The 42nd BCA Federation of Buddhist Women’s Association Conference will be held Oct. 12 to 14 at the DoubleTree by Hilton in San Jose, California. The conference is hosted by the Coast District BWA, and is chaired by Marlene Terasawa and Phyllis Sugimoto of San Jose. The theme of the conference is “Diversity in One-ness – Oneness in Diversity – The BWA – Celebrating uniqueness, uniting in the Nembutsu – Nyukai – Gozo! – Ichimi Nari.”

The keynote speakers are: Rev. Masumi Ikukichi (Japanese) and Professor Evelyn Nakano Glenn (English). Rev. Masumi Ikukichi received her Bachelor Degree in Early Childhood Education from Kyoto Woman’s University. She attended Gyo- shin Buddhist School and received her Master Degree in Shin Buddhist Study from Ryukyu University. Presently she is undertaking doctoral course in Shin Buddhist Study. Her work experiences include Gensho, Head Officer, minister at the Buddhist Churches of Canada, minister of Toronto Buddhist Church and more recently Montreal Buddhist Temple and Hamilton Buddhist Temple and minister of Ameston Buddhist Temple. Rev. Ikukichi has been a part-time researcher at the Institute of Jodo Shinshu Studies, Contemporary Project Research Section. She also provides Dharma talks throughout Japan as Fukyoshi. Evelyn Nakano Glenn is a professor of Gender and Women’s Studies and of Ethnic Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. In addition to her teaching and research responsibilities, she serves as Founding Director of the Center for Race and Gender. Prof. Glenn’s scholarly work focuses on the dynamics of race, gender and class in processes of inequality and exclusion. Her early research documented the work and family lives of heredofacere neglected women of color in domestic service and women in clerical occupations. This work drew her into historical research on the race and gender structure of local labor markets and the consequences of labor market position on workers, including the forms of resistance available to them. She is the author of “Issei, Nisei, War Bride” (Temple University Press), “Unusual Freedom” (Harvard University Press), “From Srividya to Service Work” (Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society). She is also editor of “Making Women” (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press) and “Shades of Difference: Why Skin Color Matters.”


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Growing Up In The Spokane Buddhist Church

By Karen Terai Akahoshi
San José Buddhist Church

This piece was presented at the Northwest Buddhist Convention Banquet. This article will be serialized in four parts.

Part 2

After the blast, Auntie Setz
worried about her two children and all the people of the families. Of course, all means of transporta-
tion were destroyed. Desperate, she walked 2½ hours back to Hiroshima, where she had to step over countless scorched bodies to reach her home. She was unrecognizable and everything was in flames around her. She was forced to walk 2½ hours back to Hiroshima, her legs were still alive and well today with healthy, grown children. My aunt, who now suffers from de-
terence, found a white picket door. The house was owned by a Catholic Italian woman, Mrs. Sada. After learning that the house was going to be used as a Buddhist temple, the owner was happy and invited her to stay in the house.

Their new temple had humble beginnings at the corner of Cow-
ley and Harrison Streets in a two-

room house with a white picket door. The house was owned by a Catholic Italian woman, Mrs. Sada. After learning that the house was going to be used as a Buddhist temple, the owner was happy and invited her to stay in the house.

their first day, or between the storm and radiation poisoning. As the war came to an end in September 1945, each of the 10

three days, $5,000 was a consid-

erable sum of money that my father and uncle scraped together with the help of their friends and my uncle’s discharge money to make the
down payment.

Activities of BCA Archives-

Shining Everything is shining.

H

ow joyous I am, my heart and mind being
rooted in the Bud-

dhist universe of the Universal Vow, and
my strong feeling of flowing within the dharma ocean, which is beyond comprehension! I am deeply rooted in the Buddhist ideal of Tathagata’s immense compassion and I sincerely revere the benevolent care behind the masters’ teaching activity. My joy grows ever fuller, my gratitude and indebtedness ever more compelling.

