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SPEAKERS

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Last week, I talked about how in doing this practice of meditation or practicing Dharma Buddhism in general, there is an interesting play a balance between making our own efforts in practice and allowing the practice to work on us. Or we make our own efforts we show up. And then something begins to unfold, which is still a bit difficult to make. To claim as that we're making happen. It's more like we create the conditions. And we put together the conditions and then certain things begin to unfold to occur. And it's many years ago, there was a movie called The Field of Dreams has Little the one line that remains in our culture from that movie was build it and he will come. And some person built a baseball field in his in his cornfield. And people thought I guess you don't remember so well the movie but because he that was kind of strange middle of nowhere and but he believed if you build it they will come. And so all these kind of old players, ghosts of the old players would come and play baseball in his field. So it's not just ghosts that come to us, but rather we build it we create the conditions for practice. So one of the like meditation practice, we make the one of the conditions is we sit down and take a meditative posture. And things unfold a little differently in our lives. If we sit down and just take a simple meditative posture, maybe close your eyes. Then if you just continue going shopping and watching computer, TV and a computer and all the time. It creates a different condition sitting I have a different condition than being busy. And that different condition makes a difference. And it might seem at first that it doesn't make much of a difference. But over time, it can make a huge difference. And some of you know the analogy I like of, if you take two parallel lines, they never meet, that's the definition of parallel lines. But if you're ever so slightly nudge, you want the lines towards the other, then or digit away from the other. Then over time, the two will either meet, or they'll get further and further further away. And so, though that first, you know, if it just a slight little budge, you can go 100 miles before you see a difference, two lines, but eventually give enough time that becomes a huge difference if you push them apart. So our lives can take different directions. Over time, that are very different than if we by making some small choices now. And so sitting quietly meditating and doing it every day, for example, creates the conditions for a life to be nudged in a different direction, than if we just continue our life as usual. And that difference over enough time can make a huge difference. You might say that, if you meditated every day for five years, like, that's, that's forever, you know, you can't imagine into the future. But if you think back five years, most of you probably that's five years went pretty quickly. And so in five years, those this this current five years will go quickly. And so it's not such a big, you know, but it can make a big difference in our lives. So some of the conditions that we put into place in Buddhism is we put the condition of ethics in place. So to lead ethically that creates a very different condition for our lives. If we don't, the condition of being generous generosity does something to the heart. Maybe not initially. But slowly over time, we develop kind of a disposition to be generous. It creates a very different feeling inside of us. It lightens things up, it creates in an openness it overcomes, you know, being closed and tight fisted with our things.

