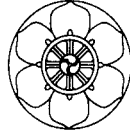


# THE EASTERN GATE



Member Newsletter Fall 2011  
The Cambridge Zen Center is part of the Kwan Um School of Zen

## Big Pregunta

*In June of 2011, Zen Master Bon Haeng (Mark Houghton) visited the sangha on the island of Mallorca, in Spain. A sangha member gave an introductory talk in Spanish, after which Zen Master Bon Haeng answered questions from the group through a translator. Here are his opening remarks from that evening.*

I have never been to Spain before, and this particular place—Palma de Mallorca—is very, very beautiful. You're very fortunate. Thank you very much.

Are there any questions? [The translator asks, *¿Hay alguna pregunta?* Mark recognizes the last word, which means "question."]

*Pregunta! Pregunta . . . any preguntas?* You know, this Zen practice—Buddhism begins with *pregunta*. Practicing Buddhism—great *pregunta*. Enlightenment means become comfortable with *pregunta*. It's all *pregunta*.

I'll tell you a little story about me, OK. Not because I'm so interesting, but maybe because you can resonate with it a little bit in your life.

When I was at university, I was maybe two thousand kilometers from my home. At my home, my grandparents and my parents lived there. My grandparents had a small apartment, and then myself, my brothers, my sisters, my parents, all lived in the other section of the house. Very close.

My mother became interested in politics when I was maybe 12, and I felt in some ways left out. But I was fortunate because my grandmother and grandfather—*abuela* and *abuelo*—were there, and I could be very close to them. So, all the time when I was away at school, I always wrote to my grandparents as often as to my parents. I may look young, but that was long before e-mail.



Deia, Mallorca

At university, I got interested in yoga, because it made my body feel good. I was not interested in anything spiritual. I was interested in sports, women, good feeling, things like that. But this yoga became very much a part of my life, every morning—stretch, breathing, energy.

Then [one day] I got a phone call from my father. He said, "Your grandfather fell down the steps. He's dead."

I said, "Papa, what should I do?" He said, "You must get an airplane ticket, come home immediately."

So, I hung up the phone. I didn't know what to do. Even now, you know . . . [He points to his eyes, which are tearing up a bit.] So, I'm thinking, "What do I do? How do I honor my grandfather?" No family, no really good friends at university.

So I said, "I will go to chapel. I will sit quietly in the chapel, and I will think of all the things I did with my grandfather through my whole life."

So I go to the chapel. One minute thinking, I'm thinking about [going to] the beach [with my grandfather], sandcastles, walking, fishing. After maybe 30 seconds, another thought comes in—"How do I get to the airport? How do I get a ticket? I don't know how to get a ticket."

Then, "No, no, no! I'm thinking about *grandfather!*"

So a few more minutes, I'm thinking about the beach again, then "Oh, what about this girl? I met this girl—I have to see her before I go, you know?"

Then, "You—what kind of man are you? You're no good!"

Then, a minute later, "I must write this paper. When will I have time to do this paper for university?"

And this went on for 40 minutes. I sat. Mind goes, try to bring it back. Then mind goes,

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# SANGHADHARMA

## European Teaching Tour 2011 By Barbara Feldman

On the first of June Zen Master Bon Haeng left for a teaching tour of Europe with a small group of sangha members. It was a privilege to be among them. Jeff McDonough from the Open Meadow Zen Group went on the first leg of the trip to Spain. Mark O'Leary, from the Cambridge Zen Center, participated for two weeks until we reached Bratislava, and he kept an engaging blog about it. Zen Master Bon Haeng and I completed the tour, which continued to Won Kwang Sa Temple in Hungary before ending in Israel; three and a half weeks, eight countries, eleven sanghas.

Each country had its own flavor. In Spain, a large group of 23 people leisurely strolled around in a scenic tour of Palma de Mallorca and surrounding areas, including monasteries and exquisite panoramic views. We often stopped for delightful snacks and then there was that incredible meal a few steps from the ocean's edge that lasted two and a half hours. At the dharma talk at Bratislava, five or six people spontaneously interpreted the talk at once. But later, in Krakow, Poland, when Zen Master Bon Haeng asked if there were any questions, there was a prolonged silence. In some sanghas, things seemed unplanned and spontaneous, while in others, such as in Germany, each retreatant was given their own printed name labels for their cup and their robe hook.

As we arrived in each new dharma room it was wonderful to see the teaching ancestors' pictures framed on the wall. There was Dae Soen Sa Nim's picture, and usually a Bodhidharma or two, the altar, chant-

ing, sitting and the robes—just like at home. We felt a sense of great familiarity and shared experience amid the vast cultural differences. We enjoyed hearing the Heart Sutra and the Four Great Vows in each country's language.



