



gay Buddhist Fellowship

JUNE / JULY 2012 NEWSLETTER

the gay Buddhist fellowship supports Buddhist practice in the gay men's community.

it is a forum that brings together the diverse Buddhist traditions to address

the spiritual concerns of gay men in the San Francisco Bay Area, the United States, and the world.

GBF's mission includes cultivating a social environment that is inclusive and caring.

What Is a Buddhist?

BY KEVIN GRIFFIN

Kevin Griffin is the author of *One Breath at a Time: Buddhism and the Twelve Steps*, and *A Burning Desire: Dharma, God and the Path of Recovery*. A long-time Buddhist practitioner and Twelve-Step participant, he is a leader in the mindful-recovery movement and one of the founders of the Buddhist Recovery Network. He gave this talk at GBF on February 5, 2012.

I was here sometime last year. Actually, the talk, I guess through the newsletter, got up to Sebastopol, and the people in one of the bookstores up there, Many Rivers, invited me there and put me on their radio show. So you guys have been great for promoting me. I need all the marketing I can get.

I'm actually not going to talk about a recovery topic today since this isn't a group that's necessarily oriented towards that, although I'm sure some of you have been in that world a bit. Nevertheless, many of the things I talk about, even when I'm trying to talk about straight Buddhism, if you'll pardon the expression, kind of come back to addiction anyway because the core teaching of Buddhism is about clinging. And that's what addiction is about.

Nonetheless, the topic, and I'll say the title for my talk today, is, "What Is a Buddhist?" There are so many clichés now in our culture about Buddhism that it becomes somewhat confusing. People will say things like, "Well, that's not very Zen of you." There are books about "The Zen of Anything." Right? You can just put "Zen" in the title and that's fine. You know, you're cool in some way.

And then I was thinking during the meditation, remembering the last segment on every episode of Jon Stewart's *Daily Show*, where he says, "And now for our moment of Zen." And what do they show then? Have you ever tried to connect that with Buddhism? It's always something really bizarre and right-wing. I guess it's supposed to kind of make your head spin. So you kind of have a satori moment or something. Is that like a koan? It doesn't make any sense, so you just kind of break into some emptiness. I don't know.

The most recent case of this inspired me to think of this talk. There was an article in *The New York Times* about Rosanne Cash, Johnny Cash's daughter, who is also a singer/songwriter. And she lives in Chelsea in Manhattan and, at some point, eight or ten years ago, I think, she got invited to perform at a Tibetan museum or something in the neighborhood. She's regularly gone back there to perform. And in this article she said, "Well, I'm not a Buddhist because I kill ants and I eat meat." And I thought, "Wow, I guess I'm not a Buddhist, either." But then I recalled that the Dalai Lama eats meat. I mean, who's more Buddhist than the Dalai Lama?

On the other hand, you're probably aware of what the Dalai Lama says about homosexuality. There's a falseness about it. "Well, the sutras say this: that it's immoral or something." And he is supposed to be the epitome of Buddhism, and isn't Buddhism founded in compas-

sion and wisdom? Not, “Oh, that’s what the sutras said, so that’s what I’m going to do!” In fact, the Buddha says specifically, “Don’t believe something just because it’s written down.” So I guess that means the Dalai Lama’s not a Buddhist either.

On a lighter note—because I’m really getting into trouble now—I travel a bit to teach, and whenever I go to a town, people will say, “Well, we thought we’d take you out to dinner. There’s a really nice Thai restaurant in town.” They always assume that I’m going to eat Thai food. A Buddhist. And

are totally focused on something, it means that the quality of concentration is more dominant, which is also part of the eight-fold path. So I think that what happens, to an extent, is that people get an idea that the teachings are just one aspect of the teachings. People will say, “Oh, well, I heard that Buddhism is all about suffering. I don’t really want to be a Buddhist, because it’s all about suffering!” Well, that’s the First Noble Truth! There are three more. Let’s try to find out what it all means together.

Suffering is a natural part of life. Gain and loss. Love, attachment, grief. This is what life is made up of. Should we deny that? Try to turn that off? I don’t think so. I don’t even really think that’s what the monastic life is meant to be. I think that it’s about seeing that this is how things work.

really, the truth is, I don’t really love Thai food. I’m just as happy to have a burger or some spaghetti.

But these are the kind of clichés and the ways that we somehow characterize what it means to be a Buddhist. My wife, who knows me better than most people, says that I should write a book called “The Bad Buddhist.”