It's a very beautiful thing to do is very different condition to investigate what's happening, notice what's happening in our lives, then not noticing what's happening our lives. Just let our lives kind of keep unfolding and doing things where we want doing what we want. But if you kind of really are cognizant, this is what's happening now. This is what's happening now. That creates a very different condition for our lives, and things unfold differently. For one thing, maybe you wouldn't do certain things because you see clearly that this is not worthwhile and interested in this, or you might see that there are opportunities to change what you're doing for the better. Or by simply knowing what's happening. It creates space for our inner lives. And one of the remarkable things about making space for in our lives is our inner lives begin to relax, open up, soften, rectify, reveal themselves in a way that they can't if we're always busy and doing and doing and doing. And one of the great purposes of meditation is not to do anything, per se, but rather to simply make space or to allow for ourselves for what's already happening for us, but to see it clearly. Right now I'm thinking, right now I'm feeling something right now. I'm hearing none right now. I'm reacting right now. I'm judging. Right now. whatever we're doing and creative Different condition for inner life. And if we just keep writing and being involved with all the thoughts and reactions and feelings. So if we create the condition, something begins to change and unfold, and that which unfolds, if you allow it to unfold A lot can be make a big difference in our lives. And it's best, you know, it doesn't really feel like I'm the one who's doing it. It's more like you're allowing it to happen to come through you. And so one of the little cliches in Buddhism is that those who practice the Dharma are protected by the Dharma, that there's something about practicing mindfulness, practicing being present, being ethical, being generous, and all these good kind of Dharma qualities. That if we devote ourselves to it, there's something in the mix and Something in the way things work, that then our lives are supported. And so we're protected. We're supported. And this is why One of the one of the things that I feel very strongly about my own life is that as I gave myself over to Dharma practice in my meditation practice, and not just kind of to meditate once a day or something, but try to find a way to let my whole life be informed or be led by or be guided by the Dharma, which from Vig partment try be present for my life as I lived it, to notice what's happening to recognize what's going on. That as I did that, as I did that my life seem to always work out for the better. It was remarkable. Now, why maybe it's just a coincidence, you know, that that happened that way. And now, you know, because I can't really see the causal connection to say, Yes, I did this and therefore, these good things happen in my life. But it's, you know, pretty clear over and over again, that All this wonderful stuff happened in myself. I became a happier person in the process of practicing. And I can't quite put my finger on why I became happier. Like, I can't say like, Oh yeah, like x, y and z, x, y and z and kingo. Those, the cause and effect I got happier. But I put together this I can look back and see the conditions were there that allowed for something to mature, a bubble up or flower inside that helped me to become happier. The and then, you know, it's in my situation since like, over and over again. things in the world responded to me, as I practice, people were Kinder opportunities opened up for me that wouldn't have opened up if I hadn't been practicing. Now, maybe if I'd done some testing with the different maybe other opportunities would have opened up. And that may be I don't know, it's hard to know. Right? You know, we aren't we don't have a reference point for if make different choices are alike like if I lead my life this way versus that way I don't have to call in when they do experiments is called the control wouldn't be nice if we had a control person for our lives.

You go try that out and then come back and tell me and so all this is leading up to a point that wanted to make and that is one of the more spiritual perhaps religious movements in Buddhism is called refuge because sometimes called going for refuge. It's on my mind it's on my heart right now because last Wednesday evening, we had a refuge refuge ceremony here at IMC and, and it's one of the primary kind of certainly Here at IMC it's like high church for us. We don't do so we do so little of this stuff, but it's a beautiful expression of people's involvement and appreciation and meaning they find in, in their Buddhist practice in Buddhism. And the way that I offer the ceremony here when I offer it is as I tried very carefully to explain that I'm not giving people something like now you're going to become a

Buddhist. Now you got to, you know, here are the Creed's, here are the rules. This is not what you got to do that, you know, go for refuge and you have to kind of shoehorn yourself into what it means to be a Buddhist or something. But rather, it's the opposite of that. And that is that if something meaningful that that's as people practice, they discover something meaningful for themselves. And Which is meaningful, what the results that could have arises from doing the practice. As it begins to change us and touch us, and everything, we deeply appreciate it because even more more valuable for us, then the Buddhism, the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha become a mirror for that become a reference point for that become a symbol for what's happening within us. And so and it's nice, and to the ceremony, is a time to celebrate it to appreciate, to affirm to recognize that the person has discovered something that's meaningful for them personally. And for some reason, they see it in the symbols we have Buddha, Dharma and the Sangha these things. And so we have the ceremony to do that together. It's very nice. And as we had it here, and I was very touched by people going through it and their feelings of it. So because it's still in my heart I wanted to talk a little bit about refuge a little bit more. And then maybe take some questions. The way that the refuge ceremony are the refuge go for refuge is worded. It's a particular way of wording it. It's says I go for refuge. In the Buddha, I go for refuge in the Dharma. I go for refuge in the Sangha. And the word for go in Pali is Gacchâmi. Gacchâmi at least, you know, I don't I don't know Pali so well, but the dictionaries and ancient commentaries say that the word Gacchâmi, which literally means to walk or to go, also means to understand. And so important part of this going for refuge going for support is to understand something? And the question is, what is it we understand? And in the Buddhist tradition, the ideal thing to understand if you go for refuge is you understand how the practice works in your own heart in your own mind. And it's not so complicated. It's actually explicitly talked about this in the ancient texts, that it's not so complicated. They don't say it that way. But what they say is that if your mind or your heart is afraid, and you're able through the practice, to drop the fear, then you know something. If your mind is filled with greed, you feel the pain of that and you're able to drop the greed and feel the mind without greed. Feel that peaceful mind that's not consumed by greed. You know something? If you have hate