Krakow, Poland



Lodz, Poland sangha



Dinner with sangha in Bratislava, Slovakia

Despite language barriers, we connected on many levels. It wasn't always the most fluent English speakers that I connected with most deeply. In one town in Poland, arrangements were made for me to sleep at the home of a sangha member's mother. We arrived quite late after the talk and

refreshments, and because she didn't speak a word of English and I not a word of Polish, her daughter translated her mother's instructions regarding my potential needs, her cat's habits and the coffee maker. She beamed at me and made me feel welcome and comfortable. There was much interaction after we were alone, offerings of blankets and pillows, and so on. In the morning, pick-up was to be at 4:30 to allow time to drive to the Zen center for morning bows. I tried to thank her for her great hospitality as I said good-night, thinking I would not see her again. But at 4:10 this Polish mother was offering me coffee and making sure I was all set: she felt it was important to say goodbye in person. I felt so taken care of. And of course, Zen-style, her son-in-law arrived at exactly 4:30—we made our goodbyes with great warmth and off we went. Our hearts had bonded without one word of common language.

Many people juggled their schedules and made time for us despite their busy lives. We would be met at the train station or airport, transported to our lodging place and at the end returned to our next transportation with tickets in hand. Like a retreat, everything was taken care of. We were all quite touched by the sincerity, caring and cheerfulness of our hosts and sangha members. Our driver in Spain kept missing the amazing sightseeing events so he could park the van and then pick us up later.

We practiced every morning much like we do here: often bows, chanting and sitting, or just sitting if it was someone's home and there were only three of us. Usually it was a large group in a dharma room. In a

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# SANGHADHARMA

## European Teaching Tour 2011 Continued from page 2

small town in Poland, fifteen people arrived for bows at 5:00 a.m. Zen Master Bon Haeng did interviews most mornings and dharma talks most nights. How he had the energy to do this is a great mystery. Sometimes we'd arrive just in time to put on our robes before a dharma talk after a full day of sightseeing.

Usually the first day we arrived in a new country and met our hosts, we'd feel like strangers; the second day we were getting to know each other, having fun and practicing together; and by the third day we were like family. The stories tumbled out, the usual problems of difficult life situations, the human condition. Where usually it might take weeks and months to form a bond with someone new, in this situation it often seemed to occur instantly.

Some things were surprising to me. A college professor and his two children (ages 13 and 15) sat three days of retreat at the temple in Hungary. I had never seen anyone so young sit so beautifully for three whole days. One man told us after the retreat that he had been trained to be a butcher at 12 years old and worked many years on his parents' hundred-square-mile farm, but he left 15 generations of butchers to pursue the dharma, martial arts and acupuncture, even though he was still only 20 years old.

Our last night in Hungary after the three-day Yong Maeng Jong Jin, we all stayed up late talking until about 11 o'clock. The temple is in the remote country where there was only a dirt road. It was quite dark with no street lamps. When it was time for me to walk back to the women's quarters, a five-minute walk away, Zen

Master Bon Haeng asked if someone could walk me there. This was a good thing as a city girl in the country might easily wander down the wrong path. As my guide and I approached the main road, from out of nowhere the temple cat sprung out and



Morning practice in Brno, Czech Republic



Palma group



Town square in Krakow, Poland

ran in front of us, and then proceeded to trot along at a steady pace, leading the way. "Here's your guide!" said my friend. Walking with his cell-phone light to guide us, we three happily made our way. At one

point I thought the cat had left us, but then I spotted him doing his business off to the side of the road, and he ran to catch up with us and again settled on the same formation, trotting along a few feet in front of us. We turned to the left and walked up an even more gravelly path until we arrived at the lodging. We said goodnight and parted ways. The next morning—our last—I planned to leave at 5:15 to attend morning bows, after which we would leave immediately for the drive to Budapest airport. As I was a little late finishing up my packing, I rushed out the door turning left to the path. Out of the corner of my eye I saw the cat curled up in a ball in the middle of the path to my right. Suddenly he leapt up from his sleeping position and dashed along the road until he passed me and again slowed to a trot a few paces in front of me. I was startled and said, "Oh you really are my guide! Good morning!" We continued on and, to my amazement, he turned right at the crossing to the main road without hesitation and continued leading me all the way, right up to the temple where he leapt onto the small ledge encircling it and walked around to the right side and, his job now completed, he vanished from sight.

The trip ended in Israel and for me this was very powerful as I was brought up as a Jew. To be in a room full of Jews who were all deeply questioning was very powerful for me. It went beyond any words about it. It felt like it was a type of "full circle." My parents gave me a Hebrew name at birth, *Bracha*. I attended Hebrew school or Jewish training three times a week from the time I was eight until I was fifteen years old. By then I was strongly questioning how

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# SANGHADHARMA

## European Teaching Tour 2011

Continued from page 3

“Jewish” I wanted to be. While at first it seemed wonderful to learn “we were the chosen people,” by the age of fifteen it didn’t seem reasonable. My question became, “How could I help to relieve the great suffering pervasive in this world?” What is my way? Political? Psychological? Long after I left my original tribe to embrace the world through Zen practice, I returned to find my tribe also practicing hard to find their true nature. I especially treasure the gift I received of a Hebrew Kwan Um Chanting book from the Israeli sangha. My heart leapt in joy to see the Hebrew letters spelling out the Heart Sutra.

