It was a kind of grace before meals.”

So, quite clearly Jinniu (Kinyu) is not your ordinary monk or Zen master. Not only was he the cook (*tenzo*) at the monastery, but he was also the abbot. A most unusual fellow. “Little bodhisattvas” is just another way of saying “everybody,” since we are all intrinsically bodhisattvas. And he did this for every meal, every day, for twenty years! Most of us, if we were to do it at all, might do it once or twice, but this was his practice for twenty years. What is he doing here?

Ritual and repetition are powerful and produce their own rewards. This is attested by none less than Dogen (1200 -1253) himself, who gave this advice to the nun, Ryonen, one of his students:

Without begrudging any effort in nurturing the way, for you I will demonstrate the precise meaning of (Bodhidharma’s) “coming from the west.” If you do not hold onto a single phrase or half a verse, a bit of talk or small expression... you will have some accord with the clear, cool ground; but if you hold onto a single word or half a phrase of the ancestors’ sayings..., they will become dangerous poisons. If you want to understand this monk’s ritual activity, do not remember these comments.

In other words, ritual enactment is more important than the particular meaning enacted. The “precise meaning” of the ultimate teaching is such that in order to understand Dogen’s activity (or, in today’s case, Jinniu’s activity), then the content of that activity should neither be thought about nor remembered. The ritual enactment itself, says Dogen, is primal and transformative.

Xuedou (Jp: Setcho Juken, 982 – 1052), the compiler of this koan collection, comments here: “Although he did it like that, he was not being cordial.” In other words, Jinniu (Kinyu) is not being kind. He is a real thief here. He appears to be doing something



GRACE BEFORE MEALS, *continued from page 6*

silly, perhaps frolicking in innocent delight, but he is actually stealing his monks' (and our) cherished concepts.

Mere conceptualizing, mere indulgence in thought, will be of no use at a time like this. In one of his letters to a student, twelfth century master Ta Hui/Dahui (Jp: Daie Soko, 1089-1163) wrote:

No sooner do (people) get out of bed each day than their minds fly around in confusion. Thinking of fame and profit, they take up false concepts of "self" and "other," continuing unbroken like the links of a chain from morning until night without ever tiring of it. If perchance they think of entering the Zen path, they think about it intellectually only and immediately want to understand it for themselves. Since the mind's concept discrimination has no place here, they become annoyed and give up....People like this are beyond counting. However, with singleness of mind and intent, (it is possible) to understand where we come from when we are born and where we go when we die from where we are (right now)....Wait until you are like a person drinking water who knows directly whether it is warm or cold and does not accept the judgement from someone else. Suddenly, you will... reach the ultimate peace and bliss, the place of great rest.

It is only the pure and plain fact itself which can cut the entangling vines surrounding your heart. You cannot cut through thoughts with more thoughts. Jinniu (Kinglyu) dances before us with rice bucket in hand, calls out and laughs loudly. There it is! Just that fact – with no reasoning attached to it whatever. See this directly.

The Zen literature contains many examples of this type of practice: Chuh-chi/Juzhi (Jp: Gutei) held up the one finger to cut through. Lin-chi/Linji (Rinzai) gave a shout. Lu-tsu/Luzu (Roso) turned and faced the wall. Jui-yen/Ruiyan (Zuigan) called "Mas-


ter!" Each of these practices was directly revealing the plain and pure fact. It is important to realize the fact instantaneously – and not just the fact, but also its essential emptiness, the lack of any intrinsic substance or independent existence. If you can do this, you will see through in a flash Jinniu's (Kinglyu) unusual presentation. At this point the checking question arises: was he behaving like this with this aim in mind, or was he just behaving like this? Another question: What was it in his wielding of the sharpest sword that did the cutting? There can be no reasoning here. You will be asked to present these in the dokusan room.

The master's behavior in this case reminds me of another Zen eccentric, P'u-ha/Puha (Jp. Fuke, d. 860), a student and Dharma heir of P'an-shan/Panshan (Jp. Banzan Hoshaku, 720 – 814) who started a small offshoot school of Zen practice wherein the chanting of sutras was replaced by the playing of the bamboo flute (shakuhachi). He had some association with Linji (Rinzai), and there are several stories about him in the *Record of Linji (Rinzairoku)*. One day he had a premonition that it was time for him to say farewell to the world. He bought himself a coffin, put it on his back and wandered the streets. He told people that he would go to the east gate of the city and die, so all the local children followed him there to see what would happen. Then he decided not to die that day and said that he would go to the south gate the next day to die. Once again, everyone went to see what would happen and, once again, he decided not to die. This happened a third time the next day at the west gate. By the fourth day, no one even bothered to follow him to the north gate. He climbed into his coffin and asked a passerby to nail the lid shut. Word quickly spread, so everybody ran to see what had happened. Upon opening the coffin, however, they found it to be empty, and all they could hear was the sound of a bell tinkling far away in the sky. There is a line in the verse to the case before us today which reads: "In the shadow of the white clouds, great laughter." The great laughter

of Jinniu (Kinglyu) and the tinkling bell of Puha (Fuke) faraway in the empty sky have much in common.

To continue with the case, many years later a monk asked Changqing (Chokei Enyo, 854 – 932) what the meaning was in Jinniu's (Kinglyu) behavior. He replied, "It was a kind of grace before meals." Indeed so. Do we not do the same thing before our meals? Does that have any meaning? What was the meaning of Jinniu's (Kinglyu) behavior? It would be easy to say that anything and everything is the meaning of his behavior, or of Bodhidharma's coming from the west. That would be incorrect – not even close. Why? "Anything" and "everything" are abstractions stuck in the mind. The living fact of Zen cannot be found in words and concepts. There is a Zen saying: "If there is even a little bit of meaning, you will not even be able to save yourself." His actions are essential nature completely revealed. It is the real person who dances before us. Just that fact.

