

SEVEN THUNDERS

newsletter

www.seventhunders.org

February 2018

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THE POVERTY OF GOD

by Leonard Marcel

One of the foremost of the Desert Fathers in fourth century Egypt was a man named Pambo. Abba Pambo was born about 303 A.D. Although illiterate in his early life, he was taught the scriptures after he became a monk and was ordained in 340. He was a student of the first of the Desert Fathers, St Antony the Great (251 – 356).

There are many stories about Abba Pambo's life in the desert. Perhaps the best known refers to the time a particular dignitary came to visit him. Pambo's disciples asked him to say some edifying words to the visitor. Pambo replied: "If he is not edified by my silence, he will surely not be edified by my words." Whenever he was asked to interpret part of the Scriptures or a spiritual saying, he would for a time be silent and then would say that he did not know that saying. If he were asked again, he would say nothing further. In 373, when he lay dying, a group of holy hermits stood by him. Pambo said: "From the time I came to this place in the desert and built this cell and dwelt here, I do not remember eating bread that was not earned by the work of my own hands, nor do I remember saying anything for which I had regret. And thus I go to God as one who has not even made a beginning in the service of God." Not even made a beginning in the service of God. Pambo was a man of silence, of humility and of great poverty of spirit. And also someone who was aware of a reality beyond or behind the experience of our material world.

It is of surpassing interest that we humans, just like Abba Pambo, seem to be so often aware of a reality beyond our sensory experience. We are attracted by a sense of the transcendent, attracted to a reality which surpasses not merely present experience, but even future potential. Beyond our ordinary, limited self, we find something deeper, or higher, which is beyond our control and which, in some mysterious manner, forms the ground of our being. Through contemplative practice, we have the opportunity to touch this and to experience this more intimately. Over time, contemplative practice shows us that underneath the familiar succession of sensations and

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SEVEN THUNDERS RETREATS & EVENTS

FIRST SATURDAY SITTINGS

Monthly "First Saturday" sittings continue in Bethany House at the Trappist Abbey just north of Lafayette, OR. Orientation is offered at 8:15 a.m. and formal group sitting begins at 9:00 a.m. A talk by the teacher begins at 10:00 a.m., which is followed by opportunities for private interviews with the teacher. Formal sitting ends at noon. There is no charge, but donations for teacher support and for the Trappist Abbey are gratefully accepted. Here is the schedule for the remainder of 2018:

- March 3, Leonard Marcel
 - April 7, Sr Joan Saalfeld
 - May 5, Sr Joan Saalfeld
 - June 2, Sr Joan Saalfeld
 - July 7, Leonard Marcel
 - August 4, Leonard Marcel
 - *September 8, Leonard Marcel
 - October 6, Sr Joan Saalfeld
 - November 3, Leonard Marcel
 - December 1, Brother Mark Filut
- * Indicates 2nd Saturday of month.

RETREAT SCHEDULE

- April 13 - 14 – Retreat in Bend, led by Leonard Marcel. More information on page 5.
- April 20 - 22 – Zen kosesshin at Stones and Clouds, led by Leonard Marcel. Registration information on page 12.
- June 28 - July 1 – CIR at Our Lady of Guadalupe Abbey, led by Sr Joan Saalfeld. Registration information on page 13.
- July 10 - 14 – Zen sesshin at Stones and Clouds led by Leonard Marcel. Registration on page 14.
- September 28 - 30 – Zen kosesshin at Stones and Clouds, co-led by Leonard Marcel & Lee Ann Nail. Registration information in next newsletter.

SEVEN THUNDERS LOCAL SITTINGS

PORTLAND AREA SITTINGS

■ Monday evenings at Stones and Clouds (*Rai'un*) Zendo, 7:00 to 8:30 p.m., zazen & dokusan. Contact: Leonard Marcel at 503.636.9009 or marcellj@hotmail.com.

SALEM SITTINGS

■ Wednesdays at the Salem Zen Center: 'On the Way Home' zazen from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. and an evening program (chanting, zazen, silent tea and Dharma talk) from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. 504.949.3188. SalemZenCenter.com

CORVALLIS SITTINGS

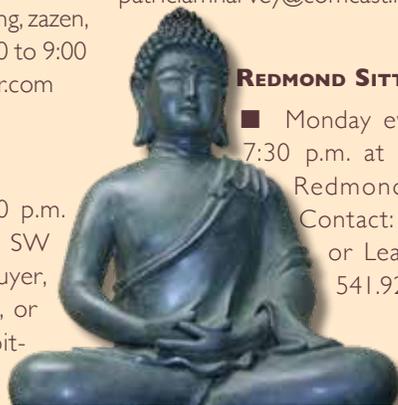
■ Monday evenings, 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. (except Labor Day) at CMLC, 128 SW 9th St, Corvallis. Contacts: Jane Huyer, 541.752.6597, ahuyer@comcast.net, or Glenna Pittock, 541.752.6139, gpittock@yahoo.com

OLYMPIA SITTINGS

■ Monday evenings, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m., and every Saturday morning from 6:00 to 8:00 a.m. in the Chapel at St. Michael Church, 1021 Boundary St. SE, Olympia, WA 98501. Three rounds of sittings (from 6:00 to 7:30) are followed by a reading from contemplative writers and a questions and comments period. Contact: Pat Harvey, 360.357.8401 patriciamharvey@comcast.net

REDMOND SITTINGS

■ Monday evenings, 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. at 529 NW 19th, Redmond, OR 97756. Contact: Richard Lance or Leanne Latterell at 541.923.7607. ✎



NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIPTIONS

Published three times a year, our newsletter is a benefit of Seven Thunders membership. Prospective members who would like to receive the newsletter can be added to the mailing list by contacting Jenny Brausch at Livinggreen@comcast.net. Complimentary copies will be sent for up to one year or until January dues requests are mailed. After that, if membership dues (full membership currently \$30 per year) are not received by March, you will be sent an announcements-only version of the newsletter. Please send membership dues to: Jenny Brausch, PO Box 3119, Albany, OR 97321. ✎

- December 4 - 9– Zen Rohatsu sesshin at Stones and Clouds led by Leonard Marcel. Registration information in next newsletter.