So for me this trip added a dimension to my direction that is larger than before.

Don’t know how it will take shape but I feel touched by the experience of actually meeting people all over the world who have a deep question, and to find that despite all the many differences we are not so different from each other. “We are never separate.” as Zen Master Bon Haeng often says.

Zen Master Wu Kwang in *Elegant Failure* says it this way: “If you recognize oneness, that does not take away the individual characteristics of any particular being or any particular expression of being. We still, in some sense, retain our unique expressiveness as a particular wave in this ocean. At the same time, we are never separate from the universal absolute.”

One night at 11 o’clock, about three weeks after the tour ended, suddenly a pop-up

window appeared on my computer screen which said, “Are you there?” It was one of the Hungarian sangha members I met at the retreat in Won Kwang Sa. He was just preparing to do his morning bows (at five o’clock for him) while I was just getting ready to sleep. He commented, “Global Dharma.”

For me this was surely an unforgettable, life-changing experience. As interesting as the countries were and all the sights we saw, far more interesting was the opportunity to meet our genuine sangha members and have an experience together. I feel so grateful to Dae Soen Sa Nim, all our teachers and the Buddha for uniting the world in this simple yet oh-so-profound practice.



Vienna, Knud, Iris, Ondras, Kuba, ZMBH, Barbara



Zen Master Bon Haeng and Mauro pointing at the moon, Barcelona



Enrique Iranzo and Zen Master Bon Haeng in Palma

## FALL 2011 SCHEDULE

<b>Sept. 1</b>	Dharma Talk by Tom Johnson, SDT	<b>Nov. 3</b>	Dharma Talk by Tom Johnson, SDT
<b>Sept. 8</b>	Dharma Talk by Zen Master Bon Yeon	<b>Nov. 5</b>	One-day College Retreat led by Zen Master Bon Yeon
<b>Sept. 10-11</b>	Two-day Work YMJJ led by Dan Sinnott, SDT & PPM	<b>Nov. 10</b>	Dharma Talk by Jennifer Magrone, SDT
<b>Sept. 15</b>	Dharma Talk by Zen Master Bon Haeng	<b>Nov. 17</b>	Dharma Talks by Zen Master Soeng Hyang and Zen Master Bon Yeon
<b>Sept. 17-18</b>	Dharma Teachers Retreat at PZC	<b>Nov. 19-20</b>	Two-day YMJJ led by Zen Master Soeng Hyang
<b>Sept. 22</b>	Dharma Talk by Dan Sinnott, SDT	<b>Nov. 24</b>	Thanksgiving Holiday
<b>Sept. 29</b>	Dharma Talk by Zen Master Bon Yeon		
<b>Oct. 6</b>	Dharma Talk by Zen Master Bon Haeng	<b>Dec. 1</b>	Dharma Talk by Zen Master Bon Haeng
<b>Oct. 8-9</b>	Two-day YMJJ led by Nancy Hedgpeh, JDPSN	<b>Dec. 3</b>	Buddha’s Enlightenment Day at PZC
<b>Oct. 13</b>	Dharma Talk by Tom Johnson, SDT	<b>Dec. 8</b>	Dharma Talk by Ben Gleason, SDT
<b>Oct. 20</b>	Dharma Talk by Zen Master Bon Yeon	<b>Dec. 15</b>	Dharma Talk by Zen Master Bon Yeon
<b>Oct. 27</b>	Dharma Talk by Nancy Hathaway, SDT	<b>Dec. 18</b>	One-day YMJJ at Open Meadow led by Zen Master Bon Haeng
		<b>Dec. 22</b>	Dharma Talk by Dan Sinnott, SDT
		<b>Dec. 29</b>	Dharma Talk by Tad Bailey, SDT

## Reflections on Spain By Jeffrey McDonough

What does it mean to be part of a Zen master's entourage? What does it mean to be part of a worldwide sangha? I had the opportunity to explore both of these questions as I joined Mark O'Leary, and Barbara Feldman on the first leg of Zen Master Bon Haeng's 2011 European Teaching Tour.

The trip began rather abruptly, with a phone call from Mark Houghton [Zen Master Bon Haeng]: "Our flight to New York has been canceled. They've booked us on an earlier flight on another airline, but we have to leave right now." Thankfully, I had struggled against my habitual pattern of procrastination and did most of my packing the day before . . . most, but not all.

There was a bit of frantic scrambling. As I grabbed everything else I thought I'd need, the message was as clear as day to me: if I hadn't made the effort to pack the necessary things the day before, I would have been screwed. This is responsible traveling. In this journey of life, if I don't make the daily effort to unpack unnecessary things before my time to die comes, I'll be screwed. This is responsible living. The difference is, when the time for the Big Trip arrives, I probably won't get the courtesy of a phone call saying, "Your flight's been canceled. We've booked you on an earlier one."

Upon our arrival at CZC, my anxiety over the rocky start of our trip abated. Dan and Tracy were waiting with a plan in place: one vehicle for passengers, another for luggage. As we were whisked away to Boston's Logan Airport, it became apparent that we weren't alone on this trip. Arrangements had been made, and preparations for our stay were being undertaken by people we hadn't even met yet. I was just along for the ride. All I had to do was show up and move my feet. I think a lot of life is like this.

