

## The Five Contemplations

This food is the gift of the whole universe—the earth, the sky, and much hard work.

May we be fully present to appreciate this meal.

May we shed light on our states of mind, and learn to eat in moderation.

May we take only foods that nourish us and prevent illness.

We receive this food to realize the way of understanding and love.

## Bell-inviting Verse

Body, speech, and mind, held in perfect oneness--  
I send my heart along with the sound of the bell.  
May the hearers awaken from forgetfulness  
and transcend/transform all anxiety and sorrow.

## Strength in Compassion

### A Mindfulness Retreat with Therese Fitzgerald and the Red Clay Sangha

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## Invoking the Bodhisattvas' Names

We invoke your name, Avalokiteshvara. We aspire to learn your way of listening in order to help relieve the suffering in the world. You know how to listen in order to understand. We invoke your name in order to practice listening with all our attention and openheartedness. We will sit and listen without any prejudice. We will sit and listen without judging or reacting. We will sit and listen in order to understand. We will sit and listen so attentively that we will be able to hear what the other person is saying and also what is being left unsaid. We know that just by listening deeply, we already alleviate a great deal of pain and suffering in the other person.



We invoke your name, Manjushri. We aspire to learn your way, which is to be still and to look deeply into the heart of things and into the hearts of people. We will look with all our attention and openheartedness. We will look with unprejudiced eyes. We will look without judging or reacting. We will look deeply so that we will be able to see and understand the roots of suffering, through the impermanent and selfless nature of all that is. We will practice your way of using the sword of understanding to cut through the bonds of suffering, thus freeing ourselves and other species.



4. Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful speech and the inability to listen to others, I am committed to cultivating loving speech and deep listening in order to bring joy and happiness to others and relieve others of their suffering. Knowing that words can create happiness or suffering, I am determined to speak truthfully, with words that inspire self-confidence, joy, and hope. I will not spread news that I do not know to be certain and will not to criticize or condemn things of which I am not sure. I will refrain from uttering words that can cause division or discord, or that can cause the family or the community to break. I am determined to make all efforts to reconcile and resolve all conflicts, however small.

5. 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 ingest only items that preserve peace, well-being, and joy in my body, mind, and the collective consciousness of my family and society. I am determined not to misuse or support the abuse of intoxicants or to ingest other toxins, including conversations and media. I am aware that to damage my body or my consciousness is to betray my ancestors, parents, society, and future generations. I will work to understand and transform violence, fear, anger, and confusion in myself and in society.

## The Five Mindfulness Trainings (as adapted by Thich Nhat Hanh)

1. Aware of the suffering caused by the destruction of life, I am committed to cultivating 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, and in my way of life.
2. Aware of the suffering caused by exploitation, social injustice, stealing, and oppression, I am committed to cultivating loving kindness and learning ways to work for the well-being of people, animals, plants, and minerals. I vow to practice generosity by sharing my time, energy, and material resources with those who are in need. I am determined not to steal and not to possess anything that should belong to others. I will respect the property of others, but I will prevent others from profiting from human suffering or the suffering of other species on Earth.
3. 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. I am determined not to engage in sexual relations without love and a long-term commitment. To preserve the happiness of myself and others, I am determined to respect my commitments and the commitments of others. 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.

We invoke your name, Samantabhadra. We aspire to practice your vow to act with the eyes and heart of compassion, to bring joy to one person in the morning and to ease the pain of one person in the afternoon. We know that the happiness of others is our own happiness, and we aspire to practice joy on the path of service. We know that every word, every look, every action, and every smile can bring happiness to others. We know that if we practice wholeheartedly, we ourselves may become an inexhaustible source of peace and joy for our loved ones and for all species.



We invoke your name, Kshitigarbha. We aspire to learn your way of being present where there is darkness, suffering, oppression and despair, so we can bring light, hope, relief, and liberation to those places. We are determined not to forget about or abandon those in desperate situations. We will do our best to establish contact with those who cannot find a way out of their suffering, those whose cries for help, justice, equality, and human rights are not being heard. We know that hell can be found in many places on Earth. We will do our best not to contribute to creating more hells on Earth, and to help transform the hells that already exist. We will practice in order to realize the qualities of perseverance and stability, so that, like the Earth, we can always be supportive and faithful to those in need.



## The Gathas of the Universal Gateway of Avalokitesvara

The Gathas by Bodhisattva Akasayamati

“O Bhagavat with all the mystic signs,  
Let me now inquire again:  
For what cause is this virtuous man named;  
He who beholds the world with absolute freedom?”

The Gathas by the Buddha

“Listen to the deeds of Avalokitesvara,  
Who responds well to every quarter,  
His vow is as vast as the oceans, surviving for  
inconceivable kalpas.

Serving an uncountable number of Buddhas,  
he has made an incomparable vow.

Let me relate it in brief:

Anyone who hears his name or sees him,  
and bears him steadfastly in mind,  
will be able to end the sorrows of existence.

