Dr. Bloom returned to Hawaii in 1986, where he has remained active in Buddhist Studies. He served as Dean and Professor at the University of Hawaii, retiring in 2013 after twenty-six years. In 1986, Dr. Bloom, already Professor Emeritus at the University of Hawaii, received the appointment of Dean at IBS. As Dean and Honorary Professor of Shin Buddhism, Dr. Bloom guided IBS as it joined the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California as an affiliated educational center. He was instrumental in developing Master’s Degree programs in the study of Buddhism and Shin Buddhism, in particular, refining a graduate-level curriculum in Shin Buddhist Studies. He served as Dean and Professor until 1994. After his retirement, Dr. Bloom returned to Hawaii where he has remained active in teaching and writing.

He has written many works, including Struessel’s Gospel of Pure Grace; The Life of Shinran Shonin; Indian and Far Eastern Religious Traditions; with Robert D. Baird; The Linguistic Shaping of Thought; A Study in the Impact of Language on Thinking in China and the West; Tanizaki; A Monograph for Modern Living; Shokubi; Modern Living: Shokubi; The Essential Struessel: A Buddhist Path of True Entrusting; Struessel’s Shape of Thought; and Shokubi; A Buddhist Path of True Entrusting. By Richard A. Stambul
BCA President-Elect

On March 5, 2016, Mr. Sei Shohara, a longtime member of West Los Angeles Buddhist Temple, was presented with the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA)’s Lifetime Service Award in recognition of his extraordinary service to BCA and its members. The Award recognizes ministers and lay leaders who have demonstrated a lifetime of outstanding leadership, achievement, and service towards the advancement of BCA. This was the fourth time it has been presented in BCA’s 117-year history.

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The discussion reminded me of an experience I had with the Fresno Jr. Youth Buddhist Association (YBA) while serving the Betsuin. Like many of our ministers, I came to the ministry after a lengthy non-ministerial career. I had worked with the chronically mentally ill and homeless populations for over twenty years. Most of my work was in outpatient settings and in my last five years I served as the clinical supervisor for a HUD program that targeted people with mental illness who had been homeless for years. The average client had been homeless for over eight years and had a history of not accepting or following through with services from other providers.

The homelessness situation is complicated and multifaceted. There are many misconceptions in public opinion and this was no different for the Fresno Jr. YBA. As a community service activity, the group volunteered to help serve lunch at one of the homeless soup kitchens in the downtown Fresno area. As we waited in the parking lot I asked the group what they thought were the reasons for someone to be homeless. The most common response was “they want to be homeless.” When I asked why someone would want to be homeless it was a lack for a reason.

Then I spoke of causes and conditions as they had learned in class. I explained that homelessness is caused by many different things such as mental illness, domestic abuse, and substance abuse. One Jr. YBA member remembered a friend’s father getting into a car accident and he was unable to work. Fortunately, he and his family did not become homeless, but it took the support of the larger community to help the family through this period. It was rewarding to see this group of young Buddhists grasping the teachings of the Buddha in a deep and personal manner.

Before we entered the building and I also asked the group not to think this activity of serving lunch as something that was nice to do for the “poor homeless”; rather, to think of it in the spirit of causes and conditions. In that way they would gain a greater respect for those who they were serving. I reminded them that if they were homeless, they would be in need of service as well.

After the presentation, the group asked questions. My reply was, “No, no. He is fine. I don’t think of him as anything wrong with him?” Ashita replied, “No, no. He is fine. I can foresee that he will be the greatest king to rule the world if he remains a secular leader. But if he pursues the path to become a monk, he will be the greatest spiritual leader in the world.”

However, I am very old. I won’t be able to travel to the temple messages.

Now, we are able to hear the Buddha’s message—the message that Asita really wanted to hear. There is no greater happiness than this. This happiness surpasses everything that we can think of. The celebration of the Buddha’s birth this day and find out what Asita really wanted to hear.

