

## Beginning Anew

With great respect, we turn towards the conqueror of afflictions,  
offering heartfelt words of repentance.

We have lived in forgetfulness for a long time.

As we have not had the opportunity to encounter the Dharma,  
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our habit energies have led us into suffering.

We have made many mistakes out of unskillfulness.

We have been blinded by our wrong perceptions  
for a very long time.

Our heart's garden is sown with attachment, hatred, and pride.

In us are seeds of killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, and lies.

Our everyday deeds and words do damage.

All these wrong actions are obstacles to our peace and joy.

Let us begin anew.

[bell]

We see that we have been thoughtless,  
straying from the path of mindfulness.

We have stored up afflictions and ignorance,  
which have brought about so much aversion and sorrow.

There are times we have been weary of life  
because we are so full of anxiety.

Because we do not understand others,  
we are angry and resentful.

First we try to reason with each other, then we blame.

Every day the suffering increases, making the rift greater.

There are days when we are unwilling to speak to each other,  
unwilling to look each other in the face.

And we create internal formations, which last for a long time.

Now we turn to the Three Jewels.

Sincerely recognizing our errors, we bow our heads.

[bell]

We know so well that in our consciousness

are buried all the wholesome seeds —

seeds of love and understanding and seeds of peace and joy.

But because we do not know how to water them,  
the wholesome seeds do not sprout fresh and green.

We continue to allow sorrow to overwhelm us  
until there is no light in our lives.

When we chase after a distant happiness,  
life becomes but a shadow of the reality.

Our mind is occupied by the past,  
or worrying about this or that in the future.  
We cannot let go of our anger,  
daily practice  
and we consider of no value the precious gifts of life  
which are already in our hands,  
thereby trampling on real happiness.  
As month follows month, we are sunk in sorrow.  
So now in the precious presence of the Buddha,  
fragrant with sandalwood incense,  
we recognize our errors and begin anew.  
[bell]

With all our heart we go for refuge,  
turning to the Buddhas in the Ten Directions  
and all the Bodhisattvas, noble disciples, and self-achieved Buddhas.  
Very sincerely we recognize our errors  
and the mistakes of our wrong judgments.  
Please bring the balm of clear water  
to pour on the roots of our afflictions.  
Please bring the raft of the true teachings  
to carry us over the ocean of sorrows.  
We vow to live an awakened life,  
to practice smiling and conscious breathing,  
and to study the teachings, authentically transmitted.  
Diligently, we shall live in mindfulness.  
[bell]

We come back to live in the wonderful present,  
to plant our heart's garden with good seeds,  
and to make strong foundations of understanding and love.  
We vow to train ourselves in mindfulness and concentration,  
practicing to look and understand deeply  
to be able to see the nature of all that is,  
and so to be free of the bonds of birth and death.  
We learn to speak lovingly, to be affectionate,  
to care for others whether it is early morn or late afternoon,  
to bring the roots of joy to many places,  
helping people to abandon sorrow,  
to respond with deep gratitude  
to the kindness of parents, teachers, and friends.  
With deep faith we light up the incense of our heart.  
We ask the Lord of Compassion to be our protector  
on the wonderful path of practice.

We vow to practice diligently,  
cultivating the fruits of this path.  
[bell, bell]

*Chanting from the heart: Buddhist ceremonies and daily practices. 2000*  
*Thich Nhat Hanh and the Nuns and Monks of Plum Village*