



ZEN AWAKENED
GOING FOR REFUGE &
PRECEPTS CEREMONY

Going for Refuge & the Precepts Ceremony

Our natural state is empty, open, aware, vast, cognizant luminosity, spontaneous freedom, stable calm, active compassion and contented joy.

As we unfold this natural state in our lives we need to guard ourselves from our unskillful habits, patterns and tendencies. To help us do that we first need a safe place to go to so that we can heal and develop ourselves and we find that sanctuary in the Triple Gems of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Secondly we need guiding principles to help us deal with our powerful habit energy and the precepts shine brightly for us helping us from stumbling.

Going for refuge and taking the precepts are an active and conscious act – a choice by us where we consciously make the decision to start to really show up in the world as a blessing and minimize the ways we burden others and the world.

In this topsy turvy world we need something stable to rely on. We need something that we can point to and say, “That over there, that’s safe.” We need a safe harbour. In Buddhism that safe place is the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha.

The Buddha: was a human that showed us our true potential

The Dharma: are the teachings shared by the Buddha and realized teachers that help us guide us to awakening

The Sangha: helpful friends that support us on the way

We need help to come back home to our awakened mind, we need help and guidance on how to live noble, upright, virtuous and awakened lives. The precepts help us along the way toward our goal of full complete awakening for the benefit of all beings. They help us to stop creating suffering in our lives and generating Karma that will hinder us in our progress.

The Essence of the Buddha’s Teaching is simple: Commit not a single unwholesome act. Develop a wealth of virtue. Tame, transform, and conquer this mind of ours. Peace. Compassion. Wisdom.

Being compassionately awake is our natural state. This simple naturalness is your true home. The precepts and going for refuge help you find your way back to it.

*Zen Master e
(Ian Paul Marshall)*

Precepts Ceremony

I. Lighting of candles and incense

II. Opening Bell

Please stand

III. Homage to the Three Precious Ones (all together)

Homage to all the Buddhas, who are present in their glory at this assembly.

Homage to the dharma, which is present in its glory at this assembly.

Homage to all the sangha, who are present in their glory at this assembly.

IV. The Mantra Summoning the Three Precious Ones (the Officiant chants solo)

Bo soe jung jin on

Namu bo bo jeo li kali dali tata a daya

Namu bo bo jeo li kali dali tata a daya

Namu bo bo jeo li kali dali tata a daya

V. Paying Homage to the Three Treasures (said by the whole assembly all together)

We most earnestly send forth our homage to the precious one, the most true Buddha; transcendent in three forms, possessing to perfection the four wisdoms, who in love and mercy embraces all creatures, who in gladness saves all beings, eternal in time and filling all space, the universe in its purity.

We most earnestly send forth our homage to the precious one, the most profound dharma; the one, the true, the eternally quiescent, which for all creatures appeared in twelve divisions, which is the universe in its purity, transcending speech, flowing equally into the five teachings and the three vehicles.

We most earnestly send forth our homage to the precious ones, the most pure sangha; those creatures enlightened rapidly or slowly, whose love increases with their wisdom, whose devotion benefits both themselves and others, who have attained to the three illuminations, who are of the ten stages of holiness and the three levels of wisdom.

We earnestly wish that these precious ones may all respond to us according to our need, that they may be for us a witness, and that they may all together receive our offerings.

May their glory fill all space, as the moon reflected in a thousand rivers is yet one, and may all the holy ones, the bodhisattvas possessing to perfection the four wisdoms, be present at this assembly, to the welfare of all creatures. So do we bow down most reverently before them.

On the seat of bodhi most distinguished and adorned, all Buddhas have sat and attained supreme awakening.

In reverence do we now offer these seats, that we and others may all together attain the way of Buddhas.

VI. The Mantra of Offering Seats to the Sangha (all together)

Om ba a ra mi na ya sa ba ha
Om ba a ra mi na ya sa ba ha
Om ba a ra mi na ya sa ba ha

VII. The Mantra of the Universe in its Purity (all together - mantra chant)

Om nam
Om nam
Om nam

VIII. The Offering of Incense (all together)

We make offerings to all the Buddhas of the ten directions, of the past, the present, and the future; to all the dharmas, even those still hidden from our view; and to the sangha of shravakas, pratyeka-buddhas, and bodhisattvas. May all these precious ones look down upon us with love and mercy, and receive our offering.

(Precepts teacher and Officiant sit at the table. Each preceptee, or one representing each group, offers incense before the image of the Buddha, and returns to his or her place. Together all preceptees bow three times to the beat of the moktak and sit down.)

Please be seated.

IX. Receiving the Precepts Gifts (The officiant says)

We go for guidance to the Radiant One, the Buddha, who saves all creatures from the three painful states; We desire that all creatures may together enter into the bliss of the uncreated.

