Catholics, Buddhists Discuss “Suffering, Liberation and Fraternity”

Pope Francis, leader of the Catholic Church, invited U.S. Buddhist leaders to participate in a Catholic-Buddhist Dialogue in Chicago, which took place at the Matipolis Center, his summer palace, 30 minutes by train from the Vatican in Rome, Italy from June 22-27, 2015.

Forty-seven American Buddhist and Catholic representatives from five geographic areas—Chicago, District of Columbia, Los Angeles, New York and San Francisco—met in dialogue, facilitated by the Bishops’ Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in collaboration with the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. Each of the representatives was involved in interfaith activities in their area.

From the Buddhist Churches of America, Rev. Roger Miyamura of Midwest Buddhist Temple in Chicago and Rev. Ron Kobata of Buddhist Church of San Francisco attended, as well as Bishop Noriaki Ito (left), Higashi Hongwanji North American District and Rev. Pun Nakai of the Buddhist Temple of Chicago, an affiliate of Higashi Honganji North America. Interestingly, the Buddhist delegates were primarily from ethnic Buddhist organizations, i.e. people who were raised in the Buddhist tradition, rather than converts from another faith tradition.

Each day began with a different Buddhist service followed by a period of meditation in the meeting room and was followed by a Catholic Mass in the chapel. The theme of the dialogue was “Suffering, Liberation and Fraternity.” Rev. Miyamura said, “It was quite educational for me to learn not only the Catholic view of the world, but also how other Buddhists view the world.”

Rev. Kobata reflected that “from a Buddhist perspective, the subjects of Suffering, Liberation and Fraternity could be interpreted as expressions of the Three Treasures. After all, the Buddha is the spirit of a person who awakens to the cause and cure of suffering. The Dharma is the source of spiritual liberation. And the Sangha is a fraternity of people which Pope Francis identified as “…an essential human quality, for we are all relational beings. A lively awareness of our relatedness helps us to look upon and treat each person as a true sister or brother, without fraternity it is impossible to build a just society and a solid and lasting peace.”

The convocation also included a visit with the Pope in the official audience room. The Pope entered the room and addressed the representatives with a few words in Italian which were translated into English. “Then he greeted each of us and shook our hands as we presented the Pope with a small gift,” remembered Rev. Miyamura. ‘It was quite impressive to meet the Pope, the leader of over one billion Catholics worldwide.”

Rev. Kobata noted “an unexpected outcome of the Buddhist-Catholic dialogue—that an intra-denominational dialogue among the Buddhists in the U.S. may be helpful, if not necessary, in addition to engaging in interfaith dialogues.” As a follow-up to the gathering in Rome, besides continuing the Buddhist-Catholic dialogue in the respective geographical locations, the Buddhist representatives are also planning to engage in inter-denominational dialogues.

“Dialogue strengthens mutual understanding concerning human suffering and means of liberation, as well as deepened relationships based on non-rigorous cooperation based on shared values,” the joint statement at the conclusion of the dialogue said.

“the objective of this ‘dialogue of fraternity,’ as it was called by Pope Francis, is to create new and practical forms of collaboration reaching out to those in need in the cities of the participants” in the United States.

“We took some small steps to move forward in global understanding,” said Rev. Miyamura.

A grant for travel was provided by The Rev. Goda Evans Memorial Fund.
Difficulties Resolved

By Rev. Gerald Saka moto
San Jose Buddhist Church Betanin

“The reason is, if I could attain Buddhahood by endeavoring in other practices, but said the Shinran, and as I fell into hell, then I would be as I was before my birth. But I am incapable of any other practice, so hold me not as anything whatever I do.”

— Shinran, Collected Works of Shinran, p. 300

When he graduated from high school, Ty Tanaka (lower right), completed the Tanaka family’s amazing record of perfect attendance. The 57-year history of the Pasadena Buddhist Temple is a result of the guidance, assistance, and inspiration of its community and continues to plan for the future and for its growth. By Rev. Kodo Umezu, BCA Bishop

58 Years of Perfect Attendance

Enmanji Keshiki

On May 17, 2015, Rev. Kodo Umezu, BCA Bishop conducted the Keshiki Affirmation Ceremony at the Enmanji Temple as part of their Gosei-E Service. The ceremony and service was assisted Mr. George Thai, Minister’s Assistant.

