



offers you

Dharma Friends

**Dedicated to Sharing the Dharma, Healing Each Other,
All Sentient Beings, and Ourselves**

January 2012 issue # 179

Happy NOW!

copyright 2012, a project of Compassion Works for All

The Dhammapada The teachings of the Buddha



Chapter 19 – The Just

256 Making an arbitrary decision does not amount to justice. Having considered arguments for and against, the wise decide the case.

257 By making decisions based on truth and fairness one safeguards the law and is called righteous.

258 Those who speak much are not necessarily possessed of wisdom. The wise can be seen to be at peace with life and free from all enmity and fear.

259 Though one's knowledge may be limited, if understanding and conduct rightly accord with the Way one is to be considered well-versed in Dhamma.

260 Having grey hair does not make you an elder; ripe in years maybe, but perhaps pointlessly so.

261 One who is truthful, virtuous, impeccable in conduct, free from all stains and wise can be called an elder.

262 -263 Those who are envious, stingy and manipulative remain unappealing despite good looks and eloquent speech. But those who have freed themselves from their faults and arrived at wisdom are attractive indeed.

264 Shaving your head does not make you a renunciate, if you are still full of recklessness and deceit. How could someone possessed by craving and lust be considered a renunciate?

265 You become a monk or nun by letting go of all evil, by renouncing all unwholesomeness, both great and small.

266 You are not a monk or nun because you depend on others for food, but by submitting yourself wholeheartedly to the training of body, speech and mind.

267 You become a monk or nun by seeing through this world with understanding, by rising above good and bad and living a life of purity and contemplation.

268 – 269 Silence does not denote profundity if you are ignorant and untrained. Like one holding scales, a sage weighs things up, wholesome and unwholesome, and comes to know both the inner and outer worlds. Therefore the sage is called wise.

270 Those who still cause harm to living beings cannot be considered as attained. Those who are attained maintain a harmless demeanor toward all beings.

271 – 272 Do not rest contented because you keep all the rules and regulations, nor because you achieve great learning. Do not feel satisfied because you attain meditative absorption, nor because you can dwell in the bliss of solitude. Only when you arrive at the complete eradication of all ignorance and conceit should you be content.

© 2006 Aruna Publications



Some thoughts about this Dhammapada verse: The Just

“Those who still cause harm to living beings cannot be considered as attained. Those who are attained maintain a harmless demeanor toward all beings.”

There are many windows through which we perceive reality and each of us - all of us who has ever lived - sees their own view. What each of us sees looks true to us and we don't see what anyone else sees, nor do most of us even think that others see something different. As we look through the window of our unique ego's view that developed through our life circumstance, karma, and biology, we might even pronounce to everyone that what we see is **right** and that others are **wrong**. We also embrace philosophies, politics, our likes and dislikes, religions, and values and create a world that matches the reality view that we perceive. And, we may condemn others for their views without ever realizing that there is no ultimate right or wrong.

To argue over who is right and who is wrong is fruitless.

The "**JUST**", those that our **Dhammapada** verse speaks of, know that only in achieving our highest realization do we share an ultimate and pure view of reality. Someday, we too will see that everyone has that same pure essence within them and that only their paths are different. Then we embrace them all for taking that journey and we can celebrate them, rather than debating and challenging them. The **JUST** know that it is not your belief system or anything that ego can measure that is attainment. The **Just** encourage all on their path and are kind to all. When there is no judgment, it is easy to be kind and supportive towards all beings. There is no more ego that wants to be right and to make others wrong.

Each person must be supported with kindness as they follow their own path of wisdom.

This verse, **The Just**, gives us a few lines that are an important lens through which we can discern whether a path, teachings, actions, philosophies, or the actions of another are **Just** while we are on our path and do not yet have pure wisdom. As we go through life, we can assess all that unfolds by holding events up to the magnifying lens of these guiding teachings. We are helped to maintain a clarity about how **Just**, or how beneficial a religion, a philosophy, our friends, or a teacher are as we travel our path. The lines are: *Those who still cause harm to living beings cannot be considered as attained. Those who are attained maintain a harmless demeanor toward all beings.*

If someone is 'preaching' teachings of love and kindness but acts and speaks in ways that cause suffering, we would be wise to silently watch for a while. If we read a teaching that encourages divisiveness or the disenfranchisement of others, we might be wise to study more before embracing those teachings. If a leader promises benefits for his followers at the expense of others, we are wise to not make any promises or commitments. Even though some might profess that they are an expert in your tradition and tell you how you should follow them as a teacher or guide, use your own wisdom judgment. Very few people in any tradition are highly accomplished wisdom teachers. The one who proclaims himself or herself to be so, is unlikely to be one of them. True wisdom teachers do not brag or market themselves. (This might be a good time to take down our "**Great Guru -\$100 per Question**" sign on the door...)

Consider that they can be your friend on the path, but do not give away any power to them that will prevent you from listening to your own inner wisdom guide as the foremost teacher for you.