Or cynicism, or envy or jealousy, or, you know, all these kinds of emotional attitudes, motivations, which are painful to have, especially when they're strong. And you feel that pain. And somehow through the practice of mindfulness of concentration of compassion, you're able to let it soften and let go and drop away, maybe temporarily, you know, something, you know, the difference between a mind which is caught, were involved in turning away in a painful ways, versus a mind that's not. And that's the key thing to know. That's what we can know. That for people who really get a taste of it can be very, very meaningful. It becomes their orientation, about what the how the how they want to live. than necessarily what they do with their lives, but how they want to do whatever they're doing, that they want to do. They want to live their lives with a heart with a mind, which is not contracted, which is not caught up and afraid and greedy or hateful or spiteful or heart which is peaceful and happy and gentle or softer. I don't know what language works for you. Some of you hear soft and genuine you roll your eyes. But you know, there's so many wonderful words can touch the wire. There's so many wonderful words that different people have different reference points use different language, different concepts to talk about what it's like when the heart and the mind is no longer caught up in fear or hate or greed, clinging all these things. And what it says in the in these ancient texts is that when he person knows the difference between mine which is caught In these painful states, and the mind which is free from it, then we know something about the Buddha isn't a nice guy. You know, well, how are you gonna find out? There's a lot of books on biographies of the Buddha, you can read them. And you might get some sense of who this person was. But the tradition, the tradition, to really get a sense, the important way of knowing the Buddha is to know that that the difference in your own mind or heart, between being caught, contracted tight, and being free. That's how you know the Buddha that passage is the essence of what Buddha is about. And this is expressed very explicitly. That when a person takes has faith, or takes refuge in the

Buddha, has faith in the Buddha. What they have faith in is not the Buddha as a person But rather in the awakening of the Buddha and the awakened state of mind. And the way you have some sense of what that awakened state is, is like, Yeah, because awakening such a big word, right? I mean, it's kind of, you know, I've known to many Buddhists who have chased after the Shamrock Shangri La of awakening as if it was some great exalted state. Maybe it is. But, but maybe it's pretty simple. But there's something about something that I think is relatively ordinary. I hope all of you have had some tastes of this sometime in your life, of being consumed in some way, in your mind by something, something suffering, some pain, some really painful, and then something that happened, and whatever it was that you were consumed by, dropped away or fell away. And you felt the contrast between being caught and not being caught. That is pointing to a mind of awakening. Perhaps that mind of awakening or the Buddha is done at much more thoroughly than you've done. Maybe you did it for a few moments for a few hours or something. But to do with thoroughly in our lives so that it becomes pervasive is one of the, you know, is what the Buddha represents. When I was first started meditating regularly. I didn't have that kind of language to understand what was happening to me. But I started, I didn't have much instruction or any instruction really, when I first started meditating. Mostly I thought, because I was doing Zen practice. My instruction that I was following was to sit down. Be still with a body and unconditionally accept Whatever was going on.