“The light of compassion that grasps us illuminates and protects us always; the darkness of our ignorance is already broken through. Still the clouds and mists of good and desire, anger and hatred, cover as always the ray of true and real shinjin. But though the light of the sun is veiled by clouds and mists,

Beneath the clouds and mists there is brightness, not dark.

When one realizes shinjin, shining and revering and adoring great purity,

One immediately large clouds, closing off the fire, evil, and cause of evil.”

— Shinran, Shinjiki, C.F.S., p. 70

By Rev. Kodo Umezu, BCA Bishop

Visiting the BCA website www.buddhistchurchesofamerica.org to find a BCA temple, Educational Events, Resources and more!
Listening to the Dharma is Meeting with the Buddha

By Rev. Ryuya Furumoto
Senshin Buddhist Temple

Last summer I went to India by myself. The purpose of my visit was to observe and learn about the Shakyamuni Buddha’s historic sites. I visited Lumbini, where Gautama Siddhartha was born, and Bodh Gaya, where he attained enlightenment. I also visited Sarnath, where Shakyamuni Buddha gave his first Dharma message, and Kushinagar, where he entered into perfect Nirvana. I also spent time in Raig尽, famous for Vulture Peak where Shakyamuni Buddha gave notable Dharma messages, such as the Large Sutra and the Contemplation Sutra.

I wanted to see the places where Shakyamuni Buddha walked, talked, and meditated. By doing so, I thought I would feel closer to Shakyamuni Buddha. “If I sit near the Bodhi tree where Gautama Siddhartha awakened to the universal truth, maybe I can feel something about the Buddha, such as the sense of enlightenment, or some kind of vibe of the Buddha.” But contrary to my expectations, I am not much closer to the Buddha at my temple, where I share his teaching with the temple members.

Shakyamuni Buddha’s historic sites, Buddhism is past history and heritage for the tourists, so the teaching is not active anymore. I did not see local Buddhists coming to how to the stupas or garbing to hold services. There were a number of Buddhist monks following from Thailand, Burma, Vietnam, Tibet, Taiwan, and China who also visited the stupas, sat in meditation, or walked around the stupas, but they were visiting from other countries. The local people were selling souvenirs and food but they did not appear to be Buddhists, and some of them were trying to rip me off. They were selling statues of the Buddha and jyotis which were overpriced. I thought, “In the U.S., the BCA Bookstore always gives me a discounted price, but here I am just a tourist (maybe a sucker), not a fellow Buddhist.”

In India, Buddhism vanished around the 13th or 14th century. Now, there are Buddhists but their number is very small. Most people living around Shakyamuni Buddha’s sacred places are not Buddhists anymore. I recognized many local people actively worshipping Ganesha, Shiva, and other Hindu gods. In the same town where the historic sites of the Buddha are located, I saw young and old Buddhists, and some who were not Buddhists at all. In the historic sites, there are many Buddhist monks who are doing a lot of work, but the teaching is not active anymore. I suggested, “Listening/hearing the teaching is meeting the Buddha.”

At one time Shakyamuni Buddha taught his disciples, “Seeing (listening to the Dharma is meeting the Buddha), and as I visited the places where Shakyamuni Buddha lived, I began to understand that a pilgrimage is not necessary to meet the Buddha anymore, a gathering of Budhists friends that makes Buddhism alive.”

Our founder, Shinran Shonin from 13th century Japan, did not go to India, but saw the Buddha statue in the Buddhist temples delivered by his master Honen Shonin. In his writings, Shinran Shonin often used the word “Listening,” which suggested, “Listening/hearing the teaching is meeting the Buddha.”

In the practice of Esoteric Buddhism, he expressed his gratitude and joy from meeting the Buddha through listening and stated, “Here I rejoice in what I have heard and exist what I have attained.” (Collected Works of Shinran, p.4) In the fifth chapter he mentioned “…seeing the Buddha participated. I would also like to thank the volunteers, the YAC retreat parents, and the BCA President, for their unique opportunity to transform young lives.

While at the retreat, I had a chance to listen to the stories of many of the retreat guests, organizers, and participants. I was impressed with their knowledge of the Dharma and their desire to help their temple members and others. If you know of someone who might be interested in next year’s retreat, please contact the YAC.
Engaged Buddhism Comes to Life at Pacific Seminar
By SandraMichels Adams, Midwest Buddhist Temple

The 2015 Pacific Summer Seminar, “The Call of the Nembutsu,” held at the Jodo Shinshu Center in Berkeley, gave this Chicago traveler a warm human gift of meeting, learning, and practice in the Minister’s Assistant Program (MAP).

