

**Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi**  
**City Center, San Francisco**  
**Monday, January 11, 1971**  
**LAY ORDINATION CEREMONY**

I wanted to talk about ordination ceremony, but I think it is pretty difficult to explain it, you know, because—even—because you have no idea of, you know, Buddhist priesthood. And what you have in your mind is priest in America, you know, so [laughs], I have no word to communicate.

[SR interrupted on tape. Narrator says here: "A good portion of the tape was inaudible on the original here." (This suggests that their tape was a copy.) SR then resumes, presumably after a gap.]

... inanimate and animate beings. So everything has its own position in Buddha's—in Bud- [partial word]—as a Buddhist. That is fundamental teaching of Buddhism, and that is the structure of the teaching. So we cannot say priest is highest. Or animal is lowest.

Tentatively, as we are, you know, human being, or as we are teacher or disciples, but we are all friends of—of Buddhist. We are all Buddhist. Tentatively, we take some responsibility to express Buddha's teaching. But each one of us—because each one of us has one's own position and responsibility, so the value of each one is the same. That is fundamental, you know, structure of sangha.

With this understanding, we observe ordination ceremony. Some of them will become priest, and some of them will remain, you know, laymen. And we will fulfill our responsibility to realize—for the realization of the teaching—for the practice of our teaching. This is, you know, why we have ordination ceremony, because we need, you know, priest. But it doesn't mean priest is highest or something like that.

But when we, you know, have some ceremony, or when we have some activity, according to the situation, someone will take more responsibility, and that is quite natural thing which will happen to us. And with this spirit, I want you to join our ordination ceremony. As some day you will be a priest or a nun. No one knows [laughs], you know, what will happen to us. But whatever happen to us, if you want to join our order, and express Buddha's spirit, I want you to join our ceremony, and I shall be very grateful for you if you appreciate our effort.

Thank you very much.

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Source: Original tape SR-71-01-11. Transcribed and checked by Bill Redican 9/21/99.