We have also met those who put themselves out as holy preachers or teachers but condemn others that follow a different path than theirs. I think that it is very likely hubris and a mistake to say to another that their path is wrong and that someone should adopt theirs yours. Or worse yet, to condemn another for their path and to say that your path is the only true path. Such judgments cause pain and suffering, just as all criticisms cause pain. Tragically, this is something that I, and I bet you too, see all the time. For those that do not treat all beings with kindness, it is likely that they still perceive reality through the lens of self-focused ego. It need not be cause for a debate or argument. You do not need to be offended or take what they say personally. See though that they are merely reflecting where they are in their own evolution. I suggest that you should listen to what everyone says but, if you see that they do not live and practice kindness and justice, they still have not found a heart of compassion. They are not yet "accomplished" in the wisdom of the teachings of any wisdom tradition. *They are a human being struggling and walking the path just like most of us.*

The **Just** are greatly needed in the world to guide us all to liberation from suffering. Our ordinary world needs them to help guide us all in establishing '**Just**' social institutions, governments, as healers, and to be the religious leaders that will lead all people to our highest potential. Anyone who purports to be a just and wise leader but who causes suffering, inequity, and who blocks the paths of individuals to awaken to their highest self, is not one who is wise and just. *They are another suffering human being who is more or less struggling with the purification of ego and all its needs. We all need friends and we can embrace them on their path - but choose your guides and teachers very carefully.*

Until you are absolutely sure that another is a Compassionate and Just teacher, focus instead on finding and listening to your own inner wisdom teacher. You can become one of the Just and Wise ones through your dedicated work. Then it will be you who can help those others who are lost and struggling. Become the Just being that already lives within you, and then live that wisdom for the benefit of all. You will find that your kindness is effortless.



"But what makes these 'experts' preach their own opinion and call it truth?" asked the inquirer. "Is it an inheritance of humankind to do this, or is it merely something they gain satisfaction from?"

"Apart from consciousness," answered the Buddha, "no absolute truths exist. False reasoning declares one view to be true and another view wrong. It is delight in their dearly held opinions that makes them assert that anyone who disagrees is bound to come to a bad end. But no true seeker becomes embroiled in all this. Pass by peacefully and go a stainless way, free from theories, lusts, and dogmas."

Majjhima Nikaya



A Meditation on The Just

Here is a few more thoughts about identifying and following a **Just** spiritual teacher. If we fully know a teacher as great wisdom and compassion, we can become One in meditative merging with them as a spiritual practice that helps in all religious traditions. That meditative process can be very important for many in the path to becoming all that we are, no matter our path. But, some of you may have confusion about how to decide whether a teacher is kind or whether he or she causes suffering. You may have heard of relationships with teachers that are sometimes called wild yogis, or ferocious saints or lamas, or even horrific stories of abuse when preachers or priests lure followers into compromised relationships. There are many stories in all traditions about those who may yell at, scold, or seduce their students and some have even banished students who followed them. This is pretty tough stuff! How can we possibly say that such teachers or spiritual guides are practicing kindness *and maintaining a harmless demeanor towards all beings*? Some of you may have or have had such a teacher, pastor, lama, priest, guru or guide. I know this because you have come to me saying, *What do I do? I am hurting too much as I follow this teacher. Or - My priest or preacher abused me.*

Here is what I suggest. Only you can know who is the right teacher for you. Take your time and study a teacher long and hard before you tiptoe into the sacred relationship of teacher/student. If a teacher or guide feels right to you and helps you to truly feel you are on your sacred path, then keep going and stick around them. If you see the teacher being severe with others and that scares you, but you still feel deeply committed to them, go slowly. If the teacher scolds or is severe with you, take a little while to sort it out. Be aware if the ferocity of the teacher helps to cleanse you of ego attachments, blind spots, or opens you up to deeper truths. If it is just too much for you, pull back. If it feels like abuse, it may well be. If it feels right, talk to them. If it feels way over your head, pull way back and let the pain die down and find your own inner voice to heal and guide you. They may truly be a wisdom teacher, but you may not yet be ready for that kind of teaching. Or, they may not be a realized teacher or saintly priest at all and only an imposter who takes advantage of those dependent on them. They too have not let go of all their challenges. Most of all, listen to your inner voice and inner guide and go slowly.

We can become One in Vastness through meditative merging with the wisdom and compassion of the teacher

The journey is always in awakening you to your inner Buddha, or to Christ, to God, or to your 'realized self'. A **Just** teacher helps to guide us there by mirroring our own wisdom and compassion. Ultimately, though, that **Just** teacher is within you. If we know a true teacher as great wisdom and compassion, they are a vehicle and a mirror for us to know our deepest self. The teacher you choose might be aware of such a meditation or not. They might be present in person in our life or not. It does not matter whether we have even met them. Maybe we have read about them or know them through the stories of others. They can still become our teacher. It is their kindness and wisdom that we rest in in order to realize that state for ourselves. Always, the Just One, the Kind One, the Realized One is in our *own heart*.

The meditation

In your quiet meditation time, choose a teacher that you feel is kind and who *maintains a harmless demeanor towards all beings everywhere*. This may be someone you know, have read about, or have seen some place, or who just appears to you out of your imagination. Most of all, you know their sacred true nature and you know their love for you.

Feel their presence as you imagine them before you and in your heart as well. Allow yourself some time to see them, feel them, and even talk to them. Know that by appearing in your awareness, you have some deep connection to them and that they care about you. Let their caring fill your heart. Let their caring bring you healing and peace.

Now, as though they can open their heart and mind and fill all space, allow yourself to open your heart and body and merge with them. Dissolve into all their love for you. Just dissolve as though you were a drop of water dissolving into an ocean. You, the drop, dissolves into the ocean, your teacher. Now you are One. Rest there in their love and wisdom for as long as you can. Know you can return to this meditation and connection any time you wish. The teacher will be waiting there in your heart for you, even if you forget that they are there. Try to remember them often and dissolve again into their mind in Oneness. Stay there longer and longer every day.

