

Refuges and Precepts Ceremony

We take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha for inspiration, for protection, and as a way to reorient our life toward that which is dependable. These three refuges exist on the surface as the historic Buddha, the teachings of the Buddha, and those who have practiced and realized the teachings of the Buddha. For someone committed to the practice of awakening, these three refuges exist as the insight of non-clinging, as insight into the nature of things as they are, and finally, as insight into the possibility of relating to all of life with compassion. Taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha is an expression of our confidence in mindful awareness to reveal inherent wisdom and compassion.

(The ceremony begins with three bells followed by an optional bow.)

Homage to the Buddha

Namo tassa Bhagavato arahato sammā-sambuddhassa. (3 times)

[Homage to the Sublime One, the Worthy One, the Fully Enlightened One.]

The Three Refuges

Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi.

I go to the Buddha for refuge.

Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi.

I go to the Dharma for refuge.

Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi.

I go to the Sangha for refuge.

Dutiyam pi Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi.

A second time I go to the Buddha for refuge.

Dutiyam pi Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi.

A second time I go to the Dharma for refuge.

Dutiyam pi Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi.

A second time I go to the Sangha for refuge.

Tatiyam pi Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi.

A third time I go to the Buddha for refuge.

Tatiyam pi Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi.

A third time I go to the Dharma for refuge.

Tatiyam pi Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi.

A third time I go to the Sangha for refuge.

I take refuge in the Buddha,
trusting inherent peace and freedom of a heart free from clinging.

(Bell and short pause for reflection)

I take refuge in the Dharma,
trusting mindful awareness of the way things are.

(Bell and short pause for reflection)

I take refuge in the Sangha
trusting those with wisdom and compassion who show us the way.

(Bell and short pause for reflection)

The Five Precepts

The Five Mindfulness Trainings represent the Buddhist vision for a global spirituality and ethic. They are a concrete expression of the Buddha's teachings on the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path, the path of right understanding and true love, leading to healing, transformation, and happiness for ourselves and for the world. To practice the Five Mindfulness Trainings is to cultivate the insight of interbeing, or Right View, which can remove all discrimination, intolerance, anger, fear, and despair. If we live according to the Five Mindfulness Trainings, we are already on the path of a bodhisattva. Knowing we are on that path, we are not lost in confusion about our life in the present or in fears about the future.

1. *Pāṇātipātā veramaṇī-sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.*

[I undertake the training to refrain from harming living beings.]

Reverence For Life

Aware of the suffering caused by the destruction of life, I am committed to cultivating the insight of interbeing and compassion and learning ways to protect the lives of people, animals, plants, and minerals. I am determined not to kill, not to let others kill, and not to support any act of killing in the world, in my thinking, or in my way of life. Seeing that harmful actions arise from anger, fear, greed, and intolerance, which in turn come from dualistic and discriminative thinking, I will cultivate openness, non-discrimination, and non-attachment to views in order to transform violence, fanaticism, and dogmatism in myself and in the world.

This is the first of the Five Mindfulness Trainings, I vow to study and practice it.

(Bell and short pause for reflection)

2. *Adinnādānā veramaṇī-sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.*

[I undertake the training to refrain from taking that which is not given.]

True Happiness

Aware of the suffering caused by exploitation, social injustice, stealing, and oppression, I am committed to practicing generosity in my thinking, speaking, and acting. I am determined not to steal and not to possess anything that should belong to others; and I will share my time, energy, and material resources with those who are in need. I will practice looking deeply to see that the happiness and suffering of others are not separate from my own happiness and suffering; that true happiness is not possible without understanding and compassion; and that running after wealth, fame, power and sensual pleasures can bring much suffering and despair. I am aware that happiness depends on my mental attitude and not on external conditions, and that I can live happily in the present moment simply by remembering that I already have more than enough conditions to be happy. I am committed to practicing Right Livelihood so that I can help reduce the suffering of living beings on Earth and stop contributing to climate change.

This is the second of the Five Mindfulness Trainings, I vow to study and practice it.

(Bell and short pause for reflection)

3. *Kāmesu micchācārā veramaṇī-sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.*

[I undertake the training to refrain from causing harm through sexual misconduct.]