“Why was I born?” “Why am I alive?” We humans seem to dis-
tinguish ourselves from other liv-
ing beings with our propensities to ask these sorts of questions.

It seems that we ask these questions for a variety of reasons. Commonly, we ask these questions when we find ourselves pondering the big questions of life, such as “What is it all about?” or “What is our purpose?”

But, we would probably, in most instances, it’s more often the case that the mystery of life that we are asking about is that of a closer to home. When we are confused or unsure about our lives, we might ask, “Where am I going?” or “What am I doing with my life?” When we are dis-
satisfied with ourselves or our options, we may want to know, “Why this life?” or “Why do I have to be like this?”

And when we are faced with failure, loss or death, the question “Why was the death of an act of dana, selfless giving. In much the same way that we are the help of many that we receive

presented by Emiko Katsumoto, member of Berkeley Buddhist Temple.

[The original description of this idea was submitted by Emerie Konzawato, member of Berkeley Buddhist Temple.]

PAGE 2

WHEEL OF DHARMA JUNE 2012

Continued on Page 6

Sharing Success–Recognizing New Temple Members

At Berkeley Buddhist Temple new members and their families are introduced three times a year at special services. Each is presented with a special member gift packet containing the following items: a copy of a Buddhist letter, several Buddhist books which serve as an intro-
duction to Buddhism, and an audience.

WHEEL OF DHARMA POLICY

All articles submitted to the Wheel of Dharma are for presentation and publication in English. English articles and translations from other languages are accepted. Articles selected for publication are edited for both content and style. Acceptance is not guaranteed. The WOD reserves the right to edit, condense, or discard any article submitted for presentation. The WOD may publish or reprint any material presented in this journal in any form and by any means, without additional compensation to the author. The WOD grants 3rd parties an identical License to republish only the first three

Continued on Page 6
We have a declining membership. As our membership

June 3-10, 2012
Five Cities in California plus Denver, Colorado

CBIE is pleased to present a series of talks by Rev. Sonam Wangdi Bhutia at various

JUNE 2012
Center for Buddhist Education  2140 Durant Avenue  Berkeley, CA 94704   www.BuddhistChurchesofAmerica.org   E-mail: director@cbe-bca.org   Phone: 510.809.1460
Rev. + Sonam + Bhutia.  Check complete schedule online.

Land of Shakyamuni,” (June/August/September 2011 issues)  www.bcasites.net/

June 10:

June 5: Jodo Shinshu Center

June 8:

June 3:

June 6:

June 8: Orange County Buddhist Church  Public Lecture, Public Lecture, 7 pm (English)

June 9: Gardena Buddhist Church - BCA So. District Conference - Closing Message, 3 pm

June 10: Los Angeles Honpa Hongwanji Buddhist Temple - Sunday Service, 10 am (English and Japanese)

CBIE gratefully acknowledge the special funding support provided by an anonymous donor.

The Institute of Buddhist Studies & Center for Buddhist Education present
Pacific Seminars - 21st Century at the Jodo Shinshu Center

Unique opportunities for studying new perspectives on Shinism with
Dr. Mark Blum
Professor, University at Albany, State University of New York

Dr. Mark Blum, one of the foremost scholars in Jodo Shinshu Buddhism today, will be presenting a unique series of lectures and study sessions at the Jodo Shinshu Center as part of the annual Pacific Seminar—21st Century, co-sponsored by IBS and CBE. This year, in addition to the traditional 2 1/2 day seminar (“Shinran’s Quest…” on 7/6-8), an Intensive Study Program (“Shinran & The Nirvana Sutra” on 7/9-12) is a new option, and available for academic credit. Registration and fees are separate for the 2 sessions; and “Shinran’s Quest” is a prerequisite for enrolling in “Shiran & The Nirvana Sutra.” (See www.BuddhistChurchesofAmerica.org)

Traditional 2-day session:
Friday, July 6 - Sunday, July 8, 2012

Shinran’s Quest: Understanding Himself To Understand the Human Condition
What does Shinran’s choice of materials tell us about his religious understanding? How did his insight resonate then and now?