ZAZENKAI

Held at the Stones and Clouds (*Rai'un*) Zendo in Lake Oswego, led by Leonard Marcel. Details on page 6. Upcoming dates:

- February 17
- March 17
- October 20 ✎

OTHER PACIFIC NORTHWEST DIAMOND SANGHA GROUPS

NO SANGHA, PORT ANGELES

■ Teacher: Kristen Larson. Zazen: Saturday mornings, 8:00 to 9:30 a.m. For more information, please contact Kristen Larson at 360.452.5534 or NOSangha@aol.com.

THREE TREASURES SANGHA, SEATTLE

■ Teacher: Jack Duffy. Zazen at *Dharma Gate* (1910 – 24th Ave S.) on Wednesday evenings 6:30-8:30 p.m. and Friday mornings 6:30-7:30 a.m., followed by breakfast. For more information, please contact Larry Keil at 206.322.8759 or go to their website at: <http://three-treasures-sangha.org/> ✎



A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

by Gregory Smith

Since the summer of 2017, the Seven Thunders Board of Trustees has been meeting to consider long-term as well as short-term issues affecting the life of our organization. Recently, we have been discussing the contributions Seven Thunders makes to our region and have focused on the way it is unique in addressing the wishes of both Buddhists and Christians for contemplative opportunities. We have come to no conclusions about how this particular mission could or should be extended in any way, but it is influencing our thinking about the future and how we can best position ourselves to ensure that similar opportunities will be provided for people in the Pacific Northwest (and elsewhere) when Marcel Roshi is ready to pass the responsibilities he has been carrying for many years on to someone else. We are a small group of people who have nevertheless maintained a vital collective life for more than three decades. Current board members want to do what we can to sustain that vitality.

We recently distributed a short survey to help us in that planning process, especially as this relates to our retreats and other offerings. Half of the people to whom the survey was sent (27 out of 54) responded. Of those, 18 had participated in a Zen or Christian retreat with the summer and Rohatsu sesshins, the September kosesshin and October zazen getting the most responses. With regard to anticipated attendance at 2018 retreats, the January CIR, summer sesshin, and Rohatsu sesshin had the largest number of responses. With regard to shorter contemplative experiences, seven of the respondents regularly attend First Saturday sittings, and nine attend Monday night sittings at Stones and Clouds.

Seventy percent feel that the current schedule is about right; 12.5% would like to see more opportunities for extended sitting while 20% indicated that there are currently

more opportunities than they can make good use of. People suggested that family needs (40%), timing (36%), and location (44%) are the primary reasons that prevent them from participating in particular events.

Eighteen people responded to the question about possible changes to the current schedule. While most members are fine with how things are, here is a sample of some of the suggestions that were made:

- Explore the possibility of linking contemplative retreats to the Christian liturgical calendar.
- Consider holding residential retreats at Mary's Woods (Marylhurst campus).
- Possibly extend the length of kosesshins to match the length of Contemplative Intensive Retreats (CIRs).
- Always schedule sesshins over a weekend.

- Avoid scheduling the June CIR during the time of the Bach Festival.

With regard to other activities, 19 people responded. The majority expressed interest in continuing to sponsor occasional potlucks, service opportunities, or possible hikes.

Data like that summarized above are useful in helping our small and lean organization determine how best to use our resources. We offer a variety of events each year and not all are always well-attended. It is the board's responsibility to make the best guess we can about what that number should be. Your help in making those determinations is valued. Similarly, we invite your thoughts about the broader questions alluded to at the beginning of this column regarding our efforts to keep the Seven Thunders organization strong and healthy. Thank you for your participation in this effort.

Finally, a small reminder: If you have not yet renewed your membership for 2018, please do so. ✍





OFF THE CUSHION: CANCER AND PRACTICE

by Eric Roost

There was once a Zen tradition of the masters preparing a poem to be read at their dying. There were times when the master in fact didn't die. He was sometimes very pleased, not so much that he was still alive, but that he had a chance to improve on the poem for the next time he would need it. I have a similar pleasure about not dying from cancer. It gives me a chance, not to improve on my death poem, but to learn from my past experience with cancer to prepare me for the next time I confront my death, and – more importantly for me – to live this life fully.

I noticed a small lump, like a piece of chewing gum, on my right thigh nine years ago. I had an X-ray, which said it was a contusion – a bruise. So I didn't take it very seriously. Besides, it never occurred to me that cancer could show up in my leg. Three months later the lump was so big and so painful that I finally saw my doctor again. I had a new X-ray, and was immediately sent to a surgeon for exploratory surgery. I had a rare cancer – soft tissue sarcoma – in my thigh. It was very large (due to my inaction) and very aggressive. The surgeon said if it were her or someone she loved, she would not suggest treatment in Oregon; the cancer was unusual enough that I should go to a specialized cancer center. My daughter lived in New York, so a couple of days later I flew there and started treatment at Sloan Kettering. I had radiation for five weeks, and two weeks later the surgeon removed the tumor. After ten days in the hospital and another ten days

at a rehab hospital, I flew home to Eugene.

