LIVING THROUGH A PANDEMIC

BCA Discusses Its Declining Membership, Strategies

28% Drop Is Reported Since 2010; Bishop Vows ‘to Turn Curve Around’

By Jon Kawamoto
Editor, Wheel of Dharma

For the first time in its history, the BCA Executive Committee devoted an entire meeting on the elephant-in-the-room issue of declining membership at its temples and churches — and heard several presentations on strategies aimed at reversing the trend. And while Bishop Rev. Marvin Harada emphasized the BCA has “got to address this membership decline issue first” by tackling it “head-on,” he expressed optimism about increasing membership. “As the new Bishop, it is my goal to turn this curve around during my term of office — but it’s going to take the effort of all of us, ministers, leaders and members,” Rev. Harada said, noting that the BCA is looking at implementing the effort in the post-pandemic period. “Let’s make Shin Buddhism a thriving Buddhist tradition in this country for decades to come.”

The Buddhist Churches of America’s membership woes are in line with the national trend affecting other, larger religions, including Protest-

Seventh ‘Women in Buddhism’ Event Draws 200 Online

Seattle Betsuin, CBE Present Tools for Spiritual Wellness

“Women in Buddhism: Tools for Spiritual Wellness,” an interactive two-day webinar gathering held Oct. 3-4, attracted more than 200 participants and featured five speakers who each offered a compelling perspective from their field of expertise, interwoven with their lives as Buddhist women facing the reality of life in today’s world.

The provocative presentations and topics began with Rev. Dr. Carmela Hirano Jave-Hill, psychiatrist in private practice and Tokudo ordained Minister’s Assistant at Salt Lake Buddhist Temple.

Her talk on “Radical Humility: A Jodo Shinsu Path to Gratitude and Joy,” reflect-

ed on the life of Shinran Shonin and how he coped with the extreme personal and social trauma of his life and times; observations of the current pandemic and social upheaval; and her own journey to experience the Nembutsu through a radical transformation.

“Namu Amida Butsu is an articulation of our ego submission, meaning I take refuge in the truth of impermanence, interdependency … it is a process of the ‘turning of the heart,’ ” she said. She also shared practical tools for...
How Dodgers’ WS Celebration Captured Buddhist Lesson

By Rev. Ryuta Furumoto
Senshin Buddhist Temple

Oseibo’ and ‘Kisha’ Giving Brings Us Increasing Freedom and Happiness

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

— The Sutra on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life

By Rev. Marvin Harada
Bishop of the BCA

I am not a huge baseball fan, and during the season, I don’t watch many games, but I love to watch the postseason playoff and the World Series every year. This year was even more exciting because the Los Angeles Dodgers were in the playoffs, and then made it to the World Series. When I watched every game and they were all so exciting with great pitching, lots of home runs, and stellar defensive plays, by both teams. And I watched the final game in which the Dodgers won the championship and the World Series on Oct. 27.

We can’t help but feel touched to see the winning team run out onto the field and jump for joy like little kids again. It is such a rare opportunity to win a World Series, and those players and coaches no doubt worked so hard to become champions. We also feel for the losing team, as they too worked hard and dreamed of being champions as well.

The Dodgers players were hugging each other, piling on top of each other, just like Little League players would if they won a championship game. I think that is part of what is so moving about seeing such a scene, to see grown adults become little kids again. We can all relate to such a feeling of pure joy.

Buddhism points to the awakened life as like “becoming a child again.” It doesn’t mean that we should become kids and go through the terrible twos again, or anything like that, but what it is trying to say is that children have a real innocence, a sincere heart and mind, that we should not lose that childhood innocence, spontaneity, and joy for simple things.

When we were little kids, just to get an ice cream cone

Correction

The headline about Hongwanji Place’s Oseibo Extravaganza in the November issue was incorrect. Hongwanji Place is a Southern District BCA sponsored organization, run by volunteers for the local District temples. The bookstore is at Senshin Buddhist Temple.

By Rev. Henry Tonyo Adams
San Mateo Buddhist Temple

Year’s End Is Ideal Time to Pause, Reflect on Our Lives

One of the great heroes in our Jodo Shinshu Buddhist tradition is a humble farmer and handyman named Shoma who lived in Sanuki province on the Japanese island of Shikoku from 1799 to 1871. On one occasion, Shoma visited the head temple and received the Sarana Affirmation Ceremony, a ritual in which the abbot of the temple places a rosary on the head of the Nembutsu follower three times, representing the shoving of the head, which since the time of Dharmakara Bodhisattva has expressed the resolution to take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha.