Includes guest panelists, dharma activities and special guest dialogue with Dr. Mark Unno. See website for sharing this treasure of the Dharma with us.

and to the BCA. It is because we will see the real value in our temples and our BCA

We need Buddhist education at the local level.

Our Minister’s Assistant Program (MAP) is addressing this very issue, and I feel that in time the shortage will be turned around to the point that in the future, we may have an overabundance of ministers. But ministers’ assistants need a place to study and learn the Dharma, so that they can eventually become ministers. The training of minis-
ters’ assistants does not only happen at the national level, such as at the Institute of Buddhist Studies and because of the CBE-sponsored MAP trainings at the Jodo Shinshu Center. We need Buddhist education at the local level.

Third, we find it harder and harder to balance our budgets. As our membership decreases, that costs per member rises. We lose our members who have been the financial backbone of our temples and the BCA. But here too, Buddhist Education is the ultimate solution to even our financial difficulties. When people really appreciate the teachings, then they are happy to donate to their local temple or to the BCA. Instead of saying, “I guess I have to do to donate to the temple. I guess I have to do

to the Dharma.” We will find ourselves saying that we

Second, the shortage of ministers. We have a shortage of ministers because we have not inspired people to pursue the ministry at our local temples. This, too, is a Buddhist Education problem. Without the opportunity for people to deepen their un-
derstanding of the Dharma, no one wants to go into it to the extent of becoming a minist-
er.

Moreover, we don’t have sufficient study classes or classes on Buddhism and Jodo Shinshu so that our own members can appreciate the Dharma more, and so that new people can come to understand the Dharma as well. If all of our temples offered classes on general Buddhist and Jodo Shinshu, this downward trend could be re-

Our own members would attend more often, and new people would find it easier to join a Sangha that is warm, inviting, and sincere.

We can even find ourselves disagreeing about what color to repaint theondo, or whether we should have a luncheon after a special service, or how much we should pay our minister. Such factions and disharmony can be very destructive. It can split a

Sangha in two. But the more our Sangha is grounded in the Dharma, the more we find our interconnectedness, the more we find that we have a universal teaching that we all share, the more we realize our common humanity. That is why Buddhist Education is the ultimate solution to bringing down the barriers and walls that divide our Sanghas and our BCA.

My aspiration as a new co-director of the CBE will be to help each and every temple and district within our BCA to establish a solid Buddhist Education program that communicates the Dharma to others in a meaningful and fulfilling way. This, to me, is the ultimate solution to all of the problems that face the BCA and our temples.

Gassho.

Crossing Over to Jodo Shinshu Buddhism - May 4-6

Discovering the meaning of Jodo Shinshu, Rev. Brian Nagata explains the elements of the onaijin to the seminar attendees (right). Eleven people attended from May 4-6, five from the east coast, and six from the state of California Above: front, left to right: Glenn Giner, R. Brian Nagata (co-director), Dennis Tsukagawa, Perry Ritenour, Susan Olson, Jane Blechman, Nick Rozsa, Ryan Afford, and Ben Lopez. Photos by Rev. Koken Sugao
An Offering of Tea

By Lois Oishi, Berkeley Buddhist Temple

On April 9, 2012, the Buddhist Church of San Francisco was host to a ‘kenchashiki,’ a solemn offering of tea by Grand Master Zabosai Oiemoto San Shudō, the 16th generation head of the Urasenke Tradition of Tea. This masterful art form was part of a day-long Joint Anniversary celebration of the 60th Anniversary of the San Francisco Urasenke Tankōkai Association and the 50th Anniversary of the Urasenke Foundation of San Francisco.

The kenchashiki at the Buddhist Church of San Francisco was held in the hondok where about 250 guests were seated to witness the proceedings. Attendees of all faiths and backgrounds were welcomed to share in this special offering of tea.

