

## *Merit Radiates Out*

*December 30, 2016*

Close your eyes and watch your breath. Give the mind something good to do: Stay with the breath in the present moment so that it's not thinking about all kinds of random things, and actually has a purpose for being right here. We're trying to develop good qualities in the mind.

We come to the monastery to practice generosity, take the precepts, meditate. These are all good things to do, all good ways of trying to find happiness. So many of the ways we look for happiness in the world take things from someone else, or require someone else to suffer in one way or another. But one of the reasons we have that reflection on the requisites is to remind ourselves: Even just the real basics—food, clothing, shelter, medicine—require the suffering of other beings.

So what are we going to do? Try to find a happiness where we can share something with them. This applies to the generosity and the virtue and the meditation: They're all good things to do. And they spreads the happiness around.

When you're meditating, the less greed, aversion, and delusion you can allow in your mind, then the less other people around have to suffer from them. It's easier for you to observe the precepts, it's easier for you to be generous, so the effects go radiating out.

This is one of the reasons why the Buddha calls this *merit*: It's something that really is good to do, and it reflects the goodness of the mind, along with the goodness of other people too. It's because of these three activities that we can live together as human beings in a human society.

So as the year comes to an end, let's see how much goodness we can squeeze out of the end of the year. We've got today and tomorrow before the new year begins. Of course, that's just a convention. When the sun rises on January 1<sup>st</sup>, it doesn't say 2017 or 2560 or whatever, it just it rises as normal. But it's good for us to take stock every now and then, to look back on the past year, to see what we've gained, what we've lost, particularly what we've gained in the sense of good qualities of the mind, in terms of the perfections. If there's anything else that we find lacking, the new year's a chance to start afresh to work on those qualities. Anything bad we've accumulated: We want to let it go. Leave it in 2016. Don't carry it into 2017.

Remember where true happiness is found. The more we can focus here, at the mind, the better it's going to be for us and for the world all around us.