

2014-04-23 Taking Refuge Refuge In The Buddha

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SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

be here with you and delighted so many of you are interested in doing this. It's, for me the idea of refuge in Buddha Dharma Sangha. is, has a lot to do with our heartfelt involvement with Buddhism and Buddhist practice, that we wholeheartedly are involved. As you'll learn the, the expression that's used for going for refuge, the word going is Gacchami. And it means literally means a number of things, but most literally means to walk. And what I like about this idea is that it leaves you with something we bring our whole selves into, or through or one with, sounds like you bring your old toe and kind of just like Buddhism is on the back part of who you are birth to, to all of you, you want to include as part of it, but by by inference, the ancient word gacchami also refers to, to understand. So to go for refuge also means to understand something important. And it also means to have an intention and orientation intention for one's life and what one wants to do. And I say that just as a few starting words to the kind of strong sentiment I have sitting here is the memory of the many times over the decades that I've been in gatherings with people who have had their intent set on practice. One of the strongest memories that comes to mind right now is when I practiced in Burma, so very large monastery, and they had a women's meditation hall and a men's meditation hall. The men's meditation hall was smaller than this room here. And the women's meditation hall was bigger than this whole building. And women's meditation hall was more stately and was in a beautiful big building and, and I pass it by every day when I went to my meals for the one meal of the day two meals of the day we had and, and because it was a hot climate, the long sides of the building were made of doors that opened and they were always open. And inside would be sitting 500 women meditating. It's quite something to see. And women when they meditate in Burma sit with great dignity they set up very, very straight or is tall. And to see the intenseness of these 500 women, all of them intent on practicing was very inspiring for me. Or times when I've been in Thailand monks would gather sometimes at night and just sometimes during the day and sit in a group huddle together, listen to a teacher or chanting and you could feel the intent that they had to practice and follow the path And I'd been a bit to monasteries here in America and in Japan and going on retreats here. elsewhere. At some point, the gathering of people, there's a feeling of, you know, a, there's an intention to follow a path to, to engage oneself on something, maybe what they practice, maybe what they understand is maybe a little bit different from everyone, but that everyone has the same direction. And that direction is commonly referred to as the Buddha Dharma and the Sangha, the triple ref future, that sometimes called the triple gem. And so during this, these days here, these next three Wednesdays, I'm going to talk to you about and we'll engage in a process of exploration of refuge in Buddha, Dharma and the Sangha. And then the fourth week, I guess we have any we might skip a week. I mean, there's fourth week anyway, the 14th of may We'll have a refuge ceremony for those of you who'd like to be part of that.

And the and part of refuge ceremony is not only refuge in Buddha Dharma and the Sangha, but also is the precepts. The Five Precepts are support all this. And so during these three, next three weeks, we'll somehow touch on the three refuges, and also the five precepts. And so you can kind of explore it and think about it and kind of make it personal. Because the Hallmark or they're what the refuge most means. For me, one of the means is that it's a personal relationship with the Buddha, Dharma and the Sangha. It's something that's something that resonates in you, and with what those what those are. The Buddha, Dharma Sangha are something they represent something, they symbolize something. And so whatever kind of whatever they mean for you, it hopefully what it means is, it resonates with something that you No inside yourself, are you into it in yourself. And so what we're doing and taking the refuge ceremony is were acknowledging you're acknowledging something which hopefully is already true for you that you have an orientation and understanding something you know, something that you're interested in some direction you want your life to go, that somehow resonates somehow is in harmony or echoes, or represent or is represented by these three ideas. Buddha Dharma Sangha. So it's not my idea that I'm going to give you refuge and you're going to, like, do something which is like, make a commitment that, you know, that's not who you are. But really, it's much more and maybe it's a commitment, but it's much more to give voice and expression to something that resides in you. And so this is a personal choice, the practice path of liberation. And so it's a personal choice that if you want to do this refuge ceremony, to do some degree, it's a personal choice, that what you take this to represent, there is no Pope in Buddhism, there's no one who's going to tell you this is what it is. And so part of the awkwardness of being a Buddhist and part of that blessing of being it, is we have to kind of find our way with all this. And it has to be personal in some way. Now, if you say that personally, what it means to take refuge in the Buddha is to take refuge in marijuana because that's where you really find it for you then, you know, I think doesn't quite work for me. You know, I don't think that's kind of what we have in mind here but so there's a limit to the personal side of it, but the but I'm hoping that you know, you have this we explore the personal connection you have with these things and reflect on these as we go along and, and maybe have more questions about it than you have answers. So And also when I was coming down here today I was thinking about a little bit my own history with Buddhism. And and, you know, for me, what brought me into Buddhism was not Buddhism per se, but rather was I started meditating. And I felt a sense of integrity and sense of well being in the meditation that I wanted to. I wanted to have the rest of my life as well. I felt like Why should I just have it when I meditate? You know, it would be nice if this could be something I lived with the rest of my time. And so it was, I entered into Zen community I ordained a Zen priest, I went to monasteries and went to Asia. Always with the intention to follow through a little bit more fully. And how do I live this fully the sense of well being integrity that I have When I when I, when I met, it meditated. And so as I did that, then I discovered this value in the Buddha Dharma and the Sangha. I found that, that if we just above my own efforts and my own understanding, that I was actually limiting myself dramatically, that the Buddha Dharma Sangha, for me represented something outside of me or something that's in me, that's not my usual self, that my ego self centered self and not me is the agent trying to understand fixing everything, but that I'm supported and guided and protected by some truth, some experience some, some connectedness that I refer to as the I feel very happy to refer to as the Buddha Dharma Sangha when I went to Japan to practice I went with very little money. I think maybe I had \$200 that was like when to just be there for a year.

