

# Evening Service & Ancestral Memorial

## Three Bows

**With utmost sincerity,**

I pay homage to the eternal Triple Gem,  
throughout the ten directions of the Dharma realm.

## Verse of Repentance

❖ - ❖

**All the evil deeds**

I have committed in the past  
Arose from beginningless greed, anger, and delusion,  
Born from the body, speech, and mind,  
I now confess them all.

❖

## Three Refuges & Confirmations

**From now until the end of time**

I take refuge in the Buddha, revered in wisdom and merit.

I take refuge in the Dharma, revered in abandoning desire. (*leading to  
samsara*)

I take refuge in the Sangha, revered among all communities.

I have accomplished refuge in the Buddha.

I have accomplished refuge in the Dharma.

I have accomplished refuge in the Sangha.

❖

## Opening the Sutra

**The supreme, profound, and wonderful Dharma,**

So rare to encounter even in hundreds of thousands of eons,

Now I see, hear, and receive it.

May I comprehend the true meaning of the Tathagata's teachings.

❖

## Sutra Chanting

### **The Lotus Sutra, Lifespan of the Tathagata. Chapter 16**

**Thereupon the Buddha addressed the bodhisattvas and the entire great assembly, saying:**

“O sons of a virtuous family! You should believe the true words of the Tathāgata.” He addressed the great assembly again, saying: “You should believe the Tathāgata’s true words.”

He repeated this to them, saying: “You should believe the Tathāgata’s true words.” Then the great assembly of bodhisattvas, headed by Maitreya, addressed the Buddha with their palms pressed together, saying: “O Bhagavat! We entreat you to explain it. We will accept the Buddha’s words.” After they had spoken in this way three times, they again said: “We entreat you to explain it. We will accept the Buddha’s words.”

Then the Bhagavat, realizing that the bodhisattvas continued to entreat him after those three times, addressed them, saying:

“Listen carefully to the Tathāgata’s secret and transcendent powers. The devas, humans, and asuras in all the worlds all think that the present Buddha, Śākyamuni, left the palace of the Śākyas, sat on the terrace of enlightenment not far from the city of Gayā, and attained highest, complete enlightenment. However, O sons of a virtuous family, immeasurable, limitless, hundreds of thousands of myriads of koṭis of nayutas of kalpas have passed since I actually attained buddhahood.

“Suppose there were a man who ground five hundreds of thousands myriads of koṭis of nayutas of incalculable great manifold cosmos into particles. While passing through five hundred thousands of myriads of koṭis of nayutas of incalculable lands to the east, he dropped just a single particle; and in this way he continued to drop the particles as he went toward the east, until they were all gone.

“O sons of a virtuous family! What do you think about this? Can all of these worlds be calculated or not? Can one imagine all of these worlds, calculate, and know their number or not?”

Bodhisattva Maitreya and the others together addressed the Buddha, saying: “O Bhagavat! These worlds are immeasurable, limitless, incalculable, and beyond our powers of conception. Even all the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas, with their knowledge free from corruption, are not able to

comprehend them, or know their number. Although we abide in the stage of nonretrogression we cannot understand it. O Bhagavat! Such worlds as these are incalculable and limitless.”

Then the Buddha addressed the assembly of the great bodhisattvas, saying:

“O sons of a virtuous family! I will now explain it clearly to you. Suppose all these worlds, whether or not a particle was left in them, were reduced to particles, and each particle represented a kalpa. The period of time since I became a buddha would exceed this by hundreds of thousands of myriads of koṭis of nayutas of incalculable kalpas. Since then I have constantly been residing in the saḥā world, teaching the Dharma and inspiring sentient beings. I have also been leading and benefiting sentient beings in incalculable hundreds of thousands of myriads of koṭis of nayutas of other worlds.

“O sons of a virtuous family! During this interim I explained about the Buddha Dīpaṃkara and others. Furthermore, I also said that they had entered parinirvāṇa. I have explained such things through skillful means.

“O sons of a virtuous family! If any sentient being comes to me, I perceive the dullness or sharpness of his faith and other faculties with my buddhaeye. According to the way I should bring them to the path, I, myself, proclaim different names and lifespans in various places. In each case I have also clearly stated that I would enter parinirvāṇa. Through various skillful means I have explained subtle teachings and have made the sentient beings rejoice.

“O sons of a virtuous family! To those beings whom the Tathāgata perceives as taking pleasure in the inferior teachings, who have few qualities and grave defilements, he teaches that the Buddha attained highest, complete enlightenment after he renounced household life in his young age. However, it has been a very long time indeed since I attained buddhahood. I give such an explanation only to lead and inspire the sentient beings to enter the buddha path through skillful means.

“O sons of a virtuous family! The sutras that the Tathāgata has expounded are all to save the sentient beings. Whether the Tathāgata teaches about himself or others, whether he reveals his form or that of

others, whether he shows his acts or those of others, everything he says is true, never false.

