

# 2009-05-17 Vesak

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

buddha, people, stillness, means, world, key, kids, mind, liberation, meditation, meditating, death, statue, beings, buddhist, peace, called, presence, celebrating, happy

## SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsda

I'll tell you a little bit about what's happening here today, since it's different. Today is the day that here at IMC, we're celebrating Vesak. Vesak is the Buddhist celebration of the Buddha's birth, his death and his enlightenment. And it's usually the one Buddhist celebration we do every year here and talk about a little bit I'll give a little talk. And then at 1030 the various youth programs we have at IMC will join us up here for they'll bring the baby Buddhist being born out there into their redwood tree. And they'll bring the baby Buddha in here. And then afterwards, afterwards, there's gonna be a potluck For the families, all the youth program and their parents and stuff are staying behind, they're going to be more youth programs starting at 1130 or so if it's a potluck for them. For those of you who are not part of that, if you'd like the teen program that we have, for the second year in a row now, as as put on a big sale, they do that they've done it before as a benefit for Doctors Without Borders. And they'll be outside on their deck with a table, they're set up with all kinds of goods that they baked. And then if you would like to make an offering for what they have baked, that offering will go to Doctors Without Borders. So probably what it means is that we shouldn't do a lot of lingering in here afterwards, but rather linger outside and in Dec in the gravels kind of garden area. So that you can get set up here for the kids who come in and do their potluck and program so today we're celebrating the Buddha, commemorating remembering the Buddha, the Buddha's birth, his enlightenment and his death. And I like it that these three events of his life are all rolled up to celebrate the same day, because they relate to each other. And understanding how they relate, seeing how they relate to each other, understanding the context, I think adds meaning each of them. The idea that he was born you died, makes the Buddha, a human being just like you, you were born and someday you'll die. And then sandwiched between these two monumental events. Is is awakening. And his awakening is a response to this world that we live in the world of birth and death. And it's his kind of response his solution His way of coming to coming to peace, or finding some profound experience of peace, liberation in this human condition that we find ourselves in. And so enlightenment, awakening is not meant to be something separate from the human condition. But it's understood within the human condition as a possibility that we all have, we all share the possibility of somehow setting the mind setting the heart, setting the body free.

The traditional story of the Buddha tells story of a person who went on a quest for liberation after his encounter with sickness, old age and death. And he was looking for some kind of solution to these existential issues. And he tried the various religious practices that were available for him in his time in ancient India, including a lot of ascetic practices. At some point, the peak of his aesthetic period, he remembered a story or remembered event from when he was six or seven years old, where his father, his parents were out, doing the ceremonial spring plowing for the first plowing of the season. And as a six year old, he wasn't really part of the ceremony. So he was left on the edge of the field underneath the rose apple tree, kind of happily forgotten. And they were everybody's out there kind of doing their ceremony stuff. And, and he settled into a deep state of well being of joy just sitting there, not

particularly trying to do anything attending anything. Nothing to prove no one to relate to, nothing to accomplish. just sat and just entered into a state of concentration. So stillness and some children. Maybe Some of you as children have memories of states of well being that you had as children. I remember when I first started meditating a lot, I remembered, as I was meditating and kind of getting to some kind of stillness or quiet a piece of meditation. I remember this experience, I had to go into bed at night, when I was eight, nine years old. And I called it, it's a strange name. And I call it the corner of the pillow experience. And there was a feeling of fullness and presence and peace that kind of would well up in my chest, as I laid there and just just felt like everything was good kind of feeling. And I forgotten about it until I started meditating. And it was one of those recovered memories. And so there's something about what is happening meditation touch that place that I had as a child. So the Buddha had this memory from when he was a kid, and he thought, oh, perhaps that way of doing Gaining that sense of presence and stillness, letting go, well, joy, maybe that's a way forward in this quest, I have to understand this issues of sickness, old age and death. And so with that, he went into meditation, went way back into that state, and then committed himself to follow that path as far as it would go, and hopefully become awakened or liberated. And so it's very common in Buddhist temples and centers to have a statue of the Buddha, meditating. And as we have here, and usually it's meant to depict him meditating on the night of his enlightenment. The, but the statues that we have the image we have of the Buddha, are meant it's meant to also be quite symbolic and it's interesting to look at the symbolism of This body first is you're generally taken to be sitting on the ground. So on the earth grounded, he's also sitting in a very balanced way. Sitting cross legged is a very balanced, supportive way of sitting. his belly is usually taking these lower bodies. madog torso is usually depicted as being relaxed. So he has a relaxed support for the upper torso, his chest, the Buddhist chest, and these statues are meant to have to protect the lions pose. It's meant to have be one that's not puffed up, but expresses confidence. So a confidence pose on top of this relaxed support of the lower body. So as a manager, that person is confident the spine is upright, and the idea of being upright and alert, isn't withdrawn, isn't receding, he's also not going into the world. In an active kind of way either, but he's fully planted in this world and standing upright in it. And, and then his,