I think the world is waiting to hear the Dharma, especially the Nembutsu teaching. I am excited by the possibility of becoming more visible in this country, thanks to our ministers, leaders, and Nembutsu practitioners like yourself.

By the way, if possible, please buy the magazine and read the article carefully. If you cannot find one, your minister has a copy. Please ask him or her to share it with you.

Happy Hanamatus!
Birthday Gratitude

In her lecture on “Seeing the Wisdom of Compassion: The Art and Science of the Heart Sutra” on June 24, 25 and 26, 2016 at the Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Temple of Northern California in San Jose, CA, Dr. Paula Arai provided a significant overview of one of the most beloved and discussed Buddhist texts: the Heart Sutra. In her lecture, Dr. Arai discussed the importance of the Heart Sutra and how it relates to our daily lives. She shared her insights on the meaning of the Heart Sutra and how it can be applied to our lives. Dr. Arai emphasized the importance of compassion and how it can be cultivated through the practice of the Heart Sutra. She also discussed the role of the Heart Sutra in the development of mindfulness and how it can be used as a tool for spiritual growth. Dr. Arai’s lecture was well-received by the audience and provided a valuable insight into the teachings of the Heart Sutra.

Order Buddhadharma - The Practitioner's Quarterly at Special BCA Subscription Rate Order by April 11th to begin your subscription with the Summer issue.

2016 National Council Report

The 2016 Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) Ministers Association and National Council Meeting (NCM) took place at the Visalia Marriott on March 2-3, 2016. The Central California District hosted the meeting, under the theme “Cultivating the Buddha Dharma.”

The BCA Ministers Association met from March 2-3. They discussed all of the issues that came up during the NCM. Rev. Ken Oseuma, BCA Bishop, announced that the BCA will be working on bylaws for the Ministers Association. The Ministers Association created a new committee to work on curriculum for Buddhist Education. On Thursday, attendees took part in a pre-meeting symposium on “Buddhism and Agriculture.” On Friday and Saturday there were workshops on social justice, ministral affairs, and “The Role of the Minister in Antiracism, the BCA Endowment Foundation, and on “What BCA Can Do For You.”

Rev. Steve Tsuoki, the BCA Interm Director of Operations, introduced the attendees. He started working at BCA Headquarters in October, 2015 and will continue to work at least until April 2016.

Jrsc. Rev. Bob Oshita (Sacramento Betsuin) will be retiring this year. Rev. Don Castro (Seattle Betsuin) and Kodo Umezu, BCA Bishop, announced that the Fall MAP seminar will take place in Chicago this year to accommodate more Eastern District minister’s assistants. The National Council voted to make two changes to the BCA Bylaws. The first change will eliminate the January 15 deadline for registering as a National Council delegate. The second clarified the current wording regarding retired ministers not being able to vote at the NCM. The new BCA officers will be installed at the conclusion of the meeting. The theme will be “Buddhism and Technology.”

Birthday Gratitude

In her lecture on “Seeing the Wisdom of Compassion: The Art and Science of the Heart Sutra,” an exhibition of the late Tsubo Iwasaki’s paintings, scholar/author Dr. Paula Arai tells the compelling story behind the unfinished masterpiece, “Flowering Evanescent.”

― After Iwasaki suddenly passed away during the full-blooming of the cherry blossoms in 2002, whenever I went to visit, no matter the season, I saw his widow kept one of his unfinished paintings hanging up in their formal room. The beauty of the painting burst forth in the thousands of soft pink cherry blossom petals he had delicately animated with the Heart Sutra. I found unfinished panels of this painting folded up in his studio. Proposed for the far right scroll was the fluid script of a poem by the highly revered 12th-century Buddhist poet, Sanjō. I was impressed he had such ambitious plans for another massive artwork. As I deciphered the highly refined calligraphic script, the import of this painting slowly dawned: ‘May I pass away under the flowers of the spring full moon.’ Then, on one of the folded sheets covered with cherry blossoms, still waiting their turn to have the Heart Sutra wisdom enfolded into their petals, I saw a simple line of sinuous red calligraphic script, the Heart Sutra’s words: ‘Namu Amida Butsu’ (unto the one who wields the wisdom of limitless light)...”