“Why is this? Because the Tathāgata perceives all the marks of the triple world as they really are: that there is no birth and death, coming or going; that there is also no existence or extinction in the world, truth or falsehood, sameness or difference. The Tathāgata does not view the triple world as sentient beings in the triple world see it. The Tathāgata perceives such things clearly and without mistakes.

“Since sentient beings have various natures, desires, behaviors, thoughts, and distinctions, the Tathāgata, wanting to cause them to plant roots of good merit, has explained various teachings through a variety of examples, explanations, and illustrations. He has not desisted from doing buddha acts even for a single moment and in this way it has been an extremely long time since I attained buddhahood. My lifespan is immeasurable and incalculable. I abide forever without entering parinirvāṇa.

“O sons of a virtuous family! The lifespan that I first attained through practicing the bodhisattva path has not yet expired. It is twice as great as the number previously mentioned. Although I do not actually enter parinirvāṇa I proclaim that I do. It is through this skillful means that the Tathāgata leads and inspires sentient beings.

“Why is this? Because if the Buddha abides a long time in this world, those who have few qualities do not plant roots of good merit, acquire poor and superficial characters, are attached to the desires of the five senses, and enter into the web of illusions and false views. If they see the Tathāgata always existing without extinction, they then become proud, self-willed, and negligent. The thought that the Buddha is difficult to meet and that he is to be respected cannot awaken in them. That is why the Tathāgata teaches through skillful means, saying: O monks! You should know that the appearance of the buddhas in the world is very difficult to encounter.

“Why is this? Because some of those with little merit may not see the Buddha during the passage of immeasurable hundreds of thousands of myriads of koṭis of kalpas. “For this reason I say: O monks! It is difficult to meet the Tathāgata.

“Hearing such words, the thought that it is very difficult to meet the Tathāgata will certainly awaken in these sentient beings. Longing and

yearning for the Buddha, they will plant roots of good merit. For this reason, although the Tathāgata does not really pass into extinction, he nevertheless says he does.

“Furthermore, O sons of a virtuous family, the teaching of all the Buddha Tathāgatas is exactly like this. It is entirely true, never false, all for the sake of saving sentient beings.

“Suppose there were an excellent doctor. He is wise, knowledgeable, his prescriptions are effective, and he has skillfully cured a variety of diseases. This man has many sons, say ten, twenty, or even one hundred in number. For some reason, he has to go far off to another country and, while he is away, his children, whom he has left behind, drink some poison. The poison starts to take effect and they roll on the ground in agony.

“At this moment their father returns home. Some of the children who have taken the poison are delirious, while others are not. Seeing their father in the distance they all rejoice greatly and kneeling respectfully address him, saying: It is good that you have returned safely. In our ignorance we took this poison by mistake. We entreat you to cure and save us, and restore us to life.

“Seeing his children suffering in this way, the father searches for beneficial herbs possessed of good color, aroma, and flavor, according to the medical manual. Blending them together after grinding and sifting, he gives the mixture to the children and says: This is an extremely beneficial medicine with good color, aroma, and flavor. All of you take it! It will quickly remove your pain and you will never be afflicted again.

“Then the children who have not become delirious see this beneficial medicine of good color and aroma, and immediately take it. The affliction is completely removed and they are cured. The remaining children, those who are delirious, seeing their father coming to them, rejoice and ask him to seek a cure for their illness. Although he offers them the medicine, they will not take it. Why is this? The poison has so deeply penetrated them that they have become delirious. They do not think that the medicine with good color and aroma is good.

“The father thinks: These children are to be pitied. The poison has completely warped their minds. Although they rejoiced upon seeing me and

sought a cure they will not take this beneficial medicine. I will now cause them to take this medicine through skillful means.

“Then he says to them: You should know that I am now old and feeble, close to death. I will now leave this beneficial medicine here. You should take it. Do not worry about not recovering.

“Having left these instructions he goes to another country and sends a messenger back home to tell them: ‘Your father has already died.’ Upon hearing that their father is dead, the children become very distressed and think: If our father had lived he would have taken pity on us and protected us. But now, abandoning us, he has died in a distant country.

“They now consider themselves orphans having no one to rely upon. Through constant grieving their minds become clear, and only then do they realize that the medicine has fine color, aroma, and flavor. They immediately take it and the poison is completely driven out. The father, hearing that all his children have completely recovered, immediately returns and makes his appearance.”

The Buddha then asked the bodhisattvas: “O sons of a virtuous family! Do you think there is anyone who would say that this good doctor is guilty of lying?”

The bodhisattvas replied: “No, we do not, O Bhagavat!”

