

THE MOUNTAIN HERMITAGE
Metta – The Heart’s Release:
A One-week Retreat
February 7-14, 2014
San Geronimo Lodge, Taos, New Mexico, USA.

PRACTICE GUIDELINES:

This week-long *Metta* retreat schedule will consist of meditation instruction, sitting and walking meditation, evening *Dhamma* talks, & individual practice interviews.

There will be three nutritious vegetarian meals served each day. After registration and orientation you will enter the silent space of the intensive retreat environment. The buildings and grounds are in silence at all times, apart from staff working and living areas.

The experience of being at *The Mountain Hermitage* is a rare opportunity for silence and solitude. These days our world is filled with habitual ‘digital distractions’. We ask that retreatants commit to refraining from the use of telephones, cell phones, computers and I-pads, and from sending or receiving e-mail or text messages during the retreat. We realize that exceptional circumstances may occur when communication is necessary. Should this arise during the retreat, please contact the retreat manager Sarah Grant for assistance.

ETHICAL GUIDELINES:

We ask that you abide by the five traditional Buddhist precepts for lay practitioners while at *The Mountain Hermitage*:

1. I undertake the training to refrain from harming living creatures. I undertake the training to practice compassionate action.
2. I undertake the training to refrain from taking that which is not given. I undertake the training to practice contentment.
3. I undertake the training to refrain from sexual activity. I undertake the training to practice responsibility in all my relationships.
4. I undertake the training to refrain from harmful speech. I undertake the training to practice noble silence.
5. I undertake the training to refrain from the use of intoxicants. I undertake the training to wisely care for my body and my mind.

WORK MEDITATION:

As part of your retreat practice, you will be asked to engage in mindful work practice. The work will consist of one hour a day at tasks such as helping in meal preparation, washing dishes, vacuuming, cleaning bathroom facilities, sweeping outside walkways and porches, etc. This work meditation, a form of service, is also vital: it enables us to maintain relatively low retreat fees, and it allows you the opportunity to practice mindfulness in daily activities.

DANA:

DANA, an ancient Pali word meaning *generosity, giving, or gift*, is central to the 2,600-year-old tradition of Buddhism. The teachings of the Buddha have been offered freely since the time of the Buddha. There was and is no way to put a price on the teachings of the truth - they are valuable beyond any fee one could set.

The early teachers received no payment for their instruction. In Buddhist countries, traditionally, it has always been understood that the lay community, through their voluntary generosity (their *dana*), provide physical support - the basic needs of food, clothing, shelter and medicine - for the monks and nuns. In turn they were/are offered guidance and teachings in their own practice by this monastic *sangha*. This practice of *dana* has been a very significant pillar in keeping the *Dhamma* (teachings) alive. The generosity of the laity towards the practical support of the monastic community since ancient times, is what has kept the *Dhamma* spreading through the world.

Western teachers have continued this tradition of offering the teachings freely. In our culture, where no real training exists in living generously, it is a new practice for us in both offering and receiving the *Dhamma*.

Dana is not only a practical matter; it also plays a crucial role in the spiritual life of a *Dhamma* practitioner. Generosity is the first of the ten *paramis*, or qualities of character, to be perfected in spiritual life. The very act of giving is of immeasurable benefit to the giver, for it opens the heart, lessens self-absorption, and serves the well-being of others.

The Mountain Hermitage fees for this retreat only cover basic expenses and operating costs. The teachers offer the *Buddha Dhamma* without any set fee, and depend on the generosity of students for the support of their daily life needs. Giving to the teachers, from the heart, whatever feels appropriate, is the practice of *dana*. It will also be possible to offer *dana* to the retreat staff – the retreat/housekeeping manager, office manager and the cook.

MEAL DANA: All Mountain Hermitage retreats offer participants an opportunity to offer *dana* to specifically help cover the cost of meals during the retreat – for an entire day or for individual meals. The suggested amount for each of these will be posted at the retreat next to the meal *dana* basket.

HOW TO MAKE AN OFFERING: At the end of the retreat, *dana* envelopes will be provided. Please clearly designate on the outside of the envelope to whom your *dana* is to be directed. *Dana* checks intended for the teacher(s) should be written directly to each of them. *Dana* checks for staff or for *The Mountain Hermitage* itself should be made out to *The Mountain Hermitage* with a clearly written designation on the check for whom the *dana* is intended. *The Mountain Hermitage* is 501(c)(3) tax-deductible charitable organization. All *dana* checks made out to *The Mountain Hermitage* for scholarship & general fund support are tax deductible. [*Please note: while Dana to the Hermitage is tax deductible, dana to teachers and staff is NOT.*]

MEDICAL ISSUES:

All participants must be mentally stable and physically able to care for themselves. Everyone must have health insurance or be able to cover his/her own expenses in case of illness or medical emergencies. Any special needs must be discussed with *The Mountain Hermitage* Office Manager and the Retreat Manager and agreed to in advance. Should medical needs or emergencies arise, the Retreat Manager will offer assistance.