And, and so I knew I, you know, I was a little bit, I was kind of kind of a naive guy. So, you know, \$200 in Japan maybe was naive, but I had enough sense that I should get a job. And so I first weeks I was in Japan, I lined up the job to teach Japanese in Kyoto. And so but I had a week or so before the job started. So I went to a Zen monastery to Stuart machine, a seven day sin retreat. And the end of the retreat. I thought to myself, I didn't come to Japan to teach English. I came to practice, Buddhism

practice then. And so I'm gonna, what I'm going to do is I'm going to cancel my jobs. And I'm going to devote myself to my practice. Come with me and You know, just that's what I can't, I'll just do that whatever with my \$200. And so at the end of that machine, I was a kind of a guest, you know, at the monastery, the temple and went to say goodbye to the abbot at osagie. And the custom, you know, was don't know money had been asking me to sit there in the seven days, but the customers to give a little gift. In Japan you do kind of formally you're supposed to give when you give money, you give it a nice envelope. And so I put it in a little bit of money in an envelope, not very much, but I had, you know, some of my money and hand it to him. And he didn't know he didn't open it. But then we talked a little bit then. And he said, and I was already ordained as a Zen priest, and I'd kind of lost my Zen teacher in America. So I in Japan, a Zen priest who has no teacher is called a Ronin monk. You know, I can summarize a Ronin Ronin Samurai has no master. So it was a run in MCC. And apparently there was a there's a cost Some of how you if you're an Abbot of a temple, how you relate to Ronan monk. So the ronin monk is, the implication is, is looking for a teacher. So he said, Oh, wait a minute. And he went back to the back room. And he came back with an envelope and the envelope to me. And later when I opened it, he gave me more money than I'd given him. And what it was was he called it because train money, the customers, you give the monk a train money, so they can go keep travel and look for until they find a teacher. And since I wasn't going to he wasn't, I wasn't the one he was going to help me to find it. So here, I made this decision to, you know, to trust myself into the practice, come with me. And then the next day, I was handed money, it wasn't like a lot of money. But, you know, it was more money than I. And that was symbolic for me of something that I've come to do repeatedly in my life. That every time I've trusted the Dharma, I feel like a Dharma is taking care of me. There's something about trusting oneself to what's true to the truth, to practice the sincerity of the intention to be free to be committed to this path of compassion that is reciprocated, by who knows what. And I didn't know what would support me or protect me. But something did and every time I made this choice now, of course, it's now those of you who are, I don't know what experiment, philosophically inclined or statistically inclined, will say, well, there was no, there was no, you know, control group. And, Gail, you're so optimistic, you know, you seem to see things in a positive light not. But that's how I felt. My whole adult life every time I chose the Dharma. It seemed to work really well for me.

And then the Buddha and that's the kind of the Dharma talks Dharma, the Buddha rapid a story for me is so I went back to Asia a second time to practice. And by that time I was interested in Vipassana practice. I've done some of it. And I had trouble getting to Burma where the teacher I wanted to study with was was, so I heard that he was going to go and teach a month long retreat in Nepal. So it was chance for me to study with him. So I flew to Nepal, and I had some days to wait for him. And while I was waiting for them to start, I've just wandered around Kathmandu and that would pass this window of a kind of, you know, Buddhist store, you know, if we had a Buddha statues and Tonka 's and all this stuff. And there was a statue Buddhist, that Buddha statue that I really grabbed me really took me I was really inspired by him. go by and stand there for a long time looking at it and looking at it, looking at the price, and I had more money than then that was the second time or the first time I \$200. And this time I had more money. I don't know how maybe it was \$300 So, you know, I had a little bit more money, but I had to, you know. And so, but there wasn't Nepal. And maybe it was \$100 to statue. And so what do I do? Do I buy it or not buy it. And then I and then I one day occurred to me that the most beautiful thing I know, that's more beautiful than the statue is a pure mind, a pure heart, the kind of the experience of meditating, practicing and kind of being emptied of our the attachments and the fears and the hates and the resentments and the greets and, you know, the confusions that I had and to feel I don't know if you up I don't know how well you how you feel about language purity, but a pure mind or clear mind clean mind. So, you know, to the degree to which I've experienced that that's the most beautiful thing that I've seen in the universe that I've experienced in the universe. Certainly more beautiful in this Buddhist statue. So I said to myself, okay, rather than buying the statue for \$100, I'm going to not buy it, save

