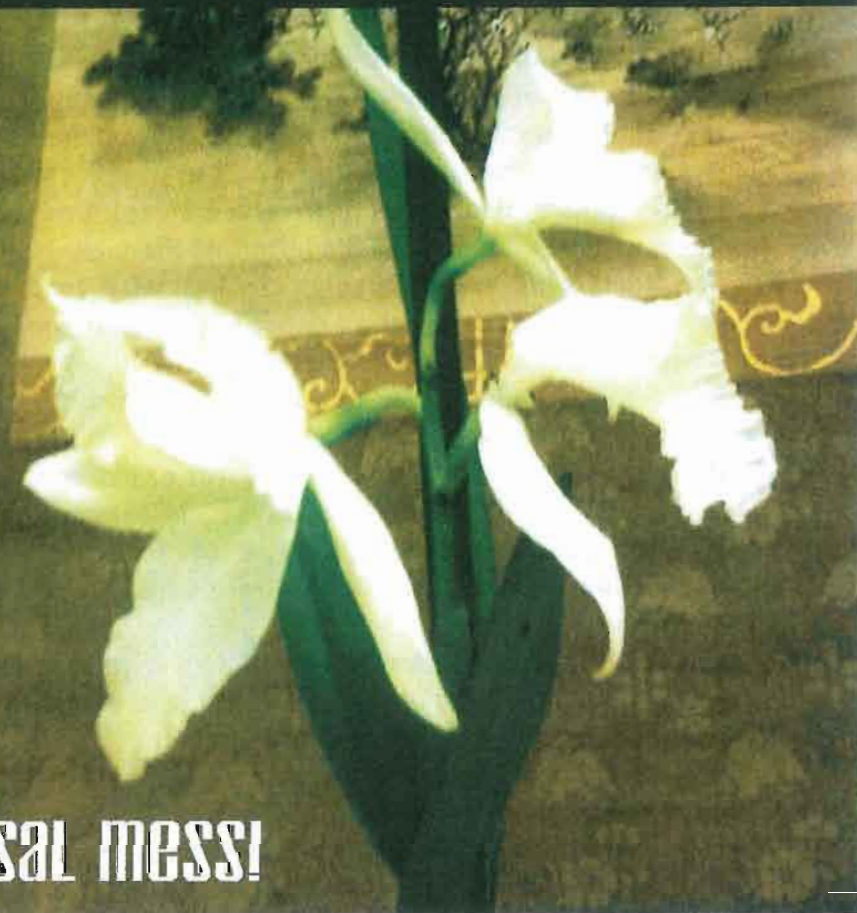


prajna

**YOU ABSOLUTELY
CAN'T DO
WITHOUT IT,**

**BUT WHEN YOU
DO WITH IT,
WHAT A COLOSSAL MESS!**



The “it” of course is the self, me. Shinran Shonin begins with Buddhism as the problem of “What am I?”, and ends with “The self-power I is hopeless!”

And in that experience, he goes beyond the self, or in the language of Jodoshinshu, “he is lifted beyond the self”. He declares that everything the self perceives, conceives, imagines, etc. is empty, vain, and void of true reality, and that only what is called the Nembutsu is true. The issue then

is, “Is the self such a mess?”, and, “What is the Nembutsu?” Pretty simple huh? That’s why our encounter with Buddhism is a lifetime endeavor. Believing this or believing that is of little use – we are not a religion of faith. Nor are we a religion of deeds, since there is no set practice by the self that can take us beyond the self. Hence we say that our daily life is our practice, to be mindful and pay attention in everything that we do. And even this is impossibly difficult.

Our ego-self then, is seen to be what makes us what we are, and at the same time, what prevents us from seeing beyond our self-constructed cage. What a work of art is man, and at the same time, what a colossal Bozo. Within any single being is the potential for heavenly activity and mass murder. The real enemy is finally in sight, and it is me. Why does such a seemingly simple awareness take so long, even when vaguely sensed? Youth is indeed wasted on youth, and even age tends not

to take advantage of its proximity to truth. I have in the past 43 years seen Senshinji members truly grow in contentment, honesty, sharing, humor, and enjoyment of life – and at the same time nodding in deepening agreement with Shinran Shonin that we are at the same time, vain, empty and self-serving Bozos. Nembutsu Bozos Banzai!

Gassho, Rev. Mas