



# GASSHO

*"Hands together  
in reverence & gratitude"*

## July 2013

Issue No: 07-13



## THE PASSING GENERATIONS

by rev. roland k tatsuguchi

The passing of generations is characterized by ceaseless births and deaths that keep linking, re-linking and interlinking the lives of people in the past, present and future like the changing of seasons. Life, for this reason, is en-visualized by Buddhists to be a "Golden Chain of Love" that is like a seamless circumference in which the "ongoing present" keeps emerging from its beginningless past that keeps becoming the present endlessly becoming the future. Shinran therefore realized: "all beings have been fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters in the timeless process of birth-and-death..." (Tannisho V). This fact for Jodoshinshu Buddhists is the ultimate significance in holding O'Bon Memorial Services.

This significance for O'Bon is found in Shinran's *Notes on 'Essentials of Faith Alone'* as follows:

The holy Name of the Tathagata surpasses measure, description and conceptual understanding; it is the Name of the Vow embodying great love and great compassion, which brings all sentient beings into the supreme nirvana..." (p. 30)

Nirvana, said Shinran, has many names such as:

... extinction of passions, the uncreated, peaceful happiness, eternal bliss, true reality, dharmakaya, dharma-nature, suchness, oneness, and Buddha-nature. Buddha-nature is none other than Tathagata. This Tathagata pervades the countless worlds; **it fills the hearts and minds of the ocean of all beings. Thus, plants, trees, and land all attain Buddhahood.** (p. 42) In bold for emphasis.

## MONTH'S THOUGHT



All things share the same breath — the beast, the tree, the man, the air shares its spirit with all the life it supports. —Chief Seattle (c. 1786-1866)

All know that the drop merges into the ocean, but few know that the ocean merges into the drop. —Kabir



These words of Shinran say all that exists is sacred and spiritual because they are pervaded and permeated by Buddha-nature.

Such a view of life certainly differs radically from the Genesis story where the first man Adam was created in God's image, then Eve from one of his ribs. This view of Jodoshinshu also differs from the view that the rest of all creation was designated by God to be used for their food and utilization (Genesis 1:26-30). The Buddhist view, by contrast, is that all things, whether living or non-living, are to be regarded as sacred and spiritual because they are all suffused by Buddha-nature. Such a way of looking at life and existence certainly is the very opposite of man being authorized by God to "subdue" and have "dominion" over all of God's creations (Genesis 1:28).

So the Shin Buddhist technical terms *ondobo* ("fellow seekers") and *ondogyo* ("fellow practitioners") certainly have to be understood in the sense of Shinran's words quoted above that all things and life forms are to be regarded as sacred and not merely as things to be altered and utilized according to the creation story in which human

# REMINDERS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

## SERVICES for JULY 2013

### 1st SUN JUL 7th:

9 A.M. English Service  
Dharma Talk  
for Children & Adults  
Rev. Tatsuguchi

"Bon Dance Set-up"

Choba, Concession - please come "KOKUA"  
8 A.M. to 12 P.M.

### Tues JUL 9th:

**Bon Dance Practice**  
7:00 to 9:00 P.M.

## **BON DANCE NIGHTS** **FRI- 12th & SAT- 13th**

**7:00 to 10:30 P.M.**

Note: Short Bon Services

Temple sanctuary  
at 7 p.m.  
for all deceased.

Stone Memorial  
at 7:20 p.m.  
in memory for all war dead

### 2nd SUN JUL 14th:

9 A.M. English Service  
Dharma Talk  
for Children & Adults  
Rev. Tatsuguchi

### 3rd SUN JUL 21st:

Temple Services Cancelled

### **Waianae Members!!**

If you wish to hold  
O'Bon Memorial Services  
for your deceased family,  
call Rev. Tatsuguchi  
(949-2801)

## WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

**KARAOKE SINGERS CLUB** Mon 7 - 9 p.m.  
Mr. Nelson Yoshioka

**KARATE CLASSES** Tues & Fri 6 - 8 p.m.  
Shihan - Walter Nishioka

**FUJINKAI LADIES' FELLOWSHIP GROUP**  
Wed 9 a.m. - noon

*With Deepest Sympathy*

Mr. Tokio Shimizu 90 yrs. May 24, 2013

### 4th SUN Jul 28th:

MONTHLY FAMILY WORSHIP  
9 A.M. Eng. Service  
Dharma Talk  
for Children & Adults

Rev. Roland Tatsuguchi  
will be off Island  
Aug. 22 to Sept. 4, 2013

## 2013 Memorial Service Schedule

2012	1 Year	2011	3 Year	2007	7 Year
2001	13 Year	1997	17 Year	1989	25 Year
1981	33Year	1964	50 Year	1914	100 Year

beings have been authorized by God to subdue and utilize all things and creatures of all creation for his personal gain, benefit and food. The actuality is the other way around. In their transiency, "all things are conditional, interdependent, and causally connected and are inseparable, one to and from all other things." This is why each form of life and passing moment of life should be considered sacred and not desecrated, especially by one's thoughtless excessiveness and mindless wastefulness.

