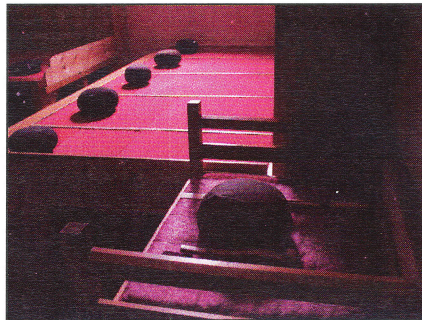


For further information,
please contact
the Novice Master
Shasta Abbey
3724 Summit Drive
Mount Shasta, CA 96067 USA
Phone 530-926-4208
Fax 530-926-0428
email: monks@shastaabbey.org
website: www.shastaabbey.org

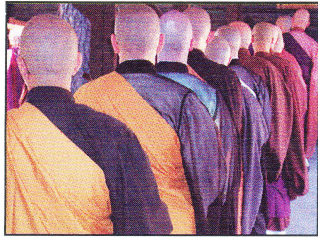
October, 2013

**First
Thoughts
About
Becoming**



**a Monk
at
Shasta Abbey**

If you are beginning to think seriously about becoming a monk at Shasta Abbey, here is some information for you to consider.



First of all, we use the term “monk” for both male and female monastics, and this term implies leaving the household life, living in the monastery, celibacy, and ordination into the Buddhist priesthood. The vocation to be a monk is a lifetime commitment.

In order to begin the process of entering the monastic life, you must first be familiar with our practice, and you should have received the Precepts (usually at the Ten Precepts Retreat), and thereby become a lay Buddhist. You will need to spend time in residence at the Abbey, and at some point you should talk to the Novice Master about what you have in mind, what it means to be a monk and the master-disciple relationship, and what you need to do if this is what you wish.

Age and health are considerations because the training is very rigorous; however, neither age nor state of health is an impediment.

Entry as a postulant means that you will wear the daily monastic robe and clip short, but not shave, your hair. You will live and train with the monks but you will not yet enter the meditation hall. This is so that you may experience the monastic life without yet making the commitment of ordination. After a year or so, if you wish to be ordained as a monk, and if you have demonstrated that this is the right vocation for you, you will be ordained by your Master, given the full set of robes and bowls, and you will enter the meditation hall as a novice monk.



All of this may seem a bit daunting; however, the purpose of this gradual process is so that you may have as clear an idea as possible of what monastic life is like before committing yourself to it, and, more broadly, to help anyone wishing to train in Buddhism to clarify the path of that training and to do what is best for them and for other beings.

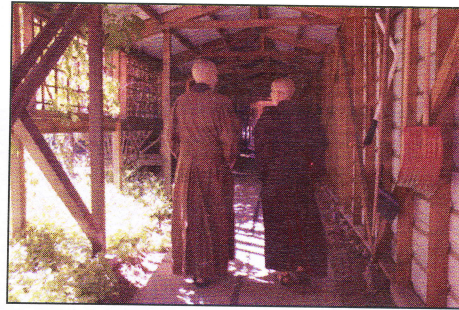
(Please note: We discourage people who are currently married or in committed long-term relationships from becoming monks. A person would have to be single and unattached for at least two years prior to being considered as a possible applicant for the postulancy. The person has to know, and demonstrate, their ability to live independently. The risk here is that a person could divorce their spouse, or separate from their partner, and then find that they are not suited for the monastic life. Being separated or divorced is not a guarantee that a person will be accepted as a postulant.)

If monastic training at Shasta Abbey seems to be the right path for you, you should plan to spend a year in residence at the Abbey as a lay person. (The time may vary from person to person with each of these steps.) You will be asked to memorize the daily scriptures, follow the schedule and participate in all activities. You will be advised not to “burn your bridges” (e.g. sell your house or give a lot of things away) at this stage. You are just doing the training and seeing how things go; no promises are made on either side.



Towards the end of this period, if you still wish to be a monk, and if this is felt by the Abbess and senior monks to be appropriate for you, you will be asked to fill in a postulancy application. This involves a number of questions

about your background and family situation, your religious upbringing, your marital status and any children you may have, employment, health, finances, any psychological difficulties, and various other things. The purpose of all this is to let the Abbess and senior monks know as much about you as possible in order to help you with your training and to be as sure as they can be that you are suited to monastic life. The information given is confidential, and is reviewed by the Abbess and a number of senior monks.



If your application is accepted, you will be asked to tie up your worldly business: you must be unmarried and without dependent children; you must be free of any debt or financial obligation; you will need to dispose responsibly of your possessions such as real estate, car, household items etc., just keeping what you will need. You do not need to give away your money; we can give you guidelines on how best to take care of it. You will be asked to undergo a medical examination and HIV test before entry. You will be given a copy of the Rules of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives and of the Rules of Shasta Abbey to read, and you will be encouraged to ask about anything which is not clear; you will then be asked to sign an agreement to keep these rules before entering the postulancy.