



### The One Way

“One day a monk asked Master Kenpo in the Etsu district: Buddhas in all directions enter nirvana through one way. What street are they on, I wonder?”

The Master, picking up a stick and pointing up the street said: They are here.”

This story appears as the 37th koan story in Book One of Dōgen’s Shinji Shōbōgenzo, Dōgen’s 301 koan stories as translated by Gudo Nishijima.

Aha, we think, “The Way is right here, right under my feet. It’s my life!” Though this is certainly true, we need to ask what we mean by “my life.” Surely the Way cannot be my usual blind stumbling from activity to activity, from relationship to relationship. If this were the case, I’d have no need to ask what street the Buddhas in all directions are on.

Let us consider the nature of this street. How have people over the centuries identified it? How do we identify it today?

In the beginning,

people walked the street by joining the Buddha’s Sangha, the group of ordained men and women who left behind their homes and family to travel the roads of India in the company of the Tathagata. Full-time devotion to the practice was the only street which led to full realization, to nirvana. One entered one’s life with the Buddha utterly and completely. Full realization was deemed to be out of reach for lay people who could not leave work and families, though they could certainly enter the path.

Then came the Mahayana shift of emphasis, with the sutra of the Layman Vimalakirti pointing to the possibility of understanding, deep perception and a practice not necessarily tied to the Buddha’s Sangha. The Bodhisattva who vows to save all beings began to appear in the literature. Considering carefully, one can perceive the development of a tension between the isolation of full-time monastic practice and living in

the world of the beings one has vowed to save.

Today, though we often assert that monastic life is dedicated to saving all beings, or that life in the world is our monastery, this tension remains a source of confusion. I recently had a revealing conversation with a colleague who had spent fully half of his life living in a Japanese monastery. Noting the rarity of full monastic practice in the U.S. and the financial strains of maintaining institutions to offer this, he expressed a feeling that Zen cannot take root in the United States. For him, Zen would appear to be monastic practice. When someone questioned him about lay practice in Japan, he said that it was rare because Zen Centers in the U.S. mode seldom exist in Japan. My immediate, though unvoiced, reaction was, “Oh, that’s too bad! The poor Japanese!” The two of us were clearly viewing what we both call “Zen” from differing viewpoints, one emphasizing the rigorous

full-time regimen of the monastery, the other interested in the spread of the teachings to a wide range of mostly lay people.

Indeed, some lay Americans feel they are on the true street primarily during the very occasional week or month they can escape from their usual world into the intense practice of a sesshin or the rigorous schedule at an isolated retreat center. In contrast, a young Japanese monk stood up at a conference a couple of years ago asking to hear more about the social engagement of Americans who work in hospices, prisons and with the homeless. The teeter-totter goes up and down, seeking balance.

Where do we find the balance? In Juppō, the 60th fascicle of *Shōbōgenzō*, in which Dōgen makes use of the koan we are examining, to remind us that comparisons are not useful. He tells us that Buddhas “never see maligning each other and discussing each others’ relative merits or likes and

*continued from page 1*

dislikes as the turning of the Dharma wheel or as the preaching of Dharma...In receiving the Dharma of the Buddhist patriarchs, we learn under them like this, not criticizing each other as right and wrong."

Dōgen goes on: "Buddhas and their lands are beyond duality, they are beyond the sentient and beyond the insentient, they are beyond delusion and realization, they are beyond good, bad, and indifferent, they are beyond purity and beyond impurity, they are beyond creation, beyond existence, beyond destruction and beyond emptiness, they are beyond constancy and non-constancy, they are beyond existence and beyond non-existence,

they are beyond self and beyond others."

To go "beyond" is to practice the balanced state of zazen, in which we disengage from comparisons, going beyond them. Zazen is the fulcrum upon which our Way balances, going beyond the self-created bumps and potholes in the street upon which we walk. To enter nirvana through one way is not dependent upon the surrounding geography. It is the committed, regular and steady practice of zazen that sustains the one way. Lay or monastic, monastery or Zen Center are not the true issue. The heart of the matter is to just sit, letting go of thoughts and allowing the one way to open before us, empty of comparison.