After administering the ceremony to Shoma, the abbot started to move on to the next person when Shoma grabbed hold of the sleeve of his robe and said, “Brother, are you prepared?”

When the ceremony was finished, the abbot told his assistant "Summon the fellow who pulled on my robe." The assistant went into the crowd of fellow practitioners and said, “Is the fellow who just pulled on the Great Abbot’s robe here? You will go before him.”

Hearing these words, Shoma sat there with a serene heart and mind, that we should not lose that childhood innocence, spontaneity, and joy for simple things.

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By Dr. Kent Matsuda
BCA President

Every morning, Rev. Yuki Sugahara of the Oregon Buddhist Temple produces a live video about Jodo Shinshu Buddhism. He has done this every day since the end of March 2020. He has talked about the letters of Rennyo (‘Gobunsho’), the ‘Jodo Wasan,’ and (at the time I am writing this), the ‘Koso Wasan.’

On Sept. 13, he talked about the seven calamities mentioned in the Lotus Sutra. These calamities are: fire, water, evil demons, weapons, ghosts, imprisonment, and thieves and bandits. Shinran Shonin makes reference to these seven calamities and how this helped to promote the Nembutsu path in Japan. In this column and in next month’s column, I talk about the five calamities of 2020 and how the BCA handled them.

1. The Pandemic

The biggest story of 2020 was the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19. BCA temples had to close and could not conduct in-person services. Major fundraisers had to be canceled. Dharma schools could not continue. And yet, BCA ministers and minister’s assistants began to put their services on the internet. Now, the online world could access Dharma talks. Ministers, like Rev. Sugahara, found followers who lived in other countries or continents. Our Jodo Shinshu teachings made a home on the internet. Jodo Shinshu Buddhism could be accessed on a smart phone. Virtual services and Dharma School classes began. If anything, this helped to spread the Jodo Shinshu teachings throughout the country.

2. The Recession

Due to the novel coronavirus, many businesses had to shut down. People lost their jobs. The worldwide economy came to a stop. Airlines, cruise ships, and railroads no longer had passengers. And yet, temples began to hold virtual fundraisers. Some temples raised more than $200,000 this way. Virtual Obon celebrations took place. Temples raised money and donated to businesses that supported the temple fundraisers in the past.

The Endowment Foundation saw its holdings take huge earning losses in March and April. And then, the stock market took off and almost all the losses were replaced with gains that put people and funds in a better position than what was the case at the start of the year.

3. The Natural Disasters

In the late summer of 2020, there were wildfires in Washington, Oregon, and California. I had to evacuate my home and spent two days at my local temple. Floods, hurricanes, and tropical storms hit the Southeastern United States. Some South-East Asian countries also had to deal with floods.

And yet, the BCA Social Welfare Committee changed the criteria for awarding grants to communities that were in need of funds. The funds were used to help with basic human needs, food and shelter. The Social Welfare Committee made a grant to help fire victims.

The Social Welfare Committee has made a lot of changes in the way they award grants. Temples that held fundraisers for the community can get matching funds. The Social Welfare Committee also put together a loan program for temples who were having difficulty paying their bills.

Meet Alex Tsukahara, BCA’s New Digital Content Assistant

A 10-year-old Orange County Buddhist Church member has been awarded the Boy Scouts of America Medal of Honor — an extremely rare medal — for saving the life of his mother.

Fifth-grader Nathan Shibata, a Webelos 2 Cub Scout Pack 578 member, was presented the award on Oct. 2 by Orange County Council Scout Executive Russell Etchenhous at the pack meeting via Zoom.

The award stemmed from a Dec. 20, 2019, incident at the Shibata household. On that day, the Shibata family — father Craig, mother Kyran and Nathan — were having dinner. Nathan was sitting next to his mom when he called out to Craig, saying, “Mommy does not look good.”

It turned out that Kyran was in mild respiratory distress, but was conscious and breathing. While waiting for paramedics and an off-duty firefighter neighbor to arrive, Nathan was able to overcome his fear and clear his mother’s airway. His quick response saved her life.