And I had no idea that about concentration about, you know, anything, I didn't have any idea what was supposed to happen. I was kind of, you know, I just thought that I was I had some kind of faith that this was a good thing to do. So I just sat there and said, this present I could and tried not to be reactive to what was going on, but rather to be present for it. And as I did that, that was the, that was the what I contributed. And that was a condition that created a condition that allowed a different feeling inside of myself than I'd ever had before. It was a very meaningful that feeling, that sense of inner inner landscape of who I was. And one of the ways I described it to myself at that time, was I felt that now I had integrity. I mean, I wasn't I wasn't a bad person, you know, before that, but, but I felt his inner integrity and I would go and meditate just to kind of You know, and I didn't know how to make that feeling whatever that feeling was, I didn't have to make it happen. But I knew that if I sat there and did this unconditional acceptance, something would begin to change and shift and let go. And I felt this integrity or this wholeness of this completion. And it was very meaningful for me. And then, about I don't know how long it took, maybe after a year of meditating. I had this thought, meditation. And that was that the mind in meditation, and the mind outside of meditation is the same mind. It's kind of arbitrary, the line between meditation and not meditation. And the next thought I had was, well, why do I only have this integrity feeling when I meditate? Shouldn't I I'd like to have that the rest of my life as well. You know, why just limited. And so then for many years afterwards, the primary motivation for me to practice and keep practicing was not to go further and deeper and better. But rather was to somehow big Atari to live this in my life as well. So in that situation, I call that integrity. But I knew something that was a big game, a central orient, or central orientation central guiding feature of my life to do that. And so I found myself and going to live in Buddhist centers because I thought about there I could help in doing it all the time. And what I came to appreciate is that I could take refuge or I could go for support, or I could rely on that integrity or that letting go or that sense of unconditional acceptance or the Dharma that there were so many times where I couldn't figure out what to do. I didn't know him find my way out the situation. I couldn't solve the problems I had. But if I sat and meditated more often than not, the problems then get solved. They dissolved. Isn't that nice? When you when you rather have your problems dissolve themselves? I don't know if you know for sure. Now, you know, most of it wasn't like I had problems with the IRS coming after me. You know, you'll sit there and those problems would dissolve. It wasn't like that, but it was he was my inner psychological hang ups and problems and my suffering and my angst and my fears and my guilts and, I mean, I had I was a handful. And, and, you know, that's really where, you know, my challenges were, and, and so, I found that a lot of those things

I chose to spend years trying to solve. As I entered into this Dharma practice, they dissolved and dissolved and No, and that was very reassuring that I'd have to solve them. Because solving is overrated. I mean, you know, how many of your psychological problems have you solved likely.

So, I came to a point where this idea of the Buddha Dharma and the Sangha was a refuge was a support was an inspiration was something I felt like I could rely on became more and more important for me. So the Buddha represents our capacity for this awakened mind, or is free mind or, you know, some kind of some kind of way of, you know, when we see this difference between two different ways of being in the mind being caught and not caught. The Dharma, the word Dharma is an interesting word because it comes from the root word to support to hold up to bear so sack which supports us, in our lives, and one of the and so Buddhism offers a number of conditions that can support us if we engage in those conditions. And the primary one is the Eightfold Path that is offered over and over again by the tradition, that if you can live the Eightfold Path involves having a certain understandings, certain understandings are really helpful. Like so one of the understandings, the first step of the Eightfold Path is a very particular kind of understanding that without believing in this understanding, you can't practice really go foreign Buddhism. So you got to believe in something. And this is this Nate this is the thing you have to believe in. not believing in this you can't be a Buddhist. So you're ready for the creed. And that is that if you cling your suffer and if you Let go that claiming that suffering goes away. Isn't that a nice thing to believe in. And the reason why it's important to believe in because that's the guideline for finding the path of freedom. If what you want is the freedom from clinging, you have to have some way to find it and understand it. So if you're clinging, you'll suffer. And so and if you let go that clinging, you're suffering and go away. That's a reworking of the Four Noble Truths. So with that as an orientation, then the Eightfold Path says it really helps. If you create the condition one of the three conditions that create then the following that is to be kind, to be compassionate, and don't cling to a lot of things. So then, it says it's really good to be ethical. be concerned by how you speak. Pay attention to how you speak. Learn about how you speak and learn about the impact your speech has on the world and on yourself. And as you learn that become sensitive to the cause the effect of lying and other forms of inappropriate or painful speech, and then see if you can practice Right Speech, good speech, helpful speech, your actions, it really helps if you want to wake up if you want to find this inner integrity if you want to find this peace if you want to find liberation, it really helps a lot if you stop killing other people. You know, just if you're doing that, cut it out. You know, I mean, I know Buddhism has is really heavy, heavy things that tell you to do you got to do these things or else but you know, just got to cut out the killing and the stealing and harming other people with your sexuality. These things just don't cook are not compatible. Those create the wrong conditions. But if you respect and care for life, if you respect and care for people's possessions, if you respect and care for people's bodies, their hearts, their inner life, then you wouldn't do those things. And those create very different conditions over time or in the present moment. And then it's the footpath is used, it makes a big difference if you have what's called the right livelihood, if you if you how you live your life and livelihood. You know, it seems basically ethical makes a big difference that it feels unethical, go to work every day and you feel you're doing unethical things. That creates a very different condition. Very, you know, especially over the long term, you know, remember the parallel lines. You know, maybe you know the first day of going to work and it's feels unethical. You Know you can get away with it just doesn't feel like no big deal. And everyone else hears workers doing it too. But you know, over time a toll will take, and that line will go further and further away from the center.