A 10th Anniversary of the Jodo Shinshu Center Commemorative Event


Above is a detailed portion of “Flowering Evanescent,” a five-scroll, 14-foot-wide painting of a weeping cherry tree, an unfinished work by biologist-painter Tsubo Iwasaki (1917-2002).
The 2016 BCA National Council Meeting, took place in Visalia, California, the heart of the Central Valley. In line with the conference theme, “Cultivating the Bud- dha Dharma,” the topic of the Thursday, March 3 symposium was “Buddhism and Agriculture.” Speakers with backgrounds in farming gave personal accounts of the struggles and successes of the Jodo Shinshu (Nisei) farmers. The presentations included a TED Talk by Nikiko Masumoto, who was unable to attend in person (visit www.youtube.com and search for “Reigniting the soul of farming”).

As summarized by Gary Maki, who helped to organize the program: “Sometimes we may take for granted how the food on our table got there. George Teraoka represented the Nisei generation, Calvin Doi, the Sansei generation, and Nikiko Masumoto, through her TED Talk, represented the Yonsei’s sit to the land. Each presenter had a different, but heartfelt and sincere connection to harnessing the ‘Energy of the Universe’ into providing all of us with sustenance for our lives. The talks helped us realize the hardships and rewards of the gamble of farming and how farmers have to maintain an attitude of perseverance and optimism. Occasionally, it is necessary for us to hear this message to remind us of how grateful we should be to everyone involved, including the plants and animals that gave their lives, for providing us with the food we put on our table.”

In addition, Revs. Seigen Yamaoka and Marvin Harada talked about their farming backgrounds, and an interesting presentation about Shinran Shonin’s work among farmers in Medieval Japan was given by Ryukoku University Professor Eisho Nasu.

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“Spring Training” for Ministers’ Assistants at the Jodo Shinshu Center, March 17-19, 2016

The first of four MAP sessions for 2016 occurred at the JSC in March, as eleven ministers assistants, six new Tokudo candidates, six BCA students, and two guests gathered to study how to help bring the Dharma to the sangha members at their temples. Rev. Kodo Umezu, BCA Bishop, introduced a young visiting minister’s assistant from Europe. Prof. Keiko Tora who is a visiting professor from Japan also attended. Tokudo ordination is scheduled for July in Kyoto, Japan. The Fall MAP will take place in Chicago at the Midwest Buddhist Temple in September.

BCA YOUTH VOICES: Young people share their experiences in Buddhist Churches of America’s (BCA) youth leadership and Buddhist education education programs.

Youth Minister’s Assistant is Certified at Berkeley

By Tara Umemoto

Berkeley Buddhist Temple

I am Tara Umemoto, daughter of Keith Umemoto and Paula Mishima. I was born and raised in Sacramento with my younger sisters Allie and Kayla. I began attending the Buddhist Church of Sacramento when I was in the fourth grade and took Rev. Bob (Oshitsu’s) Metta Padma class in the fifth grade, which sparked my interest in Buddhism. I was fortunate enough to attend the sixth Youth Advocacy Committee (YAC) retreat in 2010. Since then I have been helping out at the church in any way I can, and when I went to college I began going to the Berkeley Buddhist Temple. Here, I have been fortunate to meet with such a welcoming community and to be able to continue my study of Buddhism.

I graduated from UC Berkeley in 2015 majoring in Social Welfare and minoring in Education and am currently an AmeriCorps VISTA member working with the Oakland Unified School District in the Health and Wellness unit. I hope to pursue a career in Social Work, while still helping at the temple when I can. I am grateful to everyone who has helped me on this path and for their continuous support.

2016 BCA Educational Events

Programs subject to change. Events at the Jodo Shinshu Center unless otherwise noted. This is a partial listing.