The last line of the verse to this koan reads: "If they were cubs of the golden-maned lion, they would see what he was doing three thousand miles away." The "cubs of the golden-maned lion" are what the *Shodoka* calls "the persons of no matter who have passed beyond all learning." Any such persons existing when Jinniu (Kinglyu) danced and laughed, would have recognized immediately what he was doing even if they were three thousand miles away – or, in our case, twelve hundred years away. Can you recognize what he was doing? Do not wait until you are on your deathbed to realize that not just anything will do. It will be too late. Your life is not random. What you think, say and do makes a difference – it makes all the difference.

For those with eyes to see and ears to hear, look and listen carefully. See the reality that is right before you. 



SHOVELING SNOW WITH THE BUDDHA

by Billy Collins

In the usual iconography of the temple or the local Wok
you would never see him doing such a thing,
tossing the dry snow over a mountain
of his bare, round shoulder,
his hair tied in a knot,
a model of concentration.

Sitting is more his speed, if that is the word
for what he does, or does not do.

Even the season is wrong for him.
In all his manifestations, is it not warm or slightly humid?
Is this not implied by his serene expression,
that smile so wide it wraps itself around the waist of the universe?

But here we are, working our way down the driveway,
one shovelful at a time.
We toss the light powder into the clear air.
We feel the cold mist on our faces.

And with every heave we disappear
and become lost to each other
in these sudden clouds of our own making,
these fountain-bursts of snow.

This is so much better than a sermon in church,
I say out loud, but Buddha keeps on shoveling.
This is the true religion, the religion of snow,
and sunlight and winter geese barking in the sky,
I say, but he is too busy to hear me.

He has thrown himself into shoveling snow
as if it were the purpose of existence,
as if the sign of a perfect life were a clear driveway
you could back the car down easily
and drive off into the vanities of the world
with a broken heater fan and a song on the radio.

All morning long we work side by side,
me with my commentary
and he inside his generous pocket of silence,
until the hour is nearly noon
and the snow is piled high all around us;
then, I hear him speak.

After this, he asks,
can we go inside and play cards?

Certainly, I reply, and I will heat some milk
and bring cups of hot chocolate to the table
while you shuffle the deck
and our boots stand dripping by the door.

Aaah, says the Buddha, lifting his eyes
and leaning for a moment on his shovel
before he drives the thin blade again
deep into the glittering white snow. ⚡



REFUGEES

by Brian Bilston

They have no need of our help
So do not tell me
These haggard faces could belong to you or me
Should life have dealt a different hand
We need to see them for who they really are
Chancers and scroungers
With bombs up there sleeves
Cut-throats and thieves
They are not
Welcome here
We should make them
Go back to where they came from
They cannot
Share our food
Share our homes
Share our countries
Instead let us
Build a wall to keep them out
It is not ok to say
These are people just like us
A place should only belong to those who were born here
Do not be so stupid to think that
The world can be looked at another way

*(Now read from bottom to top) ⚡



THE SELF CHANNELS

by Joe Barrett

I rarely watch TV
Anymore
Other than to check
The score

On various narratives
That I would like to
Keep alive
But, more and more

When I check in
The score is whacked
I feel cracked
In 10,000 different directions

I need to keep focused,
Or the pleasure center
In my brain
Is a runaway train

So many choices
I feel voiceless
Adrift, miffed
Upset

There are only 2
Options now afforded me
it seems

Pick the channels
On the left
The ones that protest

Or, channel Zen
Orated by Dogen
Running for 800 years

I reach back
No more buttons
A sun dial
Marks the path

The clean lines
Of a study hall
Beautiful monk robes
Hang on the wall

A banner announces
Four great truths

To study the Buddha Way is to study the
self

To study the self is to forget the self
To forget the self is to be verified by all
things
To be verified by all things is to let the body
and mind of the self and the body and mind
of others drop off

This is the Shobogenzo
This is realizing Genjokoan
This is ancient wisdom
Yet so fresh I can taste it

The veil of the SELF channels
The maddening selections
The myth of separation
Is slowly being replaced

There is a scent
In this air
An intimate connection
Yet impersonal, not intimidating

A baby bird learns
To take flight
Awkward legs wobble
New wings tremble

The winds seem formidable
Practice takes risk
But it sees the mother and
Father strength

more than adequate as a model

I take my seat
Below the tree
That holds the nest
Zazen and Mindfulness

The only tools left
On this subjective quest
For freedom, liberation
Really learn about myself

Fly like a bird
Through the turbulent
Narratives
All those channels that change

Nothing solid remains
As I realize how compelling
My particular view
Of my SELF actually is

Now things are getting personal
I like abstract generalities
It keeps the fear of death
Of annihilation at bay

I think
But this is about feeling
Every time I view something
As mine

I obsess a bit
It can lead to
Selfish action
And dissatisfaction

Instead learn about self
Experientially
Using the power of curiosity
To obtain some raw data

Of what it is like
To be a human being
For instance
Is it an assumption

That there is anything
Enduring about my self
It seems to have been with me
Since I can remember

Yet it is ever changing
And therefore impermanent
Like the channels on the TV.
There is a switch I can turn off.

Eventually I will get back.
To the news of the day
But for now I am
Not only liberated

But verified by all things
out there

Truly HAPPY
JOYOUS and free
Self and other drop away

Yet there is something
I can still play with
As I seesaw
In and out of this awareness

Thinking smaller
Living BIGGER ⚡



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



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.

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 ✨

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