

● INKIN (OR SMALL BELL IN SOME CASES)

◎ KESU (BIG BELL)

EXAMPLE OF SIMPLE CEREMONY

The following is an example of a simple ceremony which may be undertaken at home by parents and children. As well, elements of the longer ceremony below might also be added.

Place the Statue of Baby Buddha on a raised platform within a large container (an infant's baby bath perhaps, or other large vessel) filled with water and rose petals or tea. Place a ladle nearby.

First, all family members express their love for each other, and gratitude for being able to be together at this time. Then, each family member, beginning with the parents and followed by children who can, express something that the example of the Buddha has taught to them, and which they will try to live by as they can in the coming year.

Next, everyone takes turns, beginning with the Parents, followed by children (toddlers and babies are held by parents and helped to hold the ladle). The ladle is filled with water (and rose petals) or tea, then poured in three pours (small, medium, large), refilling the ladle each time. Everyone chants the 'Three Refuges' together (repeated 3x) while doing so.

I take refuge in the Buddha,

I take refuge in the Dharma,

I take refuge in the Sangha.

When done, the family offers 'Gassho' (Pressed Palms) to the Buddha. Then, the oldest child who is able (or the parents together) may lightly dry the Statue of the Baby Buddha with a clean cloth. (The Statue should be set out the morning of the holiday, left in place for the remainder of the holiday until the next day). Family members can then embrace, and share a family meal at the same table with the Baby Buddha.

EXAMPLE OF LONGER CEREMONY

The following ceremony is an example from the Lineage of Plum Village, Thich Nhat Hanh Teacher, which may inspire and suggest content, or be adapted by various Buddhist Sangha for their circumstances. Portions of the ceremony may be adapted and undertaken by families at home as well.

From the Lineage of Plum Village, Thich Nhat Hanh Teacher:

The Buddha's birthday is celebrated in the spring. The exact date varies among traditions, but most ceremonies include bathing the baby Buddha. This ceremony can be organized by children with the help of an adult. A small house of bamboo or wood can be made for the statue of the baby Buddha. The statue should be set on a stone in the middle of water. The roof of the house and the supporting pillars can be decorated with flowers and leaves. The children can find flowers to decorate the house. The water that is used to bath the Buddha can be perfumed with flowers and herbs. At the edge of the water is a ladle (presumably of wood or coconut shell) to pour water over the statue during the ceremony. There should be enough room for participants to come up in turn to offer a flower and a candle to the Buddha before bathing the statue.

1. OPENING CEREMONY

One may begin with a period of Zazen and Walking Meditation

Offering of Incense INTRODUCTORY WORDS

Today the community has gathered to celebrate the birth of the Buddha and to bathe the baby Buddha. Please, will the community listen. Two thousand six hundred years ago in the town of Kapilavastu, a Buddha known as Shakyamuni was born. He was a human being just as we are, but in him understanding and love were developed to a very high degree, and he became a fully awakened being. He was a beautiful and precious flower in the garden of humanity, an udumbara flower that blooms only once every three thousand years.

THE THREE REFUGES SONG

I take refuge in the Buddha,

the one who shows me the way in this life.

Namo Buddhaya, Namō Buddhaya, Namō Buddhaya.

I take refuge in the Dharma,

the way of understanding and love.

Namo Dharmaya, Namō Dharmaya, Namō Dharmaya.

I take refuge in the Sangha,
the community of mindful harmony.

Namo Sanghaya, Namō Sanghaya, Namō Sanghaya'

Namo Buddhaya, Namō Dharmaya, Namō Sanghaya'

DHARMA WORDS

[Chanted by the Head of Ceremony]

The Buddha is a flower of humanity
who practiced the Way for countless lives.

He appeared on this Earth as a prince who left his royal palace
to practice at the foot of the Bodhi tree.

He conquered illusion.

When the morning star arose,
he realized the great path of awakening
and turned the wheel of the Dharma.

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With single-mindedness, all species aspire to experience
the path free from birth.

With single-mindedness, all species will experience
a path free from birth.

•

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Samma Sambuddhassa

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HEART SUTRA

Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva, Awakened One of Compassion,

In Prajna Paramita, the Deep Practice of Perfect Wisdom ☉

Perceived the emptiness of all five conditions, and was free of suffering.