Ironically, our earlier flight was delayed, and

we almost missed our connection at JFK. The good news is that we arrived in Barcelona on schedule at 7:10 the following morning. The bad news is that our luggage didn't. After a brief interlude at the lost-luggage desk, we were met by Anthony, a Czech living in Barcelona with his girlfriend, Barbara Pardo, after having lived as a monk in our school for seven years. Again, we simply did as we



Zen Master Bon Haeng and Isabella, on the flight to Spain

were told, and were taken by taxi to Barbara's small flat in an old section of Barcelona. The five flights of stairs to her apartment, over the course of two days, would prove to be more of a workout for me that hiking the Serra de Tramuntana on Mallorca.

Barbara greeted us with warm, Spanish hospitality that included a warm, Spanish breakfast of churros and hot chocolate. This is hot chocolate, mind you, not hot cocoa. This is literally molten milk chocolate with just enough cream added to admit a freshly fried, freshly sugared churro. This is a breakfast that makes blueberry pancakes with whipped cream and cherries look like Kellogg's All-Bran with skim milk. But I digress . . .

Jet-lagged almost to the point of delirium, I opted out of a nap to explore the vibrant yet laid back city of Barcelona, from my first swim in the Mediterranean to the tapas bars and cafes, and finally back to the apartment, where our luggage had joined us in time to prepare for the evening sitting at Bori Centro Zen.

Barbara's apartment is in an old section of the

city; Bori Centro Zen is in an ancient section, the Gothic Quarter. Amid a maze of narrow cobblestone alleys, the Barcelona group meets above La Libreria Santo Domingo, a very small, very eclectic bookstore with a stone floor and a stone staircase leading to the sitting room. About a dozen practitioners, including ourselves, were in attendance. Regular members of the Barcelona Zen Group include the owner of the bookstore, Claudia, as well as Anthony and Barbara, Roger (whose impeccable English owes itself to six years of life in London) and Barbara's father, Fernando Pardo.

Fernando, a student of Zen Master Seung Sahn, is the anchor of the Barcelona Zen Group, and has been instrumental in the spread of Seung Sahn's teaching in Spain. The owner of a small publishing company, he assisted in the Spanish translation and publication of both *The Compass of Zen* and *Wanting Enlightenment Is a Big Mistake*. Fernando didn't just jump out and tell me this, however. It came to light in the course of conversation over a long, late dinner. This is humility, and a strong example to me. I'm writing this article and I've already told ten people about it. Aren't I something! (Actually, I've only told four or five people. My penchant for exaggeration is another indication of my lack of humility and her close cousin, honesty.) Incidentally, that dinner, several hours long, didn't end until well after midnight. Barcelona gets up late, stays out late, and doesn't hurry in between.

The following day was filled with sightseeing courtesy of Mauro, a friend of Anthony and Barbara, and our de facto driver and tour guide during our stay. Our meandering over the course of two days brought us from the Castell de Montjuic atop a hill to the south of the city to the idyllic Antoni Gaudi designed Park Guell in the hills to the north, to Gaudi's magnificent cathedral, Sagrada Familia in the heart of Barcelona. Still under construction after more than a century, this fantastic

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# SANGHADHARMA

## Reflections on Spain Continued from page 5

nature-inspired colossus is like an acid trip set in stone as a testament to God's glory. Daunted by the hour-and-a-half wait to get inside, we retired to a nearby café where we were joined by Jo Potter JDPSN, who had just arrived from the airport via Mauro's van.

Jo gave the opening talk at the Bori Centro Zen that evening, and it was here that the rubber met the road for me; I began to appreciate the full import of what I was participating in. The dharma room, as would be the case in Palma de Mallorca two nights later, was filled to capacity with people very much interested in meeting an American Zen master.

Jo's story of her mother, her grandmother and the strong relationships between the women in her family, was delivered in Spanish, which she admitted was rusty. Having minored in Spanish and spent some time in Central America, my Spanish is passable. I heard her story in a different way than I did when I heard the English version in Lexington. Mark didn't. "I have no idea what she said," he confessed, "so ask me anything." The questions came from a place of confusion and misunderstanding, with which I am intimately familiar in any language. These people were looking for answers to questions to which Zen proposes no answers. As we left our friends in Barcelona to meet new ones in Mallorca, a Mediterranean island an hour's flight to the southeast, I began to sense what was different here: in Lexington and Cambridge, I feel as though Mark is teaching to the initiated, to those already practicing Zen. Many of those attending the dharma talks in Barcelona and Palma de Mallorca, the main city on the island, were bare beginners, perhaps not even consciously on the path. Maybe there's no difference. Whatever the reason, the teaching felt much more basic, much more direct, on the other

side of the Atlantic. It struck me more clearly that it ever had at home.

