



# Dharma Teacher Order Newsletter

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An excellent article from CT Sangha member, Craig Hannah, about the Silent Retreat held at Mariandale Conference Center in Ossining during September 2021

## The First Silent Retreat of the DTO

Within our DTO community there has been the unexpressed need for an opportunity to practice together in a setting with fewer distractions, with enough time to let our mind run itself out and become quiet. It is at such moments that our original mind is no longer shrouded by the words, thoughts, feelings, and concepts that seem to form the 'I' that we think we are.

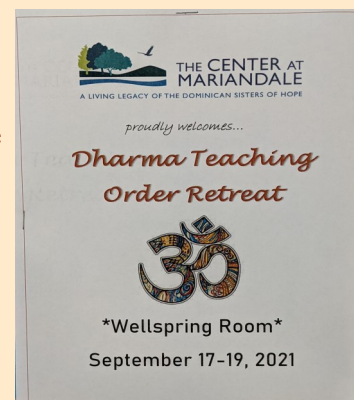
Last winter Teo expressed that need by suggesting that the DTO add a third retreat to its normal annual schedule. Now expressed, the seed grew, and culminated in a group of us meeting on the third weekend in September, 2021 at *The Center at Mariandale* in Ossining New York for the first DTO Silent Retreat.

A feeling of sacredness permeates some spaces - openness, calm, and beauty are all present together and merge with the same qualities in each of us. This was the feeling that I had upon arriving at Mariandale and it grew as the weekend progressed. The main building is set back about a third of the mile from the road and that distance is mostly open, lightly maintained grounds, adjoining semi-wild grounds filled with life. There is the sound of geese descending to a field, faint traffic noise from the highway, ducks quacking on the Hudson River, and a commuter train rumbling past. This is a place where people live, but it is done in an easy balance with the natural world.

For a silent retreat it started not so silent. We gathered overlooking the river and enjoyed the pleasure of being in the physical presence of one another. Virtual reality enables many things, but it is a poor substitute for the real thing. Due to injury, illness, and the unpredictability of life, several of our friends who intended to join us were unable to. They were missed and we dedicate merit from this weekend to them. That left six of us: Teo, mokugyo artist and the spark that lit this candle; Maeve, our graceful bell master and the designer of our thoughtful schedule; Fernando, our anchor and guide; Phap Lan, our other Laughing Monk; Bobbie, our weird (and wonderful) dharma sister; and me, the self-appointed chronicler.

The rhythm for the weekend was, in varying sequences, practice, eat, free time. Most of our time was scheduled, but some things arose organically, such as our post-meal seated meditations (which spread to all of the others in the dining hall as well), and our evening appreciation of the near-full Harvest Moon. Other activities included a half hour of gentle but thorough yoga, a long walking meditation through the Mariandale grounds, and a thoughtful Dharma Talk by Fernando who shared why he came to this retreat. I can't do full justice to his talk, but the deciding reason was because he needed it. He needed to extend to himself the same compassion that he offers others.

(continued on page two)



“...Our evening appreciation of the near-full Harvest Moon”

After we ended our silence on Sunday, we had a few hours to share our experiences. Was a weekend enough time to justify the effort to organize and attend? The unanimous response was that it was. We sat a lot this weekend and, on occasion for me, time simply was no longer there. Forty eight hours wasn't a lot of time, but it was enough time. We also agreed that, as evidenced by this weekend, retreats don't need to have a lot of participants to be worthwhile. In fact our small size probably helped increase the sense of intimacy we all felt. Another discussion topic was “What's the future for this type of retreat?” We all agreed that silent retreats should continue to be part of our national activities, and that it is worth considering having two such retreats per year.

With gratitude and metta,  
Craig



The Harvest Moon with Jupiter alongside was breathtaking!