that money and support someone else so they could practice. So then A day later or something I or that day, I don't know when it was right around that time. I called Berkeley. I went to the telephone exchange and made my call to my I was going to talk to my girlfriend in Berkeley, and her roommate answered and I said, I asked Nick, I talked to Rosie and he said, Oh no, Rosie has gone to Nepal to be with you. Well, the Paul is not a you know. Not like, you know, going to Starbucks to look for someone and look around, you know, it was, you know, Kathmandu was already a kind of a big city by then and how she gonna find me, you know, I had no idea where the retreat was anything where I was anything but but you know not buying that she came to you in less money than I did. So not but so what not mine that statue then allowed me to support her. And so two of us in traveled and made our way eventually to burn mine set long retreats in Burma. So this idea of so this idea of the Buddha, in his Buddhist statue, they represented the Buddha, he really represented something deeper inside of me. And when I tuned into that, which was deeper inside of me, then it really shifted what I thought was important what to do, I wanted to do with my life. I want to share that with someone else. And then and then they later this thing happened. So how did you find me? Well, I biked. I biked out to the air. ports. And I stuck a notice a little note on the bulletin board. And just before she got off the plane, she told the person that you're in the seat next to her her name. And when they, when she got off the plane, he saw her name on the, on the message board. And so, she then so she found me in the hotel I was staying at. So that's a nice story. So, and then the Sangha for me. So Sangha means the assembly or the gathering of people come together. In the Buddhist language, we refer to it as the community of people who do a number of meanings. Here in the West, we often mean the community of people we practice with.

Traditionally, it means one of two things either the people who are monastics, Buddhist monastics or who are over To some degree, who witnessed for themselves the truth of what the Buddha was teaching. So you know what, from firsthand experience this is true. And this this other one, but being in the monastic community, I think it makes some sense that that was the kind of the community that people saw as protection is a refuge as a support as an inspiration as an example. because historically in Asia, there wasn't there wasn't an organized group of late people who practiced, it just wasn't really set up society and traditional society wasn't set up for that possibility, as modern society is. And so it's kind of a relatively modern phenomena, both in Asia and the West, to have a large group of lay people practicing. And there's a lot of people here at IMC, who practice more meditation than most monks do in Thailand. So you're not monastics, but many people here are very dedicated to the practice and in a way that is exemplary. And so it makes sense to to translate to record the song or not just to the community amongst, but to the community of practitioners, when we have so many strong practitioners here to support us. And for me, it's very clear to me hundred percent clear 20% clear whatever that I could not have practiced, without the support of others about the community of people to practice with. I didn't have the fortitude I couldn't have stayed inspired. I couldn't have had the examples of people who showed the way in front of me where to go without the community and other practitioners who are practicing. And one of the one, the one little story that kind of stands out for me is right now to come to mind was I was at Tassajara, the Zen monastery, and one of the priests there, who was going to work in the in the kitchen, I was kind of up kind of on the hillside looking down the courtyard where you walk across to the kitchen, and he was walking across the courtyard to the kitchen The way I saw it, how he walked. So maybe it was my projection, but that's okay. It worked for me was he was he was just walking. He was just walking and it wasn't like he was walking in a hurry. It wasn't aware he was walking slow. He wasn't like he was, you know, I had an agenda. It wasn't like, I just I saw him walk and it was like, it was like, so peaceful or setup just what it was. And it was like one of the few times in my life where I saw someone being alive and present. And there was nothing extra it was just like, so simple. He was so pure was so beautifully empty or so. No ego involved. I was just walking. That great. Oscars was great for him. He inspired me and inspired me about a way to do for myself. And to just be to be simple and not there going to be someone special. It's too often that Buddhists read about three Buddhist texts and then want to become special. You know, there's a great attainments you can get and

all that. I don't know if that I don't think that's what it's about. Another story like that for me was so in the first retreat I practiced in Thailand first Vipassana retreat was a 10 week retreat that happened by accident there was that long I had no intention to sit that long, but just tell you as an accident now and, and then, but halfway through the retreat, or somewhere early in the halfway through, so I was given a little cootie a little hot and the edge of the monastery was kind of a dog patch, chaotic and acoustical place and I was in the edge of the swamp on top of the swamp actually, in this cabin on stilts, there was this long plank that took me to the across the swamp onto the dry land to the monastery there and so For some reason, you know, I was supposed to be sitting and walking, sitting and walking, practicing all day long and I was a good Zen student and useful the schedule and, and you don't deviate. But for some reason, in the middle of the day, I decided to go for a walk around the monastery, pretty radical. And especially for a person who has a little bit I used to be when I was younger, kind of maybe a little excessive father figure kind of neurosis, you know, like this authority figure.