According to Craig Shibata, who is the current Pack Quartermaster and Advancement Chair of Nathan’s Pack 578, Nathan learns about the Dharma and the Nembutsu at the Orange County Buddhist Church, where his family are long-standing Sangha members.

Robert Tanaka, chair of the BCA National Buddhist Committee on Scouting, issued a statement congratulating Nathan Shibata for being the Boy Scouts of America Medal of Honor.

Tanaka said that the Medal of Honor is one of BSA’s four life-saving or meritorious action awards and is extremely rare. As an example, a BSA council in Northern California has 16,000 registered Scouts, and each year about 500 Scouts earn the prestigious Eagle Scout Award. But only one or two Scouts earn BSA’s one of the BSA life-saving awards every other year.

The BCBS is very proud of Nathan’s amazing achievement and most grateful that he saved his mother’s life,” Tanaka said.
TechnoBuddha Conference Goes on – Virtually

By Brandon Yanari
Palo Alto Buddhist Temple

TechnoBuddha and BCA’s Center for Buddhist Education co-hosted “Good Trouble,” a virtual seminar featuring Richard Stambul, the immediate past BCA President, on Oct. 10. As many of you know, TechnoBuddha is a conference at the Jodo Shinshu Center for those people between ages 21-39 to provide an opportunity for young professionals to network and find a sense of community through workshops and activities incorporating Jodo Shinshu Buddhist teachings in everyday life.

March 2020 would have been our 13th Annual TechnoBuddha Conference, however, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we were unable to host the conference as planned. Fortunately, Stambul was open to the idea of collaborating on a virtual seminar, and we deeply appreciated his willingness to keep up the discussion on the topic of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism and social issues.

With more than 145 attendees of all ages, the virtual seminar was a great success as Stambul expertly weaved in his personal experience as a volunteer and “soldier” in the Civil Rights Movement with powerful video clips revealing America’s true past.

As an audience member, I was deeply engaged and felt moved and privileged to hear directly from someone that participated in events that I’ve only ever read about in history books, such as the March on Washington and Freedom Summer.

Stambul concluded his presentation with a connection to the current uprisings and demonstrations for social justice, as well as what he believes is the “great evil.”

The lecture portion was followed by a question-and-answer session that delved into allyship, moving forward, meeting Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, and how Jodo Shinshu Buddhism connects with civic engagement.

The whole seminar was incredibly relevant and helps put current events in context. The presentation was recorded and can be found on the BCA Center for Buddhist Education YouTube channel.

Thank you very much to Judy Kono, Koichi Mitsuhashi, Carl Yanari, Bishop Rev. Marvin Harada, TechnoBuddha co-chair Sydney Shiroyama, and our wonderful speaker, Rick Stambul, for making this event possible. We hope that these conversations will continue how Jodo Shinshu Buddhism informs our ideals on social justice and equity moving forward.

Yanari was the TechnoBuddha 2020 Co-Chair.

Bishop’s Message

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brought real joy to us, didn’t it? After we become adults, it takes a four-star restaurant and something like bananas foster or crème brulee to get the same kind of joyous response. An ice cream cone from the local baskin and Robbins just won’t do it for us.

I will never forget some years ago, when my wife was still teaching elementary school, the school had an annual “Read Across America” program in which teachers would bring in people from the community to read to the kids in the classrooms.

My wife always insisted that I do this and I would go to her kindergarten class and read a few children’s stories. One year, I read a book on “Happiness,” and after reading the story, I thought I would dialogue with the kids a little and I asked them, “What makes you happy?” I thought they would say something like, “Having a birthday party,” or “Getting a new video game,” or something like that.

However, to my great surprise, one little girl said, “It makes me happy when a butterfly lands on my nose.” I would never say that. Not in a million years. I would say something like, “When I hit a big jackpot in Las Vegas,” or “When I hit a good shot on the golf course,” or “When someone compliments me on my sermon,” or something to that effect. I would never say something like, “When a butterfly lands on my nose.” That is the childlike innocence, spontaneity, and pure joy that children exhibit, that Buddhism says we have lost, but should return to.

Through listening to the teachings, through encountering the Dharma, we too can return to our childlike innocence, and find joy and appreciation for little things in life.

