

sangha

NEWSLETTER OF THE SANTA CRUZ AND MONTEREY BAY ZEN CENTERS

JULY 2013

NANCHUAN KILLS A CAT

One day at Nanchuan's temple in old China, the monks of the eastern and western halls were arguing over a cat. Maybe they were arguing about which residence the cat gets to live in. The eastern people wanted it with them, or the western people wanted it with them, or neither of them actually wanted it, since the cat demanded a lot of attention and during zazen it would curl up on their laps which disturbed their concentration. Or maybe they were just arguing about whether the cat had buddha nature or not, or debating what is a cat anyway? Zen monks can come up with an argument about anything! You'd think they would have better things to do in a Zen temple than argue over cats, but that's what they were doing on this particular occasion. And when Nanchuan, their teacher, saw this he held up the cat and said, "If you can express something, it won't be killed." The group had no reply so Nanchuan cut the cat in two.

The term for "the ability to speak, express, say something" in Japanese is "dotoku." In Zen it is not only important to understand Dharma, but to be able to express something. Dogen Zenji has a whole essay called "Expression" (Dotoku) in which he says, "All Buddhas and ancestors are expressing themselves; thus when buddhas and ancestors are looking for buddhas and ancestors, they always ask for an expression." One would think that those living in Nanchuan's community would be ready for this kind of question from their teacher. Nanchuan would often say things like "All buddhas of past, present and future, don't know IT; house cats and cows know it!" Nanchuan loved cats. They know reality more directly than the buddhas. We celebrate this in the Song of the Jewel Mirror Samadhi: resting in mirror-like awareness is kind of like the mind of a house cat or a cow, very simple and straightforward. Cats are also pretty good at immediately responding.

Nanchuan picked up this cat that knows it more clearly than the buddhas of the three times, held it before the arguing monks and asked them to just express something here and now. They were already talking a lot, but they are being asked to say something straightforward, to the point, beyond discriminating ideas, that will release this buddha-like cat. The argument is already killing the cat, but if something can be expressed right now, from our deepest heart, the true life of this precious cat will be saved. At that time the group could not speak. Isn't it amazing? Not one of them could say anything! They couldn't even say, "Don't do it!" or "What are

you talking about teacher?" They couldn't say anything. Sometimes silence is the appropriate and ultimate response in Zen stories, but more often it is NOT! This is a case where silence won't do. At least Nanchuan did get the monks to stop arguing; that was pretty good. They were dumbfounded, shocked, afraid to speak. The stakes are high, because Nanchuan is a great Zen teacher and he's asking for an authentic expression, for some truth to be expressed here. What if one says it wrong? What if I give the wrong answer and I am the only one who speaks, and he kills the cat? Then the killing will be my fault. So if we all just silently do nothing together, then at least no individual can be blamed.

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There is a cat being held up before us every moment. A perfectly healthy, non-discriminating cat, warm and full of life. This world is like that. This world holds up living cats every moment and asks for our response. There is no escape from this. Even just being silent, the cat is often killed, as we know. Or if we argue further, giving twenty justified reasons why the cat should not be killed, it will be too late; we don't have that kind of time in this world. Cats are being held up and actually killed every moment. This practice is asking us to respond – immediately and authentically.

There are two sides of Zen practice: there is sitting silently, not reacting to anything, letting go of all of our ideas about everything, just being completely present, dropping off discriminating mind. We settle and relax in the midst of this world of painful situations; this is half of our practice. The other half of practice is to get up from our cushion and respond in myriad ways that we can't figure out beforehand. Who would have expected that the teacher would suddenly pick up an innocent cat and hold a knife to it? We cannot plan on how we will respond. These two sides of practice work together: by cultivating presence and relaxation even in very difficult situations, from this stable foundation we can immediately and spontaneously respond to help the world.

Later in the day, Nanchuan's great disciple Chaochou, who liked to talk about dogs, came back to the temple. Nanchuan brought up the incident and asked for his response. Chaochou immediately took off his sandals, put them on his head and left. Nanchuan said, "If you had been here you could have saved that cat." Chaochou brought forth a true expression and his teacher seems to have approved it.

There are some famous verses from Shantideva's "Way of the Bodhisattva", in the chapter on "Vigilant Introspection": "Harmful

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beings are everywhere, like space itself. Impossible it is that they should be suppressed. But let this angry mind alone be overthrown, and it's as though all foes have been subdued." This is not to say that we don't ever protest harmful beings, but from a practice perspective we must first



and foremost take care of this one. We BE peace and offer that example. The verse that follows this goes (edited here from "leather" to "straw", since Nanchuan and the cat is a kind of "animal rights" story): "To cover all the earth with sheets of straw, where can such amounts of straw be found? But with the straw soles of just my own sandals, it is as though I cover all the earth!"