For this reason, in the *Ullambana Sutta* (*Scripture on O'Bon*), the fifteenth day of July has designated by Sakyamuni Buddha as the day when a family should come together and hold a memorial service for their deceased ancestral parents for up to at least seven generations in one's family past. The astounding number of parents just for seven generations would be 254, 127 fathers and 127 mothers from as many different families that they came from to be joined together as husband and wife. And the fact is, if any one father or mother in any one of the seven generations were missing, we would now not be here breathing and alive as a human person with a conscience. So if one's mother and father are still living, all the more, said the Buddha, we should also express our undying devotion and gratitude to them.

There is a Chinese saying: "Happy is that family crossing four generations living under one roof in harmony, love, understanding and forgiveness." Concerning one's profound indebtedness to one's father and especially to one's birth mother, Sakyamuni Buddha said: "Even if one could carry one's father on one's right shoulder and one's mother on one's left shoulder for the rest of their lives, one would not be able to repay fully the love and care they gave us!"

Sakyamuni Buddha especially acknowledged the fact that we are especially most indebted to our one and only birth mother for having carried us as we were developing in her womb for some

## WORDS OF SHINRAN

... Dharmakaya-as-suchness has neither color nor form; thus, the mind cannot grasp it. From this oneness was manifested form, called dharmakaya-as-compassion. Taking this form, the Buddha proclaimed his name as Bhiksu Dharmakara and established the forty-eight great Vows that surpass conceptual understanding. Among these Vows are the Primal Vow of immeasurable light and the universal Vow of immeasurable life, and to the form manifesting these two Vows Bodhisattva Vasubandhus give the title, "Tathagata of unhindered light filling the "ten quarters".... SBT-Series. *Notes on 'Essentials of Faith Alone.'* p. 43.

nine months till birth. And then for having breast fed us for the next two to three years as we used our mother's lap as a safe playground and a secure sleeping place.

So in Buddhism, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are "en-vised" more to be like mothers hovering over their just born helpless babies and would risk their own lives to keep them from harm's way. Through this mother to infant analogy we get some understanding concerning the meaning of Amida Buddha's All-embracing Compassion that never condemns, forsakes or abandons especially the "evil person," meaning all us human beings completely who are helpless and vulnerable as far as our moral safety and spiritual integrity is concerned.

Now, Prince Shotoku Taishi composed the following couplets:

The world is vain and empty.  
Only the Buddhas are true!

and realized,

Most certainly,  
I am not always a saint!  
Most certainly,  
you are not always a fool!  
Together, you and I  
alas! mere mortals are we!

The first is a couplet quoted by Hiroyuki Itsuki in his *Tariki* (p. 18). The second is a translation of a

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calligraphy hanging on the wall in my room. It was brushed by three different spiritual teachers of mine as a reminder to be humble, reflective, non-judgmental and forgiving. These words of Shotoku Taishi constantly remind me that I am a karma riddled person full of transgressions and desecrations, and need to fix myself first, even before I can try to fix others.

These words of Prince Shotoku also remind me of Shinran Shonin's words:

... all things are vain and empty;  
therefore, untrue.  
Only the nembutsu  
is true, real and sincere.  
Taitesu Unno. Tannisho... p. 39.

Hiroshi Itsuki in his *Tariki* says that these words mean: "What an idiotic, worthless world this is!" (*ibid*).

Itsuki then concluded:

From ancient times to today, our world has always been this kind of place. (p. 59)

So the sociological and psychological adages still ring true: "The more things change, the more things remain the same!" And, "The most rational thing you can say about human behavior is that it is irrational!"

Then Itsuki quotes from Hyakuzo Kurata's *Shukke to Sono Deshi* (The Monk and his disciple) the following episode (p. 137). Obviously, the episode is based on the thirteenth chapter of Tannisho. Shinran is the monk and Yuiembo the disciple. The scene is as follows. Shinran and Yuiembo are conversing as they are enjoying the scenery.

*Yuiembo*: "Master, I have been feeling so sad lately. Sometimes, even watching people walking down the street, I am overcome by a feeling of sadness and I start to weep. Is there something wrong with me?"

