

# Cedar Rapids Zen Center

## Newsletter

Volume 2, Number 3 Summer, 2001- [Click here to return to Newsletter index](#)

### Religion

by Zuiko Redding, Resident Teacher

In our discussion group last night there was much dialogue about organized religion. Some people felt that organized religion had damaged them. Others found support in it. Others feared being controlled by it. Feeling a bit at sea, I just tried to listen and take it all in. This "religion" question is important. It's the question of living and passing on the authentic practice. How do we develop healthy ways of practice, teaching and transmission - organization encouraging growth and vitality rather than aiming at control and dogmatic adherence to rules and procedures?

Organization has a long history with us Buddhists. One of the Buddha's first acts in his teaching career was the establishment of the sangha, the community of those who practiced his teaching, and he made rules, the Vinaya, to guide it. After the Buddha's death, it was the sangha who preserved the teaching by agreeing on a basic canon, then by regularly reciting it together so that it would be preserved in the absence of writing. Older sangha members taught newcomers about the Four Truths and about meditation and guided them, passing the teaching to the next generation. The teachings have now been transmitted through eighty-two generations of practitioners in our lineage, from India to China and Japan, and now to us. How do we keep the Buddha's sangha and practice wholesome?

It seems to me that we begin with the Buddha's basic teaching that the religious life is not one in which we do things to get rewards. To do zazen or to practice mindfulness in daily life in order to gain a more prosperous life or feel better about ourselves or gain "enlightenment" is not true practice. It is attachment, and it can destroy our practice if we let it. This seeking rewards is very subtle, growing quietly undercover like creeping charlie in the garden. After Katagiri Roshi's death I had to face how much I depended on seeing him sitting there in the zendo each morning and how much I wanted him to see me sitting there each morning - my little treat at 5:00 a.m. I had not realized how deeply I depended on the reward of his presence, and I felt my own practice shaken by his absence. No more rocks to lean on, no more treats - gotta sit up straight on my own now.

Our tradition is kept healthy by our understanding that there's no permanent immunity to attachment, aversion and delusion. We can only recognize and deal with these in ourselves and appreciate them in others. To believe that a teacher or an organization is beyond attachment, aversion and delusion is to be pulled about by our ideas, avoiding life just as it is.

We feel protected and secure when we think our teacher, our tradition, our sangha are beyond worldly clinging. In our minds they become our salvation, the thing we can depend on absolutely. When we can no longer ignore flaws in teacher, tradition, or sangha, our practice crumbles. The Buddha understood this well - he encouraged his disciples to depend on their own wisdom and on the teaching that all things are subject to change and impermanence. So, moment by moment, depending on nothing, appreciating everything, we can cooperate naturally to build a healthy practice that fosters the well-being of all creation.

To realize that our ideas are just our ideas and not be limited by them also fosters a healthy sangha and a healthy tradition. This allows for differences in ideas and it expands our hearts. We can remain open to the parts of our practice that don't at first speak to us - perhaps the details of zazen posture, the incense smell, the unintelligible sutras - we could go on, couldn't we? If we can put aside our judgment, we can just allow those things to be there, realizing that they might speak to us when we've gotten more experience of them. Then again, they might not. Even then, we are able to see others' connection with them and appreciate their bond even though we have none. This is saving all beings.

Another aspect of openness is acceptance of attachment, aversion, and delusion in others. We like to see others as hypocritical, unspiritual, or unethical, but we can give really good reasons for our own lapses. Can we appreciate that others behave badly sometimes because, like us, they are not always able to be free from desires, hatreds, and delusions? The flawed people in the sangha, including ourselves, are not the teaching. Together, finding that which we can respect in each person, we transmit the Buddha's teaching.

Appreciating and taking care of our own attachment, aversion and delusion, we make the tradition alive and healthy. Working together with constant effort to live life just as it is, we transmit the Buddha's teaching - constantly changing, alive, vital, beyond our ideas of what it is or should be.

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### **"I Am A Simple Monk and My Religion Is Kindness"**

by Cris Myoshin Odell

On Tuesday, May 8, His Holiness the Dalai Lama gave a public lecture on Compassion in the New Millennium on the campus of the University of Minnesota, the first stop on his three-week tour of the United States.

I was privileged to hear His Holiness and I was moved (as were the other 15,000 or so people there) by his humility, his humor and the simplicity of his message:

**ALL KNOWLEDGE IS IN THE HEAD; ALL PRACTICE IS IN THE HEART.**

The following are some notes from his talk:

“We all have the same inner potential to achieve happiness. Instead of focusing on external

differences, we must use inner qualities to fulfill that goal.