When I arrived in Spain, I expected to find a large, thriving sangha in Barcelona and a smaller, struggling group in Palma de Mallorca, but the opposite turned out to be true. El Centro Zen Palma is clearly outgrowing its environs on the second floor of a build-



Barcelona, Spain Barbara, Roger, ZMBH, Mauro, Jeff, Jo Potter JDPSN and Anthony



Tolo Cantarellas, Maria Jesus and Zen Master Bon Haeng in Deia, Spain

ing in the old part of the city. After being enthusiastically collected at the airport by Tolo Cantarellas, Eduardo and Enrique, a Spanish Kwan Um teacher working for the Spanish consul in Munich, we met with other members of the sangha for another whirlwind of restaurants, sightseeing and cafes. The Spanish people seem to spend a lot of time in restaurants and cafes: I averaged five small meals a day while I was there. They eat all day, yet no one's fat. I noted this phenomenon with the focused interest of a cultural anthropologist.

It wasn't until Tolo had used the term Dae

Soen Sa Nim several times that I realized he was referring to Mark, and not to Seung Sahn, the only person I'd heard referred to by that title. I then understood the royal treatment we were receiving, the gracious hospitality and the boundless attention to our every need: Zen masters are afforded a level of respect by the Spanish that is above that which we offer them in the United States. These people were truly grateful to spend just a little time with an American teacher. Mark lives right down the street from me, and I take it for granted on a regular basis. In all likelihood, I'll continue to do so—not surprising from someone who has taken this precious human birth for granted for over 40 years.

It was in a spirit of shared gratitude that I attended the public dharma talk at El Centro Zen Palma. Eduardo translated Mark's talk in a wonderfully animated and humorous fashion. I hope that you've all had the opportunity to view the video on Mark O'Leary's blog. Two things were particularly interesting to me about this talk. The first was that Mark, while recounting his experience of the death of his grandfather, became very emotional, something that I'd not seen from him before. This cut right through me. As was the case with Jo's talk in Barcelona, I had heard this story before, yet it was like hearing it for the first time. I identified completely with the great sadness and desperation, which have served as my motivation to truly examine my own mind in a way that reading scriptures and books about Buddhism does not offer.

The other interesting facet of the Palma de Mallorca talk was that Mark had apparently warmed up to the language enough to speak directly in Spanish at several points. Remark- ing that his Spanish is "as bad as Seung Sahn's English," he informed the 40 or so people gathered that "la cabeza no es bueno" (the head is not good). Hearing Mark deliver the teaching in this terse, direct and humorous

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# SANGHADHARMA

## Reflections on Spain

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fashion put me in mind of what makes Seung Sahn's delivery of the teaching so powerful: he couldn't speak English very well. When we speak in our own language, we can be overly elaborate, elliptical and verbose, as I've doubtless been here. In an unfamiliar language, we can't. This is Zen. A language barrier makes the teaching poetically simple, clear and direct. Anyone who has communicated with another human being without the benefit of a common language knows this: nuance is lost, and truth comes through. This is probably the greatest gift I received as I heard the teaching across the ocean, far away from my New England comfort zone.

I remained on Mallorca for several days after Barbara, Jo and the two Marks departed for the continent, grateful for the opportunity to decompress after the fast pace and deep emotion that characterized the previous four days that had felt like a month. I stayed in the seaside village of Deia, enjoying the hospitality of Barbara's friends, Yvette and Archie, and

hiking the ridge high above the Mediterranean, reflecting on my experience as part of a Zen master's entourage and considering what it means to be part of a worldwide sangha. As wonderful as it is to be welcomed like an old friend by strangers in a foreign country and to be able to experience a new place with the locals rather than as a tourist, being part of a worldwide sangha means much more than this. It means being united with other human beings in a practice that stretches across oceans and across centuries. During my three years of regular practice at the Open Meadow Zen Group, I've often asked myself, "Why are we chanting in Korean? I have no idea what I'm saying." This question was put to rest once and for all in Spain. In conversations throughout the day, I found myself hearing broken English and speaking broken Spanish. When we practiced, however, the chanting was familiar to us all. The direct experience was beyond linguistic understanding. United in words and rhythm, our differences fell away. What is essential remained. When I sit, the idea of sitting for the benefit

of all sentient beings often seems abstract to me. Attaching names and faces to a handful of these sentient beings makes this aspiration more real. Along with the faces of fellow practitioners I've met in Lexington, Cambridge and Providence, I can now add the faces of Barbara, Anthony, Fernando, Claudia, Roger and Mauro from Barcelona. I can add the faces of Tolo, Eduardo, Mercedes, Enrique, Pablo, Maria Antonia and Pilar from Palma de Mallorca. I can add Luigi and Christina, the Italian couple vacationing in Mallorca, to the list of Zen practitioners I've had the pleasure to meet. I can add Yvette and Archie. Following practice one evening after returning from his three-week European teaching tour, Mark was speaking to us on the porch at Open Meadow Zen Group. He said that the "great deception" of travel is that we go abroad to see all these new and exciting places. What ends up being most important, however, is the people we meet. I'm grateful to have met all these members of the Kwan Um sangha, and to have expanded my circle of compassion just a little bit more.



