

Thank you, Thank you, and Thank you

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Some of the earliest descriptions of the Buddha's sangha say that it consisted of monks only. When Shakamuni was asked why he had initiated the sangha he said it was to acknowledge the monks who had given up everything in ordinary life to concentrate on finding the truth and to learn how to be of service to others.

It is written in the Pali Cannon that the Buddha held the laity in high regard and later included lay men and lay women in the Sangha.

As far as who the teachings were for, the book "What the Buddha Taught" by Wapola Rahula says, "The Buddha's teaching are meant, not only for monks in monasteries, but also ordinary men and women living at home with their families. The Noble Eightfold Path, which is the Buddhist way of life, is meant for all, without distinction of any kind."

In the Sigala Sutra (No. 31 of the Digha-nikaya) detail what great respect Buddha had for the layman's life, family and social relations.

After coming to Hawaii, at every temple I have been at, I noticed that whenever something had to be done at the temple, there always seemed to be people around to do it. There was little or no discussion, no "monku-ing", (complaining) people just responded to the need and got whatever had to be done, done. It could have been a seminar, a luncheon, or dinner or just refreshments after service; it always got done by the members of the Sangha. This was done on a weekly basis.

Over the years I was slowly immersed into the realities of inter-relations and interdependence through the operation of the Sanghas. It was you, the Sangha who taught me that.

There are things that are born of the Sangha also that we may take for granted, but should not. The Board of Directors, who see to the many concerns of temple operations, the Buddhist Women's Association, an important part of any temple whose generous support of the many activities of the temple adds to the life of the temple and the Hoshu gang, working to keep our grounds and facilities in good shape.

It is the Sangha that provides the roots of the Hongwanji here in Hawaii. Like any tree though, the roots must be strong in order to support the tree and gather nourishment. The temple provides a warm, friendly atmosphere, a

community for both young and old to become a part of and grow in. I think more and more people are looking for just that, a community. Do not be afraid to invite a friend to the temple, they might be waiting for you to do so.

When I was growing up in the Bronx in New York I lived in a neighborhood called High Bridge. It was named after a walking bridge that spanned the Harlem River and connected us to Manhattan. It was a community where people knew one another if only as acquaintances. We went to the same neighborhood stores, their children went to school and played with each other, and if, by chance, you misbehaved, someone might mention it to your mother or father. I am sure it was and is the same in Hawaii, especially in the country.

Nowadays, in some places, usually big cities, it seems people are alienating themselves from each other, some folks do not even know their neighbors, the people next door. How sad, how lonely it must be to live without any roots. I know for a fact that some of our newer members were drawn to this temple by the sense of community which we have here at Lihue Hongwanji. So the sangha, you and me, can offer a great deal to people who live here. There are people out there looking for a community to which they can belong and feel comfortable.

It is experiences like these that have shown me where I may find the Dharma. The realities of the Dharma though are revealed in everyday life, in each moment we live. All we have to do to see this is to open our eyes, ears, minds and hearts.

The sangha is so important that it is included in the Three Treasures, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. These three elements make up a perfect tripod, which is a very strong supportive structure, as long as all three pieces are in place. The value and importance of being a member of the Sangha is never to be underestimated. Through your actions and support we insure the continuance of the Three Treasures and Buddha's Dharma so that others, like ourselves, can find wisdom and compassion so desperately needed in this world.

I am reminded once again of the words of the Buddha, "Nothing comes about of itself; all things come about as the result of the maturing of causes and conditions"

We realize that today's modern families have many, many activities competing for its time so, no matter how great or how small your contribution may be, it is appreciated. I speak for myself and I think of the leaders of the temple when I say "Thank you, thank you, thank you very much." "Mahalo, Mahalo, Mahalo nui loa."

Namoamidabutsu