

Learning from Imperfections

November 19, 2012

When you're quiet, it's a gift to yourself and a gift to other people too—especially here at the monastery. We want to respect one another's peace and quiet, because there's so little of that in the world.

The basic rule in the monastery is if something is necessary to talk about, you talk about it. Otherwise, you just leave it be.

Because you don't know: When you're speaking to somebody, you may be interfering with some point that they're trying to understand in their meditation. Or they're trying to observe something as they're working, as they're going through the day. So you don't want to interfere with that.

This is one of the ways in which admirable friendship is actually a help. We give some space to one another. But we're also there when other people need us.

And especially in our modern society this is such a gift, because everybody else is trying to get in your face and get their ideas in your head as much as possible. They don't give you any time to breathe, to think for yourself.

A speech gets put on the TV and while the speech is being given, the commentators are already talking about it. There's no time to contemplate.

So allow one another time to contemplate here. This is one of our gifts to the world. Sometimes people accuse the monastery of being just there for itself. It's not. Our doors are open. We provide a place of quiet and a place of rest, where everybody can have time and space to contemplate things.

Try to respect that for one another and you'll find that this quality of admirable friendship really is a help, really does help to speed your practice along.

If you're looking at other people and see things you don't like, remind yourself that that's their karma. Then turn around and look at yourself: Do you have those qualities within yourself? Learn how to reflect on your own actions.

Sometimes it's very easy to see someone else's faults and very hard to see the same faults in yourself.

This is one of the reasons we need to have time to stop and contemplate, because that's an area where we tend not to look: at our own actions. But this is what the teaching's all about: You've got to learn how to watch yourself in action, to step back from your ordinary opinions and ask yourself, "What if those opinions are wrong?"

You see bad qualities in other people. Then you know if you have them in yourself, then you've got something you've got to work on. If it doesn't look good

in other people it's not going to look good in you, either.

So that's another way in which having friends around can be really helpful. Not that they're perfect. And I don't know any place in the world where there's a perfect meditation community. It's up to you to learn from the imperfections both around you and within yourself.