So, I walked onto the line to the monastery. And, and, you know, and who should walk by, at that moment, but the habit busted, you know, you know, but what happened was that, you know, he was maybe 30 40 feet away from me. And we were kind of walking perpendicular to each other. And he looked, he turned and looked at me. He looked at me like he really saw me but this Same time, I felt like he saw me like, like, I felt like I was really seen, fully seen. But at the same time, I felt like he looked right through me like, like he was looking at a tree or something. And there was absolutely no ripple in his mind. No effect the fact that I was not following the schedule. The first time I met Tassajara, the first time that I missed zazen in the morning, I overslept Zen monastery, I was convinced they're going to kick me out of the monastery. I was absolutely that was it for me. Anyway, so. So that's, you know, kind of my background, right? And so we hear that he looked at me and, and there was not a ripple. He didn't to say that he accepted me as too much work, but he didn't. He didn't accept me didn't because he didn't not accept me. He just he just saw me. And there's something about being seen that way. That maybe because of my background, and what I carried with me, that transformed me and changed me and that kind of taught me something about myself. projections my stories I live with. And again, something from the inside about how I can just be simple. Just be, you have to be anything. So, without, you know, I can give you hundreds of examples of ways in which the encounter with other practitioners was deeply meaningful for me and changed me. So, I'm very happy and have has a tremendous feeling of devotion and faith to what we call the Buddha Dharma and the Sangha. And the idea of the refuge going for refuge is very meaningful for me. And I feel that, as a tradition says, it's a protection. Its support and its inspiration. Its expresses an intention and an expresses a orientation for one's life. And it's possible to have this orientation be at the center of one's life like this is what we want. In our life to be about not just like coming here Sunday morning and just that's when we're going to be a practitioner or when we meditate or something when we get around to it, but we want our whole life to be informed by something of the central values that these three things represent. So with that as a background, what I like to do is to say just a couple of more words about the first refuge refuge in the Buddha and the Firstly, this word refuge in English, you know, we have refugee and maybe that's okay, you get to be a refuge Buddhist refugee now. But from samsara, or whatever, but the, you know, has all kind of has connotations idea of refugee refugee that might be a little bit negative. I don't know if the word sarana Word Pali word sarena has the same connotations with ancient India. It means a support to protection. You know, some reason we translated as refuge so the first one refuge in the Buddha. And so the question is, what is it in your experience? Do you have anything in your own direct experience? Or your intuition that resonates with what you think the Buddha is? The statue here is a completely idealized version of the Buddha. It's some artist's conception or some collective artists and people's conception. I bet the Buddha and look nothing like that. I don't bet he didn't have a flame shooting off the top of his head.

And the you know, it's kind of it's kind of an image of certain kind of human perfection but it's meant to be a, it's been meant not so much. You know, I am inspired the fact there was some person A long time ago, who understood something and saw something and was transformed in some way that has propelled community people down through these generations. To us, that's very meaningful, I have a lot of gratitude, appreciation, and reverence for whoever that person was. But whoever that person was, also is now has come to be a representation for something like an archetype that represents represents a potential and a possibility. And so it's, it said sometimes that if you're about to the Buddha, you're really bowing to yourself, that the Buddha statue is meant to be a mirror for yourself. So you're not really following an icon but really, you're seeing yourself in that and not that you're ever going to look like that physically. But it represents something of a something of some Some experience or some way of being from the inside out. And so, and that's what the, in the ancient texts, it says that when a person has faith in the Buddha takes refuge in the Buddha, they don't take refuge in Him as a person, but rather than the Buddha, in the Buddha's awakening. So the Buddha had an experience of awakening, where the mind became free, the heart came at peace and rest in itself. And that experience of awakening then, is what we take refuge in. And so that's hopefully something that we there we've touched into some ways are intuitive or close enough to get a sense of that there's a different way of living, that there's some inner change, of well being a piece of truth of knowing, that's radically different from a life that's caught up in greed and life that's caught up in fear and life that's caught up in consumer isms and life that's caught up in identity and proving oneself and apologizing for oneself and defending oneself, that we can let go of all these kinds of ways of being agitated. And let them know that the heart and the mind rest or be at peace in a deep way. And there's a range of experiences that people can have that kind of teach them, teach them a similar lesson like that. And that's what we take refuge in. So each of you hopefully have something whether you know, it doesn't have to be dramatic. But intuition or a hint, or something very clear that you've had, that somehow in your life is an experience a way of being an opening. something you've touched on, that speaks to you about a possibility that you would like to enhance and develop and live by. And if you have enough time after practice enough, that the inside you can look like this archetype. You do it completely, thoroughly, completely.