If men with harmful intentions  
throw you into a pit of fire,  
by the virtue of invoking Avalokitesvara,  
the pit will become a pool.

While sailing across the oceans, if threatened by  
dragons, fishes and demons,  
by the virtue of invoking Avalokitesvara,  
the waves will never drown you.

May I become at all times, both now and forever,  
A protector for those without protection;  
A guide for those who have lost their way;  
A ship for those with oceans to cross;  
A bridge for those with rivers to cross;  
A sanctuary for those in danger;  
A lamp for those without light;  
A place of refuge for those without shelter;  
And a servant to all in need.

(His Holiness the Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso, *Ethics for  
the New Millennium*, last chapter, entitled “An Appeal”)

## Compassion

As we have seen, compassion is one of the principal things that make our lives meaningful. It is the source of all happiness and joy. And it is the foundation of a good heart of one who acts out of a desire to help others. We cannot escape the necessity of love and compassion. This then is my true religion, my simple faith. In this sense there is no need for temple or church, mosque or synagogue, no need for complicated philosophy, doctrine or dogma. Our own heart, our own mind is the temple. The doctrine is compassion. Love for others and respect for their rights and dignity, no matter who or what they are: ultimately these are all we need. So long as we practice these in our daily lives, then no matter if we are learned or unlearned, whether we believe in Buddha or God, or follow some other religion, or none at all, as long as we have compassion for others and conduct ourselves with restraint out of a sense of responsibility, there is no doubt that we will be happy.

Therefore, with my two hands joined, I appeal to you the reader to ensure that you make the rest of your life as meaningful as possible. Do this by engaging in spiritual practice if you can. As I hope I have made clear, there is nothing mysterious about this. It consists of nothing more than acting out of concern for others. I say this as neither Dalai Lama or as someone who has special powers or ability. Of these I have none. I speak as a human being: one, who, like yourself, wishes to be happy and not to suffer.

On the peak of Mount Sumeru,  
if men would hurl you down,  
by the virtue of invoking Avalokitesvara,  
like the Sun will you hang in the sky.

If pursued by wicked men,  
you fall from the Iron Mountain,  
by the virtue of invoking Avalokitesvara,  
not one single hair will be injured.

If overwhelmed by robbers, all with slashing swords,  
by the virtue of invoking Avalokitesvara,  
their hatred transforms into kindness.

If sentenced by royal command to die by the  
executioner's blade,  
by the virtue of invoking Avalokitesvara,  
the blade will break into pieces.

If imprisoned, shackled and chained,  
limbs bound by gyves and stocks,  
by the virtue of invoking Avalokitesvara,  
so will you be freed.

If by curses and poisons, men seek your destruction,  
by the virtue of invoking Avalokitesvara,  
they will all be returned.

If you meet with evil rakshasas,  
venomous dragons and various demons,  
by the virtue of invoking Avalokitesvara,  
none will dare to hurt you.

If surrounded by fierce beasts with  
sharp fangs and fearsome claws,  
by the virtue of invoking Avalokitesvara,  
they will flee in every direction.

If faced with serpents and scorpions,  
breathing poison and scorching flames,  
by the virtue of invoking Avalokitesvara,  
at your voice will they retreat.

Thunderous clouds and flashing lightning,  
falling hail and heavy rain,  
by the virtue of invoking Avalokitesvara,  
instantly are they scattered.

In disputes before a magistrate,  
in fear before armies arrayed,  
by the virtue of invoking Avalokitesvara,  
all your enemies will be routed.

Sentient beings are trapped and harassed,  
oppressed by countless sufferings,  
but Avalokitesvara's wondrous wisdom  
can save this suffering world.

Perfect in miraculous powers,  
expert in wisdom and tact,  
in all the realms of the universe,  
there's nowhere he does not appear.

All the evil states of existence—  
hells, animals, and ghosts;  
sorrows of birth, aging, disease, and death—  
all he will progressively end.

True and serene regards,  
far-reaching and wise regards,  
compassionate and kind regards,  
he's ever wished for and sought after.

Pure and serene in his radiance,  
with wisdom like the Sun that destroys darkness,  
able to quell calamities of wind and fire,  
his universal light illuminates the world.

With a body of compassion like thunder,  
and thoughts of love like great clouds,  
he showers the sweet rain of the Dharma  
to quench the fires of Klesa.

Wondrous is the voice of Avalokitesvara,  
universal and like the ocean tide,  
it surpasses all the sounds of the world.

Therefore bear it constantly in mind,  
with never a single doubt.

Avalokitesvara is pure and noble.

In pain, distress, death, and calamity,  
will he be a sure reliance for all.

Endowed with all merits,  
he beholds all with compassionate eyes.

Such a boundless ocean of blessings,  
let us prostrate and revere him!"

— Universal Gateway chapter of *The Lotus Sutra*