

April 2020

Greetings!

First, I would like to send all my love during these difficult times. I am doing well, taking shelter from the storm, as I imagine most of you are. While we are hunkered down, it can be an opportunity to concentrate on our training and meditation, which I think will greatly help with our anxiety during this stressful time. Our daily practice can cut through many of the things that cause us suffering. For myself and others, allowing the non-judgmental love of the Eternal to flow has been a great source of peace at times like this.

Since I have been taking a hiatus from the detention center due to the virus, I have reflected on some of the issues that have come up there over the years. I feel that they are quite relevant to the present situation, where many of our daily movements are restricted due to health concerns. I would like to share some of these thoughts with you.

A while back, an inmate told me that she "really hated this place." While I could understand this on one level, it seemed to me that she was being consumed by her hate and anger. I encouraged her to continue her daily practice and to be mindful of these emotions that were controlling her and dragging her down. She eventually took her training very seriously and two years later, when she was released, she was filled with gratitude and looking forward to continuing her training.

This next example is one that was brought to my attention by more than one inmate. It was an overwhelming feeling of yearning for their loved ones. I told them that this was quite normal, but that they were being overcome by this, and it was leading to a state of great suffering. My suggestion was to be mindful of this powerful feeling when it came up and to let it dissipate into the pure love of the Eternal. Over time, most of them were able to greatly benefit from their meditation. It was not easy, and first there had to be a willingness on their part to do the training and to feel what came up.

Finally, I want to talk about the general sense of despair that I quite often sensed at the detention center. This despair was usually accompanied by feelings of restlessness and boredom, of not knowing what to do with themselves. Similar feelings may come up for us today given the current restrictions on our usual activities. In response to this difficulty, at the detention center, I stressed to the inmates the importance of accepting their situation and living their lives, while being mindful that these thoughts and feelings would come up. I passed on to them that daily practice and meditation, done while staying open to the love of the Eternal, would help to greatly reduce the suffering that this despair brought on.

One last thing I want to mention is about the close proximity with loved ones that some of you are experiencing since the virus hit. Sometimes sharing close quarters for 24 hours a day may lead to some tensions. This can be a very difficult situation. We have to be very mindful when this love gets skewed, recognize it, and allow the pure love within us to alleviate any suffering.

All these ways of training will help you during these times. So keep your hearts open, keep looking up, keep that love flowing, and know that the love of the Eternal is always, always, always there.

With all my heart,

Rev Basil