

Case 7. Jōshū's "Wash Your Bowls"

The Gateless Gate, Koun Yamada

The Case

A monk asked Jōshū in all earnestness, "I have just entered this monastery. I beg you, Master, please give me instructions." Jōshū asked, "Have you eaten your rice gruel yet?" The monk answered, "Yes, I have." Jōshū said, "Then wash your bowls." The monk attained some realization.

Mumon's Commentary

Jōshū, opening his mouth, showed his gall bladder and revealed his heart and liver. If the monk, hearing it, did not really grasp the fact, he would mistake a bell for a pot.

The Verse

*Just because it is so clear,
It takes us longer to realize it.
If you quickly acknowledge that the candlelight is fire,
You will find that the rice has long been cooked.*