Brno Dharma talk night



Vienna YMJJ

## Big Pregunta

Continued from front page

I said to myself, "If you cannot get insight into this consciousness, then your life will never have any meaning." I made this strong decision. I began to look around for someone to help me. At the time I thought there was something wrong with me. But then I came to perceive that all human beings have a similar problem.

One day, I heard about this Zen Master Seung Sahn, maybe 33 or 34 years ago. I

went to hear him speak, this Korean master. *Mi español* was better than his English. I went to a talk, and there were maybe this many [about 30 to 40] people. Then he came in, sat down and said,

Don't make anything, don't hold anything, don't check anything, don't attach to anything. If you want to understand your true self, you must return to "before thinking," because you are not your thinking.

Just as you are not what you think, you are not

what you see, you are not what you hear, you are not what you smell, you are not what you taste, and you are not what you touch. Those are your tools to function as a human being.

But something is using the tools. What is *that*?

In 33 years, I have never encountered clearer teaching than that. So I stay and practice.

*You can watch a video clip of this excerpt as well as other materials from Zen Master Bon Haeng's 2011 trip to Europe at [teachingtour2011.blogspot.com](http://teachingtour2011.blogspot.com).*

# SANGHADHARMA

## Tying Your Shoes By Mark O'Leary

A 19th-century Hasidic Jewish story tells of a young man who traveled a long way from his home to study with a famous rabbi. After a year's absence, the young man returned to his home, and his friends and family all clamored to hear about his trip.

"The rabbi is a great scholar," said his friend. "You must have learned a lot of Torah."

"Well, the rabbi is a great scholar," said the young man, "but I'm not much of a scholar myself, so I wouldn't say I learned a lot of Torah, no."

"Oh, but then again, the rabbi is a very spiritual man," said someone else. "You must have learned how to pray with great fervor."

"You would think so," said the young man, "But I have to admit, I didn't learn a lot about that either."

Everybody was puzzled. Finally the young man's father said, "My son, you have been away from home a whole year. You didn't learn any Torah. You didn't learn to pray fervently. Why did you go to this famous rabbi?"

"I went," said the young man, with a twinkle in his eye, "to see how the rabbi ties his shoes."

In June of 2011, I had the privilege of accompanying Zen Master Bon Haeng on his European tour. The stated purpose of my presence on the trip was to blog about the visit and post pictures and video clips online. In this I was only somewhat successful, but people here at home seemed to appreciate the effort.

But the real reason I went was so I could see how a Zen master ties his shoes.

Before the trip, my experience with Zen masters had consisted mainly of Tuesday-night kong-an interviews, lots of Thursday-night public talks and Q&A, and a good many other less formal situations with the extended sangha: fundraisers, holidays and so on. Controlled and safe.

But two and a half weeks of constant exposure, traveling across Europe? Think of

all the things that could go wrong: airlines, passports, trains, buses, missed connections pickpockets. If anything were designed to reveal a person's true character, it's the stresses of international travel.

The stress began before we even left Logan Airport. In fact, it began before we arrived there. A couple of hours before our planned departure for the terminal, the airline called to tell us our flight to La Guardia had been cancelled. We were presented with the choice of an evening flight or "alternate transportation." (Translation: hiring someone to drive us to New York.) The casual manner in which we were presented with these impossible choices merely served to amplify the irritation I felt as I saw our trip being derailed before it had even begun. I was irritated; Barbara was irritated; Mark was—OK. "No problem," he said. We got on another flight with a different carrier, scrambled a bit to accommodate the change in departure time, and that was that.

No problem.

From La Guardia we flew to Barcelona. Anyone who has flown overnight to Europe knows that those six, seven or eight hours are precious sleeping time, and if you don't get your rest, the next day will be miserable. Things seemed like they were shaping up for a decent night's sleep until we found a new traveling companion, a little girl named Isabella and her even littler brother, both of whom took an instant liking to Mark.

It was not a restful flight.

We landed in Barcelona at seven in the morning. Sure, we were tired, but so what? We were in Spain, our friends would meet us outside passport control, and the adventure would begin for real. No problem.

Whoops, problem.

We arrived, but our luggage did not. We stood watching the empty baggage carousel turning around and around, all our fellow passengers (including Isabella) long since departed. Finally we found the baggage office and informed the helpful young man there

about our predicament.

Did I mention that Mark had been practicing his Spanish in preparation for the trip? Mark's command of Spanish is very peculiar, to say the least. His Spanish is worse than Zen Master Seung Sahn's English. Mark speaks *alleged* Spanish.

*No problema.*

Apparently, our bags were not lost, merely delayed. They would arrive (Mark led us to understand) on the next flight from New York. The airline would deliver the bags to wherever we were staying. All we had to do was give the nice young man our address in Barcelona, and he would take care of everything.

I was skeptical. Barbara was worried. Mark was delighted to be speaking (sort of) Spanish.