We who still suffer rebirth in the six realms, and who are not yet freed from our obligations and involvements, may we cast off these obligations and enter into the uncreated, and by so doing fulfill our greatest obligation.

(Each preceptee comes forward, one by one, receives his or her Buddhist name, pāmsūda fabric, gift and returns to his or her seat.)

(The Officiant says)

Great are you who understand the impermanence of this world. You have cast aside the conventional and are entering into nirvana, an event hard to conceive of, and rare in this world.

How good it is, the robe of liberation, a robe of highest merit. We do now receive it, and may we receive it perpetually, in life after life hereafter.

(All together:)

Om-maha-ka-babada-shiche-a-sabaha

Om-maha-ka-babada-shiche-a-sabaha

Om-maha-ka-babada-shiche-a-sabaha

X. Requesting the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas and All the Deities to Serve As Our Teachers
(Said by the whole assembly)

May the Buddha Śākyamuni be present and serve as our original teacher;

May the Buddha Vairocana be present and serve as a light that dispels our darkness;

May the bodhisattva Manjushri be present and serve as our precepts teacher;

May the future Buddha Maitreya be present and serve as our instructor;

May the bodhisattva Avalokitesvara be present and serve as our teacher of the awakened heart;

May the bodhisattva Samantabhadra be present and serve as our teacher of practice forms;

May all the Buddhas of the ten directions be present and serve to witness and confirm our precepts;
May all the bodhisattvas of the ten directions be present and serve as companions in our study; and
May Shakra, Indra, and all the celestial beings be present and serve to protect and adorn our practice.

XI. Going for Refuge

(Officiant reads)

You that are now before me have finally found true refuge.

What is it that we need to take refuge from? From Samsara. From the world that is lost in the great forgetting. And even from ourselves. We take refuge from the three poisons of greed, hatred and delusion.

In this topsy turvy world we need something stable to rely on. We need something that we can point to and say, "That over there, that's safe." We all need a safe harbour.

In Buddhism that safe place is the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha.

The Buddha: was a human that showed us our true potential

The Dharma: are the teachings shared by the Buddha and realized masters that help guide us to awakening

The Sangha: helpful friends that support us on the way

You who are gathered here have discovered and now recognize that you have found a safe harbour, a sanctuary, something special in the form of the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha.

You now have a certain level of faith and confidence in these three precious jewels. In Pali (the original language of the Buddhist texts) the word for faith is saddha. While sometimes translated as "confidence" or "trust," the literal meaning of saddha is "to place your heart upon."

Our hearts are squishy, tender and vital to our survival. To entrust it to someone or something means that we know and have faith that it will be kept safe. That it will be protected from harm.

When we place our heart upon the Three Jewels of the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha we entrust them with our most important treasure. We give it over knowing well that we have found a safe and secure place for our fragile and tender heart. We can now begin to rest knowing well that we will be protected, we will be guided and we will be shown how to take care of this delicate and essential piece of ourselves.

We look at the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha and say,

(Preceptees say together and aloud one hand on heart)

“Precious Buddha, Precious Dharma, Precious Sangha, I see that you are wiser than me, stronger than me, further along than me. I see how you live, how you speak and how you think. I’ve felt the power of potential and possibility emanating and radiating from you and I want that for myself.

I, as I am right now cannot be trusted with this precious heart. Sentient beings lost in samsara cannot be trusted with this precious heart. This world lost in greed, hatred and delusion cannot be trusted with this precious heart.

But in the midst of all that madness I have found you – Buddha, Dharma and Sangha – a safe harbour from the storms of samsara.

So please, keep this tender and precious heart of mine safe and show me how to heal it, how to nurture it and how to unlock its radiant lustre and power so that it may be a shining light for others as you have been for me.

(Officiant reads)

As you grow in wisdom, peace and compassion - then your home begins to be filled with those same energies

As your home is infused with awakening – so will your family be influenced by that power

When the family is wise, peaceful and compassionate then the community changes

As the community becomes wise, peaceful and compassionate then the country changes

As the country becomes wise, peaceful and compassionate then the world changes

So as you grow into your own inherent potential you are actually growing the whole world

To help us grow in wisdom, peace and compassion we go for Refuge to the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha

(Preceptees all say together and aloud)

I go for refuge to the Buddha
I go for refuge to the Dharma
I go for refuge to the Sangha

Buddhaṃ śaraṇaṃ gacchāmi
Dharmaṃ śaraṇaṃ gacchāmi
Saṅghaṃ śaraṇaṃ gacchāmi

XII. Precepts Ceremony

(Officiant reads)

Our daily habits build deep grooves for our energy to flow through. Most of us have dug deep grooves of unskillful and selfish habit energy. This habit energy is inherited from our past lives, our families, our countries, our societies, our communities, our culture, from the media, from our friends and from our tendencies to believe that we're separated from all of life.