Some more reflections on this: I’m a musician, and I remember, at the end of a long retreat I was on many years ago—this was 1981—people were still trying to figure out, as we still are, I suppose, what Buddhism was in the West. At the end of the retreat—this had been a long silent retreat—we went around the room and people said what they did, what their profession was. And most of them were in helping professions: psychologists and nurses and things. And they came to me, and I said, “Well, I’m a musician.” And people looked at me with expressions that said, “Really? What are you doing here?” Which hurt my feelings, I will say. But, once again, they were pointing to this very narrow thing: “Oh, well, musicians—we know that they are just kind of mindless party animals,” or something. Well, I had my moments, let’s say.

On that same retreat, I was talking to Joseph Goldstein, one of the most respected Western teachers, and I was talking about this conflict: “Gee, you know, I don’t know if I want to go back to being a musician.” And he said, “Well, when you’re playing music, there’s nothing more mindful and present than being awake in the moment and listening to music. I mean, as soon as your attention wanders, you miss it. So it seems like a great practice.” That was really, really helpful for me, and it was the beginning of me starting to broaden my understanding of what it was that I was doing.

I remember some years ago, after I had started to teach, a woman came to a class in Berkeley I was teaching. She was very troubled. She was a poet, and she was very troubled, saying that, “Well, you can’t be mindful and be writing poetry or be creative.” And she was frustrated and angry, getting the idea that meditation was “not thinking,” basically. “Well, if I’m thinking or I’m being creative, then obviously I’m not being mindful.” And I thought, “Wow, that’s not how I get it at all!” When I’m writing a song or working on a book, I’m fully engaged in that.

There’s this idea that mindfulness is about being detached, like you’re observing all the time. We observe the breath, and there is this quality of watching that happens in practice. But when we

So we create this idea of what a Buddhist is, and then, very often, we create suffering around that idea because we can’t live up to it. Who can live up to being a Buddhist? It’s too much! One of the teachings is “The Ten Perfections.” They drive me crazy! When I was on one retreat I decided to write a book, and it’s going to be called “The Ten Imperfections.” Let’s talk about them: impatience, irritability, sleepiness, cheating on your taxes.

So what often happens, then, and this is what happened to me in my early practice, as I was still drinking and using, is that we wind up having this split life. We go to the Buddhist Center, and we’re spiritual and we’re quiet and mellow and loving and talking about the dharma. And then we go home and we’re ourselves. And then we’re in our relationship, or we’re partying, or we’re at work. And all that goes out the window. Then there’s this shame or just denial; there was for me. There are five precepts. I was like, “Four is enough! What’s this ‘not drinking and using’ thing? Really, let’s not go too far!”

So, again, the idea is, “Am I a Buddhist?” What is a Buddhist? People will say to me, “Well, you’re a Buddhist, so blah, blah, blah.” And I’ll say, “Hold on. I don’t know what you mean by that, but to me, being a Buddhist is really complicated.” I can’t really define it. I don’t say that I’m a Buddhist. Sometimes I do when it’s convenient. You know, to me, again, it’s just kind of like, “Oh, well, I’m a Buddhist if it’s useful.” Is that dishonest? I don’t know. Which would, I guess, make me not a Buddhist. But anyway my head is spinning. I’m having a moment of Zen, I guess.

One of my teachers, and now colleagues, Leigh Brasington, just spent nine months in retreat. Nine days is a lot for me. I did three months a long time ago. And since then, I’ve done a month a couple of times. So we were exchanging emails, and he gave kind of a brief outline of the nine months. And on this retreat at one point he was working with a Burmese concentration master. He worked for four months with this guy: you know, “Follow your breath!” get to these deep, deep, deep, deep states. He was in Massachusetts where there’s a kind of compound, which is the Insight Meditation Society, and then he was at the Forest Refuge, where he spent most of his time. It was kind of a self retreat. And then there’s the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies, which is more of an academic and sort of study-center. And after he had done the four months with this Burmese master, he went over to the study-center for a ten-day

insight dialog retreat, in which you're talking in very intentional ways on very intentional topics and working through things. And he said, in his email, "I got more insights in those ten days than I did in the rest of the nine months of silent practice." Very interesting coming from someone who's a very serious meditator. He likes to meditate. Very deeply. And I respect him tremendously. And I think this was a surprise for him, and it certainly was a surprise for me to hear that from him. But that's been my experience, as well. It was when I started to work in more open forms that my deeper meditation experiences started to become more meaningful for me. I was able to connect them more.

