



Bishop's Office Newsletter

Soto Zen Buddhism Hawaii Office

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Bishop's Message: Bishop Shugen Komagata

Aloha from the Bishop's Office,

As we continue through these unprecedented times, I hope that you and your family are doing well. The novel Coronavirus has infected millions of people worldwide with COVID-19 in a little over six months, and the devastation of this pandemic will certainly continue for quite some time. I pray that we will be able to weather these turbulent times and soon be able to return to a life of normalcy.

The longer days and warm weather of the summer months have long announced the arrival of the annual Bon Season here in Hawaii. Unfortunately, because of the pandemic, our Soto Mission temples here in Hawaii have been forced to modify our Bon Services to follow the restrictions on physical distancing. Thanks to modern technology, Virtual Bon Services—services that will be filmed and broadcast over social media—will allow people to still be a part of this year's ceremonies. I am happy that most of our temples in Hawaii will be able to observe Bon Service this year using this method.

Bon is a time for us to remember our loved ones. Even though our congregations won't be able to physically visit the temple for Bon Services this year, it is still important to take this time to cultivate our ability to love, appreciate, and celebrate the lives we are so fortunate to live. It is important to also pause to honor and remember those who are no longer with us physically. The quote, "Heijoshin kore do," interpreted as "the Buddhist path lies in the ordinary mind of our daily lives," comes to my mind during this time of Bon. It shows us that even though we cannot physically participate in Bon Services this year, the true meaning of Bon—having a sense of "gratitude"—can still manifest itself within our hearts each day in our daily lives.

Recently, we have seen the relaxation of some social and travel restrictions in Hawaii. Nonetheless, in the best interest of everyone's safety and health, I recommended that all the Soto Mission Bon Dances be cancelled this season. I hope that the global environment will improve in time for next year's Bon Season!

Let us extend our prayers to all the people who have lost their lives because of the novel Coronavirus, and those millions of people who have been infected worldwide. And again, please continue to take care of yourself and your family.

In Gassho,

Bishop Shugen Komagata



Shushogi, Chapter 5: Verses 26-29

By Rev. Jiko Nakade
Daifukuji Soto Mission



V. *Practicing Buddhism and Repaying Blessings*

“Arousing the thought of enlightenment is mainly something that human beings in this world should do. Should we not rejoice that we have had the opportunity to be born in this land of the Buddha Shakyamuni and to have encountered him?”

Have you ever considered how fortunate you are to have encountered the teachings of the Buddha and ancestors? When I think about the circumstances of my own birth and the compassion of my birth parents which resulted in my being raised in Hawai'i, I feel a surge of gratitude. Had I not been given to my adoptive parents who lived in Hawaii, I could have grown up in a small town in Ohio without ever having encountered the Buddha-Dharma. But, thanks to the supreme generosity, love, and thoughtfulness of my Aunt Alice and Uncle Bob (my birth parents), who gave me as a gift to my adoptive parents whose baby had died, I was carried to Hawaii as an infant, immediately immersed in a Buddhist household, and raised by loving parents who took me to Daifukuji throughout my childhood. Truly, I rejoice in my good fortune and wish to repay the blessings bestowed upon me by the buddhas & bodhisattvas, as well as by my teachers, ancestors, and two sets of parents. Had the circumstances been different, even by a hair, I might not have had the good fortune of encountering the Buddha Shakyamuni. If you are reading this, it means that you, too, have had the good fortune of encountering the wondrous Dharma. Let us rejoice together!

“We should calmly consider that if this was a time when the true dharma had not yet spread in the world, we would not be able to encounter it, even if we vowed to sacrifice our very lives for it. We who have at present encountered the true dharma should make such a vow. Do we not know that the Buddha said, ‘When you meet their teachers who expound supreme enlightenment, do not consider their family background, do not regard their appearance, do not dislike their faults, and do not think about their conduct. Simply, out of respect for wisdom, bow to them three times daily, honor them, and do not cause them any grief.’”

It is said in our Buddhist tradition that it is not an easy thing to encounter the Buddha-Dharma. In fact, not only is it considered rare to be born into human life — just think of how many different kinds of life forms there are! — it is even rarer to encounter the precious Dharma which liberates one from suffering.