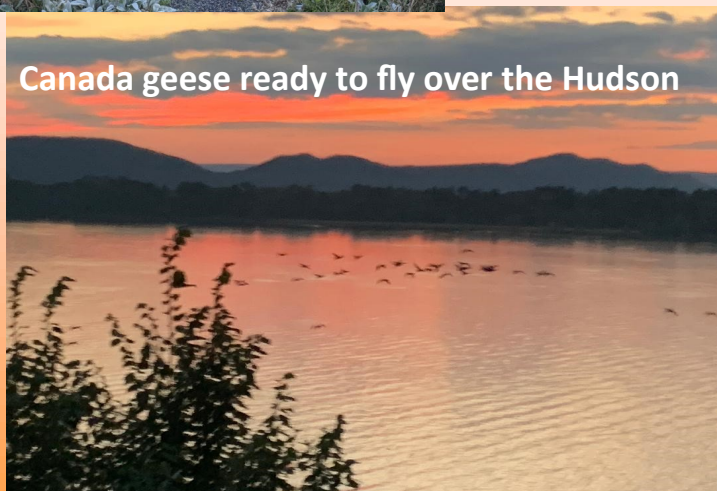




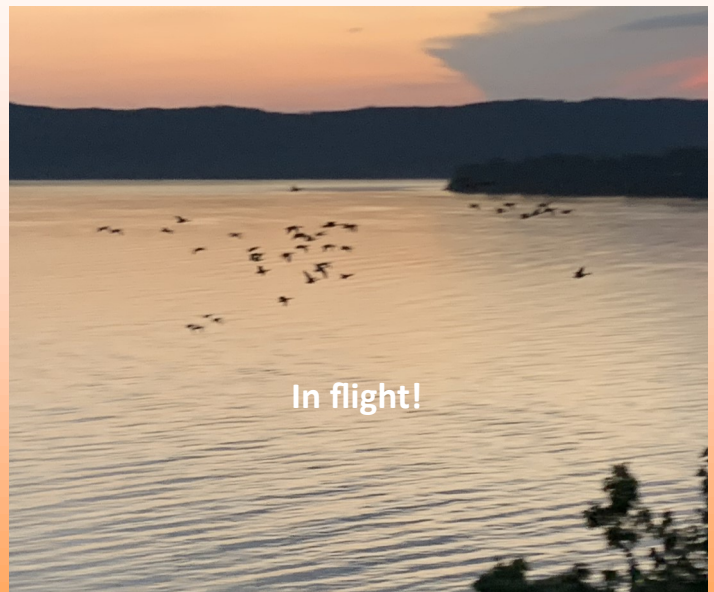
**\* 'In the Prajñāpāramitā literature they say "Phenomena are like magical illusions" The magical illusion of Teo being in this photo, even though he had already left, was assisted by PhotoShop'.**



**Labyrinth for walking meditation**



**Canada geese ready to fly over the Hudson**



**In flight!**

## The Outer Banks (Nags Head Sangha) in North Carolina

The earliest version of the Outer Banks (Nags Head) Sangha started in 2016 as an informal dharma discussion and meditation group. We have been meeting in the current location since February of 2019, and in the previous location for about a year. The place we meet now started as a yoga studio, called The Studio, that held an after school program they call Karma Kids. In the fall of 2019, Sam, the owner, decided she wanted to drop the yoga part of her business and focus exclusively on her Mindful Kids programming. Much of her style with this programming is influenced by Thich Nhat Hanh and Plum Village, which makes our collaboration even more appropriate and supportive.

In early 2020, of course, a lot of things changed. For The Studio, the change to remote learning for the kids in school meant that the Karma Kids after school programming transitioned to all day for some of the kids, and became more of a “learning pod” so that the kids could keep engaged in their school work.

For our sangha, in this same time period, we decided to move from meeting once per week to meeting twice, and then to three times per week. In talking with the members we decided that we were a small enough group, with limited contacts outside of the group, so we were able to operate as a “pandemic pod/sangha.” We found this to be very supportive for each of us, especially in the earliest days of the pandemic. Of course, there were many challenges in our nation and the world throughout that year, and being able to stay connected as a small group was tremendously helpful for everyone.

The Outer Banks Sangha currently meets on Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 7-8 PM and on Saturday evenings from 7-8:30 PM. On Tuesday and Thursday evenings we do informal dharma discussion about how we may have practiced the dharma in our own lives in the past few days. Sometimes we will base discussion on a quote, or we explore the precepts (including the Fourteen Precepts of Engaged Mindfulness), the Paramitas, the Eightfold Path, and the Lojong Slogans. On Saturday evenings we will do a service of chanting the Heart Sutra, followed by meditation and discussion. We do 30-35 minutes of meditation in each of our meetings.

Last year we used the year one DTO book list for our reading and informal discussion. Our format was more like a book club rather than a classic DTO class format, because this is what was a good fit for our sangha members. The core members enjoy having three evenings a week to meet, but are not necessarily interested in meeting for longer than an hour and a half. Most of the members seem to be getting near their energy limits after about an hour and a half. This year we will be using the year two book list for discussion.

Submitted by Dave Edmonds