

Abbot's letter

Robert Blender, *Senior Dharma Teacher*

As evening draws near, you regret that you did not practice early in the morning. The worldly pleasure which you enjoy now becomes suffering in the future. Why then are you attached to this pleasure? One moment of patience becomes lasting pleasure. Why then do you not practice?

Words of admonition can be endless, yet craving is not extinguished. By saying, "next time, next time," attachment is not cut off. The things that keep us busy are interminable, so why not simply throw away all worldly affairs? Plans also have no limit, so why not just cut off the thinking mind?

Moment succeeds moment, and thus day and night are soon past. One day succeeds the next; months slip away. Month follows month, soon next year is here. Years pass rapidly, and you find yourself at death's door. A broken vehicle cannot run; an old man cannot practice.

Won Hyo (617-686)

Won Hyo is one of the most famous monks in Korean Zen history. He was a great scholar and iconoclast. The admonition above comes to us from more than one thousand years ago, across many generations of Zen practitioners, but it is as pertinent today as the day it was written.

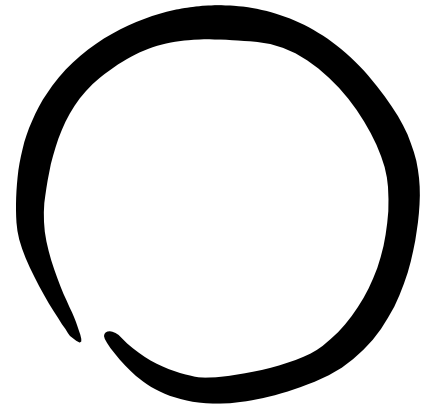
Recently, some sad news came to me about an old girlfriend. Speaking with my brother, who lives in New Jersey where I grew up, he told me that he had learned from a friend that Sharon, the girl I had dated after high school, had died of leukemia. Sharon, in my memory, was a beautiful, smart, funny young girl. I had heard over the years of her successes: graduating from University of Michigan, then an MBA from Indiana University and, then, starting her own business in Poland. She was exceptional. I later learned that Sharon had married, and had two young children.

I spoke with Sharon's father--whom I hadn't spoken to in twenty years--and we mourned her together and cried over the phone.

The loss of such a young, vibrant person is a tragedy, and it is also a caution. In a very immediate way, it is akin to Won Hyo's admonition. Remember, this precious human life is limited and fragile. The evening gatha chanted by Maezumi Roshi's White Plum sangha says, "Time passes swiftly by and opportunity is lost, each of us must strive to awaken. Take heed, do not squander your life!" Such reminders occur frequently in Zen literature.

In Zen practice, we cultivate mindfulness--paying attention to this moment. Mindfulness is a skill and a habit that we can develop through practice. Daido Roshi of Zen Mountain Monastery says, "If you miss the moment, you miss your life."

As we begin the new year, we can re-dedicate ourselves to practice. Zen practice is not something special to be done on a remote mountain-top--quite the opposite. Zen practice is an organic part of actual life, helping us to pay attention and to not miss it--helping us to be present and to take care of each other. When we do this, we honor those loved ones that we have lost and our ancestors in this ancient practice.



You never lose your true job

by Cori Faklaris, Dharma Teacher

There is a line in our Temple Rules that quotes Pai-chang: "A day without work is a day without eating." The literal truth of this is hitting many people quite suddenly now with the crash of sectors of our economy.

It's scary to not know if you'll have money six months from now for groceries, or whether you'll be able to afford to see a doctor or pay for medication. These calculations are even more frightening for those with children or other dependents. Of course, what's a new fear for many has been a common circumstance for some time for too many others who never shared in the economic boom to begin with.



And there's a deeper fear, too, for many of us: As one former co-worker put it to me after being laid off, "Without this, who am I?" The comfort we all feel in a well-ordered and productive sense of self can vanish—just like that.

Work develops patience and discipline while focusing the mind. Without a structure and outlet for your energy, you could lose your way. Many years ago, I became very sick and depressed and couldn't work, and if I lose my job, I fear the void of purpose even more than bankruptcy or hunger. It's also frustrating to feel that some unspoken agreement with life—that you will get back in proportion to what you give, like sustenance of any form, food or appreciation or benefits, for a certain level of work—is being violated.

I've realized at past moments of uncertainty, though, that interesting things can appear in the space that opens up, if I just let this space appear and exist and accept I can't control it or force it to be different than what it is. We are taught that the attainment of emptiness and impermanence is not a dead end—it's a necessary starting point. Nothing good can appear without things falling apart and making way for the new.