From your Letters:



Holidays for Dharma Friends - January:

December 20 – Judaism: eve of Hanukkah and December 21 is the first day of Hanukkah

December 22 – Wicca: Yule, the New Year

Shinto: Tohji-taisai, the Grand Ceremony of the December Solstice

December 25 – Christian: Christmas

December 26 – Zoroastrianism: the death of Zarathustra ca. 6000 BCE

North Americans of West African heritage: Kwanzaa

December 28 – Judaism: last day of Hanukkah

December 31 – Zoroastrianism: the celebration of the creation of animals.

January 27 - International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust.

and a few other reminders -

#1 - We are trying to become a well-oiled machine here and you can help us! It would help Linda a lot if you would briefly put on your envelopes what it is you want. If you are a subscriber who wants to change your address or if you are new and want to be put on the mailing list, say that. Also write on the envelope if you want a book, a dictionary or a Mindful Money book, if you have an Ask Tim question, or if you are including a letter for Jeff's Kids. Then she need not search through the letters for all that information and can send your letter on to the next person to take care of your request. Thank you.

#2 -ASK TIM -If you have a burning question - ASK TIM! Write us with your questions. Tim will tackle almost anything - except how to file your legal paperwork. Questions about life, getting a job, which fork to use at the dinner table, anything you have also wanted to know but did not know who to ask, now try: **ASK TIM!**

#3 -Become a DICTIONARY DROP TEAM PLAYER!

We have been so admiring of so many of you for wanting dictionaries, we also wanted to support you with a fun program to encourage your interest in learning words, developing a larger vocabulary, and gaining skills that will serve you well when you are out and applying for jobs. Here are the game plays for our Dictionary Drop !!

If you want a dictionary, there are two plays.

#1-Drop a letter to us at CWFA/DF DICTIONARY DROP and tell us how you will be helped by having a dictionary. We have English and Spanish/English dictionaries. Specify which you want.

#2- AND - get a new teammate! Give us the name of someone you know who would ALSO benefit from having a dictionary. Give us their name, number, and address, and tell us why you want to make this gift. (You might check this out with them first so they won't take it as an insult to their English skills!) You might see if they would also like to receive **Dharma Friends** and mention that to us too. We will send them a dictionary and a note that you have given them this gift - and **Dharma Friends** too.

and then... If you want to play the game... (you can get a dictionary and choose not to play, or if you already have a dictionary, you can use your own...)

#3 - In each **Dharma Friends** issue we will have a word drop - and ask you to research it and send us a note that explains your understanding of it and maybe even what it means to you in your life.

#4 - For those who are on the team and play the game, we will send you a CWFA/Dharma Friends Dictionary Drop Certificate after we receive twelve months' of letters successfully explaining the words we include.

Hooray - Your Team Wins!

#4 - For the women...Kathleen Welton has graciously donated a handful of her latest book, "The Little Book of Gratitude Quotes", a beautiful book full of motivational and encouraging quotes. She requests that these books specifically go to women inmates. If you are a woman and are interested in a having a copy sent to you, please let us know. A limited quantity is available. Please put on the envelope "**Quote Book**".

#5- Jeff's Kids and your letters: Jeff is our friend who counsels kids in a Juvenile Detention Center. He thought that sharing your thoughts or stories about your journey to prison might benefit kids that are in the same situation that you might have been in once upon a time. Know how much your letters are all appreciated for your stories, your advice, and for being such a wonderful vehicle to reach broken hearts! The healing that is coming from these letters is extraordinary. **If you would like to write a letter to Jeff's Kids the address is: CWFA, PO Box 7708, Little Rock, Arkansas 72217-7708 and put JEFF'S KIDS on the envelope. Keep those letters coming. For those who have written to Jeff's Kids, thank you so much!**

#6- If you would like a free copy of Linda's **Mindful Money** book to learn a great understanding about money and your life - just send a letter to CWFA and put on the envelope - **MINDFUL MONEY BOOK** please We have a limited supply. 😊



Book of Knowledge - Omar's dream - our friend Omar dreamed of educating ourselves as much as we can so that we all can become all that we can be..

The book – **Nicholas Roerich - The Life and Art of a Russian Master**
by **Jacqueline Decter** and the Nicholas Roerich Museum



The Treasure of the World - Chintamani
by Nicholas Roerich

A quote: *"In the Treasure of the World - Chintamani and the Burning of Darkness, we enter the mountains. Both are highly symbolic works illustrating Roerich's belief in the divine fire-agni that in the new Era will be brought out of the mountains to illumine human consciousness. The first work is a visual presentation of the Tibetan Legend of the Steed of Happiness, on whose back the sacred stone Chintamani - treasure of the world is carried down from the mountain heights.*

As the horse descends the craggy mountain pass, everything around it is illuminated by the blue flame emanating from the chest that contains the sacred stone. The cliffs that line the pass seem to be sentinels carved out of stone, guarding the steed's descent."

Dear Dharma Friends readers: If you are able to acquire this book or others about Nicholas Roerich, the great Russian painter and his wife, you will read of two people who followed true spiritual life journeys despite great hardships and who left a legacy of fabulous art that poured from Roerich's heart. You will learn much of his youth in Russia, his travels through Tibet and Mongolia, and the politics of spiritual paths in the early twentieth century. It is an exciting and uplifting guide for us on our journeys.

Remember: we are sharing these books because they will help you, but unfortunately these are not books that we have in stock or can send to you for free. Sorry.

The DICTIONARY DROP WORD for JANUARY IS *Compassion*

A letter from SH:

Dear Anna: Thank you - you truly are a wish fulfilling jewel. Your thoughts on the **Dhammapada** each month have and are helping me and therefore others gain joy and compassion; love and happiness. Anna, it took me a day to come up with words to describe my thoughts and thanks and still the paragraph above seems inadequate. I'd like to tell you why. In order to do that I have to go back some years. Please be patient with me. I'm not the best of writers.

