



BUDDHIST CHURCH OF MARYSVILLE

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Hiking the Path, with Team Castle Hiking at home, Number 9.

In the last Hiking article, I wrote about my recent trip to Yosemite to officiate a wedding on the shore of the Merced River at Cathedral Beach.

To say that getting to the wedding had been a journey would be an understatement. With plans A and B being scrapped due to COVID-19, plan C was only a day away from being cancelled due to the recent forest fires. Then, just the week before the wedding, massive fires and the resulting smoke closed Yosemite to all visitors. With zero days to spare, Yosemite opened the day before the wedding and ceremony was a go!

In a way, this weekend represented where we are at with all of these COVID restrictions and having to close the Hondo for services. What is important now is that we stay home. Right now, it is perfect, to not have services to protect one another, yet we still have the ability to do what is important.

As I write this month's article, I have just had to shift gears as this morning the MBC Board has had to cancel our limited reopening of the temple due to Yuba and Sutter counties again moving into the most restrictive purple tier. While I am very disappointed, I have been worried about the potential impact that our recent spike in COVID cases may have upon our Sangha members. Now it is an easy decision...we all stay home!

In preparing for a possible reopen on November 22nd, I thought, how perfect to re-open the week of Thanksgiving. My Dharma Message for the 22nd was to be about gratitude and the giving of thanks...so in a summarized form, here is my message that was to be delivered on November 22, 2020.

Gratitude. Next to Impermanence and Interdependence, Gratitude is probably the next most important teaching in our Jodo Shinshu tradition, simply the giving of thanks. Interestingly enough, there is a day coming up in the end of the month where we all give thanks (except for turkeys!). Thanksgiving! On November 26th, we will be celebrating the most Buddhistic of holidays observed in the U. S.

Thanksgiving is indeed the most Buddhistic holiday. First, one of our main teachings in Jodo Shinshu is living a life of gratitude, recognizing those people and those events in our lives that deserve our thanks. The second reason is that Thanksgiving is a time for traditions. Maybe your mom's favorite turkey recipe, your brother in laws chunky gravy, that no one really wants to know what the chunks are...and that favorite stuffing that NO ONE can ever duplicate. All of these traditions give a unique flavor to each family's celebration of this holiday. I don't just mean a literal flavor, but rather our own personal touch to the holiday. Although the meaning of Thanksgiving is clearly taught in school and in our culture, each family adds its own unique practice, or flavor in observing the holiday. These traditions are passed down from generation to generation.

This is very similar to the time we are in right now with Buddhism in the US. Over the last 2,600 years, we have seen Buddhism start in India, slowly move across India, to China, then Japan, and as Japanese immigrated east, Buddhism was introduced and now practiced in the US. At each step of the way, we see flavors added. We see subtle, often not so subtle

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changes in interpretation and practice. Jodo Shinshu itself is a blend of teachings and practices from India, China, and Shinran Shonin's influences in Japan.

Even here today, at the Marysville Temple, we see little different flavors being added to our practice. Although our altar is a very traditional part of our practice, we see differences from temple to temple. We may add pumpkins, or apples, or ka-ki to the offering. We routinely recite the Golden Chain and the Three Treasures, but these versions are just a little different from versions we use in Sacramento. And I think flavor is good! I think these subtle changes give us each a personal comfort level to the Dharma.

Knowing that the basic teachings are always here for us, but that we also have some flexibility and personal ownership to add a little flavor. Who knows what flavors will be added from this point?

So, getting back to my first thought this morning...Thanksgiving. Saying thank-you should be an everyday reality of our lives, but how often do we really show true and heart felt gratitude?? How often do we ourselves do things that generate true and heart felt gratitude?? We say thank-you for a variety of reasons every day. When a family member passes you the sho-yu at dinner, or passes you a napkin...what do we say?? We say thank-you. During rush hour on I-5, when someone lets you merge into traffic what do you do? You give them a little wave...thanks!! All of these acts of kindness, or every day courtesy, deserve a thank-you!!! But isn't it awesome to give or to do something that allows you to receive that level of gratitude that really makes a difference in both your life and someone else's?

I'd like to finish today by encouraging all of us to simply practice giving thanks. Saying thank-you and showing gratitude is but one small practice. It sounds easy doesn't it? But like everything else, it is not as easy as it sounds to consistently, throughout the day recognize all of the little thank-yous that we should all be saying. To realize that there are so many people who we rely on and that we need to thank. Whether it is a big issue or just a small one, don't hesitate to say thanks.

At the same time, we need to keep our individual link bright and strong so that we all can provide an opportunity for others to show their gratitude to us. Simply put, I know that I need to take more time every day to focus on others instead of myself. We all need to try to create opportunities for someone to say thank-you to us!!!!

So as we prepare for our Thanksgiving Day holiday, let us try to simply focus on one thing, each and every day...saying thanks when someone does something for us, but more importantly, remembering to live our lives in a way that generates others showing gratitude to us for our actions.

In closing today...please join me In Gassho:

While remembering the traditions of the past, don't be afraid to try new things, add your own flavor, begin new traditions...and pick one thing!

Namo Amida Butsu, Namu Amida Butsu,
Namu Amida Butsu

In Gratitude,

Namu Amida Butsu

Keep on Hiking!!

Team Castle

