

Dear Students of the Way,

Several of you have inquired about Jukai, receiving the Buddhist precepts. I am now accepting applications. The deadline is December 31, 2019. Jukai will be held on the last day of Nyogen Senzaki Sesshin at Dai Bosatsu Zendo May 2-7.

All Jukai candidates must attend the first group meeting, which will be held at Martin Luther King Jr. Sesshin, New York Zendo Shobo-ji, January 17-19, and at Winter Sesshin, Zen Center of Syracuse Hoen-ji, January 23-26. It is recommended that you also attend HoOn Holy Days Sesshin at Dai Bosatsu Zendo, April 4-11, and/or Spring Sesshin at Zen Center of Syracuse, April 23-26. You are required to attend all of Nyogen Senzaki Sesshin.

Participating in Jukai is devoting oneself to the Three Treasures: Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. In every-day life, this means committing to the relationship with one's Teacher, Temple, and Community. While living by the Precepts begins with Jukai, the real significance is manifesting this relationship throughout the rest of your life. How do you do this? Through consistent Zen practice at home and at NYZ or ZCS, including Sunday mornings; frequent sesshin participation; reading and study of Dharma texts, including memorization of sutras and dharanis chanted in morning service; and volunteer work.

If you wish to join this upcoming Jukai group, you may do so by submitting a letter of request c/o Togan, abbotassistant@zenstudies.org. He will follow up with an informational packet, including a list of recommended readings.

I will reflect upon a suitable Dharma name for you, which will be inscribed on your rakusu and presented at the ceremony. You may sew your own rakusu or arrange to purchase one. These must be ready by March 13, so that the calligraphy can be completed well in advance of Jukai.

“Ju” is a synonym for “kaku,” “to realize.” “Kai” is “Precepts,” but it is also a synonym for Buddha-nature. So in the most profound sense, Jukai means “to awaken to ultimate freedom.” What keeps us from realizing this freedom is the very thought that it lies beyond our present condition. “We seek it far away,” Hakuin Zenji says in “The Song of Zazen”; “What a pity.” The Precepts are far more than a set of guidelines for leading an ethical life. They are not a panacea by which we can feel cured of our ills, but rather an outline of the work ahead.

Although we speak of “taking” or “receiving” the Precepts, what is necessary is to give up that usual way of thinking—that mind of taking and getting something—and shift to the mind of giving, without any expectation of reward. Then we can affirm Nyogen Senzaki's words: “Bodhisattvas seek to realize the truth not only for themselves, but for the sake of all beings... You and I are here to learn to be bodhisattvas, with no desire for other ranks at all.” (*Eloquent Silence*, “The Ten Stages of Consciousness,” p. 259).

Gassho,



Shinge Roko Sherry Chayat