The Buddha said: “I am just like this. Since I became a buddha, immeasurable, limitless, hundreds of thousands of myriads of koṭis of nayutas of incalculable kalpas have passed. Though for the sake of sentient beings, I use skillful means and say that I will enter parinirvāṇa, there is no one who could rightly say that I am guilty of falsehood.”

**Thereupon the Bhagavat, wanting to elaborate on the meaning of this further, spoke these verses:**

Since I attained buddhahood, immeasurable hundreds of thousands of myriads  
of koṭis of incalculable kalpas have passed.

I have been constantly teaching the Dharma, through these  
immeasurable kalpas,  
leading and inspiring innumerable koṭis of sentient beings and enabling  
them to enter the buddha path.

Using skillful means I have manifested the state of nirvana to bring sentient beings to this path; yet I have not actually entered nirvana, but continually abide here expounding the Dharma.

Although I am always among these erring beings, with my transcendent powers, I prevent them from seeing me. The sentient beings, seeing me enter perfect extinction earnestly revere my relics and, filled with longing, yearn for me.

When the sentient beings become sincere, mild, and receptive, and, wanting wholeheartedly to meet the Buddha, are willing to give unsparingly of their bodies and lives, then I, together with the sangha, will appear on Mount Gṛdhrakūṭa.

I will declare this to sentient beings: although I am always here without extinction, through the power of skillful means, I manifest extinction and non-extinction. If there are any sentient beings in other worlds who respect and believe in me, I will also teach them the highest Dharma.

Not knowing this, you only think that I have entered parinirvāṇa. I see all sentient beings submerged in the ocean of suffering. That is why, by not manifesting my form, I cause them to yearn for me.

Then, after awakening this longing, I appear and expound the Dharma; such are my transcendent powers. For innumerable kalpas I have constantly resided on Mount Gṛdhrakūṭa and elsewhere.

When sentient beings see themselves amidst a conflagration at the end of a kalpa, it is in fact my tranquil land, always full of devas and humans.

All the gardens and palaces are adorned with various gems. The jeweled trees abound with flowers and fruits, and the sentient beings are joyful among them.

The devas beat heavenly drums making constant and varied music. They rain down māṇḍārava flowers upon the Buddha and the great assembly.

Although my Pure Land never decays, the sentient beings see it as ravaged by fire and torn with anxiety and distress; they believe it is filled with these things.

Because of their misdeeds these erring sentient beings do not hear the name of the Three Treasures for incalculable kalpas. But all who cultivate merit, and are receptive and honest, will see me residing here, expounding the Dharma.

For the sake of these sentient beings I teach that the lifespan of the Buddha is immeasurable. To those who, after a long time, finally, see the Buddha, I teach that it is difficult to meet him. Such is the power of my wisdom.

The light of my wisdom illuminates immeasurably and my lifespan is of innumerable kalpas. This has been achieved through long practice.

You wise ones, do not give in to doubt! Banish all doubt forever! The Buddha's words are true, never false.

It is like the physician who proclaimed his own death, although it was untrue.

He did this to cure his delirious sons, through excellent skillful means; so no one could say he really spoke falsehood.

I, also, being the father of the world, cure those who suffer. To the deluded and unenlightened I say that I have entered nirvana, although, in fact, I am really here.

For if they were to see me, they would become lazy and arrogant. Attached to the desires of the five senses, they would fall into the troubled states of being.

Always aware of which sentient beings practice the path and which do not,

I teach the Dharma in various ways, according to their ability to be saved.

I am always thinking: by what means can I cause sentient beings to be able to enter the highest path and quickly attain the Dharma?



## Ten Suchnesses

### **The Dharma**

that the Buddhas have attained is foremost, unique, and difficult to understand. No one but the Buddha with a Buddha can completely know the real aspects of all dharmas—that is to say their character, nature, substance, potential, function, cause, condition, result, effect, and essential unity. (LS. Ch.2)



## Perfect & Sudden Enlightenment

### **On Perfect and Sudden Enlightenment-**

Perfect and Sudden Enlightenment means, from the very beginning, samatha-vipassana takes ultimate reality as the focus. Every object of perception is inherently the Middle Way, and nothing is not true reality.

When one's mind is unified with the Dharma Realm, a single thought is the Dharma Realm. Every form, every fragrance, is none other than the Middle Way.

The realm of self, the realm of Buddhas, and the realm of sentient beings are all the same in this. The aggregates and sensory entrances are all thusness; there is no suffering to discard. Ignorance and defilements are themselves identical with enlightenment; there is no accumulation of afflictions to sever.

The two extremes and false views are all the Middle Way and correct; there is no path to cultivate. Birth and death are themselves Nirvana; there is no cessation to attain.

Since there is no suffering and no accumulation of afflictions, there is no mundane world. Since there is no path and no cessation, there is no transcendent world beyond.

There is only the pure and singular ultimate reality. Beyond this ultimate reality, there is no other Dharma.