The seminar’s theme of “Engaged Buddhism” was a topic I was aware of, but had limited personal experience with. Teachers from diverse Buddhist sanghas brought engaged Buddhism to life from their own global experiences, including work in Japan, Sri Lanka, Africa, Nepal, and California.

I learned that engaged Buddhism is something living, something which would ask me, “What breaks your heart?” and what I would want to do about it. We learned about engaged Buddhism to life from their own global experiences, including work in Japan, Sri Lanka, Africa, Nepal, and California.

I was grateful to continue my MAP education among students from BCA sanghas in Illinois, New York, Virginia, Idaho, and California. By Sunday service, all ministers’ assistants had opportunities to participate in the services, greatly encouraged by the more experienced, Tokudou-ordained ministers’ assistants. New friendships arose on the altar and from delightful talk and laughter in the dining room.

Thank you! To all the kind BCA and BCE staff, sangha members, teachers and friends, I offer gratitude and look forward to learning and laughing with you again. In gassho.

Jodo Shinshu Correspondence Course  •  Monthly Essay

This article was written in response to an assignment for the JSSC and reflects the author’s individual understanding of this topic.

Visit www.JSSC.ode-bce.ca for course details

The Thoughts on the Tradition of Receiving a Dharma Name (Homyo)
By Nancy Dodd
Southern Alameda County Buddhist Church

I feel the granting of a Buddhist Dharma Name has great significance, whether it is done at the time of death or earlier in life. In my experience, however, each type of confirmation has a different meaning and purpose. As a nuns’ Jodo Shinshu Buddhist, the presentation of a Dharma Name by my grandmother was a personal legacy.

My grandmother was a devout Buddhist, evidenced by her daily morning and evening ritual of coming before her home Buddhist altar and chanting K’o Sar Mon, or Japanese “Three Treasures.” Her life was difficult – having to endure imprisonment at Poiston, Arizona – but guided by her strong belief in the Buddha, which she instilled in her four daughters. All four daughters, my mother included, followed in her footsteps as Jodo Shinshu Buddhists.

In conclusion, the BCA can play many roles in a Buddhist’s life. It can provide a sense of connection and grounding in faith when given during one’s lifetime. And, when granted at the time of death or afterward, it can give solace to the survivor in their time of grief. Nama Amida Butsu

Visit www.JSSC.ode-bce.ca for course details

Learn Buddhism Online! Orange County Buddhist Church Launches Online Learning Program

The Orange County Buddhist Church (OCBC) Buddhist Education Center is happy to announce a new, online, distance-learning program. Three courses are being offered at this time, with other courses to follow in the near future.

The first course, “Resolving Life’s Problems through Buddhism,” is a four-session course dealing with four major issues of life: matters of life and death, relationship issues, Buddhism and the workplace, and self-esteem issues.

The second course, “Lectures on the Sutrologic,” is a character-by-character, line-by-line study of the Shingon Buddhism, which is one of the primary texts of Sanjirin Buddhism. In this text of 120 lines, Shosho Shinon expresses his deep spirituality and praises the teachings of the Seven Masters. This course is designed for those who have no background in reading or writing in Chinese or Japanese, and instructs students in the meaning and writing of each character, plus the meaning of the passage.

The instructor for both courses is Rev. Marlin Harada, resident minister of the OCBC.

The complete list of available courses is available at www.OCBH.com.

Thank you to all of our generous donors!
The BCA has instituted a change in policy for receiving donations. Please make donation checks payable to the BCA Endowment Foundation and specify in the memo line where you would like the donation to go. Questions? Please call (510) 809-1460 or email cbe@bcabh.com. Thank you!
Nagasaki Peace Park to enshrine Shakyamuni Buddha’s ashes. The ashes of unidentified Buddha’s ashes. The ashes of unidentified

Hibakusha (A-Bomb Survivor)  
By Jack M. Dairiki  
Buddhist Church of San Francisco

In Hiroshima City’s Atomic Peace Park, there is a poem carved into a rock which states, “Please rest in peace, for this earth will never heave itself again.” It is a pledge to all living beings of the world to protect all of humanity. I witnessed the holo-
crue and one-half miles from the atomic bomb detonation point.