There was once a great Buddhist named Issa, who would often play with children in the village. Once he played hide and seek with the children, and hid so well that he fell asleep in his hiding place and stayed there all night long. When Issa played with children, he “became” a child again.

May we reflect on what makes us happy, what gives us fulfillment in life, and may we rediscover our own childlike innocence, spontaneity, and joy in life through the teachings.

Rev. Furumoto

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true. Many of us are bound by a mortgage, car loan, maintenance fees, and problems of ownership.

In Shakayamuni Buddha’s order, monks and nuns only own their robes and a bowl for alms. Their lifestyle is to have the minimum so that they can get maximum freedom. In Buddhism, the less you have, the more you will be respected.

However, it is difficult for laypeople to have the minimum like monks and nuns. So Shakayamuni Buddha also taught a way for lay followers to live with less attachments. It is giving. Giving brings us freedom and happiness. By giving, we are free from the bondage of our possessions. Giving is sharing too. Sharing connects us and the feeling of connection brings us peacefulness.

Giving to the temple is sometimes called “Ki”-sha” which means enjoy giving. “Ki” means joy, happiness, and “sha” means throw away. If we have less, we are happier and free, so we can give with joy. Toward the end of the year, we have many opportunities to practice “Kisha” at the temple and gift-giving to other people. Let us try it and see if we can be happy by giving.

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Rev. Emeritus
Musashino University, Tokyo
Former BCA minister and IBS Associate Professor

Introduction: This is the continuation of the article from the November issue, the seventh in a series of seven segments.

By Rev. Dr. Kenneth Kenshin Tanaka

Phase 7: Liberation

Up on reaching the island, the sailor now takes out a small boat and sets out to locate and help the others who fell overboard.

Reaching the island symbolizes the attainment of full awakening — that is, budhahood — or birth in the Pure Land at the end of life. Actually, for Shinran, the two are virtually the same, because he taught that when a person of shinjin dies, he or she is born in the Pure Land and immediately attains budhahood.

This teaching that one does not spend time in the Pure Land is a radical departure from the teachings of earlier Pure Land teachings in India and China. What was key for Shinran was the realization of shinjin awakening in this life. But the path does not end there. With the attainment of complete awakening, in keeping with Mahayana cosmology and the bodhisattva spirit of benefiting all beings, one returns freely to the unenlightened realms to assist in the ongoing effort to liberate others.

Shinran does not discuss the exact manner in which one returns, so I, as a Shin Buddhist, can take the liberty to imagine all the possible forms I would like to take. After all, as Buddhists we are endowed with any and all skillful means! I imagine returning as a caring first-grade teacher, a bird with melodious chirps, an enlightened politician, a soothing breeze, and a Buddhist nun, dedicated in each birth to contributing in some small ways to assisting others in awakening.

In closing, it is my earnest hope that my Zen Dharma sister mentioned at the beginning may read this essay and change her mind, agreeing that Shin Buddhists are not Christian Buddhists after all. I then will exclaim with joy, “Oh my God, that’s great!”

Editor’s note: This article originally appeared in the quarterly magazine Tricycle: The Buddhist Review in its Spring 2019 issue. The illustrations were drawn specifically for the Wheel of Dharma.

Thank you very much to Judy Kono, Koichi Mitsuhashi, Carl Yanari, Bishop Rev. Marvin Harada, TechnoBuddha co-chair Sydney Shiroyama, and our wonderful speaker, Rick Stambul, for making this event possible. We hope that these conversations will continue how Jodo Shinshu Buddhism informs our ideals on social justice and equity moving forward.

Yanari was the TechnoBuddha 2020 Co-Chair.
"I had lost one of my main motivators for me. She also witnessed the complete dedication from the priests during the service. The fact that they got up every morning to chant the sutas, that they welcomed strangers into their temple, and that they wanted to share the teaching of the Buddha with all those that came into the temple," she said. "That was not turned away for being different from them, and instead there was an enthusiasm for me to participate in the ritual, to understand and become one with their understanding of the Dharma. That is pretty amazing." After graduating from college in 2006, Rev. Mascher-Mace spent the next 12 years working in oil fields around the world — including Canada, China and throughout the United States — in production operations, mostly dealing with exploration and development operations.

