



...”an opportunity for students to train in a variety of meditative practices in a flexible manner...”

## An Ecumenical Endeavor

### Rev. Richard Zipoli, Jr.

Richard Zipoli of the Connecticut DTO sangha will be serving as a Mitra (spiritual friend/mentor) in the 2020 Margha program to be offered in Cambridge, Massachusetts and other locations by the

Natural Dharma Fellowship (NDF). The NDF is an organization that supports the ethical and practical applications of Buddhism and the transmission of Tibetan Buddhist practice for contemporary life.

The Margha program focuses on Natural Meditation and Bodhicitta practices, in alternating years, which have been modeled after the traditional Tibetan Buddhist curriculum. *Bodhicitta* practices include meditations of innate compassion and wisdom, as adapted and taught by Lama John Makransky, and Lojong (mind training) and Natural Compassion meditation, as taught by Lama Willa Miller, Ph.D. *Natural Meditation* practice follows the stages of traditional training in the meditations of the Mahamudra tradition, including Shamatha, Vipassana, and Open Awareness, as transmitted in the Kagyu lineage of Tibetan Buddhism.



*Margha* means “path” in Sanskrit. The Margha program provides an opportunity for students to train in a variety of meditative practices in a flexible manner that recognizes the uniqueness of individual students.



**Sondra  
in front of  
her office**



**Sondra  
in her  
scrubs**

## Sondra's Chaplaincy

### "SPREADING THE DHARMA" UPDATE

I wanted to update the National Sangha on some very exciting news on *Spreading the Dharma*, a phrase I've been using to update our local (Pearland) Sangha on my work as a Hospital Chaplain at the Texas Medical Center (TMC) in Houston. As most of you know, I graduated from a Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) Residency program on September 1, 2017. I've been PRN'ing (working as needed) as a Chaplain within our very large hospital system of 14 campuses throughout the Houston metro area. On September 1, 2019, I was hired by the TMC campus for 2 new service lines wherein no chaplain has been assigned before: "behind the red line" in the OR (70+ OR rooms) and in the outpatient Cancer Center in the Medical Plaza across the street, but connected to TMC.

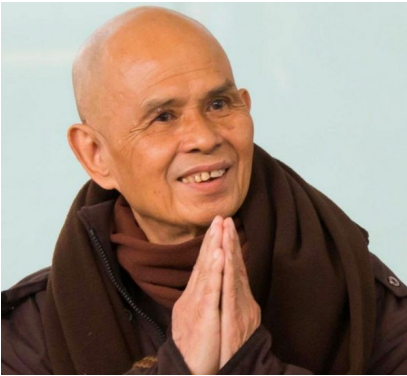
I now arrive at work at 0545, to begin my day by ministering to the staff of this huge Level I Trauma center. I see the patients as well, if possible, in the pre-op area but my primary duty is to be there for the staff. I roam the vast hallways being visible for those who may be suffering and need an empathetic ear, to celebrate the birth of their new grandchild, to listen to them defuse their run-in with a coworker, or to offer prayer as their source of comfort. At 1000 I change out of the scrubs and into professional attire, and return to my office to chart and eat lunch. By 1100 I'm heading to the Cancer Center to see out-patient Chemo and Radiation therapy patients as well as the staff there.

Within my first week of arriving, other Department heads had heard about the new "Buddhist Chaplain" and were contacting my Director to request that I come and teach their staff how to meditate. I was also taken into the office of the new CPE Director and asked to help teach some of the material for the new Resident class which has (2) Buddhist Residents (I was the first Buddhist Resident in our System's CPE Program). Since then, I have been requested to teach "Mindfulness" to the OR staff for our Heart Vascular Institute and to help the Emergency Center staff to cope with the stress that they have working in the only Life Flight Hospital in the Texas Medical Center. All of this is just what's happening on my campus!