I traveled to Hiroshima, Japan in August, 1941 with my father as a summer vacation in order to visit the then-granite-filled Peace Park. There I found out that Nagasaki city officials visited Rev. Tatsuya Kusunoki to discuss how to enshrine and manage those important ashes. Nagasaki city officials eventually decided to locate the Peace Park to enshrine Shakyamuni Buddha’s ashes. The process of unearthing and caring for the A-bomb victims are also enshrined in the same building. Nagasaki city officials pushed the project in order to put up a monument to the bomb victims and to signs about it and tighten security. The Presi-
dent of the Nagasaki Buddhist Association, Rev. Tatsuya Kusunoki stated, “Based on Mr. Nehru’s wish, the Peace Park is the best place to enshrine Shakyamuni Buddha’s Ashes.”

A memory of the late Katsuo Yoshida

The late Mr. Katsuo Yoshida was an A-bomb survivor who spoke about his experi-
ences. Mr. Yoshida said, “Regardless of one’s principals and ideology, we spontaneously do whatever we can for peace. It is peace activity.”

Rev. Tatsuya Kusunoki has never ever forgotten these words.

He first met Mr. Yoshida in his high school days when Rev. Kusunoki visited his house to discuss about the atomic bomb. He was seared and scared like a ghost. We noticed as she came closer that it was not burned clothes, but her feet into the air. The whole city was on fire, covered in smoke and fire with no buildings to be seen.

An hour later we peeped out from the cave shelter and witnessed the first vic-
tim. A young woman walking with her arms extended—her ragged clothes hanging from her body. She was walking straight ahead and walked like a ghost. We noticed as she came closer that it was not burned clothes, but her skin hanging from her arms.

We were instructed to return home if we were able to walk. I boarded a ghost train with my hands and legs burning and my mind shattered. Inside the train, many injured people asked for medical aid. I could not help them so I dismounted the train to walk home, a distance of 10 miles. My grandmother welcomed me—she was scanning the horizon for my return. The house was not damaged, except all the sliding doors were broken but untouched.

There were 55 hospitals, 200 doctors and 2,000 nurses in Hiroshima City be-

Every Sunday night, students of all different age groups from kindergartens to high school gathered at the Peace Park to listen to the story of the bomb. Nagasaki city decided to train fifteen children still attend. Every year when August 9 approached, Rev. Tatsuya talked about his memories of the A-bomb. He wanted to tell the students that the A-bomb is a weapon that must be abandoned so as to vanquish all weapons. It is our responsibility to train children about the stories of the A-bomb from generation to generation, just like the tales of old Japan.

Shakyamuni Buddha’s ashes enshrined in the Peace Park

After Shakyamuni Buddha’s passing, Buddhists started his ashes and built mausoleums in order to enshrine the ashes. But there are many mausoleums that are empty.

The former prime minister of India, Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru, presented this treasure and ex-

His wish is to hand over the original articles written in Japanese online at www.asahi.com/articles/OSK201311110028.html and the final segment at sainoyai.jugem.jp/?edt=765.

The 70th Anniversary of the A-Bomb (Part 2 of 2)

Translated by Rev. Katsuya Kusunoki, Buddhist Church of Lodi

Translator’s Note: The first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima City at 8:15 a.m. on August 6, 1945, and the second one was dropped on Nagasaki City at 11:02 a.m. on August 9, 1945. About one-third of each city’s population was killed instantly; around 140,000 people in Hiroshima and about 70,000 people in Nagasaki. My father, Rev. Tatsuya Kusunoki, a survivor of the Nagasaki A-bomb, was severely burned. Ninety-seven percent of his body was burned, and seventy

Mr. Yoshida’s face. He looked like a monster. His face had been burned because of the A-bomb. Rev. Kusunoki was scared to look at Mr. Yoshida, so he avoided seeing him after that.