My case was transferred to a sarcoma team at OHSU in Portland. There was concern that the cancer would show up in my lungs or recur in my thigh. The first time my wife Anna and I went for the follow-up at OHSU, we sat in a small room, one of ten or twenty rooms in a row, each with a sarcoma patient and a loved one waiting for the oncologist to enter. He looked at the X-ray results and I could almost hear him say next door, "Okay, we will start you on chemotherapy ..." or "There was something there that I want to look at more closely. I want to schedule another X-ray that will let me look at the spot in more detail." But each time he looked at my results he said everything looked good and that I should schedule my next appointment. These first encounters were pretty scary, but as the years went by and the intervals between exams got longer and longer, I relaxed and left Anna at home. I had X-rays and MRIs every three months, then every four, then every six, and then yearly. Finally, last year the oncologist said that I was now such a low risk of recurring cancer that he no longer needed to see me. So I am cancer free, at least as much as any of us are.

When I was first told that I had cancer I imagined walking down a corridor with two doors ahead of me. One door closed and a second door, the cancer door, opened. I walked through. Robert Aitkin tells of his wife



Anne's response to Yamada Roshi's asking her about death: "It's like when a bus stops before you — you get on and go." My initial response to cancer started out like that. The door had opened and I walked through. But the state of equanimity didn't last. As the treatment wore on, I became consumed by terror, and then anger. I was very angry, but I didn't have anyone to be angry at. I concluded bitterly that Zen had let me down.

Over time I began to consider the possibility that it was me, not Zen, that had let me down. That began the quest for a practice that would support me when I am next faced

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ABOUT "OFF THE CUSHION"

Off the Cushion is a regular feature of our newsletter. We invite you to submit articles about what your practice means to you, of activities off the cushion which feel like an extension of your practice. Please e-mail your submissions to newsletter editor Greg Smith at gasmith@clark.edu. ✎



CANCER AND PRACTICE, *continued from page 4*

with a challenge that could overwhelm me.

I have been a Zen practitioner for a long time. I was drawn to the experience of deep peace and even ecstasy that I found in week-long sesshins. This was greatly rewarding, and I am deeply grateful and cannot say it was misguided. And yet, I was seeking an experience. It did not occur to me that Zen training might be for something more. I ignored the teaching of the Zen masters about the absence of a subject that experiences and an object that is experienced. Now I was beginning to see zazen as strengthening, moment after moment, a muscle – the muscle of letting go. This is not focused on the sesshin time, but on the next time the rubber hits the road, whether that is when a clerk in the check-out line is frustrating me or when I again am face to face with death.

I am moving toward daily practice and away from sesshin. I have often found daily practice unsatisfying, a failure when I am stuck in thoughts and unable to drop into deep peace. I am now seeing that those very thoughts may be the gift that I have been looking for: another opportunity to exercise the spiritual muscle that brings me back to my center. Most thoughts seem to dissipate without my doing anything. But thoughts with a lot of emotion attached to them, like the fear that I am going to die, are tenacious. The practice of returning to my breath on the easy thoughts builds my capacity to return to my breath when I am really scared or filled with any other emotion. I am finding it possible to respond when I notice I am caught in thought not with “there you go again” but with “thank you.”

I look back now on my past practice and can see its limitations. I can already see that my present practice based on letting go of thought may also be limited: it is zazen for a goal. I will probably some day be able to let go of this. It is only the latest step in my commitment to embodying Zen teaching into my own unique life. ✨

BEND RETREAT: APRIL 13-14, 2018

Our friends in Bend host two short weekend retreats in the Spring and Fall of each year, lasting from Friday evening to late Saturday afternoon. The retreats are led by Leonard Marcel. As the small practicing communities of Bend and Redmond include Zen, Christian and unaffiliated practitioners, these retreats incorporate forms from both Eastern and Western traditions.

The next Bend retreat will take place April 13 & 14, 2018. To reserve a place, please contact Leanne Latterell at 541.923.7607 or email her at: leannelatterell@bendbroadband.com.

Pictured below are the attendees of the Fall 2017 event. ✨



Standing, left to right: Joe Barrett, Chandra Smith, Marion Tripp, Tom Wykes, Sue Moir, Rom Roberts, Leanne Latterell, Arlene Watkins, Virginia Sponsler, Bill Weaver, Denise Fainberg, Cathie Landeros, Anthony Monteverdi. Seated: Leonard Marcel. Not pictured: Richard Lance, who is taking the photo.



JANUARY CONTEMPLATIVE RETREAT AT MARYLHURST

by Tom Davies

We were fortunate to be able to hold our winter CIR on the beautiful grounds of the Sisters of the Holy Names Marylhurst campus. Driving onto the site you are struck by the ambitious expansion of the Mary's Woods facility and the energy of that new project. You then pass the existing Mary's Woods retirement facility situated among stately old buildings reflecting the long history of the Sisters' mission in Northwest Oregon.

We stayed in the carefully remodeled Historic Laundry Building which dates back to the 1890s, where formerly laundry was done for all who lived on campus, including the orphanage and the college the sisters had founded. The new rooms all had en-suite baths, and the kitchen suited our needs very well. Meals were expertly prepared by Teresa Marcel off-site, and were consumed with gusto by an appreciative mob. This was no-sacrifice vegetarian fare, with much subtle flavoring; superb. Thank you Teresa!

