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2016 BCA Theme: "Live a Real Life" - Makoto no jinsei wo ayumon

Response to the Shooting in Orlando, Florida

We are deeply shocked and saddened by the mass shooting at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida. We wish to express our profound sympathy to the families and friends of the victims.

When we encounter tragic events such as this, we turn to the Buddha for guidance on how to live our lives without hating and harming each other. We recognize that the root of hatred is very difficult to identify. It comes from deep inside of our karmic consciousness. We live our lives based on emotions and feelings of love and hatred. This is the source of our daily actions.

But there is a true and real realm beyond love and hatred. This is the Buddha's realm; the realm of Enlightenment. Deeply grieving our condition, the Buddha urges us to listen to the Dharma and to hear the words from the world of true equality. Through this realization, we are able to see one another as fellow travelers on a journey to the world of true equality. Regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation, we should live our lives with respect and kindness.

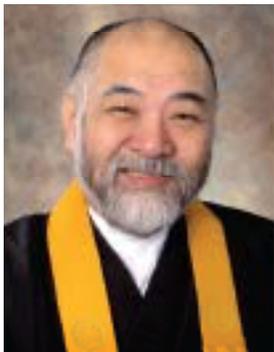
Namo Amida Butsu

In Gassho (With Palms Together),

Rev. Kodo Umezu - Bishop, Buddhist Churches of America

Rev. Kakei Nakagawa, Rinban

Original 'Toro Nagashi' in America



'Toro Nagashi', Floating Lantern Ceremony in Fresno began in 1986 but was passed down for decades after World War II.

The Sansei (third generation) do not know that many Japanese-Americans lost their lives in the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Since it was common among first-generation immigrants to send their children to Japan for education, many

children were in Japan and indeed, in their parents' hometown of Hiroshima and Nagasaki when the war broke out and bombs were dropped on both cities. The aged had a difficult time mending their hearts after such loneliness, missing their sons, daughters and siblings.

In its original meaning, the Floating Lantern Ceremony was the event that symbolized the end of the Obon season. But this event began to take on a different meaning after the end of WWII... "that" day, under a blinding flash in Hiroshima.

On August 6th one year later, many people who lost family members, relatives and friends voluntarily started to float handmade lanterns here and there along the riverside in Hiroshima city.

This, for the repose of souls of the loved ones who evaporated in an instant or burned without a trace who had been living only in their memory.

From around the 3rd year after the end of WWII, members of Jodo-Shinshu temples located near "Ground Zero" had taken the lead of distributing thousands of handmade lanterns to the bereaved families and floated these lanterns in a river from a dry riverbed facing "Ground Zero". More than 60 percent of these temples' members vanished, and the remaining members were victims. People gathered and on the lantern panels, wrote the name of the person who had passed away (Buddhist name or secular name) and the name of donor. Prayers were also written, for the first ceremony. As well as "appeasement of the spirits", the messages written became "peace" messages. For the first time, we read messages such as, "No nations, just people. Peace", "No more Hiroshima and Nagasaki", "No more Stupidity on Earth", etc.

When President Obama called on Hiroshima the other day, a message of an apology was argued in the United States, but it was just an insignificant argument among the people of Hiroshima. The meaning of Hiroshima has exceeded way beyond the war.

See "Toro Nagashi", page 4

Rev. Alan Sakamoto



Compassion and Altruistic Joy

Imagine, that you were sealed in a gym with a group of strangers by aliens. All the windows and doors are permanently shut. The aliens provide you with all the food and water you need to survive. You can't get out, you are struck in the gym with those people for the rest of your life. What will you do after the shock, anger and frustration subside? How will you react? How will you treat those

struck in the gym with you?

Your wellbeing, companionship and friendship will have to come from all those strangers. You can choose to live isolated from everyone and try to be an island unto yourself. Or you can work with everyone to make the best of the situation. Then what happens when someone is sad, depressed, angry or ill? I hope that we would all understand that we are in the same boat and that we need to take care of and support each other. We are all "wearing each other's shoes." I hope that we would all learn to trust each other, comfort and sacrifice for each other because the others would do the same for me. This mutual understanding that we are all together in the same gym with the same issues and concerns is the foundation for Compassion.