Thirty years later, he visited Mr. Yoshida to conduct another memorial service. After the service, Mr. Yoshida told him about his bomb-related A-bomb experience. For the first time, he heard Mr. Yoshida’s story and his wish for peace. Rev. Kusunoki regretted that he had missed the opportunity because, until then, he had judged Mr. Yoshida only by his appearance. They became good friends and often drank together. In 2007, Mr. Yoshida gave a talk at Koyasan on his experi-
ences. Mr. Yoshida told him about his horrible A-bomb experience. For the first time,

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“The former prime minister of India, Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru, presented this treasure and ex-

Ashes but it was canceled because of the belief that it created a conflict with the separation of religion and politics. Therefore, Nagasaki city officials gave the ashes to the Nagasaki Bud-

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His wish is to hand over the original articles written in Japanese online at www.asahi.com/articles/OSK201311110028.html and the final segment at sainoyai.jugem.jp/?edt=765.
Social Welfare Fund in action: ACC Rides connects seniors to meals & community

Mary Ann Miyao, chairperson for the Board of Directors of the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) Social Welfare Committee, announced that a grant of $10,000 was approved for ACC Rides Transportation Services, a program of ACC Senior Services.

ACC Rides provides door-to-door transportation services to individuals for medical appointments, church services, community events, errands, and other needed services. Seniors who use ACC Rides are unable to drive due to medical conditions or lack of public transportation due to frailty or physical and cognitive impairments. ACC Rides is primarily supported by 5,000 round-trip rides for seniors to Meals on Wheels lunch sites in Sacramento County, including five to three locations: the Sacramento River Delta towns of Walnut Grove, Locke, and Clio, Senior Services agencies that support ACC Rides, most of these seniors would not be able to attend the lunch center. For many, this lunch is their most nutritious meal of the day and the only time they are not alone for each hour, which often are community centers or churches, are used by Foodlink and other senior nutrition programs. ACC Rides provides the contribution points for free food for the seniors. Transportation to the lunch center is not just a way to provide nourishment, but also connects seniors with very low incomes access to important community resources. For more information about ACC Rides, visit: www.accsv.org

“We are grateful to the BCA Social Welfare Fund to continue the important work of ACC Rides, which is a key service to our seniors in the Sacramento region,” said Miyao.

Answering the Questions “Why Jodo Shinshu? Why BCA?”

By Steve Terusaki, Co-Chair, Joint Development Committee of the BCAEF

“I am so grateful that I encountered the teachings of Jodo Shinshu. Without him, I don’t know what my life would have been like. He is the best companion for everyone in the world,” wrote the Rev. Noinzou Umezu, Bishop of the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) in the July issue of the BCA Journal. The Rev. Umezu was responding to the question, “Why Jodo Shinshu?” The “why” of one’s personal journey to the ministry and with the realization that Shinran had touched all the people that have surrounded him indirectly influencing his life. And for whatever answer each of us finds to the question “Why?”, Rev. Umezu writes, “[you] are touched by the heart of Buddha.”

Being touched by the heart of Amida Buddha happens because we are able to listen to Shinran’s teachings. Those teachings are available to all of us because of the sacrifices and commitment of all who came before us to allow this tradition to continue. As our predecessors have done in the 800 years since Shinran, each of us must now ask ourselves, “What will it take to continue our own commitment to ensure that this legacy continues? What small part can I play?”

This fall, the Endowment Foundation of the BCA will be launching an annual program of donations to fund ongoing BCA activities that support the question, “Why Jodo Shinshu?” Among the areas of particular need include Buddhist education; ministerial training and support; promoting a vibrant and expanding U.S.-based Jodo Shinshu ministry; and local temple support. This annual program of donations will complement the existing endowment program, which allocates funds to expand programs that support the Center for Buddhist Education, BCA Senior Services, and the BCA Relief Fund; and coordinate with annual fundraising efforts on behalf of the Nepali government’s campaign to rebuild Nepal after the 2015 earthquakes. More information will be forthcoming in next month’s Wheel of Dharma.

Charlene Grinolds posed a question to each of us in last month’s article, “Why BCA?” She wrote, “I can’t tell you your particular ‘why’ for BCA, but I ask you to come up with your own individual ‘why.’” In response, I found inspiration while waiting in the serving line at the Empenjian Temple Tenrikyo Bazaar and Bazaar this July. The organizers for the bazaar had sought to make the long wait for breakfast more palatable by posting some of the daily reflections from Rev. Seigen Yamakawa’s collection. In particular, one caught my eye:

To give is truly difficult to do unless we truly realize what we have received and continue to receive.

For me, it is Shinran’s Namu Ekoji teachings.