his eyes usually in these kinds of statues are not closed. Even though we sit with granted with our eyes, eyes closed, he sits with his eyes kind of half open. And that's supposed to symbolize that he's not separate, separate himself from the world. He's aware of the world. He's connected to the world with his eyes and sees what's going on. It's not shutting the eyes, shutting the world out, that liberation happens. And then also, he's supposed to have usually a little smile, what's called a half smile. And in that he has this kind of sense of peace and well being and joy that comes from his liberation is freedom. There's something usually very still About the stack up sitting upright alert, also very still, I liken it to the stillness of a candle flame, which when there's no wind at all, the candle flame is doesn't flicker. But you think the candle flame is actually a very dynamic thing. You know, it's but it is from outside it looks like it's completely unwavering, but inside it's full of life and vitality. So the Buddha has this wonderful combination of being energized and present, but also completely still. Very, and there's a wonderful dynamic between presence and stillness. They're almost like two sides of the same coin. If you bring your full presence to whatever you're doing, chances are that something about you will also become very still. If you bring complete stillness, find a real healthy kind of stillness. You'll probably also find You're still very present for what's going on. stillness, which withdraws from experience from awareness is probably not real stillness. And when I worked at greens restaurant, I was a fast order cook kind of at the restaurant. And I'd spent a few years in Buddhist monasteries at that time. And so I brought my sense of practice to working in this very fast kitchen. And, and I learned that it's possible to be if you're fully present for what you're doing, it's possible to do things very fast and become very still at the end of my shift. I would feel Stiller than when I came to begin today. I know it's possible to do a lot like that and get frazzled and feel exhausted, but I would actually feel very still very present very calm from my from

my full presence to what I was doing. So the Buddha discovered this capacity for presence. capacity for stillness. The combination of those then also led him to see very deeply into the condition nature of the mind, the heart. And one of the things he saw was he saw the place where the Genesis or the whether the tricks of the mind, that bring on suffering, how we contract, how we end up hating, or being afraid, or caught up in greed or lust. He saw the movements of the mind. And he saw that the responsibility for those movements of the mind movements of the heart lie in us. So it's not a matter of looking externally for someone to solve these issues for us, as if the world out there can provide it. If we can just California can just figure out its tax system, figure out its finances, then I'm sure it'll be happy. It's it's rather For some real happiness, real liberation and real capacity to deal with these difficult life issues that all of us are dealing with there, the Buddha says, Take a mirror to yourself and see what I saw. And what he saw is that if the mind moves, to hold on to anything, to cling to anything to resist anything, that mind will suffer. And if you let go of that clinging, that suffering will go away. That suffering does not arise, independent, spontaneously, by itself, is not forced on us by the situation's of the world, but rather, involves some response within ourselves in relation to what's happening.

The Buddha attained his awakening as an adult, not as a child as an adult. The idea of stepping back and looking deeply at your own response to the activity Have your mind that we reactive activities in mind and learning to, to look at it, to be present for it to be very still for it and see that you don't have to pick things up. You don't have to get involved. You can create infinite space around what arises. You can have hate to arise in your mind. And you could step back from it and not have to do anything about it. You don't have to pick it up. You don't have to push it away. But rather you can create a lot of innocence, a lot of space in the mind. So it's there without any power for you. There can be strong desire, or strong fear. When there's still presence that meets that fear and that desire, it's possible again, in a sense to have a lot of space around it. And in that space to realize that those experiences of fear of hate and desire, don't define who I am. I don't have to define myself. by it, I don't have to believe it. I don't have to act on it. I can be free of it, free of living by it to be pushed around by it. And that capacity to be free to have life go through us. And to step back and be free, brings a phenomenal feeling of happiness. The Buddha said, a watch to mind brings happiness, watch, a watch to mind is happy not to be a viewer. but rather to have this wonderful combination of presence of stillness, of clear seeing of what it is that we those, all those things come together, and we see Oh, this is how my mind works. And I don't have to act on that. Those movements of the mind that cause me suffering. And I can act on those that those movements of the mind that bring happiness I like to think that the large chest of the Buddha not only expresses confidence, but also expresses his great compassion and his great love, this huge heart that he has. And so as the mind becomes still present, that the heart also becomes quite full. And the full heart is one that hopefully is big enough and large enough that we can hold the whole world in our hearts, that we are life or life is not one withdrawal. And not one of just what's in it for myself, but rather, it's a way of meeting the world responding to the world, living in this world, so that how we live is supportive and helpful for others. So here we are. 2500 years after the Buddha still referring back to the Buddha and what his awakening was As a source of inspiration, meaning for us, it can be said that none of us we wouldn't be together here as a group of people, unless we were because unless it was for the Buddha, we share that here. And that brings us to a constellation of people together. If it was if he hadn't lived, some of us would be at the beach today. And some of us would be, I don't know, doing other things. And I think that the distance between us and the Buddha is not that great. In the Zen tradition, where I studied in, I have I was given what's called Dharma transmission. Were you supposed to construe transmitted the Dharma from your teacher, and your teacher was transmitted from his or her teacher, back through the generations and given a document that shows the genealogy all the way back to the Buddha Now some of its mythological, but a lot of it's not. And, but it shows about 90 to 93 people. And it's about how many people we have here at IMC today. So if you lined up in all of us, we will get back to the Buddha. There's I think it's a pretty