Sr Joan Saalfeld was our teacher for the retreat and gave two quote filled conference talks along with daily interviews for retreatants. Sr Joan drew from her broad depth of knowledge of Christian mysticism, other faith traditions, zen practice and literature to touch on issues that inform our practice. Her first talk suggested an image of the everyday and the absolute, with the symbol of the everyday on a horizontal line, and the absolute on the vertical, with the point of intersection as our contact with the Kingdom of Heaven, the present moment. We easily miss that and become lost in a quest to make "progress," to get "there" even though we are already there, at the intersection. We may take comfort that even the early disciples with direct access to Jesus himself were caught up in competitive ego arguments over who would be the greatest in the Kingdom. Jesus admonished them to change their minds about what the Kingdom of Heaven is like. There is no greater or least, and those who want to realize it in their lives must become like children, whose minds are not clouded by concepts, and who live in the present moment.

We were also able to attend mass on Friday at the Mary's Woods Chapel, and as if on cue, Fr Richard Berg gave a homily on the parable of the mustard seed, in which something small and easily dismissed grows to great size. He later reminded us of The Wizard of Oz story, with the four companions undertaking a perilous journey to find what they already possessed.

Similarly, Sr Joan's second talk started with a literary quote from Alice Walker's, *The Color Purple*, in which the character Shug says in part, "...The thing I believe. God is inside you and inside everybody else. You come into the world with God. But only them that search for it inside find it. And sometimes it just manifest itself even if you not looking..." Joan talked about the inner and outer "troubles" that bring many of us to our practice. Embracing these sorrows can help free us from attachments and bring us to experience the transcendent God we can never understand or

communicate to others, though we feel compelled to talk about it anyway.

Mostly we sat in silence. It is truly a blessing to sit with so many experienced long-term meditators. Special thanks to our time-keeper and cool-under-pressure while multi-tasking Kailyn Kent. She kept us well timed, in line, and on our cushions. Order was preserved; chaos averted.

In the end, Sr Joan says, and we probably all know this, we do the best we can. We return to our cushions, chairs and benches, and we return to our practice, again and again. She ended with words from Julian of Norwich, "All will be well, and all will be well and all manner of things shall be well."

Thank you all and especially Sr Joan for an excellent retreat! ✨



Standing, left to right: Bob Smith, Patti Guptill, Kaylin Kent, Eric Roost, Ed Glad and Jane Huyer. Seated, left to right: Helen Jackson, Sr Joan Saalfeld and Sr Sandra Lincoln. Not pictured: Tom Davies, who is taking the photo.



ROHATSU 2017:

by Dan Dickinson

Greeted by a magnificent lunar experience,
We danced an ancient dance with new partners,
In expectation of Venus.

First light exposing three guardians,
Wy'east, Klickitat, and Loowit,
Cloaked in radiant ptarmigan,
Backed by azure and pink,
Their mother screaming her frigid message,
"Stay alert, do not blink."

Stillness arrived at the door;
A chilled necessity inviting us in,
Hands raise and lower,
What is it we see,
Is this respect or just what we do?
All potential presents.

A first connection,
Let us touch, let us hold,
No more you, no more me.

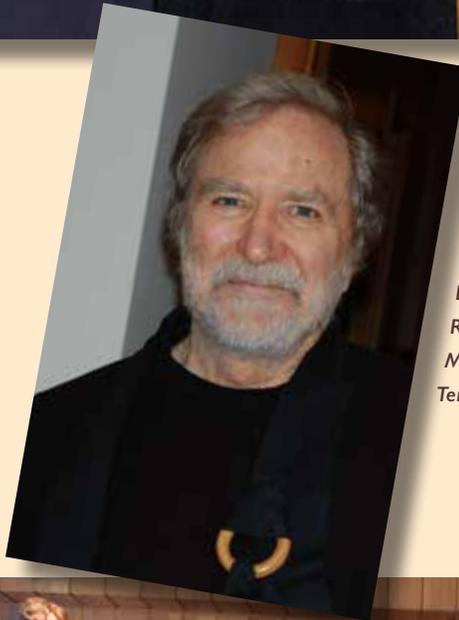
Yen Men teaching, look deep within,
Churning water still clouds our sight,
Ching Ch'ing and Hsiang Lin encouraging "persevere."

The shijo sings with many voices, always the same message,
"Come quickly and join me,
Follow me now,
Quietly we go,"
A silent finger gesturing, come here,
Always pulling us inward.

We dance through the still, silent, day,
Steps remain the same, over and over and over,
Dancing and dancing,
Backs and knees stiffening,
The discomfort, bringing intimacy and passion.

Morning star,
What have we been given,
Where are we?
Now and here.

A last bow,
"This ends our sesshin," announces the inkin. ⚡



Above: Talking after sesshin. From left to right, Matthew Lawrence, Katy Bain, Greg Smith and Dan Dickinson. Left: Eric Roost. Bottom: Standing, left to right: Matthew Lawrence, Greg Smith, Dan Dickinson, Katy Bain, Josh Shindler, Lisa Rosser, Eric Roost and Neale Povey. Seated: Teresa Marcel and Leonard Marcel. Photos by Teresa Marcel.





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reflections, there rests something more permanent in which space and time are transformed into vistas of an inner realm with its own rhythms and perspectives. The eminent psychologist of religion, William James (1842 -1910), claimed that all around our rational consciousness, and separated from it by the flimsiest of screens, there are potential forms of consciousness of a completely different nature. To these forms, to this deeper or higher order of being, our contemplative practice can provide access.

For the contemplative, it is the point where that Ultimate Reality we call God and the soul touch, the divine basis on which human selfhood rests. It is what Johannes Tauler (1300 -1361) called "the ground of the soul," and what Meister Eckhart (1260 - 1328) called "the little castle." Catherine of Siena (1347 - 1380) speaks of the "interior home of the heart" and Teresa of Avila (1515 - 1582) the "inner castle." John of the Cross (1542 - 1591) calls it the "house at rest ... in darkness and concealment." And the poet, Mark Strand (1934-2014), called it: "...the one clear place given to us when we are alone."