April 15 * IBS Center for Contemporary Shin Buddhist Studies Symposium: Shinran and Continental Philosophy: Shinran, Heidegger, Levinas, 9am-3pm. Supported by the GTU Asia Project. For more information, visit bcahong.org.

April 29-May 1 * 2016 Federation of Dharma School Teachers’ Leagues Conference: Dharma for Dummies III: What Would Rennyo Shonin Do? at the Berkeley Buddhist Temple. Here, I have been fortunate to meet with such a welcoming community and to be able to continue my study of Buddhism.

May 3-5 * Minister’s Continuing Education Seminar: East Meets West: Jodo Shinshu from Higashi and Nichi Perspectives. Dr. Mark Blum and Rev. Dr. David Masamoto continue the discussion for ministers.

May 13-15 * Obasa School of Ikebana exhibition, including flower arrangement demonstration. Hosted by the JSC as part of the 10th Anniversary Celebration.

May 20 * Gotan-e. A celebration of Shinran Shonin’s birthday. Service Dharma mes-

BCA Bookstore News by Gayle Noguchi

Now available: 16 oz. Stainless Steel Tumbler, $20.00

No more plastic water bottles and disposable lidded coffee cups! This sleekly designed tumbler in black and lavender is insulated with vacuum insulation, and copper-plated stainless steel inner wall. Features one-touch push-button lid and mechanism. Keeps hot drinks hot for 8 hours and cold drinks cold for 16 hours.

Also available: Ants in Your Pants, Worms in Your Plants! (Gilbert Goes Green) by Diane deGroat, hardback, $16.99

Gilbert must come up with an Earth Day project for class, but all the good ideas seem to be taken! Gilbert wants to do something original – and then finally, after much brainstorming, Gilbert comes up with a great idea. Learn about all we can do to care for the earth. For ages 4-8.

The Dharmakara Series: Our Lifelong Learning Challenge

This is the second part of a five-part guest series on the Jusei. We hope you enjoy it.

Reflections on the Jusei: Our Great Benefactor

By Rev. Henry Adams

Many of our central Buddhist images, such as Jusai and Soshito, are excerpts from the Sutra on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life Distilled by Shakyamuni Buddha, which is often referred to as the Larger Sutra. In that sutra, Shakyamuni Buddha tells the story of Dharmakara Bodhisattva, a king who renounced his throne and established vows to create a Pure Land where all beings can realize freedom from suffering. The second verse of the Jusei is a powerful expression of the Buddha's Great Compassion:

GYO MU KYO KO TU DE SHIBU
FU SO SHO BAN GU
SEI FU SO GOM GAKU

If, for countless kalpas to come, I should not become a great benefactor
And save all the destitute and afflicted everywhere,
May I not attain perfect enlightenment.

(Tome Pure Land Sutra, Jusai:II, The Larger Sutra, p. 30)

Shakyamuni goes on to describe how these vows were fulfilled when Dharmakara Bodhisattva realized perfect awakening and became Amida Buddha.

You may be wondering, “If the vows have been fulfilled, why do I still see people suffering all around me?” The logic of the Larger Sutra is that through the fulfillment of Amida Buddha’s vows, a Realm of Pure Land exists as the potential for all beings to achieve freedom from suffering. Those who continue to suffer have not yet realized birth in Amida Buddha’s Pure Land, but all have the potential to be reborn there. Therefore, ultimate freedom from suffering is assured for all beings. When we open our eyes to that reality, our path to awakening will be set.

Following the observance of memorial services for Shinran’s wife Eshinni and their daughter Kakinomi, I had an interesting conversation with a Sangha member about the following passage from a letter that Eshinni wrote to Kakuninshi when nearing the end of her life:

I myself will be going to the [Pure Land] paradise very soon. There everything can be seen without any darkness, so be sure to say the nembutsu and come to the paradise to be with me.