What a wonderful image; since padded straw will protect us from the thorny world of difficult people, let's pave the whole world with straw so we can walk barefoot on it. But, since this would be virtually impossible, we can try to cover just this tiny little area of our feet and then just take our padded feet wherever we go. This protects us from the thorny world of harmful beings, and it protects the world from us. We don't need so much straw to cover our feet.

The appropriate place for sandals is on one's feet; it is very grounding and soft to meet the world like that. Then naturally, without very much effort, sandals just stay on the feet like that and do this work without a lot of conceptual figuring about how to do it. It is as if these arguing monks are taking off their sandals that protect them from each other, putting them onto their head instead of on the ground where they do their work. Chaochou is demonstrating the distraction these monks have gotten into, showing that their argument and inability to respond compassionately is topsy-turvy; these simple beneficial sandals, so easy to take for granted, have been taken off their feet and put on their arguing heads, and all is lost.

Later a commentator on this story, celebrating Chaochou's response, added a verse: "Picking up whatever comes to hand, there's nothing that's not it." If he didn't have sandals on his feet at the time, he might have expressed himself with something else; using whatever arises in the situation with trust in the larger workings of the whole, we can express our true heart and save the life of the moment.

- edited from a talk by Kokyo Henkel

MIRROR SAMADHI AND FIVE RELATIONSHIPS OF APPEARANCE & REALITY

6 Sunday evenings: July 7-August 11, 6:35-8pm.

Kokyo will offer a class series on Zen Ancestor Dongshan's verses on the Five Relationships, the hidden heart of the Jewel Mirror Samadhi. This teaching, which practically defined the Soto Zen tradition in ancient China, is a subtle guidepost for discerning our true relationship with the world. Suggested donation: \$10/class for sustaining members, \$13 for all others. (There will also be a discussion group, 5:15-6:15pm).

ONE-DAY SITTING AND CEREMONY OF RECEIVING THE PRECEPTS

Saturday, July 13, Sitting 8:30am-4pm, Ceremony 4-5pm.

The day includes a talk on the bodhisattva precepts by Kokyo and ends with Jukai Ceremony at 4pm (please bring lunch). Gabriel Gendel and Emily Schell will receive the precepts from Kokyo.

CEREMONY OF RECEIVING THE PRECEPTS

Wednesday, July 17, 6:30-7:30pm.

Mary Knudtson will receive the precepts from Eugene Bush.

ZEN OF CLOTH WORKSHOP: SITTING WITH HOPE, SITTING WITH CLOTH

with Edie Brown: Sunday, July 28, 10:00am-4:30pm

We will be hand-stitching 7-inch squares of cloth. Activities will include chanting, journaling, stitching in silence, kinhin (walking meditation), and some discussion. The emphasis will be on studying the mind and what arises during the day. Both Zen practitioners and non-practitioners are welcome. No sewing experience is needed. We will have a short lunch break (please bring lunch). See website or bulletin board for more details. Suggested donation: \$55 for sustaining members, \$65 for all others.

ORIGINS OF ZEN AND BODHIDHARMA

with Andy Ferguson: Saturday, August 3, 10am-noon.

Andy Ferguson, author of "Zen's Chinese Heritage" and "Tracking Bodhidharma," will give a talk and slide show looking at the origins of Zen in China and Bodhidharma's place in that development, going even farther back in history to discuss why the "Blue Eyed Barbarian" Bodhidharma, as well as Nagarjuna, may have come directly out of a Greek intellectual and spiritual tradition that was strong in the Kushan Empire as well as Southeast India. By donation.

3-DAY SESSHIN

August 16-18, 5am-9pm (ends 4pm Sunday).

Each day will include morning teachings and formal oryoki meals. Suggested donation: \$35/day for sustaining members, \$40 for all others.

STONE AND SELF

with Michael Bashista: evening of August 30, all day August 31 & September 1.

Carving stone is a relationship of exposing secrets and accepting boundaries. The stone surrenders to the touch when honoring its strengths.

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The self surrenders to the vision when exposing its attachments. Over one weekend we will learn how to carve, shape, sand and polish a soft stone. In doing so we will face our apprehensions and release our creativity by irrevocably changing an object that has existed for millions of years and, in moments, hours and days, change it for millions of years to come (please bring lunch).

See website or bulletin board for more details. Suggested donation: \$110 for sustaining members, \$130 for all others.

CEREMONIAL TEA: MINDFUL PRACTICE

with Gerow Reece: Sunday series; September 8, 15, 22, 1:30-5:00pm.

This will be a time of sharing together the way host and guests function as one in giving and receiving. The process of sharing tea enables some moments to become illuminated, yet it is clearly grounded in the ordinary stuff of objects, liquids, setting and other people. The class will begin with holding and looking at tea bowls, getting a feeling for them. From there we'll consider the powdered tea, the whisk and then the several other essential elements. Next we'll put them all together in their ceremonial mode and see how that "works" – internally and externally. Suggested donation: \$75 for sustaining members, \$90 for all others.