So I don't wanna go into more of the Eightfold Path. But this eightfold path is, you know, that's the Dharma. That's the heart of, you know, the Dharma practice that supports us. And then, the third of the refugees is Sangha. For those of you don't know what that word is, it means the community of practitioners, and, and in particular, what the heart of what Sangha means is those practitioners who

have seen the difference, who really know for their own self in some very deep, profound way, the difference that the difference between being caught and being not caught and thrown from that really, no, it's better not to be caught. And they've witnessed that they've experienced that they know that as a possibility. And perhaps not just to kind of in the mild kind of letting go But in some very profound, deep way of letting go of some of the very deepest things that we're caught up in, we get caught in, that are so deep and subtle that we don't always know that they're operating. But they're like the tradition calls it the root and that and the roots are the underpinnings for a lot of other things we do. And one of them is attachment or clinging to self egotism, being self centered. And to really kind of really see that God really see that to the root to the base, and be able to experience for oneself the difference between being caught up in self and being free of that corruptness is one of the remarkable things to really know that difference to know it clearly and fully. So that in the future we're much less likely to be fooled into back into selfishness, or taking something good self so

So this take refuge in the Sangha is to find support and inspiration, guidance in the people who somehow have gone in the path before you and know something about this, have confidence in it. exhibit the life has lived that way. Because, you know, if you want to follow a path, it's good to know their models that people who are further ahead enough can offer support. So, then refuge sarana. So it's buddham saranam gacchami. So gacchami means to go. But it also means to understand to understand something, so it's not, you know, so it's this kind of an act of faith statement of faith and Buddhism. They say, I take refuge in the Buddha Dharma Sangha, but it's not it's faith that's built on knowledge, something we know. That's the ideal thing. And so requires knowing something requires having confidence or looking back at our own experience being present enough to be able to track ourselves to really see there are different modes of being different ways of being, and that one has more meaning more value than another. The end So, this last words actually means to go or to understand the middle word Suriname means, usually translated in English as a refuge. Sometimes I said protection. It said by the tradition, it's that which helps you drop fear. When you have sorrow, and then when you go for a refuge, then you're no longer afraid. And this is one of one of the experiences I've had with this idea of refuge. All this practice in Buddhism, that it's given me a lot of confidence in just being alive. I don't feel as much fear as I used to Not that I know how to find my way and, but rather, not that I know how to find my way all the time. But rather I know how to find myself all the time. I know how to come back to myself and find and find how to be peaceful, how not to be more importantly, how not to be caught in whatever circumstance I'm in. And so terrible things can happen to people. And I have confidence that if terrible things happen to me if I suddenly get cancer, that or some terrible thing, it shouldn't happen, be nice if these things don't happen. I have confidence in this practice that I have confidence in these values I've discovered through this practice. I have this confidence that I feel like one of the things I've been given through this Dharma practice is and I don't know, I mean, I can't speak with too much confidence we're about to say. But I feel confident but I'm smart enough. No, that shouldn't be. But I have I have confidence that I have the Dharma, I have this practice, to quit to take with me to meet my death, my dying. And so I don't feel that afraid of dying. Because I have this wonderful thing, that this skill, this ability, this understanding, to look back at myself and find where the place of pieces or again I keep wanting to be Correct, correct myself not find that place of peace, which might be the result. But I think it's more powerful and more significant to say, to find a place of not being caught. Because that's really the issue not being caught. If peace becomes held up on a pedestal. It's too easy to become into problems like you're looking for the peace we want the peace we measure ourselves by the peace when approve ourselves by the piece or that piece becomes a thing. But let the piece take care of it. Self. It's quite content, it's happy. And, but your job is to focus on them on the clinging, the kotnis, that tightness, the constriction that comes. And so to have confidence that there you have a path, even if you don't get very far to know you have a path, to walk, to help release these inner constrictions and tightness to dissolve these things, is one of the great, great things of a human

