

April 2014

Greetings!

I hope everyone got through this difficult winter without too much trouble. Here in Seattle, we had a late arriving and very wet winter, followed by an earlier than usual spring.

We are sending our love and merit to all those involved in the big mudslide outside Seattle.

I feel things are going quite well with the various groups. The original group meets on Saturdays and I have four meditation groups at the detention center. In addition, I meditate with neighbors in my building twice a week and continue to have a family get-together at a member's house. All in all, I am very pleased.

I would like to address a concern that is often expressed to me from many people. That is, that this meditation is very difficult and very demanding. This is indeed true, but with it comes great benefits and rewards. The meditation and training have helped me and many others so much. It takes patience and perseverance. To illustrate this, I want to tell a story of when I was younger and went to a YMCA sleep away camp. They had canoe trips down the Delaware River, but in order to go on these trips, you had to go through a vigorous training. This involved long distance swimming and treading water for extended periods of time. It was extremely difficult, but ultimately very worthwhile, because I really loved those canoe trips. This training proved to be very useful in another area. In New York City, where I grew up, when the weather in the summer got very hot and humid, and before air conditioning was prevalent, people would try to go to the beach for relief. The beaches would be very, very crowded, and even more so as you got closer to the ocean, but for most people the respite from the heat and humidity was worth it. There were only a few people who would venture out further into the ocean. In order to go out there, it was wise, even necessary to be a strong swimmer, as it could be a little risky, with the possibility of rip tides, jellyfish, and even a stray shark. This was where the training I received in summer camp really came in handy. I can't explain how wonderful it is to swim out in the ocean. You really have to experience it. It was a relief from the heat for everyone, but for those out in the deeper ocean, it was something very special!

At this point, I would like to thank my Masters, Reverend Master Jiyu and Reverend Master Koshin, for showing me how to train to swim in the deeper spiritual waters.

There are a few things about the meditation and training I would like to get into, which present some of the greatest difficulties, especially for beginners. The first thing I had great difficulty with was just being able to sit still in meditation. I was the biggest fidgeter my teachers had ever seen. It took a long time just to be able to sit still. Another issue is to let thoughts and feelings come up and let them dissipate naturally. In dealing with the spiritual pain that inevitably comes up, such as fear, grief,

sadness, and a general feeling of uneasiness, one must observe it, meditate with it, and let the Unborn/Eternal, with its love and compassion, permeate through it.

Years ago, I had someone in their early twenties ask me a very good question, which was, "why would I want to do this?" I reflected and was still for a few moments on this very sincere question. I just said that this has worked for me after I tried many other things in my life that didn't work. I told this person that they might have to go out themselves and try other things. What I was trying to convey is this - something else may work or it may not. However, like me, you may come back with a greater spiritual understanding with which to more fully devote yourself to this meditation and training.

I want to mention just a couple of things that you need, to do this kind of training. One is that you be willing and want to change. If you do this sincerely, that will happen. The other thing you need is a certain kind of faith. I know that the word "faith" ruffles a lot of feathers. But the kind of faith that I am talking about is the faith in all the people that have done this training before and have had it work for them. That includes faith in yourself that you can do it. It includes the faith in the existence of the Unborn/Eternal that is full of love and wisdom, and faith in me and many others, who through meditation and training, have found this place.

Take care, with all my heart,

Reverend Basil