ONE-DAY SITTING AND LIBERATING LIFE CEREMONY

Saturday, September 14, 8:30am-5pm.

Includes lecture in the morning by Kokyo. Please bring bag lunch. After the sitting, at 5pm, there will be a traditional Liberating Life Ceremony for releasing captive crickets from being killed. Suggested donation: \$12/day for sustaining members, \$15 for all others.

SCZC relies on fees and donations to continue its mission. If you can pay more, please consider doing so. If you cannot afford the suggested donation, please offer what you can. No one will be turned away for lack of funds.

INTRODUCTION TO ZEN

Saturday, July 27, August 24, September 28, 10am-noon.

A monthly introduction to the body and mind of Zen meditation and the forms of practice at SCZC. The morning includes sitting and walk-ing meditation, followed by discussion. Everyone is welcome, free of charge.

SANGHA DAY

Saturdays, July 20 (2-5pm) & September 21 (9:20am-4pm).

Sangha Day is a time to come together and help take care of the temple and grounds: cleaning the zendo, making candles, gardening, etc. Please bring something for a potluck lunch on September 21.

ORDINARY RECOVERY GROUP

Friday evenings, 6:45pm-7:45pm, in the zendo.

A weekly meeting discussing Buddhist practice with addictions, emotions, and relationships. A short meditation, a Dharma reading, compassionate discussion and support.

TUESDAY MORNING BREAKFAST AND STUDY GROUP

Everyone is welcome to informal breakfast with conversation in the community room at 7am most Tuesdays, following morning zazen and service. Breakfast is followed by a Dharma study group 7:45-8:45am. Currently we are reading and discussing modern commentaries on Dogen's Shobogenzo. All are welcome to either or both events, free of charge.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

June 24 marks the one-year anniversary of Katherine's passing and I continue to miss her footsteps before morning zazen. The heart of Zen practice continues to beat at Warm Jewel Temple with a vibrant schedule of daily sitting, classes, art workshops, sesshins, and community events such as the Japanese Cultural Fair. SCZC Board of Trustees has approved a capital fundraising campaign to renovate the dokusan building and dedicate the building to Katherine. Dokusan is traditionally a time for Zen teachers and students to engage in deep questions related to Zen practice in daily life. I can't think of a better way to honor Katherine than to renovate the dokusan room where these important exchanges occur. Please consider making a gift to Santa Cruz Zen Center for the renovation of the dokusan building in honor of Katherine, the teachings, and the deep roots of this practice.

With gratitude,

Edie Brown, President of Board of Trustees



Karin Sobun, Katherine Phanas Dokusan Building

Santa Cruz Zen Center
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ON FACEBOOK: you
can "like" the two Zen
Centers Facebook pages

for current information on what's
happening there, photos of events,
and more.

SANTA CRUZ ZEN CENTER		115 School Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95060	831-457-0206	www.sczc.org
DAILY SCHEDULE		Five Relationships Class	Jul 7-Aug 11	6:35-8pm
Monday-Friday:		1-day Sitting & Jukai	Sat. Jul 13	8:30-4,4-5pm
		Jukai Ceremony	Wed. Jul 17	6:30-7:30pm
5:45am Zazen		Afternoon Sangha Day	Sat. Jul 20	2-5pm
6:25am Service (chanting)		Precepts Renewal	Mon. Jul 22	5:45-6:30pm
12:00pm Zazen		Kobun Roshi Memorial	Fri. Jul 26	6:25-7am
5:45pm Zazen		Introduction to Zen	Sat. Jul 27	10-noon
6:25pm Service		Zen of Cloth Workshop	Sun. Jul 28	10-4:30pm
Wednesday Evening:		Origins of Zen Talk	Sat. Aug 3	10-noon
6:35pm Lecture/discussion		3-day Sesshin	Aug 16-18	5am-9pm
7:30pm Informal tea		Precepts Renewal	Tues. Aug 20	5:45-6:30pm
Saturday Morning:		Sobun Roshi Memorial	Fri. Aug 23	6:25-7am
8:30am Zazen		Introduction to Zen	Sat. Aug 24	10-noon
9:10am Service		Stone and Self Workshop	Aug 31-Sep 1	all day
Sunday Evening:		Ceremonial Tea	Sep 8-22	1:30-5pm
5:45pm Zazen		1-day Sit & Liberate Life	Sat. Sep 14	8:30-5,5-6pm
6:25pm Service		Precepts Renewal	Thurs. Sep 19	5:45-6:30pm
		Sangha Day	Sat. Sep 21	9:20-4pm
		Kobun Roshi Memorial	Thurs. Sep 26	6:25-7am
		Introduction to Zen	Sat. Sep 28	10-noon
LIBRARY OPEN		Dogen and Keizan Memorial	Mon. Sep 30	6:25-7am
During tea after Wed. Lecture				
ORDINARY RECOVERY				
Friday evenings at 6:45 pm				