So at the risk of talking too much. I'll give you one more story. Now analogy analogy. We used to have our Sunday morning gathering before we had IMC, in Portola Valley at the community center, their big auditorium. And they had a linoleum floor with his linoleum tiles, like one square foot tiles to our 10 inch square tiles. And we've come Sunday morning, and sometimes they had parties and the community center Friday night with beer and popcorn and underwater stuff. And we come on the floor, we take our shoes off, right? And it feels sticky. And so it occurred to me one day that what if for 500 years, no one cleaned that floor, and the dust and the grime and the beer just built and built and built and built and people danced and walked and did all things on this floor. So all this grind got really packed in well and Got shiny then it was really good and we didn't know several feet high and it got really diamond like hard and then lo and behold someone went back in the old files and found some didn't doesn't file a paper. Some people didn't know where paper was anymore but but sometimes paper we read it and they found this paper and it said that there was a floor linoleum floor with tiles. And so they came up with this paper said look this supposed to be tile floor down there we don't know what tiles are anymore but they're supposed to be there and no, no, no, it can't be that everyone poo pooed it and this person said yes, I'm gonna find out. So that person then had take a jackhammer took a lot of work to go so hard, went through layers and layers and layers and layers. And after a lot of time came down to the linoleum floor. And after a lot of work cleared out one square, one of the squares made it all shiny, talk to beautiful than linoleum. And then everyone knew that given enough time, they could clear the whole floor and have a blue, beautiful linoleum floor again.

But they didn't know if they had enough time because there's a lot of work, right. So the same way, we could have some experience some hints of a possibility, a way of being. And that tells us that if we have enough time, we could clear away all the gunk and get exposed. And that's what that's what the Buddha represents the army. I don't know if the Buddha did it really did that 2500 years ago, they did that thoroughly. But it represents that possibility. And for me, that's very meaningful, to have that as a direction to send my life I don't need in my life to clear the floor entirely. But it's very meaningful for me. That's the direction I'm going. And so I'm doing doing what I can to clear that floor to expose that right and so there are type of the Buddha that image you need to take refuge in the Buddha, I take refuge in the possibility of that direction, and what that represents that possibility. So that's a lot for myself, you know, and I offer you all that, to try to spark something in you so that you can see what's lives in you, as we do this. And as part of the exploration, what I would like you to do is, if you don't mind if you would, maybe pair up with two other people a pair up, try up with the three three other three other people and, and then share with your two partners. why you've come to this refuge class? Or what it what it might mean for you or what questions you have or why you're curious about it or what it touches for you or I want to keep it very opens. I don't want you to feel constrained, like now you have to already be enlightened and explain that to your partner. It could it could be that you just you Intuit something you're curious, you think something's here and you want to check it out and then you kind of because you're talking with a group of three, you kind of begin exploring a bit more why you thought to check it out what that meant for you, what it might represent for you, what you're looking for. And so, I'd like this if you have a chance to talk with other people while you're here. Is that okay? So why don't you find two other people to sit with and I don't know for multiples of three, if we're not, if you can't find someone to walk towards the front towards me.

So we'll do another three minutes. So just make sure that everyone has a chance to speak

So one of the contrasts to the idea of refuge in Buddha Dharma Sangha is the many refugees that people often go to in their ordinary life, the things, maybe to call them a refuge but things you go to for support things that are going to save you make you, you know, things you kind of depend on what you rely on. And so people rely on for example, money or jobs or they Rely on relationships or they rely on status or they rely on knowledge, opinions, some people really rely on having opinions and they want to let you know. And some people rely on government, some people rely. It was really eye opening to me when I was in Burma. I woke up one morning and overnight the government decided that all the currency paper currency they had was no longer valid. I mean, you know, America, it's In God we trust but, you know, I thought it was I had the No, I think, like, you know, I knew everything was impermanent, but I thought some things I thought there was some things you could rely on, that's gonna rely on money, right? And so the wake up and find out that, you know, just was, you know, probably wasn't even useful for toilet paper that way. You know, you know, wasn't very good texture. And so, you know, it wasn't worth much at all. And so what, you know, people rely on all these things, and that are not very reliable. And so that is that there's something about the Buddha Dharma Sangha, which is reliable, because it, it's, it's not fickle, it doesn't change. It's there kind of it's good. There's a kind of permanence to it. That is not there and the ordinary things people kind of depend on and want to chasing after in their lives. And I think that what has some permanent value is that is the principles and the practices that are behind it, that point to a possibility of mental transformation or heart's transformation change, that we're no longer relying on something outside of ourselves, to provide us with safety protections, to provide us with meaning to provide us with you know, some value things that are changing in the world. But rather we find in our own hearts that a heart that's free of agitation heart, it's free of fear, or heart, it's free of anger or greed or hate, a heart that's deeply a piece and addressed, that that is trustworthy. And the principles and the practices that point us to that possibility, are portable, and we can use them in any situation we can it can be and to find this deep abiding peace. And so the