close to me. And other way to figure out maybe it's a little bit unusual, but silly is up on the exercise where you figured out how many ancestors you've had, you know, maybe in 50 generations back.

You know, the way that things grow exponentially, you know, two parents and four grandparents and eight great grandparents, you know, goes back and back and back. After 50 generations, I think you get something like 70 trillion ancestors which doesn't work. Couldn't have been done many people back then. So, somehow we must have shared a lot of similar ancestors. We must have had a lot of commonality in our family lineages. And I'm, and I think, you know, at some point we were all pulled back far enough and we're all related to each other. We're all related to the Buddha related to, to each other and our humanity. And I like to think of the Buddha. As someone who reminds us, that liberation comes hand in hand with a compassionate feeling of the connection that we all have. So, one of the things that we do, to remember that connection between the Buddha and all of us the connection of the heart, and remind us as part of our practice, does not we don't practice for We're in separate from all that there's a tradition in Buddhism to take a a red cord and it has to be a very special cord it's somehow been specially infused but this cord that I have here has not been infused with anything yet except for what the habit Michaels but, but the children right now are getting ready out in their parking lot. And they're preparing themselves to come in here and they're getting the baby Buddha ready and they're gonna bring it in here and then we'll do a little ritual canting but we have to get ourselves ready for the kids to come in. So we're going to do is take this cord and weave it in and out and around and about everyone is home It's hard if not everyone, then the attrition improves because then not everyone does sometimes can hold it, the idea is to have to go around the perimeter. And the perimeter somehow holds us all. And then when it comes to go all the way around, then it comes back, and then it comes back and it make a loop that goes back to the Buddha. So if you could take this and hold on to a piece of it and just pass it, pass it around, and we'll see how that works. And the red is supposed to be symbolic of the Buddha's robes and that we all connected to. The other thing I want to say is that the statue in the front of the Buddha is also the Buddha and it's the Buddha on the night of passing away. He passed away at the age of 80 or 81 years old, and he died quite peacefully. There's a count of him dying outdoors. He laid himself down underneath to solve trees. And these trees they say bloomed out of season. And the blossoms were quite fragrant and the blossoms kind of center petals falling down all around him, very nice and idyllic. But the way that the Buddhists like to remember the death of the Buddha, is that he, he died, he died peacefully. And I think that this is very meaningful that here, death is often one of the things that most frightens people, most troubles people, many people and, and or people's relationship that death is often quite troubled or their relationship to debt to life in relationship to death can be quite troubled. And here's a man who faced his death, knowing he was dying, and had attained a level of peace. Attained to kind of resolve some of the key issues of his life. And so he was able to slay down. And he entered into meditation. And then as he went, went through his different meditation states, at some point in particular meditation state, I suppose he let go, and in that state, he passed away. He had, they say he had been poisoned, accidentally eaten something that shouldn't been eaten. But he was the accounts of him is that he was quite old and quite frail. By the time he died. Usually when people think of the Buddha, they think of this beautiful thing, the statue of the Buddha, where he was, you know, 36 years old, kind of in a peak of health and all that I'll tell you a little bit about what's happening here today, since it's different. Today is the day that here at IMC, we're celebrating Vesak. Vesak is the Buddhist celebration of the Buddha's birth, his death and his enlightenment. And it's usually the one Buddhist celebration we do every year here. And I'll talk about a little bit I'll give a little talk. And then at 1030 the various youth programs we have at IMC will join us up here for bring the baby Buddha's being born out there into their redwood tree. And they'll bring the baby Buddha in here. And then afterwards, afterwards, the there's going to be a potluck for the families All the youth program and their parents and stuff are staying behind, they're going to be more youth programs starting at 1130 or so it's a potluck for them. For those of you who are not part of that, if you'd like the teen program that

