

# **The Berkeley Buddhist Priory Newsletter May-June, 2005**

Priory's main altar for the Manjusri Ceremony on March 27.

## **Priory News**

Jet, the Priory's beloved, three legged, black cat is again having serious health problems. This March, Jet had a series of seizures, a problem that she has had a few times before. The seizures respond successfully to medication, however, they seemed to have caused her some additional paralysis of her legs. Jet, showing impressive spirit, still goes up and down the stairs and crawls up the sofas into her favorite sitting places.

The Priory has obtained three beautiful, antique Tibetan thangkas. Thangkas are made of cloth and silk, hand painted with oil paints and are made to be rolled up so they can be transported very easily. A very large Manjusri thangka is now the backdrop for our main altar. The photo on the opposite page shows this thangka. We also have two Avalokteswara thangkas, one is hanging in the common room and the other is in our small auxiliary meditation room which is dedicated to Avalokiteswara.

## **May 15: Wesak Celebration and Potluck**

On Wesak, Buddhists throughout the world commemorate the birth of Shakyamuni Buddha. It is the most spiritually

significant day of the Buddhist calendar and it is helpful for Buddhists to join together as a Sangha and express their gratitude and joy for the existence and transmission of the Three Treasures.

On Sunday, May 15, we will have the usual 9:30 am meditation, followed by the Wesak ceremony at 10 am. The Wesak ceremony is a particularly joyous service. The altar is set covered with silk flowers, and a statue of the Buddha as a baby stands on the front altar. During the ceremony we pour water over the head of the baby Buddha, representing the water of compassion abundantly flowing over all beings.

After the ceremony, the Priory will have a Dharma class and the children will gather for their own class. At around 12 pm, we will have a vegetarian potluck lunch. All family and friends of our Sangha are welcome to come to the potluck and to share in our celebration of the birth of the Buddha. The Priory potlucks provide a wonderful offering of foods, and allow us to deepen our contact and friendship with our fellow members of the Sangha.

## **Meditation Retreats: May 5-7, June 11, and July 7 - 9**

Retreats are an excellent way to deepen our meditation and training. For the three day retreats, since many people will not be able to free themselves to be here for all three days, it will be fine to attend these retreats for just one or two days. Please register in advance and let us know which days you can attend.

## **Helping the Priory and Work Days**

Buddhist training is based not just on receiving the spiritual nourishment that the Sangha offers us, but also our own willingness to cultivate gratitude and to be willing to find ways to give. Offering our valuable time to help with the work of the Priory is very much needed if the Priory is to flourish. During the past few months, Sangha members have helped with many different tasks, such as gardening, cleaning, cooking, computer work, bookkeeping, construction, sewing, and laundry. Please contact Rev. Kinrei if you wish to help; the Priory always has plenty of work that needs doing.

In addition, the Priory has been having regular work days which have been a great help with fixing up and maintaining the Priory and its grounds. You are welcome and encouraged to come to the Priory whenever you can and offer your help. The next work days are scheduled for Saturday, May 28 and July 30, from 9:30 to 3:00, but we welcome everyone to help for whatever part of the day they can come. Working together as a Sangha is a way of both giving to the Priory and sharing in the brightness of our fellow members of the Sangha. Work days include a lunch at the Priory which is a relaxed meal. Please let us know if you can attend as it is helpful in planning the work.

## **Shasta Abbey Retreats**

Attending a retreat at Shasta Abbey is an excellent way to deepen one's Buddhist life by living and practicing together with a large community of monastic and lay members of the Sangha. The introductory retreats are the recommended first step in practicing at the Abbey. For more information, you can go to their Web site at [www.shastaabbey.org](http://www.shastaabbey.org) or

contact the Shasta Abbey Guestmaster at (530) 926-4208 or at [guestmaster@shastaabbey.org](mailto:guestmaster@shastaabbey.org).

**Introductory Retreats June 10-12, July 12-17  
Wesak-May 20-22 Meditation Retreat-June 19-26**

## **Funerals, Memorials and Naming Ceremonies**

On February 26, Jimmi, an elderly golden retriever who recently had been given a new home with Mischa Wendel and her family, had a Buddhist naming ceremony at the Priory. We had a memorial ceremony for Dave, Mary Gray's recently deceased, cat on March 8. Mary Gray's other cat, Deva, who is having health problems, had her Buddhist naming ceremony on March 25.

## **With Gratitude**

Charity is one of the four wisdoms and demonstrates the Bodhisattva's aspiration. Deep appreciation and gratitude is extended to all those who contribute their spiritual practice, money, time, energy, and various gifts to the Priory. The generosity of the entire Priory Sangha is what makes it possible for the Priory to exist and for the Dharma to be offered.

In recent months, we have been given many generous gifts, including a donation for veterinary care for Jet, a fruit tree, plants, tools, medicine, paper, cleaning supplies, building materials, hardware and many books.

Providing monks with food is the traditional offering given when coming to a Buddhist temple, and we appreciate all the generous food offerings we have been given which provide most of the food for the Priory. Rev. Kinrei has become aware that he is allergic to cow dairy products. Although we are grateful for any gift of food, the most helpful food donations are eggs, soy milk, goat milk, fruit, goat or sheep cheese, decaffeinated coffee, and herbal tea. We also have an ongoing need for such paper goods as toilet paper, paper towels and tissues. You are always welcome to ask what is currently needed at the Priory.

## **Spiritual Counseling**

Rev. Kinrei is available to discuss your spiritual practice and to help you to better apply the Dharma to your life. Taking refuge in a senior member of the Sangha is an important aid in gaining a better perspective and deeper insight into our spiritual life. It is also helpful in learning to cultivate openness and trust. You are welcome to either sign the spiritual counseling sheet on the Priory bulletin board, or call the Priory and arrange a time to meet.

## **Priory Membership**

The Priory has no fees for participating in meditation, Dharma talks, Buddhist services, retreats, spiritual counseling or any other service we offer. We are supported by the donations of our congregation and friends. All gifts of any kind, whether money or materials or labor, are deeply appreciated.

One of the best ways to help the Priory is to make the commitment to be a Priory Member. What this involves is making a pledge to contribute a certain amount of money to the Priory each month. There is no set or recommended amount as we leave it up to each individual to offer what he or she feels is appropriate. This commitment is a tremendous help to the Priory because it gives us a stable financial base. More importantly, deciding to become a member has deep spiritual significance. It means you are choosing to help take responsibility for the continued existence of the Priory. Some of you may only be able to pledge a few dollars a month and think it is not worth making such an insignificant commitment. Yet it is important to offer whatever you can and be willing to make a formal commitment to be part of the Priory. The most important help members bring to the Priory and the Sangha is not their donations but their Buddhist training. By being willing to come to the Priory and train with others, we help make the Priory a true refuge of the Sangha.

However, we are not suggesting that everyone who occasionally attends the Priory or gives us donations should become a member. For many people, it is not appropriate to make such a commitment, and we welcome them to join us whenever they wish, to help us in the manner they feel appropriate, and to be valued friends of the Priory.

## **Meditation Instruction**

Meditation instruction and an orientation to the practice at the Priory are offered each Thursday at 6:45 pm. Please arrive a few minutes early so that we can begin promptly at 6:45. The instruction is followed by a 7:30-8:05 pm

meditation period. We ask all people new to our practice to attend this instruction. The meditation instruction is free, as are all the activities at the Priory. If your schedule will not allow you to come on Thursday evening, you are welcome to call the Priory to try to arrange a different time for the instruction.