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Reflection on Obon by Rev. Marcos Sawada

On July 3 and 4, we will hold our annual Hatsu Bon and Ulla Bon services. Obon is a Buddhist observance and festival where you encounter your relatives who passed away, especially those who passed within the past year. Traditionally, it is said that during the Obon season the deceased come back to our parallel world via the home altar or the gravesite. The family members use this time to gather to honor and memorialize them. Historically, this was the time that ancient ancestors expressed the unexplainable concept of death. Through these rituals they were able to re-encounter their ancestors to clarify and justify their own journey as a mortal being.

This is a symbolic way to remind us of our connections with the people who passed before us and to think more about the meaning of life and death. When we think about death, there are two points of view. One is viewing death as an objective process, something outside of me. The other way is subjectively think about my own death.

We humans usually mistakenly and subconsciously think we are immortal even knowing we are going to die. Death is for other people, not for me. We behave as though we can live one thousand years, and that death is something external. We normally don't think about dying, denying the real meaning of death. Then suddenly, a loved one passes away, uncontrollable feelings overcome us. Through tears we question, "Why did you have to go? How will my life be without you?" This generally forces me to face the reality that death is inevitable for everyone, including me! How will my family be if I go before them? How will the lives of my children, my brothers/sisters, my friends and all the important people in my life be without my presence here in this world? My death makes me scared, but I start to think about others who surround me. Learning about my life's journey from the perspective of a loved one expresses how we can be more aware about the meaning of death and to really appreciate our present life. Acting like we will live eternally is a big illusion.

Japanese Buddhism usually says when people die, they will become Buddha (Hotoke 仏). This is something that can make sense, if the meaning is on extinguishing the world passions. We won't always be living in this secular world, but who can affirm and confirm that this statement is correct. There isn't a dead person who have come back to assure us about becoming a Buddha or opposite way of going to the "Hell".

There is an important word that Master Rennyō wrote 後生の一大事 (GoShoNoIchiDaiji) that means "Clarifying the death as the biggest concern of humans!" The word "GoSho" can be understood as rebirth, not in another life, but right now. We clarify our biggest concern about our own death while we still alive. This is the best awareness we can receive. That means we transcend the problems of age, illness and death. Of course, this isn't after dying, but right now in this current life.

On clarifying it within me, I'll be able to receive the most meaningful step to live in joy. It isn't positive or negative from the human's dualism, but will purify the human judgment and letting the wisdom of the Nature of "as it is" make our body be absorbed in this Cosmos alone, and becoming one with this Universe. It is the power beyond the self that conducts us to the universal harmonious perspective of good for you, good for me, for all and for the environment. It is the pulse of the right now flowing into this body. The Ultimate Truth is beyond the human's ideal; it is the Dharma. The Shinjin or Pure Mind of entrusting alone is essential to liberate us from the world of suffering.

Life or Death isn't good or bad; it only expresses the nature of "as it is", every day "suchness". You cannot change it, but you can appreciate this unique moment of your life, the best moment of your life because you are able to live only this moment now. The past doesn't come back anymore; no one knows about the future or the next moment. This, now, is the best moment that you have received from your ancestors. Namuamidabutsu!!

Featured Events

June 27 seminar - Let Us Discover the Joy of Living: Living in Uncertainty

We are not having 9:00 am morning service at the Kaneohe temple on Sunday, June 27. Instead we'll be participating in a ZOOM meeting broadcasting from Hilo!

To register for the ZOOM link please complete the form located at

<https://forms.gle/AGoJowjrQKwPJJ5BA>

Resident minister of Hilo Higashi Hongwanji, Rev. Kazuya Miyoshi, will speak on the theme of "Let Us Discover the Joy of Living: Living in Uncertainty".

The Reverend Kazuya Miyoshi is the resident minister at Hilo Higashi Hongwanji Mission as of February 1, 2021. He and his wife, Eriko, and children arrived in Hawaii at the beginning of this year.

Born in 1981 & raised at Jyoshuji Shinshu Otani Branch of Shin Buddhism in Kagawa Prefecture, Shikoku Island of Japan. Kagawa Prefecture is famous for their udon (sanuki udon).