Moment One: On May 12, Seattle Betsuin hosted an adult seminar on all forms of Buddhist music with guests Rev. Harry Bridge (Oakland), Dii Lewis (Berkeley), and Michiko Yukawa (both from Tacoma). Presentations covered the history of Buddhist music and update on new compositions by Donna Sasaki. There was lots of singing and a live music jam session. It was educational, exhilarating, and a lot of fun!

Moment Two: Teenagers + pizza + music make for a winning combination! Add to the equation two very talented Buddhist musicians and we had the formula for a very special jam session! Add to the equation two very talented Buddhist musicians! Rev. Bridge and Dii Lewis hosted a jam session with middle school students: Aaron (viola), Emily Y. (violin), Emily K. (trombone), Kristy (keyboard), Kayla and Alina (flute), Emily H. (percussion). With Rev. Bridge laying down the beat on electric bass, and Dii on guitar and lead vocals, the group warmed up to the music and melody with a basic practice for Buddhists to look inside of ourselves to realize the truth of impermanence. Poisons which are ignorance, greed, and anger. In examining the cause we become aware of the insatiable self-centered desire of "I" "Me," or "Mine," that creates a world of duality, separation. In this case, then, we are born, and encounter endless suffering throughout our lives. This condition then moves us to consider, "What is this suffering?" The Buddha identified the cause of suffering as being rooted in a fundamental "ignorance" of the universal truth of impermanence, which generates a mistaken notion of ego-self that generates self-attachment.

In the Buddhist view, it is the unawareness of our self-centered nature that creates its own problems. Not being aware of this condition is what prolongs the suffering. The teachings of the Buddha Dharma provide an answer to the question about the cause of suffering in this life. It redirects our attention from looking for answers externally. In listening to the teachings, we are taught how there is a very basic practice for Buddhists to look inside of ourselves to realize the truth of impermanence, and one of the most powerful of this is to simply know what is going on in our minds and bodies. To know We Can!, another gatha by Dii, written in a call-and-response format. The students did not use any sheet music; Dii taught the chords, and Evan played for each student. The students played by ear, listened to each other, and learned how to improvise. For many, this was the first time they played in a group form. We gather the group into a grid, and fly by quickly. The ensemble played for over 2 hours, non-stop. It was an inspiring evening of Buddhist music—one that the students will never forget. We’d like to thank Rev. Bridge and Dii Lewis for such a positive jam session, where the students and guests were infectious with their love of music and the Dharma.

Moments in Buddhist Music at Seattle Betsuin

Rev. Koho Takata
Arizona Buddhist Temple

I recently had an opportunity to participate on an interfaith panel at Arizona State University. The theme was “Forgiveness and Reconciliation.” It was a great opportunity for me to share my thoughts from a Buddhist perspective and learn about other points of view from different faith traditions.

I believe that there are two types of relationships when we talk about forgiveness. One is the relationship between people and God. The United States of America is a country which is strongly influenced by Christianity and which is quite different from Buddhist perspectives. In Buddhism, we generally don’t talk about forgiveness, repentance, reconciliation, justification, transfiguration, unforgivable, etc. in the context of salvation. This is because we don’t consider the existence of God as an absolute truth. A common notion of a God. Buddhism was founded on a tradition that teaches that there is no truth and reality. Therefore, we don’t believe in the concept of violating the law of Compassionate Ones, but rather that the Buddha taught us to act according to the truth through various skillful means to awaken the supreme Shūjin (true, pure, and sublime Buddha) through being born into the Amida Buddha’s Pure Land.

Another relationship is between people and people. Buddhism begins with the fact that life is full of suffering. Once we are born, we encounter and endure many forms of suffering throughout our lives. This condition then moves us to consider, “What is this suffering?” The Buddha identified the cause of suffering as being rooted in a fundamental “ignorance” of the universal truth of impermanence, which generates a mistaken notion of ego-self that generates self-attachment.

