Braising the Mind of the Way

by Ven. Jinmyo Renge sensei
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I realize that some of you who came to attend the Dharma Assembly today may have thought that because the word “braising” appeared in the title of this Dharma Talk, and because I am tenzo or head cook for the monastery, this would be something like a long cooking class. Sorry, but that is not what it is about. I am going to talk about food at a certain point, and we will be doing some kitchen work together, but that is not really the point of this Dharma Assembly. The point is our practice.

The title “Braising the Mind of the Way” plays with the wording of a traditional term, “raising the mind of the Way” which, of course, refers to giving rise to the mind of practice. “Braising” is a cooking term that refers to long, slow cooking in liquid, usually in a covered pot. For example, cooking meat at a simmer for many hours will cause the meat to become so tender that it falls off the bone. And so “Braising the Mind of the Way” refers to the long, thorough process of Zen practice and monastic training that over time will serve up a tender offering to feed all beings.

So this morning, we are going to start with some raw ingredients, not carrots and celery, but rather, the raw ingredients of our practice – the skin, meat and bones of our practice. It is through making use of these raw ingredients along with carrots and celery that we can learn to practice while cooking, and it is only if we practice in this way while cooking that we can make food that is an appropriate offering to the Sangha.

In *Hotsu Mujoshin* (which means ‘Giving Rise to the Unsurpassable Mind’) Eihei Dogen zenji says,

Practising zazen and learning the Way are raising the mind that seeks the Way. Arousing the mind which seeks the Way is not the same as zazen nor different from it, and zazen is neither the same as raising the mind which seeks the Way nor different from it; nor are they two or three things, nor are they different. You should study everything in this way.

The Dharma of luminous Awareness is not “out there” somehow separate from us, something that we need to attain. It is right here, right under our nose, all of the time. The practice of zazen is sometimes called “the practice of recognition” and what it is that we come to recognize is that each and every moment is Dharma; each moment of experiencing is Dharma. We have never, can never be separate from the Dharma. And yet it can appear that way to us.

Right now we are sitting in zazen in the Hatto at Dainen-ji. The room itself is spacious and orderly and the only objects in it are those associated with our practice. The room is very reflective of our practice, which continuously points to the context in which all things arise: the vastness and openness of our Experiencing. The room, all of the objects within it, the forms of our practice including the posture of zazen itself invite us and remind us to practice.

Yet instead of making use of the opportunity we are given, we will tend to fill up the space of our experiencing with our thoughts and feeling tones and interpretations about who we are, who everyone else is, what the world is. We tell ourselves stories about the past, the future, about our hopes and fears and dreams, and plans, the slights we have suffered at the hands of others, the knots and tangles of our lives as we perceive them.

Now it is not that we need to cut any of this off. In fact, we can’t. Thoughts are what thinking does and of course thoughts will come up while we are sitting. But we can know that these are only thoughts and that they make up the very smallest part of our experiencing. To know that, of course, we have to at least be able to stay in the room, to practice environmental mindfulness. How do we know where we are and what is going on? By paying attention to the sensations of the bodymind that inform us that we are not having a conversation with someone, we are sitting on a zafu. By paying attention to the colours and forms that tell us that we are in this room, not in the internalized landscapes of imagery that form and reform in our minds. By paying attention to the sounds we are hearing with our ears instead of listening to the endless babble of internalized discursiveness.

To practice clearly when we are not sitting, we must be able to practice clearly while sitting on a zafu. We must be able to stay with what is actually going on in the space we are in, instead of allowing thoughts and feelings to eclipse our experiencing. So we practice releasing patterns of thought and feeling as soon as we notice them. They may continue for a time even after we begin practicing with them, but if we continue to practice, they dissipate of their own accord. It is not necessary to cut off thoughts and feelings while sitting. What we need to do instead is open around them so that the energy of the thoughts and feelings can begin to open to our lives as a whole, to our own benefit and the benefit of those around us.

If we practice this during formal zazen, then it becomes possible to practice with habitual patterns that come up the rest of the time. For instance, we might be at work and notice a certain state beginning to form. But then we need to recognize that this is no different from a state that appeared while we were sitting and we

were able to release it. So why pursue it now? Through these moments of recognizing that a feeling is a feeling, a thought is a thought, a state is a state, regardless of where we are when it is taking place, we can begin to understand how it is possible to practice continuously.