(Letters of the New Eshinni, trans. James C. Dobkins, p. 40)

In our conversation, the Sangha member said that when she first encountered this letter, she was troubled because on the surface, the Buddhist Pure Land that Eshinni describes sounds similar to the idea of “heaven.” As we looked deeper into the meaning of this letter, we came to understand that Eshinni’s words are a beautiful expression of Buddhahood compassion, the wish for her daughter and all beings to realize a life free from the darkness of ignorance and illuminated by the great compassion of the Buddha’s wisdom. This understanding of Eshinni’s words enabled us to appreciate how the motherly kindness she shows in this letter touches our own lives, even though we live 750 years later with our modern scientific way of looking at the world.

Shortly before Shakyamuni Buddha departed from this world, he advised the Sangha member that when she first encountered this letter, she was troubled because on the surface, the Buddhist Pure Land that Eshinni describes sounds similar to the idea of “heaven.” As we looked deeper into the meaning of this letter, we came to understand that Eshinni’s words are a beautiful expression of Buddhahood compassion, the wish for her daughter and all beings to realize a life free from the darkness of ignorance and illuminated by the great compassion of the Buddha’s wisdom. This understanding of Eshinni’s words enabled us to appreciate how the motherly kindness she shows in this letter touches our own lives, even though we live 750 years later with our modern scientific way of looking at the world.

Ishin’s words enable us to appreciate how the motherly kindness she shows in this letter touches our own lives, even though we live 750 years later with our modern scientific way of looking at the world.

Vivian in this manner, the Pure Land that Eshinni describes in her letter to Ka- kushin possesses a guiding principle and direction for Buddhist practice in this very life and this very moment. With our destination in the realm of awakening clearly illuminated before us, we practice patience and kindness toward the people around us as we mutually support each other on our respective paths to freedom from the dark-
This year, 2016, the Institute of Buddhist Studies (IBS) is celebrating its 50th year as a graduate school for Buddhist learning. Historically, the initial founding date for what was to become the current IBS, was 1949. It took many years of study and deliberation to forge the foundation for a school. One point extremely clear to the leaders at that time was that they wanted to establish a high level educational program to train ministers in America in English.

In February of 1966, the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) National Council proceeded to establish an independent Buddhist university under the leadership of Bishop Shinsho Hanayama. Shinsho Jo, from Stockton, became the campaign director for the special scholarship fund drive. A total sum of $300,000 was pledged by devout Buddhists across the country. A school building was necessary, so the building committee in Berkeley was purchased for $110,000 for the education and training of potential American-born ministers. The Institute of Buddhist Studies was officially started on October 1, 1966. This marked the beginning of the first Buddhist ministerial school in the United States.

In March of 1966, the BCA Board of Directors had decided to call the new educational institution the Buddhist Institute of America. However, in June, Rev. Kanmo Imamura, Executive Director of the Institute pointed out that the common English form of an institute’s name demanded a change to the Institute of Buddhist Studies. This was authorized accordingly.

From its outset, the IBS was looked upon as having two main objectives: a high level of instruction leading to Tokaisha and Ayu-kan ordination, and Master’s Degree program. In October 1966, a committee on the Buddhist Institute of America curriculum under the chairmanship of Calvin Shibata had pointed out the necessity of securing some forms of accreditation for the IBS. Changes in the California Education Code and the wishes of the IBS to be incorporated and organized as a graduate school. Thanks are due to President, Rev. Haruyoshi Kasada, a full program of classes was already being offered.

The official establishment of the institution was completed on May 14, 1970 when a letter was received from U.S. Secretats of the State Department of Education that the IBS had been approved as a degree-granting institution under Section 2907f (A) (3) of the California Education Code.

In June 1969, the Board of Directors and IBS officials adopted for public use the title: The Institute of Buddhist Studies A Graduate School for Buddhist Ministry and Research.

To be continued in the May issue.

