

From Myoan Grace Schireson, Sensei

December 30, 2010

Dear Soun Joe Dowling,

I am writing as a Dharma cousin to encourage you and your sangha to terminate Rev. Eido Shimano's teaching responsibilities and connection with the ZSS as recommended by the Faith Trust Institute October report . As a Zen person, I have given you the pith of my message first; the explanation of how I presume to involve myself follows.

I am a teacher in the Suzuki Roshi lineage, who has received Dharma transmission and the responsibility of the Mountain Seat ceremony from Sojun Weitsman Roshi, becoming Abbess for my temple. While I have not personally experienced the teaching power of Rev. Eido Shimano, I have also studied with the great koan master, Fukushima Keido, Kansho, at Tofukuji temple, Kyoto. Fukushima Roshi has also concurred with my discomfort over the sexual misconduct of Rev. Shimano. As a practitioner of koan, and now as a koan teacher, I understand the power of that method and the deep trust required in the relationship of student and teacher. In this regard I share with you the Zen expression: "Water drunk by the snake becomes venom, water drunk by the cow becomes milk". Our Zen ancestors know that practice can be used for harm and become harmful to recipients.

I am also a Clinical Psychologist, who has served as an expert witness in court. I have been in contact via the phone and internet, and also face to face, with those who feel that Rev Shimano's misconduct has caused them deep and lasting pain. Meeting face to face with these students helped me to find their experiences credible. I hope that my witnessing has felt supportive to them and to you.

The Dharma is sturdy and can survive our mistakes when our collective wisdom is expressed. But we cannot turn away from mistakes. Covering up harm, versus publicly acknowledging and witnessing the survivors' suffering, has occurred in many cultural settings (political and etc)—it always results in more harm. Covering up, saving face, and denying wrongdoings will neither protect the Zen transmission in the West, nor will it nourish the Dharma. The Dharma thrives on our humility, ethical action and courage to each be a lamp unto ourselves. I implore you and your monks to take on the responsibility of the Dharma with the guidance of Roko Shinge Roshi and Genjo Marinello. Rev. Shimano needs to step down and away from ZSS. This is the highest compliment to your teacher—your faith and confidence in practice that is now your own so he can retire.

May Rinzai's "man of no rank" come forth and lead the ZSS back to the practice of integrity. I have been teaching on Rinzai's very relevant expression at my New Year's retreat, and I have shared my concerns and this communication to you with my sangha in an effort to express the Dharma.

With many bows for your service in Dharma,

Myoan Grace Schireson, (Ph.D.)