I've been in prisons since 1990. I'm serving a life sentence - eligible for parole after 25 years. I turned 23 in prison. At that age, life was life; I was never getting out.

To keep it short, my "life" in prison has sent me on a path that I can only describe as enlightened. Although I didn't see it that way until I started following Buddhism. I've been studying Buddhism since 2006. Before I continue, please understand and I don't know how to put it in words what happened to me. So bear with me.

Although I did not know this at the time, all my life I've been facing my unhealthy thoughts, values, beliefs - etc. through my dreams, or when I was asleep. Calling these experiences dreams or nightmares doesn't convey the "realism" or strength in these episodes.

For years - decades - I have been afraid of these "dreams". Running, hiding - and waking up scared and exhausted. Feelings of self doubt, worthlessness, low self esteem. Coward . I could probably list all the negative values you can attach to a person.

Because of these "dream" experiences in my early years of prison, I was put on a psychotropic and I took medication, Sinequan. I don't know how to spell it. As a consequence my experiences happen more frequently, not less. The stress grew and grew - the experiences were getting uglier and more violent, more and more vivid. Toward the end of my medicated days, I understood that a great force of the same magnitude of God or Satan was attacking me and I could not win against it. Depression hit so bad one day that I just lay in bed for two or three days wanting to die. I was going to have to live like this for life. To this day I don't know who or what made me get out, but I did. Then, later, I went to a Christian based retreat called Kairos. I started refusing my medication. I read the Bible and books by Bo Lozoff. My "dream" experiences were still there, worse than ever before. The only difference was that I understood what the great force was. I realized I was fighting myself. I didn't know how to fix it or what the fight was about. All I knew was that the struggle I was going through was inside.

These dream experiences were horrendous, Anna. Whatever pain I felt in these "dreams" lasted for hours after I finally awoke. My mom shot me five times in one of these episodes. The pain of those shots lasted all morning. My sister stabbed me in several episodes. I felt those for hours. Those were probably the worst that I could talk about. In some episodes, I would think that I had awakened only to find that I was still asleep. Sometimes it took four or five tries to wake up. Sometimes I would have to race to the bathroom to throw up. None of these words can describe the fear and horror of these episodes. This didn't happen every day, but the anxiety did - "Would I have another one tonight?"

The struggles of surviving in prison is nothing compared to my nights.

About my fifth year in prison, I made a breakthrough realization and what triggered these episodes. I noticed that when something good or positive happened in my life, that night an episode would occur. To me that was weird and I did not understand. It took me awhile to make the connection. But it finally hit me. Deep down, I truly believed I did not deserve good or positive in my life. Talking, listening to certain people, reading certain books, feeling a certain way - all would trigger these episodes. Again, I do not know who or what made me make the decision to confront the Great Force, but one night I did and instead of running, hiding, flying or whatever I normally did in these episodes in the past, this time I turned around to face myself.

It was the worst experience of my life. The next day and the day after, I was sick and confused. But I didn't stop. This next part may sound really weird but it's absolutely real. My psyche developed a warning signal for when I would have an episode. Believe it or not, as I would drift off to sleep a kind of band of white noise would start in my head. And it was in a narrow band stretched from ear to ear. The center started at the base of my skull then rose all the way to my forehead. At least, that's where it was when I'd fall asleep.

The reason I explain this to you, Anna, is to give you a kind of history of the relationship my gross mind had with my subtle mind. (Not my very subtle mind) You could say they were at war with each other. Through the years, this relationship has become more amiable. Through meditation and contemplation, and following the Great Path to Enlightenment, I have gained a greater sense of love and compassion for myself as well as all sentient beings. And a greater understanding of self.

So, finally, we come to the reason I wrote. It's about the last episode I had about two weeks ago. In this episode "I" was two. I had something important to accomplish. As I struggled, not in a negative sense, I knew I had to do something in order to move on on my path. Suddenly, I slipped. It felt like I had fallen, a bad case of vertigo. I had the sense that whatever it was that I had to accomplish, I failed. But there wasn't any grief or fear when I woke, only remorse and sadness. If I interpreted the episode correctly, it was about my attachments. How attached I am to this world. See, one of the meditations I have been doing is dying. And as I get deeper into this contemplation, I am realizing the things I "cherished". Though I have given up a lot of my attachments, I am finding more. This last episode, I believe, showed me that it's not just the gross mind that holds onto attachment but our subtle mind holds them as well. And they are harder to perceive than from the gross mind.

This was a powerful experience for me. It was really good and affirmed all I believe in Buddhism and my conventional self. This episode also showed me how my gross and subtle minds effect my very subtle mind. Because I believe that just for an instant during the episode, I perceived my heart mind or very subtle mind. Probably for ½ second but those seem to be a greater power in the "corner" of this experience. And it was also a part of me.

I really hope that I was able to convey my thoughts to you in a way you would understand. I'm not good at writing and sharing stuff. I have followed the teaching of Je Tsongkapa through the wonderful guidance of two very special spiritual teachers - Mike and Pat Lawmen with Refuge without Boundaries. Their root guru is Geshe-la. I also receive great love and guidance from Kelsang Teckchang. I have written them similar letters. This experience was/ is too important to me not to let those who helped me know their influence too. It is my hope that others will benefit from these experiences and words. As I am healing and growing through others, may I help others heal and grow through me. May whatever virtue collected from this letter benefit all sentient beings. Namaste, Anna!