All of these metaphors suggest a hidden area of the soul of divine centrality, the center of created being which remains permanently united with God's creative act. On the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, Michelangelo (1475 - 1564) has depicted Adam's outstretched hand just being released from the divine finger and an empty space beginning to separate the two. The contemplative, however, knows through continual practice that this is an illusion, that the hand and the finger continue to touch in a common space. That space is the ground of being, what Plotinus (204 - 270) called "the sanctuary without images." In this "sanctuary without images," the contemplative over time comes to experience that in deepest, or highest, nature the human being is more than a human being.

And what is found at the deepest level of that inward journey is nameless, so nameless, says Eckhart that God upon entering that depth loses God's own name. Eckhart writes: "Back in the womb from which I came, I had no god, and merely was myself." Being as such has no names. The Godhead is before it is named. Even we creatures in our essence must remain nameless in the pure core of

divine Presence. Here we do not will or desire anything beyond existence.

Only in our creaturely, phenomenal form does "God" confront us. "God" is the name which humans invented after a long history of religious experience. First there were the gods, then God, but that pure Existence, the Godhead, has remained and remains beyond any names. The Hindus say: "No word can touch it. No name can soil it." That to which we affix the name "God" belongs to the order of manifestation, the phenomenal realm, and so do all divine names and attributes, even the most sacred. We have "enriched" God with these names and attributes, but at the same time have also impeded our ability to experience God in the naked poverty of existence.

To reach that realm of primeval poverty, my poverty and also God's poverty, which is beyond all names and categories is the goal - if we may speak of a goal at all - of the contemplative path. In order to walk that path, the soul must abandon not only its possessions, but its self-will, and also its creaturely identity and even its concepts of God. In

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his sermon, "Blessed are the Poor," Eckhart exhorts us that "if one wants to be truly poor, one must be as free from creaturely will as before one had been born." In other words, totally detached from that individual existence to which we are so clingingly attached. We know that this little ego-self is insignificant, but we think we had better hold onto it anyway, since without it we may have nothing left. Yet, that is precisely the self we need to surrender, if we are to partake of God's own poverty.

Inevitably, we shall become discouraged about our efforts to surrender and so feel at some distance from God. Yet, the soul that worries about the quality of its relationship with God has not become truly poor. The person must relinquish all ambition to acquire any knowledge of God. In other words, as long as we are still concerned about finding a place for God within ourselves, we are not truly poor. It is God who must create God's own place in each of us. It is for us to surrender the "God" we know for that is a God of our own construction and a private possession. Like St Pambo, we must become poor and also humble.

Ultimate poverty is also true humility. Too often we confuse humility with false modesty. True humility consists in the honest acceptance of our abilities and our imperfections. Poverty and humility are virtues for giving way to God, since to be united with God is simply to be devoid of self.

The first of the great Beatitudes is: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." In Aramaic this is rendered as: *Tubwayhun l'meskenaez b'rukh d'dilhounhine mlkutha d'ashnaya*. The word meskenae conveys the image of a secure home base and of devotedly holding fast to that. One is "poor" for the lack of such a home base or resting point. Meister Eckhart said that one is "poor in spirit" who does not even have God. The word ruhk conveys the image of "spirit," "breath," or "that which animates." What has come to us as "poor in spirit" is a traditional Aramaic meaning "humble" and behind this the roots tell us that when one is at-

tuned through the breath to God one does not put oneself forward inappropriately. One's readiness for action rests in the breathful awareness of the eternal silence of God's constant silence. From a contemplative perspective, this beatitude can be translated as: "Happy and aligned with Ultimate Reality are those of humble spirit who find their home in breathing; to them belongs union with the Source of all life."

In a similar vein, amongst the writings of the Rhineland contemplatives, one often finds the word *Gelassenheit*. *Gelassenheit* means more than "resignation" or "submission," as it is usually rendered into English. It means, in addition, waiting and expectation, openness without demands, willingness to be drawn into God's life. Only through this *Gelassenheit* do we reach the point of nowhere in the midst of all movement, the nothingness at the heart of all being. We cannot actively seek it. As Thomas Merton (1915 – 1968) cautioned, "Do not try too hard. Do not be too much concerned about your own perfection and progress from day to day. Once you become aware of yourself as seeker, you become a possessor. Then you are lost. Yet, if you are content to be lost, you will be found without knowing it, precisely because you are lost. For you are at the last nowhere, which is where God is." That dark cloud of "nowhere" also contains the brightness of God's light, but only one who has become totally poor and genuinely humble will be able to perceive that light through contemplative practice. John of the Cross tells us that such a soul can become "illuminated" through the regular practice of contemplative prayer.

No spiritual life, no contemplative journey, can exist without passing through an intense



awareness of the emptiness of the creature. This is the lesson of absolute poverty. This message is far removed from the aspirations of a culture predominantly bent on self-fulfillment, self-achievement, and especially self-gratification. Yet perhaps that is the very reason it so powerfully appeals to those who seek to lead a spiritual, indeed contemplative, life in our time. The very attitude toward existence required for a life of faith and disciplined practice to make sense has vanished. And yet, amazingly enough, deep down, men and women still nurture the aspiration of breaking through the confinements of their secular lives into the free space of transcendence, the free space of Abba Pambo and Eckhart, of Catherine of Siena, John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila and all of our ancestors in this tradition. On this path, we learn a new attitude: to be fully present to each moment with unconditional trust without knowing what it is we trust; to be fully present to each moment with a willingness to let go without knowing if anyone will catch us; to be fully present to each moment with preparedness to wait without knowing whether we will be met.