So, again, the model of a Buddhist: "Well, you're supposed to just meditate and be silent; talking isn't really meditation, or it's not spiritual."

Another friend spent a year as a nun in Burma, where she had to wear pink robes. That was a year-long retreat. She's a very, very serious practitioner. She did many three-month retreats. A couple of years ago, she became a mother. She wrote a piece for *The Inquiring Mind*, which is a Vipassana journal, saying, "The experience I've had being a mother is much more enlightening. I've practiced loving-kindness for years and never had a clue! Now, the experience I'm having now is much more powerful. The moment-to-moment intention—and, you know, attention—that I have to have, the awareness here that I have this guru who makes me wake up constantly—both literally and figuratively." It's just so interesting to see, again, models. You know, her model was to be a serious, serious meditator. And, of course, it's not to diminish that experience, because there's no doubt that that foundation has informed her motherhood. And there's no doubt that what she's experiencing as a mother would not have been the same had she not done this practice.

But, again, just opening up our idea of what is a Buddhist. Traditionally, to become a Buddhist, you take refuge: taking refuge in Buddha, dharma, sangha. So, if you want to be a Buddhist, just take refuge and say you're a Buddhist. I take refuge

means trying to live up to the teachings. And this comes back to the idea of intention. And, for me, intention is the lifesaver because I'm always going to be a bad Buddhist. You know, I'm always going to fail. I'm going to fail in my meditation. I mean, how many times did you "fail" this morning during those thirty minutes? Fail to be mindful. Of course. I hope you did!

You know, I'm going to fail in my speech. Yeah, I'm going to kill ants, sometimes. I actually try to kill ants compassionately. I don't mean that in any woo-woo kind of way. What I mean is this: if there are ants in the kitchen, they don't belong there. They should know that. But if they are there and I get angry and I kill them with hatred, it feels unpleasant. And if I kill them rather with the feeling that I'm sorry that I have to do this, but this is what I have to do, and even, maybe with the thought, "May you be re-born in a higher realm," if there is such a thing as reincarnation, but just this kind of "Okay" rather than "Grrr!"—that, in itself, to me, is a little window into what I consider to be the difference between not being a Buddhist and being a Buddhist. In that moment, I'm trying to be a Buddhist. Not the kind of Buddhist that's a model because the model, I guess, is you don't kill the ants. But I'm not really sure what happens then. I guess ants are impermanent, and so they come and they go, and they're kind of seasonal. But, in any case, this is what I'm able to do. And it's what's important to me. Because it's what's in my heart more than, "Oh, well, I don't kill ants, you know, because I'm a Buddhist!" Some model of being a goody-goody that really doesn't mean anything. And that's the way I was in my early practice. And meanwhile, as I say, I was breaking precepts left and right. "But I didn't kill bugs!" It's really phony. And this is what can happen when we're "being a Buddhist," that we become phonies. To me, I'd rather be a bad Buddhist than a phony Buddhist.

So, then, for me, this comes back, then, to my own experience. It's not about showing to the world, you know, wearing a badge of being a Buddhist. I'm inspired by the dharma. I'm inspired by the Buddha's teachings. I'm inspired by my teach-

I'm inspired by the dharma. I'm inspired by the Buddha's teachings. I'm inspired by my teachers and by the experiences that I've had in practice. And I want to live that, and I want to find out what it means to live that. So the key to it isn't to act out some model, so far as I'm concerned, but to be aware of when I'm creating suffering, for myself and for others, and to try not to do that. Not to not do that, but to try not to do that!

every morning. But I'm still not sure I want to be a Buddhist.

One of my favorite teachings on this is from Soen Sa Nim, who was a great Korean Zen master—the late Soen Sa Nim. He had a story in which one of his young students said, "You know, I go home and my family is very concerned and in opposition. They're fundamentalist Christians. They really think it's terrible that I'm a Buddhist now, and when I go home, there's all this conflict around that." And Soen Sa Nim said, "When you go home, don't be a Buddhist. Be a Buddha." Ah. Now we're getting somewhere! So what does that mean? Well, obviously, it

ers and by the experiences that I've had in practice. And I want to live that, and I want to find out what it means to live that. So the key to it isn't to act out some model, so far as I'm concerned, but to be aware of when I'm creating suffering, for myself and for others, and to try not to do that. Not to not do that, but to try not to do that!