His Family temple was built in the 1700's. Many generations of Rev. Miyoshi's family have ministered there. At age 9, he received his ordination.

He attended a university near Tokyo. After graduating, he worked in the fashion field at various boutiques. Later moved back to his hometown and helped at the family temple while working for a company that sold Buddhist altars and accessories. Later he attended Doho University to deepen his Shin Buddhism teachings.

MOTTAINAI RUMMAGE SALE

SATURDAY, JUNE 12

9:00 am TO 1:00 pm

If you have some stuff like clothes, house wear, not perishable foods, kitchen items we really appreciate having them. If you can donate, could you please bring them to Kaneohe Higashi? Sorry but we will not be accepting Books, video cassettes, cds, records. Please call Rev. Sawada if you have any questions at 247-2661.

Thank you for supporting us. Take care and stay safe.

CALENDAR of EVENTS

For all events indicating ZOOM sessions, please call temple (247-2661) one day prior to event for ID code

JUNE 2021

- 6 (Sun) Sunday Service 9 am
- 12 (Sat) MOTTAINAI RUMMAGE SALE 9 am
- 13 (Sun) Sunday Service 9 am
- 19 (Sat) MAP Shoshinge Class Bishop Kawawata 10 am
- 20 (Sun) Sunday Service 9 am
- 23 (Wed) Ministers Meetings 1 pm
- 27 (Sun) Local Dharma Gathering from Hilo Higashi Hongwanji by Rev. Kazuya Miyoshi 10 am

JULY 2021

- 3 (Sat) Hatsu Bon Service 2 pm
- 4 (Sun) Ulla Bon Service 9 am
- 11 (Sun) Sunday Service 9 am
- 17 (Sat) MAP Shoshinge Class Bishop Kawawata 10 am
- 18 (Sun) Sunday Service 9 am
- 25 (Sun) Sunday Service 9 am

Every Wednesday and Friday Dharma Health Morning Service 7:30 to 8:30 am

Virtual Obon 2021

We will be producing and posting a Virtual Bon Dance in August at our website (<http://www.kaneohe.hhbt-hi.org/>). It will feature one of our favorite dance groups, the Ko'olau Sakura Odori Kai group taught and led by Mrs. Jean Crosier. Included in this program will be an instructional segment on how to properly wear a yukata (summer kimono), demonstrated by our Bishop's wife, Mrs. Jeannie Kawawata.



Our website will also include two additional links. One will feature the Obon service led by our Reverend Marcos Sawada in which you may participate virtually. The next link will be a lecture held by the esteemed Rev. Nobuo Haneda of the Maida Center in Berkeley. His lecture is a very comprehensive talk which explains the basics of Buddhism which are sometimes misunderstood.



CONTRIBUTIONS

March 25, 2021 through May 17, 2021

Kyodan:

Liane Briggs (in memory of Mitsuji Higashi),
Glen & Reiko Hatakeyama (in memory of Tomoko
Matsumoto), Patricia Nitta (in memory of Roger Fujieda),
Ronald Toyofuku, Susan Tarumoto

Funeral:

Family of Mitsuji Higashi

Memorial Service:

Bernard Asato

Memorial Book:

Bernard Asato, Karen Higashi

Hanamatsuri: anonymous, Liane Briggs, Diane Deportilo (in
memory of Shiira Yamaguchi & Helene Shiira Dote), Margaret
Hamachi, Glen & Reiko Hatakeyama, Alvin Iida, Karen
Hayashida, Karen Higashi, Mary Kagawa, Dennis Kajiura, Joyce
Kawakami, Sandra Kawate, Mary Matsuda, CharlAnn
Nakamoto, Joyce Nariyoshi, Julian & Susan Ng, Sakiko
Nishimura, Patricia Nitta, Harold Sakaguchi, Gladys Sakata,
Stanley Sato, Eleanor Tokunaga, Barry & June Weled

Gotan-ye: Mary Matsuda, Barry & June Weled

Photo credits: Reverend Marcos Sawada, James Dote

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Jushin

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Rev. Marcos Sawada