One drawback: we didn't know our address in Barcelona. Mark tried to phone his Barcelona contact person (who was at that very moment waiting for us outside passport control, less than a hundred feet away), but his supposedly global cell phone hadn't yet initialized or whatever it does when it wakes up and discovers it's not in America anymore. I was frustrated. Barbara was smiling nervously. Mark was entirely unconcerned. No problem.

I don't remember how we resolved all this, but somehow Mark (and Jeff, who it turns out really does speak Spanish) figured out where to send the bags, we got our passports stamped, met our friends and arrived at our first destination in the old city of Barcelona. I was still unconvinced that we would ever see our bags again, and I was already trying to remember the Spanish word for *underwear* in case I needed to buy a few things locally. But that afternoon, we returned from a sightseeing jaunt to find that the airline had not only delivered all the bags, 100 percent intact, but had *carried them up the four flights of stairs* to the apartment.

First thing we did was shower and change clothes. I think Mark put on fresh shoes. I don't remember how he tied them.

No problem.

## SANGHANOTES

Much physical plant work has been accomplished under the leadership of Dan Sinnott, our physical plant manager. Five skylights were replaced, and new wall-to-wall light brown carpet was installed in the main house after stretching our former carpets to last for 30 years! They look so clean and feel so nice, creating a fresher feeling in the Zen center than it has had in a long time. Cobalt blue carpet was selected for the interview room and the TV room, which gives a nice contrast. All the painting has helped as well! One third-floor apartment had major renovations with a new kitchen, bathroom and floors, and even track lighting! Another two apartments also had work done in the bathrooms and kitchen. In the main house, four bathrooms have been completely redone in the last year and a half—a most welcome change! There are still more that will need to be rehabbed in times to come. We have switched to a new air conditioning unit in the dharma room that is quieter, more energy efficient and allows us to hear the speaker clearly on dharma-talk night. Many windows are being replaced with triple-paned energy efficient ones that are easy to use.

On May 7 we celebrated Zen Master Bon Haeng's 60th birthday. About a hundred people attended, and we received many generous donations totaling \$10,000 for the Kwan Um School, which Zen Master Bon Haeng had asked for in lieu of gifts. Shuk-Kuen Tse and Maria Chan were our chefs, and truly went above and beyond the call of duty cooking up a storm of delectables. Bo-Mi Choi baked and decorated the largest and most delicious German chocolate cake that there ever was! Tom Johnson emceed the celebration, and his wonderfully quirky sense of humor added a

droll touch. Zen Master Soeng Hyang gave a heartfelt talk, and Zen Master Bon Yeon's talk ended up as a roast. She suddenly



Zen Master Bon Yeon speaking at the 60th birthday



Zen Master Bon Haeng's 60th birthday party



Birthday cake after lighting

unfurled a life-sized poster of Zen Master Bon Haeng as a 20-year old hippie, complete with long hair and guitar! Sangha

members told stories about their beginnings at the Zen Center and how it changed their lives. We sang a funny song to the tune of "Happy Birthday, Sweet Sixteen," for which Dan revised the lyrics to fit the occasion. The sangha presented Zen Master Bon Haeng with a new Zen stick that was polished by sangha members. His niece sang a beautiful song. Saba Usman choreographed and executed an exotic Arabian dance interpretation of a kong-an interview. Dan Sinnott's entrance as her Arabian lover in convincing costume surprised us all! The evening concluded with a joyful eruption of wild dancing for a few minutes, followed by dessert.

At the Buddha's Birthday and Founder's Day celebrations at the Providence Zen Center we welcomed new preceptees: Christine Calfas (who came all the way from Portland), Michael Selva, Jessica Ames (our new housemaster) and a new resident, Eugenia Hyung, each took five precepts. Mark O'Leary became a dharma-teacher-in-training, and former residents Tiffany Reed and Melissa Hull became dharma teachers. Thank you for your commitment and great vow! We also congratulate Tiffany Reed on completing her three-month Kyol Che at the Providence Zen Center. Thank you for your hard training. Michael Selva and a few residents performed skits for the entertainment Saturday evening and were successful in creating much laughter.

Thank you to our retreat teachers Zen Master Wu Kwang, and Ji Do Poep Sa Nims Ken Kessel, Thom Pastor, Paul Majchrzyk and Steve Cohen. Each teacher brought his own unique flavor to the teaching and sharing of Dharma. We are grateful for this opportunity. Andy Wood has continued teaching children from various church groups and they always enjoy it

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## SANGHANOTES

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immensely. Thanks to Tiffany Reed for taking on a new group. Jessica Ames began and led a dharma study group that met every other week for four months to study the Sixth Patriarch's Platform Sutra. Participants shared their questions and personal experiences. Zen Master Bon Yeon taught a huge class of high school seniors in our dharma room. Our bianual college retreat was led by Zen Master Bon Haeng. It was well attended and appreciated by students from five local colleges, and was for many a first-time experience.

Summer Kyol Che taught by Stanley Lombardo JDPSN and Zen Master Bon Haeng was well attended, with our head dharma teacher Beth Walsh completing all three weeks as the moktak master for the retreat, and Christine Calfas serving as kitchen master for the last week of the retreat.

