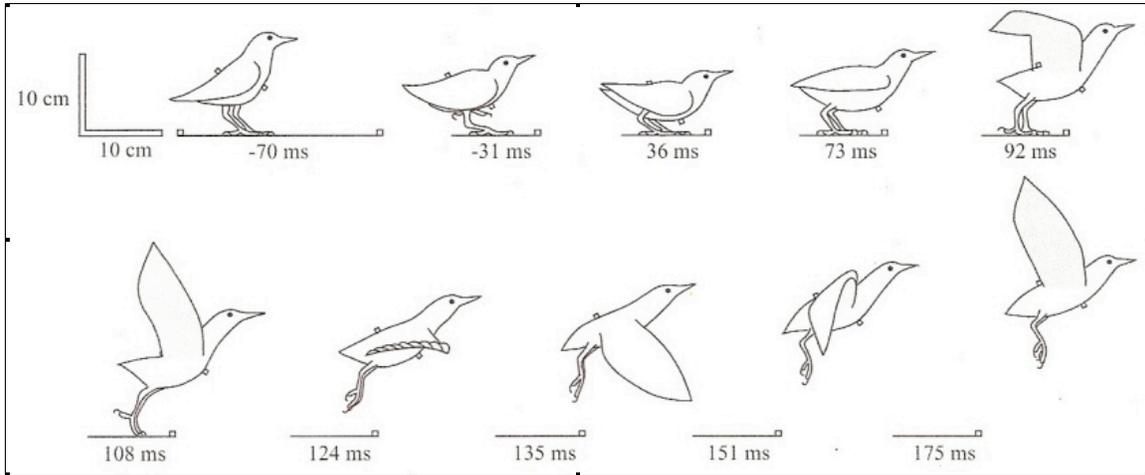


Pacific Zen Institute

The Ceremony of
Taking Refuge in the
Bodhisattva Way



Bodhisattva: *Sanskrit* A person who seeks freedom inside this life with its birth and death, happiness and sorrow, and all the rest of it.

THE CEREMONY OF TAKING REFUGE IN THE BODHISATTVA WAY

1. The teacher faces the room, back to altar. Participants face the teacher.
2. *Teacher*: Invocation and Water Blessing
3. *Cantor*: “Refuge”
4. *Teacher*: Brief Talk
5. *All (led by Cantor)*: “Purification”
6. The Three Refuge Vows
 - *Cantor* announces the Three Refuge Vows
 - *All* read each vow
 - *Participants* read their own words after each vow
7. *All (led by Cantor)*: “Refuge”
8. The Three Pure Vows
 - *Cantor* announces the Three Pure Vows
 - *All* read each vow
 - *Participants* read their own words after each vow
9. *Cantor and Surprise Guests* : “The Story of Bird’s Nest Roshi”
10. The Ten Bodhisattva Vows
 - *Cantor* announces the Ten Bodhisattva Vows
 - *All* read each vow and Bodhidharma’s commentary
 - *Participants* read their own words
11. *Teacher(s)*: Presentation of rakusus
 - Explanation of rakusus
 - Explanation of names
 - Verse of the Rakusu

12. A representative of the community pledges the community's support for those taking refuge
13. *All (led by Cantor):* "Heart Sutra" with participants' incense offering
14. *Cantor:* Dedication
15. *All (led by Cantor):* "The Four Boundless Vows"

Teacher: **INVOCATION**

Water blessing with a green bough

Water has no attachments; when it meets an obstacle it flows around it, or under it or over it or through it. Water purifies the soul, it joins the ocean and rises again in the clouds, Water dissolves sorrow, nourishes plants and animals, and refreshes the earth.

