



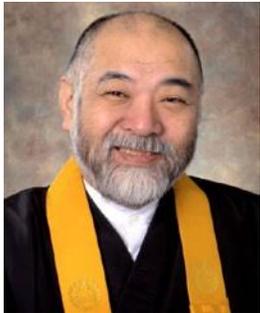
VOLUME 55
ISSUE 11

Website: www.fresnobuddhisttemple.org

NOVEMBER
2020

“NEVER REGRET A DAY IN YOUR LIFE. GOOD DAYS BRINGS YOU HAPPINESS AND BAD DAYS GIVE YOU EXPERIENCE.” - Unknown

REV. KAKEI NAKAGAWA, Rinban



One-Thousand-Folded Paper Cranes

(Senbazuru = Strings of folded paper cranes numbering 1,000)

The other day when I talked about ‘One-Thousand-Folded Paper Cranes’ in a pet memorial service, it attracted a lot of people’s interest, so I will write about it.

The first thing I would like to emphasize is that the wish contained in the thousand-folded paper cranes is “live” or “longevity.” Recently, the meaning of this wish has been forgotten, and it is often found in places where a thousand-folded paper cranes should not be displayed, such as a graveyard. If you are not careful when introducing foreign artifacts, ‘Lost in Translation’ will occur.

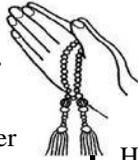
Perhaps the misunderstanding began when we heard about the thousand-folded paper cranes, dedicated to the memorial monument to the boys and girls who were victims of the Atomic Bomb, which bears the name of Sadako, the girl who died from the effects of the Atomic Bomb in Hiroshima.

Unfortunately, even now 75 years after the Atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima City, many countries will never acknowledge the fact that humans, as well as most living beings, can never co-exist with nuclear energy. They are not willing to do so; therefore, there are many children around the present world who are suffering from radiation damage of nuclear energy. It is the reason why Hiroshima citizens continue to offer the thousand-folded paper cranes to the monument.

By the way, the origin of the thousand-folded paper cranes goes back to Archbishop Rogen, who was a leader of Japanese Buddhism in the 10th century. Gansan Daishi, also known as Rogen (912~985), is one of the leaders who took the initiative in propagating Buddhism, which was a monopoly of the aristocratic class before his time to the common people. He is also famous for being a direct teacher of the 6th master of Jodo Shinshu, Genshin Kasho.

When Rogen, highly respected by the common people at that time was on his death bed due to aging, many citizens of Kyoto who heard of his sickness began to dedicate strings of thousand-folded paper cranes to the nearby shrines and temples.

Continued, page 2 (left column)



REV. KAZ NAKATA

Showing our reverence to our founding generations



Hello, all Central California Sangha friends! We are welcoming in November with cool weather and only two more months to the year 2021! Since March, most temple/church activities have been suspended under the Health Department guidelines. Our Central Cal Sangha leaders have been discussing how to cautiously re-open temples/churches to our Sangha members with essential concern for everyone’s health. As you are aware, some “outside” activities are held such as the Obon Dance, and the Drive thru Food fundraisers. I have confidence that all helpers for these events will put extra effort into preventing the spread of any disease. As one of the outside activities, Rinban and I decided to conduct New Year’s Eve Service whether our temples/churches reopen by the end of the year or not. The main event of the Service is to gong the Kansho/Bonsho bell. Plans are to chant Juseige in front of the bell outdoors, then everyone tolls the bell. Hand sanitizer will be provided to use after you touch the bell hammer. It will be a short Service, but I am sure it will be a very meaningful Service for all. Even if you are not able to come out to toll the bell, no problem. I will be sure to live stream our Service to share the resonating sound of the bell! Some CC churches have their Ministerial Assistants to conduct services or we will have a guest to conduct the Services at your local churches. I will have more detail in my December article!

As I promised in my October article, I like to write about my research on the internment camps and my talk at the Fall Ohigan Service. I hope many of our Dharma School children will read this article. Since I have become a BCA minister, I have had several occasions to visit Manzanar. I have visited all 10 internment camps since coming to the U.S. in 2003, and Manzanar is the only location where I have visited multiple times. When I was a senior at Ryukoku University Kyoto Japan, I was researching for my final paper, thesis for the graduation. Ryukoku is known as a Ministerial training school of Jodo Shinshu. At the time, I encountered the word “Japanese-American”. Until then, I really did not know who the Japanese Americans were. I received K-12 education in Japan, but they did not teach the history of the Japanese American because it is not a part of Japanese history.

Continued, page 2, right column

Rev. Nakagawa, continued from page 1

They shared their prayers for the longevity of Rogen: “Venerable Rogen Shonin, please live longer.”

So why did they dedicate “the strings of thousand folded-paper cranes”? Rogen is considered the first person to make frequent use of Buddhist narratives when sharing Buddhism to the common people. He explained in an easy-to-understand manner the truth reality of Mahayana Buddhist basics. For example, “Kokudo Sansen Sôroku Shikkai Jôbutsu” means, “All sentient beings that exist in this universe have the element of becoming a Buddha as potentiality”; but he pleasantly shared the same passage by using observed-facts of the familiar animal world that everyone knows.

There is a passage in Rogen’s Dharma-talk that continues to influence the ordinary people until the 21st century. Regarding Buddha-nature, some species of animals, such as elephants, lions, deer, and peacocks etc., though not as potential as humans, sometimes gain Buddha-nature within their lifespan on Earth. Typical examples are cranes and turtles. When observing the cranes, it is said that once cranes become a pair, they will live together for the rest of their lives and if one dies in an accident, the other will remain single for the rest of its life.

