

TOMODACHI NEWS

“Peace and Tranquility”

Fall 2009 Edition

Dharma School Publication



Sensei and Putra: Hello, everyone! It is nice to see you.

Sensei: How was your summer vacation? Wonderful and meaningful, I hope. Now, Dharma School Service starts again! I wish to spend happy moments and make good memories with all of you each Sunday.

Putra: Yes, I also want to learn many important things with my Dharma friends through the services. I was anxious for the services to start again!

Sensei: Thank you for your patience, Putra. Let's make our service fruitful and wonderful for everyone. By the way, do you know what major service we observe in September?

Putra: Yes, it is Fall Ohigan!

Sensei: Very good! Do you remember that we all always recite the Six Paramitas during the service?

Putra: Yes, of course!

Sensei: Great! Have you memorized them?

Putra: Yes, Sensei.

Sensei: Really? Wow. Please tell us the practices of the Six Paramitas.

Putra: OK, Sensei. Let me see -- *Giving, discipline, patience, endeavor, meditation, and wisdom.*

Sensei: Wow, you are so great! You have studied very well.

Putra: Of course, Sensei! I always try to follow them.

Practicing the Six Paramitas

Sensei: As you know, practicing the Six Paramitas is very important in order to attain enlightenment in Mahayana Buddhism. Our sect, Jodo Shinshu, also follows these practices. However, in our sect, it is the practice to attain Buddhahood through the Nembutsu instead of the practice of what we can do for the benefit of others in our daily

lives as Buddhists. We should always pay attention to how we are living our lives because we can improve its quality and help others to have better lives through the Six Paramitas.

Putra: Sensei, I know it is very important for us to follow these practices in order to become a good Buddhist, so I try to do my best to follow these teachings everyday. I always wonder if it is impossible for me to follow the first practice, “Giving” because I don't have much money to help others. My mother doesn't give me a big allowance. She is kind of stingy.

Sensei: Hey, Putra, you shouldn't say that about your mother. You don't have to have much money because you are still so young.

Putra: Oh, I'm sorry. I know it is early for me to have money but in order to practice Giving to others, I need more money. I want to donate money to needy people and a large sum of money to our temple. I want to donate money to many children who are suffering from undernourishment all over the world.

Sensei: I see, I didn't know that you have been thinking about others so much. I am very impressed and proud of you with your consideration and thoughtfulness. As you said, the act of giving money is the first practice of the Six Paramitas. We call it “Dana.” Selfless giving is a very important practice in Buddhism. But, the practice of Dana is not only the act of giving money, but also the Seven Intangible Offerings.

Dana: Seven Intangible Offerings

Putra: What are intangible offerings?

Sensei: They are Dana practices for everyone. Even if we do not have enough money, anybody can practice the act of selfless giving through intangible offerings.

Putra: Really? I didn't know that. Can you tell me about them in more detail?

Sensei: OK, Putra. Shakyamuni Buddha said, “Even if you have nothing to give to others, you should follow the Seven Intangible Offerings, which anybody can practice. If you are a good Buddhist, you should try your best to follow them because the act of this can make others happy.” Now, I will explain them one at a time. The first of the Seven Intangible Offerings is “Offering of the eyes.”

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Educational and friendly atmosphere offered through the Dharma School Program

Dharma School offers a friendly and comfortable atmosphere for children and parents to gather each Sunday. Children learn the simple traditions of Buddhism and our Jodo Shinshu sect, through the guidance of Rev. Mukojima and informative and friendly instructors. Here is a list of what learning experiences the service has to offer:

- Listening to the Dharma (message) from Rev. Mukojima
- Putra (Special guest appearances from sensei's Panda friend).
- Gassho (Putting your hands together in meditation).
- O Shoko (Burning incense)
- Sutra Chanting (Expressing the appreciation of the Buddha)
- Singing a Gatha (Hymn)
- Birthday recognition (once a month).

Children are encouraged to attend class where they learn about general Buddhism, Buddhist etiquette and hands-on Buddhist related crafts. There is something for every child who attends Dharma School.

- Classes for children include: Pre-school and Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grades; 3rd and 4th grades; 5th through 8th grades; and 9th-12th grades.
- Infants, toddlers and their parents are welcome to use the nursery.

Here are more activities that involve Dharma School:

- Hospitality (Refreshments after service on pre-announced Sundays).
- Taiko (for youths 10-years-old and up).
- Activity room for children's use after Dharma School.
- Temple activities (for the entire family).
- Off-site Dharma School activities (Check the announcements).

If your family is new and is considering attending the Buddhist Temple of San Diego Dharma School, we welcome you! For the returnees, welcome back!

The first day of the new term is Sunday, September 13. Service begins at 10 a.m. Registration forms will be given to all students during class. Dharma School will host a Pizza and Cake Hospitality after the service. Yeah!

We look forward to having you and your children participate in the Dharma School program. Please join us each Sunday.

LABCC CAMP EXPERIENCE

Breven Honda, Trevor Muraoka, Davis Ong, and Sean Tokunaga attended the Los Angeles Buddhist Coordinating Council (LABCC) Summer Camp at Camp Morningstar August 2-8.

Though a bit tired from O Bon the night before, all of the parents and kids drove to the Los Angeles Betsuin early Sunday morning for their bus departure to camp. The boys enjoyed themselves and have great stories to share including archery, sleeping under the stars, swimming and O Juzu making, just to name a few. So, please ask them about their adventures!