We thank Tad Bailey for serving in the demanding housemaster job these past four years. We welcome our new housemaster, Jessica Ames, as she steps up to take on this big job! We thank Saba Usman for serving as guest master these last several months for her attention to detail and her care of our guests.

We welcome our new residents: Jim Kopcienski (formerly Chong Won Sunim), Julie Regan, Mark Uehling and Eugenia Hyung. And we are happy to have Mike Bruffee, William Jackson, Jay Moore, Eric Espinosa and Andy Wood #2 as new residents. To avoid confusion we will call Andy Wood #2, "Woody" and hope that Woody Woodpecker doesn't also move in! We also welcome back Rosa Zuluaga, a Columbian Consul and her six-year-old son, David, as well as Sandra, David's au pair, while she attends Harvard Business School

this year. We said goodbye to Michael Carey, who left for Thailand and is teaching English, and to Thomas Ponniah, who moved to Toronto to pursue his teaching



Preceptees on Founder's Day 2011



CZC hikers on Mt. Monadnock



July YMJJ with Paul Majchrzyk JDPSN

career. We miss you much and hope to see you both back again soon! In September, MJ Kenny will be moving but only right across

the street, so we hope to see her even more often than before! We were grateful to have Cheong Gang Sunim, a Korean monk from the Chogye Order, staying with us for more than eight months while he studied English. He was an inspiration to many. Also Sung-Ju Park, a temple bosalnim from Mihwangsa Temple in South Korea has also returned home after four months with us. We all miss her helpful, quiet and gentle presence greatly.

We were all saddened by the sudden passing of Mac Hedgpeth, the husband of Nancy JDPSN. Some of us were able to attend the wake and memorial service on April 11. Nancy, our hearts are with you.

The European Teaching Tour of Zen Master Bon Haeng through Europe began on June 1 and included eight countries: Spain, Poland, Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Hungary and Israel. Accompanying him was Jeff McDonough from the Open Meadow Zen Group for the Spanish portion, Mark O'Leary who joined for two weeks and Barbara Feldman. It was a great privilege to meet and practice with our European sangha members. In every city the tour was met by spirited members who made every aspect of the visit enjoyable and comfortable from start to finish. There were dharma talks almost every evening and interviews and practice every morning, and also seven Yong Maeng Jong Jin days were included. The public talks were well attended, including some newcomers, and they were held in the humblest spaces to the most impressive temples. Sincere practitioners were met everywhere.

One poignant moment occurred at a public

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# SANGHANOTES

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talk in Lodz, Poland, after a long wait for someone to ask a question: an eight-year-old girl suddenly bravely asked, “Where will I go when I die?” Some sanghas told us they only see a teacher no more than once every six months, which made us appreciate all the more how bountiful the dharma is in Cambridge! Hearts were touched, bonds were formed and it was surely an unforgettable experience to connect with our dear sangha brothers and sisters across Europe. We invite you all to come visit us here at Cambridge Zen Center! Check out the blog that Mark O’Leary created at

[teachingtour2011.blogspot.com](http://teachingtour2011.blogspot.com) for videos and pictures of the trip. As the summer air suddenly transforms into autumn, we look forward to our annual canoe trip and our Zen work retreat in September led by Dan Sinnott SDT, which includes six hours of work practice. In an effort to increase the sustainability of the Zen center and lower its environmental impact, the Zen center is collaborating with the Home Energy Efficiency Team. Cambridge-based HEET leaders will guide retreatants through simple steps to increase the sustainability of the Zen center. Under our abbot, Tom Johnson’s strong but

low-key leadership our numbers have steadily grown to 37 residents, and we now have a waiting list for residency. We send out heartfelt wishes to Jiri (George) Hazlbauer and Tamarind Jordan for their great success and happiness in their next endeavor in the Czech Republic, and a huge thank you for all the hard work and sincere effort they have given our school as Kwan Um School director and abbot of Providence Zen Center. We will miss you greatly!



Andy Wood #1



Sangsuk Oh and daughter Minji on her 7th birthday



January YMJJ led by ZMBH



Saba Usman and Sung-Ju Park



Bodhisattva temple cat at Won Kwang Sa



Synagogue Museum in Krakow, Poland

## WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Introduction to Formal Practice  
Thursday Evenings 7:00pm

Long Sitting & Kong-an Practice  
Tuesday Evenings 6:30–9:30pm  
Sunday Mornings 9:00–11:30pm

Midday Sitting  
Tuesdays & Thursdays 12:30–1:00pm

Public Dharma Talk with Q & A  
Thursday Evenings 7:30–8:30pm

## DAILY SCHEDULE

Mornings: <i>(Except Tuesdays)</i> 108 Bows 5:45am Chanting 6:10am Sitting 6:30am	Evenings: <i>(Except Thursdays)</i> Special Chanting 6:30pm Chanting 7:00pm Sitting 7:25pm
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Brno, Czech Republic train station communications



Brno train station farewell



Jeffrey McDonough on a cannon in Barcelona



Mark O'Leary hard at work on the blog in Lodz, Poland