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Moments Three: On Sunday morning’s service, the youth ensemble, joined by Donna Z. on percussion and Evan K. on saxophone, rocked the temple with both gospels. Rev. Bridge even led the sangha in a funky version of the Golden Chain! It was a delightful service, full of the energy of young and vibrant heart-music.

Reverend Koho Takata
Arizona Buddhist Temple

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Continuing north, we stopped at San Joaquin Valley we saw an oasis, a tower shimmering in the afternoon sun that beckoned us to some cool shade. As we drew near, we noticed others had heeded the towers call and were rushing to the same destination. What was this place? A welcome respite on the highway to nowhere (actually Lincoln CA…no offense intended), a place to wander, rest, and recharge, a destination where one can be comfortable. And this is exactly where we intended to be. While a casino may have been an unusual place to hold a conference, we soon found ourselves settled, the room was filled with much joyous noise and laughter. The height of thank yous, for about as long as the conference lasted. Thank you Betty! Speak to you later. Saturday morning service was led by Rev. George Shibata has been the ministerial advisor to the FDSTL. We want to thank him for his guidance that will serve a two-year term are President – Carl Yanari (Palo Alto), Vice President – Koschi Sayano (LA Betsuin), Recording Secretary – Maya Lawrence (Oakland), Corresponding Secretary, Bessie Tanaka (LA Betsuin), Treasurer, June Kondo (LA Betsuin), Historian – JoAnn Melcham (Palo Alto), and Ex-Oﬃ- cial, Tad Shibata (Stockton). Congratulations to the new cabinet. On Saturday afternoon we had a Memorial service in memory of the victims of this, Nagasaki also has an interesting history. Dutch merchants, who were the first Europeans to visit to Nagasaki in 1609, built the first church. This church was destroyed by a storm more than a century later and was restored as a national historic site in 1942 as a memorial to those who lost their lives during the Nagasaki bombing. Continuing on Page 6
of temple members through oral history, had been discussed at earlier meetings. A pilot video program was initiated at Los Angeles Buddhist Academy (LABA) with a few temple members. Bruce Hatakeyama has put together a comprehensive paper, “Video Tap – an Interview,” listing equipment used and suggesting; and Allie Kimura, a summary of temple members through oral history, had been discussed at earlier meetings. A pilot video program was initiated at Los Angeles Buddhist Academy (LABA) with a few temple members. Bruce Hatakeyama has put together a comprehensive paper, “Video Tap – an Interview,” listing equipment used and suggestions; and Allie Kimura, a summary of temple members through oral history, had been discussed at earlier meetings. A pilot video program was initiated at Los Angeles Buddhist Academy (LABA) with a few temple members. Bruce Hatakeyama has put together a comprehensive paper, “Video Tap – an Interview,” listing equipment used and suggestions; and Allie Kimura, a summary of temple members through oral history, had been discussed at earlier meetings. A pilot video program was initiated at Los Angeles Buddhist Academy (LABA) with a few temple members. Bruce Hatakeyama has put together a comprehensive paper, “Video Tap – an Interview,” listing equipment used and suggestions; and Allie Kimura, a
親鸞聖人は『教行信証』の著作にあたり、総序で「インド、中国、日本等の尊い師釈（先生）にお遇する事が出来たことを慶びます」と述懐しておられます。「子供は親の后姿を見ながら育つ」と云います。私は50有余年にわたり開教使を勤め、更に仏典等の研究にも勤しむ中で、素晴らしい先達の後姿を眺め、追い求めながら歩む事が出来たのでありましょう。今、私の人生を顧みた時、若し父が一通の手紙を書いてくれなかったら・・・、若し三明永無先生にお遇いする事が出来なかったら・・・、おそらく今の私は無かったと思います。しかし、幸いに私は、尊い宿縁に恵まれて、み仏のお慈悲に照らされて生きる慶びを獲ました。

