

禅のこだま

# EKIZEN

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHINNYO-JI SANGHA

SPRING 2013- N. 14 year IV



**11 March 2013, two years after the earthquake in Japan,  
the Great Bell was sounded in all Sōtōshū temples in  
Commemoration of the tragic event.**



Teacher Shinnyo and the Sangha after the Commemoration

## **Messaggio del Rev. Koichi Sasaki, Presidente di Sōtōshū**

To Soto Zen Temples and Centers around the World - 23rd of January, 2013

The Second Anniversary of the "The Great East Japan Earthquake"

A Request for a Memorial Service and Tolling of Tempie Bells.

Time moves very fast. We are now approaching the second anniversary of those who lost their lives in the "The Great East Japan Earthquake."

In the affected areas, the progression of reconstruction has been slower than expected. There are still many people who are forced to live with the discomfort of temporary homes. In addition, the damage caused by the diffusion of radioactive materials from the Fukushima nuclear power plant has had a significant impact on everyone's lives.

Soto Zen will continue to support and help the disaster victims and temples of the affected areas.

Furthermore, we would like to pay homage and thank temples nationwide, and all other concerned parties, for all the support, reconstruction efforts and volunteer activities in the affected areas.

For the second anniversary of the 3.11 disaster, Soto Zen is calling all temples and Zen centers to:

- Sound their temple bells at 2:46 p.m. on March 11th, the exact time the earthquake occurred to offer a prayer for the victims and the fast revival of the region.
- Conduct the second memorial service.

It is our hope to dedicate this day, with everyone praying as one, so that our thoughts, prayers and our desire for reconstruction to be as fast as possible, to reach those in deep sorrow, the victims of the earthquake and their families.

The devastated areas will need our help and support for a long time. With your help and understanding, we will continue to support and assist in the reconstruction effort.

Sincerely,

佐々木 孝一

Koichi Sasaki  
President of Sotoshu



## ANNOUNCEMENT

Teacher Shinnyo will be absent from Shinnyo-ji from March 18th to April 8th for a Pilgrimage in Japan.

The Temple will remain open during her absence: Zazen meetings on Mondays and Fridays will regularly occur at 8:00 p.m. and on Tuesday mornings at 6:30 a.m. (except for on March 19th when the Temple will be closed).

The Sutras will not be recited.

It will not be possible for newcomers to begin practice during Roshi's absence (given that it will be impossible to hold a first meeting with the Teacher).

We ask the Sangha to participate in the Temple activity in this time: to continue the

Teacher's works and activities during her absence and to be close to her throughout her journey.

Gasshō



## TESTIMONIES

**T**onight in an array of of conflicting feelings, one thing was clear. The chaos that I see around me is actually only in my mind. And that white wall in front of me is the tool to clean it up. Thanks to my Teacher. Gasshō.

*Lō*



Teacher Shinnyo with Practitioners during the Zazenkaï of March 10th

**T**he importance of the Practice, how many times have we hear the Teacher give us “preachings” upon the importance of the Practice, of the continuity that we must follow. But in reality, how hard is this? I don’t know about you, but for me it is very hard. I lack patience and willpower and have felt it

more and more over the past few years, I can’t stand monotony and after awhile of doing the same thing everyday, it becomes impossible, I start to suffer. I can’t sit and concentrate, I get the itch to do something else, to go somewhere, escape, give up and do something more “useful” and less static, like talk a walk, read a book or go have a drink and chitchat. However, yearning to return to the meditation pillow comes back (or better to say, on a seat) with my hands in Hokkaijoin, trying to find again that calm and peaceful place that seem so far away. I’ve decided to give myself some time, constrictions have never worked well for me, I’ve been trying (attempting) Self control Training and to be less nervous and anxious, I have been trying to move my body so that my mind can take a rest from the shuffling in my mind: buzzing thoughts, some that even hurt and I realize how the Way of the Buddha, Butsu-Do, is important. With only one theory, one can be the greatest researcher in