When observing the turtle, probably because it is close to Buddha-nature, the turtle is a family-minded being, and parents always nurture, putting their child and grandchild on their back shells. The sense-of-care also favors other creatures, and it is often heard that a fisherman, thrown out of a boat at sea, was rescued after being carried on his back by a sea turtle even for three days and three nights.

It is said that such kinds of birds and beasts that carry well potentiality get Buddha-nature; for example, a crane gets a thousand-years life, and a turtle gets a ten-thousand-years life. Especially when both the crane-pair would emerge with Buddha-nature, the two are said to work the role of messenger of the gods or buddhas while maintaining the love of the couple for a thousand years.

That is why these crane-pairs always are adopted as a happy-go-lucky motif to all Arts of Japan.

This fable must have been well understood by the citizens of Kyoto because this story included criticisms of the court life at that time by Rogen Shonin, especially the disorder of the marriage life of the upper aristocratic class. The thousand-folded paper cranes also include the meaning of a warning bell as the same creature from the crane’s standpoint, toward the awkward reality of the human beings who ought to be closest to emerging Buddha-nature. People are naturally aware of the commonality of Life’s preciousness in this world.

Rogen is also known for creating one of Japan’s unique religious customs that has lasted until the 21st century. He is the inventor of the “Paper Oracle” tied to the branches of the trees in the precincts, which is the familiar landscape of Japanese shrines and temples.

Continued, next column

Rev. Nakagawa, continued from left column

Even now on New Year’s Day, at least 30% of Japanese people who visit the shrines and temples draw ‘Omikuji = Paper Oracle’, write their prayers or New Year’s resolutions on the paper, and tie them to the branches of trees in the precincts.

Before Rogen, people were just “folding” paper and offering it to gods as a dark and negative act, such as an ancient religious occult “curse.”

Rogen, in accordance with the Buddhist policy of guiding the primitive religion without denying it, turns the negative “folded-paper Oracle” into a positive “prayer” act of “tying it” to the tree in the sanctuary. He was the person who created this tradition and brought Japanese ancient religion out into the place of light. His achievements were welcomed by the entire devout people.

So, therefore people would offer strings of thousand-folded paper cranes as the act of earnestly wishing for the longevity of dear Rogen Shonin. Again, the act of dedicating a thousand-folded paper cranes is the act of earnestly wishing for the longevity of the person.

Rev. Kaz, continued from page 1

Likewise, the U.S. public schools do not teach the history of American Japanese at their school. In December of 1941, the Japanese military attacked Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. Because the “Japanese” attacked the U.S., the U.S. government worried about Japanese in the U.S., especially Japanese on the west coast. Two months later in February 1942, the 32nd U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt signed an Executive Order to construct relocation centers for Japanese and Japanese American. Japanese immigrants in the U.S. are called Issei, which means the 1st generation. Japanese-American at that time were mainly the 2nd generation U.S. born children. They are called Ni-sei. Ni means two and sei means generation. 3rd generation Japanese American is known as San-sei (Three/Third generation). Three months later in the announcement of the Executive Order, the Civil control administration printed a poster to Japanese (Issei) and Japanese American (Nisei and Sansei) ordering them to move into the internment camps.

As I mentioned, after I moved to the U.S., I visited all 10 camps in person for my personal research. During my research, I was able to interview people who were in the camps. They were mostly our temple church members, especially members of Buddhist Women’s association. I found some interesting facts. I interviewed different age groups of people who in camp, would have been pre-teen, in their 20’s, and over 30’s. I started my research nearly 60 years after WWII, so I was not able to talk to many people would have been in their 30’s or 40’. I was expecting to hear their experience of difficulties, frustration, and hardship while in the camp, but what I heard from them was quite different. Not all but most had rather good memories of the camp, especially the pre-teen and teens who enjoyed their life in camp. Sometimes they went fishing and swimming outside of camp, some said that in camp, was the first time they saw so many Japanese.

Continued, page 3 (right column)

Rev. Kaz, continued from page 2

Everyone was speaking Japanese and played Japanese games. Many of their parents lost their homes, land, and personal belongings when they relocated to the camp. There is no doubt that the internment experience was a big tragedy for all the adults, but I am sure that their children were their hope for the future. According to the interviews, many children in the camp enjoyed their life. I am sure their laughter and smiling faces helped their parents bear their hardship. Three years after the Executive Order, people were released from the camps and they spent their lives trying to rebuild their family life and re-establish the Japanese American community. Without their tireless and selfless efforts, we might not have been able to enjoy our temple/church activities until March.

Right now, in 2020, we are under a stay at home condition because of the pandemic. I am sure many parents are experiencing hardship, and so their children's laughter and smiling faces will definitely help and support their parents. These children are the hope and the future. Like the people of our founding generation, we too will overcome our hardship by our children's/grandchildren's laughter and smiling faces.

Lastly, there are two upcoming fundraisers and I'd like to ask for your support! First, November 14-15 will be Fresno's Curry fundraiser (drive-thru pickup). Next, similar to the "Obon Snack Bag" filled with fun snacks, we will be selling a "Holiday Snack Bag" on December 5th. Proceeds will benefit the local CC temples/churches! Please purchase as many bags as possible and share with your family & friends. They will make for simple holiday gifts, too! Thank you for your support!



Gassho