森繁久弥の詩に学ぶ

映画俳優の森繁久弥さんは映画「社長ものシリーズ」23本やその他多くの映画を通して私の叔父・東宝映画監督松林宗恵の親友でした。叔父は森繁久弥さんを百年に一人生まれてくるような名優だと賞賛していました。その森繁久弥さんは1990年に最愛の奥様を亡くした詩を、たまたまお孫さんが見つけて、私の叔父もお参りしていた一周忌法要の席で発表されたそうです。初めは驚いて大変怒られたそうですが、自分の作った亡き妻を偲ぶ詩を聞いて森繁さんは号泣されたそうです。法要の席で叔父がもらった詩は次のような詩です。

隙間（すきま）－－妻を偲ぶ
彼女は一寸した隙間をねらって
東京女子大から私のアパートへ来た。
親や親戚の隙間をねらって
こっそり小さなアパートに二人で住んだ。
また、一寸した隙間をねらって早稲田の教室に入り込み考古学に夢中に
なり、ついでに私の授業を受けてカンニング・ペーパーも書いてくれた。
彼女は一寸した隙間をねらって世界中を歩き回りノートをとった。
その国は何と百を越した。
私も、その隙間をねらって、女優のシリや、芸者のシリを追った。
ひと言もコゴトを言わないのを幸いに、いささか度が過ぎた事もある。
ある日、「私も子供を連れて三原山へ行くかもしれません」と
ピシャリ私を圧えた。
私が原稿に向かうと、彼女も隙間をねらって男のような文章を書き
絵も描いた。隙間をつめて働いたせいか、病魔が彼女をおそった。
十月二十一日、私の居ない一寸した隙間に、あえなくあの世にいってし
まった。
思えば隙間の一杯つまった一生だった。
隙間とは「ひょっと」起こった人生の姿でありましょう。それは又、仏さまの教えで「諸行無常」と説かれた人の世での不思議な因縁の出来事でもありましょう。考えてみれば、無常なる人生の中で宿縁の出遇いほど慶びで、しかも不思議なものはありません。若しあの人に出遇わなかったら・・・、私の人生はどうなった事だろうと思う事はしばしばあります。隙間の一杯つまった一生の中で、お念仏の真髄に出遇う時、人の世の真実の慶びは生まれます。

私の生の総決算是「ただ念仏」である

京都大学医学部教授・東昇先生は、日本で初の電子顕微鏡を製作し、病原ウイルスを発見された偉大な科学者であります。そして、東先生は素晴らしい念仏の道を歩まれた方です。先生は著書『力の限界』の中で、次の様に述べておられます。

私の生の総決算は「ただ念仏」であったというと、「あなたは自然科学者だというのに、それでよいのか」と反問される方があると思いますが、私はそれに対して次のようにお答えしたい。「私は自然科学者でありますが、ひとりの人間であります。自然科学をとおしていろいろなことが教えられましたけれど、私自身の厳粛な死との絶対的対面となったとき、人間の力で得たものは、みんな消えていく、何ひとつ力になりません。価値ありとされたものは無価値、無力化します。力となるものは、絶対他力、あたえられた「ただ念仏」だけです。私の生の総決算として、私についてはなれないもの、それは「ただ念仏」だけです。

そして、東昇先生は、著書の最後に、
この世は人間苦の世界であるけれども、人間苦の生活は、浄土の光にふれれば、安らぎに転ぜられます。往く浄土で、なぜ、安らぐのか。親の待つ故郷へ帰るのだからです。親鸞聖人の教えは、現実に光を与える宗教であります。
3月末から4月初旬に仏教教育部主催で行われた日本への研修ツアーの参加者より旅行記の投稿がありましたので紹介させていただきます。

