



BUDDHIST CHURCH OF MARYSVILLE

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Hiking the Path, with Team Castle Hiking at home, Number 10.

In the last Hiking article, I wrote about the Dharma Message I had hoped to deliver on November 22nd in the Hondo at the MBC. With our re-opening on pause...again...I shared a summary of my intended talk about Thanksgiving and the ultimate message of gratitude.

Gratitude is such an important teaching in our Jodo Shinshu tradition. Saying thank-you should be an everyday reality of our lives and I encouraged all of us to simply practice giving thanks.

As we are now again on the most restrictive tier due to COVID-19, I know that I find myself Monkuing (complaining) more, but kick myself for not listening to my own recent message. With life so different, we all struggle with our attachment to how our lives were just a year ago. But while the struggle is real, I hope we all can wake up each and every day, and with gratitude in our hearts, simply recite the Nembutsu, and realize that each day is a good day and one to be thankful for. I will try to stop...well, maybe reduce my Monku nature!!

As we look to say goodbye to 2020 and welcome in 2021, I think this upcoming year is indeed one that brings an overwhelming sense of hope and optimism for positive change. I think we all hope that we all can stay healthy and soon gather in-person with friends and family, and return to the Marysville Buddhist Church for time together and time in the Hondo looking at our beautiful altar. While this pandemic has given me an entirely new view of Buddhism outside the walls of our temple, I do miss the warmth and comfort of being in the Hondo with all of our Sangha members.

For this coming year of 2021, I think I will stray from some of the grand themes that we often see for the new year, and simply stick to a goal that I firmly want for myself and all of those reading this.

My theme for 2021 is simply: BE YOURSELF!

Recently, as I often spend time on Facebook, I found a post from the Jikoen Buddhist Temple in Honolulu. The post simply said:

BE YOURSELF.

This is the easiest thing to do if you do not judge yourself. It is the most difficult thing to do if you are always judging yourself. You are neither good nor bad. You simply are. Accept that and be enlightened.

As I read this a couple of times, I thought...great message!

I think this message of Be Yourself, is the core to Shinran's realization that he himself could no longer be a part of the monastery life. His own humility, self-reflection, and honesty led him to abandon 20 years of life in the monastery and search for a new teaching and a new teacher.

Finding his new path and new teacher in Honen, he was given the best advice I think I have ever heard. And while I may have taken a little bit of creative license with this, I believe the advice from Honen to Shinran, and to all of us today would simply be this:

Be yourself and live a Nembutsu life. Be yourself and live a life centered upon a life of gratitude, being aware of the change and oneness around us, and focusing our thoughts on others...Namo Amida Butsu, NOT Namo Me.

I will do my best to listen to this advice. I hope that we are all able to simply be ourselves, and I sincerely hope that we can be ourselves together very soon.

In Gratitude,

Namo Amida Butsu

Keep on Hiking!!

Team Castle