With these qualities we can transcend the world of dualities and experience the unadorned divine life intimately so that each day, each moment, with each breath we can bring that open, receptive, grateful poverty to all whose lives we touch. ✎



FUKANZAGENGI: DOGEN'S FUNDAMENTALS FOR ZAZEN



As a reminder about fundamentals, we invite you to read through Dogen's instructions about the act of doing seated zazen.

Translated by Dan Welch and Kazuaki Takahashi. Moon in a Dewdrop: Writings of Zen Master Dogen, (N.Y.: North Point Press; Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1985), pp. 29-30.

1. Practicing Zen is zazen. For zazen a quiet place is suitable. Lay out a thick mat. Do not let in drafts of smoke, rain or dew. Protect and maintain the place where you settle your body. There are examples from the past of sitting on a diamond seat (seat beneath the Bodhi tree) and sitting on a flat stone covered with a thick layer of grass.

Day or night the place of sitting should not be dark; it should be kept warm in winter and cool in summer.

2. Set aside all involvements and let the myriads things rest. Zazen is not thinking of

good, not thinking of bad. It is not conscious endeavor. It is not introspection.

Do not desire to become a Buddha; let sitting or lying down drop away. Be moderate in eating and drinking. Be mindful of the passing of time, and engage yourself in zazen as though saving your head from fire. On Mt. Huangmei the Fifth

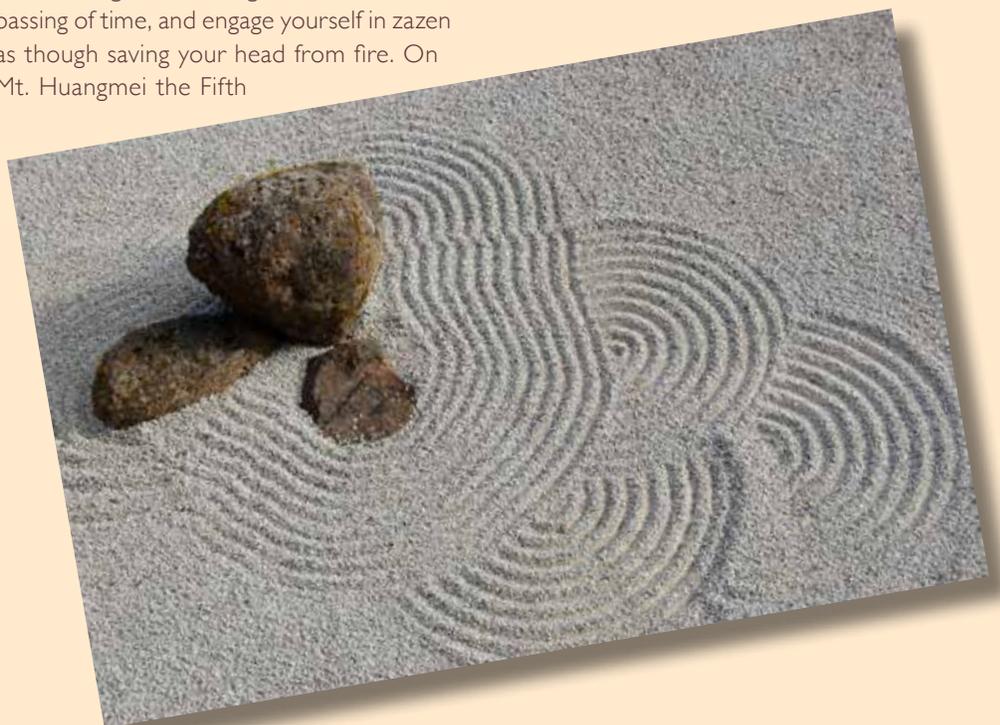
Ancestor practiced zazen to the exclusion of all other activities.

3. When sitting zazen, wear the kashaya (patched robe) and use a round cushion. The cushion should not be placed all the way under the legs, but only under the buttocks. In this way the crossed legs rest on the mat and the backbone is supported with the round cushion. This is the method used by all buddha ancestors for zazen.

Sit either in the half-lotus position or in the full-lotus position. For the full-lotus put the right foot on the left thigh and the left foot on the right thigh. The toes should lie along the thighs, not extending beyond. For the half-lotus position, simply put the left foot on the right thigh.

4. Loosen your robes and arrange them in an orderly way. Place the right hand on the

Continued on page 11





FUKANZAGENGI, *continued from page 10*

left foot and the left hand on the right hand, lightly touching the ends of the thumbs together. With the hands in this position, place them next to the body so that the joined thumb-tips are at the navel.

Straighten your body and sit erect. Do not lean to the left or right; do not bend forward or backward. Your ears should be in line with your shoulders, and your nose in line with your navel.

Rest your tongue against the roof of your mouth, and breathe through your nose. Lips and teeth should be closed. Eyes should be open, neither too wide, nor too narrow. Having adjusted body and mind in this manner, take a breath and exhale fully.

Sit solidly in samadhi and think not-thinking. How do you think not-thinking? Nonthinking. This is the art of zazen.

Zen is not learning to do concentration. It is the dharma gate of great ease and joy. It is undefiled practice-enlightenment. ✎



ZAZENKAI & STUDY GROUP AT STONES & CLOUDS

Zazenkai are an opportunity for intense practice with the Sangha in a shorter time-frame than either a Kosesshin or a Sesshin, as they are limited to one day only.

