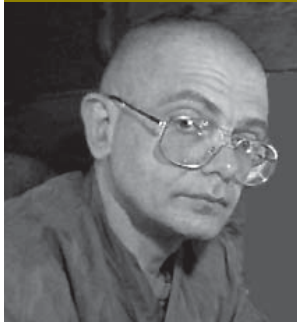


TCVC WINTER RETREAT



with

Ajahn Punnadhammo

February 12–15 or 12–19

Villa Maria Frontenac, MN

On Taking the Eight Precepts

By Ajahn Punnadhammo

The basic ethical guidelines for a lay Buddhist are the five precepts. These are straightforward and it is easy to see the reason behind them; don't kill, don't steal, don't have relations with someone else's partner, don't lie, don't take intoxicants. Imagine how the world would be if everyone lived like that!

The eight precepts add some additional guidelines that may not be so easy to understand; don't have sex at all, don't use cosmetics or scents of any kind, don't take in entertainment, don't sleep or sit on overly comfy furniture and don't take any nourishment after twelve noon.

These additional precepts have nothing whatsoever to do with ethics. There is nothing immoral about eating supper! They are renunciant precepts. Their purpose is to foster the important spiritual quality of sense restraint.

In meditation we are trying to look within, to gain understanding of the inner realm of our own mind. To be successful in this work, we need to turn around, at least for a while, the ingrained habit of seeking pleasure, interest and knowledge outside - through the gateway of the senses.

On a meditation retreat we really need to work to avoid seeking little distractions. Sense restraint is not always easy to do, but we must try if we really want to explore the inner world. We have to turn the seeking gaze of the mind's eye around and avoid as far as possible letting it wander out into the external world of the ten thousand things.

The eight precepts are an excellent tool given us by the Buddha for just that purpose. Think of them as a fast for the senses. Sense contact is a nourishment for consciousness. When we deprive it of its regular fare, it has to seek elsewhere. Nibbana cannot be perceived if one is engaged in Samsara.

These simple guidelines have been followed by meditators for twenty-five hundred years. In Theravada countries lay devotees may take them on for such occasions as the full and new moon days, or occasionally for a longer period. The eight precepts are an essential part of a traditional Buddhist retreat, because sense restraint is an essential part of meditation.

Vipassana (insight) meditation

is a simple and direct practice: the moment-to-moment investigation of the mind/body process through calm, open and precise awareness. Learning to observe experience from a place of spacious stillness enables one to relate to life with a balance of wisdom and compassion.

Retreats are held in noble silence

and include sitting and walking meditation, instructions, Dharma talks, and time for questions with the teacher.

We will be observing the **Eight Precepts for this retreat**. As part of this training you are asked not to eat before sunrise or after the midday meal. Fruit juice will be served in the late afternoon. If you have a physical condition, such as diabetes, which makes it medically necessary for you eat after noon, please contact the registrar so that your needs may be accommodated.

As the teachings of the Buddha

are considered priceless, they have traditionally been offered freely. The teachers do not receive payment from TCVC for their teaching. The registration fee covers room and board, transportation for the teachers and other retreat expenses.

At the end of the retreat, students are encouraged to offer a donation to the teachers to support their living expenses so that they may continue to practice and teach.

Scholarships are available for up to 50% of the retreat fee. To apply for a scholarship, include a letter with your registration giving the background of your need. Scholarship requests must be received by the due date and are limited to one retreat per person per calendar year.

Those who wish may help others by donating to the TCVC Scholarship Fund, or the Operating Fund.

Detailed information about the retreat is mailed upon registration. **Contact the registrar**, Elizabeth Archerd at **612-729-6168** or retreats@tcvc.info