These energies push us to perpetuate a pattern of pain. A pattern that most of us never really see but which rules our thoughts, words, and actions.

To help us along the path we need some guiding principles to enable us to break free of the mental, emotional and physical patterns that lead to us thinking, speaking and acting in unskillful ways. We need help navigating the troublesome spots of life so that we can live it nobly – like an awakened daughter or son of the Buddha. We need help to break free of the hellish habit energies that push us to cause suffering to others and ourselves.

The Five Precepts or Mindfulness Trainings help us to do that.

The First Precept: I undertake the training to abstain from taking life and I am committed to cultivating the insight of interbeing and compassion.

The Second Precept: I undertake the training to abstain from taking things not given and I am committed to practicing generosity in my thoughts, words, and deeds.

The Third Precept: I undertake the training to abstain from unskillful behaviour done in lust and I am committed to cultivating responsibility and learning ways to protect the safety and integrity of individuals, couples, families, and society and to do what I can to foster togetherness and meaningful connections.

The Fourth Precept: I undertake the training to abstain from lying and I am committed to cultivating loving speech and compassionate listening toward others and myself.

The Fifth Precept: I undertake the training to abstain from intoxicants taken to induce heedlessness and I am committed to cultivating good health, both physically, emotionally and mentally, for myself, my family, and my society.

(Officiant) Can these precepts, each one of them, be kept by you, or can they not?

(All preceptees) They can be so kept.

(Officiant says)

This brings joy to my heart. Let the preceptees now fully recite the precepts and so burn them into their hearts.

(All Preceptees & Officiant together)

From this present life until we attain to Buddhahood, we shall resolutely uphold these precepts, and not break them.

We desire that the Buddhas serve as witnesses, for we shall never depart from these precepts, preferring rather first to give up our lives.

XIII. The Repentance Ritual (Officiant and all preceptees together:)

I do most earnestly repent
of my transgressions
committed since beginningless time,
through my greed, my anger, and my ignorance,
in thought, word, and deed.

I do now repent

the grave offense
of taking any life.

I do now repent
the grave offense
of taking things not given.

I do now repent,
the grave offense
of wrong actions done in lust.

I do now repent
the grave offense
of boasting of my non-existent spiritual attainments.

I do now repent
the grave offense
of vain speech.

I do now repent
the grave offense
of abusive speech.

I do now repent
the grave offense
of hypocritical speech.

I do now repent
the grave offense
of endless craving.

I do now repent
the grave offense
of my ignorance.

May all offenses
accumulated during hundreds of kalpas
now be totally consumed
in an instant,

as fire burns dry grass
extinguishing all things
until nothing remains.

Our offenses have no self-nature, but arise only from our minds.

If our minds are extinguished, then our offenses too will be destroyed.

When both our minds and our offenses are extinguished, and both are seen as empty, this is termed the true repentance.

The Symbol of Repentance (Precepts Burn & Mantra)

(The Mantra of Repentance is chanted by the preceptees and whole assembly until the last of the fire has been put out)

Om salba motcha moji sadaya sabaha

(All preceptees together:)

We now prostrate ourselves in repentance for all karmic hindrances accumulated for countless kalpas.

We desire that our transgressions be totally removed and that life after life we may always walk the path to enlightenment.

(The preceptees bow three times to the beat of the muktak before the Officiant, and take their seats.)

XIV. Giving Away the Merit (The Officiant says)

Most noble is the Buddha; what person does not take joy in the Buddha!

Calling to mind this assembly and what has taken place today, we now obtain the benefits of this dharma.

(Each preceptee, or one representing each group, offers incense to the Buddha; then all bow together three times and sit down.)

(The Officiant says)

It has been said that great energy, blessings and merit is built up and accrued when we come together to hear, experience and train in the Dharma.

We will now give away any and all the fortunate merit and blessings that we have received from undertaking this precepts ceremony.

May the merits received by undertaking the precepts be given to others;

May all sentient beings everywhere be free from suffering and be free of the causes of suffering

May all sentient beings everywhere experience happiness and continually experience the causes of happiness

May all sentient beings everywhere quickly and easily awaken.

It is so.

XIV. Dharma Talks

XV. The Four Great Vows (all together.)

Beings and creations are numberless,

I vow to free them.

Delusions are inexhaustible,

I vow to transform them.

Reality is boundless,

I vow to perceive it.

The enlightened way is unsurpassable,

I vow to embody it.

As long as space remains

As long as sentient beings remain

So too shall I remain

To free us all

XVI. Extinguishing of candles

XVII. Closing announcements

XVIII. Group photo