

**Learning the Buddha's Great Compassion—the Meditation Sutra (44)
And in the End—Sharing the Dharma**
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...When the Buddha had spoken thus, the Venerable Mahamaudgalyayana, Venerable Ananda, Vaidehi and all the others greatly rejoiced to hear the Buddha's discourse.

Then the World-Honored One returned to the Vulture Peak through the air. There Ananda fully explained to the assembly what had happened. Innumerable humans, devas, nagas, yaksas and all the other beings greatly rejoiced to hear the Buddha's teaching. Having worshipped the World-Honored One, they departed... (translation by Hisao Inagaki [annotation by TK Nakagaki])

As Sakyamuni Buddha finished his discourse on Meditation Sutra on the Pure Land, Queen Vaidehi, Ananda, Maudgalyana and all those gathered in the room where Vaidehi was confined at the Palace of Rajagriha, listening to the Buddha, were deeply moved and experienced great joy at encountering the Nembutsu teaching. Normally, this is the end of the sutra. Yet, the Meditation Sutra has another ending at Vulture Peak, where the Buddha had been giving a teaching, but disappeared in the middle to help Vaidehi with her spiritual emergency.

When the Buddha returned with Ananda to Vulture Peak, Venerable Ananda explained what happened to the assembly. The Nembutsu teaching of the Meditation Sutra on the Pure Land was delivered again by Ananda at Vulture Peak, and all those who heard this teaching were deeply moved and experienced a great joy. Then, everyone left. This is the other ending of the Meditation Sutra.

I have a feeling that Ananda really felt that he needed to share his experience of encountering the Nembutsu teaching with his fellow practitioners. And possibly he asked the Buddha to give him a permission to explain the discourse the Buddha had given at Rajagriha. In our lives, we have also experienced a similar feeling that "I really need to share this great experience!"

As I wrote this article, I was reflecting upon what may be my experience of feeling that I really need to share with my sangha of New York Buddhist Church. The first thing came to my mind was my visit to Hiroshima, a month before I was assigned to New York in March, 1994.

I went to Hiroshima to learn more about the statue of Shinran Shonin which once stood on Mitaki Hill in Hiroshima city and now stands in front of our temple. As I visited Koryuji temple where many materials concerning the Shinran statue are kept, I realized how much people appreciated and valued this statue after the atomic bombing. In spite of the atomic bomb, this statue survived, protected by trees in a park. Shinran Shonin was our founder of Jodoshinshu Buddhism in the 12th Century, and over 70% of the population of Hiroshima city at that time of the bombing were followers of Jodoshinshu Buddhism. This statue gave hope and encouragement to the people of Hiroshima. It was not easy for the statue to come to New York where the United Nations is located. It took ten years to reach agreement among the people, but when they did, the statue were carried around the city of Hiroshima and people from not only Hiroshima but all over Japan saw it off with prayers for "peace." This statue carried all the messages and wishes of peace from the people of Hiroshima. I went to the site in Hiroshima where the statue once stood, and imagined how the statue witnessed the atomic bomb and its consequences including suffering, sickness and the deaths of men, women, children and elderly. This should never happen again to anyone! This visit really brought me an awareness of my responsibility as a resident minister of the NYBC to share the message of "peace." This reminds me of a passage by Shinran Shonin, "Let there be peace in the world. Let the Buddha-Dharma spread!"

This is my story to share with you. What story do you want to share with us?

Speaking about your own experience of the Dharma

Heals not only others but also yourself.

As long as the Dharma is the center, things are somehow fine, and our life is OK.

Real problems happen when the dharma is gone, and everything has become "I" business.

Encountering the Dharma is a great experience and story which can benefit all.

(by Kenjitsu)

End of the Meditation Sutra on the Pure Land 