we have, for the second year in a row now as as put on a bake sale, they do that they've done it before as a benefit for Doctors Without Borders. And they'll be outside on their deck with a table, they're set up with all kinds of goods that they baked. And then if you would like to make an offering for what they have baked, that offering will go to Doctors Without Borders. So probably what it means is that we shouldn't do a lot of lingering in here afterwards, but rather linger outside and in the deck in the gravels kind of garden area. So that you can get set up here for the kids who come in and do their potluck and program. Okay. Okay. So but and also the statue of him, you know, lying down there. You know, he doesn't look like he's 80 years old. But some of the depictions of him have music. He was stooped over, all bent golden. He had a bad back. And he described himself. It was very hard for him to kind of keep going in his frail old age, but he could use his meditation and mindfulness to hold it all together. We would like our religious founders to be sturdy Sterling examples of health, buoyancy and everything. But I think it's very realistic to think of the Buddha 2500 years ago getting to the ripe old age of 80 and stooped over wrinkled and variety of things.

So

So if the people who are right here in the floor can move back a little bit have come over here because we need to have space in here for the procession and if you can help the kids make sure they don't trip over the cord, they could go going out to that outer home there. So welcome everyone, kids and adults and everyone and we're here to celebrate the Buddhist birthday. And in preparation for you kids coming in here, we took this red cord, you see this red cord that's ever been ever been hold up the red cord so that kids can see you see that? And it goes all the way around the whole room here and it goes all the way back to the Buddha is holding there. And the red cord is supposed to come from symbolize the love and generosity and the peace that comes from the Buddha that holds us all here today. And we're going to celebrate that love and that peace and that generosity with our little songs and our chance. And with what? Washing the baby Buddha. So usually when babies are born, one of the first things that happens is they get washed. And so we have this ladle that's inside that bowl of water with the baby Buddha standing there. He's kind of precocious, so he's standing, ready for a shower. And he is and the idea is that each of us has our own Buddha potential. And that, with celebrating the birth of the Buddha, we're celebrating the possibility of cleansing ourselves of all that troubles us so that we too can be a Buddha. We can be liberated and free. So, we want to your song first, Michelle, we want to do with that. Maybe do your song first. Okay, so Michelle leads the Dharma rocks program here for the third to eighth graders. So, go ahead.

So, some of you have a copy that

hopefully you can share. It's very simple.

The kids know it. They don't know.

Please feel free to join in. I'm going to just sing the first verse along so that you get it is really simple. And then if you're nearby, someone who's got a copy, you'll be able to plug in

Okay, so we'll start with the top

Okay, let's try.

Last one, actually



everybody knows

Way to see

So then, part of the custom in celebration like this is remembering the Buddha and expressing our gratitude and appreciation and our sense of support we get from the Buddha and the Dharma and the Sangha. And so as a chanting of what's called the refuges. So I'm going to teach you the simple refuge chant, in Pali, the ancient language. And for the kids, this will be new. And then after I do this chant with y'all have you, then the kids are going to teach the grown up to chance. to nothing, okay. So it starts off by just remembering the Buddha. And then we do the refuges. So I'll do one word, and you can repeat after me. And the words are nominal which means means like, hail or gay. And tassa bhagavato arahato samma sambuddhassa and it's Hail to the worthy one, the perfectly self enlightened going to repeat after me. No, no

go toe to

some

Some Buddhists

go toe to toe.

Some some Buddhists

go toe to toe to

some

some Buddhists

Buddhists

gotcha me

dumb

saranno

tchami

sung

God cha me,

this is saying Buddha Buddha sutra, means refuge and God charmi means to go or to walk to the walk into refuge to walk for refuge with the Buddha. And, and then we our usual way to do it is you do it three times. Because the first time, we didn't quite get the idea. And the second time, we're kind of like getting oriented the third time it really kind of and then can, you know, connect to it. And so we add these

words do TMP, which means for the second time, and then TMP for third third time, so do it. The Buddha Saarinen gotcha me do the

dumb sarana

gotcha me do the be

sung

gotcha me the B

gotcha me the B

got john me DMB

Seung.

