



BUDDHIST CHURCH OF MARYSVILLE

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Hiking the Path, with Team Castle

Message from home, Number 4.

May 17, 2020

In the last Hiking article, I wrote about change and the unimaginable change that we have all had to deal with during this COVID crisis. The world has just recently been given a huge dose of the reality of change. Regardless of our religious background and path, regardless of our political outlooks, and regardless of where we live on this planet, change is truth in our lives...just as it has always been.

Especially during times of change, Shinran's teaching of the Nembutsu path is so meaningful. Placing our hands together In Gassho, let us think with gratitude for the easy path that Shinran helps us walk.

As I look at my calendar today, I see that we would have observed our annual Gotan-e service on May 3rd. Gotan-e is a birthday observance for Shinran Shonin, a person who devoted his life to living and traveling on his own unique Buddhist path...a path that he walked and shared with anyone who was willing to listen.

As we observe the birth, life, and teaching of the founder of our Jodo Shinshu tradition we realize that his teachings and practice of Buddhism are Shinran's true gift to us today...even though it is HIS birthday, he continues to give US, a present!!

Shinran is said to have been born on May 21st, 1173. He was born just outside the area what is now Kyoto, Japan. Shinran was fortunate to be born into a family of some wealth and social status and was educated from an early age. Unfortunately, the truth of impermanence was something experienced early in Shinran's life as at age 8, his mother passed away. Shinran was initially taken in by his uncle, but then his uncle brought 9-year-old Shinran to a temple on Mt. Hiei where he was to be raised as a monk.

It is said that Shinran's uncle waited until late in the evening to take Shinran to the temple, and once there, the resident head monk told the uncle to bring Shinran back the next morning for him to receive his ordination and entrance into the temple.

Shinran, already exposed to the truth of impermanence, is said to have then written this poem:

Cherry blossoms that are felt
To last till the morrow
May well blow away
During the night

His realization and expression of impermanence at the young age of 9 inspired the head monk to immediately allow Shinran to enter the temple grounds and conducted his ordination service.

For the next 20 years, Shinran immersed himself in the life as a monk. At the end of these 20 years, Shinran realized how impossible it would be for HIM to become free from his blind passions...impossible for him to reach enlightenment...realizing that this path was not the path for him.

Shinran felt that he needed to set out, and search for a new teacher, a new path...a path where he was a part of society, living with people, not separated living up in the mountains. In leaving Mt. Hiei, Shinran became an outcast to the traditional schools of the day. Shinran heard of another outcast from the traditional schools, and this person was Honen. Honen introduced Shinran to the Nembutsu path, and from that point forward, Shinran considered himself simply as a life-long follower of Honen's teaching. Even though they were with each other for roughly 6 years, their time together helped form Shinran's thoughts and practice and ultimately to led him to a new practice of Buddhism...Jodo Shinshu.

Honen showed Shinran a new path, and stated to Shinran that his direction is now very simple...your path is to simply follow the teachings, follow the Dharma...live a Nembutsu life...whether monk, lay person, simply live a Nembutsu life, focused on Amida and reciting Namo Amida Butsu. So that is just what Shinran did...got married...had children...and lived his life as a devote follower of Honen.

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Hiking the Path

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This is a very simplified story of Shinran Shonin...Someone with a vision of how he wanted to live his life and very willing to share, to simply help others. Shinran had an important message that has lasted for over 800 years. Shinran felt that he was simply a caretaker of Amida's teachings as he understood them from the Shakyamuni Buddha and in turn from the Seven Masters.

In a way, we are all caretakers of the Dharma and of the teaching that has been passed down to all of us. Whether it be a physical caretaker at our temple or simply how we act and conduct ourselves, we are taking care of ourselves and the Dharma 24/7. Each and every day, let us all remember to reflect outward that sense and let
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us walk our paths in a manner that will make Shinran, and all of the prior caretakers proud of their sacrifice.

In remembering the Life and Teaching of our teacher Shinran Shonin, let us not just reflect upon his birth, life, and teachings, but with gratitude in our heart.

In Gratitude,

Namo Amida Butsu

Keep on Hiking!!

Team Castle



TEMPLE UPDATE

As I mentioned in my last update, the Marysville Buddhist Church Board of Directors met on Saturday May 9th. We started off by having our first service in the Hondo in almost 10 weeks! Of course before the service, tape measures were brought out and safe social distancing spots were marked in the pews so that everyone was safe. All seven of us enjoyed chanting the Juseige together and a short Dharma message of simply reciting the Golden Chain together.

To start off service, the Kansho was rung for the first time in almost 10 weeks. It had been so long since it was last rung that after the first strike of the bell, dust and pollen rained down from the Kansho!

Closing the temple during this COVID crisis was one of the most difficult decisions I think the MBC Board has ever made. Yet at the same time, it was an easy decision as we knew protecting the health and safety of our Sangha is our goal.

It is that same goal that makes opening up the MBC again for services so very difficult.

When will we re-open? What will services look like? Great questions and we still do not have a firm answer to either question. It is safe to say that our annual Memorial Day Weekend cemetery services will not happen this year. Obon Odori and our Obon Chicken Dinner will also be canceled this year. It is our hope that we can observe our Hatusbon service in the Fall of this year. It is also our hope that maybe in September, that we can start to have carefully planned and limited seating Sunday services again as we think we can fit 30 people in the Hondo observing current social distancing guidelines.

The best advise I think that we can all take from the world right now is this:

Be patient, be safe, be healthy, and BE HOME!!!

Gassho,
Rev. Tim