

Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi
LAY ORDINATION
WHITE BIRD IN THE SNOW
Tuesday, August 25, 1970
[No tape.]

NOT VERBATIM

I am so grateful to have this ordination ceremony for you, our old students. This is actually the second time ... the second ordination ceremony for Zen Center. Because why we didn't have lay ordination ceremony more often was because I didn't want to give you some special idea of lay Buddhists. Bodhisattva way, according to Bodhisattva teaching, every ... actually every sentient beings are Bodhisattva, whether or not they are aware of it they are actually disciples of the Buddha. As this is our conviction, we didn't I didn't want to give you some special idea of lay Buddhists, but time has come for us to strive for more sincerely to help others.

As we have so many students here, inside and outside of Zen Center, we need more help. And I decided to have Lay Ordination for you just to help others but not to give you some special idea of lay Buddhists, because all of us are Buddhists actually. This is not conceited idea, this is idea of spirit transmitted from Buddha to us. Accordingly, our way is like Avalokiteshvara Buddha, Bodhisattva. When he wants to save ladies, he took, he takes the form of ladies; for boys, he takes form of boys; for fisherman, he will be a fisherman. More sophisticated Chinese expression is to be like white bird in the snow—white bird in the snow. When people are like snow, we should be like snow. When people become black, we should be black. And being always with them without any idea of discrimination, and we can help others in its true sense without giving anything, any special teaching or materials, this is actually Bodhisattva way.

And now ... how we actually ... this kind of freedom from everything, and this kind of asking, and this kind of soft-minded spirit is to practice our way. You may think we are forcing you in same form, forcing some rituals on you or forcing some special teaching on you and forcing you to say, "yes, I will." But, those things are provided for you just to be like a white bird in the snow. When you go through those practice, and when you practice zazen in this way, you have point of zazen and point of practice and point of helping others. This is why we had ordination ceremony today, all of us, including various great teachers. It is not at all easy to be like white bird in the snow.

But then, somehow, anyway, we should make best effort to be like a white bird. Remember that this is not easy task. In this way, if you help yourself through practice, you ... you can help others, without anything, just to be with people will be enough.

Ah ... I am so grateful to have this kind of very, very formal ordination ceremony. Without guidance of Yoshida-rōshi, who came just to visit Zen Center, and just to help us, help our practice ... we could have this kind of very formal ordination, lay ordination ceremony. After sewing your robe, in spite of busy, everyday life of yours, and I think this is also good example of the Buddhist, or even though we are busy, there is some way to practice the most formal practice. Even though we ... all human beings in the city ... are busy, there is no reason why they cannot practice our way to be like white bird in the snow. If all of us taking your way for good example and practice our way and join our practice of Bodhisattva, the result will be great.

Thank you very much.

This transcript is a retyping of the existing City Center transcript. It is not verbatim. No tape is available. The City Center transcript was entered onto disk by Jose Escobar, 1997. It was reformatted by Bill Redican (11/4/01).