Buddhism on the podium, doesn’t mean anything. In all of my interior confusion, I do however continue to transcribe the Kusen, and am happy to do it, first of all because I consider it as a service to the Temple, a form of thanksgiving for what I have received there, and also because the Kusen help me reflect and push into action this Way. I thank the Teacher who allows this, Benshin who usually sends me the Kusen and every person in the Sangha. It’s true: knowing that the Temple is always there is a joy, even if it’s not possible to physically be there. Gasshō

*Margherita*



**W**riting this testimony allows me, or “forces” me to analyze my practice. Lately I’ve been thinking that my practice has weakened from all of the things that have happened to me recently and that

have distracted me. I realized the importance of sitting with a mind seeking the Buddha, with a still mind, otherwise it's just a waste of time, a habit, and that the practice doesn't limit itself to just sitting. +  
Gasshō

*Gregorio P.*

**T**he Teacher instructs us everyday with silent testimony that the Zen Way is a Loving Way, a way of loving and service towards others before ourselves. It is often difficult to live this feeling simply because other people have become indifferent and estranged to us rather than like a sibling. Slowly, everyday of practice is therefore a day of service to learn a new way of living, a way to rediscover and the sensitivity and breath of union and connectedness with those around us. This teaching is hard and difficult as it leaves us wide spaces for mistakes and failure, but it is equally beautiful and joyful. A little while ago I realized that love is what gets me up after a fall, a

love for the Way and for this sprout that buds thanks to my practice. Thanks to this unusual gift, a thought of thankfulness to my First Teacher, Shakyamuni Buddha, and to the Patriarchs, and to the Teacher that gives us this possibility.  
Thanks  
Gasshō

*Yushin*



**T**hree months have passed since I came back to America. In this time I have learned many things about my practice away from Shinnyo-ji. Not being able to be physically at Shinnyo-ji, I strongly feel the protection from the Patriarchs and support from the Teacher. I feel a

stronger faith, in myself for my determination to continue my practice in America, in the Sangha in Italy and in the Teacher who lovingly supports me from afar. It is not always easy to practice alone. I must use a lot of effort and self-discipline not having a sign in sheet or a pre-established schedule for Zazen like at the Temple. I follow my heart and I sit upon the zafu.

In this period I encounter an emotion while sitting in Zazen that normally I would say doesn't belong to me: anger. Sometimes I don't want to meditate to avoid the discomfort of feeling angry, but I follow the instructions of the Teacher: I must have the courage to being ready to face anything, and to not abandon my meditation. I think of the concept of Shunyata, o Ku: emptiness. We all many who make One. We are truly lucky to encounter Zen and to come together for the good of all beings. Thank you with all of my heart Teacher!  
Gasshō

*Tenshin*



**I** have been thinking for awhile that I have stopped doing Zen and have begun to be Zen, I feel more present in my practice and in the life of the Temple, I feel good about it, I want to stay... and it happens- like when I think of a dear person, of a passion, of something that makes me happy- that my thoughts turn to my practice and I suddenly smile....

Gasshō

*Goshin*



On 25 February 2013 has joined the Sangha for Zazen Bruce, a practitioner who regularly attends the Zen Mountain Monastery in New York City

**A** note about the Sangha  
The Sangha is defined as one of the Three Treasures, of the cardinal elements of the religious “structure” of Zen Buddhism, it represents the community of practitioners and of the Bodhisattva, it represents not only symbolical meaning but also the actual community, the people who we meet every day, friends, acquaintances, the society. It is not an elective group who we that meditate and individually meet who knows what, I am the Sangha, with my problems, contradictions and fears, my choices, we are the same as the day before while we eat a pizza with friends or while at work..

So in this Sangha my work as a practitioner, of us as practitioners, and us as men and women is complex and intertwined. I am not dividing but explaining- an aspect that is something essentially religious and something that I would say relative to the relationship between practitioners that should reflect an opening of the heart-mind, the same that is professed in by Teacher Shinnyo in the Temple and

welcomes great joy in satisfaction in us. We must go beyond our “I”, therefore difficult in everyday situations but can be refreshed through the Sangha...