Gakuso.

Nepal Earthquake Relief Fund Update

Clockwise from upper left: volunteers prepare to go to the construction site; the community receiving benefit, a banquet announcing the first anniversary of the completion of the school building; and distribution of medicine at the site.

Last May, the BCA Social Welfare Fund sent $20,000 to the Kathmandu Hongwanji for earthquake relief efforts, and to date BCA has contributed $41,000 to the Nepal Earthquake Relief Fund to date. Besides the BCAEF, the BCA Social Welfare Fund, the BCA Relief Fund have totaled over $130,000. On July 3 at the Pacific Buddhist Association’s (PBA) 50th Anniversary Seminar, Rev. Uma Lama Ghising presented a slideshow update on the project led by Rev. Sonam Wangdi Bhutia of the Kathmandu Hongwanji to rebuild a school in rural Nepal. She stated that getting supplies to the remote site is difficult and expensive, often requiring the use of helicopters. However, the building is almost complete with six classrooms and a principal’s office (but no doors), and is being used as a temporary shelter.
ヒロシマ・ナガサキから70年

ローダイ仏教会
楠克也開教使

昭和20年（1945）年8月6日8時15分ヒロシマ、8月9日11時2分ナガサキに原子爆弾が投下されました。広島では約14万人、長崎では約7万人の命が一瞬にして奪われました。あれから、今年で70年になります。当時、6歳だった私の父、楠達也は、その経験を多くの人に伝えようと励んでいます。その一つの取り組みとして、10年前、私の自坊、光源寺は『光源寺門徒の戦後60年 “戦争そして原爆その悲しみを越えて”』を自費出版しました。今回は、その中に書かれている父の体験記を紹介し、みなさんと共に、戦争と平和について考えたいと思います。

平和が取り戻せば、戦争は解いたと、その通りです。あの日、あの時を思い出して、平和を守りましょう。今、我々の前には戦争の恐怖が、子どもたちのために、今もまた訪れる可能性があります。そう考えると、平和の価値はどんなものも打ち消せないものだと感じられます。

戦争そして原爆
その悲しみを越えて

昭和19年の夏、暑い日でした。驚くほど多くの兵隊さん達が私のお寺に宿営をされたのです。一週間だったのか十日間だったのか、定かではありませんが、この間の日々は、とても悲しい日々として記憶しています。昼休みの時間、本堂で談笑しておられる兵隊さん達の回りを走り回っていた私に、「坊や手を出して」と、たくさんのコンペイ糖を天に昇る気持ちでいただきました。ある日突然、「兵隊さん達が出発されるよ」と真夜中に起こされました。境内...々と出発され、私は、日の丸の旗を無言で振り続けていました。その後、誰一人として帰ってこられませんでした。おそらく南方の海にみずく屍となられたでしょう。そのコンペイ糖の味を本当にいただいたのは数十年経った後でした。ある日ふと思ったことです。昭和19年の夏に出陣された人々は、故郷に幼き子を残してこられた方々だったのではないかと気付かされました。「そうか!私の手のひらいっぱいのコンペイ糖は、ふるさとの我が子への贈り物、私を通してふるさとの子供さんに...そそうだったのか!!」急いでコンペイ糖を買いに走り、口にふくんでいると、とめどなく涙が溢れてきました。沖縄で勤務された五〇回忌法要の時、この話をさせていただきましたが、改めていのちの大切さと、平和への思いを遺族の皆様とともに念じさせていただいたことでした。

昭和20年8月9日は、もっと強烈でした。境内でセミ取りに木に登っていた時です。ブーンと轟音が聞こえてきましたが、私はセミ取りに夢中でした。「なんばしよっとね、走って逃げろ」と、大声で叫ばれたようです。飛び降りて玄関に入ろうとしているとき、ピカドンが同時にありました。ガラガラと家の中のすべてが吹き飛んです。「やくそくしてお前はみんな死んでる」と大叫ったが、私はその声を信じられず、そのまま逃げるのを決めました。そして頂上で、心の中だけが丸一杯で、まるで心を殺されたかのようで、私は深く感動し、涙を流していました。