In the opening lines of *Gyoji* , Eihei Dogen zenji says,

In the great Way of the Awakened Ancestors the most important thing has always been continuous practice. Beginningless, endless, and seamless, there is not even the slightest gap between rousing the mind which seeks the Way, practice, Awakening, and nirvana. Continuous practice is an endless wheel turning. It is not forced out by your own effort or someone else's effort. Continuous practice is stainless.

To practice while standing, walking in kinhin, or going about any of the countless tasks we do each day, we must practice in exactly the same way we practice while sitting on a zafu. Getting lost in thought, or identifying with this or that state while stirring a pot is no different from getting lost in thought or identifying with a state while sitting. Our tendency to view the world from within an internalized interpretation of what is going on around us blurs and muddies our lives, prevents us from being able to see clearly what is really going on around us. Viewing a meal we are preparing from within an internalized interpretation of what it is and whom we are making it for will blur and muddy the food we prepare in the same way. Recognizing when thoughts and feeling-tones are conditioning our experience and releasing them is the essence of our practice and this is no different when sitting on a zafu or doing anything else. But often when we are reminded of our practice outside of formal practice, we will notice only the most superficial details of our experiencing. This is how students will sometimes mistake the enjoyment of having felt the breeze stir their hair while standing on a beach for mindfulness; or mistake feeling the rhythmic movement of muscles while riding a bicycle for mindfulness. The practice of mindfulness is much more than feeling the most obvious sensations of the body. Feeling the sensations of the body to some extent is necessary just to function. But the practice goes much further than that. It is not a matter of noticing this or that sensation and focusing attention on them so that they seem to stand out with more vividness than is usually the case. Those sensations are included, but we continue to open attention around them to a much wider range of sensations and feel into the whole of the body – not just the bits that are the feeling of the breeze or the legs moving on a bicycle. Feeling whole bodily, we also open attention to our seeing and hearing, to open to the context of our experiencing. The context of our experiencing is the space in which we arise and which we each arise as.

Our formal practice of zazen, of kinhin, bowing, chanting and so on is much more than a remedy for our states. As we penetrate deeper into the practice we find that these are ways of embodying and actualizing the space of experiencing. How do we penetrate deeper into the practice? By actually practising. And as our formal practice deepens, our informal practice opens out as well.

For the tenzo, working in the kitchen is not different from kinhin, chanting, bowing, or zazen. As Dogen says in the *Tenzo kyokun* ,

Since ancient times this office has been held by realized monks who have the mind of the Way or by senior disciples who have roused the Way-seeking mind. This work requires exerting the Way.

Now I would like to talk a little about the function of tenzo and the relationship of this post to monastic training and the practice. So first of all, why is there a tenzo? Well, obviously because we need to eat and so

someone has to prepare our food. But there is more to it than that.

The first monks were students of Sakyamuni Buddha, a ragtag group of people who followed along behind him as he wandered through the forests of India. There were no monasteries, no facilities where people could go to sit. A monastic was someone who literally left home, leaving behind all of the comforts and conveniences of family life, in order to dedicate themselves entirely to the study and practice of the Dharma, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

They were not permitted to work and they did not grow or prepare their own food. They ate once a day from food that was placed in a begging bowl by laypeople. So it would not be an uncommon sight to see monks wandering from house to house begging for their food. They had no choice about what was placed in their bowl and were required to eat whatever was provided through the generosity of the lay community and this included meat. Whatever was placed in one's bowl was gratefully received and it simply was not done to refuse a certain food because it was spicy or had meat in it, or was slightly off. Monks ate whatever they were given regardless of whether they liked it or not because there was no other source of food and this was the one meal of the day.

Over time the community of practitioners grew and it became necessary to house them. And so began the first monasteries. With the growth of these communities it also became necessary to grow food and prepare meals because…well, imagine 300 hungry monks descending on a village carrying begging bowls.

From India, the Teachings were carried to China and from there, to Japan. As Buddhism flourished throughout Asia, there were many splits and divisions within various schools that resulted in a large number of different sects, each with their own style of presentation, ways of organizing the Teachings, and ways of taking care of the day-to-day business of running a monastery.

The day-to-day business of running a monastery required extensive organization. And so traditionally there were six offices held by senior students who had roused the Way-seeking mind and were charged with guiding the activities of Awakening the community. Dogen says of this,

The roku chiji or six offices of a Zen monastery in Dogen's time were tsusu, or administrator; kansu, or assistant administrator; fusu or treasurer; ino or disciplinarian; tenzo, or chief cook in charge of meals and supplies; and the shissui, or work leader in charge of caretaking.