After a while, Rev. Mascher-Mace realized that she “wanted to use the tools she has to teach people about the Buddha with all that came into the temple,” she said. After that initial encounter, Shoma would reply, “No matter, bring him here.” There was no need for the red robe won’t help you escape rebirth in hell, and to explain something I wanted to dedicate myself to.” She enrolled at the Institute of Buddhist Studies program and expected to graduate next year. She was awarded a graduate certificate in Shin Studies in 2019. Rev. Mascher-Mace became a certified Minister’s Assistant in early 2015. (Courtesy of Rev. Kaityn Mascher-Mace.)

Rev. Adams Continued from Page 2
and returned to the abbot to recount what he had said. However, the abbot replied, "No matter, bring him here." There was no choice but for Shoma to be brought before the abbot. Being ignorant of formality and refined manners, he just plucked himself down and sat cross-legged right in front of the abbot. At that time, the abbot asked him, "Was it your desire to enter Buddhist orders?" Shoma replied, "Yeah, it was me. "What were you thinking when you pulled on my robe?" the abbot asked. "You are wearing a fancy red robe, but that red robe won’t help you escape rebirth in hell, so I was wondering if you are prepared for your next rebirth," Shoma said. "Yes, I summoned you here because I wanted to understand this teaching of yours. Many people treat me with reverence and respect, and so I was wondering if the teaching of a buddha who has shown concern for my rebirth. I’m glad you asked, but have you received the heart of entrusting (shinjin)" the abbot inquired. "Yes, I understand what is it," Shoma answered. "In one sentence, tell me what you’ve received," the abbot said. "It’s nothing at all," Shoma replied. "With that, are you prepared for your next rebirth?" the abbot asked. You’d better ask Amida about that," Shoma replied. "It’s not my job, so why would I have the answer?"

The abbot was most satisfied with Shoma’s reply and said, “As you say, there is nothing beyond entrusting in Amida. One must not rely on the working of one’s own mind. You are an honest man. Today, let us share a drink as brothers!” After that initial encounter, Shoma would regularly visit the abbot. Shoma was quick to forget matters of this world, so before he returned to his village and left, the abbot would say, “When are you coming back?" Shoma replied, "As soon as someone noticed the letter, he would be taken to visit the abbot immediately. The end of the year is an ideal time for us to pause and reflect upon the direction of our lives and ask ourselves whether we are acting as brothers!" After the pandemic is over, the abbot would say, "Where am I going? Where am I going?" As brothers!"

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Membership

Continued from Page 1

ants and Catholics, according to the Pew Research Center. Since 2010, Protestants have dropped 16% and Catholics by 13%.

However, the BCA’s problems are more pronounced. From 2010 to 2020, it has seen a 28% decline in membership, from 16,994 members to the current 12,206. After that said the BCA’s total budget has increased 29%, from $1.43 million to $1.85 million.

And, in Japan, with the Nishi Hongwanji in Kyoto, the situation is more dire, according to Rev. Harada. Of its 10,000 temples, fully one-third may be shuttered in the next decade, he said.

The wide-ranging discussions, strategies, and recommendations included:

- Increasing membership
- To decrease the assessment:
  - Propagation and education by focusing on unaffiliated people and prioritizing making Buddhist education available to this group; and developing temple resources to ease the burden on the membership assessment to focus on non-members.
- Rev. Harada stated the need to set realistic goals to increase membership. For example, he said, small temples might set a goal of gaining 10 new members; medium-sized temples might try to get 50 new members; and large temples, 50 new members.
- At the same time, Rev. Harada noted his challenge as well, that “the temple is an obstacle to gaining new members — is ‘to give a message about Buddhism, and need to come to the temple to hear.’”

“Practical Buddhism” versus “Lite Buddhism” versus “true level Buddhism,” which he said that Shinran Shonin, and other Buddhist pioneers, have based their writings and teachings on.

Women’s Webinar

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cultivating gratitude through activities, including Naikan and other activities.

Dr. Duran spoke as a professor at the University of Washington, School of Social Work, and Independent Wellness Research Institute; a mixed-race Native American; a former member of the Seattle Buddhist Temple since 1982; teacher with the Insight Meditation Society; and Spirit Rock Meditation Center.

Dr. Duran is a recent fol-

lows of Jodo Shinshu and a member of the Seattle Betsuin Sangha. She spoke about the role of historical, multicultural diversity in Buddhism, and the impact of new immigrants and racial diversity on the membership of the temple.