"In every direction," said the Buddha, "above, below, around, and within, you see things you know and recognize. Put them down. Do not let consciousness dwell on the products of existence and things that come and go, for there is no rest of relief there. When you understand that by taking the objects of the world for granted as total reality, you are tied to the world, then this understanding will release you from your dependence on objects and will stop your craving and your desire for constant becoming. Then you can let go your hold and engage with things as they are, instead."- Sutta Nipata

Freedom in Practice by Joshua Katus

My alarm clock is the sound of metal call bars clanging open at approximately five in the morning as an inmate living below me is awakened to attend their job in the kitchen. I then proceed to make my bed, wash my hands and face, and then meditate for thirty minutes before my cell opens and I have to go out and join the chaos of prison life. That's right – prison.

Now some might wonder, “What in the world has prison got to do with what the Buddha taught: I mean, aren't people in prison because they were living the antithesis of the Buddha's teachings?” While this may be true, there is still much to learn from the experience of a prisoner. Also, one should not forget the story of Milarepa who was able to abandon his ways as a murderer thanks to his stumbling on the Dharma.

While most prisoners are not fortunate enough to encounter the Dharma prior to their incarceration, their situation provides the perfect atmosphere for the ripening of their karmic seeds which will bring them in touch with the Buddha's teachings. When it seems like you've hit rock bottom, one of the biggest questions you have is why things are the way they are. You often times feel abandoned by your family, your friends, and quite possibly even your god (or capital G as the case may be). There is this vast emptiness inside looking for answers that might fill it.

Into this vast, dark emptiness can come the light of Buddha's teachings. Perhaps a bored inmate comes across a free Dharma book that someone received from an organization such as the Prison Dharma Network or the Liberation Prison Project. Maybe another inmate invites you to attend the institution's Buddhist meeting to learn about meditation or even just experience a bit of solitude in the midst of all the hustle and noise. Either way (or any of a number of others for that matter), some things start to click for some of us. I'm in this situation as a result of actions I committed – Karma. I've got a release date, so it's not like I'm going to be here forever – impermanence. The list goes on.

Once a person in prison comes to know the Buddha's teachings, he or she need only look around to see evidence of their truths. By having direct experience of the teachings, a prisoner is hopefully able to develop a stronger faith in them.

Let us take the **Four Noble Truths** as an example.

The First Noble Truth tells us that suffering exists. If you can't see the Truth behind this in prison, you need glasses. Every day brings a litany of complaints, “I deserve this . . . The food is disgusting . . . These mattresses are too thin . . . “ It's endless. Then we can toss on top of that the suffering that comes from identifying with the ego. Everyone wants to be top dog. Reputations can be such a big deal that fights can break out over such insignificant things as what to watch on television or whether or not a window should be open. So yeah, prisoners are familiar with suffering.

The Second Noble Truth states that we cause our own suffering through our attachment. To the prisoner, this becomes obvious upon arrest. Everything gets taken from you when you go to prison. You lose your job, your standing in society, possibly money, cars, even friends and family often times vanish when you think you need them most. In the worst case scenario, you even lose your very identity and have your name taken from you and have it replaced with an identification number. This causes a great deal of pain as you long for what you used to have. Eventually, at least for those who come across a true spiritual path, this suffering eases as we learn to become content with what we have.

The Third Noble Truth, that there is an end to suffering, is the hardest to find proof of in the prison system. Endlessly, we see more and more people getting locked up. We see families being destroyed. If anything, we see suffering being perpetuated rather than destroyed. Every once in a while though, we see the up side. People do go home from these places. We see the changes as cases go to court and sentences get reduced.

The Fourth Noble Truth, the path of the Middle Way, is the means by which one puts an end to suffering. Realization of this truth is seen through the examples set by those who practice it. Those who follow the Noble Eightfold Path of Right View, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration manage to exude an aura of peace despite the environment of turmoil. If the lunch menu changes, they are pleased by the surprise rather than complain about not getting what they were expecting. If the institution locks down and they are forced to spend days, weeks, or even months isolated in their cell, they do not complain, but simply use it as a time for more intense practice and meditation. This shows others that it is possible to live a peaceful, pleasing life in spite of external circumstances.

So, now you can see that a prison environment can give many direct examples of the Buddha's teachings. Combine that with the fact that most prisoners do not have to worry about the daily grind of bills, laundry, meal preparation, and the like and you are

presented with a great opportunity to practice and obtain direct realizations of the Dharma. All that many of us lack are qualified teacher to guide us on the path.

All paraphrasing of the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path are those of the author and any errors are his and his alone. I hope that any merits I might accumulate by sharing these musings might be dedicated to all sentient beings that they may reach nirvana and escape the bonds of cyclic existence. Much metta to all,

Metta Meditation - Loving Kindness, sent by DC

Step 1

Begin by taking a few letting-go breaths and then enter the inner sanctuary of stillness. Imagine the light and love of the Divine pouring over you and washing through you, revealing the purity of your own heart, extending beyond you and merging with the Divine Light. See yourself totally enclosed in the Divine light, and then repeat these loving kindness blessings.

May I be at peace, May my heart remain open,
May I awaken to the light of my own true nature,
May I be healed, May I be a source of healing for all beings.

Step 2

Bring your loved ones to mind and see them in as much detail as possible, imagining the Light of God shining down on them and washing through them, revealing the light - the Godseed - within their heart. See this light grow brighter, merging with the light of God and enclosing them in the Divine light. Then bless them:

May you be at peace, May your heart remain open,
May you awaken to the light of our own true nature
May you be healed, May you be a source of healing for all beings.

Step 3

The third step of Metta extends blessings to those who might be a little harder to love.

