

## Gratitude for the Path

At some point, most everyone feels the path of the sacred Earth Interbeing an impossible burden. We find self-discipline and limits irksome and changing our ways too difficult. The struggle to overcome our self-centered willingness to harm others for self-benefit seems endless. If we find no joy on the path, then our commitment to it will wane.

Some give up the path as if they had a choice. They perceive furthering life on Earth as an option among many others, one that they can put aside. However, omnicide stands as the only option to furthering life on Earth. All the other purposes we feel we could choose to pursue lead to omnicide. If we don't further life on Earth, we kill life on Earth, a purpose that only the suicidal would choose. Those on the sacred path know that we must further life on Earth.

Once we get to know the sacred path, we do not find it an onerous duty or burden. Indeed, the path brings us a greater joy than we have ever had, a joy that endures and for which we have a deep gratitude.

The path encourages us to widen our focus beyond what harms. Instead of gritting our teeth and doing what we must do, we see the sacred moving through our faults. The wrong views of Western culture objectify and demonize our experience of what we reject. We cannot imagine loving what disgusts us. The sacred path cultivates our capacities to compassion the suffering within our faults and the harms we experience in the world. We naturally respond to relieve the suffering and the causes of the suffering.

By compassioning we experience the great joy of approaching the sacred through our faults and learning how to further life on Earth. Everything we experience has a sacred meaning. Our creativity, joy, and love open us to this meaning, but so does our reactivity and despair. We have gratitude for learning how to refrain from imposing our self-centered values upon a situation and to yield to sacred direction, allowing the situation to unfold on its own in unexpectedly beneficial ways. By persistently learning how the sacred wants us to respond to our experience in ways that further life on Earth, our lives become works of art and visions of the sacred Earth Interbeing.

Compassion opens us to a quiet and lasting joy. We come to view our faults as blessings through which we become sacred Earth Interbeings. Joy does not come from experiences external to us but rather from how we respond to experience. The more we live in valued ways, the greater our joy.<sup>1</sup>

With gratitude for a joyful path, we learn to have reasonable expectations of the path. Rather than thinking we can immediately overcome our deeply entrenched willingness to harm, we accept the gradual ways of diminishing the ways we harm step by small step.

Having a joyful gratitude for the sacred path keeps us on it. While we will always have hardships and heartaches on the path, we also have the joy that comes from transforming our faults into knowing how to live as an Earth interbeing. We come to have a passion for living the path and pour our life energy into it. We have gratitude for our opportunities to further life on Earth.

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<sup>1</sup> **Common values of furthering life on Earth (work in progress):** reverence and gratitude for the sacred and the sacredness and equality of life on Earth, patience and loving awareness for arising experience, surrender to the sacred knowing of what to do to further life on Earth, compassionately responding to relieve suffering and the causes of suffering, harmoniously interacting with others through loving-kindness, equitably sharing and caring for the interdependent Earth commons, responding in valued ways that further life on Earth, self-discipline to preserve our balance with Earth and mutual wellbeing. By living in these ways, we deepen our loving awareness of the sacred and sacredness of all life and the Earth.