Dr. Duran discussed the impact of new immigrants and the role of multicultural diversity in Buddhism. She noted that Buddhism has become a diverse religion, with a wide range of beliefs and practices, and that the temple needs to be inclusive to attract new members.

Dr. Duran also discussed the role of mindfulness in cultivating gratitude and how it can be practiced through activities such as Naikan and meditation.

She led all participants in a simple mindful breathing and healing practice.

Sister Mizumori, Ph.D., presented on the topic of mindfulness and neuroscience at the University of Washington, where she is a professor in the Department of Neuroscience. She discussed the benefits of mindfulness as a form of self-reflection and self-discovery, and how it can help individuals to develop a greater sense of well-being and self-awareness.

Dr. Duran noted that mindfulness is a key performance indicator for many communities, and that it can help individuals to develop a greater sense of well-being and self-awareness.

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サンフェルナンドバレー本願寺仏教会

開教使 関谷 沙羅

2020年10月頃に既にクリスマスの用意をしている人達がいるという地元のニュースを見ましたが、多くの方々にとって今年は「もうそろそろ終わってくれ」と、早く終わってほしい年であるようです。いよいよ12月号ですから、やっとここまで来た！というところでありましょうか。事業もある一方で、コロナによって業績が向上した会社もたくさんあるといいます。どちらがいいですか？と問われれば、皆さんも「暗」は避けて、「明」側にいたかったと思われることでしょう。しかし、私達の暮らす世界はなかなか「明」ばかりではないのが悩ましいところです。振り返って、皆さんはいかがでしょうか？自宅に留まることを求められるなど、自由の利かない日々が続きますが、忍の心でもって、なんとか健やかに過ごしてくださっているでしょうか。私などお寺の皆さんに直接会えませんが、皆さんか屈託なく笑った時のお顔をよく思い出しています。思い出すだけで私まで笑顔にならせていただけます。人の笑顔にはなんだかすごい力があるのでしょう。輝かしい美しさ、一瞬の中の永遠のようなものが発せられるように…「口角を上けて！」と日々仰るので、戦闘用マスクを着けるかのように、頬の筋肉を使い、キュッと口角を無理やり上げて、上向きな口（ヘの字でなくて、Vの方）にしていました。そうすると、そこからはそのV字の口が引っ張ってくれるのです。驚きでした。戦闘時のリーダーと平常時のリーダーは異なるそうですが、V字の口はまさに闘う時の（つまり色々ジレンマがあるよう）体を一つにまとめあげてくれました。辛いんだけど、あの輝かしい時に向かうんだという意思のようなものを、口角に感じるんでしょうね。この身体の仲間達それぞれが、その方向に向かって努力してくれたように思います。ツライから笑顔になれないのではなく、笑顔が引きつっていますが、私を、次の環境を作るのです。身体とはそういうものなのでしょう。禅の言葉に聞く「随所に主となれ」という言葉を思い出します。いついかなる場合にあっても、主体性をもって、真実の自己に在り、力の限り生きていくならば、いつ何時も、束縛されることなく、それぞれが真の場所にある、いかなる外界の渦に巻き込まれるようなことはない、というような意味だそうです。それは私達でいえば、お念仏に生きる、ということでしょう。私達はお念仏が・あるから、そのような生き方が可能となるのです。先が見通せず、現在立っている場所が見えないような「暗」にある私達ではありますが、「明」はいまこの私達に届いてくださってあります。阿弥陀如来の「アミダ」は梵語で無量を意味し、「アミターバ」無量の光、「アミターユス」無量の命の、徳を備えた仏様が阿弥陀如来であります。親鸞聖人はこの阿弥陀如来のお浄土を「無量光明土なり」と仰せになりました。その光のはたらきをいただいて、私達は闇に落ちることがありません。どこまでもくい上げてくださるはたらきが届いてくださっているのて・す。自灯明、法灯明といわれるように仏教は私が外に何かを求めるのではなく、独り生きる中でここに全てあると知らされる教えであります。