There will be three zazenkai in 2018:

- February 17
- March 17
- October 20

Zazenkai take place from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. In addition to formal zazen, the day includes a sutra service, teisho, and dokusan. Please bring a brown bag lunch, to be eaten in silence. Teas and water will be provided.

You are asked to wear plain conservative clothing of dark or subdued color – no shorts or sleeveless tops, please. Zabutons, zafus, low and high benches will be provided, but if you have a favorite zafu or bench (no chairs) please feel free to bring it.

While there is no set fee for zazenkai, a **donation of \$20** is requested and much appreciated to help cover costs. Simply leave your donation in the dana basket in the hallway.

Zazenkai is followed by a study group, to which all are invited. Study group lasts approximately one hour, and is centered on a reading agreed upon at the end of the previous study group.

Please contact Teresa Marcel at tdmarcel@mac.com or 503.636.9009 to reserve a place for Zazenkai, and for more information. ✎



**KOSESSHIN AT STONES AND CLOUDS ZENDO
APRIL 20 - 22, 2018**



The next kosesshin at Stones & Clouds will take place April 20 - 22, 2018. It will begin Friday, April 20, 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., continue Saturday, April 21, 6 a.m. to 9 p.m., and conclude Sunday, April 22, 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. This kosesshin will be led by Leonard Marcel.

RETREAT FEE:

Kosesshin: \$75 members, \$95 non-members. Includes all meals (vegetarian) on Saturday and Sunday breakfast.

A deposit of half the retreat fee is required with your registration; payment in full is appreciated. Any balance is due no later than two weeks before retreat begins. Should you need to cancel, all but \$25 is refundable until that time; after two weeks prior to the retreat, \$35 is refundable.

You will receive a confirmation from the registrar. If for any reason you find the full fee a barrier to attending, please contact the registrar requesting a scholarship. Affordability need not be a deterrent to attendance. Full or partial scholarships are almost always available for Seven Thunders members. Donations for such scholarships are both appreciated and tax-deductible.

RETREAT REGISTRATION:

To register for the retreat, please either pay your fee or deposit online at www.SevenThunders.org or send a check (payable to **Seven Thunders**) to retreat organizer and registrar **Teresa Marcel, 1333 Skyland Drive. Lake Oswego, OR 97034**. Questions? Please contact Teresa Marcel at 503.636.9009 or tdmarcel@mac.com

RETREAT DETAILS:

Space is limited to a maximum of 16. Additional applicants will be wait-listed in case of cancellations.

This is a non-residential retreat. For non-commuter participants, limited accom-

modations in members' homes may be available. Information about local accommodations and carpooling will be sent to out-of-town registrants upon request after receiving your registration and deposit.

As always, total silence will be observed for the entire sesshin. All attending are required to participate fully in the daily sitting and work schedule, including cleanup at the end of the retreat.

You are asked to wear plain conservative clothing of dark or subdued color during sesshin. No shorts or sleeveless tops, please. Zabutons, zafus, low and high benches will be provided, but if you have a favorite zafu or bench (no chairs) please feel free to bring it. ⚡

**REGISTRATION FORM
STONES & CLOUDS KOSESSHIN**

APRIL 20 - 22, 2018

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

I will be able to provide accommodation for ____ people.

Special dietary requirements: _____

I will bring my own zafu or bench. This is my first Seven Thunders Retreat.

I request a scholarship of \$ _____ I enclose a donation of \$ _____

Current Seven Thunders members:

I enclose full payment of \$75 (the member rate).

I enclose a \$35 deposit (\$40 balance due 2 weeks before retreat begins)

Not a current Seven Thunders member:

I enclose \$95.

I enclose a \$50 deposit (\$45 balance due 2 weeks before retreat begins)

Please make checks payable to Seven Thunders.



CONTEMPLATIVE INTENSIVE RETREAT (CIR) JUNE 28 - JULY 1, 2018

The retreat will be held at Our Lady of Guadalupe Trappist Abbey, Lafayette, Oregon. It will begin with supper at 6:00 p.m., Thursday, June 28 continue all day Friday and Saturday, and end after lunch on Sunday (about 1:30 p.m.), July 1. Please arrive well before 6:00 p.m. Thursday, check in, and get your room assignment at the Porter's Lodge.

Sr Joan Saalfeld, SNJM, will lead our retreat, sit with us, present talks and offer interviews. Sr Joan is a member of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary currently living and working in Portland, Oregon. She has studied and practiced Zen and Contemplation for 35 years, first with Robert Aitken, then with Fr Willigis Jaeger, OSB, and most recently with Fr Pat Hawk, C.Ss.R., who encouraged her to teach in CIRs.

The retreat differs somewhat from our standard CIR in that it integrates most of the monastic liturgies into our schedule — from Lauds and Mass (6:30 a.m.), through the Day Hour (12:30 p.m.), Vespers (5:30 p.m.), and Compline (7:30 p.m.). Vigils (4:15 a.m.) is optional. Our normal sitting schedule will begin at 6:00 a.m. and conclude at 9:00 p.m. This is a short and intense CIR retreat. All retreatants must commit to participating fully in the entire schedule of group sittings.

The Abbey's guest facilities limit overnight attendance to 9 people. Each retreatant will have one of the two private rooms in a guest unit, the two sharing a toilet and shower. Meals are prepared by the monks; the fare is vegetarian, simple, and balanced.

We will sit together in the meditation hall in Bethany House, which is big enough to seat about 20 of us, as well as the few monks who will sometimes join us. This means we can accommodate 10-12 additional retreatants who wish to attend part of a day as commuters or who have a place to sleep outside the monastery and who will provide their own (brown bag) meals.