Those serving in these training posts were required to adhere to a set of standards known as the *Zen Monastic Standards: Chanyuan Qinggui* , an important ten-volume work by Changlu Zongze, published in 1102/3. These standards are upheld by the Office of Tenzo to this day, although how they are interpreted will vary within the various traditions of Buddhism.

Dogen zenji brought new life to monastic training because he presented all aspects of it as a means of deepening and clarifying one's understanding of practice. Every aspect of our practice, from how the floors were washed during samu (caretaking practice), how food is handled and prepared, how we hold our bowls, our koan practice, the Transmission between Teacher and student as Buddha and Buddha…every activity, every task, every exchange was viewed as being important.

He wrote extensively about all of this in a massive volume entitled *Shobogenzo: the Treasury of the Eye of Reality* . Other essays were scattered in single folio editions. Of these, two essays provide the basis of

training concerning the preparation and handling of food: *The Tenzo kyokun: Instructions for the Tenzo* and the *Fushukuhanpo: How to Use Your Bowls* .

Dogen zenji's profound and practical instructions on cooking and eating in the Zen monastic training environment provide everyone everywhere with teachings on how to use ourselves and our daily lives to prepare and serve the feast of Reality.

The work done by the tenzo is considered to be equal to other activities within our practice. It is zazen in movement, It is Hotsu bodaishin – giving rise to the mind that seeks and finds the Way, unfolding our recognition of openness and embodying it while sitting, or while preparing food.

As is stated in the *Zen Monastic Standards* , the mandate of the Office of the Tenzo is this:

Putting the mind of the Way to work, serve carefully varied meals appropriate to each occasion and thus offer everyone the opportunity to practice without hindrance.

And Dogen zenji says,

In the past such great masters as Guishan Lingyu, Dongshan Shouchu and others have served in this post. Although this is a matter of preparing and serving meals, the tenzo is not just the "cook".

When I began training as tenzo at Zazen-ji some 10 years ago, I soon discovered that there was much more to preparing and serving food in this context than I could have guessed. Every aspect of my training was and is still overseen by Anzan Hoshin roshi. The degree of planning, attention to detail, the variables that must be considered to meet the needs of a large group of students requires many hours of work on the part of Roshi, myself as tenzo, and monastics training as tenzo-anja or assistants to the tenzo.

Roshi usually does the meal planning or menu design. The basic format of the meals served is based on our practice of oryoki. In oryoki practice we use a set of three nested bowls. An example of this would be a meal traditionally served during sesshin: rice sprinkled with sesame seeds, miso shiru with silken tofu, and a pickle dish. Each dish complements the other dishes. The rice combined with the sesame seeds and the miso in the soup along with the tofu make a complete protein. Miso shiru is also made with seaweed stock and is served with fresh greens, so it includes the nutrients of fresh vegetables as well as the minerals of the seaweed. The pickle is served as a digestive aid. The colours and shapes of each ingredient used create an aesthetically pleasing and visually appetizing meal. The food is light and nourishing, appropriate for students sitting in zazen.

Meals prepared for retreatants or residents at Dainen-ji are planned in a similar fashion, based on the three bowls of oryoki. All of the food served is vegetarian – not because there is any particular "rule" that excludes meat from our diet, but because everyone can eat vegetarian food. Those who need to supplement their diet with fish or meat due to illness or allergies can do so privately as this would be considered a form of 'medicine' according to the *Shobogenzo Zuimonki* .

The first consideration for meal planning is the protein complement; the second is the carbohydrate and, of course, how these will combine to further complete the protein, how the ingredients will look, the kind of mouth-feel that they will provide, the colour combinations, and so forth are also looked into. In upholding the standards of the Office of the Tenzo, we make use of the widest range of ingredients available and our diet is

always varied. Roshi will not design the same meal twice in a row. There will always be different ingredients combined even in a standard dish, such as scalloped potatoes.

