

We gather at the Harcourt flame Thursday, April 9, 2020



The Practice of Loving-kindness

The author of John's Gospel has Jesus give, in his version of the Last Supper, this commandment: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another." (Jn 13:34)

It helps to distinguish the types of love, lest we try to live out the commandment in terms of the common understanding of love as a feeling. The Greeks distinguished "eros," (love of attraction), "sorge" (familial obligations), or "philia" (love of mutual care, as in friendship), and "agape" (the unconditional willing of the good for others). Agape, or loving-kindness, is above all an attitude, a disposition, which one can cultivate.

The Buddhists have a simple prayer which one repeats often throughout the day. It starts with wishing peace, safety and happiness for oneself, then for loved ones, then for the broader community, for enemies, for animals, all living things, and finally the whole earth.

The form of the prayer can vary as you feel called, but its essential form is this:

May I* be happy.
May I be peaceful and at ease.
May I be well.
May I be filled with loving-kindness.

* I, (my spouse, my friend, my family, my community, those who have harmed me, all animals, all living things, the whole earth)