

We have already reached, so quickly, the mid-day, the mid-point of our *sesshin*. To make the analogy with mountain climbing, on this fourth day we are now going for the peak. But you must not have the attitude that there is no rush, because you still have the fifth, sixth and seventh days to climb, because the mountain climbing analogy only goes so far. In a sense, in the deeper sense, you are not trying to reach the peak of the mountain at all. Your aspiration, your goal, is always, only to be able to be Here, to be of service to all beings. Isn't it true, hasn't it come to be that you can no longer bear the thought that you might not be able to truly help others. So you are climbing step-by-step. This One-Step. You are doing the great work of becoming one who is able to be in perfect accord with Original Mind. No matter what you encounter, to remain calm, centred – no matter what, Now and Here. You are Here-Now because you have already aroused the aspiration for enlightenment. The aspiration for enlightenment is to be One with Life – as it is. The aspiration for enlightenment is being in accord with true Life. Enlightenment is Original Mind, genuine Self. The aspiration to awaken to your True Nature for the sake of all beings, is in a sense, awakening itself. Of course, you still have the question at times, "How should I live my life?" You often wonder what it is to be in harmony with True Nature. There is still at times a sense of insufficiency, of wanting things to be different to better suit yourself. And, so, you may well ask me, "Does this mean only when I have attained supreme enlightenment, will I be able to help others? Only then will my step be clear and truly given?" No. All is well. Now, as you are, you are walking Truth's Walk, practicing Truth. Of course, everyone is. Ultimately the great earth and all sentient beings attain The Way. No, you have not seen into this yet. You are holding something, grasping, unsettled, "If only this, If only that..". But, all is well. All is well. Even though you are still mired in confusion, and your aspiration, even though you are still mired in confusion, your aspiration to attain enlightenment for all beings, is all important. Of course, the aspiration to attain enlightenment is to not ignore others and seek to attain The Way for your own selfish gain. You do not seek The Way for self-gratification. Your aspiration to attain enlightenment is the aspiration to help all other beings. No matter how weak you are, even though you are still wondering confused at the foot of the mountain, your determination to be of service, to bring happiness to all beings, is crucial, and it is, in accord, with Truth. So your goal now in the deep middle of this *sesshin* is not to strive desperately to reach the mountain peak of Buddhahood for myself. Really, really what you must vow and pray for and deepen is this: I vow not to cross over to the other shore of enlightenment before all beings have crossed. Your vow, your

promise, is to liberate all beings before you yourself are liberated. May all beings attain enlightenment. This is your vow – the Bodhisattva vow. And to follow the Buddha Way, to be in accord with The Way is just this in itself: May all beings attain happiness...all beings. Of course, of course, even when you have made this vow, even when this vow is in your heart, you cannot afford to be careless. If you are careless you will fall into the old habit of putting “I, me, mine” first. You will seek to enhance self. And another point is that we very easily tend to think, “How can I help anyone, if I myself am not at peace? If I myself am in such a muddle, if I have not seen into Truth, how can I guide anyone else to Truth?” But this attitude, while humble and honest, is mistaken. Listen, it is stated so clearly. To awaken Bodhi Mind means to vow not to cross over to the other shore before all beings have done so. So, you can know that your way is clear. The Way is clear. All is well. For the sake of all beings you must be a person who can say, “Please go ahead. Everyone, go ahead. Great peace of mind”. All the Buddhas, all the Bodhisattvas, all held others up before themselves. All dedicated themselves to the welfare of all beings. “Please, go ahead”. At this time, already, body and mind are released .. forgotten. Someone told me that it was not in their mind to practice for the sake of others. That was not foremost in their mind. Up till now they had practiced first and foremost with the goal of self-enlightenment. I want enlightenment. I want peace of mind, liberation, and then I always thought I could always then be able to probably help others. Of course, you can imagine that I had to talk to them very strongly. “That is no good!”. Why? Who is it who is now receiving all of Life’s inexhaustible blessings, Now and Here, already from the beginning. Who is perfectly blessed? Who? No-one of you, no-one is lacking a thing. You are blessed, blessed, blessed with all the universe.

The first day of *sesshin* I talked to you about the roots of great faith, great belief. All beings are Buddha endowed with virtue, wisdom. Buddha virtue. Buddha wisdom. This is Truth. It can never be lost to you, never deluded, never harmed, nor destroyed. This is true art. So the vow naturally follows, “I vow not to cross over to the other shore until all beings have crossed”. The vow naturally springs forth. It is only natural. Please. Whether lay person or monk, living in the celestial or the human realm, subject to pain or pleasure, all should quickly make this vow. Though of humble appearance, a person who has awakened to the Bodhi mind is already the teacher of all persons. Even a little girl of seven can become the teacher to the four classes of Buddhas and the compassionate mother of all beings. This wonderful aspiration. This is your wonderful aspiration. In time, place and circumstance, to feel sadness for those who suffer. Don't you feel the sadness? How can you see the pain of another as not your very own? I vow not to cross over to

the shore of enlightenment as long as there are those who still suffer. Do you ask, weak, messed up person that I am, how can I make that vow in all honesty? I assure you – you can – it is only natural. All is well. All things are born of causes and conditions. All conditioned things are without self-nature. There is nowhere any such pitiful self that you perceive yourself to be. All things are born of causes and conditions. All conditioned things are without self-nature – no coming, no going, no attaining, no grasping, great emptiness. Emptiness – this we call *prajna paramita*. So this is your reality. So walk boldly. Walk with dignity. Just release body and mind - forget about them. Throw them into the house of Buddha, then all is done by Buddha. Who is Now-Here in the house of Buddha? Who? All is done by Buddha. When you follow this you are free from birth and death, and become a Buddha without effort or calculation. Life, Truth, is always supporting, nourishing, nurturing and protecting all beings.

*Shikantaza*, counting the breath, following the breath, doing *Mu*. All is One in the same true nature. Your practice is the practice of true nature. Doing THIS-One-Doing. You are decidedly not turning your back on Truth. Now-Here, THIS-One-Doing embodies Truth. This is the genuine. With boldness, clarity, assurance, dignity, do THIS-One-Doing. Only THIS. You are giving your life Now-Here, just as you are. You are receiving everything – perfectly open. There is no thread of stinginess in the Universe. Truth is ungrudging. Nothing is held back from you. Look! Nothing is held back from you. Nothing. THIS-One-Doing. Just THIS-One-Doing.

Together with all beings we attain the Buddha Way.