



Insight Meditation Society

Sangha News - June 2011

Selfless Practice



From Bob Agoglia, Executive Director: I recently recorded a fascinating conversation with senior IMS teacher Rodney Smith about a topic near and dear to his heart: 'Selfless Practice.' Throughout his decades of teaching meditation, Rodney has observed that many of us inadvertently reinforce a subtle sense of self in our practice, creating an obstacle to the unfolding of wisdom.

Listen [here](#) to Rodney's helpful suggestions on how to avoid this pitfall along the path to realizing essential selflessness.



New Construction Plans

The time has come! IMS is delighted to announce that plans are underway for two significant building projects at our Retreat Center. One is to construct a brand new dormitory, and the other is to thoroughly renovate the first and second floors of the 'Catskills.' On completion, privacy in accommodations will be guaranteed for each and every retreatant who sits at IMS.

We've long held the aspiration to provide single rooms for all our course participants. While sharing a room during a retreat can provide an opportunity for different kinds of learning, we've listened to many comments over the years that single accommodations offer the gifts of solitude, silence and simplicity - qualities that support our entry into a quieter way of living and being, and deepen our sense of refuge. We are grateful to everyone in our community whose input has helped shape our latest vision.

We're well on the way toward achieving our overall fundraising goal of \$2,350,000. If we reach this (with your support!) we'll break ground in the late summer of 2012. The new dormitory will go up first and will meet LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) standards, continuing IMS's commitment to environmental sustainability. It will consist of 28 simple single rooms on two floors, all suitable for anyone with chemical sensitivities.



This architectural perspective envisions the new dormitory (on the left), with a covered walkway connecting it with the Annex (in the middle, behind the walkway) and the Catskills (on the far right).



The above bird's-eye view of the Retreat Center shows where the new dormitory (upper far left) will be situated in relation to the other dormitories - the Annex (top) and the Catskills (below it to the right).



Layout of bedrooms in the new dormitory will increase a sense of refuge: the placement of the wardrobe will create a 'nook' for the bed, offering privacy from the doorway and reducing any hallway noise. Walls will be constructed to isolate sound.

As many of you have personally attested, the Catskills renovations are long overdue. The plan is that once the new dormitory is finished and retreatants have settled into it, the Catskills will be redone. All 1st and 2nd floor bedrooms will become singles, with new flooring, ceiling and wall surfaces throughout. Bathrooms will be completely refitted for greater privacy, and additional insulation will be installed for improved energy efficiency. The Gym will no longer be used for accommodations.



In both the new dormitory and the renovated Catskills, bathroom blocks will contain fully private rooms for each toilet and shower stall.

With careful planning and good oversight, we should be able to celebrate the completed facilities in mid-2013. We are committed to staying operational throughout the entire process, offering our usual schedule of courses.

Stay tuned for progress reports.

Growing a More Diverse Sangha

In offering a spiritual refuge for awakening, IMS is committed to cultivating a community that reflects the diversity of our society and our world. We believe that all members benefit from diversity, recognizing that a wide range of human experiences and viewpoints broadens and enriches the understanding of all. We seek to promote the inclusion and participation of people of diverse social identities including those of all races, ethnicities, cultures, sexual orientations, gender identities, classes, religions, abilities, and ages, so that all may feel welcome, safe and respected within this community.

This statement articulates IMS's vision for a more diverse sangha of retreatants, teachers, staff and friends. It arises from the recognition that unless social diversity at IMS increases, we will have failed in our mission to provide *"a spiritual refuge for **all** who seek freedom of mind and heart."*

With this in mind, we've been actively engaged for much of the last three years in an organization-wide process, led by IMS's Board of Directors, to deepen our sensitivity to issues of diversity so that we can provide an ever more welcoming and respectful retreat environment.

Having observed that significantly few of our sangha were people of color, we began with learning more about the individual, institutional and cultural roots of racism. To date, Board and staff members have participated in multiple trainings, five Board members of color have been recruited, we've conducted a survey of those who've attended our annual People of Color retreat to learn about their experiences at IMS, and we've run focus groups with retreatants of color to learn how to make IMS more supportive of their practice. Together with our Guiding Teachers, we're currently working on expanding the overall diversity within the IMS teaching faculty itself.

