



THE CEREMONY OF TAKING REFUGE IN THE BODHISATTVA WAY

Preparation

A low table is set up in front of the altar with room for the Teacher to sit between it and the altar, the Head of Practice and Cantor (with instruments) to either side; put out cushions for the ceremony participants to sit in a line in front of the table, facing the altar. A bowl of water that can be held in one hand and a small evergreen branch are placed near the Teacher.

Cushions and chairs are set up for retreatants and guests. Leaders greet and seat guests as they arrive. Ceremony programs are handed out or placed on cushions and chairs.

Ceremony

1. The Liaison fetches the Teacher, who comes in and is met by the HofP to offer incense at the altar
2. *Teacher* : Invocation and Water Blessing
3. *Cantor* : Conducts ceremony beginning with “Refuge” (p. 5-2) and continuing through the Ten Bodhisattva Vows
 - Purification
 - The Three Refuge Vows
 - *Cantor* announces the Three Refuge Vows
 - *All* read each vow
 - *Participants* read their own words after each vow
 - Ti-Sarana
 - The Three Root Vows
 - *Cantor* announces the Three Root Vows
 - *All* read each vow
 - *Participants* read their own words after each vow
 - The Story of Bird’s Nest Roshi
 - The Ten Bodhisattva Vows
 - *Cantor* announces the Ten Bodhisattva Vows
 - *All* read each vow and Bodhidharma’s commentary
 - *Participants* read their own words
 - *All* read Dogen’s commentary
4. *Teacher* : Presentation of rakusus
 - Explanation of rakusus
 - Explanation of names
 - Verse of the Rakusu
5. A representative of the community pledges the community’s support for those taking refuge
6. *All, led by Cantor* : Heart Sutra with participants’ incense offering
7. *Cantor* : Dedication
8. *All (led by Cantor)* : “The Four Boundless Vows” (p. 5-10)

Teacher:

INVOCATION

Black Tara, mother of all things
earth and water, wind and flame
ancient and present Buddhas
Guanyin, whose hands and eyes
console the world
Manjushri, guardian of the crystal
palace
Kshitigarba, protector of children
and guide through the underworld,
the hidden Buddha yet to come,
you gods adrift in splendor,
you gods of war and strife,

crow, dolphin and your kind
salmon in the creeks,
redwood, oak, and scented grass,
branches budding in the rain,
you ghosts who are never satisfied
you demons in the depths of hell
the spirits of this place
all grandmothers, grandfathers
attend us now
bless our ceremony
the humans are taking refuge today

Cantor (spoken):

○● REFUGE

When knowing stops, when thoughts about who we are fall away, vast space opens up and love appears. Anything that gets in the way of understanding this is a cause of suffering and something to refrain from.

Moment by moment, thought appears, the earth appears, we appear. When we test each bit of life against the heart, we find we cannot reject any, for we are the only hands and eyes that eternity has. With our virtues, our failures, and our imperfections, this is the body we take refuge in; this is what we offer to the world.

By their nature, vows are not things we hold perfectly. Vows are the bridge we build between the spacious world and the things we do everyday. They encourage us to follow our questions when they arise, and underlying our vows is compassion for everything that has the courage to live.

Cantor (chanted—once): ○○○● **PURIFICATION** ○

All the ancient twisted karma ●
From beginningless greed, hatred and ignorance
Born of my body, mouth and thought ○
○ ○
I now confess openly and fully

Cantor: ○● **THE THREE REFUGE VOWS**

All: ○ **I take refuge in awakening**
○ *Participants read individual vows*

All: ○ **I take refuge in the way**
○ *Participants read individual vows*

All: ○ **I take refuge in my companions**
○ *Participants read individual vows*

Cantor: ○ **TI-SARANA** ●

(Chanted on one note—once)

I take refuge in awakening
I take refuge in the way
I take refuge in my companions

(Sung—3 times)

Buddham saranam gacchami
Dhammam saranam gacchami
Sangham saranam gacchami
Buddham Dhammam Sangham

Cantor:

○● THE THREE ROOT VOWS

[with Dogen's commentaries]

All:

○ **I vow not to do harm**

○ *Participants read individual vows*

All:

○ This is the cave where the teachings of all the Buddhas have their source

All:

○ **I vow to do good**

○ *Participants read individual vows*

All:

○ This is the way of perfect enlightenment, and the path that everyone walks

All:

○ **I vow to do good for others**

○ *Participants read individual vows*

All:

○ This is going beyond any distinction between ordinary and awakened people, freeing yourself and others ○

Cantor:

○ THE STORY OF BIRD'S NEST ROSHI ●

The teacher got his name because he often meditated in a tree. One day an eminent man paid him a visit and exclaimed, "What a dangerous seat you have up there!"

Bird's Nest Roshi replied, "Yours is more dangerous than mine."

The visitor said, "I am the governor of this province, and I don't see what danger there is in that."

Bird's Nest responded, "Then, sir, you don't know yourself very well. When passions burn and the mind is unsteady, this is the greatest danger."

The governor then asked, "What is the teaching of Buddhism?"
Bird's Nest Roshi recited a verse from the *Dhammapada*:

Don't do harm

Do good

Do good for others

This is the teaching of all the Buddhas

When the governor heard this, he was not impressed. "Any three-year-old child knows that."

Bird's Nest said, "Any three-year-old child may know it, but even an eighty-year-old has a hard time doing it."

Cantor: ○● **THE TEN BODHISATTVA VOWS**

Here are some things that the ancestors teach us cause pain to ourselves and others when we do them. We look at these vows in the negative form (for example, it's good not to kill), and in the positive form (it's good to support life). The negative form takes the shape of a protector or worthy adversary who helps us put delusion to rest; the positive form has the shape of an advisor or benefactor who opens the path we hadn't conceived of before.

We read each vow and then Bodhidharma's commentary together. The participants will read their own expression of the vow, and then we read Dogen's commentary together.

All: ○ **I vow not to kill**

○ The way things are is mysterious and hard to see. In a world where the Dharma is eternal, not having thoughts of taking life is called the Vow of Not Killing.

○ *Participants read individual vows*

All: ○ The Buddha's seed grows when you don't take life. Pass on the Buddha's life and do not kill.

All: ○ **I vow not to steal**

○ The way things are is mysterious and hard to see. In a world where the Dharma is unattainable, not having thoughts about gaining is called the Vow of Not Stealing.

○ *Participants read individual vows*

All: ○ Just as they are, you and the things of the world are one. The gate to freedom is open.

All: ○ **I vow not to misuse sex**

○ The way things are is mysterious and hard to see. In a world where the Dharma is unadorned, not manufacturing a veneer of attachment is called the Vow of Not Misusing Sex.

○ *Participants read individual vows*

All: ○ The Three Wheels of yourself, others, and your actions are pure. When you desire nothing, you follow the Buddha's way.

All: ○ **I vow not to lie**

○ The way things are is mysterious and hard to see. In a world where the Dharma is inexplicable, not preaching a single word is called the Vow of Not Lying.

○ *Participants read individual vows*

All: ○ The Dharma Wheel turns from the beginning. There is never too much or too little. Everything is wet with dew and the truth is ready to harvest.

All: ○ **I vow not to misuse drugs**

○ The way things are is mysterious and hard to see. In a world where the Dharma is naturally pure, not surrendering to delusions is called the Vow of Not Misusing Drugs.

○ *Participants read individual vows*

All: ○ Drugs are not brought in yet. Don't bring them in. That is the great light.

All: ○ **I vow not to gossip maliciously**

○ The way things are is mysterious and hard to see. In a world where the Dharma is flawless, not dissecting mistakes is called the Vow of Not Gossiping Maliciously.

○ *Participants read individual vows*

All: ○ In the Buddha Way, the path, the teaching, the realization, and the practice are one. Don't allow fault-finding. Don't allow careless talk.

All: ○ **I vow not to praise myself at the expense of others**

○ The way things are is mysterious and hard to see. In a world of the Dharma of equals, not insisting on *I* and *you* is called the vow of not praising yourself at the expense of others.

