

Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi
Sunday, December 29, 1968¹

Next Tuesday we will have no lecture, so this may be—will be the last one for this—at the end of the year we clean up our house and we throw [out] old things which we do not use anymore. And we renew our equipment, even things in the—furniture we renew it. And after cleaning our room we—we put new, new _____ and which is distributed from temple like this. We take off old mats and put new ones, like this. This is—when in temple we have prayer for the—to control fire, this is what you call it _____ "taking care of fire," it says in Japanese.

And this is—in temple at end of the year we have ceremony to read *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*—600 volumes of *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*. But actually we cannot read 600 pages of sūtra, so the priest conducting the ceremony read one—one volume of the 600 sutras. Then we have one volume, one of 600—[inaudible]—just to turn it instead of reading. And so the most important volume will be recited by the priest who is conducting, and we—and you receive this kind of prayer card from the temple. That is what we do.

And end of the year is the most busy days. We have to clean up our rooms, and if you have some debts you should pay. For someone to collect the money he lent, and for the most people it is time to pay the debt. And then we—after cleaning up everything, spiritual and physical, we decorate New Year's decoration so old times [?]. Those should be done before twelve o'clock. And after twelve o'clock there is no need for you to pay—pay back the money you owed, so the man who—who wants to collect his money _____ even after twelve o'clock, if he had chosen [inaudible].

So usually it is pretty exciting week. This kind of custom still in Japan and each one of us, rather we enjoy this kind of activity. We understand each other—we fool ourselves in some way and enjoy the last day of the year. This idea is based on Buddhist way of understanding life. Moment after moment we should renew our life, we should not stick old idea of life, or way of life, we should renew it, our life day by day, especially at the end of the year. Especially at the end of the year we should completely renew our feeling and completely renew our car. If we stick to old ideas always, or if you have no chance to renew it, it is rather difficult to renew your way of life. Some encouragement is necessary if you always repeating same thing over and over again, then even though you have no feeling of sticking to old way of life, actually you are confined in old way of life.

¹ Date is unsure. This may be the conclusion of SR-68-12-21 (WKR, 8/28/00).

Some excitement or some occasion is necessary. For instance, we use this kind of stick. This is to renew your practice, if you become drowsy, if you don't receive a stick you will have chance to renew your _____ and in this way, you can live moment after moment. Actually—faithful—you will be faithful to your own life.

So, as it is we say, but actually when most people say "way as it is" is not at all way as it is. Without clearing up your mind and body, physically, you will not have chance to live on each moment. So the (end) for us is laziness. If you are always lazy and drowsy, spiritually and physically lazy, you actually have no chance to live truthfully to yourself. That is why we practice various practices. But if you—if we stick to old way of practice it is not so good also. So it is necessary maybe to change our way of practice sometimes. For an instance, at some monastery they start to bathe in cold water from January, December 1 until December 15. All the monks getting up about four o'clock and going to the lake and bathe _____. This is not _____—just to get out of drowsy mind. And you will not catch cold. Recently flu is all over, but if you make up your mind to bathe every morning and evening in cold water, your mind do not accept _____ because you are so physically and mentally very active. So we monks rather _____ ourselves when we catch cold. Lazy monk!

_____ Especially—it is rather difficult to take cold-water bath, and more difficult after working so hard and to take cold bath in evening very difficult. Maybe I don't know why but anyway when you get up you need some situation, natural, but in evening usually we are not prepared for that kind of situation. That is—it is so difficult to take cold bath in evening. This kind of practice is not orthodox practice, but according to the situation of the monastery we apply various ways of life and to keep chance to renew our mind and body. Especially people who live in San Francisco where climate is always same, it may be necessary to, to have some pool for Zen monks to take cold baths. Maybe exciting practice for us, and it will give pretty good stimulation for San Francisco people. I am busy now, everyday activity, but if you want I think you can do it, and you are young enough to do it. It doesn't mean to be involved in ascetic practice, it is the purpose of those practices _____ physically and spiritually. We say Zen—if we, if we are caught by even the idea of Zen we call—sticking the _____ he is not fresh enough—old stinky Zen student! But if we do not have some chance to renew our practice we will soon, soon we will be stinky student. As if you wear same underwear one week or two weeks. What will happen to us _____

And so my teacher or my master² always told us: "You stinky boys, wash your underwear!" Not just underwear. And so my teacher—my

² Gyokujun So-on.

master, his way of training his students was—disciples was pretty different from usual master. He did not allow me to stay at Eihei-ji so long time. "Two years is enough! You will become stinky Eihei-ji student! That's enough, you should go to Sōji-ji."

And when I stayed at Sōji-ji more than one year, one day he appeared and after talking with me ten minutes. "Maybe it is time for you to leave Sōji-ji." And he always put emphasis on Dōgen-zenji's beginner's mind. You should always be all right. It means you should not stick to old style of practice, or any kind of practice and you should be always new student. When you go to Rinzai temple, you should be new Rinzai student. And if you go to Japan, you should be new student. You should forget all about what you have studied in America. You will know—the fundamental practice is the same, but we should practice the essential practice with renewed feeling. This is important. To practice always with new fresh—freshness of the feeling is rather difficult. Necessary for us to change some part of our practice.

My master didn't give me—didn't give us any idea of what we will do next day or next week. He didn't talk about tomorrow and it was—he was very unpredictable type of monk, and monks and priests were very much afraid of him. They couldn't get what he had in his mind. Maybe he didn't have any idea, but he was always concentrated on what he was doing. That is, I think, too much, but it is necessary for us to practice our way moment after moment, with our best effort and _____ mind. As we are pretty new students, so it is rather difficult to practice our way without much rules, but each one of you should make your best effort to study without, without instruction in detail, detailed instruction. You should feel as if you are study—with few people, you shouldn't think that we have so many students. You study our way as if you are studying with your teacher only. I think that help you to ignore other's practice. But we should not be involved in group study only. This is not school—not school system. I want you—to understand this point more, whether you are you have only one teacher. We have each one of you are only disciple, disciple for teacher, for a teacher. With this spirit we should practice our way. If this point is missing, we cannot practice Zen _____. Originally Zen master do not have so many students. When Dōgen left China, receiving transmission from Tendō Nyojō.³ Tendō Nyojō-zenji said to him: "After you go back to Japan, you should practice your way in remote country with few students and keep always our practice fresh and new, and take good care of your students." That is what he said when Dōgen leave China _____ and he secluded

³ Tendō Nyojō (Tiantong Rujing): 1163-1228. The Fiftieth Chinese Ancestor. He gave dharma transmission to Eihei Dōgen-zenji.

himself in remote country, northern part of country and built his small temple in [Echizen, now Fukui] Prefecture, where there is Eihei-ji now.

Tassajara may be—at Tassajara they may have small, but Eihei-ji they—at this time of year the—all the buildings is dark because of the snow. We have to cover all building by _____ to protect building from heavy snow. Such a remote country he practiced his way, with candlelight, when winter come. That was his way.

That kind of practice is very important. Even thought we are many people now, we should not forget this spirit.

Thank you very much.

Formatted 7/10/00.