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Using an ancient metaphor, to have this opportunity to meet teachers such as the Buddha who expound supreme enlightenment is as rare as a blind turtle in a vast ocean swimming up to the surface and, by chance, poking its head through a ring that just happened to be there. In other words, when, in the course of one's life, one meets a sensei who teaches the Dharma, regard this as a precious opportunity and don't hesitate to demonstrate your respect and appreciation to your teacher and sangha. You have indeed received a great blessing!

“That we are now able to see the Buddha and hear the dharma is due to the blessings that have come to us through the practice of every one of the buddhas and ancestors. If the buddhas and ancestors had not directly transmitted the dharma, how could it have reached us today? We should be grateful for the blessings of even a single phrase; we should be grateful for the blessings of even a single dharma. How much more should we be grateful for the great blessings of the treasury of the eye of the true dharma, the supreme great dharma. The injured bird did not forget its blessings, but showed its thanks with the rings of three ministries. The trapped tortoise did not forget its blessings, but showed its thanks with the seal of Yubu. If even animals repay their blessings, how could humans ignore them?”

One's joy and appreciation are heightened when one considers how the Dharma has been transmitted, heart to heart and mind to mind, from the Buddha Shakyamuni who lived 2,600 years ago in India to people like ourselves, living in the 21st century. Just the fact that the Dharma has passed through many lands and reached us is mind-blowing! One can only imagine the countless number of men and women, monks and laypersons alike, who've diligently practiced the Buddha Way and transmitted the Dharma light through the ages! Had they not done so, we today would not have received even a single verse of the Dharma. Truly, we are blessed. Therefore, let us not take this precious opportunity for granted. Like the injured bird and the trapped tortoise who were recipients of acts of great compassion & showed their gratitude, let us rejoice and offer our thanks, for we have received something of great value. We have received the gift of Dharma which excels all other gifts.

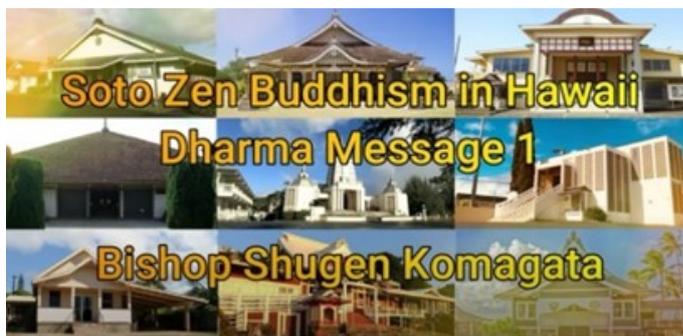
“Our expression of gratitude should not consist in any other practices; the true path of such expression lies solely in our daily practice of Buddhism. This means that we practice without neglecting our lives day to day and without being absorbed in ourselves.”

How do we express our gratitude to the buddhas and ancestors? Dogen Zenji is saying that we do so through our daily practice of the Buddha Way; that is, by living each moment of our precious lives with mindfulness and by dedicating our practice to the welfare of others, so that others, too, may be liberated from suffering and attain spiritual peace. To have such an aspiration is the Way of the Bodhisattva. To live in such a way is to repay the blessings of the buddhas and ancestors.



Online Dharma Message

Soto Zen Buddhism in Hawaii is providing online Dharma talks on Youtube and Facebook every two weeks. You can watch videos of Bishop Shugen Komagata and some Hawaii ministers' Dharma messages by using the link or scanning the QR code below.



Youtube Page Link

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCsTHV_8A59kEfZlBRImDtRw

Facebook Page Link

<https://www.facebook.com/Soto-Zen-Buddhism-in-Hawaii-111602773848472/>



Please scan the QR code with your smartphone to access the website!!



Following is the schedule;

Rev. Ryokei Ishii June 28, 2020
Rev. Shinsho Hata July 12, 2020
Rev. Hirosato Yoshida July 26, 2020

Rev. Shuji Komagata August 9, 2020
Rev. Shoryu Fukagawa August 23, 2020
Rev. Tom Wright September 6, 2020

