

Sermons

September - Two Founders' Memorial (*Ryoso Ki*) by Issho Fujita

In the Sotoshu we honor Shakyamuni Buddha, Koso Joyo Daishi(Dogen Zenji) and Taiso Josai Daishi(Keizan Zenji) as *Ichi Butsu Ryo So*(One Buddha Two Founders). Shakyamuni is the founder of Buddhism. Dogen is the "father" who established Japanese Sotoshu and Keizan is the "mother" who nurtured it. These three figures are also collectively called *Sanzon* (*Three Honored Ones*). They are our objects of reverence.



Dogen Zenji, the founder of Eihei-ji, passed away in Kyoto on August 28th, 1153 at the age of 54. Keizan Zenji, the founder of Soji-ji, passed away in Ishikawa prefecture on August 15th, 1325 at the age of 58. These dates are based on the lunar calendar. In 1877, when these dates were converted to the solar calendar, the dates of their death fell on the same day. Since then the Sotoshu has fixed a date for the Two Founders' death on September 29th.

So on this day at Sotoshu temples in Japan the Two Founders' Memorial is observed to remember their blessings and to express our heartfelt gratitude. The depth of our gratitude to them is well expressed in the *Two Ancestors's Memorial Statement*, which is read aloud during that ceremony.

...Crossing over ten thousand leagues of billowing waves and returning home empty-handed, from far away [Dôgen] planted the extraordinary seedling of Tiantong [Rujing] on these exquisitely craggy shores.

Receiving the bowl in the fourth generation, [Keizan] ate the meal with his entire body and transplanted Eihei's [Dôgen's] spiritual tree to the Hourglass Drum Woods.

Thereby, at this training center for future abbots, foremost in the realm, the virtues of the old buddhas have long been reverently praised.

In this Zen monastery, peerless in Japan, the blessings of the two founders are always recompensed.

We truly know that: The Treasury of the True Dharma Eye, that extraordinary composition, has promoted the soft and subtle way of our [Sôtô] ancestors.

The Record of the Transmission of the Light, that marvelous record, proclaims and spreads their open-minded style of Zen.

Already there are ninety-some chapters of marvelous text; how could there not be fifty-two generations of dharma lamps?

The water of the streams of Etsu flows into Crane Bay, widely benefiting the triple world. The clouds of Kippô Peak [Eiheiji] circulate around Shogaku Mountain[Sôjiji], broadly blanketing all nations....

Among Soto rituals, the Two Founders' Memorial is performed in the most courteous and solemn way. The main memorial service involves special offering of tea, leaving ranks and burning incense (*shuppan shôkô*), and circumambulating while chanting "Life Span" Chapter of Lotus Sutra.

The Two Founders' Memorial is a good opportunity for us to ponder on the following question: As their Dharma descendants, how can we "repay their blessings"? We can do it by embodying their teachings in our daily life. But what did they want to transmit to later generations? Is it still relevant to us? We are now living in a world almost seven hundred years distant from their death.

Both of them lived their life with the vision of spreading the true Dharma and saving all sentient beings. They also trained many excellent disciples who could carry on this vision. We have to follow their footsteps as much as we can.

Dogen and Keizan strongly recommended that we live a life centering around zazen practice. We should be creative so that we can find a way to realize such a life-style in our own situation whether we are ordained or lay, living at a temple or at an ordinary

house, being a man or a woman, young or old.

Try to have a time for zazen on a regular basis. If we can make zazen an essential part of everyday life, then zazen itself will start guiding us.

Here zazen means just sitting still in upright posture (of course traditional cross-legged posture is ideal) at a quiet place for even a short period of time. Blaise Pascal once said, "All human evil comes from a single cause, man's inability to sit still in a room" If he is correct, our Two Founders proposed a wonderful way to overcome this inability!

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