Four Noble Truths, for example, to really understand that those are portable, valuable refuges that we can take refuge in the Four Noble Truths because that's portable. The teaching that if you cling, you'll suffer. And if you let go, that clinging, the suffering will go as well. That's a powerful teaching for our lives. And to take refuge in that means that you're constantly looking at every situation. You're in Where am I clinging and kind of let go of that clinging, Calico, that clinging, the and maybe this maybe this is the wrong thing to say. But even if you become destitute end up homeless and homeless shelter, the Four Noble Truths still apply. It might be unfortunate circumstances, but you're protected if you've had the Four Noble Truths from your heart and mind getting contracted, because they're contracted and tight and clinging, fearful heart, that's your contribution to the situation. And so, to learn how to negotiate and fight and take responsibility for your own heart, your own mind what it does, is part of what it means to go for refuge. So, traditionally, it said that a person has gone for refuge fully, will no longer be afraid. I've never met such a person who just did refuge ceremony did that, but that's kind of day principle behind Remember, we're talking about a direction, we're talking about a possibility that we can move towards so. So I think it's very important to appreciate this idea that something about going for refuge, which frees us from fear. That's the idea. And then I've heard in the modern world, I heard someone said that once you've gone for refuge, you have no more reasons to complain. And then don't have to come back.

But, you know, that's an interesting statement, that if there's something about the refuge, the Four Noble Truths that what this practice means what we're moving towards, and that we're not complaining means that you're somehow tying your welfare and well being into something outside of you. And if you no longer if you take responsibility for your own well being and your own heart, then you won't, you know, you can still point out that disagree and point out that things aren't what they should be. But people are keeping their agreements, whatever but the complaining is Is what goes. So now I'm curious from you is many of you didn't grew up as Buddhists, some of you might have grown up with it. But even if you grew up with it, there were probably some time as an adult where you started being interested in the practice, and interested in being involved in a way that maybe you didn't as a child. But do you is there is there for you? It doesn't have to be some of you are new and just checking this out, that's fine. But is there? Could you remember a moment or an experience where you felt that? Yes, this makes sense. Yes. Here, I can start taking responsibility here as a practice that I can do. Here's an understanding that can help My life this is this is really something that I want to support my life something like that is there it was it you remember a moment like that for a time. And I was wondering if it's a few of you be willing to tell the group as a whole if you remember what that was hope the idea that we get a range of stories of what there was like it doesn't have to be like the most dramatic time but something

so in the big beginning of 2001 is when I just felt like

it was hopeless

that I would ever figure out how to be happy or managed to do it. And I didn't wasn't giving up because I knew that wasn't couldn't be helpful, but I didn't see what to do next. And beginning so I was very unhappy in the beginning of the year I thought this is going to be the worst year of my life. But there was a yoga studio in my studio and I haven't tried that yet. I tried everything else, but I hadn't tried that. And I gave it a try, and I loved it and I didn't know why. But it did and became pretty religious about going to those classes. And then I kind of segwayed from that to reading books on Buddhism. Started with the author's name, it's easier than it then you think someone knows the author. Yes, Sylvia Borstein. That was and it was a pretty normal book, sight. good stories. I read More and more than I started founding groups and started practicing, and slowly started to come together. I remember I

remember that by the end is whatever relief so about by November I remember I was thinking, this is the best year of my life.

Thank you Bill. Straight behind you.

I didn't grow up. In fact my my parents are funny. I didn't realize so much that my mother was even Catholic until her funeral. I knew my grandmother was because my mother would come back after that where they do that handshake and I don't want to shake hands with him. I wanted to cancel i'd shake hands and tell me to shake hands with people. There's always kind of funny relationship with that and I I later in life, kind of joined 12 step then I got involved with a Christian church, which felt great, but it's very emotional experience and not a very feel good in the moment, but it wasn't very sustaining for me. And I remember, someone bought me one of Tich Nhat Han's book on tape. And it was read by Michael York. So it's very funny. So you have this kind of Englishman speaking in with ties, idiosyncrasies, so it's kind of a little funny thing that got me interested in.

I remember I

i in 2005, I had a big shift in my life. I essentially had nothing I had no job. I had no relationship. I had no money. I if it weren't for my parents, I would have been homeless. I was sleeping on my on the floor at my parents house. And I finally just took that step and follow that instinct and it actually led me here.