Place someone that you have some problems with in the Divine light, and see the light washing away all their negativity and illusion, just as it did for you. Bless them.

May you be at peace, May your heart remain open,
May you awaken to the light of our own true nature
May you be healed, May you be a source of healing for all beings.

Step 4

Now think of a group of people that you heart really goes out to and repeat the blessings for them:

May you be at peace, May your heart remain open,
May you awaken to the light of our own true nature
May you be healed, May you be a source of healing for all beings.

Step 5

Now think of Our Beautiful Planet Earth and see the Earth surrounded in Divine Light and repeat the blessings for Mother Earth:

May you be at peace, May your heart remain open,
May you awaken to the light of our own true nature
May you be healed, May you be a source of healing for all beings.

Thanks to D. who sent us this from Joan Borysenko's POCKETFUL OF MIRACLES

It is crucial to know when it is appropriate to withdraw our attention from things that disturb our mind. However, if the only way we know how to deal with certain objects is to avoid them, there will be a severe limit as to how far our spiritual practice can take us. - Lama Thubten Yeshe, "Introduction to Tantra"

Subscription information: We have gladly been offering this newsletter free of charge to those in prisons. We are so happy to have a vehicle for those who have little dharma support to feel united with others who identify with their life situation. It is truly important to remember that we are all mirrors of each other. We are all one with each other. And we can recognize that samsara is suffering for us all whether behind the bars of a prison or behind the bars of our own ego structure.

For anyone who is not in prison and who would like to subscribe to *Dharma Friends*, here is what to do. Sent us an email and you may have your monthly issue free. EMAIL dharmafriends@comcast.net. If you want a paper copy, the fee is \$30 for one year. Mail a check or money order made out to **Compassion Works for All:** and send to **Compassion Works for All, Dharma Friends subscriptions, PO Box 7708, Little Rock, AR. 72217-7708**. This amount covers the subscription for you and a partial subscription for a prisoner. I also want to acknowledge the enormous generosity of many of those in prisons who have sent stamps and letters of support and appreciation. Far more important than anything material are the letters and notes that say that you are benefiting from being part of this sangha of **Dharma Friends**. I think that many feel less alone on their journey because we are connected beyond all time and space to each other.

PLEASE LET US KNOW IF YOUR ADDRESS CHANGES.

Kristopher says that he is getting many requests for back issues. Some of these are because of mail room errors but some are because we are behind on current addresses. If you change your address, please send a note to LINDA to give us your new address and she can send your next issue to your new location. That saves us money and you from having to write for your back issues.

Thanks so much for your help!

SOME NEW OPTIONS: We are always trying to be mindful of \$\$\$ in order to keep publishing our newsletter, as we are always in search of additional funding. **Here are some ways that you can help us.**

If you are receiving *Dharma Friends* but do not read it or know someone else who does not read their issues, either donate them to your library, or write and tell us to take you off the *Dharma Friends* list. Now, some have written and said that others need them more than they do so take their name off. Don't be too generous!!

WE WANT YOU TO KEEP GETTING DHARMA FRIENDS IF IT IS HELPFUL TO YOU!

From Chelle-

Just for Today

Just for Today - I will live through the next 12 hours and not try to tackle all of life's problems at once.

Just for Today - I will improve my mind. I will learn something useful. I will read something that requires thought and concentration.

Just for Today - I will be agreeable. I will look my best, speak in a well-modulated voice, be courteous and considerate.

Just for Today - I will not find fault with friend, relative or colleague. I will not try to change or improve anyone by myself.

Just for Today - I will do a good turn and keep it a secret. If anyone finds out, it won't count.

Just for Today - I will have a program. I might not follow it exactly, but I will have it. I will save myself from two enemies - hurry and indecision.

Just for Today - I will do two things I don't want to do, just because I need the discipline.

Just for Toda - I will believe in myself. I will give my best to the world and feel confident that the world will give its best to me.

From Lawrence - Anna, would you please announce this in the next **Dharma Friends**: Anna Cox you are the bomb, and thank you for all that you do for the brothers and sisters in prison via **Dharma Friends** and **Compassion Works For All**. Your organization rocks. Thanks to the **Dharma Friends Readers** my upcoming book will be a total success. We are now in the post production process of this awesome book called **The Eye of Truth** and can no longer accept any more letters. Thank You for your participation.

Thank You guys for your input in reference to my up-coming 6th book called **The Eye of Truth** by Lawrence J. King. Your entire stories and comments will be printed in **The Eye of Truth** and I thank you guys from the bottom of my heart for wanting to be a part of this amazing upcoming book called **The Eye of Truth** by Lawrence J. King

<http://www.artistfirst.com/lawrenceking.htm> and check out my Radio Show. Approximately 8-10 weeks from now this book will be published and all of you that participated will receive a personalized autographed copy of this book.

The following people have made an amazing contribution to **The Eye of Truth**.

David Shane, Cristobal Garcia, Kendall K. Snider, A.S.A. Gul Bronson, Adam Remington, Sidney Harvey, Richard R. Soto, Joe Oneal, Richard L. Bradshaw, Sean Malis, Troy T. Thomas, Ph.D., Jamil D. Gordon, Steven Kenly, John Steinbach, Louis J. Rocco, James L. Halbirt, K.R. Johnson, Chris Godfrey, Jeremiah Park, Travis Wolfkill, Joshva Doyel.