Oh Shariputra, form is no other than emptiness, emptiness no other than form;

Form is precisely emptiness, emptiness precisely form.

Sensations, perceptions, formations and consciousness are also like this.

Oh Shariputra, all things are expressions of emptiness,

Not born, not destroyed, not stained, not pure;

Neither waxing nor waning.

Thus emptiness is not form; not sensation nor perception, not formation nor consciousness. No eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind;

No sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, nor object of mind;

No realm of sight, no realm of consciousness;

No ignorance, no end to ignorance;

No old age and death, no cessation of old age and death;

No suffering, nor cause or end to suffering;

No path, no wisdom and no gain.

No gain – thus Bodhisattvas live this Prajna Paramita ☉

With no hindrance of mind. No hindrance, therefore no fear. Far beyond all delusion, Nirvana is already here. All past, present and future Buddhas live this Prajna Paramita ☉

and realize supreme and complete enlightenment.

Therefore know that Prajna Paramita is the sacred mantra, the luminous mantra, the supreme mantra, the incomparable mantra by which all suffering is clear. This is no other than Truth.

Therefore set forth the Prajna Paramita mantra.

Set forth this mantra and proclaim: Gate! Gate!

- Paragate! Parasamgate!
- Bodhi! Svaha! Hannya Shingyo

BATHING THE BABY BUDDHA

Opening Verse

Today we bathe the Tathagata.

Deep wisdom and clarity bring great happiness.

May all living beings who are overwhelmed by suffering
see the Dharmakaya in this very world.

Recitation

[CHANT THIS VERSE INTERSPERSED WITH "THE THREE REFUGES" in 3 ABOVE]

WHILE EVERYONE COMES FORWARD TO OFFER A FLOWER AND A CANDLE TO THE BABY BUDDHA, THE HEAD OF CEREMONY IS THE FIRST PERSON TO OFFER A CANDLE AND A FLOWER AND TO LADLE FRAGRANT WATER OVER THE STATUE OF THE BUDDHA. THE CHILDREN THEN FOLLOW AND AFTER THEM THE ADULTS COME FORWARD.

Namo Budh Shakyamuni

THE REFUGE CHANT

Incense perfumes the atmosphere.

A lotus blooms and the Buddha appears.

The world of suffering and discrimination
is filled with the light of the rising sun.

As the dust of fear and anxiety settles,
with open heart, one-pointed mind,
I turn to the Three jewels.

•

The Fully Enlightened one, beautifully seated, peaceful and smiling,
a living source of understanding and compassion,
to the Buddha I go for refuge.

•

The path of mindful living,
leading to healing, joy, and enlightenment, the way of peace,
to the Dharma I go for refuge.

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The loving and supportive community of practice,
realizing harmony, awareness, and liberation,
to the Sangha I go for refuge.

•

I am aware that the Three Gems are within my heart.
I vow to realize them,

practicing mindful breathing and smiling,

looking deeply into things.

I vow to understand living beings and their suffering,

to cultivate compassion and loving kindness,

to practice joy and equanimity.

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I vow to offer joy to one person in the morning,

to help relieve the grief of one person in the afternoon,

living simply and sanely with few possessions,

keeping my body healthy.

I vow to let go of all worries and anxiety

in order to be light and free.

•

I am aware that I owe so much

to my parents, teachers, friends, and all beings.

I vow to be worthy of their trust, to practice wholeheartedly

so that understanding and compassion will flower,

helping living beings be free from their suffering.

May the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha

support my efforts'

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THE THREE REFUGES

I take refuge in the Buddha,
the one who shows me the way in this life.

I take refuge in the Dharma,
the way of understanding and of love.

I take refuge in the Sangha,
the community that lives in harmony and awareness.

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Dwelling in the refuge of Buddha,
I clearly see the path of light and beauty in the world.

Dwelling in the refuge of Dharma,
I learn to open many doors on the path of transformation.

Dwelling in the refuge of Sangha,
shining light that supports me, keeping my practice free of obstruction.

•

Taking refuge in the Buddha in myself,
I aspire to help all people recognize their own awakened nature,
realizing the Mind of Love.

Taking refuge in the Dharma in myself,
I aspire to help all people fully master the ways of practice
And walk together on the path of liberation.

Taking refuge in the Sangha in myself,

I aspire to help all people build Fourfold Communities,
to embrace all beings and support their transformation.

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