IBS Celebrates 50 Years as a Graduate School

By Rev. Dr. Seigen Yamaoka

President’s Letter – 2015 Annual Report

The BCA Endowment Foundation: Long-term Growth for Our Future

Dear BCA Members and Friends:

The Buddhist Churches of America Endowment Foundation (BCAEF) of BCA has donated funds in equity and bonds, and the income derived from these investments has supported many BCA and Institute of Buddhist Studies (IBS) programs for many years. The equity and bond market has fluctuated over the years, but the long-term results are very positive. For example, the annual return for the Standard and Poor’s 500 Total Return Stock Index has been +8.2% on the average over the past 20 years.

The long-term investment has grown to generate donations that form the basis of the funds held by the BCAE.

Investing for the long term implies that over shorter periods the BCAE’s portfolio will experience the ups and downs of the market—and 2015 was no exception. Macro-economic headlines including concerns over the U.S. Federal Reserve’s change in monetary policy, the future path of China’s growth, and sharp declines in commodity prices led to a heightened level of stock, bond, and currency market volatility. This volatility negatively impacted returns across all asset classes during 2015.

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To be continued in the May issue.

Thank you for your gifts to the BCA Dana Program!

I do not have a Dana Program.

IBS Symposium: Shinran and Continental Philosophy

The Institute of Buddhist Studies Center for Contemporary Shin Buddhist Studies will present a symposium titled “Shinran and Continental Philosophy: Shinran, Heikyegu, Levinas,” on Friday, April 15, 2016 from 9 am to 5 pm at the Jodo Shinshu Center, 2140 Durant Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94704.

Leading scholars who will present include: Dr. Takemasa Unno, Shonin University; Dr. Calvin Shibata, Hamasaki, Sekiya, Quon, and Wondra.

Continued from Front Page

Dr. Bloom is the third recipient of the prestigious IBS President’s Award. Previous recipients were Dr. Takemasa Unno (2014) and Dr. Lewis Lancaster (2015). It is indeed appropriate that this honor comes during the fiftieth year of IBS’ existence and completion of our 50th year anniversary.

As the well-known Buddhist magazine Tripicali The Buddhist Review has stated, “Bloom is widely regarded as one of the most important American figures in Buddhism. His impact is evident in all the main areas of Buddhism.”

The President, Board of Trustees, faculty, staff, and students of IBS join together in expressing their respect and gratitude to Dr. Albert Bloom for his many contributions to IBS and his understanding of Jodo Shinshu throughout the world.

Contingent from Front Page
「裸にて生れてきたに何不足」

開教使 安孫子 浄海 洋

現役を引退して既に二年半になり、益々筆不精ですが、勿体無かな、法輪に一筆書かしてもらうこととなった。その上、釈尊降誕「花まつり」の時節である。三度お参りしたルンビ二ーが思い浮かぶと共に、各地の花御堂飾りつけや法要次第が顧みられる。

サンデースクールの子供さんが甘茶を潅けながらクスクスと楽しんでいるのも一つの「花まつり」シーンである。「どうしたの？」と尋ねると、「素っ裸で可愛そう。何か着せてあげてー！」であった。又、上海のエメラルド寺では、甘茶で濡れた誕生仏像を、全参拝者がタオルで拭くのが習慣である。三年前参拝させてもらった時は貧弱な農村であったルンビ二ーが、世界に有名な日本建築家の丹下健三氏の思考で大規模（五マイル×五マイル）な聖地公園となり、色とりどり、大勢の観光客をあつめている。誕生仏のお話を聞きますと、お釈迦様は、お生まれなさると同時に七歩進んで、天地を指し「天にも地にも、ただ我独り尊し」と宣言なされたと聞きますが、いくらなんでも生れたての赤ん坊にそんなことができそうには思えず、又、「我独り尊し」ということは独善主義のようで、抵抗を感じる方々は少なくないと思う。宗教とその儀式は子供たちのためと思っておられる方々や、自分はお寺に参る程、年を取っていないと思っている方々に以前から次の様に話かけている。

