

White Heron Sangha –

Morning Meditation 5/18

Buddhist monks begin each day with a chant of gratitude for the blessings of their life. Native American elders begin each ceremony with grateful prayers to Mother Earth and Father Sky, to the four directions, to the animal, plant and mineral brothers and sisters who share our earth and support our life. In Tibet, the monks and nuns even offer prayers of gratitude for the suffering they have been given: “Grant that I might have enough suffering to awaken in me the deepest possible compassion and wisdom”.

The aim of spiritual life is to awaken a joyful freedom, a benevolent and compassionate heart in spite of everything.

Gratitude is a gracious acknowledgment of all that sustains us, a bow to our blessings, great and small, an appreciation of the moments of good fortune that sustain our life every day. We have so much to be grateful for.

Gratitude is confidence in life itself. In it, we feel how the same force that pushes grass through cracks in the sidewalk invigorates our own life.

Gratitude gladdens the heart. It is not sentimental, not jealous, nor judgmental. Gratitude does not envy nor compare.

As gratitude grows, it gives rise to joy. Joy is natural to an open heart. In it, we are not afraid of pleasure. We do not mistakenly believe it is disloyal to the suffering of the world to honor the happiness we have been given.

Like gratitude, joy gladdens the heart. We can be joyful for people we love, for moments of goodness, for sunlight and trees, and for the breath within our breast. And as our joy grows, we finally discover a happiness without cause. Like an innocent child who does not have to do anything to be happy, we can rejoice in life itself, in being alive.

Let yourself sit quietly and at ease. Allow your body to be relaxed and open, your breath natural, your heart easy. Feel how year after year you have cared for your own life. Now let yourself begin to acknowledge all that has supported you in this care.