

A Perfect Day

Many years ago, one of the elder ladies of the temple said to me in the course of a very pleasant conversation, "You know Sensei, sometimes I get up in the morning surprised, saying I'm still alive! And when that happens, my whole day is perfect and beautiful". I thought "Wow, what a great way to wake up in the morning". I asked her if she woke up that way very often. She said no, not as often as she would like. And it never happens the next morning – because she wants it to happen so badly. She said "When I forget about it, it happens - it's like an accident". I suspect though, that Obasan woke up surprised very often.

Getting "it" and having "it" are two very different animals. It's like trying to grasp billowing incense smoke – the grasping destroys it. Other Power (Tariki) is having what is, Self Power (Jiriki) is getting what you have constructed, made up, conceived, worked for, demanded. The Tariki of the Nembutsu is the only thing given, everything else is gotten. And for us, there is no practice that gets us there – in a way, giving up trying to get it is having it. It's like taking pictures of a rare and special event. One misses something in getting a record of it as opposed to the enjoyment of it as it is happening. And the pictures almost never capture the magic of the moment, a moment beyond the restraints of time and place. It is of another realm, beyond time and space, infinite in life and light, Amitayus-Amithabha = Amida. And at the same time, of this realm, bound by place and time, by self and ego = Namo. Namoamidabutsu is Obasan's normal waking up and her "I'm still alive" waking up. One is waking up to the heavens and hells of the normal world, and the other is waking up to glittering, effortless joys of the natural world. The left hand of Namo and the right hand of Amidabutsu, flowers on the left, candle on the right, the ever-changing now of the incense smoke in the middle. Why this embarrassment to bow, chant, and say Namoamidabutsu on your own?

Rev. Mae