Thanks, L.J.King

If you have family or friends who might like to receive Dharma Friends as well, they can just let us know and we will put them on the list and send them issues via email or paper copies for free. It is important for us to keep those in prisons connected to society, and most especially to their families and friends. We greatly value the opportunity to bring a loving community of support to those who are connected to people in prison as they are often made to feel uncomfortable by society. If those you love receive Dharma Friends too, think of the common growth that you would share and the bond that could develop. So, you might suggest Dharma Friends as something your friends and family might like to donate to if they can. Write and ask Linda to put them on our email list or hard copy list.

Here is a letter that you can send to your family members to encourage them to read Dharma Friends along with you to help them grow with you so that you can stay better connected.



Dear

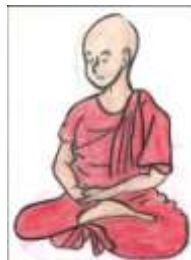
Here in prison, I receive a monthly newsletter from Compassion Works for All called Dharma Friends. It offers support from ancient wisdom with which we explore our spiritual path, no matter what tradition someone follows. We learn meditation teachings, psychological and emotional healing, and we build a community between those in prison and those out in the world through letters.

Compassion Works for All encourages communication and healing of old family patterns and relationship issues with those I have left behind - like you. If we are both reading Dharma Friends issues, one way to support such discussions between us is to use the issues as a basis for our discussions. I welcome this opportunity to share such healing and growth talks and letters with you and would like to ask you to go to www.JustUsFriends.org and sign up for the twice monthly emails that will bring you Dharma Friends newsletter and also the www.CompassionWorksforAll.org web site updates. There are lots of healing videos on the web site as well, some especially for those with family members and friends who are in prison.

I greatly regret that we are spending this time apart and the challenges that it imposes on our relationship. I also look forward to being able to use all of these traumatic events as a way to grow beyond the issues of our past and find a stronger healing that will benefit not only me and you but all those that we love.

Thank you for considering sharing Dharma Friends and this part of my life with me. I hope it helps you as much as it has helped me. Love,

Never think that I believe I should set out a "system of teaching" to help people understand the way. Never cherish such a thought. What I proclaim is the truth as I have discovered it and "a system of teaching" has no meaning because the truth can't be cut up into pieces and arranged in a system. - Diamond Sutra



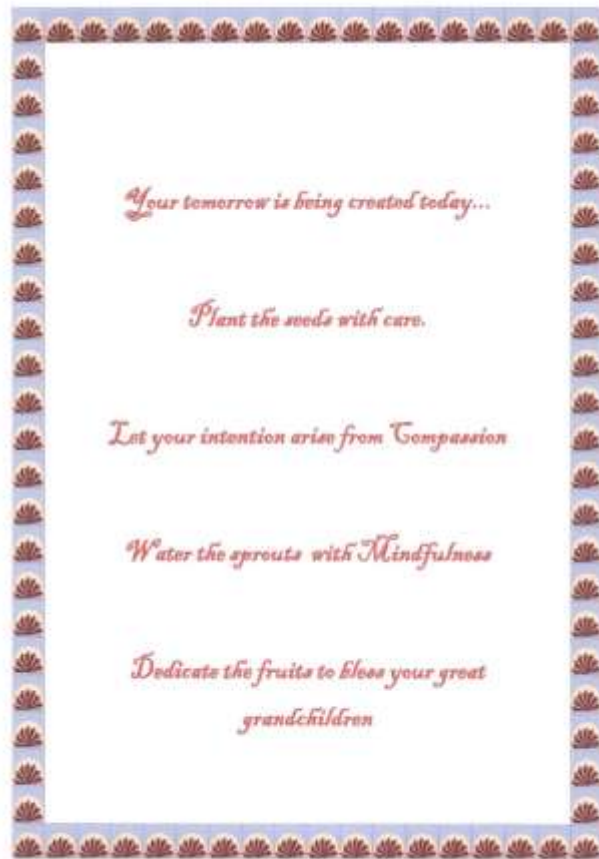
by G.R.

Compassion Works for All/ Dharma Friends
PO Box 7708
Little Rock, Arkansas 72217-7708

Webpage: CompassionWorksforAll.org

FREE RELIGIOUS MATERIAL

Permit NO. 160
Non-Profit organization
US Postage PAID
Little Rock, AR.





Dharma Friends

January 2012 issue # 179

copyright 2012,

Compassion Works for All

Additional Pages for EMAIL VERSION of *Dharma Friends*

Happy Holidays to Everyone of Every tradition



COMPASSION WORKS

Join us in our monthly **Compassion Works** sessions if you are in Arkansas.

The next sessions are: Thursday, December 15 at Fletcher Library; and Tuesday, January 17, at 1 PM, at St. Margaret's Church on Chenault Blvd.

- Compassion for You and Compassion for All. Sessions are free, non-denominational and open to everyone. You will be comfortable if you are a beginner or an advanced meditator.

Compassion Works sessions offer a quiet experience of compassion.

With a few gentle and guiding prompts, we will let go of the struggle, renew, heal, and send compassion into the world. Then we head out again to live our question - How can I live compassion for myself and for all beings today?

We will add you to our email reminder list if you want information on times, dates and place, or you can go to www.justusfriends.org/ and print out the schedule.

(We also offer portions on videos and have this printout so that you can have an individual practice or you could start Compassion Works sessions in your locality)

For those in Arkansas - Join us in this wonderful opportunity to learn about prayer in all spiritual traditions.