So this is what the practice of mindfulness helps us to see. "Am I creating suffering in this moment?" In your meditation, when you're sitting there and you're breathing, you can notice, "Wow," when you realize you're spacing out—when you're

thinking about how tragic it is that the 49'ers aren't playing football today. Which some of us feel bad about. You can notice, "Wow, how do I feel right now? Oh, I feel kind of sad. Why do I feel sad? Well, because I'm obsessing about this thing that's really irrelevant." And so you could say, "I'm clinging," "Oh. And if I just notice that." Noticing a lot of the silly things we think is enough because a lot of times, it's like, "Psssh! Oh, well, easy to let go."

I mean, sometimes it's hard to let go. Sometimes there are things that have much deeper hooks. But a lot of times we can notice something and just come back to the breath, and in that moment, we're experiencing the essential teachings of the Buddha that clinging causes suffering, letting go is freedom. That's the practice. And so we practice it in this formal way, and then we try to take that way of being in the world into our daily lives as well. We start to let that spread further and further into our lives.

As I was preparing for this talk yesterday, I thought of one of the teachings that I guess surprised me, disappointed me, and forced me to reflect again when I first encountered it. In it, the Buddha says that suffering is caused by those who are dear. "Born of those who are dear" is the name of the sutta. And he just talks about how suffering comes from the people who we are, let's say, attached to—our family members, or our partners, or our dear friends. Suffering comes from them, from our relationships. Because, if something bad happens to them, we grieve. If they are angry with us, we grieve. If they behave in ways we don't want them to—like when your child behaves in a way you don't want them to—you suffer. That's kind of a tough one.

And in this sutta, the queen—the Buddha actually interacted with a lot of royalty; he was kind of minor royalty—but the queen of this particular area tells the king about this. And she

Well, I read the sutta carefully, to the end, and the Buddha never says you shouldn't hold people dear. He just says, "Suffering comes from this." And the way I understand that, and the way I try to live that, is not that I'm trying to avoid suffering. I don't really think that's what Buddhism is about. "You're not supposed to suffer." I think, for me what it's about, is understanding suffering. Suffering is a natural part of life. Gain and loss. Love, attachment, grief. This is what life is made up of. Should we deny that? Try to turn that off? I don't think so. I don't even really think that's what the monastic life is meant to be. I think that it's about seeing that this is how things work.

You know, it's interesting that the Second Noble Truth, as the Buddha describes it, is that the cause of suffering is our craving and our clinging. But when that teaching is actually expanded into more detail, we find that craving and clinging are actually in the middle of something called "dependent origination," and what originates is suffering. And it depends on these factors, these eleven other factors, the first of which is ignorance. In Buddhism, ignorance has this very specific meaning. It means that you don't understand the Four Noble Truths, and you don't understand the law of karma—the Four Noble Truths are an expression of the law of karma—that you don't understand cause and effect, that you don't understand how suffering arises and how suffering ends. So what originates this whole chain that ends up in suffering is not understanding. It doesn't say that what originates suffering is that there are these natural qualities of life, these natural challenges. It just says that if you don't understand it, you're going to keep creating suffering. This is where I really try to aim my practice, try to hold my practice, because I can't live up to a model of spirituality or Buddhism that says, "Don't care about people. Don't get enthusiastic or excited about things. Don't enjoy sensual

So what originates this whole chain that ends up in suffering is not understanding. The sutta doesn't say that what originates suffering is that there are these natural qualities of life, these natural challenges. It just says that if you don't understand it, you're going to keep creating suffering. This is where I really try to aim my practice, try to hold my practice, because I can't live up to a model of spirituality or Buddhism that says, "Don't care about people. Don't get enthusiastic or excited about things. Don't enjoy sensual pleasures." I can't do that! I can't be that perfect Buddhist. To me, that would be suffering!

believes it, because she's a follower and devotee of the Buddha, and the king's very doubtful until he goes to the Buddha, and the Buddha explains it to him. So, I wanted to read this sutta yesterday to see if there was a conclusion, because it's very easy to assume that the conclusion is, "Well, if suffering is born of those that are dear, then you should not hold anyone dear!" Right? It's kind of like, "Well, if I'm supposed to pay attention to my breath, if I'm thinking then I'm doing it wrong." It's inferring something from the teaching.