That is one reason kong-ans are such great practice. They build your patience and discipline in a deliberate way in the midst of the profound uncertainty we usually try to push away. When you gain the experience of attaining good solutions to these gates of practice in the security of the dharma room, you can increasingly take that life-solving process into the same difficult situations of everyday life. A retreat gives you the ideal "office environment" for embarking on this kind of work with kong-ans.

Now many of us have a new kong-an, the economic crisis. I don't know how mine will resolve, but Zen practice gives me faith in myself and in my fellow citizens that a solution will appear, and that until then, it's ok not to know exactly what comes next. Something will appear.

Regardless of how we pay the bills, or don't, we all have the same work assignment ahead of us—to keep and nourish a clear mind, to cut off selfish thinking and emotions, and help others.



Calendar of Events

February 14

Heart Kyol Che
Retreat

9 AM to 3 PM

lunch provided

March 7

Foundations of
Zen Class

1 PM to 5:00 PM

*no charge,
registration required*

March 12

Public Dharma
Talk 7:30 PM with
Linc Rhodes, JDPSN

March 13-15

3-Day Retreat with
Linc Rhodes, JDPSN

April 11

One-day Retreat

9 AM to 3 PM

lunch provided

April 11

Buddha's
Birthday
Celebration

4 PM

Disclaimer: All events are subject to change. Please contact the Zen Center at 317-921-9902 or director@indyzen.org before coming to an event. All events take place at the Indianapolis Zen Center, unless otherwise noted.

Retreat Schedule 2009

The 2009 retreat schedule includes four multi-day retreats and three one-day retreats. All multi-day retreats are lead by our guiding teacher, Linc Rhodes, JDPSN, and the one-day retreats include consulting interviews with Senior Dharma Teacher Robert Blender. The weekend retreats have an optional third day on Friday and the December retreat is a full week, Monday through Sunday, with additional entry points for those not able to sit the entire week. All retreats include meals and overnight accommodations are available.

February 14th — one-day retreat, 9 am to 3 pm

March 13, 14 and 15 — Dharma talk Thursday, March 12 at 7:30 pm

April 11th — one-day retreat, 9 am to 3 pm

June 5, 6 and 7 — Dharma talk Thursday, June 4 at 7:30 pm

August 15th — one-day retreat, 9 am to 3 pm

September 11, 12 and 13 — Dharma talk Thursday, Sept 10 at 7:30 pm

November 30 to December 6th — Monday through Sunday

Foundations of Zen Class

Do you want to know more about meditation and Zen practice? Are you interested in knowing more about the history and philosophy of Zen? Do you want to start a daily personal practice or refresh your practice? The Foundations of Zen class addresses all of this and more.

Join us on Saturday March 7th from 1 pm to 5pm for the Foundations of Zen class. There is no charge, but pre-registration is required. Use the registration form at www.indyzen.org or email director@indyzen.org to reserve a spot.

Residential Opening

The Indianapolis Zen Center has an opening for a resident. This is a chance for in-depth Zen practice and to help in the development of the Zen Center. The Indianapolis Center has a regular weekly schedule of practice, four retreats a year, training programs, and classes. The potential resident would need to agree to certain practice requirements, as well as, some care-taking responsibilities. The monthly training fee is \$400. Utilities and internet service are provided by the Zen Center. Any Kwan Um School member interested should contact Robert Blender at 317-921-9902.

Hamilton County Sitting Group

Tuesday Evenings
8:15 p.m. to 9:15 p.m.
*sitting meditation, walking
meditation and chanting*

SOURCE YOGA CENTER

8609 E. 116th Street

Fishers, Indiana

*Across from
Fishers Government Center*

Practice Schedule

Monday

6:30 p.m.

Special chanting

7:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.

Evening bell, chanting, sitting

Tuesday Source Yoga, Fishers

8:15 p.m.-9:15 p.m.

Sitting, walking meditation, chanting

Wednesday

6:30 p.m.

Orientation to practice

7:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.

Evening bell, chanting, sitting

Saturday

9:00 a.m.-10:45 a.m.

Bows, morning bell, chanting, sitting

Sunday

8:30 a.m.

Orientation to practice

9:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m.

*Bows, morning bell, chanting, sitting,
Dharma talk, discussion & socializing*



*Kwan Seum
Bosal
at Indianapolis
Zen Center*

Also known as
Avalokitesvara in
Sanskrit,
the bodhisattva of
compassion

About the Zen Center

The Indianapolis Zen Center offers authentic Zen practice in the lineage of Zen Master Seung Sahn and is a member of the Kwan Um School of Zen. Membership is \$25/month for individuals and \$35/month for families. Becoming a member supports both the center and Zen practice in the community. Members receive a monthly calendar, the local and Kwan Um newsletters, discounts on retreat fees, and have the right to vote at the annual meeting.

For more information, call 317-921-9902, email director@indyzen.org or access our Web site at www.indyzen.org

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