物事には事実と真実の在り方を考えることが大切で、それは事実は必ずしも真実とは限らない。たとえば、今日どこで災難があったということは、事実であっても真実とはいえない。真実とは、それに依って、自分もひとも共に無事でなければならない。そして、真実とは人間が見出していく本当の価値を教えている。先の誕生仏のお話は、事実であったか無かったと問うよりも、そこに教えられる真実には何を意味しているのであろうかと思う心に真実心が芽生える。そして先ず無我を説く佛教では、独善はありえず、数え切れぬ程の因縁で、生まれ、お育ちを受け、生かされて頂いている、生命の尊厳と言いましょうか、と考えるのが適当です。又、人間として生れてきた、と言うことは、誠にかけがいのないことである。それを奥深く自覚してこそ、自分をいとおしみ、自分の人生を意義あらしめようという覚悟が生れてくる。しかも花御堂で素っ裸である誕生佛は、一切の飾りや、ごまかしを捨て、本当の自分にかえり、真実の願いを燃やしつつ生き抜くことを示している。

教えという字は、偏の「孝」と旁の「(ぼく)」という字からなっている。「孝」とは、子供が大人に交わることを現し、学ぶ者、先達者を求めて近づくことを意味する。又、「(ぼく)」とは、人間の与える動作を意味している。要するに、教とは求者と与える者が同時に逢ってこそ成立され、一方だけでは成立されない。禅の公案を百題収録する「碧巌録」（へきがんろく）（十六題）に「卒啄同時」（そつたくどうじ）という教えがある。卒とは、雛が卵を破って誕生するにあたって、その雛がいよいよ生れる時がきて、卵の中からコツコツとつつくことをいい、啄とは、その卵の中の音を聞いて、親鳥が嘴をもって、外から殻を破ってやることをいう。その両者は、時間をへだてず、呼吸ピッタリしてこそ、雛は誕生することができるのである。ただのチキンではあるが、親鳥が卵を温めながら、ジーと殻の中の様子を聞いているのは親心というべきものであろう。その上、雛が殻の外側には親がいて、今か今かと待機しているのを認知していることも大切である。それと同じように、佛教を学び、生き、さらにお念仏に生きようと真剣に求める者は、自己の殻を破るお師匠、善知識が必要である。

こんな実話がある。その昔、江戸で手広く商いをしていた人が事業に失敗し、全部財産を失った。「もう、だめだ。」と江戸を逃れて死の旅に出た。「どこで死のうか？」と死ぬ場所を甲府まできてしまい、安宿に入った。夜、ふと枕元を見ると、貧弱な屏風に「裸にて生れてきたに何不足」と書かれた文字が薄目にとまった。...アメリカの諺に、「貧乏人とは持っているものが少ない人をいうのでなく、多くのものを欲する人を言う。」ともある。

裸で生れてきた者が、どうして不平などいえましょうか？量のことの知れない程の恩恵を受けているので今日までいたっている。「阿弥陀さん、有難うございます！」と両手をあわせられる者こそ、よろこびのある、又、よろこばれる者である。門弟達が、日頃親鸞聖人に教えてもらった念仏往生の生き方に疑いを持ち、聞法、念仏に苦しみつつ関東より京都の聖人にたずね、その真意を問うた。聖人は自分自身の心中を開け、次のお言葉で返事された。

「詮ずるところ、愚身におきてはかくのごとし。このうえは、念仏をとりて信じたてまつらんとも、又すてんとも、面々のおんはからいなり。」[歎異抄]