LABCC camp's focus is for children ages 8-13. Ministers participate at the camp. This summer, Rev. Marvin Harada (OCBC) and his sidekick Freddie the Frog talked to the children. Other guest ministers included Rev. Patti Usuki (San Fernando), Rev. Bill Briones (L.A. Betsuin) and Rev. Noriaki Ito (Higashi Hongwanji). The San Diego boys hope that Rev. Mukojima and Putra make a visit in the near future.

The boys and their parents will participate in the camp reunion on September 26 at the Orange County Buddhist Church.

Located near the village of Angelus Oaks, in the San Bernardino Mountains Camp Morningstar is a youth retreat center. Over 150 young Buddhist from Southern District temples and other Buddhist denominations gathered for seven days of activities. This was the second year of participation for the San Diego boys.

Parents with children interested in participating at next year's camp are encouraged to talk to the parents and boys who participated in a great experience.



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Putra: Offering of the eyes?

Sensei: Yes. It means to see others with gentle eyes. Buddha said, “The eyes have the power which heals others’ minds but also can frighten others. You should embrace all people with a loving look.” So, Putra, no matter who we meet, we should always try to see them with gentle eyes so that they can feel a liking towards us.

Putra: Yes, I want to try that.

Sensei: Good. “Offering of a peaceful face” is the second offering. It is similar to “Offering of the eyes.” As you know, nobody likes to see somebody’s sulky look because it is an unpleasant sight,” Buddha said. “Smiling faces always brighten the neighborhood like the shining sun.” Putra, we should always greet others with a big smile everyday so that we can give others peace of mind. OK?

Putra: Yes, it seems to be very important lesson, doesn’t it?

Sensei: Yes, it does. The third is “Offering of affectionate words.” This is the practice to speak to others with gentle words. Buddha said, “Voice is a very important part of our lives. There is nothing like a voice that touches other minds. Voice makes one feel happy, mad, sad, and relieved. There is nothing quite like voice and words that have a powerful impact in our mind.” Therefore, we should be careful of what we are saying so that we don’t hurt other’s feelings. We always try to speak to others with the affectionate words.

Putra: Yes, I know. When I heard harsh words from my bad friend I felt very sad and couldn’t forget it for a while. I’m sure others have had similar experiences. I do not want to make others feel sad with harsh words.

Sensei: You are correct, Putra. The fourth is “Offering of the mind of sympathy.” It means to be considerate of others. We should understand a person’s pain and grief, and accept their suffering just as our own. Compassion is called “Ji-Hi” in Japanese. “Ji” is called “Maitri” in Sanskrit. It means the highest friendship. So, it is interpreted as the look of Buddha that encourages all people and gives pleasure and happiness. “Hi” is called “Karuna” in Sanskrit. This original meaning is the groan. It is a heartrending groan that we groan in spite of ourselves when many sufferings or sadness weigh heavily on our mind and body. In the dictionary, it says, “Only one who has groaned and grieved over suffering of life can truly understand the suffering of people’s mind and sympathy with their suffering and make their mind heal. Consideration of understanding a person’s suffering is called Karuna.” So we should try to accept one’s suffering and sadness as our own because we only will be able to be healed when we feel Karuna.

Putra: Wow, compassion in Japanese, “Jihi” has a wonderful meaning. I also will try to understand other’s feelings as my own.

Sensei: Good. The fifth is “Offering of physical labor.” Buddha said, “It is rare to be born to have no physical defect.” However, we are fortunate to have two hands,

legs, eyes, ears, and a mouth. We can see, hear, talk, walk, and catch. So when we see an elderly or a handicapped person, we should help and support them with our whole body. I think that it is a wonderful practice to help others.

Putra: Yes, I agree. My parents said it is important to be the first to help others whenever we see that an individual needs assistance.

Sensei: Wow, your parents are so great. You are so gentle due to having been raised with the love and guidance of such wonderful parents. Excellent. “Offering a seat” is the sixth intangible. Needless to say, it means the practice of giving your seat to others. But it is not only for the elderly or the handicapped, but for any person who needs your seat.

Putra: A couple of days ago, I took the trolley to Petco Park stadium with my family. The trolley was crowded! At that time, I saw an elderly person standing. I gave up my seat to her. She seemed to be very happy and told me, “Thank you” with a big smile. I was also so happy to see her smiling face.

Sensei: Wow, it is not easy for us to give up our seat all the time. But you are sincerely trying to follow the Buddha’s teaching. I am proud of you, Putra. The final intangible is “Offering a room.” It is the practice of offering shelter to a homeless person. Today, due to security reasons, it is difficult to offer a room in our house when somebody asks for one. So I don’t want to encourage you to do it, but it is the ultimate practice of Dana. Putra, these are seven intangible offerings and it is the wonderful practice which anybody can try.

Practicing Dana

Putra: Wow, I didn’t know that there are so many practices of Dana.

Sensei: I hope that you understand that Dana is not only the practice of giving money. Please remember that the purpose of the Seven Intangible Offerings is to extend kind thoughts and deeds for the benefit of others. We should try to follow these practices in order to make others happy. I sincerely hope that all of you will be able to accept other’s suffering and sadness as your own and embrace all people with your loving kindness and become gentle Buddha’s children through the Seven Intangible Offerings.

Putra: Thank you, Sensei. I learned many important lessons through your message. But I cannot remember all of them all at once! So could you tell me once again after lunch? I would like to take notes.

Sensei: Sure! I am impressed with your determination. By the way, what do you want for lunch?

Putra: Sensei, I want to have fish tacos!

Sensei: OK, let’s go to Rubios!

Sensei and Putra: See you everyone. Have a nice day!