



The Five Earth Touchings

Introduction:

This is the full text guiding the practice of Five Earth Touchings that we use at our practice centres and sanghas in the Plum Village Tradition. Practicing the Five Earth Touchings gives us an opportunity to contemplate what has been transmitted to us by our blood ancestors and spiritual ancestors. We can practice to celebrate the positive and transform what needs to be transformed. After practicing with this standard text, we encourage you to write your own, so that you can go even deeper into your practice.

To begin this practice, we invite you join your palms in front of your chest in the shape of a lotus bud. If you are with others, one of you may like to take the role of bell master, and invite the bell and read the text for others to practice. If you are alone, you may like to invite the bell, and read the text out loud.

Then, gently lower yourself to the ground so that all four limbs and your forehead are resting comfortably on the floor. While touching the Earth, turn your palms face up, showing your openness to the Three Jewels — the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. When we touch the Earth, we breathe in all the strength and stability of the Earth, and breathe out our suffering — our feelings of anger, hatred, fear, inadequacy and grief.

Enjoy your practice.

[invite the bell three times to begin]

i

In gratitude, I bow to all generations of ancestors in my blood family.

[invite the bell] [touch the earth]

I see my mother and father, whose blood, flesh, and vitality are circulating in my own veins and nourishing every cell in me. Through them, I see my four grandparents. Their expectations, experiences, and wisdom have been transmitted from so many generations of ancestors. I carry in me the life, blood, experience, wisdom, happiness, and sorrow of all generations. The suffering and all the elements that need to be transformed, I am practicing to transform. I open my heart, flesh, and bones to receive the energy of insight, love, and experience transmitted to me by all my ancestors. I see my roots in my father, mother, grandfathers, grandmothers, and all my ancestors. I know I am only the continuation of this ancestral lineage. Please support, protect, and transmit to me your energy. I know wherever children and grandchildren are, ancestors are there, also. I know that parents always love and support their children and grandchildren, although they are not always able to express it skilfully because of difficulties they themselves encountered. I see that my ancestors tried to build a way of life based on gratitude, joy, confidence, respect, and loving kindness. As a continuation of my ancestors, I bow deeply and allow their energy to flow through me. I ask my ancestors for their support, protection, and strength.

[take three breaths] [invite the bell] [stand up]

In gratitude, I bow to all generations of ancestors in my spiritual family.*[invite the bell] [touch the earth]*

I see in myself my teachers, the ones who show me the way of love and understanding, the way to breathe, smile, forgive, and live deeply in the present moment. I see through my teachers all teachers over many generations and traditions, going back to the ones who began my spiritual family thousands of years ago. I see the Buddha or Christ or the patriarchs and matriarchs as my teachers, and also as my spiritual ancestors. I see that their energy and that of many generations of teachers has entered me and is creating peace, joy, understanding, and loving kindness in me. I know that the energy of these teachers has deeply transformed the world. Without the Buddha and all these spiritual ancestors, I would not know the way to practice to bring peace and happiness into my life and into the lives of my family and society. I open my heart and my body to receive the energy of understanding, loving kindness, and protection from the Awakened Ones, their teachings, and the community of practice over many generations. I am their continuation. I ask these spiritual ancestors to transmit to me their infinite source of energy, peace, stability, understanding, and love. I vow to practice to transform the suffering in myself and the world, and to transmit their energy to future generations of practitioners. My spiritual ancestors may have had their own difficulties and not always been able to transmit the teachings, but I accept them as they are.

*[take three breaths] [invite the bell] [stand up]***In gratitude, I bow to this land and all of the ancestors who made it available. ****[invite the bell] [touch the earth]*

I see that I am whole, protected, and nourished by this land and all of the living beings who have been here and made life easy and possible for me through all their efforts. I see Chief Seattle, Dorothy Day, Cesar Chavez, Martin Luther King, Jr., and all the others known and unknown. I see all those who have made this country a refuge for people of so many origins and colors, by their talent, perseverance, and love — those who have worked hard to build schools, hospitals, bridges, and roads, to protect human rights, to develop science and technology, and to fight for freedom and social justice. I see myself touching my ancestors of Native American origin who have lived on this land for such a long time and known the ways to live in peace and harmony with nature, protecting the mountains, forests, animals, vegetation, and minerals of this land. I feel the energy of this land penetrating my body and soul, supporting and accepting me. I vow to cultivate and maintain this energy and transmit it to future generations. I vow to contribute my part in transforming the violence, hatred, and delusion that still lie deep in the collective consciousness of this society so that future generations will have more safety, joy, and peace. I ask this land for its protection and support.

[take three breaths] [invite the bell] [stand up]

In gratitude and compassion, I bow down and transmit my energy to those I love.

[invite the bell] [touch the earth]

All the energy I have received I now want to transmit to my father, my mother, everyone I love, all who have suffered and worried because of me and for my sake. I know I have not been mindful enough in my daily life. I also know that those who love me have had their own difficulties. They have suffered because they were not lucky enough to have an environment that encouraged their full development. I transmit my energy to my mother, my father, my brothers, my sisters, my beloved ones, my husband, my wife, my daughter, and my son, so that their pain will be relieved, so they can smile and feel the joy of being alive. I want all of them to be healthy and joyful. I know that when they are happy, I will also be happy. I no longer feel resentment towards any of them. I pray that all ancestors in my blood and spiritual families will focus their energies toward each of them, to protect and support them. I know that I am not separate from them. I am one with those I love.

[take three breaths] [invite the bell] [stand up]

V

In understanding and compassion, I bow down to reconcile myself with all those who have made me suffer.

[invite the bell] [touch the earth]

I open my heart and send forth my energy of love and understanding to everyone who has made me suffer, to those who have destroyed much of my life and the lives of those I love. I know now that these people have themselves undergone a lot of suffering and that their hearts are overloaded with pain, anger, and hatred. I know that anyone who suffers that much will make those around him or her suffer. I know they may have been unlucky, never having the chance to be cared for and loved. Life and society have dealt them so many hardships. They have been wronged and abused. They have not been guided in the path of mindful living. They have accumulated wrong perceptions about life, about me, and about us. They have wronged us and the people we love. I pray to my ancestors in my blood and spiritual families to channel to these persons who have made us suffer the energy of love and protection, so that their hearts will be able to receive the nectar of love and blossom like a flower. I pray that they can be transformed to experience the joy of living, so that they will not continue to make themselves and others suffer. I see their suffering and do not want to hold any feelings of hatred or anger in myself toward them. I do not want them to suffer. I channel my energy of love and understanding to them and ask all my ancestors to help them.

[take three breaths] [invite the bell] [stand up]

* *Substitute the names of ancestors appropriate for the country in which you are practicing.*