○ *Participants read individual vows*

All: ○ Buddhas and Ancestors realize the vast sky and the great earth. When they appear in their noble body, their vastness has no inside or outside. When they appear in their true body, there is not even a bit of earth on the ground.

All: ○ **I vow not to be stingy**

○ The way things are is mysterious and hard to see. In a world where the Dharma is everywhere, not holding back resources is called the vow of not being stingy.

○ *Participants read individual vows*

All: ○ A phrase, a verse: that is everything — each blade of grass. This way, this realization: that is all the Buddhas and Ancestors. From the beginning, there has been no stinginess at all.

All: ○ **I vow not to indulge in anger**

○ The way things are is mysterious and hard to see. In a world where the Dharma is selfless, not contriving reality for yourself is called the vow of not indulging in anger.

○ *Participants read individual vows*

All: ○ Not attacking, not withdrawing, not real or unreal. There is an ocean of bright clouds. There is an ocean of solemn clouds.

All: ○ **I vow not to disparage awakening, the way, or my companions**

○ The way things are is mysterious and hard to see. In a world where the Dharma is one, not holding dualistic concepts about ordinary beings and awakened beings is called the vow of not disparaging these Three Treasures.

○ *Participants read individual vows*

All: ○ Your expression of the actual body is the harbor and the weir. This is the most important thing in the world. Its power comes from the ocean of essential nature. It is beyond explanation — we just accept it with respect and gratitude.

TEACHER PRESENTS THE RAKUSUS and GIVES DHARMA NAMES

Cantor:

○ VERSE OF THE RAKUSU

This is the robe of freedom
the bare field, the blessings.
I receive the Tathagata's teaching
which wakes all beings.

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PLEDGES SUPPORT

Cantor: ○●✘ THE GREAT PRAJNA PARAMITA HEART SUTRA ○

(Mokugyo on each syllable)

Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva, practicing deep Prajna Paramita
○

clearly saw that all five skandhas are empty,
transforming all suffering and distress.

Shariputra, form is no other than emptiness, emptiness no other than form;
form is exactly emptiness, emptiness exactly form;
sensation, perception, mental reaction, consciousness are also like this.

Shariputra, all things are essentially empty —

not born, not destroyed; not stained, not pure; without loss, without gain.

Therefore in emptiness there is no form, no sensation,

perception, mental reaction, consciousness;

no eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind;

no color, sound, smell, taste, touch, object of thought;

no seeing and so on to no thinking;

no ignorance and also no ending of ignorance,

and so on to no old age and death and also no ending of old age and death;

no suffering, cause of suffering, cessation, path, no wisdom and no

attainment.

○

Since there is nothing to attain, the bodhisattva lives by Prajna Paramita,

with no hindrance in the mind; no hindrance, and therefore no fear;

far beyond delusive thinking, right here is Nirvana.

All Buddhas of past, present and future live by Prajna Paramita,
attaining Anuttara-samyak-sambodhi.

Therefore know that Prajna Paramita
is the great sacred mantra, the great vivid mantra,
the unsurpassed mantra, the supreme mantra,
which completely removes all suffering.

This is truth, not mere formality.

Therefore set forth the Prajna Paramita mantra.

Set forth this mantra and proclaim:

Sung—3 times:

○
Gaté Gaté Paragaté
○
Parasamgaté
○
Bodhi Svaha!

DEDICATION

Cantor (palms together):

To the protectors of each moment
and benefactors who gave us life
we offer this ceremony in gratitude.
Broken things are joined,
where there's trouble we have shelter.