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Everybody has their own level of ability to let go. And it's true that the monastics that I know, who are really devoted and spend their lives in the robes, seem to be more able to let go of more things than I am. Nevertheless, someone like Ajahn Amaro, one of my teachers, one the monks who was the co-abbot of Abhayagiri Monastery—his mother died a few years ago, and he was there. He went back to England to be with

her. And he was clearly grieved. This was difficult. And I was grateful for that. You know, if he had just stayed here and kind of gone, “Well, she’s just another being, arising and passing away,” you know, I would have really kind of been like, “Uhhhh...” But that’s not at all how he responded. He responded with real compassion.

The two wings, they say, of Buddhism are wisdom and compassion. And to me, if I’m going to be a Buddhist, this is what I want to be able to embody. I want to be able to care about people, and I want to be able to understand how suffering arises. I don’t expect that when I die it’s going to be a pleasant experience, but my hope is that I won’t add to the problem by being confused about why it’s happening. It’s happening because I was born! The Buddha says the cause of death, the fundamental cause of death, is being born. It’s the inevitable result of being born. That’s wisdom to me.

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If you are struggling: “Oh God! Why am I dying? What’s going on?” You know, this confusion that we see in some people who really feel like, “What’s life about?” You know, trying to kind of hang on until the bitter end. They’re just building more suffering into what is already a difficult situation. Certainly the greatest loss we lose is ourselves. And that to me, again, is about wisdom and compassion, compassion for myself.

So, finally, I’ll just say that I don’t think it helps you to be a Buddhist, or to believe in Buddhism. That’s just the shell. For me, you have to try to live the dharma. Try. You don’t have to do it. Failure is built in. But if we can have our hearts pointed in that direction, and try to understand for ourselves what it means, whether your question is, “What is a Buddhist?” or more vitally, “How do I end suffering? How do I bring freedom?” Then it’s about how we live, not about some model.

So, I think I’ll just leave it at that and see if there’s any thoughts, reflections, questions, corrections.

Q: I want to thank you for the question you have posed. I think it’s important to look at the cultural context. Here in the West we pick up labels for religion the same way we do political party labels, or the shoes I wear, based on separation. And my understanding of Asian culture is that, in Hinduism, for example, they make the Buddha part of the Indian pantheon. There it is: incarnation of Vishnu. In China, you can be Tao-

ist, Confucian, or Buddhist, depending on the time of day, or the occasion that is called for. It’s not this, “I have to be separate.” Asian culture seems to be much more “Live and let live.” And identity isn’t constructed the same way that it is here. And we suffer for that. We have shoes with a particular label, for example. Does that make sense?

A: Yes, and in fact, it was Westerners who actually, I think, defined Buddhism as Buddhism. I don’t know enough about Asian culture—I haven’t been to Asia—to make a blanket statement. But I think what you’re pointing to certainly is true: that the adoption of identities is another cause for suffering, basically. Which doesn’t mean that we can’t say we’re Buddhist. But I think that we say that with an understanding. We say it with wisdom. Inside we know what that means. People will say to me, around the twelve step world, when they get a taste of Buddhism, “Well, I don’t feel comfortable saying I’m an alcoholic, because that’s like creating an identity, and in Buddhism we’re not supposed to have identities.” No, it’s not about not having an identity. It’s about seeing through, seeing the illusory nature of that. Of course we all have identities that we put on and take off. It’s to wear them lightly, not be, you know, “This is who I am!” That’s where the suffering comes from, not from saying, “I’m a poet,” or “I’m a cook,” or “I’m a Buddhist,” or “I’m an alcoholic.” That’s not where the suffering comes.

Q: I am curious as to what you think it meant to the person whose family were evangelical Christians and who said he was a Buddhist, and yet the answer from his teacher was, “Be a Buddha.” For me, I took it as, when you’re there, be as compassionate as possible and participate in whatever family events or rituals you are able to. I would be okay with holding hands and saying grace over meals, going to church. What is it that you hear in it?

A: I think very much what you’re saying. I think to be compassionate and wise. Two wings. To not wear your label or try to shove the teachings down people’s throats. You know, when you’re new to something, you’re excited about it, and you want to tell your family about it, or correct them about it. Yeah, a big part of it is, in that circumstance, not to talk about Buddhism but to try to act out the principles of Buddhism. Which, of course, are going to be in complete harmony with Christianity. There’s not going to be a conflict there. ■

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GBF members can donate their quality cast-offs to the Community Thrift Store (CTS) and GBF will receive a quarterly check based on the volume of items sold. This is a great way to support our Sangha, and the community. So far this year we have received over \$800 through members' generosity. Bring your extra clothing and other items to CTS at 623 Valencia St between 10am and 5pm, any day of the week. The donation door is around the corner on Sycamore Alley (parallel to and between 17th and 18th) between Valencia and Mission. Tell the worker you are donating to GBF. Our ID number is 40. Information: (415) 861-4910.

