

Inka Speech

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[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]

Coming empty-handed is going empty-handed. Going empty-handed is coming empty-handed.

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]

Originally -- no coming, no going.

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]

Coming empty-handed is coming empty-handed, going empty-handed is going empty-handed.

Which of these three statements is true? If you find it this stick will hit you thirty times. If you don't find it you will also get thirty blows. What can you do?

KAAATZ!

We've come here today to take part in this ceremony and when it ends we'll leave this place. Thank you all very much for coming. I'd like to express my gratitude to my teachers; above all Zen Master Seung Sahn, who founded the Kwan Um School of Zen and infused it with the spirit of his teaching; Zen Master Wu Bong for his guidance and protection and Aleksandra Porter JDPSN who has always been an example of practice, wisdom and clear teaching. Also I would like to thank Grazyna Perl JDPSN and all the other teachers with whom I've had the opportunity to practice.

This ceremony today points to the great work of life and death. Our life is very short. I could say that yesterday I was a child, today I'm an adult, tomorrow I'll be an old man and the day after I'll have to return this rented car (my body) to nature. When we enter this world we have only empty hands and when we leave it's also with empty hands. This isn't a special discovery of Buddhism, it's the fundamental truth of our human existence. Everybody understands this. But understanding isn't enough, so the core of our practice means using our empty hands, giving them work and making use of our life. That means attain enlightenment and help our world.

Our practice is something very rare and valuable because it takes up this work by dealing directly with the deepest anxiety and question of our life, "What am I?" Usually our world diverts our attention from this question. In our Temple Rules we find, "If you don't open your mind in this life you won't be able to digest even one drop of water." Human beings can't get true happiness without understanding themselves. I also strayed for many years led by this anxiety and came very close to the point of destroying my life completely. I came to understand that the only thing that could really help me was a profound transformation in how I lived my life. Then I came to the Warsaw

Zen Center and heard Zen Master Seung Sahn's teaching. It was a great discovery. There's an old Polish saying: "It's like being lost in a big city and suddenly you meet your grandparents on the street." I had a similar experience. I felt like a car which after a crash was taken to the best repair shop.

We can look at Buddha's dharma as a kind of medicine which can bring about a cure. Its function is to transform the mind of ignorance and suffering into the mind of happiness and enlightenment. Today these empty hands receive a Zen stick, which means new work. This also means I'm again becoming a student because Zen Master Seung Sahn's teaching is that all things are our teachers. Our work isn't finished as long as sentient beings suffer. The goal of our practice is never separate from what we are just now and yet it's independent of time and space. One commentary on a kong-an in the Mu Mun Kwan says, "Before he even took one step he had arrived; before he opened his mouth he already had finished speaking." The Compass of Zen also states that without cultivation you are already complete. Yet we all experience waves of karma which obscure our original clear mind, so continuing to practice is necessary. Its fuel is eagerness.

Once during an interview with Zen Master Wu Bong I poured out all my problems. He listened patiently then after a moment of silence held out a plateful of chocolate cookies -- a good way to soothe children and in this case very effective. Then he said, "I don't know a shortcut but I know our practice works. You must be patient and persevere." This perseverance is like heating up ice which is our karmic mind. As our practice matures the ice block becomes smaller and smaller until it becomes water, then steam and finally disappears. Then the one, clear and bright thing not dependent on life and death emerges. We call that our true self. Then helping this world becomes possible. We don't have to worry about our empty hands any longer. They always have plenty of work.

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]
If you have great faith you attain the Way.

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]
If you have great courage you attain the Truth.

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]
If you have great question you attain Correct Life.

The Way, the Truth and Correct Life -- are they the same or different?

KAAATZ!

Outside the window the last rays of day. Inside, many bright friendly faces.

What can I do for you?