Happiness has come, and now
we pass it on —
we give refuge in our turn.
May the blessings of this ceremony
go to you:

participants speak individual dedications

We offer these blessings in all
the worlds of dark and light.
Let wisdom go to every corner of the house
Let people have joy in each other's joy ●

All:

● All Buddhas throughout space and time ○
all Awakened Beings, Great Beings ○
the Heart of Perfect Wisdom ○

Cantor: ○● THE FOUR BOUNDLESS VOWS ○

(Sung—3 times)

I vow to wake the beings of the world ○³

I vow to set endless heartache to rest

I vow to walk through every wisdom gate ○³
○³ ○³

I vow to live the great Buddha way ○^{1,2}



SPECIAL CEREMONIES

During a retreat, special ceremonies usually take place in the evening, during the time reserved for the talk or koan seminar. People often come in for such ceremonies, and sometimes they have no experience of a retreat, so it's important to make them feel welcome and to accommodate them comfortably. These ceremonies can also be held at other times and places. The altar is often prepared in a special way, and there might be other special preparations necessary.

BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY

A blossom-covered bower with the baby Buddha in a bowl of sweet tea and a ladle is set up on the altar; flowers are massed around the hall. People have been invited to bring flowers or other offerings to the ceremony.

Welcome & introduction

[One period of sitting, then walking meditation]

Kids arrive and offer flowers at the altar

Welcome to families and telling the story of the Buddha's birth

Begin singing *Row Row Row Your Boat*, and people come to the altar to ladle tea on the baby Buddha on at a time

Refreshments are served

BABY WELCOMING CEREMONY

The ceremony may be held during a retreat or in the family's home. Friends and family of the baby are invited to attend. Prepare the altar as for Buddha's Birthday, with lots of flowers. If there are statues of the baby Buddha, Guanyin or the Virgin Mary with a child, or Jizo (the protector of children), place them on the altar. There should be room for people to sit on cushions or in chairs.

Everyone gathers around the family, who sit in front of the altar with the holder of the ceremony (customarily a teacher), facing the gathering. The cantor is nearby,

with a bell and mokugyo or drum, and a bowl of flower petals.

1. The teacher welcomes everyone.
2. The cantor leads the group in chanting the Guanyin Sutra of Endless Life, as the family offers incense or water at the altar.
3. The teacher speaks to the baby and then to the community, asking them to support the life of this child. Everyone answers, "We will!"
4. Parents speak to the baby, and then anyone who wants to comes forward to speak to the baby and the family. A basket of flower petals is near the family, and as each person offers their words, they scoop up some petals and sprinkle them on the family.
5. At some point while this is going on, the Thirteenth Fairy interrupts, offering a blessing against difficulty:

"I am the Thirteenth Fairy, the one it's important not to turn away. Sometimes life is difficult, sometimes you will know pain, but I give you my blessing now: That when it is hard, people who love you will offer their hands; that you will remember the beauty of the sky and the long grasses, and it will console you; that the pain will pass away, having opened your heart and strengthened your spirit."

This is based on the fairytale tradition of the fairy who isn't invited to the party and so curses the child; instead, we include an acknowledgement that life can be difficult and turn the curse into a blessing. The person who plays the 13th fairy should be someone very close to the family of the baby. S/he can wear a mask or some other indication of their role.

6. If requested, the holder of the ceremony gives the baby a dharma name.
7. The holder of the ceremony performs a dedication with water blessing.
8. Everyone sings "Row row row your boat" as a round.

MEMORIAL SERVICE

First is a purification. We say the Purification Verse, but even a moment of silence would do. You can add a fire puja or smudging.

○○○● **Purification** ○ *(Sutra Book p. 1-1)*

(Chanted—palms together—once)

All the ancient twisted karma ●
From beginningless greed, hatred and ignorance
Born of my body, mouth and thought ○
○ ○
I now confess openly and fully

Second is a testament of faith, for which we use:

○●✘ **The Great Prajna Paramita Heart Sutra** ○ *(Sutra Book p. 1-2)*

Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva, practicing deep Prajna Paramita

○
clearly saw that all five skandhas are empty,
transforming all suffering and distress.

Shariputra, form is no other than emptiness, emptiness no other than
form;

form is exactly emptiness, emptiness exactly form;

sensation, perception, mental reaction, consciousness are also like this.

Shariputra, all things are essentially empty—

not born, not destroyed; not stained, not pure; without loss, without
gain.

