



BUDDHIST CHURCH OF MARYSVILLE

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April 2021

Hiking the Path, with Team Castle Hiking at home, Number 13.

Rev. Tim's theme for 2021 is simply: BE YOURSELF!

In the last Hiking article, I wrote about the Eight-fold Path and a question that I often receive from our Fourth graders from the Betsuin's Scouting Buddhism class. The question being, "What is the most important (or your favorite) of the Eight-fold Path?? Without a good foundation, anything we build on top of the foundation will fail. So, I believe that Right View (I shall see things as they are) is the most important as it provides this stable foundation for the rest of the Eight-fold Path.

Right view is simply being able to open our Dharma-eyes and see things as they are, as if we were enlightened as the Buddha was. It is able to see all things around us with change and oneness as our guide. If we are able to see things as they are, with our teachings of change and oneness always in our heart and mind, then we will have Right View.

So for this month, I would like to write a bit about this Ohigan time of year and who and what can help us move from this shore of life and death to the other shore of enlightenment.

There is so many who help us each and every day, but often these efforts go unnoticed with our Dharma eyes closed. This reminded me of a story about a drowning sailor who was struggling to survive in the middle of the ocean. It was dark, the water was cold, and the waves were choppy. The sailor was all alone and he was scared so began to panic and paddle frantically to stay afloat. After a while, his arms and legs grew tired, his lungs felt like they were going to burst as he gasped for air, and he started to feel himself being pulled under.

All of a sudden, out of nowhere a voice told him to flip over on his back and float. The voice told him to relax, forget about trying to overcome your situation solely on your own and to let yourself fully entrust in what surrounds you. Suddenly, the ocean that seemed so dangerous and frightening was now gently supporting him. The ocean didn't change, but the way the sailor looked at it did. Instead of being scared, the sailor was OK because he realized that whenever he got tired, he could let go and the ocean would support him. And even though he still wasn't completely sure he was headed in the right direction, he knew the ocean would not let him drown.

Eventually, the sailor reached land and was overcome with gratitude not just because he was

safe, but because he realized that even though he was swimming, it was the power of the ocean that kept him afloat and not solely his own power.

I like this story because it reminds me of a very important truth that our lives are not simply ours alone. That although we may think that we've got everything under control and that we can take care of ourselves and everyone around us. In reality, it's the ocean of great caring, love and sacrifice, an ocean of other people's patience and efforts that surrounds us. This is what is actually keeping us afloat every moment of every day.

Even though we try not to, how often do we focus only on ourselves and what we want, and then end up struggling with the impact our actions have on those around us...the misunderstandings, the hurt feelings and the tears. It's only when we can let go of our self-centered ways and start focusing outward, that we can begin to realize and truly appreciate just how much our lives depend on others.

Life is tough and presents us with daily challenges and we can use all the help we can get! We won't always know what the right answer is, or whether we're headed in the right direction. But even when our vision is clouded by our blind passions and self-centered ways, we can always be assured that we're never alone. We're surrounded by so many people who have so much to offer. We are surrounded by people who are willing to listen and who are willing to help. This is part of the wisdom and compassion of Amida that we too are a part of. This compassion will always be there to support and guide us...and help each and every one of us to stay afloat. Knowing this, we cannot help but live our lives the best we can, with gratitude in our hearts and giving the best of ourselves to those around us.

Until we can all be together, let us all remember those around us who care and support us each and every day, and together let's take a hike (or relax in the ocean) as fellow travelers!!!

In Gratitude,

Namo Amida Butsu

Keep on Hiking!!

Team Castle

