

Senshinji

(Senshin Temple)

Senshin means: *sen* - to wash, cleanse, *shin* - mind, heart, being, and *ji* - temple. A rough approximation might be the temple where one's being is cleansed. Being a Jodoshinshu, temple, it could be read the temple where one's ego-dust is washed away. After 36 years here at Senshin, I have seen and grown up with the Senshin Sangha. So far it's been a great ride.

As our commuter membership increases, paradoxically our numbers and activities increase. I think this is because religion has remained the core of all our activities, it is what makes us generous in supporting a good cause, strong in mutual aid, and community minded in an age when 'neighborhoods' no longer exist. Rev, Kuwatsuki once told me that if 10% of a Sangha is deeply involved in their journey to the self, you will have a thriving Sangha. At the time, I thought "only 10%?". But considering how often my ego takes me to places other than "the real and true", 10% of anyone's time isn't so bad after all.

After over 100 years in America, it is time to evaluate ourselves, our present condition, and secondly, our future. I say secondly because our future is never as important as our present condition. We have thought a lot about our future, we put all our energies and wealth into Dharma School and youth activities. We dutifully dropped off our kids on Sunday and picked them up when Dharma School was over - teaching them in no uncertain terms that religion was good for kids, but unnecessary for adults, unless of course you were running for office of some kind. It has been my observation that children of parents who come to the temple to understand the Dharma-Nembutsu for themselves, regardless of whether or not their children came, tend to grow up with a regard for religion as equally important and have supported and participated in our services whenever possible. An active temple member is gauged by his or her participation in the Hondo, at seminars, lectures, meditation sessions, bowakai, etc, and not how often he or she is here at meetings, in the kitchen, in the office, etc. You do not have to be religious to do the latter, but you can do the latter better and more deeply if you are. How do you apply Buddhism to your everyday life? - by understanding it - not by believing in it. If Buddhism is not for me, and now, who is it for? And why should they value it if I don't? If a temple is vibrant and alive for me now, the future will take care of itself, More often than not, planning and working for the future, is an excuse for not having to deal with Buddhism personally now.

It is time for everyone at Senshinji, paid member or not, to give input about our present. We do not need to slavishly ape whatever is done in Japan, nor do we need to copy American institutions simply because they are American, We are a temple of the Buddhist persuasion and we will define who we are and what we stand for on our own terms, In order to do that, we need to be standing firmly in the Nembutsu. If this is not of interest to you, you are still welcome to participate and support the temple in

anyway you like or can. But the present and future of Senshinji will be determined not by keeping up with the Joneses but by that 10% part of you that constitutes your religious cone. It is time to think in broader terms. What is the Nembutsu, and is there a better way of study and meditation that will bring us to it? Why do we have funerals, memorial services, Sunday services, dharma school, affiliated organizations, what is the purpose of ritual and Sunday services; why do we have home Butsudan, Juzu. etc., etc. - are they really effective?

If we want to change things, what do we base that change on - on what value, what attitude, what method, what view of the world? Our Buddhism comes with a Japanese cultural form. That form has naturally changed over the years, without excessive conflict, coercion, strife, or adversarial stances. The change has been a natural and Buddhist one, and that is the vitality of our temple. We plan to have periodic and ongoing brainstorming sessions about what we would like to have at Senshinji and how to implement it. Not as a whim or because it is currently in, but because it contributes to the Dojo nature of our temple, a place where awakening is cultivated. We ask for your participatory support.

Gassho,
Rev Mas
Senshinji