“What should we do in this millennium?”

Global responsibility: countries are more interdependent. There is no national boundary concerning the environment, global warming affects us all. There is no more room for "we" and "they." We must think on a global level.

Compassion: the ultimate source of happiness for many reasons.

--A sincere open heart allows communication with other beings. It builds inner strength, dissolves fear, insecurity and suspicion that separate us from each other.

-- External events cannot disturb the inner peace of compassion.

-- An altruistic attitude is the foundation of happiness.

-- Compassion, forgiveness, love and tolerance are not solely religious matters. Religious beliefs develop later in life, but we need human affection and compassion from birth and cannot exist without them.

--The practice of compassion is good for others, as well as for ourselves. The immediate benefit we receive from giving affection is calmness, inner strength and serenity.

-- The Opposite of compassion is hatred and negative feelings toward others which have a radiating effect: first, they destroy our inner happiness, then the peace in our families, our communities, our nations and, ultimately, the world.

-- Anger alone will not harm our enemy, although it alone harms the self.

--We must look inward and analyze what kind of emotions are positive and which are harmful, taking care to nurture our physical health through positive mental states and emotions.

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## **SESSHIN at CEDAR RAPIDS ZEN CENTER**

July 20-22 with Zuiko Redding

October 5-7 with Tonen O'Connor

The schedule will be as follows:

Friday 7:30 - 9:00 p.m.

Saturday 5:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Sunday 5:00 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

You are welcome to join us for all or part of sesshin. Please sign up by July 1 or October 1 to assure your place. Out of town participants are welcome to stay at Zen Center. For details, fees, housing, etc., please contact Cedar Rapids Zen Center, P.O. Box 863, Cedar Rapids, IA 52406. (319)247-5986, email: [crzc@avalon.net](mailto:crzc@avalon.net)

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## **Many Thanks!**

We would like to express our deep appreciation for the many people who helped with the move and with the yard sale. We are very grateful for all your time and effort.

CRZC is now settled into its new home and we are thankful for the additional space and opportunities it provides. The garden is flourishing and yielding offerings of fruit and flowers. If you haven't stopped by yet, please come for morning or evening zazen or Sunday morning activities, or just come by to sit on the porch or visit the garden.

## **Rummage Sale**

The rummage sale held in May was a surprising success, despite the less than cooperative weather. Thanks to those of you who helped to make it a success, it was well worth the effort!

CRZC is planning another rummage sale on August 31 and September 1. We have clothing and other items that we didn't put out for the May sale, and would appreciate any additional items you may have on hand to donate. On Wednesday and Thursday evenings, August 29 and 30, we will need people to organize and price items. On Friday and Saturday during the day volunteers are needed to set up and to sell things. If you can help or if you have items to donate, call us at 247-5986 or email [crzc@avalon.net](mailto:crzc@avalon.net)

## **Sangha News**

The Cedar Rapids discussion group meets at CRZC at 7:30 p.m. on the second Monday of every month. The next scheduled meeting will be on Monday, August 14th. The group will begin reading 'When Things Fall Apart,' by Pema Chodron. The book may be purchased at the CRZC bookstore or other local stores. Please feel welcome to join us.

## **Membership in Cedar Rapids Zen Center**

Help us spread the Dharma by becoming a member of CRZC.

As you may know, in order to make the Dharma available to everyone, we do not charge for many of our activities - daily zazen, dharma talks, all-day sittings, and zazen instruction are freely offered to anyone who comes. It is important to us to provide the Dharma to all, asking of people only what they can give. This means that, as is the case for most organizations of our kind, income from our activities does not cover our costs. Though participants' fees and donations meet some of our needs, the zendo and the teacher are maintained mainly through the compassionate donations of the members and friends of CRZC.

If you are interested in becoming a formal member of CRZC, or wish to make a contribution to help support our efforts, please write, call or email us. We warmly appreciate whatever you feel you can give. You truly give a gift of the Dharma in your willingness to make an offering

to support the practice of all beings.

### **Newsletter Submissions**

We appreciate and encourage your submission of material for the newsletter. The deadline for the next newsletter is September 15th. You may contact Ellen Wetzel at (319) 341-9668 or by email at [erw400@aol.com](mailto:erw400@aol.com) if you have questions or items you wish to share.

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