life to have a path to have a practice that for this. And so, I have I feel like Buddhism has given me this wonderful practice and this path. And it's because of this passage and practice that I've confidence in that I've can say, and I say this cautiously confidence are provisionally calculated, and provisionally provisionally confident, maybe then I can say it accurately. I'm provisionally confidence, because I don't really know what's going to happen. But when that time comes by provisionally

About I have some support for me when I face a crisis like dying. Isn't that nice? So refuge. So Buddhists will say I take refuge in the Dharma. I take refuge in, I take refuge in the Buddha, I take refuge in the Dharma, and I take refuge in the Sangha. And it's nice to have ceremonies, it's nice to chat those things or to say those things periodically be reminded, because it's so easy to forget. And there's something about a state stating it to oneself for clearly and unequivocally that reminds us which kind of re evokes evokes those states or evokes that path or books, our deep appreciation or value that we have in these things, and it's good to kind of get reconnected in a deep way our lives are busy, we get distracted, and then I take refuge in the Buddha Ah, I take refuge in the Dharma. Ah, yes. I take refuge in Sangha. Yes. However, usually doesn't work that that quickly. That's why the tradition when they chant the refuges, they do it three times. No more. You know, by the third time maybe it sinks in. So I thought I had more time for questions, but yeah, I think you want to ask about that. today. Was that too religious? Talk for those of you who are what religion, or was it not religious enough for those of you who want more religion around here? It's very hard to be Dharma teacher, you know, all these competing wishes out there. So any questions or comments? Thank you for your integrity. Oh, thank you. Yes. Oh, do you have time to chant them? People want to get to chant them. How many of you don't know them the chant in Pali? That's a lot. So those of you Why don't we do it? call and response. So I'll chant one word. And then you repeat after me. And we'll do the as I told you to do three times, right? So the first time we'll do call and response, the second time, you say in Pali for the second time, and that word is duty MP. Then the third time you say for a third time and that the ancient language is Totti, MP. So the first time you say budem, Saarinen gotcha ami, dumb Saarinen, gotcha ami Sangam. Saarinen catch ami, and then you say the same thing all over again. But with the preface to TMP and Totti, MP. Got it. So we'll do the first time, every word call and response and then the second time, I'll do the whole line and then you repeat after me this line, the third time, we'll do it all together. And if you don't have it by the third time, that's fine. It's you can just hum along and you don't have to do this but it's the custom often we do this to put our hands together and Anjali like this. And that's just only if you want to which is like completely no requirement and so then repeat itself repeat these words.

Buddham Saranam Gacchami
Dhammam Saranam Gacchami
Sangham Saranam Gacchami

then repeat after me the whole line

Dutiyampi Buddham Saranam Gacchami
Dutiyampi Dhammam Saranam Gacchami
Dutiyampi Sangham Saranam Gacchami

Then all together the Buddham Saranam Gacchami. Thank you. That was nice. So I hope that the Buddha becomes just a mirror of what you see in yourself. Thank you