



KORINJI RINZAI ZEN MONASTERY

臨濟宗 • 祖的山光林禪寺

Information for Persons Interested in Rinzaï Zen Ordination

There are two types of ordination in Korinji's Community, LAY and MONASTIC. They are separate, non-sequential paths. Please read the following carefully before inquiring.

It must first be said about both that the only valid motivation for ordination is to be of service to others. Ordination is a vocation to which one commits, not a title one is given. Although ordination is sometimes incorrectly viewed as a rank or position one receives, it actually confers no status above others whatsoever, and is not authorization as a teacher.

We can say that from the standpoint of the fruition of Zen practice, what is truly required for any practitioner to effectively serve others - regardless of ordination status - is a clear recognition of one's true nature (*kensho*), and the ability to express that awakening in some useful way. This does not mean that only awakened people can ordain! But all of the following should be considered without losing sight of that one most crucial point of our training.

1. NYUDO: Lay Ordination

Nyudo (literally, those who "enter the Way") are senior lay practitioners who have taken precepts in a kind of partial ordination. This allows them to remain fully engaged in their family and career lives, but to express a fuller commitment to the Zen path and take an active role mentoring others.

(Note: *Nyudo* ordination is different from *Zaike Tokudo*, or *Jukai*, i.e. taking refuge in the Three Jewels and receiving the Five Lay Precepts. *Jukai* is available to any committed student, so please inquire if interested).

Nyudo are not required to enter residential practice at Korinji, though they certainly will have attended a good number of retreats with us. They do not have the ceremonial and other responsibilities that monastic ordained persons carry, and do not wear the full robes.

They are, however, expected to be able to teach basic practices such as meditation to beginners. In some cases they may also be trained to conduct common ceremonies such as weddings, as a service to the community.

Requirements for Nyudo Ordination

1. Enter into formal training relationship with the Korinji abbot through shoken.
2. Take refuge in the Three Jewels, and take the five lay precepts (the jukai ceremony).
3. Practice consistently in our community for at least seven years.
4. Be active in support of our community's activities.
5. Be able to instruct beginners in basic meditation and other practices.
6. Serve as a worthy example to others of a Zen practitioner, striving to integrate practice within daily life.
7. Complete the Nyudo ordination ceremony: taking (or re-taking) refuge in the Three Jewels, and receiving the Three Pure Precepts and the Ten Grave Precepts.

Please note that Nyudo status is not certification as a Zen teacher or permission to take disciples of one's own: mind seal (*inka shomei*) and subsequent teacher training after inka is required for this, including certification as a qualified lay Dharma Teacher in our community by the Korinji abbot.

Ongoing Nyudo status is contingent upon continued training for one's whole life.

To Apply: Inquire with the Korinji abbot in person.

2. SHUKKE TOKUDO: Monastic Ordination

Shukke Tokudo ("leaving home, accomplishing the Way") is the ceremony of monastic or priestly ordination in the Zen Buddhist tradition.

Background

Originally, monastic ordination signified a lifelong commitment to renunciation including celibacy, minimal possessions, and the leaving of one's family. However, in Japanese Buddhism since the middle ages, the extensive precepts governing the life of monastics have been replaced by a condensed set of precepts. Furthermore, for several centuries in Japan ordained Zen practitioners have often been given the option to be released from lifetime celibacy, including permission to marry if desired. Of course, one may choose not to exercise that option and maintain celibacy. The point is that there is flexibility.

Whatever type of life a monastic ordained person chooses, however, the essential point is that the Zen Buddhist path must be the central priority above other life concerns. *Monastic ordination in Zen means to commit to doing Zen study and shugyo (intensive physical and spiritual training) for one's entire life.*

Naturally, that commitment can be expressed in many ways, or in different ways at different times of life. *But ordained Zen practitioners are expected to make Zen practice their primary life focus, integrating career, family, and other activities with that.*

What should finally be understood is that monastic ordained persons serve as the public "face" of the teachings in a way that lay practitioners usually do not. Their robes and persons are the visible expressions of the sangha. They may expect their behavior to be under greater scrutiny, and in some cases may be subject to

mistaken notions and projections regarding clergy in our culture. Finally, they carry the burden of mastering and transmitting ceremonial forms, and using those when needed to aid others.

In short: monastic ordination is a grave but deeply fulfilling responsibility, to be undertaken only with the utmost sincerity and seriousness.

Requirements for Monastic Ordination

1. Laypersons in our community aged 18 or over may be eligible for monastic ordination. They should make a personal resolution beforehand that, once ordained, they will remain so for a minimum of 10 years.
2. Ideally, interested persons should then apply and be accepted for a period of residency at Korinji, of a length to be determined in consultation with the Korinji abbot. A minimum stay of one year is best. But in some cases it may be possible to break this up into shorter stays over a longer period of time.
3. Persons who cannot reside at Korinji due to personal limitations or life obligations are not automatically excluded from monastic ordination. In such cases, different practice and retreat requirements may be set by the Korinji abbot according to the applicant's background and special abilities.
4. If they have not already done so, trainees will enter into formal teacher/student relationship with the abbot through the *Shoken* ceremony (persons who have previously committed to another teacher must first obtain permission from that person).
5. After successfully completing the set training requirements they have been given, candidates may receive novice (*Shami*) ordination in the Shukke Tokudo ceremony: they will take (or re-take) refuge in the Three Jewels and receive the 10 Shami precepts, which shortly afterward are superseded through receiving of the Three Pure Precepts and Ten Grave Precepts. Note that all ordinations in our community are conducted by the abbot, as the holder of our ordination lineage. *Before actual ordination, novices must acquire the necessary monastic garments (Korinji will assist with ordering these).*
6. Shami subsequently receive training over a period of time in basic skills relevant to the ordained vocation. Aside from Zen practice, additional training may also be prescribed according to each person's abilities and deficits, for example Buddhist or other religious/historical studies, training in fine arts or physical culture in the manner of our lineage, ministerial training, exposure to other teachers, and so on.
7. To be qualified to run a temple or Zen center, ordained persons must subsequently gain additional experience of Zen practice, be sufficiently trained to perform various ceremonial functions, and be trained to instruct others in basic practices such as meditation. When they are judged to be ready, such persons can be certified as fully ordained (rather than novices) by the Korinji abbot, and qualified to serve as temple priests (*Jushoku*) in our community.
8. Please note that Jushoku status is not certification as a Zen teacher or permission to take disciples of one's own: mind seal (*inka shomei*) and subsequent teacher training after inka is required for this, including certification as a qualified *Shike* (teacher) in our community by the Korinji abbot.
9. Ongoing Shami or Jushoku status is contingent upon continued training for one's whole life.
10. Persons who are already ordained in a legitimate Buddhist lineage are welcome to apply for residency at Korinji, and that status will be recognized. But if they wish to be recognized as Rinzai Zen priests, they should apply separately for that training.

To Apply: Inquire via email: info@korinji.org