While there is plentiful sitting equipment on hand at Bethany House, you may wish to bring your own to be sure you have what you need or prefer. Dark, layered clothing is right for this occasion. Distracting jewelry and perfumes are not. Bed and bath linens are provided.

The total fee for the 9 overnights is \$310. The fee is \$280 for Seven Thunders members. Partial scholarships are available to Seven Thunders members. The deposit to hold your place is \$75, with the remaining balance due on arrival at the Abbey. All but \$25 will be refunded for cancellation re-

quests received by retreat coordinator on or before June 1; after that date, all but \$50 will be refunded. Registrations will be made in the order of postmark dates, alphabetically by last name within each date.

When the 9 overnights places have been filled, all but three of the remaining registration requests and fee payments will be returned. The three requests will be notified of their status and, if desired, held on the waiting list. A similar process applies to those who choose to register as commuters. Commuter fees: \$75, two whole days or more; \$40 one whole day; \$25 half day. No deposit, pay on site. Please contact retreat coordinator Mike Seely at seelym@ohsu.edu with any questions and for details on where to return this completed form with your check. Alternatively, you may e-mail your registration to the retreat coordinator and pay the deposit/fee online at SevenThunders.org (Click on the 'Contribute' tab and follow the donation process, leaving a note in the last window saying that this is your CIR fee payment.)

Please note: since the rooms will be available, the Abbey invites any 9 of us to stay on another night (Sunday night) and leave the next morning by 10 a.m.; Sunday supper and Monday breakfast included for \$35 total. This opportunity is available to retreat commuters as well as overnights. ⚡

REGISTRATION FORM

CONTEMPLATIVE INTENSIVE RETREAT (CIR) JUNE 28 - JULY 1, 2018

I wish to register as a full-time overnight guest of the abbey (deposit required)

I wish to register as a day-to-day commuter (no deposit required)

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Special needs _____

I commit to participating fully in the entire schedule of formal group contemplation.



Full payment of \$310 enclosed

\$280 for Seven Thunders members

Deposit of \$75 enclosed

Donation for Scholarships \$ _____

Request a Scholarship of \$ _____

I wish to reserve a room for Sunday night, June 30, and will pay then.



SUMMER SESSHIN AT STONES AND CLOUDS ZENDO JULY 10 – 14, 2018



This is a non-residential retreat. For non-computer participants, information about local accommodations is available. Limited accommodations in members' homes may also be available. Information about local accommodations and carpooling will be sent to out-of-town

of the retreat. You are asked to wear plain conservative clothing of dark or subdued color during sesshin. No shorts or sleeveless tops, please. Zabutons, zafus, low and high benches will be provided, but if you have a favorite zafu or bench (no chairs) please feel free to bring it.

The 2018 Seven Thunders Zen Summer Sesshin will be held at the Stones and Clouds Zendo in Lake Oswego, OR, from Tuesday, July 10, at 5 p.m. until Saturday morning July 14, at 10 a.m.. Sesshin will be led by Leonard Marcel. Registration deadline is June 20. Registrations will be accepted on a first come basis. As this sesshin is usually well subscribed, early registration and payment is encouraged. Part-time attendance will be possible.

registrants upon receiving your registration and deposit.

As always, total silence will be observed for the entire sesshin. All attending are required to participate fully in the daily sitting and work schedule, including cleanup at the end

To register for the retreat, complete this form and send it with your deposit to retreat organizer and registrar: **Teresa Marcel, 1333 Skyland Drive. Lake Oswego, OR 97034.** Please make checks payable to **Seven Thunders.** Alternatively, you may e-mail your registration to the registrar and pay the deposit/fee online at SevenThunders.org (Click on the 'Contribute' tab and follow the donation process, leaving a note in the last window saying that this is your Summer sesshin fee payment.) Questions? Please contact Teresa Marcel at 503.636.9009 or tdmarcel@mac.com ⚡

REGISTRATION FORM STONES & CLOUDS SUMMER SESSHIN, JULY 10 – 14, 2018

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

I will be able to provide accommodation for _____ people.

Special dietary requirements: _____

I will bring my own zafu or bench. This is my first Seven Thunders Retreat.

I request a scholarship of \$ _____ I enclose a donation of \$ _____

Current Seven Thunders members:

Not a current Seven Thunders member:

I enclose full payment of \$180
(the member rate).

I enclose \$210, please apply \$30 to
Seven Thunders member dues.

I enclose a \$80 deposit
(\$100 balance due by June 20)

I enclose a \$80 deposit
(\$130 balance due by June 20).

I enclose \$110, deposit & member dues
(\$100 balance due by June 20).

Space is limited to a maximum of 16. Additional applicants will be wait-listed in case of cancellations. Sesshin fee is \$210 (member rate \$180) and includes all meals (vegetarian). A member rate is available to regular members at all sesshins and retreats throughout the membership-year. Non-members may choose to join Seven Thunders (dues are \$30). They then qualify for the member rate at this and other Seven Thunders regular retreats and sesshin through the remainder of that calendar year. A deposit of \$80 is required with your registration; payment in full is appreciated. Any balance is due by June 22. Should you need to cancel, all but \$25 is refundable until June 22; after that date all but \$80 is refundable. You will receive a confirmation from the registrar. If for any reason you find the full fee a barrier to attending, please check the box on the registration form requesting a "scholarship" or contact the registrar. Affordability need not be a deterrent to attendance. Full or partial scholarships are almost always available. Donations for such scholarships are both appreciated and tax-deductible.

Please make checks payable to Seven Thunders.