

September 2021

Greetings!

I hope everyone is doing well and had a very nice summer. My trip back east had to be postponed for a second time, due to the Delta variant. This was a very difficult decision because I was really looking forward to seeing my family and friends. My daily training proved to be of immense help to me during this difficult decision-making time. I was feeling troubled, but I just let this situation sit within the flow and love of the Eternal. At first nothing was coming up, but then something came up quite clearly. If I went on the trip and contracted Covid, even if I was asymptomatic, it was definitely possible that I could infect my family and friends, many of whom are senior citizens, who could become very compromised if they got the virus. This was unacceptable. I saw that it would be irresponsible to go on the trip. During this process some painful feelings came up. I was able to let them be washed through by the Eternal with its love and compassion and shortly these feelings began to simmer down. This serves as another example of the importance of my training and practice. I am very grateful.

I received a very nice article from Catherine Hunt. She explains how she started her practice and how much it has helped her. I will print it out below. It is another instance of how daily meditation and training, along with mindfulness, can be of great help. As I often say, the practice will be of great benefit for anyone who takes it up. Take care.

With all my heart,
Rev Basil

Here is Catherine's article:

With a simple statement to former Seattle City Council member Sally Bagshaw, who had been hosting our meeting in March 2016 at the Belltown Community Center, I changed seats. I told her I was going to try Zen Meditation in the other room of the Community Center. She looked surprised but also understanding. I wasn't getting anywhere in politics or any career at all. In fact, Sally and I had been talking about the two years I spent living in women's shelters in Seattle in the mid '90s. When I was younger I didn't have the skills to overcome the obstacles and barriers to successful employment. I suffered from confusion, distractions and a lot of grief.

On the night I changed seats, I met Zen monk, Reverend Master Basil Singer, whose flyer advertising Zen Meditation said, "All Are Welcome." He held no judgement of my life experiences and inexperience with Zen Meditation. The few things I knew about Zen or meditation came from a book I read in college in the early '80s called, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, by Robert Pirsig. I remembered liking this book at the time. Also, I'd been to lunches at an ashram in Honolulu some years ago, but many of the young members looked like they were lost or on drugs. So I had some skepticism. But there was one more memory leading up to my change of seats - that of the beautiful inside of a Buddhist Temple, Kwan Yin Temple on Vineyard Boulevard in

Honolulu. It was so peaceful inside and full of fruits and flower offerings. This memory encouraged me to try meditation. ("Kwan Yin" in Chinese, is the Goddess of Compassion).

Rev. Basil had folding chairs set-up facing the walls. He gave me a wedge cushion to place on my chair. Then he gave me simple instructions for how to hold my hands for both seated and walking meditation because, he said, we would be doing both. "Let the thoughts come and go," he said, and repeated, several times. Then, in a dimly lit room I began my evening of Zen meditation.

It was easy at first, just sitting. My body was not restless. And I really liked the slow rhythms of walking meditation. One evening I even had a beautiful visualization of a rainbow fountain on top of my head!

But over the following weeks of practice something uncomfortable began rising in my belly. I identified it as an emptiness. I tried to sit with this but then fear came, a fear of the emptiness.

After a few more weeks of practice it dawned on me I could ask Rev. Basil about this fear of emptiness. So one evening, I got the courage to ask him about this fear. He said, "Oh, that's nothing to fear. It's the Immaculacy of Emptiness!" That's what his teacher, Rev. Master Jiyu Kennett called it, "the Immaculacy of Emptiness." I understood these words immediately and felt a great sense of relief. It meant to me: the potential that is in emptiness, or a "blank slate." Rev. Basil describes it as "the immaculate flow of the Eternal, with its unconditional love, no judgement and compassion; it flows through everything all the time--our true refuge". I was able to meditate with more ease and joy after this understanding. I also began to understand and know for myself how the flow of the love of the eternal resides in this immaculate emptiness.

Some years of practice passed. I made an adjustment to my posture, relaxing my belly more while sitting upright in meditation pose. This relaxed belly led to deeper states of meditation allowing me to see some things that needed to be done in my life as I approached the age of sixty.

Last Spring, I attended a Jukai Retreat at the North Cascades Buddhist Priory. I was ordained as a lay Buddhist, receiving the black wagsa tie as a symbol of my commitment. It was a wonderful retreat with several periods of meditation each day. I thank all the monks and lay trainees who attended, witnessed and helped me.

Prior to meditation my brain was full of distractions and I couldn't really hear myself or wasn't really listening to the random thoughts that arose. During my first meditation it was as if a light bulb went on in my brain and I connected to what I was thinking. In other words, I could hear myself and pay attention. And now the task was also, "to let it go." I became mindful! I woke up!

Over time I experienced increased peace-of-mind, more tolerance and acceptance for time alone, less judgement of others, and less impulsivity. I'm grateful for this

meditation, training, and my teachers, especially Rev. Master Basil Singer, who offered the "gateless gate" and has been very dedicated to the well-being of his trainees.

"Already you are in possession of the vital attributes of a human being--do not waste time with this and that..."

--from Rules for Meditation, Scriptures of the Serene Reflection Meditation Tradition.