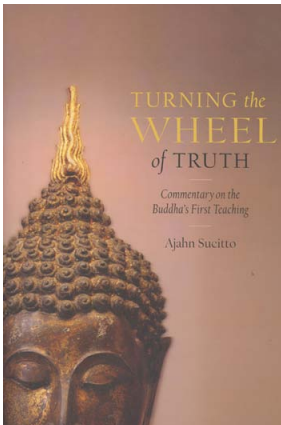
In addition, we've recently created a voluntary and anonymous retreatant questionnaire to help us measure our progress towards building a flourishing and more diverse community. When you sit at IMS after July 1, you'll have the opportunity to complete this short survey - we hope you'll consider doing so.

Our next step is to develop a concrete and realistic three-year plan to further realize our mission and vision. We invite any comments and questions you may have about this vital and ongoing initiative - please email Bob Agoglia at boba@dharmia.org and we will respond.

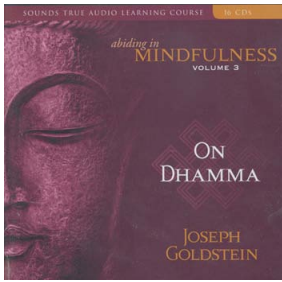


Dharma Updates

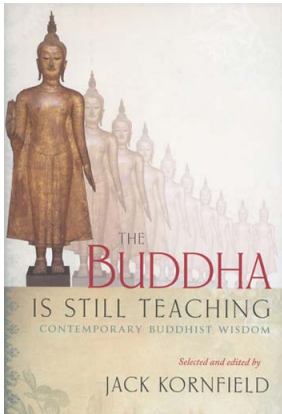
Hot Off the Press! - You might like to know of new publications from several beloved IMS teachers.



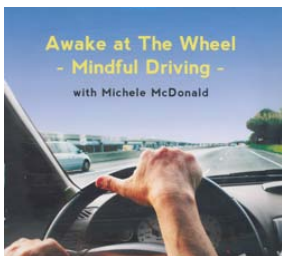
English monastic Ajahn Sucitto's latest book is Turning the Wheel of Truth: Commentary on the Buddha's First Teaching.



Volume 3 of Joseph Goldstein's audiobook *Abiding in Mindfulness*, an in-depth course on the *Satipatthana Sutta*, is now available from Sounds True. It is titled "Dhamma"; the first two volumes are "The Body" and "On Feeling, the Mind and Dhamma." Joseph was recently interviewed by Sounds True founder Tami Simon, and a [podcast](#) is available.



Jack Kornfield has recently edited a collection of short essays and quotations from contemporary Buddhist teachers titled *The Buddha Is Still Teaching*.



And Michele McDonald's two-CD set, *Awake at the Wheel* helps listeners apply mindfulness while driving.



News Worth Noting

New Arrival - Last April a Quan Yin statue was installed at the entrance to the Forest Refuge meditation hall, a reminder of the possibility within us all of boundless compassion. In honor of her arrival, a blessing ceremony was held for her by teachers, staff and yogis.



Quan Yin arrives at the Forest Refuge.



Reliable Power - A new Retreat Center generator is now up and running. It will immediately take over if a power outage occurs, providing sufficient electricity for all the facility's needs, including lights, heat and hot water, and communications.



Help for Potwashers - *The Retreat Center potwashing area has been equipped with a new sterilizer, a three-bay sink and new drying racks, making the yogi job of potwashing more effective. The sterilizer quickly and thoroughly sanitizes pots, mixing bowls, food storage containers and other kitchen utensils used to prepare and serve our delicious meals.*

Getting Oriented - Orientation booklets about the ins and outs of retreat life at IMS are now available in each dormitory room for course participants to refer to whenever needed. They cover everything from noble silence to hall and meal etiquette, from walking trails and the location of the 'lost and found' to the practice of generosity.



