

# Shoyo Sensei's Dharma Message

## Don't Shoot "The Second Arrow" To Harm You

On August 28<sup>th</sup> I received a fax addressed to "Shoyo Sensei." It was from a stranger, let me call her "A." A wrote an urgent request: "Please go to Stanford Hospital as soon as possible and visit my dying aunt." The fax said: "Her condition has worsened overnight and she is now having difficulty breathing and is in severe pain. She is conscious but on morphine. Could you go visit her and give her a blessing and prayer? She would really appreciate it. We are Jodo Shinshu, she is originally from XXX but has been living in XXX with my cousin, XXX. She loves prayers and chanting. Thank you for your assistance in this. Sincerely . . ." I immediately called the number of the fax to know more. A said that her aunt (Mrs. B) has been in a very critical condition and the doctor said it could be one day or two. I was already telling myself that I should go right away. But, come to think of it, the Palo Alto Temple was much closer to the hospital and indeed the minister there should have been asked first, which is a basic ministerial etiquette. "Did you contact the minister at Palo Alto Temple?" "Yes, the reverend visited her two days ago. But, I thought the more 'prayers' should work more." Understanding the urgent condition, I said, "I'll be there within one hour. Is there anyone with her?" "Yes, her daughter is with her." She gave me Mrs. B's daughter's cell phone number so that I could call her if I had to.

Stanford Hospital is huge and has a complicated structure with many buildings with different departments, branches and offices. I quickly searched the driving directions with the MapQuest, printed out the directions, and left the temple, sincerely wishing for Mrs. B's peace of mind in her critical and difficult condition. I wanted to be there as soon as possible. My mind was filled with strong wishes for her recovery.

I drove fast, crossed the Dumbarton Bridge, turned left on Willow street, and finally arrived at Stanford Hospital. I parked my car in the parking lot. I had to ask one of the hospital staffs about the room that I was looking for. He advised me to use the steps rather than waiting for a slow elevator. I quickly walked up to the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor and looked for the room. In the room was a young guy. I asked if he knew Mrs. B. He said "No," so I went to the nurse station and asked for her. No one knew. At a loss, I called A. She did not answer. I left my message: "I am at the hospital, but I cannot locate her. No one knows where Mrs. B. was. I need your help. Please call me back soon." I also called the daughter. No answer. I left a message. A short time later, the daughter called me. I introduced myself briefly and asked her, "How is your mother?" Then, she answered, "She passed away yesterday morning." "What?" I said in my mind. I calmed down myself and extended my feeling: "I am so sorry to hear that. I would like to extend my sincerest condolences to you" She said, "Thank

you so much for visiting the hospital all the way from Union City. I heard that my cousin has been contacting ministers nearby. I am sorry if she caused you any troubles.” “Don’t worry about me. Please take care.”

The first painful arrow I received was this sad news: someone lost her mother. How sad it must have been for the daughter. I was so sorry to realize that I could not do anything. I wished to be of any help if it is ever possible. With deep sorrow, I hung up. With my sincere mind and heart, I rushed to see her. However, the person’s death is totally beyond our control and it is the reality we have to face.

A few minutes later, A called me. “I am sorry. My sister just told me that my aunt had already passed away yesterday.” I was upset. I was even mad at her. This was the very moment of creating the second arrow. I told her, calmly, “I came here from my extremely busy schedule. I have a funeral services and two memorial services tomorrow, and another funeral service the day after tomorrow, which I did not tell you when I talked with you earlier. Because, I knew I should do the most urgent thing that I was facing then. Whenever asked, I, as a minister, have to visit a dying person. It is more important than anything else. Please be careful not to give wrong information from next time.”

I thought of how many hours I had lost to go to the hospital to hear that someone passed away the day before. I even don’t know who she was. All these thoughts became “The Second Arrow”! “The Second Arrow” was big, sharp and even poisoned with my disappointment, my arrogance, and my self-centeredness. Within a few minutes, the Second Arrow stuck into my heart, transforming a soft and genuine heart into a rough and tough one.

On my way back to the temple, the Second Arrow kept shooting me again and again. Soon later, I realized, “I should definitely receive a plus for my visitation in my busy schedule. How wasteful it is to stain my heart with the Second Arrow that I myself created! Why should I keep hurting myself with this Second Arrow? How foolish it is. Na Man Da Bu.”

I appreciate A who gave me an opportunity to become aware of my self-centeredness. She is my Kalyana Mitta (Spiritual Teacher). Mrs. B. was a blessed lady to have such a caring niece. Now, I see her smile with Amida Buddha in the Land of Bliss.

Namu Amida Butsu

Shaku Shoyo