田中 隆子
かつて日本でキリスト教が禁止されていた時代に人々は厳しい弾圧をうけながらも「隠れキリシタン」となって信仰を護りつづけたことは多くの人に知られています。しかし同時代に九州南部の薩摩藩（鹿児島と宮崎の一部）では300年あまりの間、一向宗（浄土真宗）の信仰が禁止され、人々は「隠れ念仏」と呼ばれる真宗門徒になり、命がけで信仰を守り抜いたということはあまり知られていません。

島津家による公式の禁止令は1601年に出されていますが、1876年に信教自由の令が出されるまで300年近く、一向宗の信仰は禁止され、それを犯した者は厳しく罰せられました。鹿児島市内の西本願寺別院の庭に「涙石」という文字の彫られた石があります。役人達が信者の疑いのある者を捕らえてこの石を抱かせ自白を迫ったと伝える石です。信者達の苦しみの涙がそそがれたという意味で「涙石」と呼ばれている。

明治の初め頃まで南九州の各地にあった念仏洞は、その後崩壊や開発によってほとんど姿を消しましたがそれでも現在いくつかの念仏洞が原形をとどめており見ることができます。今回のツアーはかくれ念仏洞を訪れるのでいくつかの念仏洞を見学しました。鹿児島市吉田町にあるどんそうですかくれ窟と同市郡山にある花尾かくれ念仏洞についてご案内しましょう。

どんそうですかくれ窟：洞窟は杉木立の中にみえます。そびえる巨大な岩の下の方に三角形の裂け目がありこれが入り口です。窟の天井は大人が膝をおり、腰を曲げてやっとはいれるくらいの高さです。私もおそるおそる窟に入り見事に脱出に成功しました。

一如宗禁制の藩政末期、この地方の信者は藩の監視が厳しかったので密かに仏壇をかくれ窟に持ち込み、仏法を聞いたり信仰の喜びを分かちあいました。また風雨の日や人なき日を選んで本尊を地主の家に持ち出し念仏の灯火をもやし、終わるとまた本尊をかくしたと伝えられています。

花尾かくれ念仏洞：薩摩藩が厳しい真宗禁止を行った頃（1550年以降）、藩の役人の目を逃れて仏を拝んだり修行するのに用いた洞窟です。入り口は断崖の中ほどにあり外部からは所在がわかりにくくなっています。内部の構造は上部に向かって空気抜けの穴があり、奥に小さな部屋をもうけ、通路、位置などいろいろ工夫がしてあります。比較的車の往来の多い国道から階段を20mぐらい上ったところに入り口があります。私は268の階段をあがることができないのでツアーの人々を下で待っていました。おりしも駐車場の周りは吉野桜が満開で森のうぐいすのさえずりにうかれて桜の花びらが風に舞っていました。美しいのどかな風景でした。

江戸時代に270余あった藩の中でなぜ薩摩藩（島津）だけが一向宗を禁止したのでしょうか。封建体制下の幕藩権力からすれば、「阿弥陀如来の前では生きとし生けるもののいのちはすべて平等である」という教えは相容れないものがありました。また暴徒化した加賀の一向一揆や信長をてこずらせた真宗門徒の石山合戦の事実は権力者にとって大きな脅威だったでしょう。

300有余年の間に迫害を受けて亡くなった門徒は14万人にのぼるといわれます。人々は強烈な弾圧をうけるなかで本願寺からは寄付を求められ、一方で藩からは厳しい年貢のとりたてをうけています。弾圧と二重収奪のなかで貧しさや飢えにも耐えながら隠れて300年の信仰を守ったのでした。

作家の五木寛之さんは「花尾隠れ念仏洞」と「血吹き涙の三百年」と題した書籍(『日本人の心 2』講談社、2001年発行)の中でこう書いています。「花尾隠れ念仏洞」と「血吹き涙の三百年」に関する著作(『日本人の心 2』講談社、2001年発行)の中でこう書いている名もない人こそが日本人の歴史の土台を作り、その生き様は私達の心の原点であると書かれています。