Compassion IS NOT feeling sorry for someone else. That is pity. That kind of compassion sees others in a different situation and emphasizes their sufferings and misfortunes. That kind of compassion compares us to others. That is not Buddha's Compassion.

Returning to the closed gym. When we are all in it together, we bond together to form a tight knit committee where each person's difficulties becomes the difficulties for the group. There is a willingness to sacrifice for each other, and a tremendous amount of empathy. Each person will try to understand as best as possible that they too might face that same problem, and therefore, selflessly work to help each other for the betterment of the whole group. In the case of the closed gym, and in life, we are all in this together, and we are all dependent on each other. We are all equal. Those people over there are just like us. Our feelings of Compassion are not based on comparing ourselves with another, but in knowing that we too are having problems when someone else has problems.

On the other side of the coin is Altruistic or Sympathetic Joy. How do you feel when someone else experiences something joyful or happy or good? Do you ignore them? Have you been jealous? Are you sincerely and genuinely happy for them? If we are in the same closed gym, then we realize that the other person's happiness IS our happiness. Just like their suffering becomes our suffering.

See "Compassion", page 4

Rev. Matthew Hamasaki



Buddha Loves You

One of my favorite songs to sing at temple is "Buddha Loves You". This comes from my childhood days when the Dharma School would have to perform for special services. The kids would stand on the steps in front of the onajin and line up so everyone's face could be seen and they would sing while everyone in the congregation watched. In order to prepare for this,

every Sunday for about the month before the teachers would help the children rehearse so hopefully the kids would be familiar enough with the tunes that it would sound good when the big day came.

When I was very young, the teachers asked us to memorize the songs so we would practice them even when we weren't at church. However, not all of the kids came as prepared and one of my earliest and fondest memories is when one of my friends did not know a song, but he still had to go up with the rest of us. The adults told him just to mouth the words but being a kid and not knowing the words, the lip syncing he did looked less like singing along and more like just screaming silently (perhaps because of this the teachers started writing the lyrics on cards and sat in front of the kids so it wouldn't be necessary to memorize everything).

The lyrics to "Buddha Loves You" go *Fly, fly, little bird/ Buddha loves you little bird/ tweet, tweet, tweet, tweet, tweet, tweet, tweet*. It continues with *Don't cry pussycat* and *Run, Run, little pup* finally ending with *Swim, swim, little fish* and each of them is accompanied with the corresponding animal sound *meow, bow wow*, and for the last one everyone open their mouth like a fish would. The simplicity and acting out the actions made this song a favorite. And while the surface meaning is very simple in that it shows that Buddha loves birds, cats, dogs, and fish, there is a deeper meaning.

The Buddha has no discrimination when it comes to the Buddha's love. And the Buddha loves them for doing what they do naturally. The first idea points to how the Buddha accepts all beings as they are and so, then, should everyone accept themselves and others. The second point speaks to how when a puppy runs or a fish swims, they do so without thinking, without trying, without effort. This doesn't mean that it doesn't expend energy, rather it means that they do it without ego. The actions they do are pure because it is without selfish intention. Both of these are ideals that are modeled by the Buddha and which we should constantly work towards.

“Toro Nagashi”, continued from page 1

Quite a few deep-thinking people who had been living in the world recognized, “that day under a blinding flash, which surpassed the brightness of the sun, we human beings entered into **A NEW ERA**. We human beings, Homo sapiens, through the ages have been living our short lives foreboding death as individuals up to 100 years. But since “that” day we gained a foreboding of the biological death of an entire species forever. Our real-self came into view for the first time, but at the present time we still don’t recognize our folly, foolishness that may cause the total downfall of all species on the earth itself.” Please be reminded of the Buddha’s wish-for-the-world and the response of Rennyō Shōnin, the master of Honganji;

“As long as space abides and as long as the world abides, so long may I abide, destroying the sufferings of the world.” by the Buddha “I shall promote the world of non-violence of physical, mental, cultural and social for establishing the true Sangha, where any individual would never be impaired to realize their full potential.” by Rennyō Shōnin, 15c, Japan.

