

MAKAWAO HONGWANJI FAMILY SERVICE
SUNDAY, FEB. 20, 2000, 9:00 A.M.

"Although the voice that calls
Namo Amida Butsu is mine, it is
the call of my dear parent, say-
ing "Come as you are!"
Namoamidabutsu

13 ✓

a. The Runaway Bunny
b. The most beautiful woman
in the world.

GOOD MORNING EVERYONE:

I WISH TO WELCOME YOU TO OUR SUNDAY FAMILY SERVICE. ~~WE'LL CALL IT SUNDAY FAMILY SERVICE BECAUSE WE'LL HAVE JUST ONE SERVICE FOR BOTH CHILDREN AND ADULTS.~~ WELL, I HOPE YOU HAVE BEEN IN THE BEST OF HEALTH AND CIRCUMSTANCES THIS PAST WEEK. AGAIN, WE'RE BLESSED WITH BEAUTIFUL WEATHER FOR THIS SUNDAY SERVICE. IT'S BEEN ALMOST THREE WEEKS SINCE MY COMING TO MAKAWAO, AND I'VE GOTTEN PRETTY MUCH ADJUSTED TO THE ROUTINE OF BEING A RESIDENT MINISTER HERE. HAVING RETIRED FROM THE MINISTRY, I HAD NO ROUTINE AND I COULD GET UP ANY TIME I WANTED, BUT HERE MY LIFE IS SOMEWHAT REGULATED AND I HAVE TO MAKE SOME ADJUSTMENTS IN MY LIFE. BY THE WAY, I CHANT THE SHOSHINGE AT 8:00 A.M. MONDAY THROUGH SATURDAY SO PLEASE JOIN ME IN SUTRA CHANTING IF IT MOVES YOU: 8:00 A.M. MONDAY THROUGH SATURDAY.

to do what
and prefer
want the
part.

I APPRECIATE ALL THE HELP AND SUPPORT I'VE BEEN RECEIVING FROM YOU. ALTHOUGH I'M HERE ALONE STILL WAITING FOR MY WIFE MARY, TO RECOVER FROM HER HIP SURGERY, I DO NOT FEEL LONELY BECAUSE OF YOUR FRIENDSHIP AND SUPPORT. I ESPECIALLY APPRECIATE THE FOOD SOME OF YOU HAVE PREPARED FOR ME SO THAT ALL I NEED TO DO IS COOK RICE TO SURVIVE. I'M ALSO GRATEFUL FOR THE FRUITS I'VE RECEIVED FROM YOU. I JUST LOVE HOME GROWN FRUITS. *I grow them myself at my home in Hawaii.*

any one
understand

WELL, THE QUOTATION I READ AT THE BEGINNING OF MY TALK IS FOUND IN DR. TY UNNO'S BOOK, RIVER-OF-FIRE, -RIVER-OF-WATER AND COMES FROM A POEM BY JUTARO OSHIMA. IT SAYS, "ALTHOUGH THE VOICE THAT CALLS NAMOAMIDABUTSU IS MINE, IT IS THE CALL OF MY DEAR PARENT, SAYING, "COME AS YOU ARE!" IT SAYS JUST AS YOU ARE, COME. THIS IS SUCH A UNIQUE CONCEPT IN RELIGION. YOU DON'T NEED TO MAKE PROMISES OR STRIKE A BARGAIN ^{to} YOU DON'T NEED TO REPENT OR ACT LIKE A GOOD PERSON. THE ONLY THING YOU ^{to} NEED TO DO IS TO BE YOUR SELF AND ENTRUST IN AMIDA BUDDHA IN SINCERITY. AMIDA BUDDHA WILL TAKE OVER AND DO THE REST ^{from} AS SHINRAN SHONIN, OUR FOUNDER, HAS TAUGHT US. THE OTHER POWER WILL TAKE WHATEVER IS THERE AND TURN IT INTO GOOD, LIKE TURNING ICE INTO WATER. IN MELTING ICE TO WATER, THERE'S NO CHEMICAL CHANGE. IN THE SAME WAY, WE ARE TRANSFORMED JUST AS WE ARE.