The greens used are often Asian greens rather than the more common Western hybrid vegetables, which have been bred to appear a certain way. For example, Roshi would choose Chinese broccoli, which is closer to broccoli in a wild form, with thin stalks, small heads and edible leaves, rather than the broccoli with an enormous plume of flower standing on a thick woody stalk available in supermarkets and ubiquitous in western cooking. This does not mean we would not use the hybrid form of broccoli if Chinese broccoli were not available. But Chinese broccoli is available and we use it because we want to encourage people to continue to grow it, lest the world be taken over by woody stalks with gigantic green plumes on them. We also want people to have a diverse and interesting diet. The choices we make concerning the procurement of ingredients take many perspectives into account. This is not about frowning with disdain on certain foods because we do not like them. In fact, in the Tenzo Kyukun, Dogen zenji says,

> *In preparing food, never view it from the perspective of usual mind or on the basis of feeling-tones. Taking up a blade of grass, erect magnificent monasteries; turn the Wheel of Reality within a grain of dust. If you only have wild grasses with which to make a broth, do not disdain them. If you have ingredients for a creamy soup, do not be delighted. Where there is no attachment, there can be no aversion. Do not be careless with poor ingredients and do not depend on fine ingredients to do your work for you, but work with everything with the same sincerity. If you do not do so, then it is like changing your behaviour according to the status of the person you meet; this is not how a student of the Way is.*
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> *Strengthen your resolve and work whole-heartedly to surpass the monks of old and be even more thorough than those who have come before you. Do this by trying to make as fine a soup for a few cents as the ancients would make a coarse broth for the same amount.*

In Dogen zenji's day, there was no need to choose between hybrid vegetables and those that are closer to their original form, so Dogen doesn't say anything about broccoli. In fact he doesn't really comment on the process of making choices as such. But what he does say throughout the Tenzo kyokun is that we should do our best. So the ingredients we choose should be and are given careful consideration.

When preparing the vegetables or ingredients for the soup, which have been received from the office, do not disparage the quantity or quality but instead handle everything with great care. Do not despair or complain about the quantity of the materials. Throughout the day and night, practice the coming and going of things as arising in the mind, the mind turning and displaying itself as things.

Each moment of choice, each decision made, is an opportunity to raise the mind of the Way. Reaching for a spoon, stirring a pot, adding salt, tasting, is an opportunity to practice opening to our capacity to feel, taste, touch, smell and hear. Standing at the sink washing a dish is an opportunity to feel our posture, to notice movements of attention that would ordinarily carry us into discursiveness and release them, to pay attention to the task at hand.

Working in the kitchen with Roshi is a continuous reminder of our practice. This is not at all like 'working in a kitchen' in a restaurant, or especially at 'home'. There is no casual talk, though there can be laughter. While the kitchen in a home is often a gathering place for social interaction, the kitchen here at Dainen-ji is a place to gather together body, breath, speech, and mind and release them in expressing the Way moment to

moment to benefit those who are practising the Way.

As Roshi warned me, it took me about 10 years to learn how to make a miso shiru, a miso soup, that had a depth that Roshi approved of. Much of that was because when I began learning how to make it, I had a set idea of how it should taste. Set ideas about how a dish should taste obscure how it actually tastes, and make it dull and uninteresting. To cook well, one cannot follow one's own agenda any more than one can follow one's own agenda while practicing. We have to completely let go of all sense of "me" cooking the soup and how the soup 'should' taste. The only way to make a wonderful soup, I discovered, was to allow each pot of soup to be completely different from the last, to taste how it actually tasted and allow the soup itself to tell me what it needed. But it took a long time to learn how to let go of wanting to follow a pre-conceived notion and let things be as they actually were. This is an example of how my practice informed my cooking and my cooking informed my practice.

During a sesshin, I would make the soup and before it was served Roshi would come into the kitchen to see how things were going. Normally he would walk to the stove, look down into the pot of soup, smell the steam and then reach into the cupboard above the stove for this ingredient and that to balance the flavours. He never tasted the soup because he knew from the smell alone exactly what it needed and he was always right. Now he comes into the kitchen from time to time, to create a last-minute pickle dish, or put the finishing touches on something that I have prepared, but the soup is usually fine.

So, having said quite a bit about the history and role of tenzo, I am going to talk about what all of this actually has to do with you.

In a little while we will go down to the kitchen to work together on some of the food preparation for our supper. When we do this, we will begin at the beginning.

We will begin by facing the *Idaten-Sonten Kamidan* , which stands on the shelf mounted in the window. A Butsudan, like the one in the Hatto, is a platform of Awakening. It raises up for us a statement about Awakening so that we can recognize and respond to it. A *Kamidan* is a platform for kami. What is a kami? The root of the word "ka" refers to fire; "mi" refers to water. So "Kami" refers to the meeting together of fire and water, the co-existence together of opposites, an unlikely and vivid circumstance. It is a way of talking about the vividness of what is. Idaten is a kami that traditionally is associated with the kitchen and the provisions of the monastery. I will lead a chant to Idaten Sonten, as follows:

On Ida Teta Moka Teta So Wa Ka

Following that, we will clap twice, hopefully in unison. The reason for the claps is that kami are associated with Shintoism and traditionally one claps twice to summon kami. This is a way of getting Idaten Sonten's attention while simultaneously summoning our own attention.

