

RELIGION EXPERTS COLUMN

Below is my response to the question provided for the Ask The Religion Experts feature in this Sunday's Ottawa Citizen. We hope this will generate thoughtful discussion of real-life applications of Buddhadharma and deeper understanding for us all.

Sunday, February 5, 2012

Q : What is your faith's position on the environment?

A : In answering this, I consulted Ottawa-based Buddhist, Kanzan Don Purchase, leader of the Flowing Rivers Sangha (<http://www.flowingrivers.ca/>), and active environmentalist. He explained that the Buddhist religion is, in part, an introspective one. We meditate and observe how our thoughts change over time and influence our experience of our world. We reflect on how thoughts motivate actions and how actions impact our world. We cultivate awareness of change in our world, within and outside ourselves. With effort and time we appreciate the interconnectedness of all things, how our thoughts and actions can positively, or negatively affect others. The separation between self and other falls away, motivating us to avoid hurting others, as we avoid hurting ourselves. We recognize ourselves in the current of life, and the importance of our contributing constructively to this current.

We come to understand that our environment reflects the activity of life, including human. If, through neglect or ignorance we damage the environment, we negatively affect all things which reside there, and produce suffering. As Buddhists, we strive to reveal suffering in the world and point to ways for its relief. We are therefore motivated to use skillful means to respond to environmental issues. Skillful means can mean social engagement in our awareness and activities such as "Think globally, act locally". To this end, Tendai Buddhism Canada (www.tendai.ca) has been actively engaged in

two multi-faith environmental initiatives: the Canadian Council of Churches initiative to unify an inter-faith "Call to Action" to the Federal Government and members of the United Nations for a faith-based solution to the global climate crisis. (See www.councilofchurches.ca/en/news-view.cfm?newsID=159). Additionally, Faith for the Common Good has a green initiative named Greening Sacred Spaces, (www.greeningsacredspaces.net) to conduct environmental audits on faith-based institutions.

Our world needs faith groups to work together to influence politically-based environmental and industrial policy. Through introspection, faith-based communities can communicate the moral implications of government policy. The world desperately needs to hear our united voices as we urge our governments towards policy which is both humane and respectful of the natural world.

*Rev. Innen Parchelo, doshu,
Red Maple Sangha
:: om namu amida butsu::*

This and all other contributors' responses are available on the Citizen's online blog:

<http://www.ottawacitizen.com/life/ask-the-religion-experts/index.html#>

All my past 52 columns are available online at:

<http://www.realperson.com/ARE.htm>

We invite you to consider this response and share your own on our Red Maple Leaflet blog at <http://www.redmaplesangha.blogspot.com>