

Being Gratitude, Being Peace

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The way time is passing by, before we know it Thanksgiving Day will be upon us. Tonight I shall attend the first meeting of the Inter-faith Thanksgiving Day service committee to discuss that service.

It seems strange to me that we designate one specific day for these special times during the year. It seems to imply that that day is the time in which we should reflect **that** value. On Thanksgiving we are grateful, on Mother's day we think of our mothers, Father, on Father's day. etc., etc. I suppose it is good to designate at least one day.

Maybe it is a consequence of my age, experience that I cannot do it that way anymore. I can no longer just think of my parents just on the specific holidays because they are always with me in a manner of speaking. I am a reflection of them and I am still learning from them and becoming more and more aware of my indebtedness to them after 76 years of aging. Same for my fellow Brother and Sister veterans, some of whom, lost their lives, while I survived.

As a Buddhist I am encouraged to become aware of my indebtedness within the vast reality of Inter-dependence and inter-relationships and the vastness of the Wisdom/Compassion of Amida Buddha. While I shall never be able to fully awaken to gratitude as a human being, the little I can become aware of is not something I can do in a days' time but the process of awakening to gratitude goes on each and every day of my life. As master Hanh might say, I have to become gratitude.

As I write this it is still October and on the 21st of this month we shall celebrate Peace Day, a product of our own Honpa Hongwanji YBA. Our Peace Day committee is hard at work preparing for the event this coming Saturday.

When we think of peace we usually think of it in terms of world peace. What can be done (by someone else) to bring about world peace? That would be a tall order for anyone. I know I cannot do it, bring peace to this whole planet?

Individually we are stunned at the thought of trying of achieving something like that. What can I do?

Well, first we have to bring the subject down to human proportions as we shall try to do at the 130th Anniversary Panel discussion.

We, individually, do not have such power to affect world peace; however we do have the power to affect peace in at least one person, myself. In order to survive, we must establish peace with ourselves, with our bodies, our minds and our lives. Then we establish peace with our families and relatives, then with our friends and neighbors and further out into the community in which we live and so and so on.

This can be taught to our children and grandchildren and to generations of children. When a person becomes peaceful, it can be recognized by others and they in turn may want to become peaceful or to promote peace.

There is a story about Bodhisattva Dharmakara, (who was to become Amida Buddha) when he met his teacher, Buddha Dharma King, he was so impressed by his manner, his peacefulness and this inspired Dharmakara saying, "I want to be like you Buddha, I want to know the things that you know and find the peace that you know. This aspiration started Dharmakara on his path to Enlightenment.

Master Hanh and maybe the Dalai Lama might describe this as not so much being peaceful or grateful but as becoming gratitude and peace. It all starts with us.

Namoamidabutsu