Honoring belonging to it, I believe goes beyond having respect for the Teacher, for the Lineage, for Form and for all Practitioners, but also to the capacity to open our heart-minds, to listening and to spontaneity that we have in turning to another without snobbery or rhetoric. Not speaking of duties or work, but speaking of Being, of Life. In practice, I say that there should be a contact for friendly interest” between practitioners, like a continuous underground current that helps move everyone. I’m not saying that we should have obligations to each other as friends or behave like preachers, this is not what I want to say. All of this is naturally a part of me and effectively is an invitation to all of the Sangha.

*Shinden*



pass and I ask myself how they managed to disappear into nothing, the sky returns to a clear blue as when clouds fray, they disintegrate and then suddenly I don't see them any longer. I give THANKS for this.

*Benshin*

**I** have been very happy to practice lately. Happy to sit in Zazen every morning before starting my day, happy to go to the Temple once or twice per week and to practice with the Maestro and with the Sangha. The practice helps me and I feel that it is transforming me, it is changing my way of approaching life, of reading what happens to me and what will come. There are, of course, black holes and gray areas, dark moments full of doubt and boredom in which one doesn't know what to do and mechanically moves forward in everyday life. However, there is more faith in their transience and more welcoming in their annoyance, they are a part of life. I don't like that they are there, of course, but at least I am aware of my refusal and suffering. In this way, sometimes they quickly



**I** decided to frequent the Shinnyo-ji Temple because ever since I have come back last summer from working abroad, I have accused an interior unease that made me feel apathetic toward my friends, work and few hobbies: I perceived the inside of myself as a type

of psychological 'wound' that 'blocked' me from life. As if I have arrived at the end of a dark alley.

Even now as I write I think of this interior unease, this disorder. Since I started going to the Temple, I can only say that I feel better because sitting in Zazen helps me, even if just for a little while, to gradually find myself again.

I these few months, I have seen that Zen is like a friend that is by our side while in a journey, and like friends, when it really wants to, he is here and present no matter what. My goal is to take a needle and thread and sew up this "tear", this wound. Through daily practice, I hope to be able to see my true nature.

Thanks to the teacher and to all of the Sangha that helps me and supports me throughout this marvelous way.

Gasshō,

*Andrea*



**S**tarting once again to flap its wings unknowingly of a destination. The Spirit guides along the way upon which we are: Individuals, that reconquer faith, that look deeply into its objective, that returns to smile. Gratitude for every failure, Gratitude for every conquest.

*Valentina*

**T**he other night our Teacher spoke to us about the difference between being and ordained Bodhisattva and being an ordained monk. It was a fundamental evening for me. Teacher Shinnyo Roshi always manages to surprise and thrill me. I will attempt to summarize what she said. Ordination to Bodhisattva (Zaike Tokudo) represents

a personal choice that implies that the person who chooses to receive (receive, not take) the vows works to follow the Buddhist precepts. In the case of receiving the vows to become a monk (Shukke Tokudo) it radically changes because it is an altruistic choice and in that moment, one decides to dedicate his or her life to serving the Buddha. Musics for our ears arrived when Roshi said: a monk becomes a testimony, a representative. A monk becomes a “public question”! I found that it is a beautiful vision that a monk that testifies and represents our Life. In this way, everything becomes clearer for whoever desired to become a monk: every moment, he or she must be aware that for others “Zen” is also “Shinnyo-ji”. For this reason, each choice he makes, from the most banal to most important must be thought out with a testimony. If you go around with your nose stuck up, it will not work, like if you sleep around, or act arrogant, or you hurt those around you. Life is more complicated for a monk, but also

simpler. It is not about moralism or rules of dogma, it is only an opportunity for good sense.

*Shinkai*



**M**onths have passed since I started regularly frequenting Shinnyo-ji Temple, our Teacher struck me immediately, she is a person overflowing with positive energy, capable of concretely transmitting, with her presence, serenity, courage, simplicity and an authentic willpower for “giving” without asking for anything in return. She is without a doubt, the nucleus of this beautiful Reality, sustained by many disciples, who deserve great praise for making possible, through their

commitment and participation, the Temple's existence. I humbly feel that I should say that with this meditative practice, I can tranquilly sit, abandon all thoughts and simply be...