As you know from my recent email, requesting your favorite "Centering" quote, I've been asked to read that quote for the entire Texas Medical Center during *National Spiritual Care Week's* service hosted by MD Anderson Hospital on October 23, 2019. I also have been asked to appear on Methodist Hospital's Religious Diversity panel, to educate their staff about the Buddhist tradition and how the staff can better care for Buddhist patients, as well as to answer general questions about Buddhism. I've also been asked to close the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Donor Sabbath Service on November 8 with a meditation.

This news is not about me, to be sure. This is news about how, with intention and when the conditions are all ripe, the Dharma lotus will blossom...even down here in the Texas Bible Belt! I left a profession that I loved but which was making me ill with the lack of ethics and compassion that seemed to surround me. However, after a meeting with Thay, he encouraged me to pursue this path, a path of love and understanding. I am forever grateful for that advice, and have never looked back! I am hopeful that others who find themselves in a place of "non-Right Livelihood" or vocational unrest, that they explore this as a potential option. To be a hospital chaplain, you must have an undergraduate degree and a Master's of Divinity or Theology, be sponsored by a faith affiliation (in our case, it's the DTO), ordained as a Dharma Teacher or Priest, and have a one year CPE Residency (4 units) under your belt. However, thankfully, there is an exception, called the "White Paper Equivalency for Buddhists," to the M.Div. rule, and our DTO program has been recognized as an educational equivalent to the M.Div.! And, if you're not interested in doing all of the work that culminates in that opportunity, you can also just take 2 units of CPE and perhaps qualify for a career as a chaplain in other arenas, such as community hospice care or prison chaplaincy. So, if you're interested, come talk to me in Virginia Beach at our end of year Retreat in December, or in April at our Spring Retreat in NY, or just email me at [skaighenlaw@gmail.com](mailto:skaighenlaw@gmail.com). I assure you, you will love the work and be spreading the Dharma to all the suffering in the path of Avalokiteshvara!

# Spiritual Nourishment from Thích Nhất Hạnh



“Just by breathing deeply on your anger, you will calm it. You are being mindful of your anger, not suppressing it...touching it with the energy of mindfulness. You are not denying it at all. When I speak about this to psychotherapists, I have some difficulty. When I say that anger makes us suffer, they take it to mean that anger is something negative to be removed. But I always say that anger is an organic thing, like love. Anger can become love. Our compost can become a rose. If we know how to take care of our compost...Anger is the same. It can be negative when we do not know how to handle it, but if we know how to handle our anger, it can be very positive. We do not need to throw anything away.”

## Conference Call...Stay Tuned

As you are all aware, at the most recent April retreat we discussed ways to try to have our Dharma teachers and lay Buddhist priests receive more spiritual nourishment from the Dharma Teacher Order. Tom Duva and Michael Geres have volunteered to try to help us set up activities to practice together as a Sangha more often. They organized two days of mindfulness this summer, one for the Connecticut Sangha and one for the New York Sangha Now, we are trying to organize a monthly conference call for all the Dharma teachers and lay Buddhist priests of all the Sanghas to share, practice and reflect together via the phone. Tom and Mike are willing to help organize this and I encourage you all to participate in it as it will be great opportunity to enrich our spiritual lives. Tom and Mike will be reaching out to all of you to explain some of the technical aspects and to go over the planned schedule of activities for this monthly DTO joint brief phone retreat.



In the future, at Teo’s suggestion, we are planning a yearly DTO retreat for the Dharma teachers and lay Buddhist priests which will consist of practice only. We will discuss this further at the Virginia Beach December retreat.

Your brother in the Dharma,  
Fernando

**ATTENTION:** By the time you are reading this newsletter, you will have received instructions via email from Fernando and Tom on the procedure for participating in these telephone conferences scheduled for **Thursday October 24th at 7:30 PM- 9 PM** and **Monday October 28th at 7:30-9**. If you did not get that email, please contact Fernando at [dharmastudent15@gmail.com](mailto:dharmastudent15@gmail.com).