True Love

Aware of the suffering caused by sexual misconduct, I am committed to cultivating responsibility and learning ways to protect the safety and integrity of individuals, couples, families, and society. Knowing that sexual desire is not love, and that sexual activity motivated by craving always harms myself as well as others, I am determined not to engage in sexual relations without mutual consent, true love, and a deep, long-term commitment. I resolve to find spiritual support for the integrity of my relationship from family members, friends, and sangha with whom there is support and trust. I will do everything in my power to protect children from sexual abuse and to prevent couples and families from being broken by sexual misconduct. Seeing that body and mind are interrelated, I am committed to learn appropriate ways to take care of my sexual energy and to cultivate the four basic elements of true love – loving kindness, compassion, joy, and inclusiveness – for the greater happiness of myself and others. Recognizing the diversity of human experience, I am committed not to discriminate against any form of gender identity or sexual orientation. Practicing true love, we know that we will continue beautifully into the future.

This is the third of the Five Mindfulness Trainings, I vow to study and practice it.

(Bell and short pause for reflection)

4. *Musā-vādā veramaṇī-sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.*

[I undertake the training to refrain from false and harmful speech.]

Loving Speech and Deep Listening

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful speech and the inability to listen to others, I am committed to cultivating loving speech and compassionate listening in order to relieve suffering and to promote reconciliation and peace in myself and among other people, ethnic and religious groups, and nations. Knowing that words can create happiness or suffering, I am committed to speaking truthfully using words that inspire confidence, joy, and hope. When anger is manifesting in me, I am determined not to speak. I will practice mindful breathing and walking in order to recognize and to look deeply into my anger. I know that the roots of anger can be found in my wrong perceptions and lack of understanding of the suffering in myself and in the other person. I will speak and listen in a way that can help myself and the other person to transform suffering and see the way out of difficult situations. I am determined not to spread news that I do not know to be certain and not to utter words that can cause division or discord. I will practice Right Diligence to nourish my capacity for understanding, love, joy, and inclusiveness, and gradually transform anger, violence, and fear that lie deep in my consciousness.

This is the fourth of the Five Mindfulness Trainings, I vow to study and practice it.

(Bell and short pause for reflection)

5. *Surā-meraya-majja-pamādaṭṭhānā veramaṇī-sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi.*
[I undertake the training to refrain from the misuse of intoxicants.]

Nourishment and Healing

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful consumption, I am committed to cultivating good health, both physical and mental, for myself, my family, and my society by practicing mindful eating, drinking, and consuming. I will practice looking deeply into how I consume the Four Kinds of Nutriment, namely edible foods, sense impressions, volition, and consciousness. I am determined not to gamble, or to use alcohol, drugs, or any other products which contain toxins, such as certain websites, electronic games, TV programs, films, magazines, books, and conversations. I will practice coming back to the present moment to be in touch with the refreshing, healing and nourishing elements in me and around me, not letting regrets and sorrow drag me back into the past nor letting anxieties, fear, or craving pull me out of the present moment. I am determined not to try to cover up loneliness, anxiety, or other suffering by losing myself in consumption. I will contemplate interbeing and consume in a way that preserves peace, joy, and well-being in my body and consciousness, and in the collective body and consciousness of my family, my society and the Earth.

This is the fifth of the Five Mindfulness Trainings, I vow to study and practice it.

(Bell and short pause for reflection)

Idam me silam magga-phala-ñānassa paccayo hotu.
[May my conduct conduce to attainment of the highest fruits of liberation.]

Sharing the Merit and Bodhicitta Aspiration

Taking refuge, undertaking the Five Mindfulness Trainings, and practicing the way of awareness and insight gives rise to benefits without limit. I offer to share all blessings and merit with my parents, teachers, family, friends, and with all beings everywhere. May this life and practice contribute to the great stream of causes and conditions leading to happiness, peace, and liberation for all beings. May all beings be happy.

(Ceremony ends with three bells followed by an optional bow.)

This ceremony is adapted from the ceremony in *Common Ground Meditation Center Chants* available at <https://commongroundmeditation.org/teachings/chants/>

The text of the Five Mindfulness Trainings is taken from the 2022 revision available at <https://plumvillage.org/mindfulness/the-5-mindfulness-trainings>