



*"The highest mountains are the abode of the lions;  
In the deepest waters the dragons dwell."*

## *Lions Gate Buddhist Priory*

### *NEWSLETTER*

*April 2017*

*Issue #115*

Lions Gate Buddhist Priory is a branch of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives (OBC). Our practice is Serene Reflection Meditation (Sōtō Zen) and emphasizes basic Buddhist meditation and the keeping of the Precepts within the training of everyday life.

Rev. Kōten Benson, the Prior since 1986, is a Dharma Heir of Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett, founder of the OBC, who died in 1996. He was ordained in 1978 by Rev. Master Jiyu, and recognized by her as a Buddhist Master in 1983.

The Priory has three monks in residence and is located at Dragon Flower Mountain, one hundred and sixty acres of land in the Botanie Valley, near the village of Lytton in the B.C. interior. The land is off-grid and conditions are primitive as we strive to plant a mandala of Buddhist training in the mountains. There are regular retreats; visitors and guests are always welcome. Lay members and friends of the Priory meet regularly in Vancouver and Lytton, B.C. and there is a meditation group in Edmonton, Alberta.

The Priory is a registered charitable society supported entirely by donations from members and friends.

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## Mercy and Compassion

Rev. Master Koten Benson

*The following is a transcript of a Dharma Talk that was offered recently to the community. It has been lightly edited.*

Homage to the Buddha, homage to the Dharma, homage to the Sangha.

Everything is impermanent. Everything is unstable and unsatisfactory, and there is no place to stand. This is great compassion, great mercy. The fact that there is no substance to selfishness, that everything is impermanent and passing away, is great compassion, great mercy. The teaching of emptiness is great compassion and great mercy.

The fact that there is no place where we can put our selfish grasping is great compassion and great mercy. That is why it is said that the substance of emptiness is great compassion.

When we leap beyond all fear; when we let go of grasping and having to have a place to stand, then great compassion, great mercy manifests itself. Kanzeon is that which is on the other side of realizing that everything has no substance. Kanzeon is when we truly understand that everything has no meaning, that no true meaning can be derived from the insubstantial and the impermanent.

When we go beyond our fears -- go beyond the place where there is nothing to rely upon, beyond having to control everything -- then we find great compassion and great mercy concrete and real. But it is a different type of real than what we are used to. We are used to attributing reality to that which is in fact continuously passing away and impermanent. We will all die, we will all become ill, and if we live as long, we will all become old. There is no place where that cannot happen. And whether we are cremated or buried, whether there is a nice monument set up or our remains are scattered to the four winds, our relatives and friends will grieve, and after fifty to a hundred years we will be forgotten.

This means that everything that is impermanent and unsatisfactory is not a refuge and cannot be a true refuge. Most of our time and most of our lives have been spent in trying to hold the self

together; which, as the old saying goes, is like trying to make ropes out of sand. It passes through our fingers. This is frightening. And beyond it is great compassion and great mercy.

If a substantial self did exist, if selfishness were real, then we would be stuck as we are, incapable of change. The fact that we can change is great compassion and great mercy. Particularly around the time when the seasons change, of winter into spring, is considered in Buddhism an excellent time to change. In the East they describe it as if two sections of a bridge come together at the equinox, and one can cross over easily. It's why those two times have a special festival significance; the two times of the spring and the fall equinoxes. And in Japan, they do the ceremony of Segaki, of conversion of the hungry ghosts. Like how we in the West make New Year's resolutions. I don't mean there's anything magical in it, but just that the symbolism of two equal parts of a bridge come together; not too long, and not too short. But they come together and we cross over to the other shore.

All of the teachings of the Buddha, all of the teachings of everything that points us in the direction of letting go and transforming our own selfishness, is great compassion, and great mercy.

Homage to all the Buddhas in all worlds,  
Homage to all the Bodhisattvas in all worlds,  
Homage to the Scripture of Great Wisdom.

## NEWS

We had a long, cold winter this year with about four feet of snow. We were grateful for all the firewood on hand and for the wood stove to keep us warm. Spring has been late in arriving, but most of the snow has now disappeared, flowers are starting to appear, and the days are getting warmer.

On Sunday January 15 we attended the annual World Religions Day at the Anglican Parish Hall in Lytton. It was the 11th year this event has been held in the village.

In mid-January we welcomed back Rev. Valeria, who had been away at Shasta Abbey for six months. It is really good to have her back.

Rev. Master Aurelian and Rev. Valeria attended the annual Lytton Chamber of Commerce dinner in January, where Rev. Master Aurelian was asked to offer the blessing for the meal. We were honoured to be invited to this event with many of the good people who work so hard on behalf of the community.