Program Highlights

Recent Courses



Annie Nugent joins Teacher-in-Residence Sky Dawson to guide practice at the Forest Refuge throughout June - there are still a couple of openings for anyone wishing to sit a [personal retreat](#) with them.



At the Retreat Center, Ajahn Sucitto (center, standing) led this year's Monastic Retreat together with Ayya Medhanandi Bhikkhuni (L) and Ajahn Jayanto (R). Offering support to the monastics were kappiyas (L-R) Tid James, Oren Sofer and John Lynch.



As part of the closing ceremony, Ajahn Sucitto invited retreatants to write regrets, messages of forgiveness and blessings on slips of paper, and then one by one the yogis released them into the fire.



A retreatant pays her respects to Ayya Medhanandi Bhikkhuni.



Mark Coleman recently offered a weekend course, The Art and Science of Mindfulness, to a packed house. He'll return to teach at the Retreat Center in January, 2012.

Future Courses



Revered Burmese meditation master Venerable Pa Auk Sayadaw (above) is scheduled to offer the dharma at the Forest Refuge, July - October. He is shown here during his previous teaching visit in 2008.

The **Forest Refuge** is full throughout Pa Auk Sayadaw's stay, with openings becoming available again in November. Information and applications are available [online](#).



In January, 2012, the Forest Refuge will welcome back Patricia Genoud-Feldman to teach with Sky. Patricia co-founded and guides [Meditation Centre Vimalakirti](#) in Geneva, Switzerland. Her teaching style emphasizes a relaxed and caring approach, and encourages an ongoing interest in relation to life as it is.

"These attitudes, both on and off the cushion," she explains, "help to open up our field of awareness to the full range of our experience. They enable us to see more and more clearly that everything is nourishment for opening the heart and learning, for understanding who we are and what reality is."



Patricia Genoud-Feldman

At the **Retreat Center**, Larry Rosenberg's course for experienced students, [The Art of Mindful Living](#), has a few spaces available, July 17-24.

For anyone interested in sitting a longer-term retreat, you might like to consider [Part Two](#) of this year's Three-Month Retreat, October 22 - December 3. Senior IMS teachers provide meditation guidance and support, and every participant has a single room.

This year's retreat for women, [Women in Meditation](#), takes place December 9-16 and will be offered again by Christina Feldman, Narayan Liebenson Grady and Maddy Klyne.



Serving at IMS

Staff Positions Available - We are currently accepting applications for two positions: a [Retreat Center Cook](#) and a [Forest Refuge Office Assistant](#).



The Retreat Center's fabulous and friendly cooking crew is looking for someone to join them!

Volunteer Opportunities

Working Guests for Teen and Family Retreats: IMS is seeking a few more working guests to support this summer's [Teen Retreat](#) (June 24-28) and [Family Retreat](#) (June 30-July 5). Working guests work alongside our staff in the Kitchen and Housekeeping operations; they don't work directly with the children or teens attending the courses. Note that these retreats are not in silence - they can in fact be quite lively! Applicants don't have to be experienced in cooking or housekeeping, but they do need to have sat an IMS retreat of at least one week. Applications can be found on our website [here](#).

Working Guests for Groundskeeping: We are also recruiting working guests to help care for the IMS grounds during the month of August. This position could be filled by one person staying the whole time or two people offering two weeks each. Activities may include gardening, maintenance of lawns and trails, and tree husbandry, as well as occasional Maintenance or Housekeeping projects indoors. The working guest position supports the integration of practice with daily life activities in a friendly environment. For more information and an application, visit our [website](#).

Wishing You Well

May you and your loved ones enjoy a peaceful and healthy summer.



The woods path between the Retreat Center and the Forest Refuge.



A relaxed stretch in the sun.

You can find an [archive of Sangha News](#) and links to its audio interviews on our website.



IMS is a spiritual refuge for all who seek freedom of mind and heart. We offer meditation retreats rooted in the Theravada Buddhist teachings of ethics, concentration and wisdom. These practices help develop awareness and compassion in ourselves, giving rise to greater peace and happiness in the world.

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