HOWEVER, EVEN THOUGH THE QUOTATION SAYS, "COME AS YOU ARE," IN REALITY, IT IS AMIDA BUDDHA WHO COMES TO YOU, TO US. IN OUR RELIGION, WE BELIEVE THAT THIS MYSTERIOUS POWER WHOM WE CALL AMIDA BUDDHA, ALTHOUGH WITHOUT FORM AND COLOR, IS ALWAYS COMING AFTER US. HE IS RELENTLESSLY EXTENDING UNCONDITIONAL COMPASSION TO ALL SENTIENT BEINGS. WE MAY TRY TO AVOID HIM BUT HE IS NOT FAR BEHIND. THERE'S A CHILDREN'S STORY THAT TOUCHES ON THIS POINT. IT'S CALLED THE RUNAWAY BUNNY. DID ANY OF YOU TRY TO RUN AWAY FROM HOME? WELL, I DID. WHEN I WAS A NINE OR TEN YEAR OLD BACK IN MY MOILILI DAYS, I BECAME UPSET WITH MY MOTHER FOR SOME REASON, I CAN'T REMEMBER WHAT IT WAS, I DECIDED TO RUNAWAY FROM HOME.

in my pocket

a I PACKED SOME SODA CRACKERS, AND WALKED OUT OF THE HOUSE WITHOUT A WORD, VERY SAD, AND WALKED OUT TO KING STREET AND HEADED TOWARD KUHIO SCHOOL DIRECTION BECAUSE THERE WERE MORE PEOPLE WALKING AROUND THERE AND THE LIGHTS WERE BRIGHTER. It was getting toward evening AND THE STREET LIGHTS WERE ON. I STOPPED AT THE STORE WINDOWS LOOKING AT THE DISPLAYS, BUT REALLY KILLING TIME AS I WONDERED WHETHER ANYONE WOULD MISS ME. I TURNED IN AT MOTHER RICE PLAYGROUND AND THERE WERE SOME CHILDREN STILL PLAYING THERE. I GOT ONTO ONE OF THE SWINGS THINKING IT WAS GETTING DARK AND COLD. AS I SAT THERE I BEGAN TO FEEL HUNGRY AND WONDERED WHAT WAS GOING TO BE SERVED FOR SUPPER. BEFORE I KNEW IT I WAS HURRYING HOME AND SNEAKED BACK INTO THE HOUSE. NO BODY MISSED ME. THAT WAS THE FIRST AND LAST TIME THAT I TRIED TO RUN AWAY FROM HOME. I THOUGHT, IF I WAS GOING TO BE MISERABLE, IT'S BETTER I DID IT AT HOME.

GETTING BACK TO THE RUN AWAY BUNNY, HE DIDN'T JUST RUN AWAY, HE TALKED IT OUT WITH HIS MOTHER. HE TOLD HIS MOTHER, "I'M RUNNING AWAY." AND THE MOTHER SAID, "IF YOU RUN AWAY, I'LL RUN AFTER YOU, FOR YOU ARE MY LITTLE BUNNY." "IF YOU RUN AFTER ME," SAID THE LITTLE BUNNY, "I WILL BECOME A FISH IN A TROUT STREAM AND I WILL SWIM AWAY FROM YOU." IF YOU BECOME A FISH IN A TROUT STREAM, "SAID HIS MOTHER, "I WILL BECOME A FISHERMAN AND I WILL FISH FOR YOU." AND IT WENT ON ~~AND ON~~ LIKE THAT. I WILL BECOME A ROCK ON THE MOUNTAIN, HIGH ABOVE YOU." MOTHER WOULD SAY, "I WILL BE A MOUNTAIN CLIMBER, AND I WILL CLIMB TO WHERE YOU ARE." "I WILL BECOME A LITTLE SAILBOAT AND SAIL AWAY FROM YOU." AND THE MOTHER WOULD REPLY, "THEN I WILL BECOME THE WIND AND BLOW YOU WHERE I WANT YOU TO GO." FINALLY, THE BUNNY SAID, "SHUCKS, I MIGHT JUST AS WELL STAY WHERE I AM AND BE YOUR LITTLE BUNNY." AND, SO HE DID. "HAVE A CARROT," SAID THE MOTHER BUNNY.

