

January 2013

Greetings!!

I hope all had a good new year. This year coming up looks as if it will be interesting, and I'm really looking forward to it. I feel things in Seattle are going quite well.

Concerning these emails, I would just like to say that Geoff and I feel good about them and are very happy to continue in the coming year.

It has been a joy to have folks on the email list come out of cyberspace and visit Seattle in person. We've had many visitors from around the country and from Canada. Many come for their businesses, and then we arrange to meet around that. I can almost always easily make time to meet, so please give me a call if you're coming to Seattle.

On the other end of the spectrum, if anyone would like to be off the email list please let us know, and we will of course remove you.

I had a really nice question about the last email. To paraphrase, the question was: how could one of the parents of one of the children that was murdered at the school in Connecticut keep an open heart, as we talked about in the last email.

My answer was that it would be very, very difficult, and that this meditation and training would be a big help. I would like to go into a little bit of detail about how the training could, and does, help.

First of all, we should remember the purpose of our meditation and training is to help us. So, let's say we have just heard about the incident and the death of our child. We would most likely go into shock, grief, despair, and also probably anger. So, where do we go from here, what is it to train when we are in such a situation? Well, it is not to start thinking about good heart, bad heart, compassion, non-compassion, or other ideas of what we should or should not be feeling. What we would do (and I know this can be very hard) is simply to ask the Eternal for help, remembering that the Eternal is just there with Its Love, and there with Its help, when these very rough times come. So, at this incredibly difficult time we can put ourselves in the hands of the Eternal, letting go completely into It, and offering all the pain, grief, anger to It, so that all these feelings may be met by Its Love. This is the meaning of Taking Refuge. We make our best effort to simply let the feelings be as they are, not trying to get rid of them, nor trying to hold on to them. As we do this, the feelings are naturally met by the Love of the Eternal. On paper this may sound easy, but I know from my own experience how hard this is, and I've been meditating for thirty years.

Also, this is not a quick fix, or magic. It takes patience, willingness and a great deal of faith. In the case of a parent in the situation we are talking about it is likely that they would have to let go of the grief, anger and pain over and over again, for months, years or decades. But every time one makes this effort to meditate with the feelings, rather than simply reacting to them, one is drawn closer to the Eternal. And as the Eternal's

Love is allowed to flow to them gradually they, and the suffering involved in holding on to them, will be transformed into compassion and love for all.

I strongly recommend getting our meditation and practice going in normal daily life, then when such a tragedy happens we have a place to go that we know. This place is our grounding and by turning to It we help ourselves not get swept away by the intense and powerful feelings that occur at such a time.

We should also remember that the Eternal flows through all, and it may use another person or another being to help us. So, at these difficult times it can be extremely helpful to take refuge in others or in our animal friends, or in other things, and when we do so we are also indirectly taking refuge in the Eternal. Just a little advice when taking refuge - we always want to try to keep our hearts open. If when taking refuge in others, we see that their hearts have hardened, and we feel that we are being pulled out of our meditation, it is best to kindly pull away. Even the act of taking refuge in another needs to be guided by the Eternal, guided by our innate sense of what is good to do. If it is good to take refuge in another then, if we are "listening", the Eternal will prompt us to do so. If it is not wise, then the Eternal will show us that also.

In the next email I and one of our members will talk about how meditation and training helps in facing death, which is another very, very difficult time for most of us.

One last comment on facing very difficult times is to relay a moving story I saw recently on the news. It was a poignant example of the transformation that can occur as a result of someone following the deep promptings of their Heart/the Eternal. It was about this mother who lost her teenage daughter in an accident with a drunken driver. She said she was consumed by hate towards this fellow. This went on for many months. Then it came up for her to forgive him. He was in prison, doing time for the incident. She wrote him a letter and told him that she didn't hate him anymore and that she forgave him. This had a tremendous effect on her, causing the anger and the hate to dissipate. The fellow in prison received the letter and it had a tremendous effect on him also. Up to this point he had not felt or expressed remorse. But on reading the letter, his heart softened and he wrote back thanking the mother. Over time they became friends, and when he was released they did talks together at high schools about drinking and driving. I thought this was a wonderful story, and I shed a few tears watching it.

Take Care

With all my heart

Rev Basil.

P.S. I wanted to pass on to those who don't already know that North Cascades Buddhist Priory has recently opened a Buddhist supplies department that is selling meditation cushions, benches, statues, rosaries, altar items and more. It is called Jizo Spring Buddhist Supplies and it has a beautiful website: <http://jizospring.com/home.html>

