



Providence Zen Center, 1998

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▶ ▶ ▶ **Thank you all** for coming to this ceremony today.

Recently somebody told me a story of a time when a student asked Dae Soen Sa Nim when he was having one of his earlier serious illnesses, “Soen Sa Nim, when you die, what are we supposed to do? We’re going to miss you!”

This was a sincere question. He started having difficulty with his health fairly early on, and many of his students were worried. Dae Soen Sa Nim supposedly responded by saying, “Don’t miss me. If you only keep your mind clear for one moment, then we’re never separate.”

So even though we’re having this ceremony, which I’m sure Dae Soen Sa Nim would also approve of—it’s appropriate—the big message of his whole life is: Don’t miss me, keep your mind clear. Then, not only are we never separate from our founding teacher; we are also not separate from our lives, moment to moment. One moment of clear mind and this whole universe become one. That’s a wonderful gift, just in that simple teaching. Keep your mind clear for one moment, then already you are never separate.

We can do that, right? We can practice that way. We can practice with that intention. We can find that as the essence of what we’re doing sitting here in this building at this place or in our everyday lives or in our involvement with Zen Centers. We can remember that. That’s not too complicated.

Along those lines is a more personal story. I had just become a monk here at the Zen Center. After the ceremony all of the monks who were here at that time and Dae Soen Sa Nim went out to lunch at a nearby diner. I remember Jimi Hendrix was on the jukebox and I thought that was kind of interesting, sitting in this funky little diner that he liked. I was sitting at the table with him feeling kind of nervous, just starting this life as a monk and having no clue what it meant. He looked over at me and said something like, “Oh, you become monk. Wonda-pul.” Then he said, “Where you going?” And I said, “I’m going to Seattle, sir.” He said, “Oh. Is there an older monk there?”

I said, “No sir. I will be the only monk.”

“Oh. No problem. Just do it! Okay?”

There was my orientation. You might think, as I did at the time, “Wow. That was a little brief.” [*laughter*] At that time, how to be a monk was kind of a mystery to me. I didn’t have many role models and there wasn’t a manual or book on how to be a monk. I was going back to live in the Zen Center in a new role and I literally did not have a clue. But I’ll tell you what: I’m still learning it, but that “Just do it, okay?” was the best instruction I could have been given by anybody. Every day, something would come up. I couldn’t run to the manual that listed all the things that might come up, with the solution. I couldn’t appeal to the senior monk there and dodge the problem. I had to face it: boom-boom-boom. I was so glad that all he told me was to “just do it.” Because then, do it and it works, no problem; do it and you screw it up, also no problem. And we got plenty of both of those in various degrees. [*laughter*]

“Just Do It.” That was, for me, the most impactful teaching I ever got from him. And as has been said many times, Dae Soen Sa Nim’s teaching will continue to unfold for each of us as we live our lives and continue our practice. In a similar way, here we are, at a Zen Center, in a Zen School, and our founding teacher has passed away. There is no manual for us either. There’s a *Dharma Mirror* and all forms and robes and titles, but really what we have to do is—we have to—just do it. That’s where this moment appears.

Thank you, Dae Soen Sa Nim, for all of your gifts. I’m sure that we’ll be opening them for generations to come.

Chong Hae Sunim, JDPS

