

June 3, 2023 Saturday Afternoon, June Retreat

Aaron: My blessings and love to you all. I am Aaron. You all know me as Aaron, but of course that's not my name any more than your present names are your true names.

Who are you beyond the appearance, beyond the name, beyond the thoughts, beyond all of the external bodies? Who are you?

Let us use this week together to help you move deeper into knowing your true being that's connected to all that is, that is awake.

This may not be a retreat that will lead to full awakening; it is a retreat that will uncover your true awakened nature—or, at least move us in that direction.

Sometimes, what we ask of you will be hard. In the last semester of class, we did quite a bit of work with path of sacred darkness, as differentiated from the path of sacred light that we worked with earlier in class.

Sacred darkness and darkness are the same and different. The sacredness comes from the way you open your heart to the places of darkness and bring light into them. That's not said right; the light is already there—you *reveal* the light. The ways you open your heart to reveal the light in the places of deep anxiety, anger, grief, illness, or fear.

If they remain dark, they remain frightened, and there is separation, and you cannot really reveal to yourself the Unconditioned within that darkness.

As Barbara mentioned, she has had a serious infection in her foot that moved into the bone. Two months ago the doctors were saying if it doesn't heal, we're going to have to amputate, and that was terrifying to her.

So, she's had two months to reflect both on the wholeness of her foot—and it is healing, and it looks like they will not have to do anything drastic with it, just more and more time, with healing. No guarantee yet, but there is never a guarantee.

But in that two months, she's had to reflect on her self-identification with her body and also with her ability to be self-sufficient, not to feel helpless.

So, she's been hobbling around on one foot and the heel of the other, keeping the weight off the wounded part. Longing to walk, to swim, to just play with her dog. And asking herself, who am I? Who am I, if I cannot do the things with which I previously identified myself? To jump in the car and go to the store—simple things like that. Who am I?

I know a few of you are in situations where there is not the best of health, where there is grief. I know at least one of you is recovering from—or at least experiencing—long

Covid and experiencing deep exhaustion. Others of you are working with areas of fear or sadness.

In our retreat we come together, and we are able to support each other in beautiful ways. Nobody can do the work for you but it helps knowing that your sisters and brothers are right there with you, and holding the space for you, are there to help you and to acknowledge, "Yes, it is painful, and yes, you can do it," with so much love.

So, each much walk their own path, and yet the support of the sangha is very beautiful.

I believe it was Thich Nhat Hanh who suggested the next buddha might be a sangha. So, perhaps in this week together we can in part become the next buddha. Wouldn't that be beautiful?

My blessings to you all. I look forward to this week with you. I am Aaron.