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SOTO MISSION OF HAWAII

BETSUIN NEWSLETTER



NEW YEAR'S PARTY EDITION

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Invitation to our New Year's Party

We cordially invite everyone to join us at our General Membership Meeting and our Shinnenkai - New Year's Party. With COVID-19, we were not able to gather for a very long time. We hope that we can invite everyone this year to bring the temple community together and celebrate the year 2023. Please call the temple to reserve your spot. For dates and time, please see the flyer. We look forward to meeting your family and share the day of togetherness.

Upcoming Events

Feb 12 at 9:30am Nehan-e Service
Feb 19 at 9:30am Kannon-ko Service
Feb 19 at 10:00am General Membership Meeting
Feb 19 at 11:00am Shinnenkai - New Year's Party
Feb 26 at 9:30am HSMA Spring Meeting @Betsuin

Let's Learn About Sotoshu

ZEN STORY: The Sound Of The Bell

One day while I was resting in a room of the publishing department which is located at the side of a road, I heard the voices of some people who were slowly coming up the hill. Not particularly paying attention, I overheard the following:

"This is one of the two main temples of the Soto School. The other main temple is called Eiheiiji, which is in Fukui Prefecture."

Wondering who was speaking, I leaned over the fence and looked. It was Mr. M. who manages a store near the temple gate, and he was conducting a group of visitors who appeared to have come from far away.



One of the visitors asked, "Well, why is it that one school has two main temples?"

To this Mr. M. responded, "Look. It's the same as a household having a father and a mother. Eiheiiji is the father, and this is the mother ..."

Visitor: "Well which one is more powerful?"

"The mother is," Mr. M. answered with satisfaction.

"It's a little man with a big wife then, isn't it? What's this building over here?" asked the visitor while pointing to the physical education building of Tsurumi College.

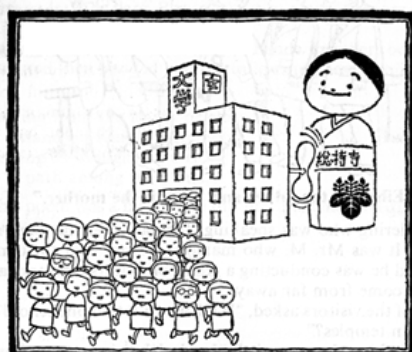
Mr. M.: "Well, whatever it is, this is a very strong mother, and she runs a college for girls only. The founder's motto was "have babies and grow", and by this he made up a big religious sect."

Visitor: "Who was the founder?"

Mr. M.: “Keizan Zenji.”

Visitor: “I’ve heard about Dogen-san, but I’ve never heard about Keizan-san.”

Mr. M.: “That’s right. Mothers are never famous. That’s what’s great about ...”



The above is only a part of the conversation I heard. I was very impressed and thought how true it was. The one who worked hand-in-glove with Keizan Zenji in founding Sojiji and in establishing the basis on which today’s Soto School is flourishing was Gasan Zenji.

Gasan left home and entered the priesthood on Mt. Hiei at the age of sixteen. For eight years he studied Buddhism and particularly studied the doctrine of the Tendai Sect which he mastered. However, realizing that true spiritual peace of mind cannot be obtained through scholastic Buddhism, Gasan came down from Mt. Hiei, became a disciple of Keizan Zenji, and devoted himself to the practice of Zen. Gasan was by nature keen and sensitive and, physically, was sturdily built. He appeared to be reliable, and Keizan Zenji was happy to be blessed with such a successor. On the other hand, Gasan seemed quite vain about his intelligence, and Keizan Zenji secretly planned, when the proper time arrived, to do something about this haughty attitude which seemed only to “put up” with people.

One winter night with the moon at its zenith, the mountains, rivers, fields and villages were all illuminated by the pure moonlight and presented an indescribably beautiful scene; somehow the light seemed even to shine through human bodies and minds. Keizan Zenji, as though the thought had just popped into his head, said “Gasan, do you know that there are two moons?”



“No, I don’t know that,” said Gasan, completely mystified. While looking at Gasan, who was having trouble coming up with an answer, Keizan Zenji said in a low and solemn voice, “If you do not know that there are two moons I cannot let you become the highest authority for spreading the Zen teachings of the Soto School.” Gasan had never before heard such stern words from Keizan Zenji and was shocked.

