Dear Sangha,

In this edition of *The Lotus Bud* we explore Thay's teachings through his poetry, notably his poem *Please Call Me By My True Names* and commentary on that poem.

**Please Call Me By My True Names**

Do not say that I'll depart tomorrow because even today I still arrive.

Look deeply: I arrive in every second to be a bud on a spring branch, to be a tiny bird, with wings still fragile, learning to sing in my new nest, to be a caterpillar in the heart of a flower, to be a jewel hiding itself in a stone.

I still arrive, in order to laugh and to cry, in order to fear and to hope. The rhythm of my heart is the birth and death of all that are alive.

I am the mayfly metamorphosing on the surface of the river, and I am the bird which, when spring comes, arrives in time to eat the mayfly.

I am the frog swimming happily in the clear pond, and I am also the grass-snake who, approaching in silence, feeds itself on the frog.

I am the child in Uganda, all skin and bones, my legs as thin as bamboo sticks, and I am the arms merchant, selling deadly weapons to Uganda.

I am the twelve-year-old girl, refugee on a small boat, who throws herself into the ocean after being raped by a sea pirate, and I am the pirate, my heart not yet capable of seeing and loving.

I am a member of the politburo, with plenty of power in my hands, and I am the man who has to pay his "debt of blood" to, my people, dying slowly in a forced labor camp.

My joy is like spring, so warm it makes flowers bloom in all walks of life. My pain is like a river of tears, so full it fills the four oceans.

Please call me by my true names, so I can hear all my cries and laughs at once, so I can see that my joy and pain are one.

Please call me by my true names, so I can wake up, and so the door of my heart can be left open, the door of compassion.

*Thich Nhat Hanh*
In Plum Village in France, we receive many letters from the refugee camps in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines, hundreds each week. It is very painful to read them, but we have to do it, we have to be in contact. We try our best to help, but the suffering is enormous, and sometimes we are discouraged. It is said that half the boat people die in the ocean; only half arrive at the shores in Southeast Asia.

There are many young girls, boat people, who are raped by sea pirates. Even though the United Nations and many countries try to help the government of Thailand prevent that kind of piracy, sea pirates continue to inflict much suffering on the refugees. One day we received a letter telling us about a young girl on a small boat who was raped by a Thai pirate. She was only twelve, and she jumped into the ocean and drowned herself. When you first learn of something like that, you get angry at the pirate. You naturally take the side of the girl. As you look more deeply you will see it differently. If you take the side of the little girl, then it is easy. You only have to take a gun and shoot the pirate. But we cannot do that.

In my meditation I saw that if I had been born in the village of the pirate and raised in the same conditions as he was, I am now the pirate. There is a great likelihood that I would become a pirate. I cannot condemn myself so easily.

In my meditation, I saw that many babies are born along the Gulf of Siam, hundreds every day, and if we educators, social workers, politicians, and others do not do something about the situation, in twenty-five years a number of them will become sea pirates. That is certain. If you or I were born today in those fishing villages, we might become sea pirates in twenty-five years. If you take a gun and shoot the pirate, you shoot all of us, because all of us are to some extent responsible for this state of affairs.

After a long meditation, I wrote this poem. In it, there are three people: the twelve-year-old girl, the pirate, and me. Can we look at each other and recognize ourselves in each other?

The title of the poem is "Please Call Me By My True Names," because I have so many names. When I hear one of these names, I have to say, "Yes."

http://www.ecomall.com/greenshopping/workingforpeace.html
Poetry of Compassion

Kate Rowley, Ecumenical Chaplain, Oxford Brookes University

I’ve worked as Ecumenical Chaplain at Oxford Brookes University since December 2012. The Chaplaincy team is made up of members of faith communities who are available for pastoral or spiritual care and guidance to the University community.

The poem I have chosen is called, ‘Please Call Me By My True Names’, and was written by Thich Nhat Hanh. Thich Nhat Hanh is a Buddhist monk and Zen Master who was born in Vietnam, and during the war with the United States of America he worked to support the wounded and dispossessed. His work is dedicated to individual transformation and creating peace in the minds of every person. He is a committed advocate of using the principles of mindfulness to calm the mind and soul, and his influence can be seen in the practice of mindfulness all over the world today.

I first heard this poem at an inter-faith event, as part of a reading from Peace is Every Step. I was profoundly affected by hearing the line, ‘I am the pirate, / my heart not yet capable of seeing and loving’. When I heard that spoken aloud it is a reminder of the humanity of people who commit atrocities, and the latent atrocity in human nature. It is a call to compassion and mercy.

In my time in ministry, I have worked with people who have suffered greatly at the hands of others. I have listened to the stories of LGBT people who have been tortured, homeless women fleeing abuse, children whose parents don’t want to know them.

My Christian faith teaches that all people are made in God’s image – torturer and tortured alike – and the words of Thich Nhat Hanh are a reminder of the sacred in everyone. They remind me to pray for my enemies, and those who hurt the people I love, and to seek to love them in turn.

I find that poetry can speak very profoundly to my faith and experiences. In poetry, I hear a lot said in few words; those words echo across languages and generations. Ancient psalms can move me to tears, or stir me to action in a very powerful way.

People who understand God very differently to me can still move my spirit to prayer or praise through an expression of our common beliefs.

Poetry spoken aloud as part of the liturgy of the Christian tradition binds us together. Set to music, poetry lifts us up or draws us inward. I can’t imagine my life and work without the poems of others, and I hope I will continue to discover new works and rediscover ancient truths.

https://www.brookes.ac.uk/poetry-centre/thich-naht-hanh--please-call-me-by-my-true-names/

Recommendation

Thich Naht Hanh

Promise me, promise me this day, promise me now, while the sun is overhead exactly at the zenith, promise me:

Even as they strike you down with a mountain of hatred and violence, even as they step on you and crush you like a worm, even as they dismember and disembowel you, remember, brother, remember: man is not our enemy.
WHO WE ARE

The Communities of Mindful Living are inspired by the Buddhist teachings of Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh.

We aspire to live fully in each moment for the peace and happiness of ourselves and all beings. We meet regularly to observe the art of mindful living and to foster a supportive community of practitioners.

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Online sources for articles in this Issue

http://www.ecomall.com/greenshopping/workingforpeace.html
https://www.brookes.ac.uk/poetry-centre/thich-naht-hanh–please-call-me-by-my-true-names/

We would love to hear from you.
We want the The Lotus Bud to be a place for sharing our experiences and building the Sangha; so why not write a short piece about your experiences with mindfulness?

Email: chrisbarker@linet.net.au

Breathing In,
I know that I am breathing in,
Breathing out,
I know that I am breathing out.

Our activities

Wednesday Mindfulness Meditation
Sydney, Inner West
We welcome all to come join us for meditation practice. We meet at 7:30 pm each Wednesday at the Buddhist Library, Church St, Camperdown, Sydney.

Meditation and monthly Mindfulness Days at Canley Heights
Southwest Sydney - 7.30pm Friday Night Meditation and Monthly Mindfulness Days.
85 Queen St
Canley Heights.

Mindfulness Days at Nhap Luu (Entering the Stream) Meditation Centre
221 Maria’s Lane
Beauchefort VIC 3733
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