南無阿弥陀仏

写真は6月20日（土）に浄土真宗センターで行われた女子会の様子。龍谷大学卒業生の会、龍谷大学校友会北カリフォルニア支部が「女子会Yoga-Ron小町」と題してバークレー近郊の龍大OGや関係者を集めてヨガのセッションを行った。校友会事務局の桑原開教使夫人、ひとみさんは、「子育てなどが忙しく、女性校友会員が集まる機会が少ないので、ヨガでリフレッシュをかねて情報交換ができる場をとおしてこの会を企画しました。」と参加者が、ゆっくりとヨガを楽しめるように、託児室や待合室も用意した。参加者は「浄土真宗センターに初めて来ましたが、いい雰囲気のところですね。とても落ち着いてヨガができました。また来たいです。」と喜んだ。
LGBTQに関する理解を深めるためのセミナーが6月27日(土)にニューヨークで開催された。LGBTQとは性的少数者を表す語でレズ、ゲイ、バイセクシャル、トランスジェンダー、クィアの頭文字をとったもの。今回のセミナーは3回目でニューヨークでの開催は初となり、仏教会メンバーを中心に三十名が集った。基調講演には「米国の同性婚と浄土真宗」の著があるウィルソン・ジェフ教授(ウォータールー大学)が招かれた他、自らが性的少数者を公表している開教使、開教使アシスタント、門徒がプレゼンテーションを行った。質疑応答では活発な意見交換がなされ、性別の多様性に関する理解を深めた。参加者は「ちょうどこのセミナーの前日に米連邦最高裁が全米で同性婚を認める歴史的な判決を出したので、たいへん意義深い集いとなりました。」と仲間たちとの交流を喜んだ。

二年毎に開催される青少年仏教徒国際文化交流研修会(YBICSE)の参加者が、7月14日(火)に京都へ旅立った。研修ではBCA各寺院から選ばれた16歳から21歳の男女15名が本山で研修を受けるほか、神戸の寺院などにホームステイする。梅津総長と中田和朗開教使(ロサンゼルス別院)が研修団を率い、7月23日(木)に帰国する。写真はサンフランシスコ空港で出発前に撮影したもの。

宮地ブラザーズとして親しまれている宮地信雄開教使(ガーデナ仏教会)と宮地明雄名誉開教使が、蓮如上人の語録などを収録した「蓮如上人御一代記聞書」の英訳を上梓した。英題は「Heard and Recorded During Master Rennyo's Lifetime」英訳本を手にした開教使からは「宮地先輩方、長年の伝道活動の経験を通じて英訳された蓮如上人のお言葉は、わかりやすく、たいへんありがたいですね。ご門徒さんにも勧めたいと思います。」と好評。念仏プレスから出版され1冊15ドルの寄付を受け付けている。お問い合わせはガーデナ仏教会(310) 327-9400まで。

お釈迦さまはすべてのいのちを大事にすることをいつも説いておられました。特に多くの虫や生き物が地面を這い回る雨期には、出来るだけ無駄な殺生をしないようにという思いから、一定の期間出歩かないようにしたのです。その間はお互い学んだことを復習したりする……研修会が毎年八月に開催されているのです。今年はサンノゼで八月十日から十二日にかけて開催されます。これに出席することは開教使としての努めであり、総長室から全仏教会にサポートをお願いしているのです。僧侶の研修会は形を替えて今でも行われているのですが、いのちを大切にということはあまり見ることができないようです。私が育った田舎の寺では、報恩講の一週間と毎月祖父の命日と親鸞聖人のご命日には必ず精進をするという習慣がありました。もちろん育ち盛りの時はそれが嫌だったことを思い出します。それと、釣りをしないようにということを強く戒められていました。

今同じことをしなさいと言うわけではありませんが、それぞれが何か一つふたつ、自分に対して戒めをもうけるということは大事ではないでしょうか。浄土真宗は何をしてもよいのだというのではなく、やはりお釈迦さまの精神を大切にしながら、生活の中に習慣を作って……かと思います。その習慣は、朝晩のお参りでもいいし、精進の日を作ってその日だけ生き物のいのちの大切さを考える日にしてもいいし、食事の前の合掌だけは絶対にするとか、もうギャンブルは絶対しないとか、何でもいいと思います。ただし、それでそれを守らない人より自分の方がよい人間であると思うようなことがあってはなりません。私たちの生活の基準を上げるように努め、親鸞聖人の教えを聞くことも大事だと思います。皆さんはどう思われますか。

米国仏教団総長 梅津廣道