決して冷淡につきはなしたお言葉でなく、門徒を思い、確かに育てようと願うお心です。
3月上旬にカリフォルニア州ヴァイセリア市で全米開教使会および寺院代表者会議が行われた。今年は中加教区の主催で、マリオットホテルが会場。中部カリフォルニアは農業が主要産業であることから、会議のテーマを「Cultivating the Buddha Dharma」にした。3月2日、3日に開教使会会議が行われ、会則に関することが話し合われた。昨年から6名の開教使および教師資格を有する僧侶が開教使会に加わったことに関連し、新しく開教使会に加わった会員は1年の研修期間中から投票権を持つことが決められた。また、開教使会議長の任期は2年で最長2期となった。3日午後には、IBSとCBE共催で「仏教と農業」を主題にしたシンポジウムが開催。アイダホ州の農家出身である原田マーヴィン開教使、龍谷大学の那須英勝教授、IBSの山岡誓願師、中加教区の門徒で農家の寺岡ジョージ氏、土井キャルヴィン氏らが話した。4日からの代表者会議で、2016年度の予算の承認、BCAの付属団体や各コミッティーから活動報告などがなされた。投票により、今年度のBCA会員一人当りのBCAへの寄付金は、114ドル23セントとなった。4日午後、会議終了後に昨年から始められた法話会「ダルマソン」が行われた。ダルマソンでは開教使、および教師として寺院に駐在している新任の僧侶5名が10分ずつ法話をした。また、5日の会議終了後には「往生礼讃」のおつとめがされ、参加者全員で読誦した。参加者は「正直なところ、会議は退屈するところがあったのですが、ダルマソンやおつとめは、とても気持ちをリフレッシュさせてくれました。梅津総長が提唱されている、'仏法を中心とした会議'になってきているように思えます。会議に来てよかったです。」と好評であった。6日はヴァイセリア仏教会で永代経法要が営まれ、今年引退予定のカストロ・ドナルド、シアトル別院輪番が法話をした。法要後にBCA理事会員就任式が行われ、谷本ケン氏(ワッソンビル仏教会)が新理事長となった。

総長メッセージ

米国仏教団総長 梅津廣道

鉄道の旅は楽しいものです。先日西海岸のオックスナード仏教会とサンタバーバラ仏教会へご縁をいただき、アムトラックで往復しました。オークランドから片道10時間弱です。車で行っても7時間かかることを考えたら、そう長旅でもないと考えたからです。

アメリカのシステムは日本と違って、乗車のとき席番号を書いた紙を渡されます。そして、その席に座っていると車掌が来て切符の確認をします。そして、行き先を小さな紙に書いて荷物棚のへりの隙間に差し込むのです。他の座席を見てみるとそれぞれの頭の上に行き先が書いてあるようなです。もちろん、私の頭の上にはオックスナードと書かれた紙が挟まれていました。ところで、人生の旅、一体私たちはどこに向かっているのでしょうか。帰るとしたらどこに帰るのでしょうか。いつも称えている南無阿弥陀仏の「南無」というインドの言葉を、親鸞聖人は「帰命」と訳されました。ここに「帰」という字が使われていることに深い意味があるようです。この言葉は、私たちにいのちの方向を示してくださっているようです。迷いを迷いと知らずにウロウロしている私たちに、呼びかけていてくださる方がおられるのです。そして、私たちの帰るのを待っていてくださるご上賀「往生礼讃」のおつとめがお勤めされます。親鸞聖人は、阿弥陀如来はインドのブッダガヤに釈迦牟尼仏として形を現されて、私たちに真実の世界を教えてくださったと喜ばれました。私たちも、一同にごみのりを聞かせていただき、安心して人生の旅を続けさせていただきましょう。

ワッソンビル仏教会(沿岸教区)は2017年11月に創立110周年を迎える。駐在開教使の花山勝清師は、創立記念のキックオフイベントとしてコンサートを行った。イベントは2月27日(土)に同仏教会、体育館で開催。花山師は、サンノゼで活躍する日系人音楽グループ「千鳥バンド」の演奏をバックに歌謡曲などを熱唱、門徒から大喝采を得た。師は「親鸞聖人の教えがこの地に伝えられて110年続いているのですから、来年は歴代の開教使をお招きして細やかにも楽しく祝賀会を開催したいと思い、キックオフイベントを試みました。ご門徒さんだけでなく、近隣の市民の方も来場され、とても喜んでもらえたようです。ご寄付も予想以上に多くしていただけたのでとても満足です。」とイベントの成功を喜んだ。

コンサートの様子はyoutubeで視聴できるので、「千鳥バンド」と「Watsonville」の語で検索。