a PROBABLY, THE BUNNY WAS TESTING WHETHER MOTHER'S LOVE AND PARENTAL SUPPORT WILL BE THERE NO MATTER WHAT. IN A WAY, IT'S SIMILAR TO OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH AMIDA BUDDHA. WE MAY NEED TO TEST WHETHER HIS LOVE IS UNCONDITIONAL AND MAY THINK OF DIFFERENT WAYS TO GAIN ASSURANCE. BUT, FROM THE SIDE OF AMIDA BUDDHA THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT HE IS COMING AFTER US. SOETSU YANAGI, A CALIFORNIA MINISTER, HAS WRITTEN IN A SHORT POEM: WHY KNOCK? THE DOOR IS ALREADY OPEN. WHY PURSUE THE BUDDHA? HE IS PURSUING YOU! WHAT A REMARKABLE THOUGHT. THE BUDDHA IS PURSUING US. FROM THE ETERNAL PAST HE HAS BEEN PURSUING US TO ENSNARE US IN HIS LIGHT OF COMPASSION. HE IS PURSUING US AND WE NEED NOT PURSUE HIM. BUT, IN ORDER TO MAKE CONNECTION WITH THE BUDDHA, WE MUST SEEK HIS REFUGE BY ENTRUSTING IN HIM. THE SEEKER NEED NOT CHASE AFTER THE BUDDHA, BUT, BY SEEKING, THE REFUGE COMES TO HIM.

THE FAMOUS GERMAN PHILOSOPHER, GOETHE, SAID:

"YOU MUST SEEK.

BUT THOUGH YOU SEEK, IT IS NOT SOMETHING THAT CAN BE FOUND.

STILL, IT WILL BE GIVEN TO THOSE WHO SEEK."

SO SEEKING ITSELF IS NOT THE DIRECT CAUSE OF OUR FINDING WHAT WE SEEK, BUT IT OPENS THE DOOR FOR THE GIFT TO BE RECEIVED. THE *seeking* heart, the ENTRUSTING HEART OPENS THE DOOR, MAKING IT POSSIBLE FOR THE GIFT OF

over

AMIDA'S COMPASSION ^{to} MAKES THE CONNECTION WITH THE SEEKER.

THE BUDDHA PURSUES US BECAUSE OF HIS INFINITE COMPASSION. FROM THE IMMEMORIAL PAST, HE HAS SEEN SENTIENT BEINGS AS EVOLVING FORMS MOVING EVER UPWARD ON THE LADDER OF EXISTENCE. BUT, THE HIGHER WE GO THE MORE WE ARE MADE AWARE OF OUR KARMIC PASSIONS. OUR POTENTIAL FOR ANGER AND VIOLENCE, OUR NEEDS RELATED TO SECURITY AND SELF PRESERVATION, AND OUR LAPSES IN FOOLISH AND UNWISE BEHAVIOR MAKE US REALIZE THAT WE ARE NOT PERFECT, WE ARE NOT SAINTS, THAT WHEN IT COMES TO MATTER OF THE SPIRITUAL ^{we} ~~THEY~~ GO BEYOND OUR CAPABILITIES AND ^{we} MUST RELY ON A HIGHER POWER! ^{the} ~~THE~~ AMIDA BUDDHA DOES NOT LOOK AT US WITH HIS EYES, BUT WITH HIS HEART. HE DOES NOT JUDGE US BY OUR PHYSICAL QUALITIES, IN FACT, HE DOES NOT JUDGE US AT ALL. HE ACCEPTS US AS WE ARE AND TURNS THE ICE TO WATER, TURNS EVIL INTO GOOD.

There's a story related to unconditional love.

ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE DISTANT COUNTRY OF UKRAINE, ^{former Russian Territory} THERE LIVED WHEAT FARMERS BY THE NAME OF MARFA AND IVAN. AND THEY HAD A SIX YEAR OLD DAUGHTER, VARYA. DURING HARVEST TIME THE WHOLE VILLAGE, ADULTS AND CHILDREN, WORKED IN THE FIELDS ALL DAY CUTTING AND THRESHING AND BAGGING ~~THE~~ WHEAT. VARYA WAS A LITTLE GIRL WITH SHORT LEGS AND WALKING BACK AND FORTH HELPING HIS PARENTS WAS VERY TIRING. SOON SHE WAS FLAT ON HER BACK IN THE SHADE FAST ASLEEP. AFTER SEVERAL HOURS, SHE GOT UP AND SHE COULDN'T FIND HER PARENTS. THEY HAD GONE FAR AHEAD OF HER. SHE RAN HERE AND THERE LOOKING FOR THEM BUT THEY WERE NOWHERE IN SIGHT. THEN SHE SAW SOME ADULTS WORKING NEARBY AND WENT TO THEM CRYING. SHE DID NOT KNOW THEM BUT THEY REALIZED SHE WAS LOST AND TRIED TO BE HELPFUL. THEY ASKED HER FOR HER NAME AND HER PARENTS' NAMES, BUT VARYA WAS SO UPSET AND LONGED FOR HER MOTHER THAT SHE SOBBED, "MY MOTHER IS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMAN IN THE WORLD!" SO THE VILLAGE LEADER SENT THE YOUNG BOYS TO SPREAD THE WORD TO HAVE ALL THE BEAUTIFUL LOOKING MOTHERS TO GATHER AROUND VARYA SO SHE COULD IDENTIFY HER MOTHER. SHE LOOKED AT EVERY KNOWN BEAUTY FROM FAR AND NEAR, BUT NOT ONE OF THEM WAS HER MOTHER.

JUST THEN A BREATHLESS, EXCITED WOMAN CAME PUFFING UP TO THE CROWD. HER FACE WAS BIG AND BROAD, AND HER BODY EVEN LARGER. HER EYES WERE LITTLE SLITS WITH A GREAT LUMP OF A NOSE IN BETWEEN. THE MOUTH WAS ALMOST TOOTHLESS. MOTHER AND DAUGHTER FELL INTO EACH OTHER'S ARMS. VARYA WAS SO HAPPY SHE SAID TO THE PEOPLE, "THIS IS MY MOTHER! I TOLD YOU MY MOTHER IS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMAN IN THE WORLD! ALL THE VILLAGERS BEAMED WITH RELIEF.

NEXT DAY WAS THE HARVEST FEAST, AND SOME CHILDREN TEASED VARYA FOR CALLING HER MOTHER "THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMAN IN THE WORLD." BUT, SHE TOLD HER MOTHER SHE STILL BELIEVE IT TO BE TRUE. HER MOTHER SMILED HAPPILY AND SAID, "SOME PEOPLE SEE WITH THEIR EYES ALONE. OTHERS SEE WITH THEIR HEARTS, TOO. I'M GRATEFUL AND LUCKY THAT YOU SEE WITH YOUR HEART, AS WELL AS WITH YOUR EYES." WELL, THIS STORY HAS A STRONG BUDDHISTIC FLAVOR.

THERE IS A RUSSIAN PROVERB THAT SAYS: "WE DO NOT LOVE PEOPLE BECAUSE THEY ARE BEAUTIFUL, BUT THEY SEEM BEAUTIFUL TO US BECAUSE WE LOVE THEM." THE POINT TO BE MADE HERE IS THAT BECAUSE AMIDA BUDDHA LOVES US JUST AS WE ARE, HE SEES US ^{as} BEAUTIFUL AND VALUABLE BEINGS DESERVING OF HIS SALVATION. HE LOVES US UNCONDITIONALLY, NOT BECAUSE

OF OUR PHYSICAL LOOKS OR OUR POSSESSIONS, BUT SIMPLY BECAUSE WE ARE WHO WE ARE. THAT IS WHY HE IS PURSUING US FROM HIS SIDE TO EMBRACE US NEVER TO ABANDON. *Sesha fusha*.

TRUE LOVE RISES ABOVE PHYSICAL QUALITIES. IT IS PATIENT AND KIND AND IS NEVER JEALOUS OR PROUD. LOVE DOES NOT KEEP A RECORD OF WRONGS. LOVE NEVER GIVES UP AND IT BRINGS TOGETHER THOSE WHO ARE LOST. THAT IS WHY AMIDA BUDDHA SEES US AS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE IN THE WORLD AND VOWS TO SAVE US.

I would like to close my talk by again reading the poem I read at the beginning of my talk.

"Although the voice that calls
Namoamidabutsu is mine, it
is the call of my dear parent,
saying "Come as you are!"

Namoamidabutsu

Announcement: Monday evening at 7:00 "Dharma Sharing"

Amida Buddha is
relentlessly extending
unconditional ~~love~~
compassion to all
sentient beings.

Related to story
The ~~Story~~ Run Away
Bunny.

- Ukraine story of
"beautiful mother"