Then we will begin to talk about how to prepare our workspace. This is something you can apply at home. To work clearly, you need a clear workspace. Clear away from your immediate work area anything that is not relevant to the task at hand. At Dainen-ji we always begin by laying out cutting boards, knives, aprons, a bowl for scraps and a clean damp cloth to keep surfaces and tools clean. It doesn't matter if you are making a meal for one or you are going to feed 30 or 300 people, start by setting up your work space. This is stage one.

Stage two is to retrieve the ingredients you will be working with. But don't clutter up your workspace with a sea of ingredients. Put them to one side.

There is a French culinary term that we make use of because it accurately describes all of the preliminary preparations that we need to make in order to cook well – *Mise en place* . This means, literally translated, "Everything in its place". It includes setting up the work area with tools, gathering ingredients together and cutting various ingredients before beginning to cook.

So stage three would be the cutting of ingredients. All depending on what you are cooking, you can do all of the cutting in advance, or cut ingredients and begin cooking them while continuing to cut other ingredients, adding them as needed since they will take different amounts of time to cook. Whichever way you do it, your workspace should remain uncluttered and orderly. Put away what you are finished with. Stop periodically to stand back from your work area and look at how things are arranged. If your work area becomes disorganized, it is an expression of your own discursiveness. So use the noticing of that to reinitiate your practice and to clean up after yourself as you go along.

As concerns the cutting of ingredients – sometimes students think that working mindfully means slowing down. This is not true. In fact, if you are truly mindful, you can work much more quickly than would ordinarily be the case. Let's take as example, peeling a carrot with a vegetable peeler. To do that one task thoroughly and completely does not take a lot of time. But if we become heavy-handed and ponderous in our attempt to peel the carrot and be mindful at the same time, it can take a VERY long time. When we work at a task in that way, it is rather like watching a videotape of ourselves peeling a carrot. There is a self-consciousness to it that slows everything down. Rather than doing that, consider the tool you have in one hand, the carrot in the other. Feel the breath, feel the body, feel the hands; open the peripheral vision and just let the peeler peel the carrot. Stay out of the way. The bodymind knows how to do this simple task. It doesn't need anyone to oversee things.

When planning out your own meals at home, you will first need to look at what you already have on hand and give some thought as to how you are going to use up fresh ingredients and what you may need to purchase. And it can be helpful to install a white board on a wall in your kitchen, as we have at Dainen-ji. When we are getting low on an ingredient or throw out an empty container, we write it down on the white board instead of committing it to the fickleness of memory.

Make a decision as to the style of cooking you will employ – whether it be western, South-western, Japanese, Chinese, Southeast Asian, Indian, Middle-eastern or some other style. Then plan the protein complement of your meal, followed by the carbohydrate. By carbohydrate I am including both starches such as potatoes or squash and grains, along with whatever vegetables you are going to use. All of these are carbohydrates. If you are preparing a vegetarian meal, you should be familiar with the quantities of protein in such items as tofu, wheat gluten, nuts, seeds, and dairy products. Some of them have much less protein than most people think and are better eaten in combination with other foods to raise the amount of protein in the dish.

There is a wide array of foods available that will provide protein for vegetarian dishes or may be combined with other ingredients to raise the protein complement. If you only ever eat cotton or firm tofu, try silken tofu. If you visit some of the Asian stores in your community you may find triangles or squares of deep-fried or age tofu, deep-fried puff tofu; tofu cut into ribbons to resemble noodles; products made with yuba, or soymilk skin. Chinese shops also sell high-protein tinned wheat gluten, which just needs seasoning. Soba, or

buckwheat noodles, provide a complete protein by themselves.

Combining grain with nuts or seeds, beans or legumes will create a complete protein. It is easy enough to ensure that you are including an adequate quantity of protein in your diet if you spend a little time planning your meals. And please, take the time once in a while to browse through Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Arab, Israeli, Italian stores – to name a few – in your area that carry ingredients that you may never have heard of but find absolutely wonderful.