*Shinran*: "There's nothing wrong with you. You're fine, Yuien, just fine. If you feel sad, feel sad. There's nothing you can do about it."

*Yuien*: "Does even a person such as yourself, master, feel sad at times?"

*Shinran*: I also feel sadness, too. But, Yuien, the sadness you are feeling now and my sadness are a bit different. Your sadness will pass with time. It is a sadness that can be cured, but the sadness I feel is **a profound, weighty sadness that has sunk deep into my very bones**. And I know that **I will carry this sadness with me for the rest of my life.**" In bold for emphasis.

Itsuki here points out that Shinran is "not speaking as a master to a disciple, but as a man speaking to his young friend" (p. 138). For Kurata has Shinran saying:

*Shinran*: "The time will come when you can understand this **true sadness** I speak of, when you will come to feel it yourself. Yuien, when that time comes, **do not try to escape from that sadness** or ignore it or pretend you don't feel it. Do not deceive yourself, but **look right into it and follow your heart**. The **true sadness is your fate, trying to teach you something.**" In bold for emphasis.

The above scene tells of what Pure Land Master Shan'tao explained to be a "twofold awakening of faith."

According to Shan'tao, genuine faith on the side of man's "awakening" is about seeing into one's own self riddled by karmic transgressions that awakens a "... true sadness ... profound, ... weighty ... that has sunk deep into one's very bones..." that one carries "for the rest of (one's) life." This is what man's side for the single coin of faith is all about that is true, real, sincere and genuine faith.

The other side to this coin of twofold faith is Amida's Unconditional Compassion that has, is and yet forever keeps enfolding the person exactly because she or he is full of hapless transgressions and desecrations to never forsake, abandon or condemn her or him. It is the side of Amida's Benevolence that has established and settled the fact that one, "just as the karma riddled person she or he is," will never ever be rejected or abandoned by Amida until one finally comes to attain one's Buddhahood. This "twofold Deep Faith" as of consequence, awakens gratitude, reverence, humility and penitence in such a person of faith.

Itsuki, in his understanding of Jodoshinshu makes a key observation about "true and real faith" as follows:

“true faith, although it can certainly be found within extreme circumstances of harsh ascetic practice, is not found only there. True faith can also sprout when a person is crushed under the weight of tremendous sadness. In other words: all human experiences can be doors to what it is that we seek. We should accept our experiences openly, and face them head-on.” (p. 139)

When the imaginary ego begins crumbling, that is exactly when a person begins undergoing an “awakening-process” that begins to transform a person’s ignorance into enlightenment (*ten-mei kai-go*) as one’s ego starts to be completely shattered. However, one’s conscious being is not being obliterated or incinerated.

Shinran likens this process to a river flowing and tumbling over the difficult terrain of life full of ups and downs as well as unexpected twists and devastating setbacks. He compares the moment of “being reborn into the Pure Land” to when our final last breath is taken which is like the instant when a river in a split second disappears into the boundless ocean to seamlessly become its very waters and currents. In doing so it has not been “obliterated.” The once cascading and tumbling waters of the river, in that very instant become the very “waters and free-flowing currents of the ocean.” This moment and instant when one’s Buddhahood is attained happens at the moment of death by a person who has been established and assured in having undergone “an awakening of true and real faith.”

As mentioned in prior GASSHOs, this process of a person’s inner transformation by power and virtue of having trusted and taken refuge in Amida is also likened to a caterpillar turning into a pupae enclosed in its chrysalis of its own making, or, to a silkworm in its cocoon woven out of its own webs of illusion. Nurtured by sunlight in its own darkness, it finally breaks out of its chrysalis or cocoon fully “transformed” into a magnificent butterfly to soar unimpeded freely in the open skies, or as a luminous lunar moth softly fluttering in the light of a silvery moon. In Jodoshinshu such transformations by power and virtue of Amida’s Benevolent Wisdom and her Beneficence of Unconditional Compassion is described as being “naturally made to become so just as you are!” (*jinen honi*).

What this “naturally becoming so” means is that there are no separations between the world of

## SHINRAN’S WASAN

When a sentient being  
in any of the ten regions,  
Hears of the virtues  
of Amida’s Wonderful Name,  
And has attained an “awakening,”  
a faith true, real and sincere,  
Such a being attains Joy,  
Overflowing with gladness!

Jodo Wasan No. 25.  
rkt trans.

sentient beings and the World of the Dharma’s Selflessness and Togetherness. This is because both are governed by and in full accord with the uniform and orderly laws of causation, conditionality, interdependency, inseparability and especially the facts of karma. This is especially so with Amida’s mysterious workings (*karma*) that has, is and continues to timelessly work and transform man’s karmic transgressions and desecrations into the very basis for her or his “awakening of faith” that brings gratitude, humility and penitence in full compliance with the laws of causation and facts of karma!

