

Circle of Peace – Interfaith Address

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The aim of Buddhism is to deeply appreciate this precious life that each of us has, and then, out of that appreciation, to help others.

And so we can ask ourselves, what really is this life? What is my purpose? How can my life function to bring peace to myself and to others? We have to look at these questions very carefully and honestly. As you all know, if we wish to align ourselves with world peace, to promote peace, then we have to start with peace in ourselves. If we can't cultivate a peaceful, open and undefended heart, then how can we wholeheartedly join others in non-violence?

In fact, when most of us look within ourselves honestly, we often do not see peace. Instead, we see suffering, anger, anxiety, denial, greed, drama, all the elements of war that might be on the front page of the newspaper each day. Although these are just states of mind, they determine how we respond to all the challenges we face every day. But when we really investigate that war in ourselves, we can also see what is our deep human wish, our real "bottom line", which is not to be at war, but simply to find happiness. When we look within ourselves we can bring life to this intention, and then act in the world from a place of integrity and peace.

Our core desire to find happiness can inspire us to look at this warring heart and at the fear that really drives that greed and hatred. Of course this is a fear that is not unique to you or me. In fact, when we really see our own fear, then we can recognize it in the warring tribes, in those who feel menaced by immigrants, those who clutch at their own history or belief systems, those threatened by people with different beliefs or lifestyles, and those desperate for power or profit. This is the reactive fear that separates us from one another, that arises from the illusion that as a people we are not one.

Looking deeply and bravely at this heart we can also see something else. We can all without exception, see beyond our afflictions, and prove that our ultimate nature is universal & fearless. We can each be confident that our true condition is absolutely free, and recognize real Love as endlessly opening to what is true in each moment.

The approaches Buddhism takes to this inner work are simple. In fact, because these approaches support, rather than conflict with the tenets of major world religions, I feel that Buddhism is truly pan-denominational and therefore can help bring together people of different faiths or beliefs. These approaches are:

First, choose to live ethically, choose not to harm...by not killing, stealing, lying, abusing sex, or abusing drugs and alcohol. As the Buddha said, being good fosters goodness. It's a basic law of life.

Second, strive to look carefully at and appreciate your life, through deep meditation and honest reflection. Peace and lasting joy come from fully accepting yourself, and accepting that everything changes.

Third, recognize your basic human wisdom and express that wisdom in the world. Every person, without exception, has the capacity to do this. Every person has value.

I'll close with a prescription that is fundamental to the cause of World Peace:

"May all beings be free from fear and anxiety.

May all beings be happy.

May all beings be at ease.

May all beings awaken"