And

there's a peacefulness I experience in it. I I think you were the speaker that first time. And there's there's something you a character you bring that I hadn't seen before and other people that I met. And I've met that with many Buddhists in my life. And there had been so much conflict and trouble and unsettledness in my life that there's that it's, it's very beautiful. And I recently tap that again, I when I was on retreat with takot Han is that I was up near the front of the walking meditation, I was in about 10 feet of him. And I realized in that moment, I could just hang out with him. rest of my life, I don't have to do anything, I can just like hang out with that in that energy. And that is just so sweet and so nourishing. And that's, that's why I'm, I'm back to the refuge, again, is to really continue to dive deeper into that and make your own such a gift

and make it our own hopefully,

and to be able to bring it to the people around me I realized what a gift it is to be able to be that particularly in Life is like the ocean and sometimes common sometimes is not the moment when it's not calm to be able to be that rock is such a gift.

Very nice. Thank you. And

for me,

I'm not a young lady. I'm an old lady. I was in college. And I was reading, I don't know what I was reading. When you took a class, in philosophy of religion, they had a special library in the department where it's just a room with a lot of books and a table in the middle. And they say, go in there and read these things. So hopefully, you'd get there when someone else wasn't trying to read them, you know? Anyway, so I was reading something. And I thought, you know, I want to do this with my body. I really want to do this. I don't want to just read about it. Before that I was thinking God, maybe I should try and

learn Sanskrit so I could really read this. Wish I didn't do. I didn't know anyone else who was doing that. I mean, now it's so ordinary, but at the time, I didn't know anyone else who, who felt that way. You know, in fact, it was kind of people kind of suspicious of it, if you tried to do it, you're supposed to study it, you know, I'd say later reading what the bodhisatta has do, and they do this and they don't do that. They always seem like very mature people, like very grounded people like like they weren't, you know, flying off the handle, you know, they had a kind of grounded view of things. Like you'd want them to be a good friend or to be your auntie or your uncle or something, you know. Ah, the other thing I was telling people in my little group, as in Japan, and I had a kind of troubled relationship with a temple where I wanted to be able to live there, but they kept saying you can come for the one week retreats, but you can't live there. And then I lived in a temple connected to it and there's all this stuff going on. However, I wanted to continue practicing with that teacher. And the same kind of starting to feel like kind of getting a headache from all this stuff. And then I had another Western friend who went and did a one week retreat, there is a temple with Japanese and Western people there. And afterwards, he said to me, and I can see why you keep going back to that place. These two Western people who've been there about 20 years, there's so beyond self, I feel like I could reach my hand right through them. And I understood what he meant completely. So it was kind of like in the middle of this kind of messy neurotic thing. I, we both saw something very clearly. And that was inspiring to me. I felt better. I felt like okay, maybe I can get neurotic about this.

Maybe it's worth it.

Great. Thank you. So one more here. I saw your hand. No, no.

Back in 1977, I had this boyfriend who wanted me to call him Baba Nick. And he was always going to mass stay. And you know, he watched Ilius Yoga and you all the time and he had this collection of books and one was handbook to higher consciousness. And I just, you know, began to look at that book. And they were 12 pathways 12 pathways to higher consciousness. And I remember the fourth was, I will always remember that I have everything here and now to be happy unless I am fantasizing about the future or regretting the past. Right then I knew that was true. And you know, I broke up with

but I kept his book.

Yeah. And I, you know, I went through a lot of your difficult years and I've made my way back here. I've made my way back here. I live for that, for that idea that I have everything I need right now. And I really hope that I really can just through practice,

and through this kind of intention, get

very nice, thank you. I said one more, but I saw one more hand so then we'll stop after that.

I

I change careers. And Can people hear me, okay? And I became a therapist. And I noticed that when I was when I was listening to people, if I would think about other things, I was lost. So I had to really focus. So that was kind of the start of it. And I came through to Buddhism via positive psychology. So I really loved all the emphasis on gratitude and undoing what you really love and going places, but there was some something missing, because I remember going to the beach one time and thinking, well, this is what I really love. So I should be really, really happy. But I was very worried about a client. I wasn't focused at all on the waves and on the beach, and I thought, huh, and then I put my husband used to

talk to me about actually seeing you in Palo Alto. And so we found we went here the first time about three years ago, and I just felt like I had sort of come home. There was a real peacefulness and real quiet and I started listening a lot to, you know, audio Dhamma and things about, you know, the sticky mind, and getting caught up in thoughts instead of stepping back and realizing what you're doing and that really made a huge effect on me and I, and the more I could be present and just kind of step back from those thoughts, the sticky thoughts and the more I could be with people, and I just kind of felt my heart mind open. And so we've decided to make much more of a commitment even and we're moving closer and where, you know, it's just become very important to me in my life.

