



KORINJI RINZAI ZEN MONASTERY 祖的山 光林寺

Information for Persons Interested in Rinzai Zen Ordination

There are two types of ordination in Korinji's Zen community:

Lay Ordination: Nyudo

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 family life and the pursuit of a "normal" career, 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 undertake a period of intensive residential practice, though they certainly will have attended a good number of retreats. They do not have the ceremonial and other responsibilities that come with the fully ordained vocation, and do not wear the full robes. They are, however, expected to be able to teach basic practices such as meditation to beginners. They may also be trained to conduct common ceremonies such as weddings, as a service to the community.

Requirements to Apply 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 ten 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.

Note that laypersons are not excluded from receiving *inka shomei*, the "mind seal" of dharma transmission. Specific teaching permissions given to persons with *inka* are confirmed by one's teacher, and approved in our community by the Korinji abbot.

To Apply

Inquire with the Korinji abbot in person.

Monastic Ordination at Korinji Monastery: *Shukke Tokudo*

Shukke tokudo ("leaving home, accomplishing the Way") is the ceremony of monastic ordination in the Zen Buddhist tradition. While interest in ordination is not a requirement to practice at Korinji, it is one important

training path available there. Korinji is not a more casual Zen center, but a formal training place where Zen priests can be certified.

Before inquiring with us, we ask that persons considering the ordained path read the following information carefully.

Background

Originally, Zen ordination signified a lifelong commitment to monastic life including celibacy, minimal possessions, and the leaving of one's family. We should note that 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 an ordained person chooses, however, the essential point is that the Zen Buddhist path must be the practitioner's central priority above other life concerns. To ordain in Zen is to commit to doing Zen study and *shugyo* (intensive training with one's whole being) 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.

Thus, Zen 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. In fact, it signifies only that one is a servant of others. It is a choice to be made only after deep consideration, and with the utmost gravity.

Requirements to Apply for Monastic Ordination at Korinji

From the standpoint of the fruition of Zen practice, what is required for ordained persons to effectively serve others is a clear recognition of one's true nature (*kensho*), and the ability to express the meaning of that awakening to others in some useful way. This does not mean that one cannot ordain before arriving at awakening. However, all of the following should be considered without losing sight of that crucial point.

1. Laypersons in our community aged 18 or over may be eligible to take up the vocation of ordained life. 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. The minimum residency required for ordination is generally one year, but in some cases it may be possible to break this up into shorter stays over a longer period of time.
3. If they have not already done so, trainees will upon arrival at the monastery enter into formal teacher-student relationship with the abbot through the *shoken* ceremony (persons already committed to another teacher must first obtain permission from that person to do so).
4. Persons who cannot reside at Korinji due to physical or other limitations, or pre-existing 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.

5. Candidates judged to be suitable may, after completing the set training requirements they have been given, receive novice (*shami*) ordination. All ordinations in our community are conducted at Korinji by the abbot, who is the holder of our ordination lineage. Before actual ordination, novices must require the necessary monastic garments (Korinji will assist with ordering these).
6. Shami must 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 during this time 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 and during that time be sufficiently trained to perform various ceremonial functions, as well as 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: *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. 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 trained and recognized as Rinzai Zen priests, they should apply to do so.

To Apply

Inquire via email: info@korinji.org. If appropriate, we will send you an application for residency at Korinji (please also read that information on our website) or discuss other options as may be deemed necessary.