Gotcha.

So, and then we have a chance and the kids will teach it to you. It's the first word what's the first word of sub? When you chant outside

say

sub A,

and the second word sutta and the third word, Suki, and the third word do on tongue do so it sabi means all in the ancient Pali language. satta means being and sukkha means happy. And hunt to means may they be so May all beings be happy is the chance. And so it goes I'll do one first of all first kids and I will do one word and house and you guys grownups can repeat so see if you can get it. So ready so

Bay

to key

on to

guys did pretty well so now we'll do a whole lineup the kids in the US we'll do the whole line and then after we do the line you guys can see the lines. So

there's

two key holes home to

We'll do it again. So

there's

two key the home to

bears.

to the, to

the, to the to. Okay, so you got

it now. So. So now two things are going to happen here. One is that we're going to keep chanting a little bit, and then we're going to pause after each line, and then maybe curse the kids and after maybe if some kids want to do it, after the kids, some of the grownups can evoke some category of beings, that we would like to send our loving kindness to our well being Wishing to. So we could be, you know, could be anything. It could be all of us here. It could be all animals, it could be all frogs. It could be all, you know, grandparents or whatever. And then we'll chant and then we'll do the evoke something. That's the first thing. Second thing is, is would you like to volunteer? Do something to see sitting next to me. So what it is this water here, it was here while we were all meditating. So because it was here, we're meditating. It's associated with all the goodness and peace and happiness and joy and love, which was circulating around this room before. So it's a very special water and you feel like you want to go around the room. We're chanting and sprinkle it on people. Because it kind of it kind of blesses them. It kind of makes them feel good. You want to do it for someone else. You Went do it. No, that's a sure you want to do it. Okay. So you go out there and bless everyone with all that goodness. And then we can chat so

to the home too. So the kids have

the

let's say, a kid.

Let's wait a minute here. Wait, wait, wait, wait, are you going too fast? So who what candidates are the kids have some category. We want to send loving kindness to

So parents obey is the

key to

their way which was once then.

Oh pets

is

to be home to

mom's bed is the

two the two.



So how about the grown ups? Do you have anybody want to work any categories of beings. Thank you  
All Dharma teachers

is

to be home to

all high school students. There is

key to

all homeless people's pay

to keep the home to

all sick people ill people the

key to

or people looking for work well people looking for works best is

The home to

all and happy peoples. They

say the home too.

And thanks Richie and the people of Burma. Bay is

to the to

the people of Tibet

they

to key to

our soldiers and veterans. Day is

key to

our children. Is

to key the two

leaders of all nations the

key to

all animals Bay

to key to

all political prisoners.

There is

to be to

have people filled with hatred

is the

key to

our refugee South Bay is

key to

all endangered species. The

key to me all the beings that we share this planet with me they all be happy

to give it to.

And then finally, there cannot be a Buddhist celebration or ceremony without a final act which is called dedication of merit. And what this dedication means. It's usually done kind of in a formulaic ritual away, and people don't even know what they're doing, really. But what it means is ideally, you would take all the goodness All the benefits that somehow have been derived from the event that you've been part of your practice, the activity, the celebration, whatever, whatever way that you've benefited, and perhaps you came to meditate here today, you will be calmer, perhaps you're a little bit more insightful, maybe you're a little bit more less reactive, maybe you're more compassionate. Maybe you're more, maybe you're happier. Maybe you're leave here ready to wish the people that you encounter that they'd be happy, May all beings be happy. So whatever way your benefit is, you have to consider what that benefit might be. And then you also then you then you also consider how, in practical, real ways, and in indirect ways, can the benefit that I've derived serve to be a benefit for others to is not just for myself, but it's also to serve and better the world we're in. So there's an active consider An act of reflection of imagination to think, how is it when I leave here and get in my car and drive away? How is it that when I'm on the freeway, how can my practice here be support to the people that I encounter on the freeway? So they perhaps I'm more generous as a driver, back in my neighborhoods with my families are places of work. So that act of reflection is a very important part of Buddhist practice. So that we feel there's a connection between our practice and the and, and others. So for whatever benefit and merit that has come from our practice together, we dedicated for the welfare and happiness of all beings everywhere, May all beings be happy. And now, there's a ladle. ladle in here. And if you want to come and watch the

baby Buddha, first the kids if you want to watch the Buddha, you can do that. It's maybe one one time, one ladle for the water. And thank you all. timing is perfect for the phone. And, and remember there's a wonderful big sail outside and on our deck and thank you for coming.