At that moment what crossed Gasan's mind was the following historic incident which occurred during the Tang Dynasty in China between a prominent priest Kyogen and his teacher, Zen master Isan Reiyu.

"You are so widely learned there is nothing you do not know, but I have no use for the knowledge you've obtained through books. However, I would like to hear in your own words about the time before you left your mother's womb, knowing neither east nor west."

Kyogen answered, but each time, Master Isan did not accept the answer saying, "You saw that with your eyes," or "you heard that with your ears," or "that was written in a book."

Looking troubled, Kyogen requested, "Please explain it to me."

Master Isan answered, "If I explain it to you, it will be my words, and it won't be of any relevance to you."

Thus rejected, Kyogen took out his notes and books which he had studied up to that time, but he could not find out anything. Dumbfounded, Kyogen thought, "I can't satisfy my hunger looking at paintings of rice cakes," and he burned all his books and notes. "I will stop studying the



Buddhist teachings. Hereafter, I am going to live the life of an ordinary monk and will no longer subject my mind to severe training."



Kyogen parted from Master Isan in tears and entered Mt. Buto to inquire after the ruins of Nanyo Echu (~775 AD), where his master had had a hermitage and he built himself a retreat. He planted bamboo trees and was absorbed in zazen, making those bamboo trees as his friends. One day, as he was sweeping a pathway, his broom caught a piece of tile which went flying and hit a bamboo tree making a clinking sound. At the same time the clinking sound was heard, Kyogen was suddenly enlightened. Then, immediately cleansing and purifying himself and burning incense, he paid homage to the great Isan who was so far away. "Oh, great Master Isan, if you had given me an explanation at that time, I would not be experiencing this great joy today. Master, your kindness surpasses that of my parents."

Similar to this historical fact, in more recent years, was the situation of Master Tettsu Gikai,

who was not able to receive Dharma transmission from Master Dogen due to his cleverness and intelligence.

From this moment on, Gasan's attitude changed completely. He became humble and trained carefully with the other monks and practiced zazen strictly. His conceited attitude disappeared completely. However, the cloud of doubt regarding the "Two Moons" remained unsolved six months and even a year later.



Three years passed, and on the night of December 23, 1301, the moon shone menacingly and coldly. Master Keizan saw the figure of Gasan in deep zazen through the moonlight and read his mind. He put his hand next to Gasan's ear and snapped his fingers. Though the sound was barely audible, to Gasan it sounded like a loud crash which wiped away all of the doubts he had had for three years.

"Oh, that's it! I understand now." Gasan clearly understood Master Keizan's mind about the two moons.

Two kinds of moons. One is, needless to say, the moon that shines in the sky. The other is the light which shines upon all the beings throughout the universe. That is – no matter how much one may be acquainted with the Buddhist doctrine, if it is not manifested or is not practiced in our daily lives, it is not true enlightenment. Accordingly, Keizan's words, "I cannot allow you to be an authority on spreading the Zen teachings," were severe, but they penetrated to the depths of Gasan's mind. It enabled him to understand the relation of "one is two" and "two are one" and to make it a part of himself.

When Gasan grasped the essence of Master Keizan's teachings the happiness and inspiration Gasan felt were so great, it was inexpressible for him.



Thereafter, the bright light of two moons, Master Keizan and his disciple Gasan having become one, shone throughout the country and they began to spread the teachings together. At that time, Master Keizan was explaining the biographical writings of great Zen masters in the past from the time of Shakyamuni Buddha to Ejo, the second abbot of the head temple of Eihei-ji, similarly to the way the moon's light was passed on. This is the famous Denkoroku which together with Master Dogen's Shobogenzo comprises the Two Great Scriptural Treasures of the Soto School of Zen.

(Published by Soto Shu Headquarter)

New Year's Party

Soto Mission NEW Year

Feb
19

Soto Mission Social Hall

Great Food, Silent Auction

Entertainment, Lucky Number

2023

RSVP by Feb 10
Call (808) 537-9409

Price

\$15 per Adult
\$12 per Child (13-18 years old)
No charge for 88 and above or 12 and under