Try to vary your diet as much as you are able. If you only ever eat three kinds of vegetables, make it four or ten or three hundred. These are some of the fruits and vegetables we use at Dainen-ji:

Red and green bell peppers, cubanelle and poblano peppers; kale, watercress, red and green Swiss chard, spinach, broccolini, rappini, broccoli, asparagus, green cabbage, savoy cabbage, nappa cabbage, red cabbage, radicchio, butternut squash, acorn squash, kobacha squash, occasionally eggplant and zucchini; plum tomatoes, vine-ripened tomatoes, English cucumber, Japanese cucumber, middle-eastern cucumber, Kirby cucumbers; Chinese long beans, wax beans, peas; dai gai choy, su choy, yu choy, Shanghai bok choy, ong choy, tong choy or chrysanthemum greens, pea sprouts, baby bok choy, bean sprouts, celery root also known as celeriac, Chinese celery, celery, fennel, leeks, scallions, garlic, shallots, white onions, red onions, Spanish onions, Vidalia onions, huagu, which are Chinese flower mushrooms, shitake mushrooms, straw mushrooms, cremini mushrooms, lobster mushrooms, morel mushrooms, chanterelle mushrooms, porcini mushrooms, button mushrooms, gypsy mushrooms, honey mushrooms, fairy ring mushrooms, maitake mushrooms, which are also known as pine mushrooms, daikon or Chinese white radish, lo bak or Chinese green radish, gau, jicima, escarole, beets and beet greens, Romaine lettuce, Boston lettuce, red leaf lettuce, green leaf lettuce, chicory, and endive. Sweet potatoes, white potatoes, red potatoes, Yukon gold potatoes. Rutabaga, turnip, parsnips, horseradish, carrots, occasionally cauliflower, ancho chillies, jalapeno, chipotle, aji chillies, Thai bird chillies, chilhuacle Negro, limes and lemons, a range of olives, artichoke hearts, palm hearts.

I could make a similar list for beans, grains, nuts and seeds, spices and seasonings, cheeses, herbs, breads, and the dozens of shapes of pasta that are available. Perhaps another time.

We are so fortunate to have access to such a wonderful array of foods that provide us with almost limitless choices. When you go to a supermarket, practice. Feel the step, feel your hand holding the plastic basket or pushing the cart. Feel the body, open to the hearing; open your peripheral vision. With your peripheral vision open, you are much more likely to find the one almost perfect tomato in amongst the 500 or so in a bin; you will notice ingredients tucked away on shelves that you may have walked past for years. If you want to shop well, you need your capacities to feel, see, hear, smell, touch, and taste to be as open as possible. And it doesn't matter if you are shopping for a tomato or making a choice about something you see on a Web site. If you are not practising, you will tend to default to habit. If you are practising, you will make more intelligent decisions and be more willing to explore.

We can start anywhere, with anything, to make use of the tasks that we do to widen and deepen our practice. To go back to an earlier quote from Dogen zenji,

> *Practising zazen and learning the Way are raising the mind that seeks the Way. Arousing the mind which seeks the Way is not the same as zazen nor different from it, and zazen is neither the same as raising the*

> *mind which seeks the Way nor different from it; nor are they two or three things, nor are they different. You should study everything in this way.*

So now, sitting here facing the wall, arouse the mind which seeks the Way in your formal practice of zazen. Don't waste time watching internalized home movies about what you think your life is. Try something new. Pay attention to your life as it is, first by opening your attention to the sensations of the body, the colours and forms and sounds. Open around the thoughts and feelings that come up to practice aligning with this moment of present experiencing. It is through practicing this that you can learn to apply the Teachings while doing everything else that you do. If you can't sit on a zafu for half an hour without getting completely lost in thought, how are you going to cook a meal or do anything else without getting lost in thought? Open around the thoughts and feelings that come up, not as a way of trying to get rid of them, but to give them context. If we only ever choose what is most habitual for us, the staleness of the same thoughts and feelings and storylines that we go over and over and over even though we already know them all, this is a bit like sitting down at a banquet table laid with a wonderful feast. But instead of participating, we do not even look up. We sit clutching a plastic Tupperware container filled with three-day old macaroni and cheese and pick at it with a plastic fork. Look up, open your field of view. Practice in this moment.

In closing, I would like to thank Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi for the years of training he has given me, for his guidance in planning this Dharma Assembly and for his translation of Dogen zenji's Tenzo Kyokun and Fushukuhanpo, under the title Cooking Zen.

Have a good morning. I'll see you later in daisan and in the kitchen.