# Pearland Sangha Going Strong!

## Sister Pháp Lan



The Buddhist Studies classes in Pearland have gotten off to a great start this year. We conducted our annual “Orientation to DTO” meeting on August 10, which was well attended. Our first class was held on September 7, and we began by studying an old favorite, “Old Path, White Clouds”. We have several new members, so this was a perfect place to begin.

We are looking forward to our first Mindfulness Day on Saturday, October 5. We will practice together all morning and will enjoy a mindful lunch together. In the afternoon, Thay will offer a teaching on “The Reforms of the Buddha,” and we will end the day with an hour of mindful work on behalf of the temple.

Our group will also be participating in the Houston Walk to Feed the Hungry, which benefits Buddhist

Global Relief. Dharma Spring Meditators will be there in our temple t-shirts on Saturday, October 26, to support the worthy projects of this wonderful organization.

We continue to serve in the Prison Program by regularly visiting two local state penitentiaries. Many of our members also serve as mentors in the Prison Correspondence Course for inmates. Our Sangha is dedicated to this path of service.

We are very excited about learning, practicing, and serving together this year. We in the Pearland Sangha wish all of our Brothers and Sisters in the Dharma Teacher Order a year of peace, happiness, and well-being.

In the Dharma,  
Pháp Lan



# Teaching Dharma in Prison

Rev. Teo Castellanos

I teach Zen weekly at a correctional institute for men at the edge of Florida Everglades. Walking into the prison I have to pass through a few guards and heavily secured doors. A buzzer lets me in the first door, where I put my see-through plastic tote bag (that carries, bell, mokugyō, and reading materials), and my shoes on an x ray conveyor belt not unlike the ones found at airports. Shoeless, I walk through a metal detector then I am patted down. After clearing, I am buzzed through a second door where I pick up my body alarm, then buzzed through a third door and set “free” on the compound. There was a time years ago, when I taught theater in prison, that upon passing each barrier, the heavy slamming of the door would rattle me. Nowadays the bang of the door has become a bell of mindfulness and a reminder of how happy I am to be there.

Reaching class, the twelve or so men are already sitting in silence waiting my arrival. They respect the makeshift Zendo even though it is littered with desks and computers parked next to walls. They transform the space into a refuge. For our practice, we follow guidelines set by Dharma Teachers Order (DTO) established by Venerable Thích Trí Hoáng (Thay). Since no incense is allowed inside we forego the incense offering. The men sit on donated cushions I was able to secure from a veteran’s service organization. I sit, invite the bell and meditation formally commences. We begin with a 30-minute meditation, Afterwards, we chant the Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra then we recite *Love Meditation* which I found in Thich Nhat Hanh’s book *Chanting from the Heart*. I have used this recitation in my personal practice for years and with every sangha I lead.

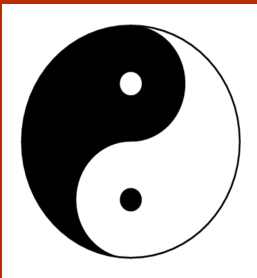
May I be peaceful, happy and light in body and spirit.  
 May I be safe from injury.  
 May I be free from anger, fear and anxiety.

May I learn to look at myself with the eyes of understanding and love.  
 May I be able to touch the seeds of joy and happiness in myself.  
 May I learn to identify and see the sources of anger, craving, and delusion in myself.

May I know how to nourish the seeds of joy in myself every day.  
 May I be able to live fresh, solid and free.  
 May I be free from attachment and aversion but not indifferent.

