

New Year's Prayer for Peace on Earth in 2024

When COVID-19 began claiming many lives and causing widespread economic distress, we witnessed a huge increase in uncertainty, anxiety, fear, and anger in the world. Anticipating that this would manifest in humanity's collective consciousness as an escalation of violence, EIAB issued a special Prayer for Peace on New Year's Eve 2021, with a Mindfulness Training for Peace on Earth. We could not have foreseen that, within two months, Russia would invade Ukraine or that, within two years, a new war would break out in the Middle East. Globally, more than 110 armed conflicts are being monitored. As we enter 2024, our thoughts turn once more to the need to understand the roots of anger and violence in ourselves, to cultivate peace in ourselves and to pursue the path of reconciliation with others, however difficult that may be.

Dear Beloved Thầy, Dear Beloved Ancestors, Dear Beloved Mother Earth,

We have gathered as a fourfold Sangha of the European Institute of Applied Buddhism in this solemn moment of New Year's Eve 2023 to express our gratitude and aspiration as a spiritual family, and to begin anew. We know that you, our ancestors, are present in this very moment and are always there for us to take refuge in you. As we Touch the Earth tonight, we feel deeply connected to all of you.

Beloved Thầy, many times in the past we have allowed uncertainty to water the seeds of insecurity and fear in our hearts. We have hesitated to take refuge in the path and we have doubted our spiritual family and community. We have not been wholehearted in our practice. We have let our strong emotions and wrong perceptions overwhelm us, giving rise to feelings of helplessness, separation, and despair.

Beloved Thầy, in the 14 Mindfulness Trainings of the Order of Interbeing, you offer concrete practices to help us overcome such feelings, de-escalate conflicts, and bring about reconciliation. We learn to stop, so we can understand and transform the seeds of anger that lie deep in our consciousness.

In the 6th Mindfulness Training, when anger manifests we are determined not to do or say anything, but to practice mindful breathing or mindful walking to acknowledge, embrace and look deeply into our anger. We know that the roots of anger and violence are not outside of ourselves but can be found in our wrong perceptions and lack of understanding of the suffering in ourselves and others. By contemplating impermanence, we will be able to look with the eyes of compassion at ourselves and those whom we think are the cause of our anger, and to recognize the preciousness of our relationships. We will practice Right Diligence in order to nourish our capacity of understanding, love, joy, and inclusiveness, gradually transforming our anger, violence and fear, and helping others to do the same.

As we mark the arrival of 2024, we aspire to begin anew and to remind ourselves of our commitment to practice wholeheartedly, to take refuge in our Beloved Community, and to be a continuation of Thầy and all our spiritual ancestors. We aspire to live more deeply by cultivating our mindful breathing and walking in our daily activities, which we know are Thầy's favorite practices. We also know that you love building Sangha, and we vow to continue your work of building brotherhood and sisterhood with all our heart, even though at times it may seem challenging. We aspire to listen deeply and to help one another, never forsaking anyone, even those who cause us to suffer.

Dear Beloved Ancestors, Dear Beloved Mother Earth,

This New Year's Eve, we give thanks that the worst of the pandemic seems to have passed. But, still, we see an escalation of violence and conflict in the world that brings pain and heartbreak to our entire human family. We send our love to all victims of anger, enmity, hatred, despair, and other destructive

emotions fueling wars. Contemplating the possibility for such suffering and violence to continue, and to proliferate on an even larger scale, we commit anew to cultivating peace in ourselves and in the world. Following the spirit of the Buddha's insight into the Noble Truth of suffering, we aspire to practice the following:

A Mindfulness Training for Peace on Earth

Aware of the suffering caused by the potential for our human family to destroy itself and - through unmindful or reckless actions - extinguish all life on Earth, we are determined to nurture a culture of honoring the sacred web of life that sustains us. This we shall do by committing collectively to practicing mindfulness and leading lives of non-violence and peace, based on our insight into the interconnectedness, interdependency and interbeing of all forms of life on Earth.

We shall practice collectively (as well as individually) in ways that stop all acts and behaviors contributing to the destruction of our human family, other species from the animal and plant kingdoms, and our planet. These destructive actions include the development, production and sale of conventional, nuclear and biochemical weapons, and of advanced technologies for waging war in cyberspace and space. The destructive actions we seek to end also include the misuse of social media, other media and artificial intelligence to manipulate human minds and emotions in ways that generate confusion, mistrust, anger, hatred, and violence within our human family, and cruelty to other species from the animal and plant kingdoms.

We shall channel humanity's collective energy, material wealth and spiritual resources towards positive, wholesome actions that help people learn about, understand, and trust each other; that nourish our existence as one human family among many species, and that protect our sacred Mother Earth.

With openness and humility, we shall learn to embrace each other culturally, politically, socially, and equitably. We shall respect diversity of ethnicity, gender, age, and religious or other beliefs so we may build and nurture on

Earth a human family that is at peace with itself, with all other living beings and with the planet.

As we Touch the Earth, we express our gratitude to you, our beloved teacher Thầy, to our ancestors, and to Mother Earth. We have found the path of practice and a spiritual family in which to take refuge. 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 realize our aspiration. We vow, in this solemn moment, to continue to build our spiritual family, our community and to open up the path for ourselves and our descendants.

Dear Thầy, 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.