

FURNACE MOUNTAIN SANGHA

Precepts Overview

Five Precepts

Five precepts appear when a person has decided to take on Zen practice wholeheartedly, to take up this work of great doubt and personal inquiry. In order to take five precepts, one should have at least a taste that this particular way of spiritual inquiry is something that one wants to take up as a long-term commitment. Before taking the five precepts below, the student should have a minimum of 6 days retreat experience (two weekend retreats or one week-long retreat).

I vow to give and not take life.

I vow to be generous and avoid taking things not given.

I vow to seek the truth in all that I say and do.

I vow to avoid exploiting others for my own sensual pleasure.

I vow to avoid misusing intoxicants as a means of escape or denial.

Sixteen Bodhisattva Precepts:

Students who have previously taken five precepts may be invited, by Zen Master Dae Gak or their resident Zen teacher, to take sixteen Bodhisattva precepts. This represents a personal decision arising from the relationship between teacher and student. This is a step which may be taken once one has worked through one's uncertainty about one's spiritual practice and has made a firm decision to live a life whose primary direction is to benefit others. When one is invited to step forward and take the sixteen precepts, one does so having realized the unworkability of blame, opinion, and personal ambition.

While taking the sixteen precepts does not require that one adopt and maintain a posture of perfect Bodhisattva action in the world, it does require that one clarify one's primary intention to move in the world as a compassionate participant in the Maha Sangha. This in no way means that taking precepts is joining a group or school or institution. It is a public declaration of the intention to conduct one's life in a way that benefits all beings.

Forms

A rokusu is obtained at the time of 16 precepts and is worn during chanting, dharma talks, and ceremonies. It is within practice etiquette to wear the rokusu during all sitting periods as well.