

New Year Prayer to Mother Earth and All Our Ancestors

Dear Beloved Thay,
Dear Beloved Ancestors,
Dear Beloved Mother Earth,

We have gathered as a fourfold sangha in this solemn moment of the New Year to express our gratitude and aspiration as a spiritual family, and to begin anew. We know that you, our ancestors, are present in every cell of our body, and that you are always there for us to take refuge in. We know that you, Thay, are also present with us in this very moment. As we touch the Earth tonight we feel deeply connected to you, Mother Earth. We, and all our ancestors, are *your* children. You are our beautiful blue planet, the Great Refreshing Bodhisattva – fragrant and cool, abundant and kind. Despite our many mistakes and shortcomings, every time we come home to you, you are ready to open your arms and embrace us.

Dear Beloved Thay, many times in the past year we have allowed uncertainty to water the seeds of insecurity and fear in our hearts. Our strong emotions and wrong perceptions have overwhelmed us, giving rise to feelings of helplessness, separation and despair.

Aware of this suffering, we are determined to take refuge in you, Thay, in our practice, and in our Beloved Community. Returning to our mindful breathing and mindful steps, we return to our true home, where we can find peace, clarity and calm. Dwelling in the heart of our community, we can be in touch with the collective energy of stability, helping us recognize and embrace our strong emotions and wrong perceptions.

Dear Mother Earth, as a human family, we have allowed greed and consumerism to prevail. We have been running after status, wealth, power and sensual comforts, forgetting that these things can never bring us true happiness and freedom. We have been so busy trying to cover up the feeling of emptiness inside, that we have not taken the time or space to stop and ask ourselves what we are doing, or where we are going. In the process, we have caused great harm to you, dear Mother Earth, destroying your natural richness, beauty and balance.

Aware of this, we are determined to simplify our life, to stop running, and to remember that in the present moment we already have enough conditions to be happy. With the energy of mindfulness and compassion we feel truly fulfilled and content. In the coming year, we are determined to consume less and to live in such a way that is sustainable for ourselves and for you, Mother Earth.

Dear Ancestors, we have allowed our fear and intolerance to divide us as a human family. We have caused suffering to one another, discriminating on the basis of religion, ethnic groups and nations. We have closed our hearts and our borders, out of fear and ignorance. We have forgotten that we are inter-dependent, and that our own happiness and suffering is deeply connected to and dependent on the happiness and suffering of others.

We trust that within us, there *is* the wisdom of non-discrimination and great compassion, transmitted to us by you, all our spiritual teachers, our ancestors, and by Mother Earth. We are determined to stay on the Path, to keep our hearts open, and to let go of our pride, so that understanding and love can prevail.

As we touch the Earth, we express our gratitude to you, our beloved teacher Thay, to our ancestors, and to Mother Earth. We have found the path of practice and a spiritual family to take refuge in. We have experienced joy, peace and transformation. We have tasted the freedom of letting go of our ideas and notions. We have felt the strength and warmth of brotherhood and sisterhood, and we know that *together*, we can face our challenges and realise our aspiration. We vow, in this moment, to continue to build our community and to open up the path for ourselves and our descendants.

Dear Thay, Dear Ancestors, Dear Mother Earth, please accept our offerings of incense, flowers, fruit and tea, as a sign of our deep aspiration, respect, gratitude and love.