*Michele G.*

**W**aiting at the threshold of the Zendo of the Temple while solemnly touching the wood, I see Zazen like walking in place and discovering that we are all connected

*Marco*

**T**o love- why not?  
To Practice- why not?  
To try- why not?  
To mistake- why not?  
To cry?- why not?  
To laugh- why not?  
Everything is in front of our eyes. Here and now.

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Rakastaa - miksi tehdä siitä ongelma?  
Harjoitella - miksi tehdä siitä ongelma?  
Yrittää - miksi tehdä siitä

ongelma?  
Epäonnistua - miksi tehdä siitä ongelma?  
Itkeä - miksi tehdä siitä ongelma?  
Nauraa - miksi tehdä siitä ongelma?  
Kaikki on silmiemme edessä. Tässä ja nyt.

*Shinko*

Who glorifies himself does not emerge.  
This behavior before the Tao  
Are scraps or words repeated until nausea. <sup>1</sup>  
Things that everyone detests.  
This is why one who possess the Tao doesn't have them.



## POETRY

**Song belonging to the  
"First Part. The Tao" by  
Daodejing,  
Classic Chinese from the  
first have  
of the VI century written  
by Laozi**

### Song XXIV

On the tip of our toes we lose our balance.  
With stretched legs we cannot walk.  
Who shows off does not stand out.  
Who claims to be rights does not dictate.  
Who brags does not have merit.

二十四章  
企者不立。跨者不行。自見者不明。自是者不彰。自伐者無功。自矜者不長。其在道也。曰餘食贅行。物或惡之。故有道者不處。

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<sup>1</sup> Wisdom avoids all exaggeration because it is dangerous.



**LO ZEN DI  
BODHIDHARMA  
Chapter IV**

Capitolo IV - The  
Awakening Sermon



created by the poisons can be gentle or heavy, these three realms are further divided into six places known as the six states of existence.

Student: And how does the karma of these six differ?

Bodhidharma: Mortals who don't understand true practice and blindly perform good deeds are born into the three higher states of existence within the three realms. And what are these three higher states? Those who blindly perform the ten good deeds and foolishly seek happiness are born as gods in the realm of desire. Those who blindly observe the five precepts and foolishly indulge in love and hate are born as men in the realm of anger, And those who blindly cling to the phenomenal world, believe in false doctrines, and pray for blessings are born as demons in the realm of delusion. These are the three higher states of existence.

And what are the three lower states? They're where those who persist in poisoned thoughts and

evil deeds are born. Those whose karma from greed is greatest become hungry ghosts. Those whose karma from anger is greatest become sufferers in hell. And those whose karma from delusion is greatest become beasts. These three lower states together with the previous three higher states form the six states of existence. From this you should realize that all karma, painful or otherwise, comes from your own mind. If you can just concentrate your mind and transcend its falsehood and evil, the suffering of the three realms and six states of existence will automatically disappear. And once free from suffering, you're truly free.

Student: But the Buddha said, "Only after undergoing innumerable hardships for three asankhya kalpas did I achieve enlightenment," Why do you now say that simply beholding the mind and over-coming the three poisons is liberation?

Student: But the three realms and six states -of existence are infinitely vast. How can we escape their endless afflictions if all we do is behold the mind?

Bodhidharma: The karma of the three realms comes from the mind alone. If your mind isn't within the three realms, it's beyond them. The three realms correspond to the three poisons- greed corresponds to the realm of desire, anger to the realm of form, and delusion to the formless realm. And because karma

業重三重若貪業重者墮餓鬼趣墮畜生重者墮地獄  
 趣輪迴之苦自然消滅離苦即得解脫  
 問如佛所說我於三大阿僧祇劫無量劫苦方成佛道  
 云何今說唯只觀心制三毒即名解脫答佛所說言無  
 虛妄也阿僧祇劫者即三毒心也若言阿僧祇劫名不  
 可數此三毒心於中有恒沙惡念於一念中皆為一  
 劫如是恒沙不可數也故言三大阿僧祇真如之性既  
 被三毒之所覆蓋若不超彼三大恒沙毒惡之心云何  
 名為解脫今若能轉貪嗔癡等三毒心為三解脱是則

Student: But the Buddha said, "Only after undergoing innumerable hardships for three asankhya kalpas did I achieve enlightenment," Why do you now say that simply beholding the mind and over-coming the three poisons is liberation?