Therefore in emptiness there is no form, no sensation,
perception, mental reaction, consciousness;

no eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind;

no color, sound, smell, taste, touch, object of thought;

no seeing and so on to no thinking;

no ignorance and also no ending of ignorance,

and so on to no old age and death and also no ending of old age and
death;

no suffering, cause of suffering, cessation, path, no wisdom and no attainment.



Since there is nothing to attain, the bodhisattva lives by Prajna Paramita,
with no hindrance in the mind; no hindrance, and therefore no fear;
far beyond delusive thinking, right here is Nirvana.



All Buddhas of past, present and future live by Prajna Paramita,
attaining Anuttara-samyak-sambodhi.
Therefore know that Prajna Paramita
is the great sacred mantra, the great vivid mantra,
the unsurpassed mantra, the supreme mantra,
which completely removes all suffering.
This is truth, not mere formality.
Therefore set forth the Prajna Paramita mantra.
Set forth this mantra and proclaim:

(Sung—5 times):



Gaté Gaté Paragaté



Parasamgaté



Bodhi Svaha!

Third is testimony, in which the holder of the ceremony speaks directly to the dead person, who is represented by a photograph on the altar. Then anyone else who has something to say comes forward, offers incense, and speaks.

Fourth is a chant to mark the crossing over:

○●✕ Guanyin Sutra of Endless Life ○ *(Sutra Book p. 1-9)*

(Sung—3 times)

Kanzeo-o-o-on Kanzeo-o-o-on

Kanzeo-o-o-o-o-on Kanzeon

(Spoken—once)

○¹ Kanzeon

○¹

Praise awakening

○³

We are born with awakening

We unfold with awakening

We unfold with awakening,

the Way, and our companions

Eternity is full of joy, the self is pure

○³

Morning's thought is Kanzeon

○³

Evening's thought is Kanzeon

Thought after thought rises in the mind

○³

○³

Thought after thought is the mind ○^{1,2}

(Sung—3 times)

Kanzeo-o-o-on Kanzeo-o-o-on

Kanzeo-o-o-o-o-on Kanzeon

Fifth are the consolations in the midst of grief that come with taking refuge, which we evoke with:

○ **Ti-Sarana** ● (Sutra Book p. 1-1)

(Chanted on one note—once)

I take refuge in awakening
I take refuge in the way
I take refuge in my companions

(Sung—3 times)

Buddham saranam gacchami
Dhammam saranam gacchami
Sangham saranam gacchami
Buddham Dhammam Sangham

Sixth is the dedication of the ceremony to the dead person. This may be accompanied by a water blessing.

We close with the Four Vows, which reaffirms our commitment to the ways of compassionate action and spiritual realization while we still live:

○○● **The Four Bodhisattva Vows** ○ (Sutra Book p. 1-11)

(Sung—3 times)

All beings one body, I vow to save them all ✧³
Blind passions spinning round and round, I vow to put
them down
Knocking on countless Dharma doors, I vow to walk
on through
The unsurpassed Buddha Way, I vow to live it every,
✧³ ✧³
every, every, everyday ✧^{1,2}

Ring *accelerando* on *inkin* to have participants stand, facing altar

✧ All bow towards altar

✧ All (turn and) bow towards each other

Then there is a feast and a celebration of the person's life

FORTY-NINE DAY CEREMONY

At 49 days after a death, it's believed that a dead person turns towards the next thing—the afterlife, rebirth, dissolution back into the universe. It's important for those who are still alive to let the person continue their journey with thanks and blessings, and to send energy to help the person on the way. The dead person turns away from the Earth and towards eternity; the living turn back towards life.

1. Gather to meditate, perhaps before dawn to sit the sun up
2. Chant the Guanyin Sutra and offer incense at an altar with the person's picture on it
3. People can speak about their willingness to let the person go now
4. Do something that reminds everyone of the person, which can be serious or light
5. Thank each other for their companionship during this passage
6. Sing the Celtic Blessing (“Deep Peace”) to close; perhaps each person takes away something to remind them of the dead person

People should leave with a sense of something completed, of a new time beginning.