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There is now a GBF discussion group for the general membership (and others) on Yahoo. Join the discussion at:

www.groups.yahoo.com/group/gaybuddhistfellowship

Calendar

Sunday Sittings

10:30 am to 12 noon

Every Sunday at 10:30am we meditate together for 30 minutes, followed by a talk or discussion till 12 noon. Everyone is then welcome to stay and socialize over refreshments till approximately 12:30, after which those who are interested usually go somewhere local for lunch. Our sittings are held at the San Francisco Buddhist Center, 37 Bartlett Street. (Look for the red door near 21st St between Mission and Valencia Streets)
MUNI: 14 Mission or 49 Van Ness-Mission, alight at 21st St, walk 1/2 block **BART:** 24th and Mission, walk 3 1/2 blocks **PARKING:** on street (meters free on Sundays) or in adjacent New Mission Bartlett Garage. The Center is handicapped accessible.

Sunday Speakers

June 3 **Dharma Duo: Bomi Billimoria and John Galloway**

June 10 **Harley Shapiro**
Harley Shapiro has lived and worked in the San Francisco Bay area since the mid 1960's, when attended university here and was fortunate to participate in the political and social changes of those times, including studying and practicing the teachings of Buddhism. Harley is an educator and photo-journalist who taught cultural anthropology at local schools and universities, was involved in the Harvey Milk era, and later with many community-based organizations dealing with the AIDS pandemic. Harley will be sharing some of his adventures from his recent six month journey to India, Malaysia, and Borneo, including visits to festivals, celebrations, gay community culture, and sacred and spiritual places.

June 17 **Joe Rodriguez**
A life-long spiritual student, Joe Rodriguez has been influenced by the Roman Catholic, Course in Miracles, and Buddhist spiritual traditions. He practices in bringing an open heart, a clear mind, and a felt sense to everyday life. He studies under Fu Schroeder, a senior Zen priest at Green Gulch Farm. Joe's topic will be "Equanimity in an election year: some hard-earned lessons from a committed political activist and a Zen practitioner".

June 24 **Open Discussion**

July 1 **Eric Poche**
Eric Poche is the director of volunteer services and training at Zen Hospice Project and the Laguna Honda Hospital Hospice Volunteer Program. Eric has many years of compassionate experience working with those in the process of dying, which he calls "the great teaching of my life." A native of the Bay Area, he has been a student of the dharma for many years, sitting Zen and Vipassana.

July 8 **Open Discussion**

July 15 **Doug Von Koss**
Doug is the Artistic Director of THE NOAH PROJECT, a men's ritual performance group in the San Francisco Bay Area. Through a magical blend of chant, movement, poetry and ritual, Doug weaves a spell that encompasses the ecstatic, the sacred and the wise fool. He draws from many of the world's religious traditions—Buddhist, Hindu, Islamic, Zoroastrian, Christian, Jewish and Sufi—to create a glorious mosaic that is, above all else, a celebration of the human spirit.

July 22 **David Lewis**
David Lewis has been a member of the Gay Buddhist Fellowship for five years. He has a degree in Comparative Religious Studies and has been a dharma practitioner for 40 years, first in the Vajrayana tradition and more recently in the Vipassana tradition. He is a graduate of the Spirit Rock Meditation Center's Dedicated Practitioners Program and shares the dharma at several sanghas in the Bay Area.

July 29 **John Coleman**
John Coleman is a Jesuit priest, an associate pastor at Saint Ignatius Church in San Francisco. He holds a doctorate in sociology from the University of California, Berkeley, where he specialized in the sociology of religion. As a Jesuit he is naturally interested in spirituality and its practices.

BY the power and truth of this practice, may all beings have happiness and the causes of happiness, may all be free from sorrow and the causes of sorrow, may all never be separated from the sacred happiness which is without sorrow, and may all live in equanimity, without too much attachment or too much aversion, believing in the equality of all that lives.

—GBF DEDICATION OF MERIT