法を拠りどころとするならば、このいのちは、こころは、何者にも留め置かれることはありません。さて、京都の御本山の飛地境内である角坊（すみのぼう）は、親鸞聖人のご往生の地と定められてあらわれますが、その少し北に上がったところの臨済宗妙心寺派大本山の妙心寺に、山田無文老師という官長がおられました。その方がご本に残した言葉はかつて私に、仏教こそ、この「暗」の世界に生きる私達にとっての真の依りどころである、と知らせてくださいました。私はその言葉に押されて、曲がりくねった道に思えつつも今振り返れば、ただ一つの白道であった仏道を歩ませていただいてきました。無文老師が河口慧海老師の講義に行かれた時に聞いた言葉とその喜びはこのようでありました。「『この地球を全部牛の皮で覆うならば、自由にどこへでもはだしで歩ける。が、それは不可能である。しかし自分の足に七寸の靴をはけば、世界中を皮で覆うたと同じことである。この世界を理想の天国にすることは、おそらく不可能である。しかし自分の心に菩提心をおこすならば、すなわち人類のために自己のすべてを捧げることを誓うならば、世界は直ちに天国になったにひとしい』というのである。わたくしはどんなに感激してこの一文を読んだであろうか。この言葉こそ、わたくしの心に第二の転機をあたえたものであった。」

わたくしは全世界の幸せを願いながらも、それを実行することがいかに己には難しいかを知らされます。しかし、私達自身が法を聞く人となり、法念仏によって智慧と慈悲のもとに生きる人となることは、その大きな革で世界を覆い救うことと同等のはたらきを持つというのです。今、生き難いこの場こそ、思い通りにならないところではありますが、私に与えられた場所、役割と知らされます。遠くに求めたり、声高の方もおられるかもしれません。でも、ここで、自身が仏教者として生きることを、自信教人信を、大切にせねばならぬ。教えをいただいて、あなたをしっかりと生きることて・す。私達には有り難いことに、『念仏者の生き方』が御門主様によって示されています。親鸞聖人は門弟に宛てたお手紙で、「あなた方は今、すべての人びとを救おうという阿弥陀如来のこ・本願のお心をお聞きし、愚かなる無明の酔いも次第にさめ、むさぼり・いかり・おろかさという三つの毒も少しずつ好まぬようになり、阿弥陀仏の薬をつねに好む身となっておられるのです」とお示しになられました。毒を撒かないよう慎み、阿弥陀如来がお見せになるおこころから学ばせていただいた生き方、穏やかな顔と優しい言葉で接する「和顔愛語（わげんあいご）」を、今共々に、この瞬間に大切にさせていただきましょう。辺境においても、「ここが仏様から私に与えられた場所」と、私達は力の限り生き抜くこと、輝いて生きることができるのです。こう考えると、航空会社の方々がお客様の前で「困った顔笑顔」をしているのも納得です。色々あるけど、ここは気持ちとは裏腹に、口角を上げるんだ、ということでしょう。彼らも泣くに泣けない状態でしょう。それでも、お客様の為と言いながら、自分や大切な方々、そしてかけがえのない日々の喜びのために、鍛えられた頬の筋肉でもって口角を上げて、奧歯を…という新たなニュースも聞こえてきています。トンネルの先に明かりが見えてきていると世界の人々が言い出しています。明かりは私達に安堵を与え、心に響きます。お念仏をいただく私達は既に灯明をいただいています。さあ、共々にお念仏申しましょう。南無阿弥陀仏

ダイヤルザダルマで日本語法話

コロナウイルスの世界的な感染拡大を受けて、BCAは電話をすれば5分間の法話を聞くことができる「ダイヤルザダルマ」プログラムがはじめている。電話での聴聞は、コンピューターをあまり使わない門信徒の方をはじめ多くの聞法者から好評を得ている。（800）817―7918に電話すると、原田総長の声で英語の方は1を日本語の方は2を押すように促される。

2を押すと約5分間の日本語の法話を聞くことができる。法話は毎週水曜日午後に更新される予定。2021年のBCA教化標語が「仏法をバーチャルでシェア～次元を超えて、おうちで聞法～」に決まった。英語での標語は「Sharing the Dharma Virtually」で、日本語は意訳をまじえたものにした。コロナ禍で多くの門信徒がインターネットで日曜礼拝や葬儀、法事などに自宅から参加している現状を表現していることにくわえ、今までご縁がなかった方々にも仏法が伝わるようにとの願いがこめられた標語となっている。

