

DAIYUZENJI  
POLICY REGARDING ORDAINED OR TEACHER STATUS IN ZEN

In response to many misconceptions that are evident regarding the roles of ordained persons in Zen Buddhism as well as Zen teachers, including those with the title of *Roshi* or “Zen master”, Daiyuzenji has adopted the following policy and definitions:

1. Ordination in the Zen tradition, whether it be fully celibate, monastic ordination (commonly translated as “monk” and “nun”) or modified, non-celibate ordination (sometimes called “priest”), signifies only that the ordained has made a personal life commitment to Buddhist practice. It does not entail or imply the conferral of any spiritual authority, pastoral leadership or counseling role. Ordained persons are not necessarily trained to offer spiritual or psychological counseling to others. They may choose to relate their own individual experiences of Zen practice; however these experiences may not be relevant to other persons, and should not be viewed as authoritative.
2. Persons certified as Zen teachers (whether they be ordained or laypersons) are qualified to teach others the methods of Zen practice, such as meditation. However, they are not necessarily trained as spiritual authorities, pastoral advisers or psychological counselors, and are not to be viewed as such. They are to be viewed simply as experienced peers in the practice of Zen. The term “Zen master” (*Roshi* or *Rokoji*), when used, does not imply a hierarchical position above others in the sense of “master above disciples”, but rather mastery of (i.e. proficiency in) the methods of Zen practice.
3. Buddhism is not a religion as commonly defined in Western cultures. The practice of Buddhism, including Zen, does not require the acceptance of or adherence to particular doctrines regarding a spiritual reality. Buddhism does not enjoin a belief in any deity, or any code of morality conferred by a higher, non-human spiritual power. Teachings given by Zen ordained persons and/or teachers regarding Buddhist philosophy, theory and practice are therefore not pronouncements of doctrine, are not formally endorsed as dogma organizationally or institutionally, and do not represent an exhortation to accept or believe, the refusal of which entails consequences.
4. Persons practicing Zen are responsible for their own spiritual development, beliefs and psychological well-being. They are encouraged to seek out formal spiritual direction or psychological counseling as needed from therapists or other persons trained in those professional disciplines.