Such a transformation by faith is all due to Amida’s Benevolence and Beneficence. As Shinran said, such an “awakening of faith” entails a penitence on the side of man that awakens a “sadness that one carries until the last breath of his life.” This “carrying of sadness” is not to be confounded with a repentance based on fears and anxieties full of doubts as to whether one is going to a “heaven” or is going to be cast into a “hell.”

Let us now understand that “the Dharma’s Truth of Selflessness and its Actuality of Togetherness is not the monopoly of any one person, race, culture, or religion. This is because such transformation by faith is not about trying to convert someone over to one’s religion. Transformation is about being “awakened” by the Dharma’s Truth of Selflessness and its Actuality of Togetherness. Transformation by faith is about our selves being fixed by Amida. It is not about karma-riddled beings trying to fix other karma-riddled beings.

The Dalai Lama put it this way:



“Although we may prefer one religious perspective to another, there is a much stronger case for unity, stemming from common desires of the human heart. Each religion works to lessen suffering and contribute to the world; **conversion is not the point. I do not think about converting others to Buddhism or merely furthering the Buddhist cause. Instead, I try to think of how I as a Buddhist can contribute to the happiness of all living beings.**” Dalai Lama Quotes. In bold for emphasis.

Here, the Dalai Lama describes the role of a human being as serving as a good friend and a spiritual mentor, an exemplar of the Dharma (*kalyananamitra*).

Sakyamuni Buddha, therefore, also cautioned that:

False-imagination teaches that such things as light and shade, long and short, black and white are different and are to be discriminated; but they are not independent of each other; they are only different aspects of the same thing, they are terms of relation, not reality. **Conditions of existence are not of a mutually exclusive character; in essence things are not two but one.** Lankavatara Sutra. A translation. In bold for emphasis.

In the Dhammapada the Buddha says: “The gift of religion exceeds all gifts, the sweetness of religion exceeds all sweetness” (*Praises of Buddha*, pp. 153, 154). The Buddha, of course, is talking about religions that are based on the Truth that is Universal and its Actuality that is All-embracing, free of dogmas and dogmatists, as well as zealots and fanatics who are convinced of their religion’s exceptionalism, supremacy and invincibilities.

Because human beings undeniably are riddled by such transgressions and desecrations (*zai-aku jinju no bombu*), this world, as we humans live it, is full of conflicts, suppression, violence and therefore suffering. The following quote helps us to understand this undeniable fact as did Sakyamuni Buddha that life is full of suffering:

Wherever I look, I see men quarrelling in the name of religion — Hindus, Mohammendans, Brahmans, Vaishnavas, and the rest. But they never reflect that He who is called Krishna is also called Siva, and bears

the name of the Primal Energy, Jesus, and Allah as well — the same Rama with a thousand names. A lake has several ghats [stairways, paths, etc.]. At one the Hindus take water in pitchers and call it ‘jal’; at another the Mussalmans take water in leather bags and call it ‘pani.’ At a third the Christians call it ‘water.’ Can we imagine that it is not ‘jal,’ but only ‘pani’ or ‘water’? How ridiculous! **The substance is One under different names, and everyone is seeking the same substance;** only climate, temperament, and name create differences. Let each man follow his own path. If he sincerely and ardently wishes to know God, peace be unto him! He will surely realize Him. **Sri Ramakrishna** (1836-1886). Bold for emphasis. [ ] mine.

These words of Sri Ramakrishna help in understanding Sakyamuni’s parables on the “Four Blind Men and The Elephant” as well as the “many fingers pointing to the moon.”

In Tannisho Chapter One, Shinran explains the workings of the wondrous and mysterious universal all-embracing workings of the Primal Vow of Amida that constantly keeps working to embrace the “good person” and, paradoxically, also especially to grasp the “evil person,” bringing them both to their Buddhahoods, each according to their person and situation. Amida’s Light and Life, therefore, embraces all opposites such as males and females, young and old, as well as those who are “good” and “evil.” This is why Amida is depicted more like a concerned mother worrying about all her children, especially the wayward and delinquent ones!

Concerning this point the following quote is helpful.

As this era of masculine dominance comes to an end and a feminine understanding of life’s wholeness is included, we are beginning to experience a different world in which physical, mental, and spiritual well-being are interdependent. We see the signs of this in the new age movement. But the new age movement is often limited by its focus on individual well-being. Our real concern is the well-being of the planet and the whole of humanity. Central to this is the understanding that the physical world cannot be healed from a solely physical perspective, but requires a shift to an attitude that contains a multi-dimensional approach.

Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee, *Source: Light of Oneness*, p. 156.

Therefore, though monasticism separates the sexes, in Buddhism, in the ultimate sense, there is no difference between a man and a woman except a bio-physiological one.

Since space is running out, allow me to close with the basic Buddhist concept of *ichinyo* which means being and living in a Selfless Oneness and Inseparable Togetherness with all things living and non-living, not just with human beings. For such is Amida's Great Vow that has never rejected or condemned any sentient being as well such things as "plants, trees and the land." However, if a person continues to mindlessly and defiantly persist in her or his transgressions of things sacred and desecrations of spiritual verities, she or he, in actuality, is the one who actually is excluding herself or himself from becoming a recipient and beneficiary of Amida's Benevolence and Beneficence that has never rejected or abandoned anyone.

As Shinran quoted above said, such then is the "sadness that has sunken bone deep" which a person "must bear until the last breath of his life." This is because the contradictions and paradoxes that characterize this world that is a "burning house" is full of suffering due to man's greediness, hostilities and presumptions.

Rev. Yoshitaka Tamai in his *Ichinyo* said that to so place one's "ego at center stage" is an extremely "frightening thing to do." Humankind in doing so has, is and yet continues to cause "... much blood to flow ..." over the endless passing generations. This is why, said Tamai sensei: "we must be educated in the doctrine of "non-ego" (*muga*) which underlies the basis of *ichinyo* (or the Dharma's Truth of Selflessness and its Actuality of Togetherness" (p. 5).

According to Shinran Shonin, when one entrusts and takes refuge in Amida Buddha, one becomes "enabled" to see into the "non-ego-ness" of one's imagined "ego-centered self" that is much like a knot that has been tied on a length of rope that shouldn't be there in the first place; this is to "acknowledge" the fact that our undeniable blind passions and self vanities keep "knotting up" what we think, feel, say and do. This is how, by realizing and becoming awake, says Tamai, we become "enabled" and "able" to:

"see how coarse and vile we really are. We

certainly cannot raise our heads in pride."  
*Ichinyo*. p. 43.

*GASSHO continues on p. 8*

**THANK YOU**  
*for YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS !!*

*... to be continued in the next Gassho*

This is why, says Tamai,

"whenever I am shown this dirty mind of mine, I rejoice in Amida Buddha's Great Compassion that is directed solely towards me. The result is a life of '... reciting the Nembutsu in repentance.' ..." *Ibid.*

Then what Tamai says next is a most significant point concerning what penitence in Jodoshinshu is all about. Penitence in Jodoshinshu, said Rev. Tamai,

"... is not an act of repentance that destroys evil; rather, it is a repentance that is transformed into the 'Great Joy.'" *Ibid.*

These words bring to mind the following words of Shinran,

"When I ponder on the compassionate vow of Amida established through five kalpas of profound thought, it was for myself, Shinran, alone. Because I am a being burdened so heavily with karma, I feel even more deeply grateful to the Primal Vow which is decisively made to save me." T. Unno. *Tannisho. epilogue.* p. 35.

Let us then live our lives in accord with the Truth and Reality of Oneness wherein an

"... inner silence ... remains undisturbed by external factors."

According to Sri Bhagavan, it is a silence that "... is not the opposite of noise." This is the reason the "Mind of Serenity" is also the "Heart at Peace" of a person established, settled and assured of his rebirth in the Pure Land as she or he yet lives in this world full with the sounds of fury, turmoil, turbulence, bloodshed and therefore, contradictions and paradoxes that one must bear with endurance with a sadness that has sunk bone deep for the rest of one's life with a serenity and joy full of commiseration.

## BUDDHIST STORIES & PASSAGES

The sun rises in the eastern sky and clears away the darkness of the world without prejudice or favoritism toward any particular region. So Buddha's compassion encompasses all people,

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encouraging them to do right and guides them against evil. Thus, He clears away the darkness of ignorance and leads people to Enlightenment. BDK. Teaching of Buddha (Eng./Jpnse). p. 42.

## QUESTION & ANSWER KORNER

QUESTION: What is *Ichinyo*?

ANSWER: *Ichinyo* translates as Oneness. In Buddhism it means all things living and non-living are in an inseparable state of Selflessness and Togetherness. Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee, in his *Working with Oneness*, explains it nicely as follows:

***Oneness is very simple: everything is included and allowed to live according to its true nature. This is the secret that is being revealed, the opportunity that is offered. How we make use of this opportunity depends upon the degree of our participation, how much we are prepared to give ourselves to the work that needs to be done, to the freedom that needs to be lived.***