来年は報恩講です

2021年を迎えてまもなくすると、各寺院で報恩講がつとまります。報恩講は親鸞聖人の祥月命日で、浄土真宗でもっとも大切な法要です。親鸞聖人は1263年1月16日にご往生されました。聖人の祥月命日の前後に、私たちに念仏の教えを伝えてくださった親鸞聖人へ感謝（報恩）の思いを持って勤める集い（講）が報恩講です。いくつかの寺院は旧暦にあわせて11月28日前後に報恩講をお勤めされています。京都の西本願寺では1月9日から16日まで法要や法話などが行われ、例年インターネットで中継されているので、報恩講の期間中、西本願寺のウェブサイトをご覧になってください。また、皆さんのお寺の報恩講にお参りするようにしましょう。
総長メッセージ
ドジャースの優勝から学ぶ

私は大の野球ファンではなく、シーズン中はあまり試合を見ないのですが、ポストシーズンのプレーオフとワールドシリーズを見るのは大好きです。今年はロサンゼルス・ドジャースがプレーオフに進出し、決勝となるワールドシリーズでタンパベイ・レイズと戦いました。ワールドシリーズのすべての試合を観戦しましたが、両チームの素晴らしいピッチング、たくさんのホームラン、そして素晴らしい守備のプレーを見ることができ、とてもエキサイティングでした。

10月27日にドジャースが試合に勝利し優勝を決めました。チーム全員がフィールドに飛び出し、子供のように喜んでジャンプをする姿を見て、感動せずにいられませんでした。ワールドシリーズを制覇することは滅多にないことですし、選手や監督もチャンピオンになるため常に奮闘努力されたことでしょう。負けたチームも優勝することを目指して一生懸命プレーされていました。

ドジャースの選手たちは、まるでリトルリーグの選手たちが優勝したときにするように、お互いに抱き合ったり、おおいかぶさったりしていました。成長した大人が純粋に喜んで、あたかも子供に戻ったかのようなシーンを見ることに感動を誘います。

仏教での目覚めは「子供に戻る」ことだと説明することがあ る。けれどもそれは、テリブルトゥーと言われるイヤイヤ期をまた経験しろという意味ではありません。子供時代に持っていた本当の無邪気で誠実な心を、大人になってから「再発見」しなければならないということなのです。

仏教では年齢を重ねるごとに、子供の頃の無邪気さや自発性、簡単なことから得られる喜び、などが失われていくとみています。私たちが幼い時は、アイスクリームコーンを手にするだけでとても嬉しい気持ちになったのではないでしょうか？けれども大人になると、四つ星レストランでバナナフォスターやクレームブリュレのようなものを食べないと、子供の時に感じたような嬉しさが起こってこないようで、近所のバスキンアンドロビンスのアイスクリームコーンでは、そこまで喜べなくなってしまっているのです。

数年前、妻がまだ小学校で教えていた頃、学校では毎年「Read Across America」というプログラムがありました。先生が地域の人たちを教室に招いて子供たちに読み聞かせをするというもので、私も何回か妻のクラスで子供たちに本を読んだことがあります。ある年に、私が彼女の幼稚園のクラスで「しあわせ」についての本を読んだのですが、その話を読んだ後、少し子供たちと話してみようと思い、「何をした時に幸せな気持ちになるか？」とたずねてみました。おそらく「誕生日パーティーをしたこと」や「新しいゲームを買ったこと」とか、そんなことを言うのだろうと思っていました。

しかし、驚いたことに、一人の女の子が「ちょうちょが私の鼻に着地した時に幸せを感じる！」と言ったのです。私にはそんな答えが返ってくるとは夢にも思いませんでした。私だと「ラスベガスで大当たりしたとき」とか「ゴルフ場でナイスショットしたとき」とか「よいご法話だったと褒められたとき」などのことを言うと思います。「蝶が鼻の上に乗った時」なんてでてきません。そういう感性が、子供のような無邪気さ、自発性、純粋な喜びであり、仏教は、私たち大人はそのような、失ってしまった純粋さを取り戻すべきだと言っているのです。

教えを聞き、法に出遇うと、私たちも子供のような無邪気さに戻り、人生に起こるささやかな出来事にも喜びと感謝を見いだすことができます。