We must know that Buddha’s wish truly makes serious sense for the future of mankind now.

The historical Floating Lantern Ceremony will be held in Woodward Park from 7:30pm on August 6. This event wishes true peace as well as to pay tribute people who have passed away.

Namō’ amitabha% in *Gasshō* (with both palms together), I wish to express my sorrow and regret over the victims at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida.

Rev. Kakei Nakagawa, Rinban

“Compassion”, continued from page 2

The difference in how we act in our everyday life versus the closed gym example is that we constantly compare ourselves to others. It’s the “me vs them” attitude that makes it difficult to be truly Compassionate and to share in their joy. We look at others to see what kind of clothes they are wearing, what kind of car they drive, the kind of cell phone they use, where they go to school, what grades they get, and so on and so forth. Why do we have to always compare ourselves with others? This means that we are looking outside of ourselves for our happiness and satisfaction in life.

The answer is not out there, but inside each and every one of us. This is what the Buddha taught. The happiness and satisfaction in life you seek isn’t out there, look inside yourself. And maybe, just maybe you’ll have greater empathy for others too.

I go to the Buddha for guidance.
I go to the Dharma for guidance.
I go to the Sangha for guidance.

Rev. Alan Sakamoto

Greg Tsudama, Board Chairman



Hi All,

Enjoying your summer? It’s that time of year where you’ve probably just experienced one or more of the following: bought your first ears of Fresno State corn, attended a graduation or graduation party, graduated from school, slept in because you don’t have to go to school, turned down the thermostat to beat the heat, or told your friend from out of town “it’s a dry heat!”.

Along with these rites of summer I would like to congratulate the recipients of the Betsuin Scholarship awards: Kendal Kubo, Jenna Aoki, Mackenzie Nishijima, & Will Ikemiya. Many thanks go to the Betsuin Scholarship committee who have the hard task of determining the recipients of each of the scholarships and the donors whose generosity established each of the scholarships.

Rev Koho Takata was our guest speaker at the Rennyō Shōnin Memorial service and he gave a very enjoyable Dharma talk to our members in attendance. He described his experience growing up with his grandfather and how his family followed the tradition of eating the rice from the buppanki in the obutsudan. His grandfather was very strict about how one was to eat the rice from the obutsudan. Not heated or seasoned in any way and eaten down to the very last grain of rice. Rev Takata would have given anything to be allowed to heat the rice up in the microwave or at least be able to sprinkle some furikake on the rice to make it easier to eat. He also told us about how large the rice ball for the buppanki on the naiijin at the Hongwanji temple in Kyoto is; it is as large as his head! Having attended a service at the Hongwanji temple you don’t realize how large the onaijin items have to be in order to be in proportion to the statue of the Buddha, amazing.

Earlier in the month I attended the BCA (Buddhist Churches of America) National Board meeting at the JSC (Jodo Shinshu Center) in Berkeley. One of the proposals that came up from the By-Laws committee was to take away a minister’s vote if that minister was supervising more than one temple. Currently, a minister may carry a vote to the BCA National Council meeting for each temple they supervise. This proposal is directly related to our situation here in the valley where we have our three ministers supervising the seven temples in the Central Valley. This change to ministerial voting was proposed by the By-Laws committee without polling the BCA temples for their opinion on the subject. After BCA president, Ken Tanimoto asked if the temples had been polled, the By-Laws committee will consider polling the temples to get their opinion on this proposed change.

In the future many of the BCA ministers will be retiring (seventeen become eligible to retire within the next five years), BCA temples will most likely have to adopt a similar supervision policy that our ministers currently work under. If this proposed by-law change goes into effect ministers will not be able to represent the temples they supervise at the annual BCA National Council meeting. Temples will lose their ability to be represented by their supervising minister at the annual meeting.

See “Tsudama”, page 7