

## **Words from Master Renshan**

Taking refuge in the Three Jewels is the first step in formally becoming a Buddhist. The Three Refuges refer to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, also called the Three Jewels or the Triple Gems.

The Buddha means perfect awakening, also Shakyamuni Buddha, the historical Buddha who is our fundamental teacher who achieved complete awakening to the truth of life and the Universe. The Dharma means the Buddha's teachings which is the right way to practice, the path that leads to awakening. The Sangha is the role model for cultivation, the community which upholds and spreads the Dharma.

Taking refuge means relying upon. Being drowned in the sea of Samsara (reincarnation), the suffering has no end. From now on, we can rely upon the Three Jewels to help us awaken, liberate ourselves from all suffering in life and live a happy life.

The Three Jewels are also within us. The Buddha told us that all beings have the same Buddha nature (awakened nature), this is

called the Self-Nature Buddha (Buddha nature). Through awakening and activating our original wisdom means the Self-Nature Dharma. Through awakening and living by wisdom, purity and harmony means the Self-Nature Sangha.

In summary, to take refuge in the Buddha means one will become awakened and no longer be delusioned; to take refuge in the Dharma means one follows the correct teachings which can lead to awakening, and not the wrong teachings; to take refuge in the Sangha means one stays in purity and not delusions.

To study Buddhism is to live a life of awakening, wisdom, purity and harmony. To take refuge means this is the lifestyle that everyone can live. Everyone can become the master of their own life. Thus, taking refuge in the Three Jewels is an extremely precious opportunity.

One can choose just to take the Three Jewels or to take one step further by also taking the Five Precepts, which are not to kill, not to steal, not to commit sexual misconduct, not to lie and not to consume alcohol and intoxicants.

The Five Precepts are not to restrain us but to free our minds. When we can follow the right way of living, it is much easier for us to obtain peace of mind in our daily life and to live harmoniously among others and our environment. There are no requirements for beginners, but when one is serious about one's practice, one shall definitely observe the Five Precepts.

Namo Amitabha Buddha

Namo Amitufo