Bodhidharma: The words of the Buddha are true. But the three-asankhya kalpas refer to the three poisoned states of mind. What we call asankhya in Sanskrit you call countless. Within these three poisoned states of mind are countless evil thoughts, And every thought lasts a kalpa. Such an infinity is what the Buddha meant by the three asankhya kalpas, Once the three poisons obscure your real self, how can you be called liberated until you overcome their countless

evil thoughts? People who can transform the three poisons of greed, anger, and delusion into the three releases are said to pass through the three-sankhya kalpas. But people of this final age are the densest of fools. They don't understand what the Tathagata really meant by the three-asankhya kalpas. They say enlightenment is only achieved after endless kalpas and thereby mislead disciples to retreat on the path to Buddhahood.

Student: But the great bodhisattvas have achieved enlightenment only by observing the three sets of precepts" and practicing the six Paramitas, Now you tell disciples merely to behold the mind. How can anyone reach enlightenment without cultivating the rules of discipline?

名爲得度三大阿僧祇劫末世眾生愚癡鈍根不解如  
 來三大阿僧祇秘密之說遂言成佛應劫未期豈不疑  
 誤行人退菩提道  
 問菩薩摩訶薩由持三聚淨戒行六波羅蜜方成佛道  
 今令學者唯只觀心不修戒行云何成佛答三聚淨戒  
 者即制三毒心也制三毒成無量善聚聚者會也無量  
 善法善會於心故名三聚淨戒六波羅蜜者即淨六根  
 也胡名波羅蜜漢名達彼岸以六根清淨不染六塵即  
 是度煩惱河至菩提岸故名六波羅蜜  
 問如經所說三聚淨戒者誓斷一切惡誓修一切善誓  
 度一切眾生今者唯言制三毒心豈不文義有乖也答

Bodhidharma: The three sets of precepts are for overcoming the three poisoned states of mind, When you overcome these poisons, you create three sets of limitless virtue, A set gathers things together-in this case, countless good thoughts throughout your mind. And the six paramitas are for purifying the six senses. What we call paramitas you call means to the other shore. By purifying your six senses of the dust of sensation, the paramitas ferry you across the River of Affliction to the Shore of Enlightenment.

Student: According to the sutras, the three sets of precepts are, "I vow, to put an end to all evils. I vow to cultivate all virtues. And I vow to liberate all beings." But now you say they're only for controlling the three poisoned states of mind. Isn't this contrary to the meaning of the scriptures?



The **SanghaFondatori**  
will meet on the following  
dates:  
25 January  
10 March

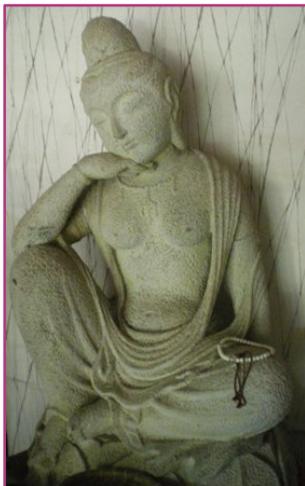


Thanks to Beatrice  
Benshin and Fabio Daishin  
for offering their photos,  
Serena Goshin for editing  
our Newsletter.

We hope to see you at the  
next number of EkiZen.  
Gasshō



### Calendar of meetings for Zen Practice at The Shinnyo-ji Sōtō Zen Temple of Florence:



**Zazen** – Three meetings per week: Monday evening from 8:00 to 10:00, Tuesday mornings from 6:30 to 7:30, Friday evening from 8:00 to 9:30.

**Zazenkai** – One Sunday per month from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

**Sesshin** – One weekend per month from Friday evening at 8:00 to 2:00 Sunday afternoon.

The program for Practice retreats can be found on our site  
[www.zenfirenze.it](http://www.zenfirenze.it)

### Shinnyo-ji Temple

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