In late February Rev. Master Koten was celebrant for two funeral ceremonies in Vancouver. Allison Lambert, aged 23, died tragically in a car accident in Thailand, and David Ingram, aged 67, died suddenly in his home in Vancouver. Rev. Master Aurelian assisted for both ceremonies.

Monthly meditation meetings in Vancouver have resumed, thanks to Supriti Bharma's generous offering of the use of her house. We hope to be able to send a monk from the Priory to attend each time. Please contact us for more information on the address, dates, and times of these meetings.

We will be vacating the mobile home on the farm below our property at the end of April, as the owner needs it. We are grateful to Amandah for making this space available to us at a reasonable rent.

From May 14 - May 20, we will be offering our annual week-long Wesak Retreat, the first of several retreats of the season. This retreat will end with our Wesak Ceremony on May 21. We invite everyone to attend this important celebration of the birth and teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha. You can find more information on this or any of our other retreats and ceremonies here: <http://www.lionsgatebuddhistpriory.ca/Ceremonies%20&%20Retreats%202017.pdf>

We welcome guests at any time for day visits or longer stays. Please let us know if you're planning to visit.

## IN GRATITUDE

***The Priory and its community are entirely supported by the kind donations of its members and friends. We receive no additional funding from the government, the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives, or any outside agency. We are deeply grateful for everything that we receive.***

In addition to monetary offerings, some of the donations that we have received over the past few months have included the following: jam, hot pepper pickles, marinated eggs, fresh fruits and vegetables, tofu, nuts, chocolates, nut spreads, mochi, wontons, spanakopita, cheeses, potstickers, chips, candy, pasta sauces, seeds, coffee, ramen noodles, curry mix, coconut milk, canned curry, peanut butter, canned fruit, mayonnaise, basmati rice, canned beans, rolls and breads, tea, olive oil, crackers, jam, dog food, coffee filters, vitamins, antiseptic wipes, dish towels, batteries, cardboard, newspaper for starting fires, dish soap, carpenter squares, books, tiles, a bath mat, wrapping paper, Chinese paper offerings for memorials and Segaki.

Thank you to everyone who kindly offered food, accommodations and transportation to the monks in their travels; to all who bring food for Sunday lunch; to Victor for maintaining the website and for generously opening his home for our Sunday gatherings; and to everyone for their training and practice, the merit of which is immeasurable.

## OFFERING BOWL

*The Priory could currently make use of the following:*

Almonds and other nuts

Bars of hand soap

Juice

A stove-top pressure cooker (Please contact us before purchasing)

Paper towels

Evaporated milk

Unscented hand sanitizer  
Spatulas (pot-scraper type, preferably heat-resistant)  
Canned fruit  
Raisins  
Vegetable bouillon  
Corn brooms  
Heavy duty rubber cleaning gloves (for cleaning stoves, etc)  
Coarse steel wool type pot scourers (e.g. Brillo pad)

***We are always grateful for financial offerings which pay the costs of the four monastic  
requisites of food, shelter, clothing and medicine.***

We now have a link on our website with a list of our current requests. You can find it here:  
<http://www.lionsgatebuddhistpriory.ca/Requests.htm>

*-In gassho*

## SCHEDULE & UPCOMING RETREATS



The congregation of Lions Gate Buddhist Priory is meeting regularly in Vancouver; and in Lytton the monks are offering meditation each Tuesday evening at the Two Rivers Studio at 366 Main Street in Lytton. Meditation instruction for beginners will start at 6:00pm followed by meditation and walking meditation at 6:30. Tea will follow. No previous experience is necessary. All are welcome. In Lytton there is also a ceremony on Sundays at 2625 Botanie Creek Road, starting at 10 am. For further information or to arrange for meditation instruction please contact [lionsgatebuddhistpriory@lyttonbc.net](mailto:lionsgatebuddhistpriory@lyttonbc.net)

A meditation group of the OBC is located in Edmonton, Alberta. For information please contact:

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10825 – 80 AVENUE  
EDMONTON, AB T6E 1V9  
WEB: [www.serenereflection.org](http://www.serenereflection.org) PHONE: (780) 433-3088

### Shasta Abbey

May 19-21	Wesak Celebratory Retreat
June 2-4	Introductory Retreat
June 18-25	Shobogenzo Retreat: The Everyday Practice of the Buddhas and Ancestors
July 14-16	Introductory Retreat
July 27-30	The Great Merit of Meditation Retreat

Shasta Abbey also offers resident lay training throughout most of the year, under arrangement with their Guestmaster. Please contact the Guestmaster if you are interested in this option.

For more information please contact:

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