Let's Pray

SUNDAY, JANUARY 15,
2012

1:00 PM—5:00 PM
WORKSHOP
\$25

6:30 PM—8:30 PM
DINNER AND DEEPENING
WORK FOR EXPERIENCED
MEDITATORS
\$20

ST. MARGARET'S
EPISCOPAL CHURCH
20900 CHENAL PKWY
LITTLE ROCK, AR
FOR MORE INFO:

602-570-4226
SCPSALEM1@GMAIL.COM

Join us for a landmark event, as representatives of the Christian, Jewish, Islamic and Buddhist faiths teach how their respective religions engage in silent, contemplative prayer. The workshop will be held from 1:00 p.m.—5:00 p.m. and is designed for people of all stages of experience in meditative prayer. The cost is \$25. Specific contemplative prayer techniques will be taught, and there will be two opportunities to practice contemplative prayer in the Arkansas House of Prayer.

For people further in their meditation journey, the Rev. Susan Sims Smith will offer a dinner and new teaching to deepen the journey from 6:30 p.m.—8:30 p.m. The cost is \$20 for dinner and the evening class, or \$15 for participants in the Interfaith Prayer Workshop.

Sponsored by Arkansas House of Prayer, the Interfaith Center of the Institute for Theological Studies at St. Margaret's (ITSSM) and St. Margaret's Episcopal Church.

Registration Form

Full Name (please print): _____

Address: _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email Address: _____

Please check one: 1:00 p.m. -5:00 p.m. Interfaith Prayer Workshop (\$25)
6:30 pm—8:30 pm Dinner and Deepening Work for Advanced Meditators (\$20)
Both (\$40)

Please send payment and registration form to :

The Interfaith Center
c/o ITSSM
221 W. 2nd St, Suite 722
Little Rock, AR 72201

Workshop Presenters



Rabbi Eugene Levy, Ret., "Preparing to Pray from the Jewish tradition" Rabbi Levy recently retired in October after serving as Rabbi of Congregation B'Nai Israel since 1987. He has had a dedicated career in interfaith efforts, including serving as Chairman of the Advisory Committee of the Arkansas Interfaith Conference in 1989 and co-founding the Arkansas Interfaith Alliance.



Sophia Said, Senior Policy Analyst of Ingenuity Outcomes, "Dhikr—a Sufi Muslim's way to meditate" Sophia Said is a native of Pakistan and moved to the United States where she received a degree in development economics from the University of Utah and a graduate degree from the Clinton School of Public Service in Little Rock, Arkansas. Mrs. Said works with the Little Rock Muslim community in their outreach efforts and is deeply committed to promoting interfaith dialogue and understanding among various faith groups in Arkansas.



Anna Cox, Coordinator, Compassion Works For All, "Meditation from the Buddhist Perspective." After being a psychotherapist and student of Buddhism since the early 1970s, she is now very focused on the work of Compassion Works for All which teaches compassion to everyone, everywhere, but most particularly to those in prison. She also leads Buddhist prayers and practices at the Ecumenical Buddhist Society in Little Rock.



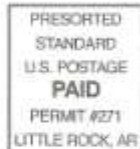
The Rev. Susan Sims Smith, Director, Interfaith Center, "Centering Prayer" The Rev. Susan Sims Smith was a Jungian oriented psychotherapist for 25 years. She has been an Episcopal priest for 11 years. She started Seedwork (www.seedwork.org), a project to teach people how to listen to wisdom from their dreams and from meditation. She spearheaded the foundation of the Arkansas House of Prayer (www.arkansashouseofprayer.org), an interfaith center for prayer and meditation.

The goal of the Interfaith Center is to reduce the hatred and fear among the world religions.

Visit us at www.itssm.org/interfaith.html

The Interfaith Center

The Rev. Susan Sims Smith and
Sarah Catherine Gutierrez
Institute for Theological Studies at St. Margaret's
221 W. 2nd St, Suite 722
Little Rock, AR 72201



Our friend, the Rev. Susan Sims Smith is going to India and wants you to come along! Check this out.

http://www.justusfriends.org/contribution_view.asp?aid=246

*At Compassion Works for All - We have **BOOKS FOR SALE:***

We now have more of Linda Bessette's Mindful Money book – order here by emailing Linda. see address below...

Mara Leveritt's books!

The Boys on the Tracks: Death, Denial, and a Mother's Crusade to Bring Her Son's Killers to Justice

And

Devil's Knot: The True Story of the West Memphis Three

Email Linda (lbessette33@comcast.net) and she can give you more information about prices, mailing, etc. for all books.

And anna's books –

Just As the Breeze Blows Through Moonlight, and Dharma Friends and the Healthy Living pamphlet are on our old Compassion Works for All web site – www.dharmafriendsprisonoutreachproject.com for a free download – but donations are always appreciated! Or you can order a hardcopy book for \$15 plus shipping (\$5) at my email address: anna@aristotle.net

We are updating our web site and the address is now:

www.CompassionWorksforAll.org

but you can still get there using the old site address, www.JustUsFriends.org.

Check us out and help spread the news by emailing the site to your friends!

Along with informative and inspirational articles –

there are many videos in our video archive to lend a little support in difficult life issues.

If you would like to host a Compassion Works for All fundraising coffee -

Please let us know and we will plan details with you!!

This is a friendly and informative way to raise money for our efforts.

You invite those who you think would appreciate the philanthropic opportunity.

We will supply the coffee and cookies and I will gladly give a talk to your guests.

You may forward any past Dharma Friends newsletters, or this newsletter, on to anyone who you believe would benefit from them. If someone has sent this Dharma Friends issue to you as a gift and you would like to join us each month, please email anna@aristotle.net for more information about Compassion Works for All, our Dharma Friends newsletter, and our prison outreach program. You may receive Dharma Friends by email for a \$30 tax-deductible donation. If you would prefer a hard copy, the subscription fee is also \$30, but unfortunately it is not tax deductible because you receive a paper publication for your donation.

