

# THROSSEL HOLE

## PRIORY



# Zen

MEDITATION INSTRUCTION  
WEEKEND INTRODUCTORY RETREATS



'Zen' means 'meditation' or 'contemplation'. Zen (Chinese *Ch'an*) Buddhism is comprised of those schools of Mahayana Buddhism which place great emphasis on the importance of practising meditation as the Buddha did in order to find the Truth which he found. The form of meditation practised in the Sōtō (Chinese *Ts'ao Tung*) Zen Church is called 'serene reflection' and consists in sitting still with an open, alert and bright mind, accepting all thoughts, feelings, perceptions and desires as they arise and pass naturally. When practised regularly and with right effort applied both in formal meditation and in daily life, this quiet sitting leads naturally to an ever-deepening awareness of the meaning and value of our life and the possibility of finding true spiritual freedom within it. The emphasis in Sōtō Zen training is placed upon awakening within ourselves the Heart of Compassion which expresses Itself in selfless action. Such action itself partakes of the very essence of meditation. Zen meditation is contemplation in the Western sense of the word because within the all-acceptance of meditation we come to commune with our Deeper Self, the Buddha Nature shared by all beings.



# Throssel Hole Priory

Throssel Hole Priory is a training monastery, parish church and retreat centre following the Soto Zen Buddhist tradition. Throssel Hole Priory was founded in 1972 by Rev. Rōshi Jiyu-Kennett, O.B.C., Abbess and Spiritual Director of Shasta Abbey, Headquarters of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives of the Sōtō Zen Church. The Abbey is located in Mt. Shasta, California, U.S.A. Throssel Hole Priory is directed by priests trained at Shasta Abbey and fully certified to teach Zen Buddhism and fulfill all priestly functions.



The Priory is located in Northumberland in a beautiful valley about twenty miles south of Hexham. The Priory grounds include eighteen acres of pasture and woodland. Most daily activities take place in and around the renovated farm buildings which were built early in the nineteenth century, and which have been extensively modernised by Priory members. A large Meditation Hall is currently under construction and, when completed, will

The life at Throssel Hole Priory is centred around our efforts to bring the openness, awareness and compassion of meditation into every aspect of our daily life. To this end, periods of formal meditation are interspersed with all the daily activities necessary for living in the modern world. Priests and lay students do all the Priory work, including maintenance, gardening, cooking, construction, cleaning and other activities. Such work is done as active meditation and, as such, is an integral part of Zen training. And always we return to the simple, quiet sitting through which we develop compassionate awareness of the intrinsic spiritual worth of our own lives and the lives of all beings.



# Training Programmes

Throssel Hole Priory offers a number of training programmes for people who would like to learn about the practice and application of Zen meditation.

**WEEKEND RETREATS.** The best introduction to our training is obtained by attending a weekend retreat at the Priory. Weekend retreats provide those who are beginning meditation with a thorough introduction to Zen training. Activities include instructions in and the practice of formal meditation and discussions of the ways in which meditation is brought into every aspect of daily life. Special emphasis is placed on giving the lay student of Zen a solid basis for practising meditation at home. The daily monastic schedule is followed which also includes periods of work, morning and evening services, and formal meals. Retreatants normally sleep in the Meditation Hall and one of the Shrines as is customary in Zen monasteries.

We also encourage more advanced meditators, especially those who have been to the Priory before, to come to weekend retreats. People who meditate regularly can benefit greatly from this opportunity to concentrate on their own training for two full days.

**SESSHINS.** The Priory holds longer intensive meditation retreats, or *sesshins*, several times each year. *Sesshin*, meaning "to search the heart", is an opportunity to put all of one's effort into meditation without distraction. It is a time for cleansing oneself within the stillness and all-acceptance of meditation. Before applying for a *sesshin* for the first time we recommend that people attend at least two of our weekend retreats either at or outside the Priory, and that they maintain a regular meditation practice at home.

**GROUP RETREATS.** We also welcome people who meditate together and wish to do a retreat as a group. Such a retreat is of great value in helping lay trainees develop the respect and compassion for one another necessary for fostering individual spiritual growth within the group.

*When sitting cross-legged  
allowing the Buddha Nature to manifest itself  
by giving up all opinions and cutting all ties,  
we enjoy great wisdom quite naturally  
for we instantly enter into the world  
which lies beyond both delusion and enlightenment  
wherein there is no difference  
between the wise and the foolish.*

*Sōtō Zen Patriarch  
Dōgen Zenji*



*RESIDENT TRAINING PROGRAMME.* Serious lay students of Zen who would like to train at the Priory for periods other than scheduled retreats or sesshins are invited to join the Priory's resident training programme. Stays varying from one or two days to several months can be arranged. An extended stay helps to deepen one's practice and enables one to carry that practice back into the world. We do request that people who have not been here within the last year come first to a weekend retreat. We have found that this is the best way to acquaint you with our current practice and the best way for us to become acquainted with you. After the retreat we can discuss a longer stay.



*DAY VISITS.* The Priory is open most days between 11 am and 3:30 pm for brief visits and tours. Please telephone or write to make an appointment. Arrangements can also be made whereby Zen students who live nearby can attend Priory meditations and other activities on a regular basis.

PLEASE SEND ME A GUEST INFORMATION BROCHURE

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_(Please include Postal Code)\_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_



# Typical Retreat Schedule

5:30 am	Rising
5:45	Zazen (formal meditation)
6:20	Morning Service
7:15	Meditation Hall and House Clean-up
7:45	Breakfast
8:30	Silent Scripture Study
9:00	Lecture/Discussion
10:15	Work Period
12:00	Zazen
12:30 pm	Dinner
1:15	Rest and Kitchen Clean-up
2:00	Work Period
4:15	Lecture/Discussion
5:30	Zazen and Evening Service
6:00	Supper
6:30	Rest and Kitchen Clean-up
7:30	Zazen - Kinhin (walking meditation) - Zazen
8:40	Vespers
8:50	Tea
9:25	To Bed
9:40	Lights Out

The usual daily schedule at the Priory is similar to the above, differing only in that there is sometimes less sitting meditation and more working meditation and there are fewer lecture/discussion periods. The rising time varies depending on the time of year. Every fifth day is set aside for rest, light work, bathing and personal business such as mending clothing and writing letters. The schedule is more relaxed on these days.



*To live by Zen  
is the same as to live  
an ordinary daily life.  
The Buddha seal has been preserved  
both by the Buddhas in the present world  
and by those in the world  
of the Indian and Chinese Patriarchs;  
they are thus always spreading true Zen.  
All activity is permeated with pure Zazen.  
The means of training are thousandfold  
but pure Zazen must be done.*

*From "Zazen Rules"  
by Sōtō Zen Patriarch  
Dōgen Zenji*



**Throssel Hole Priory**

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