Invocation with water

Black Tara Mother of the Buddhas,
The ancient seven Buddhas,
Earth that takes us in with everything we have and gives back trees
and flowers,
Water the universal solvent,
Fire that warms the heart and gives us light,
Air that carries news and birds,
Shakyamuni who's a friend of mine,
Manjusri in his empty palace
Guanyin, whose hands and eyes console the world,
Samantabhadra, completer of tasks
Ksitigarba protector of children, guide through the underworld
The hidden Buddha yet to come
angels adrift in splendor,
all grandmothers, grandfathers, the spirits of this place,
redwoods and oak in the fog
salmon heading up the streams
hummingbirds with beaks in flowers,

fox on its evening walk, pine marten rarely seen,
ghosts who never can be satisfied,
demons in the deepest dark who see our green, sweet world as hell;
these parts make up a woman or a man—
you are welcome,
attend us now,
bless our ceremony
the humans are taking refuge today.

[Black Tara (the Valley Spirit of Laozi), the four elements, the Buddhas, some major Bodhisattvas, the beings of the six realms, including our ancestors and the spirits of this place are called to witness and bless the ceremony.]

Cantor: **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.

Teacher: **DHARMA TALK**

Cantor: **PURIFICATION**

(Chant once—palms together)

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

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: **THE THREE PURE VOWS**

All: **I vow to do no 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 (and others): **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, "That's a dangerous seat you have up there!"

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

The visitor said, "I'm 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, "Well, what does Buddhism teach?"

Bird's Nest recited the verse from the *Dhammapada*:

Do no harm

Do all good

Do good for others

This is the teaching of all the Buddhas

The governor 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 will read Dogen's commentary together.

[Bodhidharma was a 6th century Brahman monk from South India who is considered to be the person who brought the teachings of the Buddha to China and is depicted as a fierce,

bearded, tattooed, pierced, blue-eyed barbarian of great insight and fortitude. He taught by pointing directly to the human mind without relying on words and scriptures.

Dogen was a 13th Century Japanese monk who went to China to study Chan and koans and then returned to write and teach in Japan. He was a meticulous chronicler of the meditation path.]

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 speak carelessly. Don't find fault.

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: Present the Rakusus

Cantor: **VERSE OF THE RAKUSU**

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

Community Representative speaks

Cantor: **The Heart Sutra**

The noble Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara,
while practicing deep Prajnaparamita,
observed the five ways of knowing the world
and saw they had no existence in themselves.

She said, "Here, Shariputra,
form is emptiness, emptiness is form;
form is exactly emptiness, emptiness is exactly form;
whatever is form is emptiness, whatever is emptiness is form.
The same is true for feeling, perception, memory and consciousness.
Here, Shariputra, all ways of being are defined by emptiness,
not by birth or destruction, purity or contamination, completeness or
deficiency.

So, Shariputra, in emptiness there's no form, no feeling,
no perception, no memory, no consciousness;
no eye, no ear, no nose,
no tongue, no body, and no mind;
no shape, no sound, no smell,
no taste, no touch, and no thought;
no eye nor mind, nor any other means of perception,
no ignorance nor old age and death, nor any causal link,
and also no end of causal links,
no suffering, no source of suffering, no relief from suffering, and no
way out of suffering,
no wisdom, no gaining wisdom, no failing to gain wisdom.

So, Shariputra, without gaining anything,
bodhisattvas find refuge in Prajnaparamita,
living without walls in the mind, and so without fears,
seeing through delusions and finally seeing through nirvana.

All buddhas of the past, present, and future also take refuge in
Prajnaparamita,
realizing unexcelled, perfect enlightenment.

Here, then, is the great mantra of Prajnaparamita,
the mantra of great magic,
the unexcelled mantra,
the mantra equal to the unequalled,
which heals all suffering
and isn't false but true.

The mantra in Prajnaparamita
is spoken like this:

'Gone, gone, into the gone beyond, completely into the gone beyond,
awakening, at last!

Gate gate, paragate, parasangate, bodhi svaha!'"

Cantor: **DEDICATION**

To the protectors of each moment
and the benefactors who gave us life

we offer this ceremony in gratitude.
Broken things are joined,
where there's trouble we have shelter.
Happiness has appears by itself, and then
we pass it on—
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
I vow to set endless heartache to rest
I vow to walk through every wisdom gate
I vow to live the great Buddha way.



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