- Tonen O'Connor

*Shōbōgenzo selections from Gudo Nishijima's translation.*



Some members of the sangha at Oshkosh Correctional Institution gathered on May 10 for Lucius Griffin's lay ordination. Receiving the precepts, Lucius also received the Buddhist name Toshō. "To" means "cave or deep internal site of being". "shō" means "authentic, right, correct". (Our thanks to Nonin Chowaney of the Heartland Temple, Omaha, NE, for the calligraphy.)

## **SPECIAL OFFER –**

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## News Notes

In late May, we forwarded to Great Vow Monastery in Oregon 127 panels for the Jizos for Peace project, 49 of which were created by members of the prison sangha and the remainder from the MZC, Shambala Center, First Unitarian Society, Unity Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Green Tara Sangha of Green Bay. A total of 5,717 images of Jizo were submitted toward the project's goal of 270,000. MZC members, prison sangha members and a local church group continue to work on panels and we hope to send another smaller batch in August. For information on how to participate in this peace project see the Web site:

[www.Jizosforpeace.org](http://www.Jizosforpeace.org)

On June 5, Tonen and several sangha members participated in the second event in the Buddhist Conversations series, held at Shambala Center and centering on the topic of chanting and its significance within our various traditions. The next Buddhist Conversation will be held at the Milwaukee Zen Center on September 25 on the topic of vegetarianism, featuring a demonstration of oryoki practice.

On June 14, Cal Appleby, whose Betty White Outreach Project serves prison inmates and those in chemical dependency programs in the Twin Cities area, accompanied Tonen on her visits to Oshkosh and Waupun Correctional Institutions. His presence and his words were greatly appreciated. Thanks, Cal.

June 26 –28, Tonen and sangha members Colette Brown, Brian Curtiss, Peter Johnson, John Rhiel and Chester Sheard drove to Ryumonji Zen Monastery near Decorah, IA, for the dedication ceremonies for their new Buddha hall. Narasaki Tsugen, Roshi, Abbot of Zuioji in Japan, officiated at the ceremonies assisted by a sizeable group of Japanese and American priests, and with close to 70 people in attendance. Tonen, Brian and John traveled on to Cedar Rapids Zen Center to participate in the eye-opening ceremony which Narasaki Roshi performed for them.

Sangha member Tim Cobb departed on July 6 for a five-week practice period at Shogoji in Japan.

July 8-11, Tonen attended the Dogen Conference at Zen

Mountain Monastery in Mt. Tremper, N.Y. which brought together major scholars of Dogen's writing with a large group of Soto Zen priests and practitioners. Tonen was delighted to have the opportunity to see her teacher Tozen Akiyama there.



Art work by Taurus Merchant,  
Wisconsin Secure Program Facility

## Milwaukee Zen Center – Schedule

### July

7 Introduction to Zen 6:30 p.m.

### August

4 Introduction to Zen 6:30 p.m.

### September

1 Introduction to Zen 6:30 p.m.

### October

6 Introduction to Zen 6:30 p.m.  
15 & 17 Two-day sitting

To see the entire 2004 Schedule and more information on Two-day sitting, visit our web site at [www.milwaukeezencenter.org](http://www.milwaukeezencenter.org)

# Milwaukee Zen Center

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## Wed., Thurs., Fri.

6:15 am Zazen  
(Zen sitting)  
6:55 am Kinhin  
(Zen walking)  
7:05 am Zazen  
7:45 am Service  
8:00 end of practice  
  
6:30 pm Zazen  
7:10 pm Kinhin  
7:20 pm Zazen

## Saturday

6:15 am Zazen  
6:55 am Kinhin  
7:05 am Zazen  
7:45 am Service  
8:00 breakfast, oryoki  
8:25 work period  
9:15 break, coffee & tea  
9:30 study class\*  
10:30 end of practice  
*\*except on all-day sitting days*

## Introduction to Zen

An informal presentation on Buddhism and Zen, followed by instruction in zen sitting, tea and discussion.  
6:30-8:30 p.m.–first Wednesday each month.

Zen sitting instruction and private interview available by appointment. Call 963-0526.

### Contact information

For messages: **Phone:** (414) 963-0526

**Fax:** (414) 963-0517 **E-mail:** tsoc@execpc.com

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