This is Blue Lotus Sangha in prison. The men chose this name not knowing that once, I wanted to name the sangha I lead on the outside Blue Lotus, but a quick Facebook search found a sangha in Colorado with the same name. In the year or so that I’ve been leading Blue Lotus, we have studied two books and are currently on a third. I thought it was apropos to begin with Thich Nhat Hanh’s *Be Free Where You Are*, based on a Dharma talk he gave at Maryland Correctional Institute. Then we moved on to TNH’s *The Heart of Understanding-Commentaries on the Prajñāpāramitā-Sūtra*. Since we chant this sutra weekly, I thought it important to demystify its imagery and poetry, bringing clarity and a deeper understanding of the sūtra and the teachings of the Buddha. We are currently studying, *No Mud No Lotus* also by TNH. (I named the Sangha I established on the outside after this book.) These men are in the midst of their Mud and learning to cultivate their Lotus. In their practice I am witnessing a deep passion for the Dharma, which I am almost certain, is helping to transform some of the suffering found in prison culture. My friend and Buddhist colleague, a practitioner from the Kwuan Um School of Zen and prison staff member, practices with us when she can. She also covers for me on the weeks I cannot make it. It was with her help that we were able to establish this sangha. We have recently been approved for a Day of Mindfulness scheduled for next month. All of us are looking forward to this day-long retreat. It will be an intense deepening of the practice and study of the Buddha’s teachings. I am hoping we can get incense-approved by then.

Students, get prepared for the Annual Retreat and Brother Noble Silence's teachings by reading his excellent article.



The word "Tao" is translated as a way, road or power..."

# Tao and Qi-Gong

## Brother Noble Silence

### INTRODUCTION TO THE PRACTICE OF TAO AND QI-GONG

The word Tao is translated as way, road or power, expresses the transcendent spiritual side, a way to perform all our daily activities in full consciousness, so we have the Tao of food, sex, meditation, martial arts etc .

Other meaning of this word is Tai ji (supreme end), Tai Hsu (supreme emptiness) and Tai Yi (supreme engine). In this sense, Tao is equivalent to the last reality, to the matrix, the source of everything that exists.

#### Brief history about Taoism

Its origin is believed to be beyond 5000 years, probably in the beliefs of the shamans of ancient China. In the cult of the forces of heaven, of the earth the mountains, valleys and rivers. Magic, talismans, dances evocative of the powers of nature will emerge from this cult. They also observed the recurring cycles of the days and nights, the sunset and sunrise of stars and stars.

It deserves to mention the I Ching or the book of changes where the characters of Yin and Yang appear for the first time, and which is the best known in all the oracles of the Taoist tradition.

But we have no written record until the third or fourth century BC of a text that includes the teachings of Taoism. At this time the Tao Te Ching was written, a period that is known as classism and that gave wise men like Lao Tzu, to whom the text is attributed.

For the practice of Qi-gong really few accessories are needed, as perhaps they could be used in other disciplines, such as Yoga, etc.

But if a minimum of information and knowledge is needed regarding the laws of Tao and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM).

That is why I will briefly explain some necessary and basic points.

Ex.

- 1) Theory of Yin and Yang.
- 2) The Three Treasures (Jing, Qi and Shen)
- 3) The Five Elements.
- 4) The Ten Phases of Qi-gong.

#### The Yin and the Yang

The theory of Yin and Yang is the basis of Taoism, some ancient writings say on the subject:

From Tao the only source

Two things were born from the single source

After Three things, then the ten thousand beings.

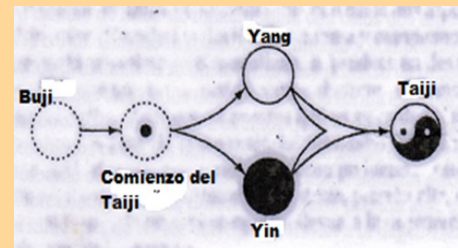
Tao Te Ching (3rd century BC)

Of course, you cannot talk about Yin and Yang without first mentioning the Tao that is the source of everything, the great emptiness without limit which cannot be touched by words or concepts. The concept or explanation was born the source that gave rise to two things, these two things are the Yin and Yang, this third is the balance between the two of this balance came life, and millions of beings.

To see what Yin and Yang really are, we just have to look around.

The Yin is the negative pole (does not mean evil), the deep, the feminine, the quiet, the cold, the dark and finally the fertile as the earth is.

The Yang is the positive, the prominent, the masculine, the restless, the active, the warm, the clear, and symbolizes the sky that is the one who fertilizes the earth.



