

The Rising Great Compassion

Vehicles for Healing and Reconciliation *A Global Dialogue between Monastic and Lay Women*

This dialogue will explore how compassion can become a global force for transforming the many kinds of suffering and divisions that exist in our world -- focusing on the collective, or communal, suffering. Women from various religious communities will come together to explore how compassion can be directed toward healing the wounds of conflict and poverty -- addressing the underlying causes of these ills: intolerance, injustice, environmental degradation, etc. There will be a special focus on ways to bring deep inner healing to the many young people who have been traumatized by conflict or natural disasters.

In the effort to resolve conflicts, the international community deals at the political and economic levels, also addressing some of the pressing social issues. But few know how to reach the deeper scars caused by years of violence and hatred. Unless these wounds are healed, it is very likely that the same issues causing the conflict will arise again. Too often we see the cycles of violence return. It is time to integrate into peacebuilding non-denominational methods for spiritual healing that can cut across faith communities.

Compassion is not just a sentiment. It is a transformative power that creates a sense of identification and empathy with the "other." Realizing our interconnectedness and underlying unity are critical steps in alleviating world problems. Women, through our role as mothers, through our biological and historic positions as life givers, nurturers and caretakers, have a special role to play as we seek to transform the self-focused and competitive nature of our society into one that cares for and addresses the needs of all. Although still excluded from many of the political, economic and religious power structures, women have a strong influence at the grassroots level. How can we use our strengths and resources to generate greater compassion at all levels of society so that we can, indeed, transform and rebalance the global community?

This dialogue is meant to initiate a global conversation between monastic and laywomen on how to create a mutually supportive environment so that we can become a stronger force for positive change. It will address the following themes:

- How the power of our faith traditions can heal young people traumatized by war and natural disasters;
- How compassion can help address the deeper causes of conflict;
- Ways to share compassion among women from different religious traditions;
- What compassion means in the various religious traditions;
- Interpretations of compassion towards all – the human, animal, plant and mineral worlds;
- How compassion can lead the way from an exclusive to inclusive world community;

- How to awaken compassion as a collective force to heal our human community and environment and to end the spiritual poverty that plagues many societies today.

This dialogue is a collaboration between Dharma Drum Mountain and the Global Peace Initiative of Women. The first meeting will take place at Dharma Drum Mountain in Taiwan in spring 2006, and the second will take place in the United States in early 2007. Successive meetings could take place in other parts of the world to engage more women from the various regions so that we can bring this rising great compassion to the many places in need of healing and transformation.

The outcomes of this Dialogue will be used to support a variety of healing and reconciliation programs in conflict areas, including Sudan, Northern Uganda, Iraq, Israel-Palestine and Sri Lanka.