



5 The Ceremony of
Taking Refuge in the
Bodhisattva Way

REFUGE

Cantor: 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.



PURIFICATION

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

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

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



THE THREE PURE 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

THE STORY OF BIRD'S NEST ROSHI

Cantor: 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."



THE TEN BODHISATTVA VOWS

[with commentaries by Bodhidharma and Dogen]

Cantor: 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.



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.

THE GREAT PRAJNA PARAMITA HEART SUTRA

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:

Gaté Gaté Paragaté
Parasamgaté
Bodhi Svaha!

THE FOUR BOUNDLESS VOWS

I vow to wake the beings of the world

I vow to set endless heartache to rest

I vow to walk through every wisdom gate

I vow to live the great Buddha way