## Tao and Qi-Gong, continued

These two poles are different but at the same time they have to complement each other to give birth to life, as I said before looking around us we can see the union of these two complementary positions: night and day, cold and heat, the sun and the moon, the acid and the alkaline, the man and the woman etc.

### The Three Treasures (Jing, Qi and Shen)

#### Jing

The Jing is the first of all treasures and this comprises the physical body, which is from the most dense of the body, such as bones, muscles, tendons, even the most subtle, which are hormones, transmitting neuros etc.

#### Qi

The Qi or energy is the life force that infuses heat to each cell of the body. In the Tao it is spoken of two types of energy or Qi: the one of the previous sky or given by our parents and ancestors (the genetics) and the one of the later sky, the acquired through food the water and the oxygen that we breathe etc.

#### Shen

The Shen is the spirit, and it groups all the experiences of the mind, such as consciousness, thinking, will, intention and feelings; Shen is the union of the mind with the heart.

From the Jing is derived the Qi of the Qi is derived the Shen and the Shen the union with the Tao.

Jing ---- Qi ----- Shen ---- Tao (empty)

### The Five Elements

The five elements are the result of the union of Yin and Yang, and represent their activities in a tangible way as in the cyclical changes of nature regulating life on earth.

These are: 1) Wood; 2) Fire; 3) Earth; 4) Metal; 5) Water

What is Qi-gong?

Qi is the Chinese word for "the energy of life." According to Chinese medicine, qi is the power that animates and flows through all living beings. A living being is full qi. A dead person does not have the heat and the energy of life is gone. A healthy person has more energy than a sick person. However, health is more than a lot of qi. Health implies that the qi in our bodies is clear, instead of contaminated and turbid. Flowing smoothly, like a stream, not blocked or stagnant.

This energy of life is also perceived in nature. The earth itself is in movement, transforming, breathing, and living with qi. Modern scientists speak the same language as ancient poets when they call Earth, a living being. When we appreciate the beauty of animals, fish, birds, flowers, trees, mountains, the deep ocean, and floating clouds, we are perceiving their qi and feeling an intuitive unity with them. Humans are part of nature and share the qi with the rest of the earth.

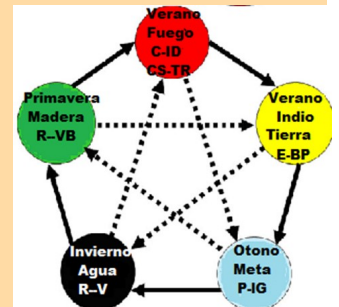
Gong means "work" or "benefits acquired through perseverance and practice." Therefore, qigong means working with the energy of life, learning how to control the flow and distribution of qi to improve the health and harmony of the mind and body.

The qigong is an ancient holistic system of self-healing and meditation, the practice includes healing postures, movements, massage, breathing techniques and meditation. Through various methods, qi is accumulated and stored in the body, such as filling a reservoir. The impure or contaminated qi is the essence of disease can also be cleaned and refined in a pure qi of healing. The goal of qigong practices is to eliminate impure qi in an analogous way, breathing is a process of absorbing a pure source of energy, oxygen, and impure carbon dioxide removal. With proper breathing, qigong practice makes this exchange more efficient.

The qigong is a "practice" or "training", because, as the medication is not "prescribed" to a limited period of time, but, rather, to a daily practice for life.

This is easy to practice because qigong is as enjoyable as any sport, and does not require a great expenditure of time or money. Practitioners usually spend twenty to forty minutes each day. You do not need equipment or a large space for training.

Anyone can practice qigong. There are adequate techniques for each age or physical condition. The qigong includes methods of standing, sitting, supine (face up) exercises. With only minor adjustments in the technique, it is possible that standing exercises can be performed from the sitting or lying position. This is an ideal exercise for the disabled.



- Brother Noble Silence

Every thought  
you produce,  
anything you say,  
any action you do,  
it bears your signature.

Thich Nhat Hanh