The nature of Dharma is stillness—this is called "cessation", samatha. Stillness yet ever illuminating—this is called "contemplation", vipasyana.

Though we speak of beginning and end, there is no duality, no separation.

This is called Perfect and Sudden Cessation and Contemplation.

Know that the body and the land, both in a single thought, encompass the three thousand realms. Thus, at the moment of attaining enlightenment, one's body and thought resonate with this fundamental principle, pervading the entire Dharma Realm.



### Relic Verse

#### **With utmost devotion,**

I pay homage to the perfectly virtuous and fully enlightened Shakyamuni Tathagata, to the physical and spiritual relics, to the original vow arising from the fundamental ground, and to the stupa that pervades the Dharma realm.

We reverently bow in worship. Through the Buddha's empowerment, may my present body merge with the Buddha, and the Buddha merge with me.

By the Buddha's miraculous power, may I attain enlightenment and benefit all sentient beings. I resolve to awaken the mind of bodhi, practice the bodhisattva path, and together enter perfect nirvana, the equal and supreme wisdom. Now, I offer this act of reverence.



### Praise of Original Awakening

#### **I take refuge in the Dharmakaya of the Original Awakened Mind,**

The wondrous dharma eternally abiding on the lotus throne of the mind. Inherently endowed with the virtues of the Three Bodies, the thirty-seven sacred beings dwell within the citadel of the heart.

The countless samadhis, as numerous as the dust particles in the universe, transcend cause and effect, naturally complete and perfect.

The boundless ocean of virtues is originally fulfilled, I return to pay homage to the Buddhas within my own heart.



Mantra of Light

ON ABOKYA BIROSHANA MAKAMODARA

MANI HANDOMA JINBARA HARABARITAYA UN (3x/108x)



Dharani of Fulfilling Wishes

ON BARABARA SANBARA SANBARA

INDARIYA BISHUDANI UN UN RO RO SHAREI SOWAKA (3x)



Contemplation Sutra Verse

**Bright light**

universally illuminates the ten directions, gathering and never abandoning all sentient beings who recite the name.



Mindfulness of Buddha

NAMU AMIDA BUTSU



Dedication Verse

I take refuge and bow in reverence to Amitabha Buddha, the Great King of Compassionate Vows, presiding over the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss.

I take refuge in the Great Compassionate Teacher, Shakyamuni Buddha.

I take refuge in Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva.

I take refuge in Mahasthamaprapta Bodhisattva.

May the assembly of holy beings, in their compassion, protect and remember us.

I take refuge in the Great Teachers who transmitted the teachings, and all the successive masters who have repaid the kindness of the Buddhas.

For all ancestors, past and present, for my family and community, whether connected by karmic ties or not, (and in particular \_ \_ \_) may all

spirits advance in their path to Buddhahood and be reborn together in the Pure Land.

I, disciple [Name], pray for the eradication of my karmic obstacles, for mindfulness at the time of death, and for rebirth in the Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss.

By the great compassion of the Tathagata, may I be compassionately protected and remembered.



Mindfulness of Buddha

NAMU AMIDA BUTSU



Pure Land Rebirth Dedication

**By these merits,**

May all beings be equally benefited,

Together may we generate the Bodhi Mind,

And may we be reborn in the Pure Land of peace and bliss.



Three Bows

**With utmost sincerity,**

I pay homage to the eternal Triple Gem,

throughout the ten directions of the Dharma realm.

*Note:*

*This is more appropriate as an evening service or when someone requests a memorial at the temple or their home. Elements may be adjusted for the occasion. A more basic version might be Life Span Chapter, Relic Verse, and Buddha's Name, for example. Removing all elements not directly related to passing away. An extended version may be the verse and prose of the Life Span Chapter, 108 recitations of the Mantra of Light, Amitabha Buddha's name with individuals offering incense at the front, etc. This could also be used for Ancestral Memorials (such as the 1st of the month, requests for praying for ancestors, spring/autumnal equinox etc.)*

*Lotus Sutra text from:*

[https://www.bdk.or.jp/document/dgtl-dl/dBET\\_T0262\\_LotusSutra\\_2007.pdf](https://www.bdk.or.jp/document/dgtl-dl/dBET_T0262_LotusSutra_2007.pdf)



**Celestial Platform Vihara**  
**天臺精舍**

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Before beginning chanting~

Wash hands and rinse your mouth.

Offer flowers to the left, water and tea in front, and a candle to the right, if appropriate.

Incense may be placed in front. More extensive offerings as you are willing and able.

First, sit respectfully and calm your body, breath, and heart.

After bowing three times, pick up the chanting book and hold it at heart level, with both hands.

Chanting should be slightly higher than your speaking voice, even, clear, and smooth, neither too loud nor too quiet. The image is that of gentle rain.

*Practice note:* This symbol ❖ indicates one bell or gong.