Wonderful. Thank you very much. And there's many things I could comment on what you said. But what's stays my mind the most was was the difference between trying to focus to listen to your clients, to letting go of what kept you from being present And it's a lot easier to let go of what keeps you from being present and having all this work to be focused. Great, thank you. Thank you all very much for that. So, the, so their refuge in the Buddha is meant to be refuge in potential that you have, potential to be free to be at peace, to be at home to be settled, to not be neurotic, have be caught up. And it's a beautiful potential that unfortunately is under that tapped into enough in our world. But it's can't something we can tap into something we can wake up to something we can grow into. Generally, in our tradition, we call it a gradual growth into it rather than some. Suddenly that's it, I have it and then Not set. But it's a slow development as we kind of set the direction walk the path. And one of the important qualities or aspects of this path, the practice of the Buddha, all this stuff is, is the mutuality of our own life and the life of others, that we can't really walk this path for ourselves without some care for the people around us. And so the one of the important kind of partners of refuge are the five precepts. And the most important principle behind the five precepts. And really, it's kind of maybe most epitomized by the first one is the dedication to not causing harm, to be to our ahimsa to being harmless, and to make ourselves into a person who's safe for other people. So we're not intentionally going to harm other people. And we do that not only because it's good for them, but that it's also a protection and supportive for us that if we're trying to kind of awaken our Buddha nature, we don't want to go against the current of that we don't want against the grain against the grain of that, to intentionally harm someone or harm someone is there's no Buddha nature and that you cover it over then you into going in the opposite direction and what you're trying to uncover. And so to live by the precepts is to enhance the possibility of keeping uncovering what's most precious are valuable in your own heart. And so and so to live a life dedicated to non harming not to kill is the first precept and so part of this going for refuge is to align ourselves with these precepts. And I use the word align carefully because because they do have committing to it is important the idea of committing but sometimes people have some trouble with the idea of commitment because they feel it has to be all or nothing. And, of course, it should be all or nothing. But realistically we do the idea is we do our best we can. And it's a, it's a commitment to a practice, not to commitment to, you know, being this way. So it's sincere commitment and intention to live a life of non harming, and then we do the best we can. And if we, if we end up causing harm, then rather than being upset that we kind of broke the precept. The idea is to reawaken the commitment to the precept, take the cake, the experience we had, and use that as fuel to do better in the future. Because you want to you want to live a life, where the inner life in the outer life are in harmony. And so living by their precepts is one way to do that. So one of the things that I would encourage you to think about for this next week is the first precept, which is the precept not to kill. The actual, literal, literal wording of it isn't, is a little different than that we all usually call it not to kill, but it's literally not to

more like not to hit or not to harm, not to hurt. And so I like to say it's much broader than just not killing. it's applicable to all areas of our life, not to intentionally want to cause harm. So you might want to consider that and think about that and, and reflect on what you think. Don't come to the quick answers, keep reflecting on it over and over again. What, what is the connection between the precept not to harm

and what it means to go for refuge for you? Is there a connection for you, and especially for this. For this we first week, divide up the weeks by Buddha Dharma Sangha. What is what is the Buddha mean for you? It's represent for you. The Buddha is an archetype or citation of something, that something that lives in your own heart. What is that that lives in your own heart? What is that? And how does that relate to non harming, that encourage you to talk to other people and journal about it, reflect on it, think about it for the week. So we'll meet two more times. And then and then the fourth time The meeting is we'll have the ceremony here. The way this ceremony is done is we'll have a potluck together. And so I put me in sick. Well, those of you who come early will start like at six o'clock, or 630 or something six o'clock and have a potluck and then I'll set it we'll set up this room here and have it do then after the potluck is cleaned up, we'll, we'll gather in here and do the refuge ceremony. But I need to know in order for the ceremony Starting next week, next two weeks, I'd like to get your names if you're interested in doing the ceremony, because I'll give you a document that I write your name of the document. So I have to know how it's spelled and all that. And so that so I need to get that written down. So we'll do that next time. And then, and I guess it is being recorded. So if you do miss a week, you can listen to it on the recording or if you're on listen to it again. So did you have any questions for me or comments, concerns?

Yes.

Thank you.

You're welcome.

That's enough for them. Pretty saving. So we will at some ways we'll go through as a community to as part of the reason to have these discussions and, and also we'll do the potluck and do the ceremony together as a group. So in that spirit for those of you just be nice to just go around the room and hear everybody's voice and everyone's name. So maybe you can scroll around and then Wednesday evening,

I'm Tanya.

I'm Becky.

Patrick.

Sharon.

Krista,

Edna

Paul.

Men,

Barney, David,

Judy, Bob

and

Brenda

Margie

Seagal

Kathy,

Michael,

Judy,

Mary Ellen.

Lindsay

by Lydia.

There

Janet.

Trudy

Noel,

Rebecca,

Tracy,

Tavis,

Diana,

Jennifer and

Dawn bill

Misha

Joe

Nana Great. Thank

you all. Thank you for for this evening and I look forward to seeing you next week.